

Celebrating God's favor **Sisters of Providence celebrate 150 years in the West at Seattle Event**

Hundreds gathered at St. James Cathedral in Seattle on April 22 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters of Providence in the West. Mother Joseph and four sister companions journeyed from Montreal to the Washington Territory in 1856, arriving on December 8 at what is now Vancouver, Wash. For one year, culminating with the actual anniversary date, the Sisters of Providence are celebrating not only the legacy of those first five sisters but the many others who have continued their legacy of compassion, courage and caring. Celebration events, large and small, are being held throughout Mother Joseph Province, which includes Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Alaska, California and El Salvador.



“Celebrating God’s Favor” was the theme of the Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated by Archbishop Alex J. Brunett. It also included the renewal of vows of 14 Jubilarians marking 70, 60, 50 and 25 years of religious life. General Superior Kathryn Rutan and General Councilor Judith Desmarais came from the Motherhouse in Montreal to participate. A reception at a local community center followed the Mass.

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From Your Director...



“I know well the plans I have in mind for you.....plans for a future full of hope.” (Jer. 29: 11-13) These words from my favorite Old Testament Scripture have seen me through difficult times for some 30+ years now. As many of you know, my mother passed away in April during Holy Week. Thanks to the wonderful, compassionate Women of Providence, I was able to be there with her in her last two weeks. It was both a privilege and a blessing to walk that final journey with her, a journey that is transformative for both the one going and the ones left behind. I want to thank all of you for your cards and expressions of sympathy. I truly felt held in the hands of Providence through those days and the ones that have followed.

On another note, you will find in these pages the stories of Providence unfolded through the lives of women who touch souls, stretch minds and prod consciences. The men and women of Providence today continue to create significant relationships that indeed give others a future full of hope!

Sr. Barbara

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The symbolism of the Mass was rich with meaning. The lace on the altar cloth, more than a century old, was from the sisters' first school in the West, the former Providence Academy in Vancouver. Sister Karin Dufault wore the traditional habit to present the archbishop with a donation to The Chief Seattle Club, which provides social service programs that assist urban American Indians, Alaska Natives and First Nation Peoples. In addition, the gifts of bread and wine were brought forth by sisters in the dress of their countries of origin, including Chile, Vietnam, El Salvador and the Philippines. Historic symbols carried in the entrance procession reflected the sisters' ministries to native peoples, at a clinic in Haiti, in health care, in education and in housing for the elderly. The celebration continues in Spokane on August 5 and in Vancouver, Wash., on September 23, followed by closing events throughout the province on December 8.



Details on all of the events, plus monthly prayer services, an historic photo gallery and more are available on a special website for the 150th celebration. It can be accessed from the Sisters of Providence website at www.sistersofprovidence.net.



WPC News

WPC Congregational News and Ministries



MCDPs from San Antonio celebrated the 60th anniversary of Pontifical Approbation on May 27, 2006 with a Mass of Thanksgiving at Sacred Heart Chapel on the campus of Our Lady of the Lake University. Archbishop Emeritus Patrick Flores presided. At that same celebration the community installed its newly elected Leadership Team. The members of this team are: Sisters Mary Louis Barba, Superior, Esther M. Guerrero, Assistant to the Superior, and Councilors Maria T. Sanchez, Rachel Castillo, Anne Garcia. We wish them well in their leadership ministry and congratulations on their 60th anniversary!



Biblical Catechetical Program, a joint initiative with Our Lady of the Lake University and the Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence will begin on June 23, 2006. For over sixty years the Missionary Catechists of Divine Providence have been known throughout the state of Texas for their ministry in the area of evangelization and catechesis, especially among Hispanics. It's been their dream to offer a new and innovative project that would assist the Catholic Church in providing quality biblical catechetical training to lay ministers who work among the Hispanic population. Sister

Anita de Luna, MCDP, PhD, Christian Spirituality scholar and Renata Furst, PhD, Biblical scholar have collaborated in designing this program with emphasis for Hispanics. It promises to be a wonderful and unique learning opportunity.

CDPs, San Antonio, TX have named Sr. Charlene Wedelich as Director of Mission Support. Sr. Charlene began this ministry in May with several projects under construction. Two of those projects address the needs of their Sisters at Our Lady of the Lake Convent Center. Plans to renovate Annunciation Chapel are underway to make this sacred space more functional for the Sisters, especially those with physical limitations. The goal is to reconfigure the space to make it both more liturgically functional as well as more accessible for handicap devices. In conjunction with this redesign, they have plans to extend the entrance of Annunciation Chapel to the street to make room for a lobby area. The other project underway is replacing the heating, air conditioning and ventilation systems in two of their facilities, McCullough Hall and Regan Hall. Plans for this have been in the making for more than a year, and work has already begun. These projects and others will keep Sr. Charlene very busy in the coming months!



Providence Leadership Program (PLP) is a program that brings Sisters and students together from Our Lady of the Lake University to explore vocation within the college setting in order to help students consider ministry as part of their future. The Congregation's New Membership Team, whose focus is vocation and formation ministry, guide students in the PLP to develop their faith and leadership skills, and at the same time, share the ministry and spirit of the Congregation. Students in the PLP are led through three components, or experiences, most of which take a semester to complete. Students start with the first level and progress onward with the Sisters alongside them to make the most of the experience. The three components are: *Building relationships with the CDPs; Learning the reality of CDP life in Mexico; and Serving others in social ministry.* In these components the student leaders intersect with many dimensions of the Congregation.



SPs from Kingston, Ontario, Canada sponsored a Trafficking conference at Providence Spirituality Center on March 7,8, 2006. Following the Canadian Religious Conference meeting in the fall of 2004, at which trafficking was a main topic, we as a community encouraged our sisters to attend a special workshop in Scarborough for training in this issue. Some of the sisters involved in helping to put on the conference in Kingston were Frances O'Brien, Peggy Flanagan and Associate Barbara Baker. It was a time when we could reflect upon the thousands of women who are trapped in the cycle of poverty, abuse and violence. Given the focus of religious leaders throughout the world, we, too, are committed to be in solidarity with them in working towards the eradication of trafficking of women and children.



SPs from St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN have five sponsored institutions that further the mission of Providence: Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College; Guerin College Preparatory High School, River Grove, IL; Woods Day Care/Pre-School, St. Mary-of-the-Woods; Providence Cristo Rey High School, Indianapolis and Providence Health Care Inc at SMW. Some of the significant decisions this year included:

Woods Day Care/Pre-School Board of Directors was given the approval to appoint Sr. Judith Cervizzi as the director. She succeeds founding director Sr. Ann Brendan Burget who guided the school for 18 years.



Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College was given approval in June to expand access to its undergraduate distance and adult education programs to men. The program is now known as the Woods External Degree program.

Guerin Prep was given the approval to acquire Holy Cross High School land and buildings adjacent to Guerin Prep for much needed expansion of educational programs and athletic activities and events.

Cristo Rey High School in Indianapolis became Providence Cristo Rey when the community decided to assume sponsorship at the request of the Archdiocese there. Sr. Jeanne Hagelskamp is the president. The Cristo Rey concept is a work-study model for economically challenged students who might not otherwise have an opportunity for Catholic education. It engages the business community for significant financial support and for placement of students in work opportunities.

Providence Healthcare, Inc. was formed to provide necessary and compassionate care and services to the Sisters in a licensed and certified comprehensive nursing facility. At the recommendation of the Board of Directors of PHC, the Leadership Team approved the seeking of reimbursement for the assisted care provided for the sisters residing in Lourdes Hall as well as its renovation, to become a licensed residential facility.



Providence Associate Relationship program is launched this year. The Sisters of Providence have appointed Sr. Mary Alice Zander as the Providence Associate Director along with an advisory group of ten members to begin this program. Some of the planning includes getting both printed and web materials out for distribution by May of 2006; scheduling a Welcome Ceremony for the first applicants for this Nov. 18, 2006 at the Woods and other locations as needed and a commitment ceremony at various locations possibly in May and in November of 2007.

CDPs from Marie de la Roche Province are engaged in the actions of Providence in many different ways. Sisters and Associates demonstrate their care for all creation by actively protesting the death penalty, working for systemic change through political activism, and taking part in initiatives that promote reverence for the Earth. One of the ways in which the congregation answers the call to action is by ministering to those who are homeless. The third Tuesday of each month, a group of retired Sisters from Providence Heights gathers on the third floor and forms a peanut butter and jelly sandwich assembly line. These are then delivered to Operation Safety Net, a Sisters of Mercy ministry to the homeless in the Pittsburgh area. La Roche College involves students in many social justice activities. One of them is coordinated by Sr. Marilyn Bergt, who along with college students, shop, cook, deliver and serve a monthly meal to the residents at Myriam's House, a shelter for women who are homeless in downtown Pittsburgh. Room at the Inn, a sponsored ministry of the Sisters in St. Louis, operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, serving up to



275 people each year, 60 percent of whom are children under the age of 18. Those numbers don't even begin to tell the story—because for each person who is offered shelter at Room At The Inn there is a different story...a different cause of homelessness. There are many ways—great and small—in which we can be the face of Providence in our world. These are just some of the ways we try to make Providence visible in our world.



Providence Colleges Collaborate

How is trust in God's Providence expressed in college teaching? Sister Michele Bisbey and Sister Mary Christine Morkovsky, members of distinct Congregations of Divine Providence, have been reflecting on this topic more than usual this year. At Michele's invitation, Christine came to LaRoche College in Pennsylvania as a visiting professor upon the completion of her term as a general councilor in Texas. Living in a local CDP community, Christine taught philosophical ethics as well as moral theology at LaRoche to undergraduates from the Northeastern U.S. but also from a number of African countries including Rwanda, Caribbean Islands such as Jamaica, and war-torn areas such as Kosovo.

Christine found challenges to her personal relationship with our Provident God included taking the risk to return to the classroom after 15 years of absence, learning new ways to present such as power point, and—most of all—learning wisdom from the current generation of students. These students are computer-savvy but not very cognizant of past history and traditions. They communicate with people in every corner of the globe by e-mail but are seldom inclined to keep up with current affairs or look to future consequences of present actions. Usually they are very tolerant, sometimes to the point of lacking principles of their own for making good judgments. In complex, bewildering times, they seem to be open to becoming convinced that God wants us to co-create a better world for all creation. Of course, these generalizations have many, many exceptions. But to communicate with today's students demands flexibility, creativity, and confidence that God will somehow be manifested in their lives. The college milieu provides plenty of opportunities to exalt God by efforts to make God's Providence "more visible in our world," as the CDPs often pray.

From Michele's perspective the collaboration has been a blessing beyond imagining. Christine is a wisdom figure in the newly combined religious studies/philosophy department. Her energy is amazing and her wide variety of interests is a source of inspiration. Her support and camaraderie have made many a difficult situation tolerable.

Michele and Christine have worked on developing the religious studies curriculum and on finding ways to make Providence values bear on all aspects of the college. The presidents of La Roche and Our Lady of the Lake are now exploring other types of exchange. Possibly Providence colleges in Indiana and Montana will conceive of further ways to communicate our charism in our institutions of higher education.

A Reflection on Trafficking

Natasha

Natasha, poor child, barely fifteen,
Eyes bright as diamonds, followed her
dream.

They lied when they told her, a rich
model they'd make her.
Who knew they'd betray, sell and
forsake her?

Her passport stolen, raped, beaten and
bought
Many times over, 'til her abusers were
caught.

Who bought her you ask. None you'd
suspect;



Men we all trust to 'serve and protect.'

Was there ever a millstone, well big to
dispose
Of traffickers dressed in fine linen
clothes?

They stole the gleam from innocent eyes,
With cold, hard hearts and cruel, sweet
lies?

The solution, I warrant, is no great
mystery.
Slavery will end when we make poverty
history.

-- Peggy Flanagan, SP

Earth Plunge for Women Religious
July 30-August 5, 2006
Sponsored by White Violet Center for Eco-Justice

This is an invitation to join in a week of immersion into Earth and contemplate its impact on your own spirituality. There are some places available and the White Violet Center staff is offering them to the Women of Providence in Collaboration first! The registration deadline is June 30th. Price is \$650 per person (includes room, meals and all materials). A non-refundable deposit of \$50 is required to reserve a space.

Your guides on this fantastic journey are: Paula Gonzalez, SC, Mary Lou Dolan, CSJ, Gail Worcelo, CP, Ann Sullivan, SP, and Sharon Zayac, OP.

If you need more information, contact: Maureen Freeman, CSJ 812-535-3131, ext. 555 or mfreeman@spsmw.org

WPC-VFL Conference
“Shall We Dance-Our Community
As Vowed Women named Providence”
By Linda Hylla, CDP

During the annual WPC Gathering, Dawn Tomaszewski, SP called forth an invitation to create a common vision of community, address implications for a healthy community life and to reflect on our congregation's vision of congregational living. As Women of Providence in Collaboration we had an opportunity to dialogue in mixed groups and then meet with our own congregation. We were encouraged to articulate a statement of our respective congregation's vision of community living.

To envision the possibilities of healthy community living the following questions were addressed:

- What seems to enhance community living? What is working?
- What are the areas of community life that need honest examination especially in relation to those new members we may be inviting to join us?
- What are the blocks to healthy community life?

The questions, like music, generated a dance of collaborative dialogue among the participants. Each was invited to articulate action within their group. Those representing Formation, Leadership and Vocation ministry shared their collaborative action (dance) in the large group setting. The energy was contagious and inspiring! To summarize the sharing here are just a few examples of the groups represented:

- **Vocation Directors**-“Dance with whoever shows up! Because we have grown in appreciation of our religious life and charism, we invite others to promote this life and charism to keep the Providence dance going.” We encourage others to consider extending to family members, associates, co-workers, and just folks we meet daily an invitation to religious life.
- **Formation Directors**- Show Up-planting the seeds. Tending the soil & weeding.
 - Hang Out with God and each other. Relationship building
 - Wait for Growth (in the garden)
 - Celebrate the experience of Communion & community.
- **Leadership**-Community is not something we make but rather is something we are a part of the earth community and part of one another. We can choose, as humans to be part of community. Leadership's call is to facilitate, encourage, and support the embrace of community and relationship.

To conclude with Dawn's input and presentation, a representative from each congregation read their vision of community life:

After the business meeting ended, each participant was invited to create a movement using silk ribbon on a blank note card. This exercise was completed before the closing ritual. Each member present was invited to share what movement they created as an inspiration from the weekend. All were then invited to create a circle and the song, "I Hope You Dance," by Lea Ann Rimes was played. Members joined in a collaborative dance and concluded with a sign of peace and celebration for one another.



VFL Conference participants pose for a group photo at Genesis Spirituality Center in Westfield, MA.

Photos in this issue submitted by communication offices: SPs – Seattle/Spokane; MCDPs – San Antonio; CDPs – San Antonio; SPs – Kingston, Ontario; SPs – St. Mary-of-the-Woods; and CDPs – Allison Park and St. Louis.

Providence Event Publication

The Cosmos Within the Providence Dance, Proceedings from the 2005 Providence Event are available in the WPC office. Additional copies may be purchased by WPC members for \$10.00. The cost for non-WPC members is \$15.00

Providence Event Videos

Providence Event 2005 Video Set includes 5 videos: Opening Ritual and 25th anniversary celebration; Saturday morning prayer, overview of the day and presentation by Barbara Doherty, SP; Saturday afternoon presentations by Lucy Zientek, CDP and Mary Christine Morkovsky, CDP; Saturday dinner, Women of Providence awards; and Sunday morning prayer, process and engagement, and Sunday closing Liturgy. If you wish to order a set, please contact the WPC office. See address and phone number below.



Dates to Remember...

June 16-18, 2006
WPC Board meeting
St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN

October 18-19, 2006
VFL Planning Committee meeting
Allison Park, PA

Fall, 2006 dates pending
WPC Executive Committee meeting
Location TBD

March 22-25, 2007
VFL Annual Conference
Allison Park, PA

COLLABORATION



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