

## From Dream...to Dedication: A Monument to Remember



Onlookers sensed history in the making when, on July 8, a larger than life-size bronze statue of Mother Mary of Providence Horan, SP Foundress, was hoisted into the air and then subsequently secured at its permanent site just outside Congregational Offices at Providence Place.

In 1932 Mother Mary of Providence was among the many Sisters of Providence rejoicing over the opening of their long awaited new home—Providence Mother House. Thoughts that one day that very same home would be Providence Place, with a statue on the front lawn honoring them and SPs to come most likely never crossed their minds.

This project began when, in 2002, Sister Marie Thaddeus, Treasurer, shared with a receptive SP Council her dream for a statue of SP Foundress Mother Mary of Providence Horan. The Council made the decision to pursue her idea and launched a search for the right sculptor. Raoul Hunter of Quebec City, Canada emerged as the perfect choice for what would be a three-year project.

On July 8 a small crowd of SPs, Associates, Employees and Providence Place residents gathered on a misty and muggy morning to witness the arrival and installation of a life-size statue of Mother Mary of Providence. Known in secular life

as Catherine Horan, Mother Mary of Providence became the first Mother General of the SPs when, in 1892, the former mission of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul of Kingston, Ontario, Canada, became an independent diocesan Congregation of the Springfield Diocese.

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### *From Your Director...*



Here in the Midwest winter is playing hide and seek with us. One day it's frigid and the next day it's so mild one cannot believe we are in the cold months of January and February! The leaves are gone from the trees and the days are gray and cloudy. The sun's warmth declines daily and we have seen the birds go for milder climates. In the Church calendar we are in Ordinary Time and Lent is right around the corner.

And yet, this is no "ordinary time" for people of Providence. Though the news is filled with images of people sobbing in grief, we hear the continued statistics of war, and innocent life is lost, God breaks open new life!! The pages of this newsletter are filled with "the good news" of Providence alive and well in our world. Internationality, diversity, groups of formation people gathering, peace and justice days, new mobile ministries, honoring our past and celebrating our future together—this is "ordinary time" for the Women of Providence. In our trust of a Provident God we turn ordinary time into *extra-ordinary* moments, always ready to embrace the new life that awaits us. Happy reading!

*Sr. Barbara*



The new monument is a tribute to all Sisters of Providence of Holyoke and their charitable works in this area and beyond since they first arrived in the Paper City in 1873. The central figure depicts a young Mother Mary of Providence holding two children by the hand. The boy in the trio carries schoolbooks to depict the SPs almost 20 years of teaching ministry. The statue of the girl with her arm in a sling represents the SPs now almost 133 years of health care ministry.



The movingly simple, yet formal, Unveiling and Dedication Ceremony took place on July 19, 2005 on the 155<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Foundress Mother Mary of Providence's birth. Approximately 200 people attended the event, including Bishop Emeritus Joseph F. Maguire and Holyoke Mayor Michael Sullivan and other dignitaries. SP President, Sr. Joan Mullen tied her dedication remarks to the hymn, "Holy Ground," saying: "Mother Mary lives on in each of her Sisters in the spirit and ministries of hope and healing which reveal to new generations the Mystery of Providence, present and active in all creation. These sacred works are where the Divine is revealed in the daily events of our lives. Every day we should hear the whisper revealed to Moses—"Take off your shoes my friend, this is Holy Ground."

## WPC News

### VFL Conference Scheduled

The Vocation/Formation/Leadership personnel are planning to meet for their annual conference at Genesis Spirituality Center in Westfield, MA from March 30-April 2, 2006.

The planning committee for this conference has been busy making the final preparations for the gathering. This year's theme is "Shall We Dance: Our Lives in Community as Vowed Women Religious Named Providence." Once again, Sr. Dawn Tomaszewski, SP from St. Mary of the Woods congregation, will offer her insights into this topic. The second mailing went out in mid-January to all those who registered for this event. It promises to be a great time of learning, sharing and challenges. These directors of vocation and formation, along with their leadership liaisons, will also discuss other business as pertinent to the Women of Providence.

### WPC Board Members Meeting

Women of Providence Board Members from the 12 congregations will meet at St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN for their annual Board meeting April 17-19, 2006. At this meeting the Board will review all projects, elect new Executive Committee Members, discuss the future 2008 Providence Event, approve next year's budget and propose future projects for the organization. At this meeting the annual performance review of the Executive Director is also conducted.

## WPC Congregational News

### Sisters of Providence, Montreal, Quebec

During the week of November 14-18, 2005, Sisters in initial formation and some formation personnel from throughout the congregation—Canada, Chile, United States, Haiti, Cameroon, Philippines and El Salvador—gathered to share, learn, and deepen their commitment to God and God's people. A two-day session was given by Rev. Eric Law on "Discovering Providence in our Multicultural Community." Two days were devoted to following the Footsteps of Blessed Emilie Gamelin, Mother Bernard Morin and Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart

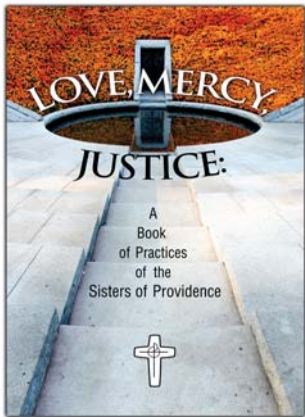


Parizeau. The final morning was focused on issues of justice, peace and integrity of creation. Providence was clearly present to the Sisters as can be seen from a few of their comments here:

- “When I saw the diversity in the room, I became aware of the future that is opening before us and of what Providence is realizing with us.”
- “Clear awareness that the face of the Congregation has already changed and that Providence does not cease to create newness.”
- “I was deeply touched by our origins as we walked in the footsteps of the foundresses. I was also moved by their spirit of total gift of self and abandonment to God, of sacrifice as missionaries, and of heroic charity.”

## **Sisters of Providence of Saint-Mary-of-the-Woods “Book of Practices”**

-- by Jeanne Knoerle



A new Congregational-focused book will appear early in 2006, “Love, Mercy and Justice: A Book of Practices of the Sisters of Providence.” The book’s subtitle, “Essays for Reflection and Discussion,” suggests the reason for its development. The idea for the book came out of a meeting with the mentors for sisters under temporary vows and members of the New Membership Team. It became clear that it would be invaluable for their work to find a way to “put flesh” on our “*Constitutions.*” Once that idea arose, the group remembered the essays written for the Practices Retreat of 1999 that, in essence, describe how our *Constitutions* are brought to life by the practices of our daily lives.

When the book is published, it will feature 15 essays describing the following practices: prayer, hospitality, honoring the Eucharist, Sabbath keeping, honoring the body, feasting and fasting, discernment, responding to life with humor, forgiveness and reconciliation, home making and community shaping, singing our lives, honoring our dead, honoring Mary, valuing education and valuing the arts. The book opens with an

introductory chapter that illustrates how our fundamental charism of *belief in and dependence upon Providence* has been expressed differently in different times in our history.

## **Earth Sabbatical — by Cheryl Casselman**

Sister May Rogers, a daughter of Charity from Evansville, is a past participant in the Earth Sabbatical Program at White Violet Center for Eco-Justice at the Woods, a ministry of the Sisters of Providence that strives to promote awareness and a way of living which supports all of creation. The individualization of this program allows participants to think of their experience as spiritual renewal rather than a sabbatical. “The staff encouraged me to take time to see, look, listen and also to work—to nourish the soil and to be nourished by it,” Sr. Mary Rogers said. Much of the first three months for Sr. Mary was filled with hours of weeding the organic herb garden, but she also got her feet wet in other areas of the center, like caring for the alpaca herd. “They are precious and beautiful and a lot of work,” she said. ...Another way the Sisters of Providence show their commitment to Earth is by educating others on their straw bale retreat house near St. Joseph Lake at St. Mary-of-the-Woods. As part of the sabbatical experience at White Violet Center, participants spend a week at the straw bale house. “It was like being in a powerful presence of peace,” Sr. Mary explained. “It seemed to exude the peaceful presence of God.” For information about the Earth Sabbatical Program at White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, contact Sister Maureen Freeman, CSJ, at 812-535-3131, ext. 555, or [mfreeman@spsmw.org](mailto:mfreeman@spsmw.org). You may also check it out on the Internet at [www.whiteviolet.org](http://www.whiteviolet.org).

## **Sisters of Divine Providence, Allison Park, PA. Historic Firsts!**



Acceptance of Dominican Women: The Marie de la Roche Province has recently accepted two women from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic as pre-novitiate candidates. Wendolyn Lopez Santos and Marie Cabrera Rosario entered on October 3, 2005. They are residing at Las Canitas, our international house in Santo Domingo with sisters from Puerto Rico, Korea, Germany and the U.S. There they will be engaging in a formation program and also continuing to help the sisters with the parish, youth, and school ministries there. This is just one more event which fits the pattern so evident across our Providence congregations as well as in other communities that many of our vocations are coming from other cultures and geographic areas, as well as from smaller re-foundational and/or base communities.

## Camp Mishannock Accreditation

Recently the Directors of our Camp in Kingston, MA, Sisters Ella Jane Bruen and Jacqueline Meyer, received word of their re-accreditation by the American Camping Association. The Camp celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Also, for the first time they have admitted boys in the primary grades. The camp is also proud of its international “flavor,” in that both campers and counselors come from various parts of the world. In recent years, the number of Spanish-speaking campers has increased, particularly from Mexico.

## Launching of New Logo



The Marie de la Roche Province of the Sisters of Divine Providence launched its new logo by incorporating it into the design of their Christmas card. The card included a description of the design “...three intertwined circles represent our Provident God who invites us to co-create in love, who redeems us with compassion, who calls us to bless by inclusive hospitality.”

## Providence Connections

Sister Maria Fest, executive director of Providence Connections, Inc recently participated in the first-ever White House Conference on Helping America’s Youth. Convened by First Lady Laura Bush, the conference took place on the campus of Howard University in Washington, D.C. The goal of the conference was to promote public awareness of the problems facing our nation’s young people. It brought together policy makers, research experts, foundations, faith-based and volunteer organizations, educators, coaches and parents. Participants were asked to share examples of what is already working to make a difference in the lives of young Americans, and to generate ideas for new initiatives. Providence Connections, Inc. operates the Providence Family Support Center, Providence Day Care South and Amelia House in the Pittsburgh area.



## Gathering of Initial Incorporation and Vowed Membership Team

This summer marked the first meeting of those in initial incorporation, their mentors, and any sisters professed for five years or less. The gathering was held at Providence Villa in the Pittsburgh area. The group used Margaret Wheatley’s book, *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future* as the basis for discussion. While all of the participants knew each other at least superficially, the depth of sharing strengthened their bond with one another. Toward the end of their time together they created a group mandala, a wonderful colorful symbol of their experience together.

## Sisters of Divine Providence, Melbourne, KY -- by Rose Ann Menke, CDP



In the spirit of the Christmas season, approximately 105 Sisters gathered at St. Anne Convent to celebrate together and enjoy the providential gift of friendship and community. The province assembly days were held on December 26-27, 2006. They opened with a moving prayer service which highlighted the theme from Isaiah: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shown.” In the darkened chapel the Christ Candle was brought into the midst of the assembly, and we were called





to open our hearts to receive the hope, the life, the strength and the wisdom of the Divine Light. Individual candles were lit and gradually the darkness was filled with light. In her reflections, Provincial Sr. Fran Moore, contrasted light and darkness in our life, in community and in the world. She spoke of the call to the vowed life that we felt and how “we were drawn to the light we saw in the sisters, in their work and in their life together.” We wanted to be like them—“living witnesses to the Providence of God.” Though our individual light may be the size of a torch, a candle, a tea light, or an ember in the fire, Sr. Fran highlighted that each member was needed,

each light lends individual beauty and strength to the community and to the world. December 27<sup>th</sup> centered on the topic of Peace-Makers. Presenter Sr. Alice Gerdeman, gave input and directed activities on peace making. Initially participants were invited to give a definition of peace and to share it with her group. The group then illustrated the agreed upon one-word definition on a specific size of poster paper. Eventually they read in large colorful letters the word **PEACE**. Sister also spoke of social sin and the Grace of Providence. Throughout the day we were challenged to see how Providence illumines our vision and sharpens our insight. Through it all we discovered new ways of becoming peace-makers in our local and world community.



### Providence Ministries

The Sisters of Divine Providence from San Antonio, TX are sponsoring a new project called Mobile Ministry in the Texas and Oklahoma areas. It is the result of a grassroots idea that originated in 2000. The idea is to do “missionary work” among rural parishes where the Sisters once served.

The project was launched in 2005 with the appointment of Sr. Bernadette Bezner as Director. She formed an Advisory Committee, developed a brochure and webpage, made several marketing trips, and together with a team of Sisters and Associates, provided ministry through ten Mobile Ministry (MM) events in 2005.

It is the goal of MM to provide faith formation and spiritual development through classes to adults. Evaluations have been positive thus far. Parenting skills and preparation for parents of children receiving First Eucharist and Reconciliation have been especially appreciated. Other offerings include retreats, RCIA consultation, Parish Council consultation, vocation promotion, and moral decision-making classes. Interesting to note is that many parishes in Texas and Oklahoma do not have Sisters on staff. One of the advantages of taking the Sisters on-the-road is to allow children to meet Sisters and see who they are today.

Another winning aspect of the project is the involvement of Sisters and Associates at many levels. All are “prayers”, keeping the project in prayer and continued support. Some are “Companions,” which means Sisters who are retired can accompany the team when they go to a parish that Sister knows through having been missioned there, or through relatives and friends.

Some Sisters and Associates are presenters, which means they are responsible for teaching and facilitating sessions. Surveys were done in the fall to ascertain the interests and expertise of the Sisters and Associates, and this “personnel pool” will be coordinated with upcoming Mobile Ministry events in 2006.

You are encouraged to visit the Mobile Ministry webpage at [www.cdptexas.org](http://www.cdptexas.org).



## Providence Event Publication Ready

The Cosmos Within the Providence Dance, Proceedings from the 2005 Providence Event are here at the WPC office!!! They have been distributed to the congregations according to the number ordered by each Board Member. Additional copies may be purchased by WPC members for \$10.00. The cost for non-WPC members is \$15.00. Be sure and check with your Leadership to receive your copy!!!

## Providence Event 2005 Video Order Form

I wish to order \_\_\_\_\_ sets of the Providence Event 2005 Videos at \$100.00 per set.

The set contains 5 videos: Opening Ritual and 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration; Saturday morning prayer, overview of the day and presentation by Barbara Doherty, SP; Tape 3 is Saturday afternoon presentations by Lucy Zientek, CDP and Mary Christine Morkovsky, CDP; Tape 4 includes Saturday dinner, Woman of Providence awards; and Sunday morning Prayer, Process and Engagement; and Tape 5 in the Sunday closing Liturgy.

If you wish to order, please return this form to me at the WPC office with your check and I will ship your order to you.



## Dates to Remember...

February 2006  
Providence Event Publication  
distributed

March 30-April 2, 2006  
VFL Annual Conference  
Genesis Spiritual Life Center  
Westfield, MA

April 17-19, 2006  
WPC Board Meeting  
St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN

## COLLABORATION

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