

## Saint Mary-of-the-Woods SP attends justice conference in Columbia

More than 4.9 million Colombians have been forcibly displaced from their homes by war, making Columbia the second worst internal displacement area in the world. The paramilitary forces have taken the people's land away for a variety of reasons. Their land may be along a route used by drug traffickers or oil compa-

nies may want the land for economic gain. The people don't have papers for the land although it's been in their family for generations, so they are just forced out of their homes and off their land.

Sister of Providence Kathleen Desautels attended a conference April 7-10 in Bogota, Colombia, entitled Faith & Politics,

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*At left, Liz Deligio and S. Kathleen Desautels, center, pose with two young Colombian men. At right, the altar of remembrance with an SOAWatch scarf as a symbol of solidarity with Justicia Y Paz and all those from Displaced Communities.*



## St. Vincent de Paul SPs work to save Prison Farms

Time is running out to save Canada's prison farms. In a few months, the Frontenac Institution dairy herd will be auctioned off. This herd genetically dates back to the 1800's and when it's sold, the decision to close Canada's prison farms is virtually irreversible.

To highlight the urgency, Kingston's Save Our Prison Farms committee organized a series of demonstrations at Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) sites in Kingston.

In late February and early March, supporters staged pick-



ets in front of strategic locations, and prison farm supporters are calling on the federal government and Public Safety Minister Vic Toews to hold open discussions with the public.

"This is a program that inmates, staff, and Canadians

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*General Superior Sister Pauline Lally visits the prison farm at Frontenac Institution along Bath Road during a visit in July 2009.*

Women of Providence in

COLLABORATION

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

## LENTEN REFLECTION AND EARTH DAY PRAYER

WPC members shared Lenten reflections on Providence spirituality. This came from the Resources team of Kathleen Popko, SP, Janet Folkl, CDP, and Barb McMullen, CDP. The response was positive and we hope to continue the practice during Advent. The team also arranged for the Earth Day prayer to be used in solidarity with all Women of Providence on April 22.

## PROVIDENCE SPIRITUALITY RETREATS

WPC members who are experienced retreat presenters gathered April 22 at Genesis Spirituality Center in Westfield, MA, to develop themes on Providence spirituality that could be offered in Providence retreats. These retreats could be offered in guided or directed formats and in different places and time frames -

week, weekend, day. Retreat planners were: Ruth McGoldrick, SP, Elizabeth Oleksak, SP, Lucy Bethel, SP, Janet Folkl, CDP, and Ann Margaret O'Hara, SP



*WPC Governing Board, above: l to r back row: Mary Lou Barba, MCDP, Judith Desmarias, SP (for Karin Dufault, SP), Marsha Speth, SP (for Denise Wilkinson, SP) Kathleen Popko, SP, Mary Francis Fletcher, CDP, front row: Ann Margaret O'Hara, SP, Pauline Lally, SP, Fran Moore, CDP, Jane Ann Slater, CDP*

## VFL CONFERENCE IN MONTREAL

VFL members gathered for their annual conference March 17-21 at the Providence International Center in Montreal. The theme was Providence as Good News for the Poor. They will meet in San Antonio next March and simultaneously translations will be provided. (see article at right for more details.)

## GOVERNING BOARD MEETING

The WPC Governing Board met at St. Anne Convent in Melbourne, KY, March 24-25.

## NACAR SOCIAL

Associates and Directors of Associates for WPC congregations have been invited to a social during the NACAR conference in St. Louis June 5. Barb McMullen, CDP, will give an orientation to WPC for those attending. The social provides an opportunity to get to know associates from other Providence Congregations.

## INITIAL FORMATION GATHERING

Sisters in initial formation from the WPC congregations will gather in Spokane, Wash. July 7-11, 2010 to share Providence heritage and get to know one another better.

*Ann Margaret*

# VFL Gathering Update

Twenty-five formation directors and liaisons from congregation leadership teams from across Canada and the US gathered March 17-21 at Providence International Centre of the Sisters of Providence of Montreal. A conference goal was to reflect more deeply on Providence spirituality and to share mutually about attracting new members and ministry with sisters in formation.

Father John Emmett Walsh was a guest presenter on the topic: "Providence Is a Work in Progress." Father Walsh is a pastor in Montreal and promotes ecumenical and humanitarian causes. He challenged the group to ask what is NEW as we look at God, think about God and understand God. He said we need courage to move from discipleship to friendship and that there is a deep hunger in many people for a friend. He reflected on Vatican II as a turning point with the Holy Spirit infiltrating the Church, and said Vatican II called the church to a change of mind and heart, to introspection, to repentance, to self-criticism, to change. Today, we are about the humanization of the world.

Conference participants spent time in focus groups according to ministry. Vocation directors shared a power point presentation on religious life in three languages that showed the work of Providence alive in the world through us. The presentation included video clips of newer members talking about why they were attracted to Providence as well as video clips of young people to help our sisters understand the hunger and interest present in today's young people. A challenge emerged that those in the group learn to use new media technologies in the next year: texting, Facebook, Blogs, Twitter.

The Formation directors discussed the need to gather sisters in initial formation (prior to final vows) from all Providence congregations. A gathering is planned for July 7-11, 2010 in Spokane, Wash., and others will be planned around Providence Events. The group recommended that Spanish speaking members in Central and South America and the Caribbean be gathered in a similar WPC format and that Spanish speaking members attend the Moye Conference in 2011, in Ecuador. Next year the Women of Providence conference will be held in San Antonio with simultaneous translation.

The Leadership focus group discussed issues and concerns, including providing Providence spirituality resources in Spanish, the effects of the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile on members and property, program for preparing formation personnel, and the use of mentors.

All participants had opportunity to visit the Oratory of St. Joseph and to celebrate the Eucharist at the Basilica of St. Patrick.



*Participants at the VFL conference gather in group prayer.*

## Upcoming retreats at White Violet Center for Eco-Justice

*Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind.*

July 13-18, 2010: **Earth Plunge** Immerse yourself in Earth to contemplate its impact on your spirituality. In-depth presentations on the Universe Story, food issues, energy needs, water crisis and what this has to do with us. Get your hands dirty and spend quiet time in prayer.

Aug. 8-14: **God Jesus Prayer and Liturgy in a New Universe Story** Michael Morwood helps Christians examine what they believe and why they believe it. He strives to allow Christians to articulate faith in Jesus in ways that resonate with contemporary understanding of our place in the universe.

Available by appointment: **Earth Retreat** Individualized retreats may include working in the garden, reading and reflecting, silent time, spiritual direction and more.

*To register or for more information, contact Sister Maureen Freeman at 812-535-2930 or [mfreeman@spsmw.org](mailto:mfreeman@spsmw.org) or visit [www.WhiteViolet.org](http://www.WhiteViolet.org)*

*The bullet torn Bible Sr. Kathleen photographed in Columbia.*



SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE OF SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS, IND.

## **Columbia,** *continued from page 1*

Theology of Hope. Sister Kathleen is a staff member of 8th Day Center for Justice in Chicago and the conference was sponsored by one of their Colombian partners, Justicia y Paz. The conference had about 100 attendees. Kathleen represented the School of the Americas Watch Movement. The question for attendees was “How does one’s faith life inform one’s day-to-day work for justice?”

Sister Kathleen called the conference “extraordinary.” Representatives of various communities of indigenous people, many of whom are farmers from various rural regions of Colombia who have been displaced, talked about their experiences and shared their stories of hope. They’ve been struggling in non-violent ways to get their land back from the government. Justicia y Paz accompanies the people when they return to regain their land, traveling in armed vehicles for added safety.

“One woman talked about how her faith had helped restore her dignity by encouraging her to try and get her land back. Not only for her own family but to other families who have the same desires.” There is a great sense of community among the displaced families.” added Sister Kathleen.

People from Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, and

Belgium were also present at the conference to share their stories of victory and encouragement. Participants attended morning and afternoon panel discussions and took part in exercises that addressed various people’s experience with faith and justice. Pictures of martyrs were displayed as mementos of the struggle. “I took a picture of a Bible that had been shot through with a rifle by the paramilitaries who eventually displaced them from their land,” said Sister Kathleen.

“We attend this conference to let these people know that there are people in the United States who struggle with them to show them that we are in solidarity with them. It is always moving for us to hear their stories of struggle and witnessing how they are able to continue to have hope and celebrate life in the midst of it all,” said Sister Kathleen.

Sister Kathleen said that she will use the information and experience she gained from this conference in her education work at 8th Day Center for Justice. She also wants to participate in educating members of the United States Congress so they realize how U.S. policy in Colombia contributes to the suffering of the most vulnerable in that country. “We’ve been doing this for years, but hope comes in the struggle,” she adds.

## SP produced "Sanctity of Seed" film debuts

Sanctity of Seed, a film produced by the Sisters of Providence and directed by Kingstonian Val Westgate, premiered on March 10.

The 5 disc DVD series introduces Carol and Robert Mouck, local seed savers hired by the Sisters of Providence over a decade ago. In partnership with the Sisters, their collective work resulted in the 2008 prestigious Canadian Geographic Environment, Sustainable Living Silver Award. It honours Canadians who protect, preserve and restore the country's environment.

Kingston documentary filmmaker Valerie Westgate spent countless hours on the project which has developed into a great gardening resource.

This project has been a fantastic education for me and for many more," says Valerie.

Originally, a brief 20 minute video was commissioned at the request of General Superior Sister Pauline Lally three years ago. The project grew in scope once Val developed a relationship with Carol and Robert. The extra four discs teach seed saving techniques.

"This is a wonderful project that Robert and Carol Mouck have started for us on our grounds – a great legacy for us to pass on to the world," says Sister Pauline.

In 1999, Robert and Carol Mouck, organic farmers, who had supplied the Sisters with seeds, offered to manage the greenhouse and expand the gardens on the pristine plot of land in the heart of the city. The location became a safe place for seeds the Moucks had grown and saved over the twenty years they farmed, organically. The seeds in the collection are open pollinat-

ed; they can be planted and saved each year as part of sustainability. Such an experience opens one to a reverence for the creative spirit in the seasonal cycles that are intrinsic to gardening.

The DVD Sanctity of Seed is available by donation of \$40 to cover the cost of the production. However, in keeping with the spirit of the Sisters of Providence, the suggested donation may be adjusted as required. E-mail [seed.sanctuary@providence.ca](mailto:seed.sanctuary@providence.ca) for how you can attain a copy.

*The Sisters of Providence newly debuted "Sanctity of Seed" dvd film series, which chronicals sustainable methods of seed saving, is available for purchase from the Congregation.*



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## Prison Farms, continued from page 1

are proud of. It is very difficult to find someone who thinks shutting down the prison farms makes sense," says Andrew McCann, of Urban Agriculture Kingston, and a member of the Save Our Prison Farms campaign. "When you read the government's 2007 Road Map to Public Safety, you see that these farms are getting in the way of plans to build regional super jails with privatization of food, maintenance, and other

services. The prison farms are in the way of the Americanization of our prisons that the current government is seeking."

Sister Pauline Lally, General Superior of the Sisters of Providence asks, "Why does our current government want to stop something that is working economically, emotionally, socially and sustainably? Performing meaningful and productive work gives inmates

a sense of contributing to the community that, in some fashion, they have damaged by their actions." The Sisters of Providence have been involved in the campaign to save the prison farms.

For more information on the campaign, visit: [www.saveourfarms.ca](http://www.saveourfarms.ca) and [www.nfuontario.ca](http://www.nfuontario.ca)

# College spire destroyed in fire restored



May 6, 2008 will forever be remembered by San Antonio Sisters of Divine Providence, Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU) community members and the San Antonio community. Many watched as fire engulfed the fourth floor of the OLLU Main building. One of the spires that sat atop Main was destroyed.

On April 21, 2010, some of those same Sisters, community members, friends, and students witnessed the newly constructed spire being blessed by the Sisters and then being raised and placed on its mount atop Main building. Just as Providence was present in the hearts and minds of those witnessing the fire almost two years ago, so also were the witnesses at the spire-raising event praising and blessing Divine Providence. The reconstruction of the Main Building continues with an anticipated completion date in the fall of this year.



## New leadership

The Missionary Catechists of Divine Providence Sisters at their Chapter of Elections were led in prayer and song March 7, 2010. Throughout the preparation and the Chapter the MCDP members used the image of the Open Door as the theme for the chapter preparation.

The newly elected leadership group for 2010-2014 are: Sister Carmen Sanchez, center, Superior; standing: Sisters Delia M. Herrera, Assistant to the Superior, and Norma Gutierrez, Councillor; and seated: Sisters Mary John Trevino and Esther M. Guerrero, Councillors.



SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE, HOLYOKE, MA

## Sister celebrates 80 years

Sister Ellen Leddy, SP, observes two momentous occasions this year—her 99th Birthday this past April 9th and her 80th Jubilee as a Sister of Providence of Holyoke on May 23!! She is photographed here, center, right on her 99th Birthday at a Community Birthday Party marking the event. Seated with her are Sister Kathleen Popko, right, President of the Sisters of Providence of Holyoke, and Sister Mary Caritas Geary, SP, Vice President.

Sister Ellen entered the SPs from Harvard, Mass. She served as the SPs' historical librarian in Holyoke from 1982 until its closure in 1999. Sister Ellen was also an invaluable consultant for the SPs' 1999 publication, *Seeds of Hope: The History of the Sisters of Providence*.

Gathered in Pomeroy are (from left) Mary Flerchinger, Holy Rosary director of religious education; Provincial Councilor Jo Ann Showalter, SP; candidate Marita Capili, parishioner Connie Harris (top left), and students from Holy Rosary who mounted a fundraising drive to help children in Haiti.



SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE: SEATTLE/SPOKANE WASH.

## Lenten project raises \$2000 for Haiti

On Palm Sunday Provincial Councilor Jo Ann Showalter, SP, and candidate Marita Capili traveled to Holy Rosary Parish in Pomeroy, Wash. to accept a donation of \$2,000 from a dozen schoolchildren who had made helping the children in earthquake ravaged Haiti their Lenten project.

With the help of the sisters, the children have achieved their goal of raising funds that were put directly into the hands of Sisters of Providence working with Haitian children, not through a giant relief agency. The donation will reach the intended recipients by way of Spokane and Renton, Wash., Montreal, Quebec, and Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

In addition to their donation, the children provided cards and photos to communicate with the Haitian children who will benefit from their generosity. "It must be hard to stay strong through everything that has happened," one card noted. Others asked questions, like whether the Haitian children still go to school and to church, how they pass the time, and what sports they enjoy playing. Prayer was mentioned often. "You are in our prayers. We love you!"

The idea for the children's fund drive was born two days after the 7.0 earthquake on Jan. 12 that killed 230,000 people. Holy Rosary parishioner Connie Harris was watch-

ing television and "saw the sad little faces of the children in Haiti. I was overcome with worry and grief for the children," Connie said. Not an hour later, she saw an interview with Sister Rosalie Locati on the Spokane television news that mentioned that the Sisters of Providence work with children in Haiti. "I felt that it was a sign of how we could respond to the tragedy."

The eleven Sisters of Providence serving in ministry in Haiti survived the earthquake, but their residences and places where they ministered were damaged. Those sisters are from Emilie Gamelin Province, based in Montreal. Another Sister of Providence, Sister Marie-Claire Soucy from Mother Joseph Province, based in Renton, volunteers at a rural hospital to the north in an area that was not as severely impacted.

Sister Jo Ann and Marita, who has spent time as a volunteer in a Haitian orphanage, spoke during the Mass and met with and thanked the children afterward.

"Becoming aware and sensitive to the harsh realities being lived by persons in other places and building relationships with them is 'living the Gospel' in real time," General Superior Kathryn Rutan said of the Pomeroy children's efforts. "Congratulations to the teachers and students of Holy Rosary Parish!"



## New leadership for Mother Joseph Province

Four Sisters of Providence were named to leadership for Mother Joseph Province for a five-year term that began Jan. 1. They are Sister Karin Dufault, Portland, Ore., Provincial Superior/Leadership Team Coordinator; and Provincial Councilors Sister Jo Ann Showalter, Spokane; Sister Judith Desmarais, Seattle; and Sister Maureen Newman, Seattle.

The new Provincial Superior and Council members have appointed Karen Lauby as provincial secretary. She has served in that role since January 2007. Jennifer S. Hall, director of finance, will become provincial treasurer after a transition period. Together, they will make up the six-member Leadership Team for Mother Joseph Province, headquartered in Renton, Wash..



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## UGF students serve in Seattle on Spring Break

Sister Karen Hawkins, SP, led a group of 13 University of Great Falls (Mont.) students to make a difference in the world over spring break. The students provided service, built community, prayed and played together. Sister Karen, director of campus ministry, planned and instituted the trip to Seattle. A sampling from the week included:

Sunday, March 7 – Participated in a prayer vigil in downtown Seattle to “Stop the Demand” in the trafficking of women, children and men, the second-highest industry of organ-

ized crime. That evening the UGF group joined in a student-led Mass at Seattle University.

Monday, March 8 – Received orientation to Providence Health & Services.

Tuesday and Wednesday, March 9-10 – Devoted time to relief to earthquake-ravaged Haiti. At CHUMA, an international missions warehouse in Lacey, Wash., they cleaned and packed three 40 cubic foot boxes of wheelchairs, crutches, walkers and canes; cleaned eight hospital beds; inventoried and packed four 40 cubic foot boxes of medical sup-

plies with a total weight of 1,346 pounds; and sorted and packed 105 boxes of clothing. The hard work was followed on Tuesday by an evening of stretching and doing yoga meditation to unwind.

Thursday, March 11 — Joined developmentally challenged individuals for fun and games. “The core members gave us a challenge in bowling, dancing, and realizing it is more important to enjoy the game than to win,” Sister Karen explains.

Students also made sandwiches to offer the homeless. “One student reported a man told her this was the best gift he received. The gratitude amazed the student.”

Between good works, the students visited Seattle’s aquarium and zoo, which offered alternative times of learning and fun, Sister Karen adds.



*Students from University of Great Falls, Mont., participated in a Spring Break service trip to Seattle, Wash. in March.*

# 50 years of canonization work honored

At their Mother House in Montreal, the Sisters of Providence celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Cause of Canonization of their foundress, Emilie Tavernier-Gamelin



*Sister Yvette Demers (left of Msgr. Parent) and Sister Thérèse Frigon, during the reception in which special tribute was given to the sisters.*

on April 16, 2010. The Eucharistic celebration was followed by a reception during which special tribute was given to Sister Thérèse Frigon, Director of the Office of the Cause for 50 years and Sister Yvette Demers, Assistant and Secretary for 38 years.

Sister Claire Houde, Provincial Superior of Emilie-

Gamelin Province, offered the following tribute to Sister Therese Frigon and Sister Yvette Demers:

“Sister Thérèse, fifty years ago, when you were a tenth grade high school teacher. Sister Simonne Leroux, Director of Saint-Enfant-Jésus Providence School, announced at the end of the school year that Sister Paul-du-Sauveur (Sister Therese Frigon) would be giving up teaching because she had been asked to assume responsibility for the promotion of our foundress, Emilie Gamelin. This new ministry included the development of the files and documents that would be required for the introduction of the Cause of Émilie-Gamelin and the recognition of her holiness.

Since the day on which you accepted this responsibility, you have dedicated yourself to making Mother Gamelin known far and wide. How many hours and days you have spent in the diocesan archives searching through files and documents and in the archives of cities, organizations and any number of other places.

In collaboration with Father Yvon Beaudoin, OMI, you authored the Positio which was sent to Rome on September 19, 1989. The degree of Venerability followed and you were appointed Vice-Postulator for the Cause. Together with Sister Yvette, you gave renewed effort to the study and documentation of a cure unexplained by science and this was presented to Rome. The decision of the doctors, theologians and Cardinals was positive and the degree of a miracle was signed by Pope John Paul II on December 18, 2000. Less than one year later, on October 7, 2001, Emilie Tavernier Gamelin was beatified and recognized by the Church as a model for Sisters of Providence and for all persons who are dedicated to the works of Charity.”

The many tributes given to both Sister Thérèse and Sister Yvette spoke to those present of their steadfast dedication and their exceptional work in furthering the Cause of Émilie Gamelin.

Sister Claire Houde, S.P., said of Sister Yvette, “There is so much to be said about her frank collaboration and about the special attention of Sister Yvette Demers, who is the assistant to Sister Therese. For 38 years, she has been especially acting as a secretary, a research assistant and an archivist! What a blessing for the community your presence has been in the Cause of Mother Gamelin. How grateful the community is for the unconditional gift of yourself, for your contribution, which exceeds scheduled working hours. Sister Yvette, please receive the expression of our gratitude as we wish you to return to Rome on behalf of the community before the end of 2012.



*The Eucharistic celebration at the Providence Chapel.*

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## Contemplation and Dialogue brings ideas, direction

The Sisters of Providence of Montreal have initiated a process of communal Contemplation and Dialogue (Congregational Retreat) across the whole Congregation, inviting their international, multicultural and intergenerational community "to dare to live our Charism in an evolving world" (2007 General Chapter theme).

To facilitate the process, they engaged Sister Nancy Sylvester, IHM, foundress of the Institution for Communal Contemplation and Dialogue.

The process started in Nov. 2008 with the General Leadership Team, and was then introduced to the members in April 2008. Beginning in the spring of 2009 and continuing through June 2010, Sr. Nancy is facilitating the Congregational Retreat of communal contemplation and dialogue for each of the five provinces of the Congregation.

Nancy says about her ministry: "Today's reality in our church and society often

questions our very identity and meaning. ....Attentive to the divine within, participants engage their experience of these major shifts within themselves, the church and society in ways that take a long loving look at the real through a process of communal contemplation. Conversations that are marked by a depth of sharing which explores diversity, befriends ambiguity, lives with paradox and commits to generating a new response.... Freed to imagine new ways of being and doing, the participants envision a future rooted in non-violence, right relationships, social justice, care of the Earth and the planetary community."

Communal contemplation for the Sisters of Providence is about entering into this mystery and being transformed and set free for a creative and prophetic living of their Charism and Mission in the world of today and tomorrow.

"This process will invite all of us into a contemplation

of our experience and our reality as Sisters of Providence, living and ministering in a changing and evolving world. As we are attentive to the spirit, our contemplation and dialogue has the potential to free us to imagine new ways of being and doing. Together, we will be listening for the movement of the Holy Spirit in us and among us and praying for the grace to go where we are being led," explains Sister Kathryn Rutan, General Superior. "We trust that the next steps for us as the community of the Sisters of Providence will flow out of and become evident from this communal process."

The Holy spirit has plans for the Providence Mission in our evolving world... Providence of God, we thank you for all!

For more information about Communal Contemplation and Dialogue: Engaging Impasse visit <http://www.engagingimpasse.org/welcome.html>

# Earth Day in Solidarity



Above, planners for a Providence spirituality retreat meeting at Genesis Spirituality Center, Westfield, MA, celebrate Earth Day as a symbol of our solidarity as Women of Providence in Collaboration. Left to right: Ann Margaret O'Hara, SP, of St. Mary of the Woods, Lucy Bethel, SP, of Kingston, Ruth McGoldrick, SP, Elizabeth Oleksak, SP, both of Holyoke, and Janet Folkl, CDP, of Wakefield. (See director's letter, page 2 for more info.)

## WPC Calendar of Events

**June 5, 2010** Associate and Directors gathering at the NACAR Conference in St. Louis

**July 7-11, 2010** Initial Formation Gathering in Spokane, Wash.

**July 13-18** Earth Plunge at White Violet Center, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind.

**March 2011** Vocation/Formation/Leadership gathering in San Antonio, Texas

## COLLABORATION

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