

Providence Pages

VOL. 3 NO. 2 FALL 2005

A time for change

YOU DIDN'T MAKE A MISTAKE. You've opened the right newsletter. It was time to update so we've added a splash of colour on the front cover of Providence Pages. While the newsletter does have a refreshing new look, the core content has not changed.

The masthead across the top of the front page features artwork by Terri Horricks, a Belleville native and friend of the Sisters of Providence. She was commissioned by archivist Sister Gayle Desarmia to create a pen and ink drawing of Providence

Motherhouse in 2000. Five years and 30 sketches later, Terri continues a relationship with the Sisters of Providence.

"Art has been a part of my life since I could hold a crayon," says Terri. "At age 11, I began painting in oils and as a teen, I experimented in several new mediums."

Terri decided to depict the main entrance to the Motherhouse as the focus for our cover design — the most identifiable landmark with visitors.



Sisters of Providence display the Make Poverty History banner on the grounds of the Motherhouse during a visit from a CKWS Television crew. Make Poverty History Day was celebrated October 17th across Canada. Here in Kingston, the day had special resonance because the Sisters of Providence also marked the tenth anniversary of their silent vigil by wrapping City Hall with a 400 metre white band.



Dedicated
volunteers



Kingstonians Darko and Marijana Matovic provided financial support and spent countless volunteer hours preparing for the 10th Anniversary Vigil. The committed vigil keepers have been involved with the Friday Silent Vigils for a number of years.

Make Poverty History

BY IAN STUTT

TEN YEARS HAVE PASSED since the Sisters of Providence, led by Sister Shirley Morris, began the silent vigil to protest the Mike Harris government's 22% cuts to social spending in 1995. Since then, sisters and community members have stood in front of City Hall every Friday at noon, calling attention to widespread poverty and urging all three levels of government to implement policies that promote social justice.

The Justice & Peace Office of the Sisters of Providence organized two separate events to mark the tenth anniversary of the silent vigil. The first, an interfaith service Sunday, October 16th in the Providence Motherhouse auditorium, brought together leaders from many different faith traditions.

The hour long gathering proved to be a rich cultural exchange and a reminder of the common call for justice found in many religious scriptures.

As many as 300 Kingstonians showed up for the second event—a public vigil which took place the following evening at Kingston City Hall. Anti-poverty supporters held a 400 metre long white band, a symbol of the global Make Poverty History campaign, which surrounded City Hall.

A reception inside followed the vigil and featured two speakers linked with the local and global struggle to end poverty.



Sisters of Providence Mary Laboure(seated) and Anne Hudec sew together 50 bed sheets to create a 400 metre band. It surrounded Kingston City Hall during the 10th anniversary of the silent vigil.



Set against the backdrop of Kingston's historic City Hall, 300 volunteers stood shoulder to shoulder.

Vigil Reflection

BY SISTER PEGGY FLANAGAN

LIKE MANY OTHERS WHO joined in the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the justice and peace vigil, I was impressed and inspired by the mutual support and community spirit expressed by the approximately 300 people of various creeds, ages and economic backgrounds who helped to wrap City Hall in a white banner. It gives me hope to know so many people at the grass roots level, here in Kingston, care enough to join in The Make Poverty History campaign.



Sr. Peggy Flanagan

What gives me more hope though, are the faithful few who turn up every Friday, often in inclement weather, to stand in silent solidarity with those who suffer from cuts to social programs, as well as with victims of the preventable pandemic of poverty around our world.

Since this contribution is for Providence Pages rather than a secular paper I would like to tell you how I, personally, spend the 15 minutes of the vigil. I pray the Stations of the Cross, one station for every minute. I include the Resurrection as the 15th station.

For instance, if we decide to focus on access to safe water for the poor, I choose as a silent mantra the words of Jesus, "I thirst." If we are standing in solidarity with mothers of children murdered in war, I dwell on the eighth station with the women Jesus consoled in Jerusalem. Sometimes I get through all the stations and sometimes I just meditate on one or two, depending on what our focus is that week.

Recently, we were reminded of the courageous act of Rosa Parks who, by a small act of holy disobedience to an unjust law, became the inspiration behind the American civil rights movement. I am continually amazed at how God can, and often does, use very small actions by ordinary folks, to lift up the powerless and cast down the rich and mighty from their high places.

The impact of weekly vigil may not be immediately noticeable, but for the faithful who have gospel eyes to see it, it makes a difference, and we trust it will bear fruit in God's own time.

Foundation
Day

Dec. 13, 2005:

144 years ago, four Sisters from Montreal arrived in Kingston to found what is now known as the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul. Under the guidance of Sister Mary of the Blessed Sacrament, the French Sisters began the task of building a new congregation.

Vigil Prayer

Vigil keepers pray the following statement each Friday noon.

We long for a world

That respects all of humanity and all the earth.

And so we stand in silent, non-violent solidarity

With those affected by government and corporations

That put profits before human kind

And indeed before all creation.

Together in this vigil we bring before us injustices

Affecting our world.

In gentle awareness

We present these concerns to the Divine Light

Which permeates the universe.

Thus, we stand in hope

Let us leave this place of prayer sharing with one another

A gesture of hope and solidarity.

Let us go in peace.

Vigil Roots

BY SISTER PAULINE LALLY

The following is an excerpt from a speech given by Sister Pauline Lally at an Interfaith Service Sunday, October 16. Sister Pauline is the co-director of the Justice and Peace Office.

IT WAS 1995 AND OUR provincial government at the time took a 21.6% cut to social assistance as part of the Common Sense Revolution. No doubt cuts needed to be made but on the backs of the poor? In the fall of that year, the premier of Ontario visited Kingston and crowds of people including several Sisters of Providence went to meet him to demonstrate against those cuts and the lack of public provision for the poor. Some people's anger boiled over and the demonstration turned violent.



Sr. Pauline Lally

The result? Mr. Harris never came back to visit us and we, the Justice and Peace Office of the Sisters of Providence, began our silent Friday noon vigil as a non-violent response of mourning.

Soon many other Kingston citizens joined us over the years in this symbolic action and the vigil began to take on a life of its own extending itself to protest against war in the Gulf, then in Iraq, to the Walkerton crisis, and to cuts to health care and education.

And we do all this in intentional powerful silence as an attempt to enter into solidarity.

We chose October 17th to honour our tenth Anniversary because it's the designated by the UN as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. The local is connected to the global.

For one whole decade, we have stood in good weather and bad, keeping before the public and ourselves the plight of the poor.

Because the first step in Justice Work is always awareness, and one of the first things I learned while working in the J & P Office is that poverty is very political. Poverty just doesn't happen by chance. Policies of our governments and multinational corporations affect peoples and the planet.



The silent vigil is held each Friday at noon in front of City Hall.

Witness to global poverty

BY MELANIE MURPHY,
KINGSTON WHIG STANDARD
OCTOBER 14, 2005

I HAVE BEEN HOME FROM Mexico for three months now after spending a year working for the Cuernavaca Centre for Intercultural Dialogue on Development, and I have to admit I am seeing many more similarities between my country and Mexico than I ever would have wanted to see.

As I walk down the street, I see women cuddled up in blankets, begging for money, I see men standing at traffic lights with cardboard signs pleading for spare change. In my job as a



Melanie Murphy

pastoral assistant at Regiopolis-Notre Dame Catholic High School, I hear heartbreaking stories of families in our school community that are struggling unsuccessfully to make ends meet. And every day headlines scream of new incidents of violence, much of it domestic violence, in what I once believed was a safe city.

Poverty is becoming more and more of an international phenomenon, a new type of epidemic, much more dangerous than any outbreak of avian flu or SARS. The new role of government is to protect the well-being of the market rather than the well-being of citizens, and privatization, deregulation and cuts to social services

have brought new forms of destruction to our community.

People do not choose to be poor. It is not something one aspires to as a child, teenager or adult. It is a condition that is imposed by one person or group of people on another person or group of people. When a small group in society controls 70 percent of all resources and a larger group controls only 30 percent, it doesn't take a genius to see that the former group has taken some of what should rightfully belong to the latter group.

Poverty brings with it other issues as well. Many feel its burden too heavily and turn to alcohol, drugs and violence. Families are torn apart. Children suffer in school. University and college are out of the question, and the cycle continues.

Ten years ago, a group of nuns belonging to the Sisters of Providence recognized this fact after the Mike Harris government cut social assistance payments by almost 22 percent. These women rallied other concerned citizens and together they began a silent vigil every Friday in front of City Hall to express their concern about and disapproval of Harris' policies.

Ten years after the silent vigils started, a different government is in power; but the vigil continues because Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government have followed in Harris' footsteps, continuing the assault on the poor.

Over the past 10 years, social assistance

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Upcoming
Conference

Trafficking in
Women and
Children.

Fourth Bi-Annual
Conference at
Providence
Spirituality Centre

Tuesday March 7-
Wednesday March
8, 2006

Upcoming Events

Preached Retreat

Maturing Gracefully and Full of Grace

Tues., Jan. 24, 9:30 a.m. - Sun., Jan. 29, 1 p.m.

Register by Tues., Jan. 10

Cost \$350

Mon. night accommodation add \$35

Mon. night supper, add \$10

Rev. James H. Mueller, O.Carm.

Maturing gracefully and full of God's grace we must garner the wisdom of years and experience to distinguish authentic promptings of the Holy Spirit. Our days of retreat will help us to review our lives and discern God's continuing call in our mature years.

Grassroots movement

Continued from previous page

incomes have declined in real terms by 34 percent. In the face of constantly rising food, energy and housing prices, I wonder how many of us could survive a 34 percent cut to our paycheques?

Last week, city councillors declared Monday Oct. 17th Make Poverty History day in Kingston. According to the proclamation, "Kingston citizens can stand in solidarity as global citizens in support of social justice". Here, too, I find similarities with my travels in other countries. A few years ago, I spent a summer in Lima, Peru. Each Friday afternoon women from surrounding communities would head to the city square in front of the government palace. There they would wash and hang up their Peruvian flags on a large clothesline to show that they thought their government's tactics and policies were dirty and needed cleaning.

In India, a group of peasants took Coca-Cola to court over claims that the company had polluted their groundwater and then given them toxic sludge to use as fertilizer. In Bolivia, the poor were hit hard when the government privatized water. Their vehement protests forced the government to reverse its policy.

More and more people are realizing that the government is becoming an enemy rather than an ally, and they are taking matters into their own hands. Grassroots groups are sprouting all over the globe and it gives me hope that in the near future we might

see change.

All of this reminds me of the story of an old man who goes to a city wracked with sin in the hope that he might inspire the people to change their evil ways. He spends his days yelling at the people as they go about their sinful activities. Days turn into weeks and weeks turn into years.

One day, someone confronts the old man. "Why, Sir, do you continue to yell when you know that you are not changing anything?"

The man responds: "At the beginning, I yelled because I thought I could change them. Now I continue to yell so that they don't change me."

A small group of citizens standing in front of City Hall in rain, sleet, snow, hail, cold, sun and heat may not have changed government policies, but these dedicated people should know that their work is not in vain. They are raising awareness and they are taking a stand.

I believe it was Martin Luther King Jr. who once said: "The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who remain neutral in times of great moral conflict." We need to ask ourselves where we stand on this issue.

This story has been reprinted with permission from The Kingston Whig Standard.

Witness to forgiveness

PROVIDENCE PAGES

DESPITE BEING FORCED to evacuate her home in New Orleans due to Hurricane Katrina, noted death penalty opponent Sister Helen Prejean made good on plans to visit Kingston. She compares the flooding in her home state with the plight of black men on death row and the poor and disenfranchised citizens living in her city.

“Katrina is a terrible tragedy that highlights the fact that these people have been drowning for years,” says Sister Helen.

Sister Helen Prejean brought her message to the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul on Thursday, September 29th. The Death Row Nun, as she’s referred to, leads what appears an exhausting speaking circuit—140 talks a year, criss-crossing the United States. But at 66, she admits to becoming more energized with each speech. She tells her poignant death row stories with a warm southern drawl that underscores her passionate message.

“The United States has killed 1 thousand people since 1976 when the death penalty was re-instated. That’s the same year Canada abolished it,” said Sister Helen.

The St. Joseph of Medaille Sister began her prison ministry in 1981, when she became spiritual advisor to a convicted killer sentenced to die in the electric chair. She wrote about the experience in the best-selling book *Dead Man Walking*, later made into an Academy Award-winning movie.

She’s launched a second book, *The Death of*



Sister Helen Prejean signs a book for Sister Sheila Brady. Both women are spiritual advisors to inmates.

Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions that chronicles the story of a black man accused of killing a white woman. An all-white jury convicted the accused based on DNA evidence that was challenged by experts. The book represents her new campaign—to save the innocent. She believes compassion can be born from her story telling.

Sister of Providence Catherine Casey, who has been involved in Pastoral Care for many years, admits she was moved by Sister Helen’s words. The pair chatted over a cup of coffee.

“She has strengthened my beliefs about defending the unjust treatment of the poor,” said Sister Catherine.

Queen’s University invited the social justice crusader to give this year’s prestigious Dunning Trust Lecture. While visiting Queen’s, she was invited to live among the

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Prison
Ministry

Sister Helen Prejean, noted death penalty opponent and author of the best-selling *Dead Man Walking*, gave this year’s prestigious Dunning Trust Lecture at Queen’s University.

She recently published a second book, *The Death of Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions*.

Peace Prize

In May 2005, Sister Helen Prejean received the Peace Prize of the City of Ypres.

Awarded every three years by the Belgian city, the prize recognizes those who have made important contributions to peace on earth.

Racial injustice

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Sisters of Providence for three days, sharing meals and trading stories.

Sister Helen spoke about healing and how witnessing the execution of a murderer 15 years after the crime, gives no satisfaction for family and friends of the victim.

“The death penalty re-victimizes the families of murdered victims.”

Pope John Paul II publicly denounced the death penalty during a 1999 visit to St. Louis. He appealed for a “consensus to end the death penalty which is both cruel and unnecessary”. The Pope had not spoken out against the death penalty during his previous four visits to the United States. According to Sister Helen, this single statement made an enormous difference prompting America’s Catholic bishops to

speak out more strongly against the death penalty. She also credits the Pope with influencing public opinion toward executions.

50% of American Roman Catholics favour the death penalty compared to 75% among the general population. Sister Helen attributes the reduction to education programs.

“The real work of the church is education. The gospel is a journey and it is ever unfolding,” said Sister Helen.

“I’ve been with presidents, death row inmates, movie stars and I’ve learned the dignity of human life. Everyone is worth more than their worst act.”

Feast of St. Vincent de Paul

St. Vincent de Paul is the principal patron of our congregation. The Feast of St. Vincent, September 27th, was marked by an evening prayer in the Chapel at the Sisters of Providence Motherhouse.

Our spiritual heritage takes its roots in seventeenth century France in the lives of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac. Vincent was challenged by Gospel values in facing the poor and the suffering of his day. Together with Louise de Marillac he set about organizing the wealthy women of Paris and the poor unlettered country girls to serve the poor, the sick and the afflicted in soul and body.



New Web site launched

PROVIDENCE PAGES

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY changes to our congregation since its founding 144 years ago. But who could have imagined that news of the diverse ministries carried out by the Sisters of Providence would travel around the globe in the blink of an eye. We officially launched on September 27 — the same day we celebrated the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul.

Internet surfers can find us on line at www.providence.ca. The site is revamped and updated from the original, launched six years ago. Extensive input from Sisters and staff was used to design the links that organize the web pages featuring a host of new features. Additional links will be added as needed. The new website navigational system is simple and easy.

The former Director of Communications for the Sisters of Providence was the driving force behind the original site. Therese Greenwood says the site offers a glimpse of the Sisters as they live their mission of empowering the poor and oppressed.

“Many Kingstonians are familiar with the Sisters because of the congregation’s presence at places like Providence Manor home for the aged, and the Friday silent vigil for the poor in front of city hall,” said Therese in the summer 1999 edition of Providence Pages.

The site provides a meeting place where information can be exchanged including



Sister Barbara Thiffault views the new Web site at www.providence.ca. She is also a member of the Communications Advisory Committee which oversees operation of the Web site.

retreats at the Providence Spirituality Centre, schedules for Sister Kay’s T’ai Chi Chih classes and articles relating to the variety of work done by the individual Sisters.

“We are delighted to finally launch our new website,” says General Superior Sister Kathryn LaFleur. “We hope it will be a means of communicating who we are and what we do within the various communities where we live. We trust that this site will make our mission better known. Thanks to all who helped us go live.”

Sister Barbara Thiffault, helped lay the groundwork for the current site. She is a member of the Communications Advisory Committee.

“I am delighted that our new web site has been launched. I look forward to assisting with the development of new material for future posting. It is my hope that our web site will continue to evolve so that others can know more about us,” said Sister Barbara.

Linking to our past

In December 1861, four Sisters from Montreal arrived in Kingston to begin preparing for the congregation now known as the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul. Three months later, Kingston native Catherine McKinley became the first member of the new community — the only religious order founded in Kingston. As the first General Superior, she is considered the congregation’s foundress for nurturing compassionate care for the poor, which continues to guide the community today.

Providence Award

Michelle Holland, SP from Spokane, WA and Ruth McGoldrick, SP from Holyoke, MA were jointly presented with the Providence Woman Award as the foundresses of WPC. We Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul were delighted when our own Pauline Lally was given recognition for being one of the original Board members for WPC.

Women in collaboration

BY SISTER FRANCES O'BRIEN

THE WOMEN OF Providence in Collaboration is celebrating 25 years since its founding in Great Falls Montana. The Mission Statement for WPC explains its purpose:

We, the Women of Providence in Collaboration, are an association of religious congregations bearing the name and charism of Providence. We come together to share and promote the evolving theology and spirituality of Providence, witnessing a preferential option for the poor, as we respond to the needs of our global society.

Providence Event 2005 was held June 24 - 26 at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College in Terre Haute, Indiana. 220 sisters and associates from across North America participated in this experience, including Sisters Lucy Bethel, Joanne Colligan, Gayle Desarmia, Jeannette Filthaut, Pauline Lally and Frances O'Brien.



Sr. Frances O'Brien

Sister Kathryn LaFleur, our representative on the WPC Board, had registered for the event but sent a letter of regret due to illness. .

The title for this event was *The Cosmos Within the Providence Dance*. The opening ritual, a cosmic walk, was followed by a celebrative narrative.

As usual the musicians, dancers, and decor added so much life to our prayer.

On Saturday morning, the 2 facilitators, Denise Wilkinson and Mary Alice Zander, SPs from St. Mary-of-the-Woods, explained the process: three presentations, each followed by quiet reflection time and shared reflection in table groups.

The first presenter, Barbara Doherty, SP of Saint-Mary-of-the Woods, was asked to develop the theme of *Providence and Meaning*. As she has so many times before, Barbara challenged us with her brilliant insights and her unique way of expressing them. She defined Providence as that name of God that brings the motions of human existence into meaning: chaos/order, love/trauma, insight/confusion, abandonment to circumstance/participation in change. Providence relating is an extraordinarily powerful love, permeating the universe and bringing everything into right relationship with everything else. Right relationship happens when Providence people carry out the meaning of Providence. Providence summons us communally to imagine alternatives to violence, war and lies. Providence asks us to give our lives to Right Relationship, which does not mean that everything works out well. In the loving design and order of the universe, chaos is always present. Reconciliation is an action of Providence. We need to discover that reconciliation is what Providence does and introduce the concept into our conversations and dialogue. Providence people must never cheapen forgiveness or reconciliation.

The energy of Providence

Compassion. Free Energy of Providence was the title of the 2nd presentation given by Lucy Zientek, CDP of Melbourne, KY. The work of Providence is done on the individual and the cosmological level. The universe is energy-reorganizing and concentrating itself anew. When the energy is not flowing, the body is dead. We have inflicted damage because we never saw it coming. To see with the eye of Providence, humans must make a commitment to sustainability, to preserve the processes of the universe. What the human is, in the context of a planet bathed in Providence, is free self-gift without which the planet can no longer be itself. We need a better vision of who we are: we are Providence. Creation retains the hope of being freed (Romans 8:20).

Mary Christine Morkovsky, CDP of San Antonio, Texas addressed the topic of *Providence and Liberation*. Our fundamental perception of selfhood has to change before we have the moral world we want. Every part of the universe is worthy of reverence. Systems promote either domination and passivity or cooperation and creativity. To liberate is to promote inclusion. The task of liberation is to break open oppressive systems or enlarge them to include those who were previously excluded. An ecological theology can free us from consumerism and lead us to liberate others. Significant change requires repentance for our sinful systems and a new way of socializing future generations. The paradigm of stewardship has to be replaced by one of a pastoral ministry of



Sisters Pauline Lally, Lucy Bethel, Gayle Desarmia, Jeannette Filthaut, Frances O'Brien and Joanne Colligan.

sustainability. Our preferential option for the poor includes other species and the earth itself. Creative responsibility is a willingness to act without absolute assurance of being right; it resembles God's respect for freedom of all creatures; and it imitates God's invitations to harmony. Resurrection is a promise that good things are stronger than their opposites. With faith in Providence, we imagine new possibilities and expect change for the better.

The participants discussed proposals for communal action. We want to move the charism forward by speaking truth to ecclesial, civic and economic structures. Three action proposals were discussed and these will be deliberated on at the next Board meeting.

The presentations from the event were videotaped and are now available in the Resource Centre so that all of our Sisters and associates may share in the experience of the Providence Event 2005.

Special Liturgies

Advent/Christmas Liturgies

Chapel of Mary, Mother of Compassion

- Saturday, Nov. 26, 7 p.m. - Evening Prayer
- Saturday, Dec. 3, 7 p.m. - Evening Prayer
- Friday, Dec. 9, 7 p.m. - Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Saturday, Dec. 24, 7 p.m. Christmas Eve/ Refreshments
- Sunday, Dec. 25, 10 a.m. Christmas Day

Eucharist: Gift for Mission

BY SISTER GAYLE DESARMIA

SINCE 2005 IS THE Year of the Eucharist, it was fitting that the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy made this the theme of their 33rd annual liturgy conference. Frances O'Brien and Gayle Desarmia attended this conference, which took place June 20-22 at the University of Notre Dame in Southbend, Indiana.

Keynote speaker

Timothy Matovina set the tone for the conference with his presentation entitled "Hunger, Fiesta and Transformation." He stated that the

Eucharist calls us to transformation for mission. In his example of the Gospel account of the feeding of the 5000, he stated that the miracle was not the multiplication of the bread, but rather the miracle was that so many shared their bread in order that all might have their hunger sated.

The other presenters further developed the theme of "The Eucharist: A Gift for Mission". Fr. M. Daniel Findikyan used images of the Eastern tradition to express the intimate union the Eucharist establishes between God and humans. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, CPPS, looked at the Communion Rite, not in the light of receiving, but rather in the light of transformation. We are not sent forth to do; we are transformed to be. The 'doing'

comes as a natural outflow of 'being'. When we ask if we are worthy to receive communion we are asking the wrong question. Communion is not about our worthiness, but rather about God's fidelity. Susan Wood, SCL, then gave an historical presentation of the Eucharist as bond of love which witnesses to the world. She noted that the Eucharist leads us out of our individuality. For her, Liturgy is a microcosm of God's work in the world transforming creation into God's body (Romans 8). Bishop Dale Melczek of Gary, Indiana, using his cathedral parish as the example, also spoke of the transforming power of the Eucharist, which enables us to recognize social injustice, and then act for social justice. His presentation gave us a practical example of commitment to a more just society. Following this, Daniel Sheering gave an historical presentation of the Eucharist as medicine of body and spirit — Eucharist as life giving. Musician Bob Hurd's presentation focused on communion music, which calls the assembly not only to honour the Eucharistic presence but also to be aware of the implications of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. Catherine Patten, RSHM, presented Cardinal Bernardin's 'common ground initiative' as a way of Christian dialogue in order to learn and understand from others.

William Cavanaugh's session rounded out Timothy Matovina's keynote presentation when he took up the theme of the transformative power of the Eucharist in his presentation on the social meaning of

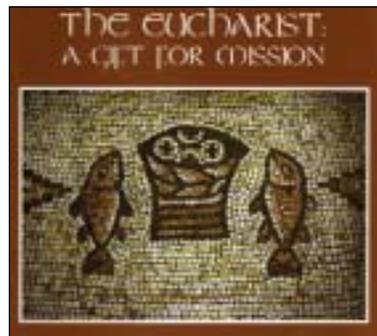


Sr. Gayle Desarmia

Year of the Eucharist

the Eucharist. He stated that the Eucharist makes a new reality where we are all made one body, the Body of Christ. This Body of Christ cannot be quarantined to the private domain. It is a social body that makes visible what a transformed creation looks like. The Body of Christ is also a sacrificial body whose mission is a sending out for the sake of the world, a self-emptying for the sake of others. This sacrifice is based on love. The Eucharist is the sacrament of non-violence — God's no to violence in the world. Eucharist is for service. True sacrifices are works of mercy/service of all to all. This is not a call to heroism, but a call to put what we

are already doing in a cosmic context. Our works are God's hopeful work in the world.



This whole conference theme fits very well with the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul Mission Statement, which concludes in these words "Serving with compassion, trusting in Providence, we walk in hope."

Frontenac Heritage Foundation

BY SISTER GAYLE DESARMIA

ON OCTOBER 16TH, 2005, members of the Frontenac Heritage Foundation gathered at Providence Manor for their annual awards ceremony and meeting.

Last year at Kingston City Hall the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul received an award from this foundation for the restoration of Our Mother of Sorrows Chapel at Providence Manor.

This year's meeting was in two parts. The first part was a combined tour of the restored Mother of Sorrows Chapel and of the Printing Room Museum which is located below the chapel. Mr. Mac Gervan of Gervan and Associates was present to

speaking about his work on the restoration of both the chapel and of the printing room. Sister Gayle Desarmia, archivist for the Sisters of Providence, spoke about the history of the chapel and printing room. Archival assistant, Tom McCarthy, answered questions pertaining to the equipment in the printing room. The second part of the meeting featured the awards ceremony which took place in the Catherine McKinley Room at Providence Manor. Award recipients this year were Hotel Dieu Hospital for the restoration of the Sydenham Street entrance, Queen's University for the restoration of Gordon Hall and Royal Military College for the restoration of Ridout Row.

Heritage
Foundation

Founded in 1972, the Frontenac Heritage Foundation (FHF) is a non-profit organization created to promote the preservation of buildings that contribute to the heritage of Kingston and Frontenac County.

Healing the waters

“Any denial of access to water represents a lack of respect for God’s creation and lack of concern for basic human needs.”

-- Church leaders’ pastoral statement on water, KAIROS

Fall Campaign launched

BY SISTER THERESE MOHER

MEMBERS OF DEVELOPMENT and Peace of the Archdiocese of Toronto gathered at The Beaches on the shores of Lake Ontario in early October to join the national launch marking the third year of our campaign on behalf of water: Water: Life Before Profit!

This launch was shared with KAIROS — Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, which has joined a campaign with Development and Peace this year.

To the sound of the trumpet, 42 people from KAIROS and Development and Peace gathered in a circle to participate in a candle-light water ritual lead by Sister of Providence



Sr. Theresa Moher

Theresa Moher. Naming themselves and the waters from which they came, united us as a group of concerned persons for the value of water, its sacredness to all life, and our desire to protect and promote its healing.

The ritual continued with song lead by Brigid Morgan. Participants listened to the sounds of water from the lake, water poured from pitchers into bowls and sounds from the rainstick. It reminded us of our connectedness to water and its importance in our lives.

Prayers for waters in need of healing-polluted waters, rivers suffering from

poisons, waters of the Colorado river stolen from Mexico and used to water Las Vegas, Palm Springs and southern California were named and responded to with a unanimous voice, “May all waters be healed.” Other places named in need of healing included China where water tables are dropping at the rate of a metre or more a year.

A litany of water helped us remember the presence of our Creator Spirit through water. Recognizing that Wisdom, Sophia, the Source of life, connects with water to bless creation, we responded with ‘Blessed are you, Source of Life.’

A reading “He Na Tye Woman” by Paula Gunn Allen was followed by a chant to remind us that water may be considered our precious Mother.

Extending our hands in blessing over the waters, we echoed refrains of the leader asking our Creator God to bless and cleanse all waters, multiply our water sources, bless the earth with clean waters, refresh the thirsty with safe water and restore all waters.

Finally we blessed one another using a water gesture like falling rain.

Concluding with the hymn O Healing Rivers, we walked through the darkness, back to our homes with renewed courage, strength and determination to make this year’s campaign a real success. The many expressions of gratitude made the effort worthwhile.

Living The Great Work

BY BRENDA MCGUIRE

LIVING THE GREAT WORK was the theme of this year's annual general education meeting organized by the Sisters of Providence Associates. Marianne Karsh, a professional forester and educator and Christina Vanin PhD facilitated the September 23rd gathering.

The speakers focused on the theme Eco-Spirituality, an idea first presented to the Associates in the spring.

Marianne and Christine shared stories from their own lives and gave evidence of their love for the land. Christine spoke with enthusiasm, energy and passion about the urgency for action.

"This is a Kairos moment — an ecological moment — a time that invites us to conversion," she said. "We need to move out of radical discontinuity with the earth — to shift our consciousness to a part of a comprehensive earth community."



The crossed banners represent the east, west, north and south of our planet. The pieces between each represent parts of our life — fire, water, plant life etc.



Left to Right: Associate Shirley Kindellan, Sister Julia Hamilton and Associate Carol Groten.

Marianne referred to the work of author and ecologist Thomas Berry, who wrote *The Great Work*. She said he teaches us to be called to a relationship of love, an ecologically spiritual conversion, and a call to live sustainably on the earth.

She showed us wonderful slides by Malek Karsh, her late father. Unlike his brother Josef Karsh, the celebrated portrait photographer, Malek photographed nature images that brought out the beauty of our land and its' creatures. Marianne led us on a guided walk around the tree path on the Motherhouse property. Later, we shared a moving meditation outside in silence as the sun was setting.

The facilitators encouraged us to make a personal commitment to action, in response to a call to carry on *The Great Work*. Together we shared these actions as a sign of our commitment in a sacred celebration. We left the weekend filled with hope and determination.

Christmas Programs

Art Therapy

Can you hear the angels?

If Christmas is difficult for you, explore how you are integrating the messages coming from events, memories and emotions of this season.

Thursdays 1:30

Nov. 24

Dec. 1

Dec. 8

Tuesdays 2:30

Nov. 29

Dec. 6

Dec. 13

Contact Sister Kay Morrell 544-4525 ext. 175

Prayer-Art Retreat

The Wonder of it All

Prepare for Christmas by celebrating with us the awesome wonder of God's divinity, your own humanity and our shared Christianity. Cost \$30

Sat. Dec. 3 - 10:30

Tues. Dec. 6 - 7 p.m.

Thurs. Dec. 8 - 7 p.m.

Tues. Dec. 13 - 7 p.m.

Homily
Given

Among the “seeds” God placed in you Jubilarians, was the call to Religious Life. That call came to you through the persons, events, and circumstances of your everyday lives. Through your parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, priests and religious and maybe even a bishop. All the time in your young lives, the Holy Spirit hovered over you until through prayer, openness to God’s will for you and the Grace of God entered your lives when the heavenly Spirit settled into your hearts and opened you fully to God’s call to the consecrated life.

Then you entered the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul. Before long, you “were sharing your individual giftedness, carrying out diverse ministries in a spirit of humility, simplicity and charity...”

Homily Given by
Father Charles
Gazeley

Sisters Celebrate Jubilee

PROVIDENCE PAGES

GIVING THANKS AND rejoicing in giftedness was the repeating theme as 10 Sisters of

Providence celebrated Jubilee anniversaries as women religious at a June ceremony at Providence Motherhouse. Over 2 hundred family members, friends and clergy attended the event for these remarkable women.

“Thanks to your parents, families, friends and our Provident God with whom you served collaboratively in partnership over 540 years,” noted Sister Pauline Lally in her address to the Jubilarians.

Speaking on behalf of Sister Kathryn

LaFleur, the congregation’s General Superior who was unable to attend for health reasons, Sister Pauline urged the Jubilarians to rejoice in their giftedness.

“You’ve used your gifts in great service in health care and education, music and gardening, administration and leadership, the mission fields and in all kinds of social service and justice work.”

A fitting gift from God arrived at this year’s celebration. Just as the Jubilarians paraded out to a perennial garden planted in their honour, a gentle rain fell to nourish the new plants. It came after many dry days. The sound of bagpipes filled the Motherhouse grounds as Piper Jeremy Wilson lead Jubilarians outside to witness



(From left) Sister Kathleen Maguire, Sister Alma Sutton, Sister Mary Rosaria, Sister Sheila Langton, Sister Josephine Doiron, Sister Barbara Thiffault and Sister Avita Kila

Western celebration

the garden blessing by Archbishop Emeritus Francis J. Spence.

Kingston Archbishop Anthony Meagher presided over the Eucharistic celebration on Saturday at the Motherhouse Chapel of Mary, Mother of Compassion. Manitoba Archbishop Peter Sutton OMI also attended. His sister, Sister Alma Sutton celebrated her 50th Jubilee.

In his homily, Father Charles Gazeley spoke of his connection with the Sisters dating back to his elementary school days. "My immediate response to this day is WOW! The Wonder of the Wisdom of our Provident God. The power of the presence of these women of faith. The truth of their trust in their hope for heaven. The light of their living Christ-like love."

Marking milestones of 50 years of religious life were Sisters Rose-Marie Bokenfohr, Josephine Doiron, Avita Kilar, Sheila Langton, Frances Piasecki, Alma Sutton and Barbara Thiffault. Sisters Anna Kelly and Mary Rosaria celebrated sixty years as Sisters of Providence, while Sister Kathleen Maguire marked her 70th Jubilee.



Sisters Anna Kelly and Rose-Marie Bokenfohr celebrated Jubilee anniversaries in Edmonton.



Piper Jeremy Wilson leads Jubilarians to the outdoor garden blessing.



The seven Jubilarians listen to Father Charles Gazeley deliver the homily.

Jubilarians 2006

Celebrations June 16 and June 17, 2006

70 years

Sr. Inez Donovan

60 years

Sr. Monica Gannon

Sr. Julia Hamilton

Sr. Josephine McCaffrey

Sr. Mary Moderwell

Sr. Rose Anne Ryan

Sr. Rose Mary Ryan

Sr. Eunice Sugars

50 years

Sr. Shirley Morris

Upcoming Events

Winter Solstice Celebration

Dec. 21 @ 1 p.m.

Heirloom Seed Sanctuary
(Heathfield Barn)

Enjoy music, mystery play & munchies.

All welcome.

Gardening Workshop—The Heirloom Garden

\$40

Sat. Jan. 14, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (includes lunch)

Register by Tues. Jan 3

Carol and Robert Mouck of the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary share practical and spiritual insights involved in growing vegetables, flowers and herbs.

Winter Solstice

BY CAROL AND ROBERT MOUCK

THE YEAR BEGAN IN October after the Autumn Equinox when the daylight began to fade. The plants in the gardens were making seed in earnest. They offered us a harvest of food, so generous after such a severe struggle with drought, heat and constant sunlight. Yet they survived, these old varieties, to produce food but more crucial to their survival as well as our own, seed.

We began collecting seed in our brown paper bags like beggars seeking the kindness of friends. Sr. Margaret Maika, Carol and Robert, with occasional help from the seed savers group who meet once a month at the Heathfield barn that houses the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary, sought seed that seemed less plentiful than in other years. So many lessons to learn for all of us.

The tedious cleaning and sorting began in November. We carefully looked at each seed on china plates or handled each potato, beet, carrot and onion, choosing the best for seed to store in paper envelopes,

glass jars or wooden baskets and crates, the rest to eat or return to the earth to enrich the soil. We are overwhelmed with the work, the intimacy in holding such miracles in our hands. The privilege of being a part of such cycles. Our minds are full of wonder.

The Winter Solstice arrives on December 21st. We have packed some seed to sell for our income, but much more important, to offer our work so that some seed may reach other hands, find other gardens and may not be lost. Some seed must be planted every year, some will wait a few years in storage. But no seed can wait if we delay too long and are careless. As we celebrate the finding of the Child by the Shepherds and Kings, we make a warm place for the Child in our hearts. We know the seed is sensitive

to this special time of year when the sun begins to return and the light increases. The seed stirs as if it remembers the warmth of the earth and the gift of life.



Sister Margaret Maika is surrounded by beets – Sister works alongside Carol and Robert Mouck in the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary.

Counting Our Blessings

BY: BEVERLEY MCDONALD

AS I WRITE THIS PIECE, it is the Saturday of our overnight retreat on the parables. Fr. Tom Rosica has just completed one of his presentations for the day and I am blessed in a renewed sense of Jesus as shepherd. Not so much in the traditional sense of Jesus as the Good Shepherd who cares for the flock and reaches out to the strays, but more in the sense of Jesus the Beautiful Shepherd whose beauty and goodness is the oil of invitation that radiates from within the midst of a broken world drawing humanity to healing wholeness.

Reflecting on the gift of my blessing this morning I am also aware of the many ways in which we are blessed here at Providence Spirituality Centre.

The Centre is a beautiful, peace-filled sacred space where all are welcome and all who come are greeted with warm hospitality. There is a deep serenity that permeates both the building and the grounds, a heritage of 74 years of service, prayerfulness and hearts longing for the depth of God's presence. A heritage too of faithful and caring staff who tend to the



Beverly McDonald,
Director Providence
Spirituality Centre

housekeeping, laundry, the meals, the gardens, lawns, buildings and so much more.

This sense of our blessings encompasses the gift of all who come here. The many hundreds who pass through the Centre each year whether on retreat, or for workshops, quiet days, spiritual direction, reiki, or reflexology as well as the many groups who regularly schedule their events at the Centre's facility; groups like L'arche, CWL, ACW, Anglican Cursillo, United Church, the Queens' Shaw Transformational Leadership Program, the confirmation students from Catholic elementary schools, many of our Catholic parishes who come for days of reflection and so many others, enrich us spiritually.

We are truly blessed in our ministry here. We are blessed above all else because the Centre shares in the mission of the Sisters of Providence. It is because of the generosity of your ministry and mission that we are privileged to have this beautiful peace-filled Centre. We are grateful for your support, your prayers and your presence, which enriches not only our team but all who come here.

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Events at Providence Spirituality Centre

Advent Supper & Evening of Reflection

Thurs., Dec. 1, 5-9 p.m.

Register by Thurs. Nov. 17

Anne Harvey

Register early for this popular annual dinner and quiet reflection in the spirit of the Advent season.

Cost \$25

Advent Guided or Directed Retreat Weekend

Fri., Dec. 2, 7 p.m. - Sun., Dec. 4, 1 p.m.

Register by Nov. 18

Irene Wilson will facilitate the Guided Retreat.

Give yourself a weekend of quiet reflection and prayer.

Cost \$150

In
Memoriam

Sister Mary Ryan

(Sister Mary
Polycarp)

March 8, 1923 -
July 1, 2005

A life filled with music

BY SISTER BARBARA THIFFAULT

SISTER MARY RYAN (Sister Mary Polycarp) was called home to her loving God on July 1, 2005.

Mary Winnifred Ryan was born on March 8, 1923 in Cochrane, Ontario to Michael Joseph Ryan and Maude Joyce. Her twin sister died at a young age leaving Mary with her three older brothers, John Francis, Michael Joseph, and Bernard. As a child she lived in Cochrane, Sudbury, Timmins and Montreal. She moved frequently because her father, a civil engineer, was posted to various cities.

Mary met the Sisters of Providence through Mother Anselm, whose sister was a friend of Mary's mother. As a child, Mary lived with Mother Anselm's sister in Cochrane for three years while her parents were in Arizona.

After finishing high school in Montreal, Mary worked for a year and a half as a bilingual secretary at the C.P.R. Station in Windsor. For six and a half years, she belonged to the church bowling league, the Children of Mary, and worked as a volunteer at St. Willibrod and St. Thomas More Parishes.

Mary entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul on

February 2, 1943. After First Profession, Mary lived in Tweed for one year to teach private piano lessons. From there, she continued teaching piano in various places including Batawa, St. Michael's Convent, Belleville, Gananoque, Providence Manor in Kingston, Picton, and Perth. At St. Joseph's Convent in Belleville, Sister Mary was the parish music teacher and organist. She returned to Batawa in 1966 to teach school-based music lessons and private piano lessons. For 10 years beginning in 1970, she lived in Perth as music teacher. A decade later, she arrived at the Motherhouse to be the organist and work part-time at the switchboard. One year later she was sent to Brantford where she taught music in five schools and was the church organist. When she returned to the Motherhouse in 1983, she offered to be organist and director of the adult and children's choirs at Blessed Sacrament Parish until she retired in 2003.

Sister Mary was a gifted woman who used her talents to help others in any way she could. Through her gift of music, she brought joy and fun to many situations. She loved to drive and was always ready to make a trip to and from the airport with the Sisters.

The Mass of Christian Burial, held in the Chapel of Mary Mother of Compassion, Providence Motherhouse on July 4 was presided over by Most Rev. Francis J. Spence, Archbishop Emeritus of Kingston. Rev. Msgr. Don Clement, homilist, and several members of the clergy attended.



Sister Mary Ryan

Illustrious teaching career

BY SISTER BARBARA THIFFAULT

SISTER MARGUERITE was born in Belleville on March 28, 1928, the eldest of six children growing up with five brothers.

She attended the local public elementary school and St. Michael's High School in Belleville. She entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Providence on August 15, 1946. After she made first Profession, she went to Toronto Teachers' College.

In September 1949, she began her teaching ministry at St. Joseph's School in Kingston. One year later, she went to St. Carthage's, Tweed then to St. Francis', Smiths Falls, St. Mary's, Chesterville and St. John's, Perth. She taught primary grades for most of

her teaching career. She took courses in home economics, vocal music, junior education and religious education. After taking a three-part course in special education, she taught children with special needs. After 22 years of teaching at St. John's, Perth, she was honoured by the Parish on October 2, 1983 for her devoted service.

In 1984 she retired from teaching and went to St. Mark's Parish in Prescott as Pastoral Assistant. From January to May in 1985, she followed the Ministry to Ministers Course in San Antonio, Texas, returning to



Sister Marguerite O'Neil

Prescott in May.

In July 1987, Sister Marguerite arrived in Kingston to serve as Director of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. She always respected every person who went to St. Vincent's for assistance. She made a significant contribution to the Society during 12 years of service.

Following this assignment, she returned to Perth to assist with the elderly Sisters in the convent. She also visited parishioners in the nursing homes and in their own homes. She was actively involved in the parish where she was a compassionate and loving presence.

In the Fall of 2002 she went to Providence Manor where she once again was a loving presence to the residents she visited there until ill health necessitated her move to the Motherhouse.

Sister Marguerite was called home to her loving God on October 13, 2005. The Mass of Christian Burial, held in the Chapel of Mary Mother of Compassion, Providence Motherhouse on October 17, 2005, was presided over by Most Reverend Francis J. Spence, assisted by many members of the clergy. Rev. Bernard O'Neil, Sister Marguerite's brother, delivered the homily in which he paid tribute to religious congregations. He referred to the symbol of the ring on Sister Marguerite's hand, which made a statement of her years of service to God and to the Sisters of Providence.

In
Memoriam

Sister Marguerite
O'Neil

March 19, 1928 -
October 13, 2005

In
Memoriam

Sister Catherine
Doherty

October 22, 1914 -
October 19, 2005

Kind Irish spirit

BY SISTER BARBARA THIFFAULT

CATHERINE DOHERTY was born on October 22, 1914 in Buncrana County, Donegal, Ireland, the fourth child of eight children born to Patrick and Margaret (Porter) Doherty. The family left Ireland in 1925 and settled near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on a 640 acre wheat and dairy farm. In the mid 1930's the family moved to Vancouver. Catherine had a great sense of humour and kept her younger siblings entertained.

Catherine had met the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul at Holy Family Hospital, Vancouver and eventually entered the novitiate on September 15, 1951. After her First Profession of Vows, she was missioned to Holy Family Hospital in Vancouver where she remained for fifteen years in the position of Finance and Hospital Administration. She then went to St. Mary's Hospital in Camrose as accountant. While in Camrose she participated in a twenty-eight mile marathon for "Miles for Millions" where she raised a considerable amount of money thanks to the generosity of one of her sponsors. Following her happy days in



Sister Catherine
Doherty

Camrose, she went to St. Anthony's Home in Moose Jaw as administrator. She enjoyed going to football games in Regina and watching the "Snowbirds" perform. Her next assignment took her to the Father Dowd Memorial Home in Montreal as administrator. After an all too brief time, as she described it, she returned to Holy Family Hospital in Vancouver as administrator until she retired twelve years later. She then returned to the Motherhouse where she did some archival work. After a lengthy illness Sister Catherine was called home to her loving God on Wednesday, October 19, 2005.

Sister Catherine's kindness, deep commitment to justice for the staff and her leadership qualities earned her deep respect and love from the many people she touched in her ministry of administration in the health care system. Her deep faith, Irish charm and joy-filled spirit endeared her to all who knew her.

The Mass of Christian Burial, held in the Chapel of Mary Mother of Compassion, Providence Motherhouse on October 22 was presided over by Most Rev. Francis J. Spence, Archbishop Emeritus of Kingston, assisted by members of the clergy. The homily was delivered by Archbishop Spence.

Christmas Pewter Ornament

PROVIDENCE PAGES

KINGSTON'S ST. MARY'S of the Lake Hospital is the latest historic building owned by the Sisters of Providence to be featured in a popular Christmas pewter ornament campaign.

St. Mary's, one of several sites under the PCCC umbrella, is among this year's Limited Edition Pewter Ornament collection. Two years ago, Mother of Sorrows Chapel at Providence Manor was featured in the collection.



Five buildings have been chosen this year — one ornament is released each week beginning November 14th. The cost is \$8 with any proof of purchase of \$25 or more from any downtown Kingston business. Ornaments are available at the Tourist Information Office, Grand Theatre Box Office, National Bank on King Street E and Wellington Foreign Exchange.

The St. Mary's ornament will be released for sale on December 5th.

The following text will appear on the description card attached to the ornament.

St. Mary's of the Lake - 355 King Street West

The original building was constructed in 1861 as a private residence named Hawthorne Cottage. In 1867, the property was purchased by the congregation of Notre Dame for use as a girls' boarding school called St. Mary's of the Lake. In 1904, the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul purchased the property and construction of a new limestone building began in 1908. Within two years the building was used to house orphans and novitiate sisters. An additional wing was completed in 1930, but by 1935, the orphanage was no longer needed and Mother Mary Gabriel Cunningham began exploring ways to preserve the institution. From 1941 to 1946, St. Mary's of the Lake was converted to a military hospital, until it was handed back to the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul who opened a hospital for the terminally ill. In 1974, the Gibson Wing was completed and the main entrance changed to Union Street. In 1991, the hospital became part of Providence Continuing Care along with Providence Manor. The hospital continues to provide specialized care and is an affiliated teaching hospital with Queen's University and St. Lawrence College.

2005
collection

This year's collection includes Murney Tower, Rideau Public School, Sydenham Street United Church, St. Mary's of the Lake Hospital and Market Square.

Canadian Chapter



“When tragedy strikes somewhere in the world, the first members of society to suffer are the children. We created the Canadian chapter of **Teddies for Tragedies** in the hope of alleviating some of the stress that prevails when these catastrophes occur. We also wanted to contribute to the community at large and perhaps make a difference”

— **Teddies for Tragedies**

Healing Teddy Bears

PROVIDENCE PAGES

THEY'RE CUTE AND CUDDLY. And they possess amazing healing powers. According to at least one doctor, they do more good for children than many medicines.

Teddies for Tragedies is an organization backed by thousands of volunteers around the globe who lovingly knit teddy bears distributed to children who face tragic circumstances, usually in Third World countries.

The charity started in England in 1985 and has grown to include volunteers in countries around the world. The first batch of bears were sent to children in Sudan.

An impromptu unveiling of these bears took place in the Sisters' tearoom at Providence Motherhouse in early September. Sister Gayle Desarmia suggested I write a story about the bears and invited me to meet one of the artistic creators.

It was my first meeting with Sister Mary Fidelis who spent 37 years in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan before returning to Kingston to live at Providence Motherhouse. The diminutive woman with the permanent smile began making these healing bears just seven months ago at the encouragement of Sister Susan Pye.

“My father didn't like socks purchased at the store, so I knit all his socks,” says Sister Fidelis, a life-long knitter who was taught at an early age by her aunt.

She wasn't confident she could create the knitted bears — a far different project than all the socks and afghans that she'd produced over the years.

“I kept going at it, and just followed the pattern,” she adds.

Sister has already created 15 loveable teddies – five have been shipped to Afghanistan. The rest may be sent to the victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

The huggable bears must pass a safety inspection. According to Sister Mary Fidelis, “We're not allowed to use buttons, and we can't stuff them with foam.”

Her favourite feature? “See their arms extended, as if they are giving you a big hug!”

Sisters living at Providence Motherhouse adore the bears, and everyone seems to have a favourite — or in this case favourites, a set of twin teddy bears.

Sister Mary Fidelis entered the novitiate at 36. She was deeply committed to her work in pastoral care and nursing for almost four decades.



Sister Mary Fidelis

Embracing the Forgotten

PROVIDENCE PAGES

NANCY STEVENS' SIX year old niece Leah cracked her piggy bank and donated two dollars to her aunt who left for Africa last month.

Nancy is the former Activity Coordinator for Sisters living at Providence Motherhouse. The personable 34 year old is being lured 12,000 kilometres from home by Habitat for Humanity, a non-profit, faith-based housing program. Nancy broke the news to family and friends during a BBQ at the family cottage in early July. It was an emotional event.

"My Dad got out the video camera," she recalled. Everyone was so excited and fully supportive. It wasn't a shock to people who know me well. I tend to be spontaneous and very nurturing."

Building homes in Africa came calling after her original plan to locate a young boy in Bangladesh whom she's been financially supporting for 10 years was scuttled. The Bangladesh trip was full so she signed up to build homes in Zambia.

Recent media attention surrounding the *Make Poverty History* campaign, including this summer's popular Live 8 concerts has caused a buzz about the plight of the poor across the globe. For Nancy, it's been a call to action.

"I became drawn to Africa because of all the news reports," she said. "But I was always drawn to doing some kind of volunteer work overseas."

86 percent live below the poverty line in Zambia. Most live in grass-thatched mud structures where cracked and broken walls invite serious health risks, rain and rodents. Families are crowded into a single room, and children are introduced daily to life-threatening conditions.

"I'm a little nervous. There will be no running water or electricity. But I'm excited to help."

The road to Africa hasn't been easy. Nancy has had a series of disease-preventing needles and pills. She has also endured sleepless nights organizing a benefit concert and other events to raise six thousand dollars to cover her four week adventure.

The budding amateur photographer plans to document her Zambian experience. In addition to her work at the Motherhouse, she waits tables at a Kingston restaurant where a chance meeting with a patron in mid-August won't leave her scrambling for film. A Kodak employee initiated a conversation with Nancy about her trip and promised to help. True to his word, 160 rolls of film arrived in the mail a week later.

The monetary and emotional support from Sisters living at Providence Motherhouse has overwhelmed Nancy.

"Words can't express how grateful I am to the Sisters. It means the world to me that everyone believes in me and my mission to change a small part of the world. I will do my very best to build, in the name of everyone who supported me."

Africa
bound



Nancy Stevens, activity coordinator with the Sisters of Providence, left for Africa October 13th.



Generosity
recognized



Laura Cobb,
Business Office
employee.

The following is a
thank you note sent
by Laura's mom and
sister:

"To Laura and all
the staff and Sisters
at Providence
Motherhouse.
Thanks to all and I
hope to be able to
repay you in some
way one of these
days. This was so
very generous and
be sure that it is so
appreciated by all of
us. We all send our
thanks and hope to
show you all such
appreciation and
care one day. God
bless you all."

Hurricane relief

Providence Pages

NEWSPAPERS OF HURRICANE Katrina blanketed our television screens and newspapers just as summer ended. We watched in disbelief as the untold tragedies emerged. We prayed from our safe homes — a world away from horrific devastation in New Orleans.

But for one employee of the Sisters in Providence Motherhouse, Katrina was life-changing.

For four agonizing days, Laura Cobb sat by the phone, eyes glued to the TV screen hoping for news that her 82-year-old mother was safe. Mary Huff, a lifetime resident of New Orleans, still hadn't contacted her daughter.

Laura, who works in the business office, recalls how fear and anxiety took over those intense 96 hours. Enlisting help from friends and co-workers, the team surfed TV channels looking for clues. The news grew worse, Mary Huff wasn't the only missing relative, four others were lost, including Laura's sister.

Finally, on the morning of Thursday, September 1st, Laura picked up the phone in her office and heard the calm voice of her mother. Mary and the others were safe in Austin, Texas 450 miles from their flood-ravaged homes.

It didn't take long for news of the family's safety to spread through the Motherhouse. Kelly Lewis-Kenny, who shares an office with Laura, went into immediate fund-raising mode.

"It was a difficult time in the office," said Kelly. "I realized Laura could receive tragic news at any moment. I felt so completely helpless that starting the fund was the only tangible thing I could do. Actions send a strong message."

It took just over a week for Sisters and staff to raise a thousand dollars (U.S).

Laura believes her mom doesn't fully understand the severity of the damage and the fact she may well have lost her home. The small aluminum sided duplex sits on pilings in case of floods. Laura believes it was likely submerged in at least six feet. The fridge and freezer have been baking in 100-degree southern heat.

While category 5 hurricanes are rare, the southern United States experiences frequent storms. Like most residents of Louisiana, Mary had insurance. Unfortunately, it only covers rain damage, not flooding.

Mary's sense of humour never wavered throughout the ordeal. When told that a boat hit the fence surrounding her property, she responded, "That's the problem with driving boats in a residential neighbourhood."

The response from people has been therapeutic for Laura, who thanked her fellow employees and Sisters for their support in a letter.

"I wish to express my gratitude for your caring and friendship. I thank you for your generosity."

Sisters' work commended

The following letter was forwarded to the Leadership Team in September 2005.

Dear Sisters Lafleur, Langton, Lally and Brennan,

Please let me introduce myself. I am relatively new in Kingston, having started a faculty position at Queen's University just over one year ago. My academic interests lie at the intersection of food, health and poverty, and I teach a course called the Social Determinants of Health in the new Health Studies Program at Queen's. The course examines the impact of social and political factors on health, the most important of which are incomes, income distribution, and poverty. As you might expect, I have an explicit focus on social justice in the course, and in the research that I do.

When I came to Kingston last year, I wanted to get connected to community organizations doing progressive work in the areas of poverty and good. I was quickly directed to the Sisters of Providence Centre for Justice and Peace. I met first with Jamie Swift, and have since also gotten to know Ian Stutt and the work being done at the Seed Sanctuary.

I am writing to express my deep gratitude for your commitment to and support of Centre for Justice and Peace, and the incredibly important work that Jamie and Ian do. Many community groups I am familiar with struggle with funding issues on an ongoing basis, and much of their time and energy is sapped away with grant proposals and worries about whether they will be around next year. The Centre for Justice and Peace is providing community leadership on issues related to poverty, food, the agricultural system, and systemic injustices, and is a natural gathering place for those of us interested in creating a different, more just society. Thank you, thank you, thank you. You are offering a beacon of hope and justice in a world in which there is too little of this.



Wishing you peace,

Sincerely,

Elaine Power, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

Christmas Concerts

Sisters of Providence are invited to the following concerts in the Motherhouse auditorium.

**Wednesday, Dec. 7
7 p.m**

**Kingston Chapter
Red Hat Society**

**Performance of
Christmas carols**

**Friday, Dec. 2
6 p.m.**

**Performers Sarah
Lyn Robinson,
golden harpist &
Joseph Scott,
french horn.**

**Hymns and
Christmas carols.**



Providence
Pages

Mission Statement

A regular publication
of the Sisters of
Providence of
St. Vincent de Paul

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Sr. Gayle Desarmia
Sr. Anne Hudec
Christine Tripp
Sherri Pilgrim

For questions,
comments or
address changes,
contact:

We, the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, are an apostolic congregation of vowed women religious called to be channels of God's Providence in the world through compassionate service in response to the needs of the times. Sharing our individual giftedness, we carry out diverse ministries in a spirit of humility, simplicity and charity in collaboration with others to bring about the reign of God.

Our heritage is rooted in the creativity and spirituality of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, in the willingness of Emilie Gamelin to risk and trust in Providence, in the responsiveness of the Montreal Sisters of Providence to the call of Bishop E.J. Horan, as well as in the courage and pioneer spirit of

Mother Mary Edward McKinley and the original members of the Kingston community.

Impelled by the compassionate love of Jesus and Mary, we seek to empower others, especially the poor and oppressed, to achieve a quality of life in keeping with their human dignity. We strive to be prophetic leaders in our church and in society through the promotion of structures and relationships of equality and mutuality and through attitudes and actions for justice and peace.

Strengthened by prayer, we are bonded in unity and love through our corporate mission.

Serving with compassion, trusting in Providence, we walk in hope.

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*May your Christmas be
rich in peace & blessings*

*Season's Greetings from
the Sisters of Providence
of St. Vincent de Paul*