

In

HARMONY

Sisters of Mercy, New York, Pennsylvania, Pacific West Community

Mercy life, perpetual vows seen as lifegiving

Sister Patricia “Pat” Black admitted she had no intention of becoming a Sister of Mercy when she became a Mercy Associate in 1999. A mother and grandmother, she just wanted to support the sisters and participate in Mercy prayer life.

That is until a retreat a year later during which she sensed an inner call to religious life. On Nov. 7, that call came full circle as she professed perpetual vows of chastity, poverty, obedience and service to the poor, sick and uneducated during a Mass at Holy Cross Parish, Rochester.

Pat said that Mercy brought her a community with similar beliefs and goals that offers mutual support.

“Being able to live and work as a Sister of Mercy alongside other Sisters of Mercy in a variety of places has been lifegiving,” she said. Sister Nancy Hoff, NyPPaW president, presided over the ceremony attended by NyPPaW sisters and associates, Pat’s family, friends and others.



Sister Patricia Black of Rochester signs a copy of her perpetual vows as a Sister of Mercy with NyPPaW. To her left are Sister Nancy Hoff, NyPPaW president; and Sister Eileen Campbell, representing the leadership of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.

“Pat’s final-vow ceremony is a wonderful celebration of deep commitment and fidelity,” Nancy said. “The energy and joy that filled the church during the liturgy is telling of how delighted the Sisters of Mercy are to welcome Pat as a perpetually professed member.”
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Sr. Cynthia named to Institute new membership post

Sister Cynthia Serjak has been appointed to serve in the New Membership Office for the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas beginning Jan. 1.

She has been NyPPaW’s incorporation minister and has served in that ministry for nine years, the past five as a full-time minister.



Sr. Cynthia Serjak

According to Cynthia, the office is responsible for programs for Mercy candidates and temporary-professed members across the United States, providing ongoing orientation and education for vocation and incorporation ministers and facilitating the dreams and hopes of membership and those who wish to join us now and into the future.

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In Harmony

A bimonthly publication of the
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Pennsylvania,
Pacific West Community

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Advent is a prayerful time of reflection

By Sister Geraldine Rosinski
NyPPaW Leadership Team

Sitting at the computer on this first Sunday of Advent, I wonder what, as yet unknown, events will transpire in the months ahead . . . for our world, our church, our country, our community and each one of us.

Will this be the Advent when each day's decisions, words, prayers and actions move each of us closer to where God is luring us to be? I truly hope so.

Although I plan to spend that-promised "more time" in prayer and actions for justice for each of our many personal, community, church and world intentions . . . will I? I suspect that many of us live in the hope that we will move beyond where we currently are in our faith and justice journey.



Sr. Geraldine
Rosinski

Moving through Advent we find ourselves living in and praying through that-famous "land of in between." We are waiting for this longed-for child . . . this Prince of Peace . . . to grow and be birthed anew . . . *in our world...in our church...in our community ... and in our own hearts.* Meanwhile, we write our justice-focused postcards to our Congresspersons and call our legislators to move them toward decisions for a more just and revered world community.

Then, before we realize it, the longed-for day and moment arrive. We find ourselves at a jubilant Christmas liturgy in a world still yearning for peace. We have not fully achieved what we had prayed and hoped for, yet, we and our world are hopefully closer to these valued goals than before Advent began. Gratefully, we find comfort in knowing that some progress has been made . . . incremental steps though they be.

Many of us will be spending the last days of 2009 in quiet reflection on retreat as we prepare for the New Year ahead. These are very special days of reflection for me, as I read through my past year's journal to recall and give thanks for the many insights, opportunities of grace and puzzlements that God managed to guide me through over the past 12 months.

It is always a delight to discover the names of people in my journal who have newly entered and graced my life during the past year. They are those special gift bearers, like the magi, for which I find myself thanking God.

As I look to the year ahead, I also pray for all those I do not yet know, but whom God will guide into my life this coming year. For these strangers – soon to be my friends – and for all of you, I give God thanks.

COMMENTARY: The Pittsburgh G-20 Summit, a retrospective

By Sister Patricia McCann

When news broke that Pittsburgh would be the site of the international economic conference known as the G-20 Summit, Pittsburghers were amazed. A mixture of pride, curiosity and excitement stirred speculation and conversation from local newsrooms to family dinner tables. What did it mean? Who would be attending? How did we get chosen? Wasn't this a great honor for our city?

As the enormity of hosting this gathering dawned, fear and concern crept into the emotional mix. Would there be major civil disturbances like those experienced in Seattle and London? Could our city meet the challenge?

Local social activists began to plan for the opportunity to get their messages onto a world stage. Peace, hunger, environmental concerns, racism, human rights, health care access, immigration – advocates for every cause mobilized quickly. Academics latched onto the “teachable moment.” Pastors and religious leaders organized prayer vigils. City and state officials focused on the monumental logistics, all the while hoping to pull off this event in a successful and orderly manner.

Fear-mongering radio talk shows had a field day accentuating images of riots and anarchy. Local newspapers provided balance with information pieces about G-20 countries, their leaders and the immediate and long-range issues they face. Meanwhile, ordinary folks contemplated the impact of such an extraordinary event in their own local sphere of Pittsburgh life. Some immersed themselves in the whole experience with gusto — the equivalent of a

crash course in economics, international relations and civil disobedience. Others fled town for the third week of September.

By Sept. 24th, media people and government staffers from around the world, as well as police from all over the U.S., arrived in absolutely amazing numbers. Pittsburgh air was charged with a kind of collective “keeping our fingers crossed” and hoping that the Summit would move us closer to economic justice and security for all people. Most Pittsburghers – whether “more eager” or “more concerned” in their feelings about the Summit – wanted our hometown to look good before the world.

Reflecting on all of this six weeks after the event, I think that several important learnings emerge: (1) a stronger awareness of the world as a global community; (2) a recognition that fear and ignorance threaten the common good more than any other factor, including terrorism; (3) a realization of the truth of Pope Paul VI's oft-quoted words, “If you want peace, work for justice.”

Perhaps all three learnings are best epitomized in the peaceful People's March which took place on Friday, Sept. 25. Marchers mobilized on Fifth Avenue at the entrance to Carlow University campus. We had front-row seats. Tibetan monks marched side by side with the peace activist group, “Raging Grannies;” Thomas Merton Center and Pax Christi folks joined arms with Mennonites and American Friends; labor union organizers accompanied Iraq



Sr. Patricia McCann

Veterans for Peace; AARP members walked beside college students their grandkids' ages.

Hundreds of police in riot gear lined the several-mile route. Their presence was intimidating and yet, given the fear heightened by six weeks of media repetition of video footage from Seattle and London prior to the Pittsburgh event, it also felt realistic. I smiled at a Pennsylvania State policeman as they faced us with shields and raised batons. “We are peaceful people,” I said. “Yes. We're just here to protect you from the crazies,” he responded.

As I observed the escalation of fear and concern in the days immediately before the Summit, Franklin Roosevelt's prophetic words echoed in my head: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” With the Convention Center neighborhood barricaded from public access, busses rerouted and bridges closed, downtown literally shut down. What might have been an educative and celebratory event was essentially put beyond the reach of the local population. It was a graphic example of our post 9/11 world.

Nonetheless, over 4,000 people marched and sang as one on that September day. The small group of anarchists who had organized unsuccessfully the day before were scattered among them, but it was very clear that the message this day was not anarchy, but justice and peace throughout the world.

Time will validate whether or not the G-20 Summit in Pittsburgh moved us a step closer to realizing that hope.

Sister Patricia McCann is archivist in Pittsburgh and writes on social issues.

VOWS (from Page 1)

Sister Eileen Campbell of the Institute Leadership Team also participated in the ceremony. Sister Kathleen Wayne of Rochester, a friend, presented a reflection at the Mass.

“Pat’s response in faith to God’s mercy has led her to walk the path as a Sister of Mercy, and we are grateful for her willingness to say, ‘Yes,’” Kathy said.

It was Kathy who led the retreat in 2000 at which Pat heard the call to be a Sister of Mercy. At the retreat, Pat said she did something that for her was out of character: she volunteered to read a prayer.

She recalled that she did not know what the Scripture reading in the prayer would be. As it turned out, it included one of Peter’s letters in which he talked about God’s call of a person to election and service.

“That’s when I knew,” she said in a recent interview at her office at Mercy Bridges, a literacy-training program in Rochester for which she serves as administrative assistant.

Laughing, she said, “That was unexpected!”

Following the retreat prayer, she told Kathy that she needed to speak with her. Recalling the time, Kathy said she was not surprised when Pat approached her about becoming a sister.

“I could see it in her qualities of prayerfulness, simple living and care for the earth that are all values of Mercy,” Kathy said. “It has been wonderful sharing the journey with her and witnessing her growth in her feeling at home with the community.”

Pat entered the then-Mercy regional community in Rochester in 2001. She was quickly immersed in Mercy life when she served a year as



Lily Black, Pat’s six-month-old granddaughter, enjoys the celebration.

a novice in Laredo, Texas, where she got to know the Hispanic culture. Also, she offered her computer skills for the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas chapter that was held there in 2005. Completing her novitiate, she professed her first vows in July of 2005.

She got acquainted with sisters in other communities when she was a computer technology support person at Georgian Court University, Lakewood, N.J., and later during the assembly for the Mid-Atlantic Community, Merion, Pa.

What she brings to Mercy is a life in which she raised two children and worked as a registered nurse, technical writer, software tester and computer technical support systems person. Her marriage was annulled in the late 1990s.

“I bring a unique and varied experience of how the world works. I was downsized in my work and had to put food on the table for my family everyday,” she said.

She added, “And I bring my sense of humor, computer skills and the desire to serve and make a difference for others.”

For the past year, she has served Mercy Bridges – performing general office work, keeping records, updating the database and the website and working on the ministry’s newsletter.

She said her position supports people, such as director Sister Edwardine Weaver and the scores of tutors who teach reading skills, enabling their clients to better their lives.

“I help make it happen,” she said.

In the future, Pat would like to do more with eco-spirituality for which she has a passion. She admits to turning off lights that are not needed and pulling papers out of wastebaskets and putting them in recycling bins.

“I don’t like to waste things,” she said. Pat hoped to do more in spreading the message of the spirituality of ecology, saying, “I believe it is right and just that everyone be responsible stewards of all that we have on Earth for the good of all.”

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Pat cuts the cake celebrating the occasion at the reception in her honor.

Vows Photos



Pat receives her ring from Sister Eileen Campbell symbolizing her commitment as a Sister of Mercy.



Following the Mass, Pat, second from left, is pictured sharing a moment with, from left, Sister Nancy Hoff, NyPPaW president; Father Thomas Wheeland, celebrant of the Mass from Holy Cross Parish; and Eileen Campbell, representing the Institute Leadership Team.



Pat and granddaughter Krystal Bradley enjoy the reception.

Post (from Page 1)

Cynthia said she was excited by the opportunity to serve the Institute through the New Membership Office and admitted that leaving Pittsburgh will be quite a change for her.

“But the opportunity to work with women and men across the Institute who are interested in how Mercy is evolving into the future is compelling,” she said. “I am especially looking forward to collaborating with those in Mercy Association, Companions and Mercy Volunteer Corp, while maintaining the very strong program we have for vowed members.”

The office, which had been centered in St. Louis, Mo., will be moved to the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas in Silver Spring, Md.

Sister Nancy Hoff, NyPPaW president, said Cynthia had been part of a dedicated and competent New Membership Team that blessed NyPPaW.

“I know that she will bring that same dedication, competency and commitment to Mercy in her new role in the Institute Incorporation Office,” she said. “While we are saddened that Cynthia will no longer be the NyPPaW Incorporation Minister, we are very pleased that her gifts and talents will be utilized Institute-wide.”

Sister Anne Curtis, a member of the Institute Leadership Team and a NyPPaW sister from Rochester, said Cynthia brings many gifts to the post.

“She brings a wealth of experience and wisdom that will be a gift to the whole Institute,” she said.

Sister Mary Waskowiak, Institute president, agreed that Cynthia’s gifts will benefit the Institute.

“She is the right person for this time as we attempt to take New Membership in new directions,” she said.

During her time as incorporation minister, Cynthia worked with Sisters Patricia Black, Kathleen Sisson and Catherine Solan, all of whom have professed final vows. She assisted these sisters who have professed their first vows: Sisters Jennifer Lang, Laurie Orman and Madeline Rockwell. Also, she worked with Sister Jennifer Wilson, a novice, and helped Sister Linda McCutcheon through the process of re-entering the Community. Two other women with whom she ministered decided to leave the process.

“This time calls us to see how we can strengthen the different forms of Mercy commitment and share our great faith in and energy for Mercy’s future,” Cynthia said. “I also anticipate learning from what Mercies worldwide are doing, and connecting with other religious communities who share our passion for a future for religious life.”

NyPPaW supports education model that generates hope

Selena Carrion is a serious student, listening attentively in Laura Derigo's math class on a recent Monday morning.

She is joined by a handful of classmates in the eighth-grade classroom at St. Monica's, the all-girls school that is home to 32 students and part of NativityMiguel Middle School, Buffalo. Just 10 minutes away by car, 52 boys are learning at the St. Augustine campus. Each campus offers an education in grades five through eight.

These are students from low-income families who come to NativityMiguel with a commitment to education and maintaining a positive attitude toward self and others.

Taking a moment to speak with a visitor from her seat, Selena said that she enjoys the teachers and students at St. Monica's and finds the atmosphere and education different from other schools she attended.

"I like the smaller classes," she said with a quiet smile. "You don't have the commotion and drama (as in other schools)."

Students at both campuses are called "Scholars" and are in school for eight-and-a-half hours a day. A fact sheet on the school boasts attendance of 97 percent.

In her second year at St. Monica's, Selena said that she is hoping to attend Mt. Mercy Academy next year and eventually pursue a career as an FBI agent.

Selena has hope for her future, and that is exactly what school president Nancy Langer wants to hear.

"I love to see the changes in students from the time they start here to the time when they take advantage of the opportunities the schools give them to change their lives through

education," said Nancy, a former attorney. She was development director for both campuses in 2005 and became president in 2008.

The Jesuits started the faith-based "Nativity" model of schools for low-income students in lower Manhattan in 1971. Jesuit Father Edward Durkin, principal of the school, director of the St. Augustine campus and a math teacher there, was a founder of that first school.

In 1989, the model has developed as the NativityMiguel Network with some 60 middle schools in the United States.

The "Nativity Model" consists of three separate but interrelated programs: a Middle School Program with extended after-school hours and an extended school year; a mandatory Summer Leadership Program, focusing on character building and continued education; and a Graduate Support Program, providing academic



Nancy Langer, president of Nativity-Miguel School in Buffalo chats with Jesuit Father Edward Durkin, principal.



Tonisha Redfern, left, and Kori Slaughter are eighth graders at the St. Monica campus of NativityMiguel School in Buffalo.

support and tuition assistance to alumni in high school.

Jesuits from the New York Province started NativityMiguel in Buffalo in 2004. At the St. Monica campus, there are five teachers and another who comes to the school as part of AmeriCorps Builds Lives Through Education. The list includes Laura Derigo, campus director, who also teaches math. St. Augustine has six teachers including Father Durkin. A Catholic Charities Volunteer Corps member also teaches.

Annual tuition is \$2,400, which represents about 25 percent of the cost which includes the extended day, summer and graduate support (except for high school tuition assistance) as well as the small classes for the regular academic school day.

"Many of our families can only afford to pay \$500 a year. These are the types of students we seek to serve," Nancy said.

The school provides financial assistance to make up the remainder of the cost, she said.

The Sisters of Mercy NyPPaW are one of the co-endorsing groups supporting the school. Others include

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School (from Page 7)

the Jesuits, Christian Brothers, Daughters of the Heart of Mary and True Bethel Baptist Church.

Sister JoAnne Courneen, from NyPPaW's leadership team, serves on the school's board of members.

"Our involvement is very consistent with the mission of the Sisters of Mercy and Catherine McAuley's belief that education is a way to empower others," she said.

Mercy Sisters Sally Maloney (Buffalo) and Bernadette Bell (Erie) are trustees.

The boys at St. Augustine's echo comments made by their peers at St. Monica's saying they like their teachers, classmates and learning.

"It's fun," said seventh-grader Christopher Dargan, an aspiring singer.

Father Durkin quietly watched proudly as students – like those at St. Monica's – entered his math class greeting a visitor with a firm handshake, eye contact and warm words of welcome.

"We try to expand their possibilities once they start seeing new possibilities," Father Durkin said. "It unlocks things inside of them they never knew they had."

According to Nancy, most students at the campuses are African-American. In fact, some have emigrated from Africa. A quarter of the students are Catholic.

She said an emphasis on academics is meshed with art, sewing and a writer's workshop for the girls at St. Monica's, which is housed in a former Catholic elementary school.

As president, Nancy is responsible for fundraising, a difficult job seeing that parents pay only five percent of their child's tuition. The rest comes from grants, foundations, donations and other sources.

"It's a lot of work," she said with a laugh. The Sisters of Mercy provide some financial support, Nancy said.

"We've been doing it," she said. "We are seeing more community support each year."

Sister volunteers for 'Extreme Makeover' television program

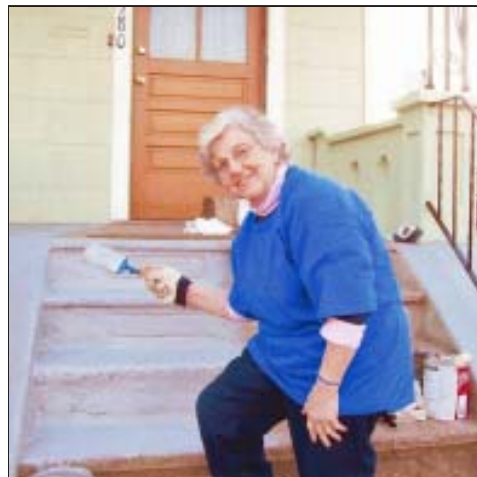
When Ty Pennington and the crew for ABC-TV's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" rolled into Buffalo in mid-November, Sister Pauline Petruzzella was there – not as a spectator, but as one of 5,000 volunteers.

"There was excitement in the air, and I wanted to be part of it," she said.

The goal was to build a new home at 228 Massachusetts Ave. in west Buffalo. The home was located in an area in which Pauline grew up.

"Our family home and neighborhood was demolished and replaced by expressways and low-income housing," she said.

Now, Pauline had an opportunity to make a difference. The builder, she said, used the "green" approach and reused



Sister Pauline Petruzzella gets ready to give a coat of paint to the front steps of the "Extreme Makeover" house in Buffalo.

materials as well as new materials to build a house for Delores Powell, a single mother, and her four children.

She said volunteers built a new home for the Powells and helped renovate 50 homes in the area with new roofs, sidings, sidewalks and gardens.

"It was neighbors helping neighbors!" Pauline said. "Yes, I pushed a broom, shoveled dirt and gravel, painted and pulled nails from wood that would be recycled. So many people were there and so was the spirit of Mercy."

Dressed in her blue Extreme Makeover T-shirt and often wearing a hard hat, Pauline volunteered for four days.

"I loved the high energy, spirit and hope that brought new life to a very poor part of Buffalo. May this spirit spread far and wide," she said.



Wearing hardhats, Pauline and niece, Carolyn Baach, stand in front of the house being "made over." They were among 5,000 volunteers.

Philippine schools help provide students hopeful future

In the September issue of In Harmony, NyPPaW's Mercy high schools in the United States were featured. In this issue, we visit two of the three Mercy high schools in the Philippines.

Mercy Junior College

Sister Hilda Jimenez, director of Mercy Junior College, Tubod, Lanao del Norte, Mindanao, said this year is among the most exciting as this is the first time that tertiary education resumed to serve the people of Tubod, Lanao del Norte and the neighboring towns. She explained that tertiary education is the next phase of school education that focuses on technology.

According to Hilda, the high school is not offering baccalaureate courses but Technical Vocational Courses accredited by TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority). It helps young ones as well as older ones in developing their special skills properly and enables them find a job for their living. Computer programming, and soon to open, bookkeeping and health care services are available.

She said NyPPaW's Development Office provided 103 scholarships to help students attend the high school. According to Sister Peggy Gorman,



Holy Cross High School, Kolambugan, Lanao del Norte, Mindanao, is another Mercy high school in the Philippines. In the photo, students enjoy making an illustration for peace. Later, they reported to the class on their project. Pictured, from left, are Anthoñiza Tadlas, Kristine Quintas, Lorraine Lumantas, Jadaza David, Ayrton Mansueto and Kyong Mei Suh.

NyPPaW chief development officer, the scholarships were provided by donors throughout NYPPAW, who donated \$125 each for a scholarship for a student in the Philippines.

NyPPaW's other Mercy schools in the Philippines also received scholarships through the efforts of the Development Office.

Mercy Junior College also offers an elementary school for which 35 scholarships were provided. Total enrollment at the school is 718 students, 546 of whom attend the high school.

"The students are poor," Hilda said. She added that she was grateful for the scholarships and said they helped increase the overall enrollment at the school.

Hilda said another factor in helping increase enrollment was school parents visiting other parents and encouraging them to either keep their children in the school, or in the case of new students, enrolling them in the school. Mercy Junior College offers a private education for which parents must pay; public schools offer free tuition.

This year, she said, the school also motivated the Parents Teachers Guild (PTG) to help us raise the tuition fees in order to increase teachers' salaries.

"The salary increase was mandated by law. Besides, salaries are quite low; public schools are paying their teachers twice as much," she said.

This year, each grade level in high school now has a library period during which students can do re-

search and use any of the 10 computers with a flat screen monitor and Internet connection.

"Our ultimate goal and objective is to turn out students who can compete globally," Hilda said. "This can be realized through student-centered activities, computer-based learning and instilling those values that will make them better individuals."

Hilda credited the efforts and services rendered by school administrators, faculty, staff, parents and the whole community.

"We are excited to implement all our goals and objectives through the activities that are geared toward the realization of our vision and mission," she said.

"This is a good start and for us it is the most exciting and memorable year in our school history," she said.

Holy Cross High School

To Sister Jean Delgado, being a teacher is a noble profession and not just a vocation. Teachers impart their knowledge to their students in a way that develops the whole being of students, not just the mental aspect, she said.

"Teaching is at the

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Holy Cross (from Page 8)

same time a vocation and a gift from God. A teacher is God's instrument to continue his mission on earth to guide the children's future," said Jean, director of Holy Cross High School, Kolambagan, Lanao del Norte.

That is why Holy Cross – a K-12 school with 498 students in its high school program – has pursued initiatives, activities, programs and classes aimed to meet that goal.

She said she was excited to see students return to Holy Cross after several transferred to other schools following an attack in the area on Aug. 18, 2008, by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

According to Jean, teachers this year have been trained in the Revised Secondary Curriculum (RSEC) that is mandated by the Philippine Department of Education for the 2010-2011 school year. The school has decided to implement the curriculum as a pilot program this year.

"This way, teacher and learners will have an idea about the new curriculum, and there won't be as many difficulties in implementing it next year," she said.

Jean noted that Holy Cross continues to implement the Technology Livelihood Education (TLE) program for the second year with two teachers.

She said Luzviminda Rivera teaches the use of the sewing machine; Sister Linda Lazaderas, a registered nurse, is an instructor in medicine, specifically basic personal hygiene and first aid; and Faith Jumalon teaches food preparation. Third-year students are learning drafting; senior students are being taught an introduction to carpentry and electronics.

On Fridays between 4 to 5 p.m., students attend remedial classes to improve their competency in math, English and science. This formerly was their time to participate in school clubs, which is now moved to Thursdays.

"This is for the purpose of preparing our students for going out from school and having the knowledge of entrepreneurship, since in reality not all of them could pursue their college courses when they graduate high school," she said. "We pray for their success."

Severe storms batter Philippines; sisters help with relief efforts



Girls walk through their mud-soaked neighborhood.

Storms battered the Philippines in September. On Sept. 26, Typhoon Ondoy brought heavy rains causing severe flooding in Metro Manila and surrounding areas. The storm killed scores, left severe damage and thousands homeless. Only eight days later, Typhoon Pepeng caused more damage in the northern areas.

Sister Derby Mercado was in Manila at that time helping pack relief supplies at Malacanang Palace. She said the Sisters of Mercy joined others helping with relief supplies.

"The Sisters of Mercy in the Philippines contributed some relief goods like blankets, soap (laundry and bath items), biscuits, noodles and milk to the victims of the typhoon in Luzon area, particularly in Metro Manila," she said.

Derby said the sisters helped families in Montalban, Rizal, particularly in Barangay Dela Costa. Photos shown here show some of the distress even two weeks after the typhoon.

"Some houses and cars were being abandoned by the owners because they were badly damaged. Other families tried to recover some of their belongings, even if their homes were filled with mud," she said.



Debris rests alongside a home.

Laboon sisters celebrate life, ministry together in Pittsburgh

They grew up with each other in Pittsburgh. Played and prayed together. They even got into the same line of work.

And on Nov. 15 – as siblings and Sisters of Mercy – they celebrated together at the Convent of Mercy, Pittsburgh. Sister Mary de Lellis Laboon blew out the candles on a birthday cake marking her 90 years. At her side were Sister Rosemary Laboon, 83, and Sister Joan Laboon, 81.

Said de Lellis, seated in a wheelchair and smiling at her sisters around her at a table in a comfortable, convent living room, “It’s nice to say, ‘These are my sisters.’ ”

“We’re all very close,” said Joan, who with her siblings gathered for an interview at the convent a few days after the festivities. She asked the interviewer to speak loudly as her sisters had difficulty hearing.

The trio can account for a total of 202 years of religious life serving in ministries that included education, health care and parish work.

“Dad was always proud that there were three nuns in the family,” Rosemary said.

De Lellis responded, “I never heard him say that.”

“He did,” Rosemary and Joan agreed in unison.

Occasionally, the sisters, during the interview, would politely disagree with each other over different versions of facts.

The Laboon sisters came from a family of nine and talk proudly of their brothers Joseph and John, both of whom became priests. Father Joseph, who celebrated de Lellis’s birthday Mass, served the Diocese of Pittsburgh before retiring to Florida. Father John,

“It’s nice to say, ‘These are my sisters.’ ”

Sr. Mary de Lellis Laboon

now deceased, was awarded the Silver Star for his heroic submarine service in World War II. After the war, he became a Jesuit priest and U.S. Navy chaplain serving in Vietnam. In fact, the U.S. Navy named a guided missile destroyer after him: the U.S.S. Laboon.

“I christened it,” said Rosemary, her eyes wide with excitement as she recalled the event in 1993 in Bath, Maine.

Youthful memories included a nightly family rosary following supper, attending Mass on Sundays and daily Mass attendance during Lent. De Lellis often looked after the younger children and would walk them to Mass.

“She used to say, ‘If you can’t walk faster you may as well stay home,’” laughed Rosemary.

The example of sisters who taught them in school led them to consider religious life. De Lellis wanted to be a sister from an early age. Rosemary and Joan said they loved being around the sisters and often helped them after school.

“I thought they fell out of heaven,” Joan said of the sisters.

De Lellis, who entered first in 1937, quietly chuckled as she told of her reaction when she received her first assignment.

“The only thing I didn’t want to do was teach,” she said.

But Mother Rose Curran learned of de Lellis’s sewing skills and informed her that she would be a home economics teacher at Carlow College (now Carlow University). De Lellis accepted the assignment.

“I guess that’s where obedience comes in,” she said.

She taught at Carlow for several years before becoming a secretary at St. Agatha Parish, Bridgeville.

“I only had a year of typing so you can imagine what I got into,” she said with a grin. “But my typing did improve.”

Later, she ministered to oncology patients at Mercy Hospital, Pittsburgh (now UMPC Mercy) and was a parish social minister.

While serving at St. Alphonsus Parish, McDonald, Pa., from 1969-76, she organized an outdoor picnic for parishioners and people from other nearby, non-Catholic churches. When it began to rain, the picnickers – Catholics



Sister Mary de Lellis Laboon is seated before her sisters, Sister Joan Laboon and Sister Rosemary Laboon.

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Sisters (from Page 10)

and non-Catholics – sought shelter in the St. Alphonsus Parish Hall.

“That started them working together (in ministry),” she said proudly.

A recent birthday card sent by a woman whom she knew while at St. Alphonsus touched her. The woman, she said, wasn’t Catholic and was so surprised when de Lellis spent time with her after her husband’s death. De Lellis said that the woman gratefully wrote in the card that her visits helped her through a difficult time.

De Lellis returned to the Convent of Mercy in 1990 and shared her gift of sewing – at one time sewing 200 curtains for the convent.

Rosemary entered in 1943 and spent 40 years teaching in Catholic elementary schools. NFL quarterback Dan Marino was one of her students while she was teaching fifth grade at St. Regis School, Oakland. She recalled seeing Marino playing catch with a football in the street with his father on Parkview Avenue.

“I used to think, ‘I wish he was home doing his homework!’” she laughed.

Her time as a parish social minister was most rewarding, she said. At St. Maurice Parish, Forest Hills, she took Communion to shut-ins, distributed food to the poor and helped plan funeral liturgies.

“I liked to hear people’s stories; many times they had no one to talk with them,” she said.

Later, she was house mother at Mercy House, where families of patients at Mercy Hospital would stay overnight. She volunteered in the hospital’s gift shop and today manages 20 hours a week working in medical records.

“This has been a vocation, a calling,” she said.

Joan entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1945 and taught in Catholic elementary schools in the Pittsburgh area, until Sister Elizabeth Carroll sent for her. “She told me that she wanted me to go to serve the schools in Puerto Rico and that I couldn’t say, ‘No!’” she recalled. “So, what was I going to do?”

Joan spent four years as assistant superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of San Juan. Returning home in 1971, she was vice principal and later principal at Bishop Boyle High School, Homestead, Pa. She worked in admissions at Carlow College and was in charge of volunteers at Mercy Hospital. She also volunteered in the hospital’s gift shop. Today, she works on special projects at UPMC Mercy.

“It’s been great. I have loved everything that I have done,” she said.

These days, the siblings meet at the Convent of Mercy every Sunday for lunch and several games of rummy and Phase 10.

“Except when the Steelers are on,” said Joan. Of course, they watch the game ... together.

Sr. Edwardine given award for education achievements

The Catholic School Administrators Association of New York State Nov. 15 presented Sister Edwardine Weaver with its Lighting the Fire for Catholic Education Award.

“The award was a surprise, but appreciated,” said Edwardine, director of the Mercy Bridges reading literacy program in Rochester. “I have been fortunate to have several opportunities to serve the good and noble mission of education.”

Carol Geddis, association executive director, said the group honored two others along with Edwardine to “recognize those individuals in Catholic education who have had a significant impact on children, schools and Catholic education.”

She added that Edwardine was one of the founding members of the association, served on the executive board for many years and continues to be a valuable member.

Edwardine said education has been a major part of her life as a teacher, principal, superintendent of schools and developer of the Catholic School Administrators Program at the University of Rochester.

“It has been a remarkable journey of belief in the power of this ministry to open a new chapter in the lives of those it serves,” she said. “It has also been a journey of great respect for those who, through their dedication, have enabled the mission of Catholic education to continue to make a difference in the lives of others.”

She applauded the work of the association and its efforts to “light the fire” that enables Catholic education to continue its long and proud history.



Sister Edwardine Weaver of Rochester displays her award from the Catholic School Administrators Association of New York State.

Giving Circle shows face of Mercy for women, children

Eight programs received grants from the Sisters of Mercy Many Faces of Mercy Giving Circle grant during an annual awards ceremony Sept. 24 at Mercy Center, Buffalo.

The grants are awarded to non-profit groups that serve women and girls in the Buffalo area. Sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy in Buffalo, the philanthropic group encourages, inspires and educates laywomen to become more effective philanthropists. The Giving Circle started in Buffalo in 2003. Sister Peggy Gorman, NyPPaW chief development officer, would like to see the Many Faces of Mercy Giving Circle spread throughout NyPPaW's stateside areas.

"Giving Circles exist throughout the country, and they enable women to contribute to charities of their choice in a very personal way," she said. "The circle provides an opportunity to encourage women to think of philanthropic dollars as investments in their community by building and strengthening programs for women and young girls through joint contributions."

In Buffalo, those women who choose to become members of the Giving Circle make a commitment of \$2,000 for two years – to improve the lives of women and young girls in their area. Giving Circle members award grants to chosen programs. Half of the grants are selected by members of the Giving Circle and the remainder by the Sisters of Mercy.

According to literature supplied by the Development Office, the "Cs" of the Giving Circles are: create something new, change to make a difference for others, connect with a cause, collaborate



Grant recipients pictured in the front row, from left, are: Franciscan Sister Maureen Harris, Pastoral Care Program, Gerard Place; Deborah Lynn Williams, CEO YWMA, WNY; and Penny Selmonsky, Consumer Advisory Group: Neighborhood Legal Services. Pictured in the back row, from left, are: Franciscan Sister Diane Gianadda, Women's Summer Respite Program, Francis Center, Inc.; Mercy Sister Peggy Gorman, chief development officer, Sisters of Mercy New York, Pennsylvania, Pacific West Community; Ellen Koessler, chair, Many Faces of Mercy Giving Circle; Lyn Rezabek, Brendan's Voyage Children's Folk Group, Ambrose Catholic Academy; Jean Buchanan, grandmother, Sisters of Mercy Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program; Mercy Sister Patricia Prinzing, vice president, Sisters of Mercy New York, Pennsylvania, Pacific West Community; Raven Dorman, program aide, Girl Scouts of Western New York; and Mercy Sister Mary Ellen Twist, president, Mount Mercy Academy, Meet Catherine McAuley program, Mt. Mercy Academy.

with other women, commit by providing hands-on experience and celebrate a sense of joy in fostering a special project with others for others.

Peggy said the Development Office has surfaced the names of several women in Erie, Pittsburgh and Rochester who would be potential Giving Circle members. The office hopes to meet with the women next spring. Depending on the response of the women, Giving Circles could be operating in other areas by fall 2010.

One of the programs receiving a grant from the Mercy Giving Circle this year was the Women's Summer Respite Program at Francis Center, Buffalo.

Letitia Brown, who attended the Giving Circle ceremony, recalls being a single mother raising an 8-year old daughter, working and trying to maintain a household.

"I needed a break," she said recently recalling that time nearly 20 years ago. The "break" came when she was referred to Women's Summer Respite Program, which offered low-income women prayer, relaxation and meditation.

"I realized that there were other women in my shoes; I could relate to someone," she said. Today, she works for the respite program and wants to make a difference for others.

At 94, Rochester's Sister Edwina keeps on going strong

Eight seniors from Notre Dame High School are learning the finer points of Mandarin Chinese. It is the first time the language has been offered at the Elmira, N.Y., co-educational school.

There is a new student in the class, too – Sister Edwina Butler, who is 94 years old.

“I am really a senior,” she said with a laugh in a telephone interview minutes before she left for a date with elderly women to play Mah Jongg, a Chinese board game.

The long-time French and music teacher at Notre Dame explained that she always wanted to learn a tonal language in which a single vowel in a word can have four tonal sounds and meanings.

“It’s a struggle,” Edwina admitted, but vowed to keep at it.

That passion for lifelong learning and her living of the Mercy spirit were reasons Notre Dame presented her with the 2009 McAuley Award on Oct. 20.

Said Rochester Bishop Matthew Clark in presenting the award: “She could be called a ‘Renaissance Woman’ with many talents whose desire to follow knowledge ...enriches the lives of others. She is a true daughter of Catherine McAuley in her service to others throughout her life.”

Sister Mary Walter Hickey, Notre Dame president, said Edwina is an inspiration to others, showing them that it is never too late to learn. She called her an “integral and life-giving part” of the Notre Dame community.

“Her loyalty and dedication to the sisters in community, to our school and to the larger local community are gifts. She has never lost her pioneer spirit, and she is generous with her time, is always willing to listen, play

cards, answer the phone or to cook, and she takes care of all of our guests with great Mercy hospitality,” Mary Walter said.

Edwina said she was humbled by the award and accepted it in the name of the first Notre Dame faculty, her pioneer companions who opened the school in 1955.

Notre Dame has been home to Edwina for most of her teaching career.

There she taught five levels of French and provided special activities for her students and parents by directing French plays, organizing a French Mass at Christmas, complete with French carols. She said former students often came back to participate in the Mass in French.

Other activities included arranging language fairs and special French meals and chaperoning trips to France with her students. Also, she directed school musicals and conducted the school band and chorus.

“It has been very rewarding and enriching,” she said of her Notre Dame years. She considered it a

“How blessed I am that God gave me this vocation. This has been a very rewarding time of serving others and advancing God’s cause.”

Sr. Edwina Butler



Bishop Matthew Clark of Rochester presents to Sister Edwina Butler the McAuley Award given by Notre Dame High School, Elmira, N.Y., where she taught for many years.

privilege to attend teaching conferences and learning from other teachers.

She entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1932 and “retired” from teaching in 1997. But retirement for Edwina included visiting the sick, ministry and grocery shopping for the convent. She also traveled to shrines in France, made pilgrimages to the Holy Land and Medjugorje, and witnessed the launch of a space shuttle twice at the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral, Fla.

“How blessed I am that God gave me this vocation. This has been a very rewarding time of serving others and advancing God’s cause,” she said.

Two years ago, Edwina celebrated her 75th jubilee.

“I’m working on my 80th now,” she laughed.

And when asked about plans for the future, her laugh continued.

“Let’s just see what happens.”

Celebrating the joy and faith of a centenarian: Sr. Mary Eileen

By Sister Barb Stinard

It's 1909, just one century ago! Theodore Roosevelt had finished his presidential term and William Howard Taft took his place in the White House. The first pennies were minted. Workers started pouring concrete in building the Panama Canal. George Eastman developed the lightweight, easy-to-use Kodak box. The Roman Catholic Church declared Joan of Arc a saint.

And Dolores FitzGibbons was born in Hornell, N.Y. One hundred years later, sisters, family and friends gathered on her birthday, Nov. 18, at Mercy Center, Rochester, to celebrate the life of this faith-filled woman who has spent her days in the classroom, the chapel and the kitchen.

After graduating from high school and business school, Dolores joined the Sisters of Mercy in Rochester in 1931. A new "motherhouse" had been built in the *country*, in Brighton, N.Y. She and the other 14 young women who joined the religious community on Aug. 15 would be the first postulants to begin their new life in this new home. At that time, to pray 15 decades of the rosary (Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries) was to pray the *full rosary*. Because of their number, this group of women was honored with the distinction of being called the "rosary band." Dolores would soon be given her new religious name: Sister Mary Eileen.

Sister Mary Eileen loved her 47 years in the classroom as an elementary teacher. She was a "fixture" in Elmira, N.Y., as she influenced thousands of children and their family members in the 34 years when she was missioned there. Her Irish wit, welcoming nature and honed teaching

skills made Eileen a much-loved teacher.

Sister Miriam Nugent, one of her former students at St. Patrick's, always tells Sister Eileen that she was her "favorite third-grade teacher." She may have been her only third-grade teacher, but Miriam loved her because she was such a nice, happy and positive person. Miriam's father had died the previous year, and to this day she remembers that Eileen comforted her with the words, "Your father went to heaven to get you a front seat." Those words made Miriam feel important and eased her grief.

Sister Veronica Casey, a member of the Mercy community, is Eileen's niece. She remembers when "Sister Eileen" came home to Hornell to visit the family with her "sister partner," as sisters always travelled in twos in those days. The kitchen of Grandma's house (Eileen's mother) was the main gathering space. A master storyteller, Eileen gave an animated account of taking the kids from St. Patrick's to the park for a school picnic or of the visit of a retreat priest at the church where she served as sacristan. Eileen also had conversations with her own mother about how her father (then deceased) would be reacting to something from heaven. For Eileen, God was as concrete and tangible as her father.

Sister Barbara Weyand, another niece of Sister Eileen's, was greatly inspired by her aunt.

"I attribute my vocation to Sister Eileen; by her great example she has always been 'my hero.'" Barbara was a small child when the family gave her Aunt Dolores a going-away



Sister Joyce McGinn, local leader in Rochester, helps Sister Mary Eileen FitzGibbons who celebrated her 100th birthday on Nov. 18.

party as she prepared to go away to the convent. The children sat on the stairs watching as the adults joined in the festivities. Then, and after she joined the community, "she has always been a happy person, smiling and the cause of fun for others," Barbara reflected. Miriam's father had always referred to Eileen as "Sister Smiley."

Throughout her lifetime, Eileen has gone out of her way to be warm and welcoming, whether to a grade school student, a postulant or a visitor to the motherhouse where she now lives. She has been known to introduce herself by suggesting that she will help the person to remember her name: "My name is Sister Eileen." As she said this, she pointed to her eye, and then leaned on her elbow.

Yes, we remember this centenarian and celebrate her century of joy and faith.

62 and Under group looks to future possibilities, conversation



Pictured, from left, are Sisters Sheila Stevenson, Jennifer Lang and Mary Bendyna who participated in the 62 and Under gathering in Buffalo in October. Participants expressed a great desire to connect with sisters who were unable to attend the weekend gathering.

By Sister Connie Derby

On Columbus Day weekend 30 Sisters of Mercy, age 62 and under from the stateside NYPPaW communities, met at the Millennium Hotel in Buffalo.

Similar gatherings have taken place across the Institute.

This age group is the one most likely to be involved in full-time ministry and leadership in the next 10 to 15 years.

Lead by the vision of Sister Kathy Wahl of Rochester, a group of sisters had formed a committee to create a theme and plan a schedule for the weekend. Some desired outcomes of the gathering included: simply getting to know one another, meaningful conversation and looking at future possibilities.

In order that all attendees might fully participate, the committee decided that a facilitator would be an

“ ... Possible was broken open through prayer and conversation ... ”

A line from a poem at the 62 and Under gathering

important factor in leading the group toward the desired outcomes. Sister Sheila Carney of Pittsburgh graciously agreed to serve in that role.

The weekend was filled with prayer, conversation, great meals and laughter. The prayer, based on themes taken from that Sunday readings, was woven throughout the schedule. Sheila exercised well her gift of group facilitation using a variety of group processes to invite meaningful conversation.

The breaking open of God’s word and the celebration of the Eucharist on that Saturday evening helped to deepen the recognition of

common bonds among the participants. Sunday morning saw the culmination of the weekend with the creation of a list of future possibilities for the group. Included in this list was a great desire to connect with sisters who, for various reasons, had not been able to attend.

The final exercise involved the fashioning of several “group poems,” with each member of a small group adding a line to one created by the person before her. A line from one of these poems succinctly expresses the experience of the gathering.

“ ... we gather gently together and go forth in courage and solidarity and hope for our future ... ”

Sister Connie Derby is audio/visual resource librarian for the Diocese of Rochester’s Resource Center.

Associate pilgrimage takes participants to ‘sacred place’

By Sister Barb Stinard

Sacred was the inward journey as 49 pilgrims responded to an invitation to participate in the NyPPaW pilgrimage to Manchester/Fall Foliage trip, sponsored by Mercy Association over Columbus Day weekend.

The pilgrimage promised a journey to where Frances Warde is buried, a glimpse of the original Motherhouse in Manchester, N.H., perusal of the Northeast archives in Windham, N.H., Mass at Kateri Tekakwitha Shrine, Fonda, N.Y., and a visit to the Shrine of the North American Martyrs in Auriesville, N.Y. These women and men of faith also believed that autumn was likely to enfold us in the glorious splendor of creation.

Sacred was the sharing and bonding which happened among the pilgrims — women, men, associates, sisters and friends from Buffalo, Pittsburgh and Rochester. Our path of Mercy was our binding force, regardless of our mailing addresses. We gained a familiarity that was fostered by being together in community. Sharing seats on a bus and in restaurant booths enabled this sacred community to happen, even if the duration of the trip was three days.

Manchester and Windham were two focuses of our sacred journey. On the crisp, autumn Saturday morning as the sun shone on our hearts, we gathered at Old St. Joseph’s Cemetery. It hosts the earthly resting place of Frances Warde and other Sisters of Mercy. Frances, who became a close friend of Catherine McAuley’s, not only shared in the story of Mercy in Ireland, but brought it to the United States after Catherine’s death. Frances founded



Pilgrims from NyPPaW gather in prayer around the gravesite of Frances Warde in Manchester, N.H., over Columbus Day weekend.

the Pittsburgh community in 1843. Rochester would be another among the many foundations that Frances would make before her own death in 1884.

The narrow roads of the old cemetery could not accommodate our bus, so in true pilgrimage fashion, we walked into the cemetery to Frances’ grave. It is marked by a large, gray granite headstone, etched with a Mercy cross. Small white crosses mark the burial places of many of her sisters.

Our circle of Mercy surrounded the headstone as we communed in prayer with God and the women and men of Mercy who have preceded us into God’s kingdom. We prayed for ourselves who were on the sacred journey. We expressed the needs of our communities and families. We recalled words written about Frances’ Golden Jubilee. We claimed the blessing from God which Frances requested for future generations of Mercy as she neared her last breath.

Our minds and hearts traveled into the past as we walked outside

the original Motherhouse in Manchester and as we visited the Northeast archives in Windham. Frances’ traveling boxes, prayer book and eyeglasses were among the treasures we viewed.

Some of Frances’ later foundations were among the Native Americans of Maine. How fitting that the latter part of our sacred journey on Sunday morning included honoring Kateri’s legacy of faith, service and respect for the earth and God’s creatures. We participated in a moving Mass with Mohawk influence before we crossed the river to make a brief visit at the Shrine of the North American Martyrs in Auriesville.

We arrived back in Rochester on the third day of our pilgrimage, transformed by this journey to sacred places. Perhaps the sacred journey inward has been the most profound as it has left us to ponder the richness of what it can mean to *be* NyPPaW.

Sister Barb Stinard is a co-coordinator for Mercy Association.

News from Around NyPPaW

NyPPaW

Leadership visit



Sister Geraldine Rosinski, a member of the NyPPaW Leadership Team, speaks to sisters in Rochester Oct. 31 as Sister Joyce McGinn, Rochester local leader, looks on. A representative of NyPPaW leadership visited each of NyPPaW's stateside geographic areas on that day to share information and hear from sisters.

Standing up for a cause



Mercy Associate Angela Giuffre and Sister Phyllis Marie Zaworski stand with an unidentified Mercyhurst College student at the annual demonstration at the School of the Americas, Fort Benning, Ga., on Nov. 22. Angie and Phyllis Marie represented NyPPaW at the demonstration at which many activists from diverse organizations carried signs and banners. Representatives of other Mercy communities also participated.

NyPPaW associates gather in Michigan



“Centered in God Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” was the theme of a meeting of the Mercy Association Leadership Network (MALN) Oct. 22-24 in Farmington Hills, Mich. It was the first-ever meeting of the group under a new name and structure. Thirty-six Mercy Associates and community liaisons participated. Pictured are NyPPaW representatives who attended the meeting. In the front row, from left, are: Sister Phyllis Marie McDonald and Carol Costello, both of Erie; Carol Herwood, Buffalo; Sister Guadalupe (Loly) Lumantas, NyPPaW liaison; and Sister Nancy Whitley NyPPaW codirector for associates. In the back row, from left, are: Mary Austin, NyPPaW co-director for associates and a member of the coordinating committee that planned the event; Jean Galofaro, Rochester; and Mary Jane Longo, Pittsburgh.

Celebrating International Climate Day



NyPPaW Sisters of Mercy and associates gathered Oct. 24 as part of an effort by 350.org to celebrate International Climate Day. The group sent more than 350 postcards to President Obama in advance of his visit to the international meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark, on climate change. Pictured kneeling, from left, are Sisters Caritas Quinn and Margaret O'Donnell. In the second row, from left, are Sisters Patricia Donovan and Consolacion Briones. In the back row, from left, are Mercy Associate Peggy Biekowski and Sisters Geraldine Rosinski, Patricia Gilbert and Sheila Walsh.

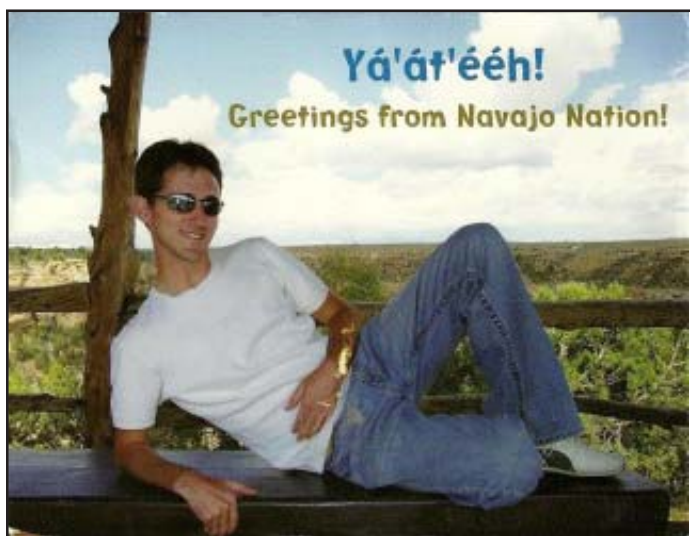
News from Around NyPPaW

NyPPaW

Pizza, friendship offer good mix



Meet NyPPaW's Mercy Volunteer



Pictured is Mike Allen, a Mercy Volunteer at St. Michael's Association of Special Education, St. Michaels, Ariz., where he is working with Native Americans who have disabilities. Mike is a 2008 graduate of Mercyhurst College, Erie, and grandnephew of Sister Edith Langiotti (Erie). He writes: "Just wanted to let you know that I'm loving reservation life so far. It's more awesome than I even expected. My students are really amazing as are my coworkers." If you are interested in more information on Mercy Volunteers, please contact Sister Michele Schroeck at mschroeck@mercyhurst.edu or call 814-897-0376. If you are interested in assisting Mercy Volunteer Corps, please contact MVC Board Member Sister Trish Tyler at rsmgarden@yahoo.com

BUFFALO

Celebrating our benefactors



The NyPPaW Development Office held receptions in Buffalo on Aug. 20 and in Rochester on Oct. 24 to honor our benefactors. The highlight of the event for the 170 benefactors who attended the reception in either Rochester or Buffalo was the celebration of Mass offered for the intentions of the benefactors. The guests also enjoyed the opportunity to socialize with members of the Community Leadership Team and the many Sisters of Mercy who attended. The Rochester guests also had the opportunity to meet informally with Bishop Matthew Clark, the Mass celebrant. Sister Nancy Hoff, NyPPaW president, welcomed the guests to the receptions. Nancy's welcome centered around Catherine's words, "The tender mercy of God has given us one another." The receptions were indeed our opportunity to give thanks for our benefactors and friends given us by the tender mercy of God. Pictured enjoying the Buffalo reception, from left, are Sister Sheila Walsh, Karen and Dick Penfold, and Sister Caritas Quinn. A Benefactor Reception will be held in spring of 2010 in Erie.

Sister from Buffalo, topic of column

Sister Marie Bernarde Procknal of Buffalo was the topic of a column by Bill Wolcott that appeared in the Sept. 24th issue of the Union Sun and Journal in Lockport, N.Y.

Wolcott said Marie Bernarde "was as sweet as all first-grade teachers should be – not intimidating, but encouraging – and memorable." He recalled how she taught first-graders at St. Monica's to square dance.

In the article, Wolcott wrote of Marie Bernard's battle with a childhood bone disease, was unconscious for two weeks and missed a year of school. She recovered and later played for the Our Lady of Perpetual Help championship softball team. She entered the Sisters of Mercy, taught in Catholic schools and was a career counselor at Trocaire College, Buffalo.

News from Around NyPPaW

BUFFALO

Distinguished alumnae



Sister Mary Bendyna is pictured speaking after she received the Catherine McAuley Distinguished Alumnae Award from Mt. Mercy Academy, Buffalo, on Nov. 12. The honor was given at the annual Mercy Honors Dinner sponsored by the high school and the Mt. Mercy Alumnae Association. Mary, a Sister of Mercy from Buffalo, is executive director and senior research associate with the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. The national organization conducts social scientific studies about the Catholic Church.

Helping homeless, parents, children



Bishop Edward U. Kmiec of Buffalo participates in a ribbon cutting Sept. 14 for the new education building at Gerard Place, a transitional housing program for homeless single parents and children. The initial building, a former Catholic grammar school, was renovated into 14 apartments and one community room. The newly renovated education building, the former parish convent, will now host community gatherings, an after-school program, life-skills classes, computer training and job readiness programs. The Sisters of Mercy in Buffalo partnered with other communities of women religious in the Buffalo area on the project. Along with other communities, the Sisters of Mercy provide some financial support and serve on the board for Gerard Place.

ERIE

Remembering women religious, clergy

The Sisters of Mercy in Erie hosted the annual Memorial Mass in their chapel on Nov. 12 for deceased women religious, clergy and others who supported the work of vocations in the Erie Diocese. The Catholic Diocese of Erie sponsored the Mass with the help of the Serra Club. Serrans support vocations to the religious life and priesthood. Pictured following the Mass, from left, are: Sister Mary Rita Kuhn, SSJ, diocesan vicar for religious; Sister Domenica DeLeo, Mercy local leader in Erie; Bishop Donald W. Trautman; Sister Christine Vladimiroff, Erie Benedictine prioress; and Sister Mary Ellen Dwyer, president, Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania.



News from Around NyPPaW

ERIE

Outstanding Philanthropic Organization



The Sisters of Mercy in Erie have been named the Outstanding Philanthropic Organization for 2009 by the Northwestern Pennsylvania Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. The recognition took place Nov. 13 at the AFP's annual Philanthropy Day Luncheon at the Lakeshore Country Club. Pictured in the front row, from left, are: Chris Tombaugh, executive director of the Mercy Center for Women, who nominated the sisters for the award; Sister Nancy Hoff of Buffalo, president of the Sisters of Mercy New York, Pennsylvania, Pacific West Community of which Erie is part; and Erie Sisters Maura Smith and Mary Ann Bader. Pictured standing, from left, are Erie sisters JoAnne Courneen, a member of the Community's leadership team; Patricia Whalen; Bernadette Bell; Mary Felice Duska; Teresa Okonski; Edith Langiotti; Domenica DeLeo, Erie local leader; and Catherine Edward Delaney.

Sisters treat employees to appreciation dinner

The Sisters of Mercy in Erie hosted a dinner for their employees on Nov. 18 in their dining room to thank them for their work during the year. Each employee was encouraged to bring a guest. Pictured seated at the dinner, from left, are: Jim Gurley of Sodexo Foods, the service used by the Sisters of Mercy in Erie; and Darcie Goetz and her husband, Michael. Standing, from left, are: Sisters Domenica DeLeo and Bernadette Bell.



News from Around NyPPaW

PITTSBURGH

G-20 comes to Pittsburgh



Leaders from 20 countries, including President Barack Obama, participated in the G-20 Summit in Pittsburgh Sept. 24-25, during which demonstrators sought to bring attention to the poor, homeless and the environment. Their path took them in front of Carlow University on Pittsburgh's Fifth Avenue. In the top photo, Sister Sheila Carney spends a moment with Carlow students who participated in demonstrations. In the bottom photo, Tibetan monks lead a demonstration, which passed in front of the university.

ROCHESTER

Meals on Wheels honor



Pictured are Sister Arlene Semesky and her brother, Mercy Associate Ted Semesky, both from Elmira, N.Y., who are part of the staff of Meals on Wheels of Chemung County, N.Y., which was recently recognized as one of the best senior nutrition programs in the United States. The National Association of Meals on Wheels gave the program its highest honor, a Magnet Exemplary Accreditation. The Chemung County program is one of four to receive the designation. Arlene is site supervisor for the program; Ted is the head cook.

Correction

In the previous issue of In Harmony, we published an article on Mercy high schools in NyPPaW.

The article mentioned that students at Our Lady of Mercy High School, Rochester, ranked high in the Regents exam program. School President Suzanne Johnson was quoted as saying that students will continue to increase their mastery in the program, which is a score of 8 percent or better, on the state level exams. The figure was incorrectly reported. The corrected figure is 85 percent.

We Remember

Sister Linda Marie (Eva Marie) Librera Buffalo Oct. 13, 2009

Sister Linda, 60, was born in Buffalo, N. Y., and entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1966.

Kindergarten was her specialty, and she had a knack for motivating the young children she taught in Orchard Park, Jamestown, Lakeview and Buffalo, all in the Diocese of Buffalo.

She had a great love of animals and delighted children with a classroom pet. Animals were a source of comfort throughout her life.

She also worked at the day care center and as a religious education coordinator. For a time, she worked with the homeless at Covenant House and The Dwelling Place in New York City. She then spent a year with very poor children living at Los Niños near the Mexican border.

Poor health marked the last 15 years of Sister Linda's life, and she



**Sr. Linda Marie
Librera**

found satisfaction in supporting the Kidney Foundation in any way she could.

Her sisters will miss her presence at the switchboard where she helped out and worked her word puzzles until the time of her death.

Sister Mary Janice Norberg Buffalo Oct. 15, 2009

Sister Mary Janice, 72, was a native of Jamestown, N. Y., and entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1956.

She spent most of her 53 years in the ministry of education serving in several schools in the Diocese of Buffalo.

She was the only Sister of Mercy in the Jamestown area for several years following the merger of Catholic schools.

For the last three years of her life she served in various roles at St. Elizabeth's Home in Lancaster, N. Y.

She will be remembered as a "wonderful friend and companion."



**Sr. Mary
Janice Norberg**

Mercy Associate Jane DeSmith Rochester Nov. 7, 2009

Associate Jane DeSmith died peacefully on Nov. 7 in Rochester.

A retired psychologist, she was involved with the Just Faith Life-long Learning Program and enjoyed Bible study, editing a book of poetry, reading and knitting.

Jane is survived by her husband David, and their daughter, son and grandchildren.

When Jane proclaimed her covenant in June 2009, she wrote: "Over the past year, I have discerned God's call to live out the vision and charism of Catherine McAuley and to share my gifts with the poor, the sick and the uneducated. While I do not fully understand this call, I know that God's best plans can only happen when God's word and my response come together."



Jane DeSmith

