

In

HARMONY

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

NyPPaW: First year has blessings, challenges

A few weeks ago, NyPPaW's Community Leadership Team sent sisters and associates a letter asking them to trim their budgets as the country faces tough economic times.

They did: \$115,000 worth, so far.

"Their response was overwhelming and inspiring to me and much appreciated," says Sister Nancy Hoff, NyPPaW president, and that is the kind of support that has carried NyPPaW through its first year.

In leadership since 1992, Nancy and her team – Sisters Patricia Prinzing, JoAnne Courneen, Guadalupe Lumantas and Geraldine Rosinski – have worked to lead nearly 500 sisters and 400 associates through a transition from five separate areas into one larger community. NyPPaW was born on Jan. 1, 2008, with its leadership elected the summer before at the assembly in Buffalo.

Nancy sees the team as the right one for the time to build a foundation for the next leadership, four-and-a-half years from now. "This is a great team that has jelled. They are amazing and the sisters know this."

Basically, she says, the team has worked to build relationships among sisters and associates and put systems and processes in place so that the next leadership team can build on what has gone before.

In a recent interview at her Buffalo office, she acknowledges that while the transition has not been easy for leadership, staff and members, things have generally gone well.

"There is always some anxiety with change. We are working on a lot of things at once; there are a lot of irons in the fire and so many things need to be looked at with new eyes," she says. But our sisters and associates have been supportive.

A definite challenge has been merging the different cultures in NyPPaW's geographic areas and deciding what needs to be done the same, and what can be done differently. For example, Nancy explains, all areas need to observe new financial structures, but each area can decide when to celebrate jubilees for its sisters and associates.

She admits to being surprised by the amount of work of something as seemingly simple as sending our Christmas cards. Lists from all areas needed to be merged; decisions had to be made: who would receive cards, gifts and personal messages?

"This took a great deal of time, and leaders in other Mercy communities that have combined like us say they experienced the same thing," she says.



Sr. Nancy Hoff

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In Harmony

A bimonthly publication of the
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Following Jesus in life's troubled waters

By Sr. Guadalupe (Loly) Lumantas, NyPPaW Leadership Councilor

"... Do you want to be healed? 'Sir,' the sick man answered, 'I do not have anyone to plunge me into the pool once the water has been stirred up. By the time I get there, someone else has gone in ahead of me.'"

(John 5: 6-7)

Because of the many paralyses in life that we experience, sometimes it takes time or we find it hard to walk back to Jesus and ask him for healing. Thus, we need other people – our family and friends – to carry us.

We are in the season of Lent. This is the time to look at Jesus and to see what he held dear, how he lived, what he calls us to be and to do, what he promises to those who are lost, how he found his own direction in the light of the loving Father, and how he refound all of us through his death and resurrection.



Sr. Guadalupe
Lumantas

Doesn't every life have suffering, falls, hurts, rejections, condemnations, death, burial ... and resurrection? The heart of the matter is to go deeper into the sufferings of Christ so that we might come out of this spiritual journey with an appreciation of what Christ did for us and a deeper love for him, for our brothers and sisters and all of creation.

Jesus himself invites us to the desert. He calls us to conversion of heart and to find forgiveness through the sacrament of penance and reconciliation. Through the grace that comes throughout the 40 days of this sacred season, we are to be strengthened in body, mind and soul to live out our lives in his service.

When Jesus was in his excruciating moment in the Garden of Gethsemane, he needed his disciples to be with him while he prayed. He longed for the comfort of their presence and was pained by their inability to provide this for him.

Even Jesus found the consequences of his commitment difficult. He begged to have the cup of suffering pass from him. Still, he found the inner strength to say yes to what was asked of him.

With each part of our life, we can ask ourselves: am I willing to accept the pain that my commitment to serve may cost me? Am I ready to be generous with my whole self, even if it brings suffering my way and challenges me to creatively make a bridge over troubled waters? In other words, am I willing to walk in the footsteps of Jesus?

COMMENTARY: A Call to Renewal of Catholic Social Action

By Sr. Patricia McCann

It is time to reclaim the social justice teachings of the church. The current era is absolutely ripe for it with spiraling economic downturns, a paralyzed credit market, increasing job loss, plant closings, widespread loss of homes and businesses. These realities tear apart the lives of people in our parishes, schools, neighborhoods, families and people we do not know. They cry out for response from the faith community as well as from economic and political leaders. Hearing this cry, we Catholics, we Sisters of Mercy, are called to act.

The Catholic faith community has a strong social justice tradition in the U.S. One thinks, for example, of the U.S. Bishops' Program of Social Reconstruction in 1919. Authored by priest-economist Msgr. John A. Ryan and endorsed by the executive committee of bishops, the 1919 program called for minimum wage legislation, unemployment benefits, social security, laws regarding age limits for child workers, workers' right to organize unions, public housing for the poor and a national employment service. These things sound ordinary to us now, but in 1919 none of them had yet been enacted into law.

Recognizing the leadership role a faith community ought to play in building a just society, Ryan promoted programs of social reform based on the dignity of persons and the quest for the common good. Msgr. Ryan and the bishop signatories of the 1919 program were reviled as "socialists" and "communists." Director of the bishops' Social Action Department, Ryan was

nicknamed "Right Reverend New Dealer" because of his support of the Roosevelt agenda. It seems ironic now to imagine the U.S. bishops being perceived as "left-wingers" just a few decades ago.

The social justice tradition gained strength by linking with the liturgical reform movement in the early days of the 20th century. Benedictine Virgil Michel from St. John's, Minn., revived liturgical prayer by connecting it with people's everyday concerns in the post World War I years. He stressed that liturgy is not simply beautiful pageantry, but that it must reach the hearts of suffering people. Father Virgil and his co-workers paved the way for liturgical reforms of Vatican Council II.

Catholic Worker founder Dorothy Day combined both elements: an acute awareness of social problems/political processes and a devout personal faith life grounded in liturgy and sacraments. She lived a radically Catholic, radically social justice-oriented life.

How did the Catholic community



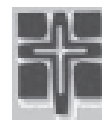
Sr. Patricia McCann

in the U.S. lose touch with this heritage? Our involvement in justice issues grew from being an immigrant minority community "voiceless" people for whom the church became a powerful advocate/voice. As Catholic immigrants moved up the ladder of success, though, we gradually pulled the ladder up behind us. The "voiceless" became the "establishment," forgetting how we got here, and careless about whom we were leaving behind. That drift into a right-leaning political conservatism and a moralistic religious conservatism blinded us to the social justice teachings of our Catholic heritage.

For the vitality of church and religious life in the future, we need to turn this around. Social justice concerns belong right at the heart of Catholic faith life nourished by liturgy and sacraments. Faith without works is dead, the Gospel tells us. So, too, works that are not grounded in faith risk being hollow and unable to endure. Like John Ryan, Virgil Michel and Dorothy Day, let us claim this potent combination of social justice teachings and Catholic faith in forging a commitment to a way of life that addresses today's concerns.

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

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Health system opportunity to experience *re-founding*

By Sister Susan Welsh

For as long as I can remember in my religious life, “re-founding” has been a buzz word urging us to revisit and revive our 1831 or 1843 spirit. I wasn’t really sure what it meant in my life until this past year.

On Jan. 1, 2008, the venerable Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh transferred into the University of Pittsburgh mega-health system. While it was a heart-wrenching loss for the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh, a door of opportunity opened urging us to re-discover our Mercy health ministry. Mercy’s well-known story spans 160 years of growth and development. But without the buildings and programs of a hospital, where is the ministry?

A year after the transfer, now without an acute care hospital,

Pittsburgh Mercy Health System (PMHS) is alive and well and remains a vital part of this region.

Mercy Behavioral Health (MBH), our largest entity, celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. MBH offers a full continuum of recovery-oriented, community-based mental health, mental retardation and drug/alcohol treatment and prevention services. With major state and county contracts, and more than 60 sites, MBH is a premier service provider in our region, standing up to “not-in-my-neighborhood” pressures for the development of group homes and educating people along the way.



The leaders and employees of this ministry are terrific. They live the values: respecting human dignity, striving for community, serving with compassion, practicing stewardship

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First Year (From Page 1)

Nancy reflects on a year that she says offered both blessings and challenges. For starters, she says, NyPPaW’s stateside geographic areas – Buffalo, Erie, Pittsburgh and Rochester – are relatively close to each other, allowing leadership and staff to travel and meet with members. For example, the CLT has visited areas for spring and fall consultations to provide updates and listen to concerns of sisters. Other Mercy communities are far more widespread and do not have that ease of travel.

“It’s good that we are a small community. It’s manageable, and we do somewhat know each other,” she says. “Of course, NyPPaW is challenged by the internationality of the

“It’s good that we are a small community. It’s manageable, and we do somewhat know each other.”

Sr. Nancy Hoff

Community in trying to stay connected to sisters and associates a-half-a-world away in the Philippines.”

The election and appointment of local leaders for each area a month before NyPPaW started helped ensure that the needs of sisters would be taken care of, she says. “The local leaders were all excellent choices, and they have tended to the needs of sisters quite well.”

As another positive move, NyPPaW named Beth Fluharty as chief financial officer. Beth brought with her the experience of working with the former regional community in Rochester.

Also, Nancy says the Development Office is following the plan drawn up by consultants hired by NyPPaW, which will be fully implemented in 2009. She cited the value of “Mercy Moments,” the office’s publication, which late last year offered a complete look at NyPPaW’s sponsored ministries. Leadership has given attention to ministry in the initial year with Sisters Pat and JoAnne working hard to be attentive to the

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Spirit (From Page 4)

and collaborating in ways that would make our founders proud!

Then there's Operation Safety Net, literally world renowned for compassionate street medicine, yet locally based in Pittsburgh. Visit www.becausefoundation.org to view or download the video, "One Bridge to the Next." See for yourself the incredibly respectful care OSN provides for some of the most vulnerable outcasts of our day. I wonder if Frances Warde herself could have done better!

A Child's Place at Mercy addresses the needs of abused children, foster children and their parents. St. Pius Residence is home for low-income elderly persons. The Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program takes health care and consultation directly to people's homes. What ministries could be more re-con-

"With the experience of this past year, I've seen for myself what re-founding means!"

Sr. Susan Welsh

tive to our founding spirit?

Back in the day, the Brotherhood of St. Joseph and an auxiliary of ladies across the city of Pittsburgh implemented fundraising for the new hospital. Today, the Pittsburgh Mercy Foundation, a small operation of two people, writes for grants and plans events that support the ministries of our system. A second foundation, McAuley Ministries, holds the income from the sale of Mercy Hospital. Sister trustees and the executive director entertain requests from the legacy programs of the Mercy community in Pittsburgh, and make

grants to organizations throughout the Mercy Corridor – the impoverished strip of geography between the motherhouse and what is now UPMC Mercy Hospital. In December 2008, McAuley Ministries gave more than \$700,000 in grants; not bad for a start-up foundation in a tough economy.

With the experience of this past year, I've seen for myself what re-founding means. It's letting go and moving on. It's having the courage to start again, to see the opportunity, identify the need and respond with our values. It's working collaboratively with lay people who, somewhere along the way, found the Mercy spirit and help us continue the work begun in Ireland, in Pittsburgh and around the world.

Sister Susan Welsh is president/chief executive officer for Pittsburgh Mercy Health System.

NyPPaW (From Page 4)

needs of NyPPaW's sponsored ministries. Often, that meant visiting those ministries to experience them first-hand.

NyPPaW's ongoing challenge, she says, is to continue to build up relationships among sisters and associates. The Community had a head start as members from geographic areas enjoyed each other's company at annual summer gatherings, first at Mercyhurst in Erie for so many years prior to coming together and more recently at St. Bonaventure University.

She credits NyPPaW's Spirituality Committee with planning the annual summer gathering, "Theology of a Merciful Heart," at St. Bonaventure University and the New Year's Eve reflection in which members reflected

on the Mercy vows and the first year of NyPPaW.

"The coming together and sharing global or theological issues have helped us grow as a community and get to know one another," Nancy says.

As the NyPPaW journey continues, Nancy would like sisters and associates to look at the Community as one "energized for mission" and imagining new ways in which it can serve others. "We need to look at unmet needs and decide what to let go and what to embrace," she says.

While NyPPaW continues to grow, Nancy asks the continued patience of members since change is difficult and often slow. But she and the team are willing to help them

through waters that will take the Community to new places.

"I enjoy the privilege of helping shape the future of the Community; this is truly an honor," she says.

She recalls a recent visit to Mercy Center in Rochester for an informal social with sisters and associates. There, a sister told her that she continued to pray for her. She says that prayer and the cards and other ways of demonstrating support have been so meaningful to this initial Community leadership team.

"I just marvel at the support from our sisters," she says.

Rochester ministry provides literacy training, hope

Told by her mother to leave the home they shared, Beth (not her real name) was only a teenager – pregnant, alone and confused.

Caring grandparents took her in and helped her through the pregnancy.

Beth, who gave birth to a baby girl, had a dream of working as a nursing assistant, but lacked the reading skills necessary to be accepted into a program. Her grandmother steered her to Sister Edwardine Weaver and Mercy Bridges, a Sisters of Mercy adult literacy program in Rochester.

Beth was a student in the Mercy Bridges program for some time when her grandfather died. In planning the funeral, the grandmother suggested that Beth proclaim one of the readings at the Mass. The girl's mother protested saying, "She can't read!"

But thanks to Mercy Bridges, Beth had learned much and after working with her tutor to review the reading, she stood proudly to read at the Mass for the grandfather with whom she was so close.

"She read beautifully and, for those who knew her story, there wasn't a dry eye in the church," Edwardine says.

Beth is just one of so many touched by Mercy Bridges.

"It's more than teaching our clients reading, writing



Sister Edwardine Weaver, left, enjoys a moment with Lawan Buffum, a learner in the Mercy Bridges adult literacy program.

and speaking," says Edwardine, who spent 50 years as a teacher, principal and superintendent of Catholic schools for the Rochester Diocese. She was also a professor at the University of Rochester. "Much has to do with building self-esteem and making a difference in the lives of people."

Three years ago, Rochester Mayor Robert Duffy held a summit to address the high illiteracy rates in the area, which he and others believed contributed to crime and violence. There, Edwardine and Mercy Sister Nancy Whitley shared the idea of a literacy program and sought to work with other literacy agencies.

"We wanted to be collaborative, not competitive," she says.

Agencies approved and supported the idea for the program, and in August 2006 Mercy Bridges was

selected as a "jubilee ministry" for the Rochester Sisters of Mercy as they celebrated their 150th anniversary.

"We didn't have so much as a paper clip," says Edwardine of the early days.

With Dorothy Lindsay, a Mercy Associate and longtime educator, Edwardine established the structure for Mercy Bridges. A \$22,000 Mercy Action Grant provided funds to help train tutors and establish a Resource Material Center at the Mercy Center motherhouse, which offers instructional materials and computer software programs.

Today, Sister Pat Black, former NyPPaW director of information technology, is administrative assistant for Mercy Bridges and has created a website (www.mercybridges.org) and a newsletter.

Edwardine explains that volunteer tutors came from all walks of life, particularly that of education. Tutors take 21 hours of training that is spread out over three, seven-hour sessions in collaboration with Literacy Volunteers of Rochester. Mercy Bridges provides for each tutor a profile of each learner that includes educational background, language and reading assessment, study habits and learning style.

The first tutors were trained in January 2007. In April 2007, tutors began working with learners who were employees of the motherhouse. Later, the learner list also included referrals from Mercy ministries and public agencies. Of the 101 tutor volunteers interviewed in the past two-and-a-half years, 65 are currently active, Edwardine says.

According to Edwardine, some learners are like Lawan Buffum, who came to the United States from Thailand in 1994. Buffum worked in food services at Mercy Center and did not speak English well. She entered the program two years ago and continues to meet with a tutor to improve her speaking and reading skills.

"Now that I can read

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Mercy Bridges (From Page 6)

better, I have a lot of confidence,” says Buffum, a married mother of a six-year-old boy.

As she continues to learn, Buffum says she can communicate better with fellow employees and others. In fact, she was promoted to manager of Our Lady of Mercy High School’s cafeteria. But her real delight is at home, where she can help her son with homework and read to him at night.

“He really likes it,” she says.

Buffum, an immigrant, represents one group of learners. Another group consists of people who did not finish their U.S. education. But according to Edwardine, nearly half of the learners are refugees from Cuba, Burma, Ethiopia, Puerto Rico, Russia,

“We are pleased to serve the needs of others and to open a new chapter in their lives.”

Sr. Edwardine Weaver

Somalia, Sudan, Ukraine and 19 other countries. Twenty-five languages in all are represented.

In the Mercy Bridges program all learners are assessed initially to ascertain their basic reading skills and whether the learner needs to participate in an English as a Second Language program. Those who are working to improve their English must become proficient enough to enter a basic reading program. All learners are assessed quarterly and annually to deter-

mine what they have learned.

She says Mercy Bridges is unique in that the program is taken to the learners, with tutors meeting individually with them for two hours each week in public libraries, church facilities and agencies in Monroe County. Each of the 127 learners who has entered the program signs a commitment to stay in the program for a year.

Edwardine indicates the retention rate is 70 percent. Grants and donations keep Mercy Bridges running. Peggy Wegman, wife of Robert Wegman who founded the Wegman’s grocery store chain, is among the many supporters whose efforts helped to initiate the work of Mercy Bridges.

Unlike similar programs, Edwardine says Mercy Bridges takes no federal funds allowing it the freedom to serve many who cannot access other programs.

“We place a good deal of time in developing relationships, building self-esteem, helping people to be self-confident and able to set stable goals for their lives. We strive to be a community of learners,” she says.

She adds, “We are pleased to serve the needs of others and to open a new chapter in their lives.”

Guyana

Reflections: Witness to being truly poor, homeless

Sister Sheila Marie Walsh returned to Buffalo last December after spending eight years ministering in Guyana, South America. She is now assistant to the chief development officer for NyPPaW. Here, she shares a reflection on her time in Guyana.

As a child, I wanted to be a “leper” nun until sixth grade when I found out there was a cure for leprosy. Then I no longer wanted to be a nun. As a student nurse, once again I felt the call to religious life which I ignored for several years. Finally, I stopped running and started listening and responded to the call to the Sisters of Mercy in Buffalo.

Forty years later, I answered the call to go to Guyana, South America, to be administrator of a small hospital sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy from Dallas, Pa. For eight years, I was privileged to serve in this capacity at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Georgetown, Guyana, the only Catholic hospital where sisters joined me to alternate

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Beautiful America

Lazarus Fazal came to the United States from Pakistan seeking a better future for himself and his family. A student in the Mercy Bridges program, Fazal felt so strongly about his experience in America that he wrote this tribute:

**Country of Broad Minded and Helpful People
Country of Resources and Opportunity for Everyone
Country of Freedom
Country of Hope
Country of Love and Smiles
Country of My Second Mother Land
Country of Attainable Dreams
God Bless America!**

Sustainability main topic at annual summer gathering

She always took a liking to nature, hiking through forests to take in their beauty.

Her interest led to a bachelor's degree in biology from Clemson University in South Carolina. These studies that taught her the many and diverse ways living organisms are interconnected with each other and their natural environments.

In her years of teaching science, it was her experience of junior high school earth science that broad-



ened her love of nature to include rocks, rock formations, water systems, and weather.

And as a Sister of Mercy, she has taken what

she has learned and seeks to help others develop a love and respect for the Earth.

No wonder that Sister Ray Maria McNamara, Ph.D., was selected to speak on sustainability at NyPPaW's "Theology of a Merciful Heart" gathering at St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, N.Y., July 17-19.

When considering sustainability, one must ask "for whom" and "by whom," she says.

"Do we focus on the

sustainability of the planet for the sake of the human community or for the sake of all creation?" asks Ray Maria, in a recent telephone interview from the University of Portland, Ore., where she has been an associate professor of theology since 2005.

A member of the South Central Community, her 2006 dissertation, "Interdependence and the God Quest: A Christian Ecologi-

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every other week with two other Mercy Sisters to visit and assist the patients there. All things come in God's time rather than our time.

My time in Guyana was filled with memorable experiences. I witnessed what it means to be truly poor, homeless, uneducated, jobless and hungry. Homeless adults and children are everywhere, access to health care is extremely limited, HIV/AIDS in Guyana has the highest incidence in South America and is second only to Haiti in the Caribbean. Besides the Public Hospital, there are only two hospitals that take care of the poor: Mercy Hospital and one run by the Seventh Day Adventists.

Through the generosity



Sr. Sheila Marie Walsh

of many organizations, foundations and individuals we were able to initiate or expand several programs to address the needs of the truly economically poor. There are over 1,000 people in the Stemming the Tide Program which treats and cares for men, women

and children who are HIV positive.

Through the Wishbone Program we have provided surgery for over 175 children and young adults with cleft lips and palates as well as facial and neck tumors, cysts and other deformities.

The Remote Area Medical (RAM) Program, which provided access to health care for women living in the Interior of Guyana (mostly Amerindian), partners with Mercy Hospital where the hospital provides other diagnostic and surgical procedures on these women in need.

The Mercy Mobile Clinic provides care in four sites in the Georgetown and surrounding areas to people who are poor and often

suffer from chronic illnesses.

Volunteers from all over the world have provided much to the hospital by way of lectures, teaching programs, "hands on" care and financial support. People and institutions have provided equipment, new techniques, medical supplies and experience which have enabled Mercy Hospital to introduce new procedures and services.

I am sure as time goes on the memories of what we were able to accomplish will fade and disappear, but the richness of the memories of the sisters, coworkers, patients and friends will remain for a lifetime. I am so grateful for being able to have this experience.

Pittsburgh convent marks 100 Years on Fifth Avenue

By Sr. Patricia McCann

Feb. 10 marked the 100th anniversary of the Convent of Mercy at 3333 Fifth Ave. in Pittsburgh. Ninety sisters, currently in residence there, celebrated the centenary with solemn vespers at

4:45 p.m. followed by dinner in the convent dining room. After dinner, the sisters enjoyed storytelling from the early days and tested their memories with some trivia questions placed at each table.

Sisters combed the archives before the event for photos and documents tell-

ing the story of the 1909 move of the community Motherhouse from St. Mary Convent, Webster Avenue, to St. Mary Convent, Fifth Avenue. These were displayed for the community and associates in the convent dining room on Feb. 10.

Mercy historian Sister

M. Jerome McHale's biographical sketch of Mother Sebastian Gillespie, the administrator who oversaw move 100 years ago, tells that "she met strong opposition from some sisters for building in Oakland, which

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Gathering (From Page 8)

cal Spirituality" is expected to be published this summer. Also, she is a co-editor of and contributor to a volume of essays centered on the emerging dialogue between Christian spirituality and ecology, "Spirit and Nature: Christian Spirituality in an Ecological Age." This volume is expected to be released next year.

"We come from a tradition in which asceticism has not always been approached in a helpful, healthy way. My current research is an effort to reclaim that tradition in a way that fosters a more sustainable life within the Christian tradition," she says. She described asceticism within the Christianity context as a "practiced discipline that helps shape and guide one's quest for God."

According to Sister Sheila Carney, chair of NyPPaW's spirituality committee, sustainability was chosen as the topic be-



Sr. Ray Maria McNamara

cause it was one of the three initiatives chosen at NyPPaW's inaugural assembly in 2007. She said 260 sisters and associates attended last year's summer gathering.

The gathering is being planned by NyPPaW's Spirituality Committee that includes Sheila, and Sisters Rita Panciera, Sally Walz and Marlene Vigna and the Sustainability Committee with Sisters Margaret Park, Cynthia Serjak and Trish Tyler.

Ray Maria will give four presentations on July 18 and then provide questions for discussion in small groups.

She says her presentations will address:

- exploring what sustainability means,
- what we mean by common ground or the good life,
- and the relationships linking asceticism, spirituality and a sustainable life.

Ray Maria considers this an important time for Sisters of Mercy and others to make the case for sustainability.

"This is about living out our vow of poverty – living a simple life – and exploring ways in which our vow of service can include Earth-care," she says.

According to Ray Maria, people need to be educated on how earth systems function and change the way we

imagine our relationship with the natural world. She hopes participants in the gathering will come away from her presentations with a renewed commitment to finding ways to live more sustainable lives.

"I hope they will be inspired to make changes as individuals and as groups so that Mercy becomes a leader in helping to reshape lifestyles for the sake of all of God's creation," she says.

Those interested can register by March 31 using the form that was included in the Update on Feb. 13. There is no charge for sisters; the fee for associates is \$100. For more information on registering, contact Sister Carol Ellis at 716-825-5531, ext. 130; or carolhelenrsm@yahoo.com. Representatives of the Spirituality Committee in your area also have information.

Mercy reaches out beyond borders to southern Sudan

Eighteen years ago, Sister Marilyn Lacey was at a conference in Los Angeles and heard a Catholic bishop tell about life in Sudan, which at the time was in the middle of a civil war.

Bishop Paride Taban told of one million displaced people; housing refugee children in his home; no schools, hospitals or clinics; and bomb craters on his front lawn.

Unfamiliar with the situation in Sudan, Marilyn was stunned. As conference participants left for other activities, Marilyn, who had been working in resettling refugees with Catholic Charities in San Jose, Calif., felt compelled to stay behind and talk with the bishop.

“I told him that I wanted to know more about what was going on in Sudan,” she recalled in an interview March 11 during a visit to Mercyhurst College, Mercyhurst Prep and the Mercy Motherhouse in Erie



Sister Marilyn Lacey is pictured with Bishop Paride Taban, who invited her to “come and see” southern Sudan.

March 9-13 seeking help and support for projects in Sudan.

A member of the Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community, Marilyn said the bishop’s response piqued her interest even more.

“Come and see,” he said. She lik-

ened the invitation to what Jesus said in Gospel.

As she was thinking about how she would get to the African country with limited funds, someone from Catholic Relief Services tapped her on the shoulder and told her the agency would pick up her expenses if she wanted to go.

In 1992, Marilyn went to Sudan and what she saw there changed her forever. She described a scene similar to the passage about the dry bones found in Chapter 37 of Ezekiel in the Old Testament.

“There were about 10,000 people who were starving. I couldn’t understand how they were able to stand,” she said. She learned that the people had walked for two weeks fleeing a massacre and looking for water.

“I was stunned at the devastation. I had not seen such extreme poverty,”

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100 years (From Page 9)

to some seemed too far removed from the city.” Other sisters, according to Sister Jerome, felt that the convent “was too large and would never be used.” In fact, by 1918, “the novitiate was crowded, the chapel had limited space, and the dining room seemed filled with postulants, novices and professed sisters.”

Designated a Pennsylvania Historical Landmark, the impressive facade of the Convent of Mercy looks much today as it did in 1909. There have been major internal renovations over the years to accommodate an infirmary wing and changing community needs. A new chapel was adjoined to the facility in 2000. The campus at Fifth Avenue is greatly expanded with the addition of the Carlow University buildings.



Sister Mary Paul Hickey was among those who recounted stories about days past during a celebration Feb. 10 marking the 100th anniversary of the opening of their current motherhouse on Fifth Avenue.

College supports effort for Sudan

As Mercyhurst College's vice president of mission integration, Sister Lisa Mary McCartney was looking to meet the goals of her new office. In particular, she wanted to revitalize the college's mission-centered culture and develop service opportunities in local and global areas for members of the college community.

When she heard about Mercy Beyond Borders, a nonprofit agency that helps educate women and young girls, and support entrepreneurial projects that can be

run by displaced women in southern Sudan she saw a way to meet her office's goals to continue the legacy of Catherine McAuley, Sisters of Mercy foundress.

"It struck me that what Mercy Beyond Borders is doing in the 21st century in southern Sudan is just what Catherine McAuley did in 19th century Ireland. What better way to revitalize our mission?" Lisa Mary said.

So, she invited Mercy Sister Marilyn Lacey, founder of the California-based group, to Mercyhurst



Sister Marilyn Lacey, right, founder of Mercy Beyond Borders, explains to a group of Mercyhurst college students and teachers the agency's support of projects benefiting women and children in southern Sudan. Pictured listening, from left, are Marek Bernach and Jill Slomski, assistant professor of marketing. Students are designing a strategic plan for the agency.

March 9-13 hoping to build a relationship with the agency.

"Our hope is to create the first collegiate partner-

ship with Mercy Beyond Borders. Since education and fundraising are two key

(See COLLEGE, Pg. 12)

Sudan (From Page 10)

said Marilyn, who spent 25 years resettling refugees to the United States and also worked in refugee camps in Africa and Southeast Asia. For two decades, she directed services for immigrants and refugees from more than 50 countries, including Amerasian children from Vietnam and the Lost Boys from Sudan, at Catholic Charities in San Jose.

"From that point on, I was changed and knew that I would do for Sudan whatever I could," she said.

Last year, Marilyn founded Mercy Beyond Borders, a nonprofit agency that helps educate young girls and women and support small entrepreneurial projects that can be run by displaced women in southern Sudan.

The Santa Clara, Calif.-based agency is working on projects, such as providing grants for refugee women so they can cultivate vegetables, get bicycles so they don't have to walk four hours to sell their vegetables at the market, and open roadside cafes

at which they can sell tea and bread to travelers in Sudan.

Since then, she has been meeting Mercy sisters and associates, and traveling to Mercy colleges, universities and high schools to educate people on what is happening in Sudan and outlining how they can help.

"I want to challenge folks to study the issues behind the many injustices and imbalances in the world. It's not enough to give food and water to the poor; we have to find out why they are poor," she said.

While in Erie, she met with Sister Lisa Mary McCartney, Mercyhurst College's vice president of mission integration, and other college officials to develop a relationship between Mercyhurst and Mercy Beyond Borders.

To Marilyn, Mercy Beyond Borders is a natural fit for the Mercy tradition. She said that when Mercy schools have a week dedicated to exploring Mercy tradition, they need to

think forward and ask, "What can we do now to extend what Catherine McAuley started?"

"I think Catherine would approve," she said.

Besides her work in Sudan, Marilyn authored a book that was published last month by Ave Maria Press. "This Flowing Toward Me: A Story of God Arriving in Strangers" tells of how she, a math teacher, was called by God to work with refugees, many of whom suffer from extreme poverty. The book details her experiences and features a forward by Sister Helen Prejean, the Sister of St. Joseph who is author of, "Dead Man Walking," which later became a movie.

"Being with the poor is our best chance to meet God face to face," Marilyn said.

The Web address for Mercy Beyond Borders is
(www.mercybeyondborders.org)

College (From Page 11)

“We hope this means that our campus will provide good soil for these and other projects to grow.”

*Sr. Lisa Mary
McCartney*

areas of need, there is a natural fit between the college and the needs and dreams of Mercy Beyond Borders,” Lisa Mary said.

In her presentations and meetings with students, Marilyn planted seeds that both she and Lisa Mary are confident will take root.

“We hope to create a Mercy Week next year, which will show how Mercy is not just our heritage but our way of life, service and leadership right now,” Lisa Mary said.

Other activities in the works are:

- Two clubs will have fundraising activities this spring;
- A professor plans to use Marilyn’s new book, “This Flowing Toward Me: A Story of God Arriving in Strangers,” in his religious studies course next year;

- The Education Department will develop a series of learning packets on Sudan for students in Mercy schools;

- A senior-level course in Business Policy and Strategy will design marketing plans and aids for Mercy Beyond Borders;

- Students will create a Mercy Beyond Borders Club composed of representatives from various clubs, so those representatives can share the agency’s message with their members.

Said Lisa Mary: “We hope this means that our campus will provide good soil for these and other projects to grow. We hope to integrate them into the academic and student life of the college.”

News from Around NyPPaW

NyPPaW

CLT on the road



Sister Patricia Whalen (Erie) shares a moment with Sister Guadalupe Lumantas, a councilor on NyPPaW’s Community Leadership Team (CLT). The CLT visited Erie March 7 to consult with members. A social followed the consultation. The CLT visited NyPPaW’s geographic areas to provide updates and information and listen to the concerns of sisters.

ERIE

Reclaiming site for nonviolence



Sisters of Mercy were among those who joined Benedictine Sisters and Sisters of St. Joseph for “Reclaim the Site for Nonviolence” prayer service in Erie Feb. 12. The service was held in memory of Brent Carey who was murdered Jan. 1 in east Erie. Pictured participating in the service at the murder site, from left, are: Sister Patricia Whalen; Nordia Brusola, who lives with the Sisters of Mercy; and Sisters Teresa Okonski and Domenica DeLeo.

Making history

Sister Mary Dolores Jablonski, left, and Mercy Associate Joyce Crishock will be honored by the Mercy Center for Women as part of its Women Making History celebration. The 17th annual program honoring several women in the Erie area, who have made a difference in people’s lives, will be April 14 at Mercyhurst College. Mary Dolores is executive director for the Mercy Center on Aging; Joyce volunteers for several worthy causes.



News from Around NyPPaW

PHILIPPINES

New candidates



Two women became Sisters of Mercy candidates in the Philippines on Dec. 30, 2008. Pictured signing their intention are, from left, candidates Adelfa Sobrejuanite and Eda Reina Tolibas. Pictured at the far left of the photo is Sister Guadalupe Lumantas, a councilor on the NyPPaW's Community Leadership Team; Sister Letecia de los Santos is at the top right.

Golden celebration

Sister Socorro Largo celebrated her golden jubilee Dec. 29, 2008, at St. Mary's Theologate, Gango, Ozamis City. She is pictured during the celebration. Socorro was the first Filipina sister in the Philippine Community.



Silver jubilee

Sister Elsa Caberte celebrated her silver jubilee Dec. 28, 2008, during a Mass at St. Lorenzo Ruiz Church, Ozamis City, Philippines. Elsa is pictured during the Mass.

PITTSBURGH

Before and after



Two years ago, Sister Patsy Skowronek began to grow her hair hoping to make a donation to Locks of Love (www.locksoflove.org), a nonprofit organization in Florida that provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children suffering long-term hair loss from any medical diagnosis. On March 9, Patsy contributed 14 inches of her own hair to the organization. Pictured, at top is a photo taken before her donation to Locks of Love; the photo below was taken after her donation.



News from Around NyPPaW

PITTSBURGH

Sisters Place receives \$100,000 grant

Sisters Place, Inc., a ministry supported by the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh to assist single-parent, homeless families in southwestern Pennsylvania, recently received a \$100,000 grant from the R.K. Mellon Foundation.

According to Sister Mary Parks, a Sister of St. Joseph who is executive director of the ministry, the grant is geared toward capacity-building so that the agency will not have to depend so much on government funding. Already, a development director has been hired as part of the \$50,000 allotted for this year. Another \$50,000 from the grant will support the fundraising operation in 2010.

Last year, the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh presented Sisters Place, which was founded by the Sisters of Mercy, with \$75,000 from its Mercy Fund.

Sister Anna Marie Goetz, local development director for the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh, serves on the board for Sisters Place. Besides the Sisters of Mercy, 11 other religious communities in the southwestern Pennsylvania are part of this collaborative ministry that assists families toward self-sufficiency by providing housing and supportive services.

ROCHESTER

Distinguished graduate



Sister Kathryn Wahl, right, recently received the "Distinguished Graduate Award" through the National Catholic Educational Association. Kathy received a certificate and pin from Sister Katherine Ann Rappl, principal of St. Rita's School, Webster, N.Y., during a liturgy for Catholic Schools Week in January. The two are pictured at the award ceremony.

New Beginnings



Past and current member of the Coordinating Committee of Mercy Association met in Middletown, N.J., Jan. 9 -11 to make the transition to its new structure and leadership. Formerly known as the Mercy Associates Director's Council (MADC), this group is newly titled Mercy Association Leadership Network (MALN). Members of the committee listed with their Mercy community are pictured, seated from left: Wilma McGrane (West Midwest) and, Mary Austin (NyPPaW). Standing are: Kathy Schiro (Mid-Atlantic), Kathy Swift (Northeast) and John McLoughlin (South Central).

We Remember

Sister Margaret Caufield ROCHESTER Dec. 21, 2008

Sister Margaret, 87, shared her gifts of music and a joyful spirit with all whose lives she touched in her 64 years of ministry in the Diocese of Rochester. Her energetic service and ready smile will be especially remembered by the parishioners of St.



Sr. Margaret
Caufield

John the Evangelist Parish where she ministered for almost 50 years. Sister Margaret is survived by a large family, including Sister Ann and Sister Janet.

Sister Mary Maureen Flood ROCHESTER February 18, 2009

Sister Maureen, 93, ministered in the Diocese of Rochester for over 70 years. She spent many years as a secondary school educator. In 1978 Sister Maureen was among the initial group of sisters which founded Mercy Prayer Center and continued to minister as a spiritual director and retreat guide for many in the Rochester area.



Sr. Mary
Maureen Flood