

RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS SUPPLEMENT



CNS photo/Reuters

‘Casting Our Nets’

By Fr. Eric Johnson

Director of the archdiocesan Office of Priestly and Religious Vocations

“As Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, ‘Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” (Mt 4:18-19).



At this invitation, the two brothers immediately dropped their nets and followed him.

Thus began a relationship in which these first disciples came to know Jesus. They learned from his teaching, witnessed his miracles, participated in his ministry and came to recognize him as the Messiah, the Son of the living God. This relationship led the disciples through the experience of Christ’s suffering, death and resurrection, and reached its culmination when he commissioned them to go forth and make disciples of all nations.

At the center of this relationship was the promise of

that first invitation. Just as Christ had called the disciples that day on the shore, so they were to call others to Christ. They were to become fishers of a different sort, casting their nets for people, drawing all people to Christ.

The call to fish for people continues to lie at the center of the Church’s mission. It stands behind the Church’s proclamation of the Gospel, gives substance to its prayer, informs its teaching, and shapes its life and ministry.

The following pages are filled with stories of men and women who have embraced the call to priesthood, the permanent diaconate and the religious life. They, too, are stories of a relationship, stories of learning from Christ, witnessing his miracles, participating in his ministry and coming to recognize him as the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Though each story is different, all are united in the desire and commitment to draw others to the love of Christ.

To some degree, the purpose of this supplement is to celebrate the unique ways in which the vocational call to fish for people is lived out by priests, permanent deacons, and religious brothers and sisters.

But these stories also afford us an opportunity to gratefully acknowledge the gift their response to God’s call is to us as the Church. They provide us with an occasion to remember with gratitude those men and



Submitted photo

Seminarian helps people near and far, page 14.



Photo by Sean Gallagher

Priest builds community, page 17.



Photo by Mary Ann Wyand

Little Sisters serve the elderly, page 18.



File photo by Mary Ann Wyand

Franciscan sister leads parish, page 21.

women who helped us to listen, to see Christ’s miracles, to share our gifts in ministry, to acknowledge God’s presence and to encounter his saving love.

It is important that we do this. Through their celebration of the sacraments, countless prayers, preaching, counseling, teaching, works of charity, ministry, community, presence, and joyful witness to faith and hope, priests, religious brothers and sisters and permanent deacons draw us closer to the love of God offered to us in Christ Jesus. They cast their nets, and we and the Church are richer for it.

Perhaps most of all, priest, deacons and religious remind us of our own call to be fishers of people. In the ways we seek to love others, forgive, nourish, challenge, support and witness to our faith with joy, all of us are called to draw others into a relationship with God.

Such a call begins with an invitation, and I have come to believe that part of this call involves personally inviting men and women to consider embracing a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. We need their witness. Such an invitation nourishes their gifts, and affirms the importance of these gifts to the life of the Church so that all of us can more faithfully cast our nets. †

Community, service mark seminarian's vocation

By Sean Gallagher

Whether they are near or far away, seminarian Chris Wadelton loves to give of himself to help people in need.

His family has known that for a long time through his regular phone calls to check in with them, and the one-on-one time he makes for dozens of nieces and nephews.

The children of Pedro Atala orphanage in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, have also

experienced Wadelton's love firsthand in his mission trips there to improve their living conditions and show them Christ's love.

This heartfelt dedication to family, faith and serving others was instilled in Wadelton in a dramatic way in 1974 when he was only 8.

That was when his father Tom died suddenly at the age of 47 of a heart attack.

"My father's death definitely brought our family together," said Wadelton, a member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis. "Everybody kind of pulled together after that."

He also learned that his parish, which was across the street from his home, was there for him, too.

"Kind of like the family being a very secure place, the Church probably was too," Wadelton said. "It was comfortable to go to school and to church over there. We were well-known in the parish. It was just part of the family."

His mother also helped him learn the connection between faith and service.

Ann Wadelton spent many years serving on the parish's peace and justice committee. For 11 years, she was the communications director for the Indiana Catholic Conference, which serves as an advocate for the Church and Church-related causes in state government.

Volunteering in the Church to build a better community has been important to

Ann Wadelton for a long time.

"Once you see the poverty and the hurting that's going on, it just kind of comes naturally," she said. "I always have been involved in that kind of thing."

It was that love of community that first led Chris Wadelton to consider a call to the priesthood when he was a student at Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) and was active in its close-knit Newman Center community.

Wadelton majored in electrical

engineering technology and graduated in 1990. For the next 12 years, he worked in research and for companies related to the computer industry.

But through it all, faith and service was a constant. As exciting as the computer industry was during its rapid

growth in the 1990s, Ann Wadelton recalled that her son wasn't satisfied.

"Chris had interesting jobs and traveled a lot," Ann Wadelton said. "But he always said, 'It's just a job.'"

This perspective on his career had an impact on Wadelton's prayer life.

"My prayer was generally, 'Give me clarity on what direction you want my life to go in,'" he said.

Wadelton eventually worked through exercises common in the business world that help people determine what career would best suit their talents and desires.

"The priesthood was always there on the short list," he said.

In 2002, Wadelton went on a vocations retreat sponsored by the Archdiocese of Portland, Ore., where he lived at the time.

At first, he was anxious because he thought he would soon have to make a decision that would change his life forever. He learned, however, that the choice to enter the seminary wasn't as looming as he had once thought.

"I kept waiting for some huge decision where I would have to make this lifetime commitment," he said, "and what it's

'There are missionary opportunities right here in central and southern Indiana.'

—Seminarian Chris Wadelton



Seminarian Chris Wadelton holds a boy who is a resident of the Pedro Atala orphanage in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, during a mission trip he took in the summer of 2006.

actually been has been a bunch of little bitty decisions here and there, opening little doors.

"Eventually, I was in the seminary. That retreat would have been one of those small doors."

A few years into his priestly formation for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Wadelton felt that he was being called to the religious life as a Franciscan.

Wadelton had come to admire many Franciscans, including his uncle, Franciscan Father Jeremy Harrington.

Wadelton entered the novitiate of a Franciscan province based in California that does mission work in Central America and ministers to Hispanic Catholics in the United States, two forms of ministry that attracted him.

But after nearly two years with the

Franciscans, Wadelton knew that God was calling him to serve where he grew up. He also realized that mission work was always right around the corner.

"There are missionary opportunities right here in central and southern Indiana," he said.

Wadelton's ordination as a diocesan priest is about a year and a half away. He said remaining close to his nieces and nephews will continue to be important to him once his priestly ministry begins.

"Hopefully, I will model for people good family relations in that they'll see that my family is very important to me," Wadelton said.

Wadelton is also trying to shape the consciences of his nieces and nephews. At his suggestion, his family put aside their

See WADELTON, page 18

Benedictine sister helps college students find God

By John Shaughnessy

The story of a young woman who overcame hatred, fear and her own doubts before she finally found peace in her life is not one that Benedictine Sister Jennifer Mechtild Horner tells too often.

Still, the story of her own life helps Sister Jennifer when she counsels college students who come to her seeking advice and comfort from their stresses and challenges.

Sister Jennifer knows the necessity of making every day in life count after she was nearly killed in a traffic accident.

She personally knows the difficulty of trying to tell your parents what you really want to do with your life—even when you believe it will cause them deep heartache.

She knows the struggles of searching for a place in the world and wanting to be closer to God—longings that she believes define many young people today.

"The students who come to me are searching for God and they are really longing for community," says Sister Jennifer, a chaplain and the director of the Lantz Center for Christian Vocations and Formation at the University of Indianapolis. "For the most part, I see students who have a desire to change the world and be part of a community that serves God and one another."

That desire has marked her own life ever since she almost died when she was in college.

'I knew it was home for me'

"In the spring of my junior year, I was in a horrible traffic accident and I

was almost killed," she recalls. "I was in the hospital for five weeks. I was in a wheelchair and on crutches for a couple of months so I had a lot of time to think. I realized then we only have today to live. I was 21 at that point, but I realized I needed to live my life today as God is calling me to do."

Before the accident, she was struggling to deepen her relationship with God. She grew up in South Africa, the daughter of a Presbyterian minister who stood and spoke against that country's system of apartheid which discriminated against non-whites. Her father's stance led him to be hated by certain people, which created difficulty for the family. They eventually moved to Idaho when she was 15.

When she entered Boise State University, she started attending different churches, searching for a spiritual home. Her college roommate, a Catholic, invited her to Mass. At first, she declined, but she finally decided to give it a try.

"When I knelt down, I knew it was home for me," she recalls. "It was just a feeling within me of a sense of comfort."

Still, she dreaded the discomfort of telling her parents that she wanted to become a Catholic. She had always admired her parents for standing against apartheid even though that stance resulted in hatred toward them. Besides, she loved them and didn't want to disappoint them.

Yet the accident convinced her to follow her desire to join the Church.

"When I told my parents, it was very hard for them," she says. "They initially tried to talk me out of it, but I knew it



Benedictine Sister Jennifer Mechtild Horner, left, helps sort boxes with University of Indianapolis student Michelle Stephens during a community service project at Gleaners Food Bank in Indianapolis.

was what I needed to do. I joined the Catholic Church on my birthday in 1986—March 29."

Later that year, she attended Christmas services with her parents at a Presbyterian church. Following the service, she told her mother she was going to a Catholic church for midnight Mass. Her mother asked to come with her. The close bond with her parents had endured. It was tested again three years later when she joined a community of

Benedictine sisters in Idaho.

Finding a home for others

"I felt I was definitely called to the Benedictines, that prayer and community and seeking God in every part of my life is what brings me joy and lets me serve others," Sister Jennifer says. "At first, my parents felt they were losing me. Then they joked that they didn't lose a daughter, they gained so

See BENELECTINE, page 21

Carmelite nuns celebrate 60 years at Terre Haute

By Sr. Mary Grace Melcher, O.C.D.

TERRE HAUTE—The first years of our foundation resembled the journey with Jesus up Mount Tabor. The climb was steep as we labored to build our monastery, answering a call to be alone with the Lord in prayer and sacrifice at the heart of his Church.

Yet, at the same time, we were always in his company—for Jesus, who summoned us up the mountain, climbed it at our side as he once climbed with Peter, James and John.

With the marvelous help of his Providence and the loving assistance of many friends whom he inspired to support us, the goal was reached at last.

Peter's dream of erecting three tents on the mountain to honor Jesus and his prophets was realized on the hill of St. Joseph Monastery in Terre Haute on Oct. 7, 1947, the feast of the Holy Rosary.

We rejoiced in all that God had done for us.

A colonial style house served as our temporary monastery while our new monastery was slowly built in those first 25 years of our foundation. The cornerstone laid on Feb. 19, 1970, read, "Carmel of St. Joseph—the Gift of Friends" and "Lord, it is good for us to be here!"

The monastery seems to be frozen at the moment of the Apostles' first passing glimpse into the Lord's glory on Mount Tabor, but behind the walls, as the years marched on, our community has been called forward into other stages of the journey. We have tried to follow the Lord faithfully into the dusty life of the plain, into our unique encounters with the full range of his human experience.

With all our brothers and sisters in the mystery of the Church, we have found one reality to be constant. On the mountain, as in the valley, in light as in the darkness, on Tabor as on Calvary, the reality is a person: Jesus.

Our cloistered life is rooted in silence, solitude, generous work, reliance on God alone, unceasing prayer for the needs of the Church, a spirit of joy, sisterly love and cooperation in community as we continue to build our foundation in love from shared experiences of the passing years together.

(For more information about the Discalced Carmelite nuns of the Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute, log on to www.heartsawake.org.) †



Submitter photos Carmel of Terre Haute



Above, Discalced Carmelite Sisters Susanna Choi, left, and Mary Joseph Nguyen, who are novices, lead an Advent procession of the nuns at the Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute in December.

Left, the Carmelite Monastery of St. Joseph was founded on Oct. 7, 1947, the feast of the Holy Rosary, at 59 Allendale in Terre Haute. A colonial style house served as the temporary monastery while the "three-tented" monastery was constructed on top of a secluded hill near U.S. 41 in Vigo County. The Carmelite nuns welcomed guests during an open house on Sept. 9 in honor of the 60th anniversary of the Terre Haute Carmel.



Carmelite Sister Susanna Choi arranges flowers for display in the monastery during the Advent and Christmas seasons.



Carmelite Sister Mary Grace Melcher reads in her cell at the Monastery of St. Joseph.

Right, the Carmelite nuns eat dinner as they listen to a sister read Scripture and spiritual books in the refectory at the Monastery of St. Joseph.



Below, Carmelite Sisters Martha Hall, left, and Teresa Griffith bake bread in the monastery kitchen.



The beauty of seeking God

Benedictine brother finds God, draws others to God through art

By Sean Gallagher

ST. MEINRAD—Surrounded by the stillness and beauty that one often finds in the wooded hills of southern Indiana, Benedictine Brother Martin Erspamer works quietly in an art studio just down the hill from Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

He seeks to make beautiful works of art that will lead others closer to God.

Brother Martin has created stained-glass windows for churches across the country, using methods and tools that have largely remained the same as those used in the Middle Ages. He has also sketched thousands of drawings in a largely medieval style that have made their way into missalettes and worship aids used by millions of Catholic Americans.

How he came to join Saint Meinrad

Archabbey is, in a sense, itself a work of art.

Brother Martin joined the Marianist order in 1971 when he was 17. At the time, he was drawn to artistic work and liked the fact that the Marianists had brothers who dedicated themselves to art.

For periods, he studied art in Boston, worked as an artist in St. Louis and helped extend his order into India, where he also took in some of the fine points of traditional Indian art styles.

In the mid-1980s, Brother Martin found himself back in St. Louis. As he was trying to establish himself as an artist for the general public, a studio turned down a group of his works for a showing because the art was “too religious.”

“I got really angry and brought it home and put it all in a dumpster,” he said. “At that point, I decided to start working exclusively for the Church.”

He soon began to work with Emil Frei Associates, the St. Louis-based stained-glass studio that, decades earlier, had created the stained-glass windows in Saint Meinrad’s Archabbey Church.

Brother Martin also continued to create pottery and liturgical furniture.

Renovations

In the mid-1990s, the monks of

Saint Meinrad were planning the renovation of their church and Brother Martin, still a member of the Marianists, agreed to create a triptych—or three panels of paintings—about the life of their holy patron.

He came to Saint Meinrad for meetings on a nearly monthly basis in 1995. It was during that time that he started to consider that God might be calling him to live out more fully a contemplative and monastic impulse that had kept re-emerging within him for years.

Although attracted to the life of the monks at the time, it would be 10 more years until he joined the community. If the solemnly professed monks of Saint Meinrad approve, Brother Martin will profess solemn vows in the community in August.

Still, he looks back on that experience of creating the triptych, which stands today at the entryway from the church into the monastery, as a key point in his monastic discernment.

“I worked on the renovation of the church, and the Benedictines worked on the renovation of me,” said Brother Martin, who acknowledged that he is still a work in progress.

The attractive power of beauty

Although Saint Meinrad Archabbey stands in a long Benedictine tradition of promoting beauty in its liturgical music, churches and other monastic buildings, Brother Martin was attracted to the community by seeing beauty there in a much wider scope.

“It was the beauty of this place that attracted me,” he said. “And not just the physical surroundings—in terms of nature—but the beauty of the people, the beauty of the liturgy, the beauty of the music. It just really, really spoke to me.”

Benedictine Father Harry Hagan, Saint Meinrad’s novice and junior master, is Brother Martin’s superior. He also worked with him in 1995 on the renovation.

Father Harry thinks that beauty is an important way that people can be drawn closer to God.

“We . . . know God by beauty, by things that are beautiful and that take us really beyond this present moment and give us some sense of that which transcends,” said Father Harry. “Things that are beautiful are extremely important.”

For Brother Martin, the actual process of creating something that is beautiful can draw him close to God.

“When you create something, I think it’s probably as close as a human being can get to being like God in some way,” he said.

Attracting others to God

Brother Martin sees his work as an artist as his apostolate, as his way

of proclaiming the Gospel and attracting others to God.

But he sees himself doing this evangelizing in an indirect way.

“It’s not me going out and preaching the Word,” he said. “It’s the work of my hands that’s doing it, and a lot of times, perhaps, in softer and more subtle ways than in actually using words.”

The work of Brother Martin’s hands may be evangelizing on a broader scale in the months and years to come. A collection of photos of his artwork has recently been published by Oregon Catholic Press.

Titled *The Work of Our Hands: The Art of Martin Erspamer, O.S.B.*, the book includes photos of art that Brother Martin has created for books and other publications, stained-glass windows, liturgical furniture and pottery.

“I hope people enjoy looking at them,” Brother Martin said. “I hope they find them inspiring. I tend to look at my own artwork as once they leave me, they live or die on their own. I wish them well.”

“But I guess my attitude toward art is that the best ones are still yet to come.”

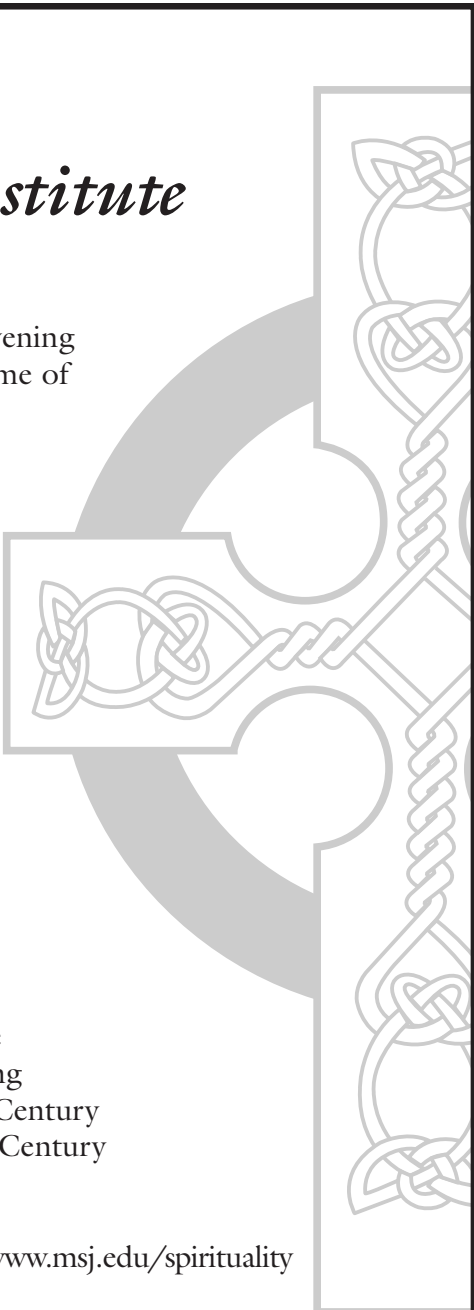
(For more information about *The Work of Our Hands* or to purchase a copy, contact local Catholic bookstores, call Saint Meinrad’s Scholar Shop at 812-357-6571 or log on to www.saintmeinrad.edu/shop.) †



This detail of a stained-glass window created by Brother Martin for St. Joseph Church in Fayette, Mo., portrays the parable of the sower of the seed.



Benedictine Brother Martin Erspamer works on a stained-glass window at an art studio near Saint Meinrad Archabbey last October. He joined the monastery after spending 30 years in the Marianist order and many years working as a religious artist.



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Benedictine Brother Martin Erspamer painted this portrait of St. Meinrad receiving the assistance of a woman as he started his life as a hermit. He created the painting in the mid-1990s while he was still a member of the Marianist order. Brother Martin joined Saint Meinrad Archabbey in 2005. The painting stands in the Archabbey Church next to the entryway from the church into the monastery.

Building up one body of Christ

Father Todd Goodson works to bring people together

By Sean Gallagher

SEYMOUR—Father Todd Goodson likes spending time with the people he serves.

On a recent Sunday morning in December, he welcomed newcomers to St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour—where he serves as pastor—by presiding over the Rite of Acceptance, a ritual in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

From there, he celebrated Mass in the packed church.

After Mass, Father Goodson chatted with parishioners as they browsed through Catholic books, videos and gift items that were on sale in the parish life center.

Later, he went to Our Lady of Providence Parish in Brownstown, where he also serves as pastor, to celebrate Mass.

In the afternoon, Father Goodson was back at St. Ambrose to celebrate Mass in Spanish for the parish's Hispanic community.

He said he enjoys "just seeing Christ in the people you serve."

"There are some tremendously powerful ministerial experiences that you have in just being with your folks,"

Father Goodson said.

Just as he values being with his parishioners, Father Goodson is trying to persuade them to spend more time with each other and help them grow in

unity.

Although they are one in the Catholic faith they share, differences in language and culture have kept them apart in the past.

"While there are tremendous challenges with that, it's a real grace-filled journey," Father Goodson said. "I really feel that this is something that God has kind of placed in my care."

The grace-filled journey is one that he wants to make with a growing number of traveling companions.

"He tries to get to know everybody one-on-one," said Wanda Hunt, a member of St. Ambrose Parish.

"He's the same all the time. He is so caring, but so busy. He tries to draw in



Father Todd Goodson, fourth from left in the back row, poses with children wearing traditional costumes after a Dec. 12 Mass in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrated at St. Ambrose Church in Seymour. Standing to his left is Father Kenneth Taylor, director of the archdiocesan Office of Multicultural Ministry.

more and more of us parishioners to help him with some of the things that he has to do. He wants everybody involved."

One person that Father Goodson has gotten involved is Ana De Gante, who helps coordinate the Spanish-language liturgies at St. Ambrose Parish.

De Gante appreciates how her pastor is working to bring people together in the parish.

"He wants to have just one community,

all together," she said. "He works so hard for that. I think that's one of his biggest dreams."

Father Goodson saw the beginnings of the fulfillment of that dream at a bilingual Mass on Ash Wednesday in 2007.

Laverne Carr, a lifelong member of St. Ambrose Parish who helps plan its liturgies, was in attendance.

"He came to tears on Ash Wednesday," she said. "It was so touching to see him so touched. He brings us all together."

Although he works to bring people together in all sorts of situations, Father Goodson said the unity is expressed the best at Mass.

"This is where you see the power of the Eucharist to unite people who wouldn't, perhaps, ordinarily be united," he said. "You really see the grace of the Eucharist in moving us—pushing us, really—to come together as a community." †

'There are some tremendously powerful ministerial experiences that you have in just being with your folks.'

—Father Todd Goodson

Prayer anchors busy Seymour Deanery priest

By Sean Gallagher

SEYMOUR—Being the pastor of two parishes with members that come from a variety of cultural backgrounds takes a lot of time and effort.

Still, Father Todd Goodson, pastor of St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour and Our Lady of Providence Parish in Brownstown, always makes time for prayer.

"I find it's important to me to anchor myself in some sort of prayerful routine," Father Goodson said. "I don't necessarily have any sort of powerful experiences during that prayer time. But because I'm anchored in that, I see God in day-to-day [events]."

Once, he had a free hour prior to a parish council meeting. Should he get some notes together for the meeting or sit down

and seemingly do nothing in prayer?

Father Goodson chose the latter.

"That parish council meeting was probably the most fruitful and productive parish council meeting we had had in the two years that I had been there," he said.

All of the one-on-one ministry that Father Goodson does to nurture greater unity in his parishes can be challenging.

But it is prayer that gives him the strength to

see his dream through to the end.

"Jesus never said that our way was going to be a piece of cake," Father Goodson said. "In fact, he said just the opposite."

"But, he did say that he would give us the grace to get us through. And that's why this anchoring in prayer, anchoring in the spiritual gifts of your parishioners, is what gets you through." †

'... because I'm anchored in [prayer], I see God in day-to-day [events].'

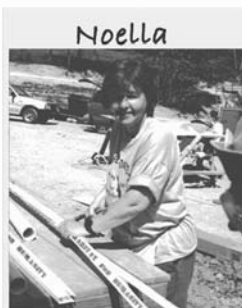
—Father Todd Goodson

so GOD, WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU?



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Little Sister of the Poor enjoys serving God and the elderly

By Mary Ann Wyand

Beatrice Spurgeon's face lit up with joy as she showed family pictures to Sister Margaret Banar on Dec. 22 at the St. Augustine Home for the Aged in Indianapolis.

The 94-year-old resident moved to the St. Augustine Home in 2003 and enjoys visiting with the Little Sisters of the Poor, who are now part of her extended family.

The residents, happy family atmosphere and daily Mass at the home are among the reasons that Sister Margaret loves her ministry as a member of the international women's religious order dedicated to serving the elderly poor.

"Caring for the elderly is a very rewarding ministry," Sister Margaret said on Dec. 22. "We prepare the residents for heaven. We prepare them to meet their Maker, and it's a great grace to do that."

She said the residents, staff members, volunteers, benefactors, friends and relatives of the residents all contribute to the family atmosphere at the home.

"We are extremely grateful to all the people who support our ministry," Sister Margaret said. "Without their support—whether it's financial, volunteer or prayers—we could not fulfill our mission as Little Sisters of the Poor. We're a team and we all need one another. That's how our foundress, Blessed Jeanne Jugan, wanted it to be—a family where the sisters are dedicated to caring for the elderly."

Sister Margaret completed coursework as a licensed practical nurse, earned a bachelor's degree in special studies in

health care, and is licensed as a nursing home administrator in Indiana and several other states. She served as the superior of the Little Sisters home in Pittsburgh for nine years during the 1990s.

In Indianapolis, she helps Sister Judith Meredith, the superior, with a variety of responsibilities at the 40-year-old home located at 2345 W. 86th St. The sisters currently serve 95 elderly residents who live in apartments, assisted living or the infirmary at the immaculately kept home.

Sister Margaret's current ministry title is "begging sister" or "collections sister," which encompasses public relations and development efforts as well as weekday outings in the sisters' "begging van."

She visits Indianapolis-area distribution warehouses, businesses and trucking companies to ask them to support the Little Sisters' ministry by donating food, money and other supplies. She also discusses the sisters' mission during Mass appeals at parishes in the

Archdiocese of Indianapolis and Diocese of Lafayette.

"My job is to keep in touch with people in the business world ... to make our ministry known and make it possible for them to be part of our mission," she said. "As I tell people during church collections, not everybody can be a Little Sister of the Poor, but by their donations or volunteer work they can be a part of the team—God's team—with the Little Sisters."

The congregation was founded by Blessed Jeanne Jugan in 1839 in St. Servan, France. The Little Sisters operate 32 homes in the U.S. and 205 homes in 31 countries throughout the world.

'Caring for the elderly is a very rewarding ministry. We prepare the residents for heaven.'

—Sr. Margaret Banar, L.S.P.



Sister Margaret Banar, a member of the international Little Sisters of the Poor order, looks at photographs with St. Augustine Home for the Aged resident Beatrice Spurgeon of Indianapolis. Sister Margaret said her habit "opens doors" that otherwise would not be accessible in her ministry.

Every few years, each sister receives a new assignment, she said, and she has gotten to know sisters and residents at many homes throughout the U.S.

"That's a grace," she said of each ministry assignment, "because it's abandonment to God's Providence."

When Hurricane Katrina decimated the Gulf Coast in August 2005, the mother provincial in Baltimore asked her and several sisters from other homes to help care for displaced residents of their New Orleans home who were evacuated to safe quarters at a nursing home in Baton Rouge, La., hours before the storm. She served in Louisiana for about three weeks.

The Little Sisters have a great devotion to God, Jesus, Mary and St. Joseph, who is their patron saint and special intercessor for prayer requests. They trust that God will provide for the residents' needs each day, and do not have endowments.

A native of Detroit and the second oldest of five siblings, Sister Margaret felt called to religious life while attending the former Rosary High School and volunteering at the Little Sisters' home there. She enjoyed helping the elderly.

"I think the roots of my vocation came early in my life," Sister Margaret said. "I always kind of thought I felt called to religious life or some other dedicated life of service. I always felt—although I have a great respect for marriage and children—that my heart was larger than to have just a family with several children. I felt that I had a universal love for many people. So that and my love for God were probably the seeds of my vocation."

After graduating from high school, she joined the Little Sisters of the Poor more than 30 years ago and was a postulant then a novice for two years before deciding to discern her future. She worked at a hospital for a year as a licensed practical nurse before rejoining the order.

"I still had that feeling of a calling from God," she recalled, "and I didn't want to spend a lot of time out of the convent if that's where God wanted me to be."

A religious vocation is a calling from God, she said, but it is difficult for people to hear God's call today because of all the noise and distractions of popular culture.

"To hear this call from God, you have to listen," Sister Margaret said. "I think today it's very difficult for young or middle-aged persons to listen to God because of the noise and constant interruptions in our culture and the fear of being in silence. I think many people today turn the radio or TV on the minute they get home—even if it's just for company—so it's very difficult for God to talk to you if you're always listening to other things. I think that might be a deterrent to a person really thinking about, 'Is God calling me to a dedicated life?'"

"I think faith is an atmosphere you have to live in every day," she said. "It's trusting in God. I think one of the most important things about my life as a Little Sister of the Poor, as a religious, is the witness value. My habit is a sign, a symbol, a witness, that I have dedicated my life to serving God and people." †

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WADELTON

continued from page 14

usual gift exchange this past Christmas.

The family's children and teenagers instead bought gifts for the children living at Pedro Atala. Wadelton and five family members then went to Honduras to deliver the gifts and do mission work.

His niece, Kellie Moore, a member of St. Pius X Parish and a senior at North Central High School, both in Indianapolis, traveled to Honduras with him in 2006.

She sees a connection between his love

for her and her family and the love he gives to those in need in Central America.

"With our family, he'll call and go out to dinner with one cousin and then the next cousin. He makes a lot of personal time for every single person," she said. "And then when he's down there, it's the same thing. He's always the first to help. He's just really generous with everything he has, and in reaching out and taking the extra step."

Father Todd Goodson had a chance to observe Wadelton last summer when the seminarian ministered at St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour and Our Lady of

Providence Parish in Brownstown, where Father Goodson serves as pastor.

He thinks Wadelton will be a "tremendous asset" to the archdiocese in large part because of the way that he approaches caring for people, an approach whose roots go back to the early years of his childhood.

"Chris wants to minister to people, and the more the better," Father Goodson said. "It's a part of who he is. Chris likes to bring the Gospel to people. He likes to be the presence of Christ to people." †



Seminarian Chris Wadelton collects used computer parts on Oct. 20 in a parking lot at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis, where he is a member. Wadelton helped organize the collection of the parts, which were to be transported to Honduras and used in a vocational school.

Sisters of Providence use biomass energy to care for the Earth

By Dave Cox
Special to The Criterion

SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS—
St. Theodora Guérin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, came from France to a dense forest in western Indiana in 1840 to sow the seeds of hope: hope that a new congregation of women religious could flourish, hope that the word of God could be spread among pioneers, hope that children could be educated.

In 1854, in a letter to another Sister of Providence, she wrote, "Well, my daughter, ours is a preparation for the generation that will succeed us, and eminent good will be done this way by us. You may not live to see it, but you will have sown the seed, and your Sisters will come to reap what will have been sown."

Many generations of St. Theodora's daughters have continued to sow the seeds of hope through a variety of ministries in devotion to works of love, mercy and justice in service among God's people.

Indeed, one of the congregation's most prominent ministries today grew from roots literally planted by St. Theodora.

She and other founding sisters worked hard to maintain their version of organic gardens, which provided food for the sisters. Mother Theodore, often in frail health, would work in the gardens

by planting seeds, pulling out weeds and harvesting crops.

Today, those roots of organic gardening and crop control thrive in the congregation through the White Violet Center for Eco-Justice and ministries that maintain a commitment to being creative re-users of natural resources and protectors of the Earth's gifts.

Sister Dana Augustin, previously a member of St. Mary Parish in Richmond, is involved in a complementary ministry that, in some ways, brings full circle the practice of reusing materials for new benefit.

She serves as supervisor of Biomass Processing at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods.

Just as Mother Theodore and her sisters had to rely on fallen trees, limbs and other materials to burn for heat, so will today's sisters when the biomass energy process is soon fully operational.

Biomass energy uses all plant and plant-derived materials, such as wood and other forest residues, grasses, husks and straw from crops, and some construction debris. The emission standards are the same as for natural gas. The system will provide heat and electrical energy at significant, long-term cost savings.

Perhaps St. Theodora never envisioned this opportunity for the sisters of this generation, but for Sister Dana, it is a natural progression from her lifestyle



Providence Sister Dana Augustin stands next to natural materials that will soon be re-used in a biomass energy process to provide heat for her congregation's motherhouse at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods.

before she joined the congregation.

"Recycling is something we had always done in my family. I have always had some consciousness of doing things in an eco-friendly way," she said.

Her awareness increased as she progressed through her initial formation with the Sisters of Providence.

"The eco-justice piece comes up a lot during formation. It's part of the postulancy training. It is part of our study of spirituality during our canonical novitiate," she said.

Here are examples of how the Sisters of Providence biomass project is reusing materials:

- Pallets, crates and other materials from manufacturing companies are being gathered to use for fuel.
- Charred wood from a grocery store fire is being sawed. Larger pieces are being planed and used for lumber. Smaller pieces are being used for cabinetry and trim at two new hermitage houses being built with mostly recycled materials.
- Mineral oil is being accepted from manufacturers, cleaned and resold to them to reduce dumping the oil into the ground.
- Cooking oil is being collected and transformed into biodiesel fuel where it can be used without any kind of alteration to a standard diesel engine.

"Our recycling program is growing a lot. I see this entire campus as a shrine to Mother Theodore, but also as a model of sustainability where we try to use all of our materials by recycling as much as we can," Sister Dana said.

"As far as moving in a direction for a sustainable Earth, we have to work with industry. We have to say, 'There are different ways you can operate that are more beneficial for you and for our

environment. Here are some things you might want to look at.' I would hope the Sisters of Providence could be a model for that kind of work," she added.

And Sister Dana believes opportunities abound for women in all eco-justice endeavors.

"There are many needs to be met. What the Sisters of

Providence have done for me through the years is open my eyes to opportunities in all kinds of places to work for justice. I think we're going through a change right now in our world and I want to be part of that change," Sister Dana said.

Thus, the seeds and renewable energy sowed by St. Theodora through her leadership and in her gardens during the congregation's foundation years continue to harvest fruit for today's Sisters of Providence who are sowing their own seeds for the future. †

'I see this entire campus as a shrine to Mother Theodore, but also as a model of sustainability where we try to use all of our materials by recycling as much as we can.'

—Sr. Dana Augustin, S.P.



In this drawing by Providence Sister Ruth Johnson, St. Theodora Guérin stands next to a garden. The foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods often worked in her congregation's garden. The Sisters of Providence are continuing to carry on her tradition of caring for the Earth by re-using natural materials in biomass energy.

What the catechism says about vocations

By Sean Gallagher

Priests, deacons, and men and women religious have been an integral part of the Church throughout its history and continue to be so today.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that these vocations are ultimately rooted in Christ and are an expression of his continuing life in the Church.

Deacons

"Deacons share in Christ's mission and grace in a special way. The sacrament of Holy Orders marks them with an *imprint* (character) which cannot be removed and which configures them to Christ, who made himself the 'deacon' or servant of all.

"Among other tasks, it is the task of deacons to assist the bishop and

priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries, above all the Eucharist, in the distribution of Holy Communion, in assisting at and blessing marriages, in the proclamation of the Gospel and preaching, in presiding over funerals, and in dedicating themselves to the various ministries of charity" (#1570).

Priests

"[The] priesthood is ministerial. 'That office ... which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is in the strict sense of the term a *service*.' It is entirely related to Christ and to men. It depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood; it has been instituted for the good of men and the communion of the Church.

"The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a 'sacred power' which

is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all. 'The Lord said clearly that concern for his flock was proof of love for him' (#1551, quoting *Lumen Gentium* and St. John Chrysostom).

Religious Life

"Religious life derives from the mystery of the Church. It is a gift she has received from her Lord, a gift she offers as a stable way of life to the faithful ... Thus, the Church can both show forth Christ and acknowledge herself to be the Savior's bride. Religious life in its various forms is called to signify the very charity of God in the language of our time" (#926). †

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Deacon candidate travels long road to ordination

By Sean Gallagher

In his native Puerto Rico, deacon candidate Emilio Ferrer-Soto grew up worshipping at a church named after St. Patrick that had been built by his grandfather.

After entering the U.S. Army in 1971, he went far away from his Caribbean home, serving for periods in Europe, Central America and South America.

After retiring from the military, Emilio's travels eventually brought him to New York in 1999 where he began working for the Social Security Administration.

Near the end of that year, he was asked to work in Indianapolis as a bilingual claims representative.

Emilio had never set foot in the city before, and didn't know where to go for Mass celebrated in Spanish, his native language.

"I called a taxi and told the taxi driver to take me to a Spanish-speaking church," he said.

Where did he end up? At a church named after St. Patrick, a reminder of the one he worshipped at as a boy back in Puerto Rico.

When he got there, he asked the taxi driver to wait for him.

Franciscan Father Tom Fox celebrated the Mass and, at the end of the liturgy, asked if there were any newcomers.

Emilio introduced himself and, afterward, chatted with some of

St. Patrick's parishioners.

"I remember going back to the taxi and the bill was \$84," Emilio said with a laugh.

It wasn't long before he got involved at his new parish.

"I remember telling Father Tom, 'I want a job,'" Emilio said.

He eventually became a member of the parish council and served as a lector.

A few years later, Emilio told his wife, Maria Torres-Gonzalez, that, if he were back in Puerto Rico, he would seek to become a permanent deacon.

Just a few weeks later, Father Tom approached Emilio and told him that the archdiocese was going to begin its first deacon formation program and that he would be a good candidate for it.

"I couldn't speak," Emilio said. "And Maria was looking at me. I told him that I needed to speak to Maria. Maria told him, 'Father, two weeks ago, he told me that he wanted to be a deacon.'"

The rest, as they say, is history. Ferrer-Soto applied to the deacon formation program and was accepted.

If all goes according to plan, he and 24 other men will be ordained to the diaconate on June 28 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. They will be the first group of men ordained as permanent deacons in the history of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Emilio's journey to that historic day began under the patronage of St. Patrick long ago and far away in Puerto Rico. It has continued under that same saint's care in Indianapolis.

"I saw that connection as [a sign of] my calling," Ferrer-Soto said.

Another confirmation of his calling to the diaconate has come over the four years of his formation in his ability to successfully balance a growing number of commitments.

Emilio and Maria are involved in the St. Vincent de Paul Society and assist in marriage preparation at St. Patrick Parish. He has ministered in the parish's Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, made hospital visits and Communion calls, and helped lead people through the Church annulment process.



Deacon candidate Emilio Ferrer-Soto, who works for the Social Security Administration, gives a presentation about Social Security to a group of people who will soon become U.S. citizens during a naturalization ceremony held on Dec. 6 at the U.S. Federal Courthouse in Indianapolis. Ferrer-Soto has found opportunities in his work to direct Hispanic Catholics in the Indianapolis area to St. Patrick Parish—where he is a member—and the services it can offer them.

The deacon formation program requires several hours a week. But, in addition to that, Emilio is also pursuing an online master's degree in religious education through Felician College in New Jersey.

He and his wife are also involved in the Third Order Franciscans.

To top it off, Ferrer-Soto is striving to be a good husband, father and Social Security employee.

Franciscan Father Arturo Ocampo, pastor of St. Patrick Parish, is amazed by Emilio's balancing act.

"Emilio is really disciplined and dedicated," Father Arturo said. "He has a great love for ministry and for the Church."

Emilio credited Maria's presence in his life as making a big difference through the years of his formation.

"She's been with me along every step of the path," said Emilio. "I don't know if I would have been able to do it without Maria. She is the power behind me."

Maria, however, looks even deeper for the strength that has helped her and Emilio along the path to ordination.

"I think that the balance of all my involvement in Emilio's formation is centered in Jesus as the center of our lives," she said, "and that has helped us

balance all these activities in a way that he can remain a good husband and father."

Once he is ordained, Emilio hopes to have a positive impact on Hispanic Catholics in the archdiocese. He is already doing that through work when Hispanics come to the Social Security office for assistance.

"I'm always asking them if they go to church," he said. "I try to guide them to St. Patrick, and there I offer the services of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. A lot of these people are in need."

As men who work in the marketplace and who are, in a sense, embedded among the laity, permanent deacons are in a unique position. By virtue of their ordination, they are a special sign of Christ

and can have a positive influence in ways that aren't ordinarily available to priests and bishops.

For Emilio, that opportunity is a call to show Christ to others through humility.

"You have to humble yourself every day. You have to pick up your cross and carry it every day," he said. "That's the way that I see portraying Jesus."

"It's going to be in your job, in your family, through the parishioners. You have to humble yourself." †

'You have to humble yourself every day. You have to pick up your cross and carry it every day. That's the way that I see portraying Jesus.'

—Deacon candidate Emilio Ferrer-Soto



Deacon candidate Emilio Ferrer-Soto speaks with Ana Maria Magana, a native of Guadalajara, Mexico, on Dec. 6 in the U.S. Federal Courthouse in Indianapolis just prior to a naturalization ceremony at which Magana became a U.S. citizen. Ferrer-Soto was in attendance to answer questions about the Social Security Administration, for which he works.

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Franciscan sisters find fulfillment in leading parishes

By John Shaughnessy

She raised the question on “Family Night” at the parish, hoping to get the parents and the children to share their answers about “What are you grateful for?”

Franciscan Sister Patty Campbell smiled as she listened to one child say “love,” another mention “our health,” and a third child proclaim “each other.”

Considering the question herself, Sister Patty mentioned the special relationship she has with the members of St. Mary-of-the-Rock Parish in Franklin County, where she serves as the parish life coordinator.

“They’re like a second family to me,” says Sister Patty, who is 81. “They’re very accepting. They accept me like I am.”

While the role of a parish life coordinator is basically to help parishes stay open, become more active and grow in the faith—during a time of a limited number of priests—the bond that forms between coordinators and their parishes often becomes a deep one.

Just ask Sister Patty and three other Franciscan sisters in the archdiocese who serve as parish life coordinators.

All of them are members of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, which is based in Oldenburg.

“Part of what I enjoy about it is you touch every aspect of people’s lives—baptism, first Communion, confirmation, graduation, the new life of a married couple,” says Sister Christine Ernstes, the parish life coordinator of Immaculate Conception Parish in Millhousen and

St. Denis Parish in Jennings County.

“You’re also with them in sickness and death. One Sunday morning, I got a call at a quarter to seven. Someone was dying in Community Hospital East in Indianapolis. I never got dressed so fast. I was there when they made the decision to take her off the life support. Just to be there with them was important to them.”

While the presence of a parish life coordinator makes a difference to the faithful, parish life coordinators also rely heavily on the lay members of the parish.

“In today’s Church, the laity takes a lot more responsibility to get things done,” says Sister Margie Niemer, the parish life coordinator at St. Peter Parish in Franklin County. “It’s not all up to me to coordinate or lead. The lay people step right up and volunteer for committees. The challenge of this particular job is learning to be organized enough so you divide your time wisely. In the smaller parishes, you have to be careful you don’t call on the same people all the time.”

Sister Margie pauses and adds, “This is the ministry I waited for all my life. I was a teacher for 25 years and that was nice. This is where I want to be. I’m glad the archdiocese has a position like this. Not every diocese does.”

Sister Shirley Gerth has fulfilled that key role at parishes in the archdiocese since 1991.

Sister Shirley served as the parish life coordinator for St. Anne Parish in Hamburg, St. John the Evangelist Parish in Enochsburg and St. Maurice Parish in St. Maurice from 1991-95.

“The Church is blessed with the gifts that both men and women can bring,” says



Four members of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis who are parish life coordinators in the archdiocese pose for a photo at their congregation’s motherhouse in Oldenburg. Sister Margie Niemer, front row, left, leads St. Peter Parish in Franklin County. Sister Shirley Gerth, front row, right, leads St. Anne Parish in New Castle and St. Rose Parish in Knightstown. Sister Christine Ernstes, back row, left, leads Immaculate Conception Parish in Millhousen and St. Denis Parish in Jennings County. Sister Patty Campbell, back row, right, leads St. Mary-of-the-Rock Parish in Franklin County.

Sister Shirley, who is now the parish life coordinator of St. Anne Parish in New Castle and St. Rose Parish in Knightstown. “This lets me be involved in the lives of parishioners in a more personal way than I ever had before. People reflect many different qualities of God to me. I see the love of God, the compassion of God, the gentleness of God.”

She’s also seen the pain a parish sometimes has to face together. In April, an arson fire destroyed St. Anne Church.

“As a parish, we’re learning we’re more than a building,” Sister Shirley says. “We are the body of Christ.”

Sister Margie shares that belief. She believes people should also have that approach toward becoming parish life coordinators.

“This is not a ministry just for women

or just for men or just for those in religious life,” she says. “This is a ministry of leadership and service that is open to all Catholics who have the desire to do what is necessary to develop the qualifications that are desired.”

There’s one qualification that these four sisters consider essential.

“I feel the purpose of my entire ministry is to call others to Christ,” says Sister Margie. “As I organize spiritual, educational and social events, I constantly ask myself: To what segment of the parish will this appeal? Will people appreciate themselves, their neighbors and their God more after participating in this?”

For Sister Patty, all the questions from her 81 years of life lead her to one answer: “Calling others to Christ is the mission of every Christian.” †

BENEDICTINE

continued from page 14

many more because of all the sisters. I made my final vows in 1995.”

She felt called again by God when a position opened in 1998 as the director of spirituality for the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center in Beech Grove. During the next two years, she lived at Our Lady of Grace Monastery and fell in love with the community of religious sisters there. She asked to transfer her vows to Our Lady of Grace Monastery. She also served as the parish life coordinator at St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greencastle before joining the staff at the University of Indianapolis in 2003.

She’s found her home in helping college students find their place in the world.

“College is such an important time in their lives,” Sister Jennifer says. “They’re

figuring out who they are and their relationship with God. It’s not just, ‘What is their major?’

It becomes larger: How am I going to live my life? What values are important to me? What does it mean to be a Christian in today’s world? Those are tough questions. I feel called to be part of that journey with them.”

She is a great traveling partner in that journey with young people, says her boss, Michael Cartwright, the dean of ecumenical and interfaith programs at the University of Indianapolis.

In working with students from different faith backgrounds, Sister Jennifer offers an approach that combines down-to-earth advice with a gracious respect for people, Cartwright says.

“It’s one thing to say you’ll accept someone ‘just the way they are, right where they are.’”

‘One of the gifts I can give to students as a Benedictine sister is a sense of commitment.’

—Sr. Jennifer Mechtild Horner, O.S.B.

Cartwright notes. “It’s another thing to really do it. Jennifer does it with a listening heart. She points them back to the Gospel witness of Jesus, the disciples and Mary.”

The daughter who learned to live a life of faith from watching her

parents now provides her own example.

“One of the gifts I can give to students as a Benedictine sister is a sense of commitment,” Sister Jennifer says. “A lot of people haven’t seen commitment lived out fully. To realize one can live out their life in God and live that visibly is

important for young people to see.”

Sometimes, the college students even ask her about the choice she has made for her life, and whether she’s happy about it.

“I tell them about the joy I have in the community here,” Sister Jennifer says. “That’s an important part of living out our Christian vocation—that we have an inner joy. For me, that joy is living in community with other sisters who are seeking God in the same way I am. We can support each other on the journey.”

“Because I made the commitment I have, it allows me to serve God’s Church. That’s the call of every Christian—to learn how to serve.” †

Superior sees bright future for religious vocations

TOLEDO, Ohio (CNS)—The superior general of one of the largest congregations of vowed women

religious in the world believes religious life is changing, but says she has “absolutely no fear” that it will die out.

“The vocations will continue to come, that I believe—because it’s God’s work. People are always there to respond to that, all through history,” said Notre Dame Sister Mary Sujita Kallapurakkathu, a native of Kerala, India, who has led the nearly 2,400 Sisters of Notre Dame in 15 countries since 1998.

“But we have to change our pattern of thinking,” she added. “God is making something new.”

Sister Mary Sujita cited smaller

families, increased opportunities for women and a more empowered laity as factors that have contributed to the decline in religious vocations around the world.

Shrinking membership has forced the sisters to shift from thinking in terms of big institutions to consider new ways to be present in the Church.

“It’s not only a matter of [the] number of sisters, it’s not a matter of doing something we always did, but it is a matter of giving our energy where we are needed the most,” said Sister Mary Sujita.

“God doesn’t need huge numbers,” she added. “God needs people with the hearts to respond.”

Across the international congregation, the superior general has observed a growing desire to reach out to the poor, especially women, in the fields of education, health care and social services.

The congregation has applied for nongovernmental organization status at the United Nations so the sisters

can advocate for women and children in need throughout the world.

Sister Mary Sujita said the sisters continually challenge themselves to see what more God is asking.

“I like that search and quest for more,” she said. “I always call it the holy restlessness inside.”

The Sisters of Notre Dame serve under a variety of conditions in different countries, but Sister Mary Sujita says their mission remains the same: to be Christ to the world today.

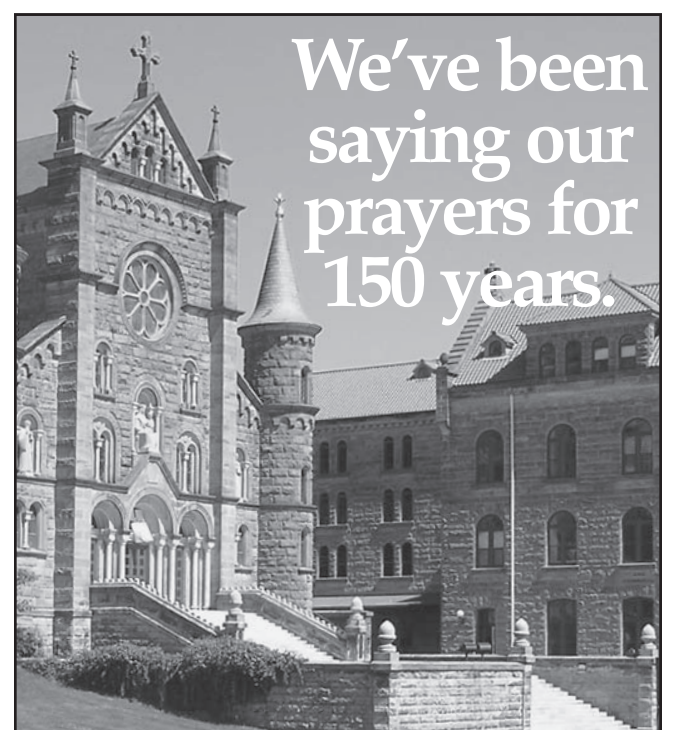
“The heart of the mission is to see the individual and the society through the eyes of Jesus, and to give a response that is fitting,” she said.

Sisters in the United States have made concrete steps to be with those people living on the margins of society, she said.

“We cannot change the world, but there is something beautiful that we can contribute to that transformation,” she added. †



Sr. Mary Sujita Kallapurakkathu, S.N.D.



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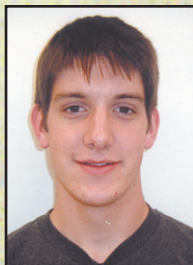
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