



SISTERS
of CHARITY
NEW YORK

Vision

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Congregation's New Leadership Takes Office

by Chris Haggerty

The quadrennial election process of the Sisters of Charity of New York concluded on Sunday, July 1st with the transfer of leadership ceremony. The occasion was marked by a liturgy in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, followed by a reception, at Mount Saint Vincent.

The process began with the Congregation's Assembly in February. The actual voting for the leadership team took place over the weekend of April 28/29. The Congregation was represented by 141 delegates who convened at Mount Saint Vincent. The election results were witnessed by Father Bartholomew

Daly, M.H.M., Co-Vicar for Religious for the Archdiocese of New York, who was there as Cardinal Edward Egan's representative.

After the results were announced, there was a Ritual of Recognition, at which mantles of light sage green crepe were placed on the shoulders of the newly elected by a Sister who had aided the candidate during her Discernment Process. This new symbolic procedure was inspired by a piece by Sr. Donna J. Markham O.P., Ph.D. that appeared in the Winter 2006 issue of the Jesuit magazine *Human Development*. In her article "The Leader's Mantle: Creating Connection in Chaotic Times," Sr. Donna wrote, "This Mantle of Leadership is not
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The Congregation's leadership team for the term 2007-2011: From the left, seated in front are Sr. Donna Dodge and Sr. Dorothy Metz. Behind them are Sisters Nora Cunningham, Dominica Rocchio, Margaret M. O'Brien, Helen McGovern and Margaret M. Kelly.



Letter from the President

Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends,

I had the privilege of attending the Plenary Meeting of the International Union of Superiors General in Rome from May 6th to the 10th. Approximately 850 women leaders representing nearly 800,000 members of Catholic Religious Institutes throughout the world were there. The theme of this meeting was to “weave a new spirituality that generates hope and life for all men and women.” We called ourselves to be open to the guidance of the Spirit while looking at the reality of life today with all its challenges. The “threads” that were emphasized were: women, migrants, the earth and its sacredness, laity, and dialogue with the religions of the world. Short reflections on each of the threads were given by religious leaders from different continents, including:

Sr. Donna Geernaert, SC - Halifax, who urged us to design new earth-friendly and justice-oriented ways of living in harmony with the whole of creation.

Sr. Christiane Lorcy, FJ from France, who spoke about the worldwide phenomenon of displaced persons. She noted that migration needs to be looked at from two points of view:

- those who leave their place of birth and life
- those who give asylum to migrants seeking it.

People migrate for a variety of reasons. “Some seek asylum; others are exiles, refugees from political systems or from violence; all are migrants from misery.” Among those without legal papers, women are particularly exposed to diverse abuses, discrimination and economic and sexual exploitation. Sr. Christiane urged us to consider ways of incorporating immigrants and helping them to find housing and work.

Sr. Katrina Brill, RSJ from New Zealand and Australia, who spoke about the challenge religious congregations have to be changed gradually by the lay movement, to see our charisms blossom in a new way, to have our spiritualities shared, lived and developed by the laity, and to be more inclusive in our communities and ministries, honoring our differences.

Hopefully this sharing, brief though it is, will give you a sense of how religious women are looking at their role in the Church and seeking to be relevant and prophetic in today’s world.

Sincerely in Christ,

Sr. Dorothy Metz, SC
President

Vision enables the Sisters of Charity of New York to make a cohesive statement about how they reveal God’s love in their lives and the many and varied ways in which they respond to the signs of the times.



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NEW YORK

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Article contributions to this publication are welcome; however, all submissions are subject to editorial and space constraints. See back page for our mailing address.

A Leader by Any Other Name

by Sr. Regina Bechtle

What do you think of when you hear the words “Mother Superior”? Perhaps the kindly Mother Abbess of the *Sound of Music*, who sent the perplexed postulant Maria off to “climb every mountain” while she wrestled with her vocation. Maybe you recall the pinched face and starchy manner of Maggie Smith’s Mother Superior in the film *Sister Act*, who resisted all innovations, while her giggling, naïve nuns tried to escape her all-seeing gaze. Answers will vary, and so will styles of leadership.

From the earliest days of the Daughters of Charity, Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac followed Jesus’ teaching and made it clear that leadership meant service. The Superioress was to be the “beast of burden” for all. The person in charge of local communities was known as “Sister Servant.” She was not to look for status or privilege. Vincent wrote: “I really do wish that our Sisters would reach such a degree of respect among themselves that persons outside the Community would never know which one is the Sister Servant.”

As women gathered around her in 1809 to form the first Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Maryland, Elizabeth Seton told a friend: “The tender title of Mother salutes me on every side.” In calling her “Mother Seton,” the Sisters recognized her aptitude for spiritual as well as physical motherhood. Her successors continued to be known as Mother, and the New York community continued the practice after it became independent from Emmitsburg. At the first election on Dec. 31, 1846, Sister Elizabeth Boyle, long-time friend and associate of Elizabeth Seton, became Mother.

When the Congregation revised its Constitution in 1948, we began to use the somewhat military term “Mother General” when speaking about (but not to) the spiritual leader of the community. It fit a Church that sang of “an army of youth” and that emphasized clear lines of authority and obedience.

In the late 1960’s, when many Sisters returned to their baptismal names, Mother Miriam Eveline Schneider chose to

drop “Mother” and be known simply as “Sister Evelyn Schneider” – a switch that brought us back to the wishes of Sts. Vincent and Louise: that the leader be one among equals.

When we revised our government structures in 1971 and elected Sr. Margaret Dowling, we began to use the term “President” for our congregational leader. This seemed more in keeping with the kind of participative, democratic exercise of authority that we desired and that the Church of Vatican II had encouraged.

“President” continues to be the term we use. Some might say that sounds too much like a CEO, but in an era when the congregational leader spends a large part of her time relating to outside publics – Church officials, institutions of education, healthcare, social service, the secular media – the word clearly signifies the person in charge.

Sisters and Associates understand that religious leadership has another dimension, modeled after the example of Jesus Christ who taught that the first shall be the last, and that the leader must be the servant and foot-washer. The Constitution of the Sisters of Charity of New York describes the President as “the visible expression of authority in the Congregation,” elected to a “role of leadership and service.” Among many other responsibilities, she is the one to “call the membership to share in the ongoing mission of Jesus” and to “lead the Congregation in its prophetic mission.” She needs to be a woman of “deep faith, committed to the Church and to religious life,” a woman who can “articulate the vision of the Congregation and provide the members with creative and inspirational leadership,” with genuine concern for each member.

As they fulfill these challenging roles, Sister Dorothy Metz and all who generously serve the Congregation in leadership deserve our support, trust, gratitude — and lots of prayer. ■

As Charism Resource Director, Sr. Regina Bechtle researches, writes about, and offers retreats and programs on Charity spirituality, especially for groups in the Sisters of Charity Federation and the wider Vincentian family. She has co-edited a multi-volume collection of St. Elizabeth Seton’s writings.

The Archdiocese of New York is celebrating its bicentennial this year. It has a special section on its web site that covers significant individuals and events over 200 years. Within *Bicentennial People* www.archnyc.org/about-us/bicentennial-celebration/bicentennial-people — joan you’ll find profiles of Elizabeth Seton, Mother Mary Angela Hughes, Sr. Mary Irene Fitzgibbon, and Sr. Loretto Bernard Beagan.

New Leadship *(continued from page 1)*

something that can be shirked by those who are alert to the vulnerability of these times....” The guiding principle of this Congregation for its 160 years has been to respond to the needs of the times. The mantles were prepared by Mrs. Claudette Edwards who works with several Sisters of Charity of New York at their Fox House ministry in Manhattan.

Results of the election

Sister Dorothy Metz was re-elected President. Sister Donna Dodge is the new Assistant to the President.

Sister Dominica Rocchio and Sister Margaret Mary Kelly are new Regional Coordinators on the Council. Sisters Nora Cunningham, Helen McGovern and Margaret O’Brien were re-elected to four-year terms as Regional Coordinators. The three new Council members for the 2007-2011 term replace Sisters who either were ineligible for reelection due to term limits or who were going into new ministries.

Reflecting on the leadership’s focus over the next four years, Sr. Dorothy said:

“During the grace-filled days of our Assembly held in February 2007, the members of the Congregation set the direction for the next four years. We committed ourselves to be more intentional about living prayerful, reflective lives impelling us to actions on behalf of the poor. By more collaborative efforts with our lay colleagues, we hope to reach out to immigrant persons in the spirit of our foundress St. Elizabeth Seton. We also intend to remain in honest, respectful dialogue with the Church, so that the gifts of women and men may be equally welcomed.”

About the 2007-2011 Council

Sr. Dorothy Metz was elected to a second term as President of the Sisters of Charity of New York. She had served on the SCNY Council as a Regional Coordinator for eight years before being elected President in 2003.

Sister’s earlier ministry was education, on both the elementary and high school levels. She served at St. Barnabas High School for 20 years as a teacher, campus minister, and finally Development Director. She also was Principal at St. Francis of Assisi in Mt. Kisco.

Sr. Dorothy entered the Congregation in 1956.

Sr. Donna Dodge is the new Assistant to the President. She had served as Co-Director of the Planning & Research Office for the Congregation from 1976 to 1982.

Sister’s early ministries were in elementary education. After 1982, she served on the college level: ten years as Assistant to the President and as Director of Planning at the College of Mount Saint Vincent, followed by 15 years at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, CT in various administrative offices. Most recently, Sr. Donna was Community Outreach Director at Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Bridgeport, CT.

Sr. Donna entered in 1966.

Regional Coordinators

Sr. Nora Cunningham’s first ministry was elementary education, which led to CCD and parish work. She was a founding member of the South Bronx Pastoral Center, which developed adult lay persons in leadership and ministry.

Sister also has served as the Congregation’s Candidate Director and Formation Director. She was a co-founder and co-director of the Center of Renewal and Education. CORE’s purpose is faith development, ministry training, and lay leadership for service in rural parishes in Sullivan and Orange Counties.

Sr. Nora was first elected as a Regional Coordinator in 2003. She entered in 1961.

Sr. Margaret Mary Kelly’s first ministry was in elementary education. She served the parish of St. Peter’s in Haverstraw as a teacher, coordinator of the primary grades, chair of the liturgy committee, and coordinator of parish activities.

In the late 1970s, Sr. Margaret became a registered nurse and began what would be a 27-year affiliation in various positions at St. John’s Riverside Hospital in Yonkers. Before her election to the Council, Sister was a Wellness Nurse at the Congregation’s retirement convent, Mary the Queen, in Yonkers.

Sr. Margaret entered the Congregation in 1958.

Sr. Helen McGovern has been involved in the ministry of education for many years and in many forms: as a teacher and principal in elementary schools, a guidance counselor at St. Catherine Academy, and Director of Academic Advisement at the College of Mount Saint Vincent.

Sister is in her second term on the Council. She entered the Congregation in 1956.

Sr. Margaret M. O’Brien has been a teacher, librarian and principal, mostly in the New York area, although she also ministered in elementary education in California for 11 years. She also served as Vice President for Mission in the Sisters of Charity Healthcare System on Staten Island.



Sr. Margaret first was elected to her present position in leadership for the Congregation in 2003. She entered in 1960.

Sr. Dominica Rocchio's years of ministry have been in education. She has served as both a teacher and administrator in high schools of the Archdiocese of New York. In 1980, Sister became Associate Superintendent of Secondary Schools for the Archdiocese. In 1992, she became Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Newark, and three years later, also was named Secretary for Education there.

Sr. Dominica recently completed a year of study at Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, MA. She entered in 1962. ■

Chris Haggerty is the Director of External Communications for the Congregation.

Direction Statement

Periodically, the Sisters of Charity gather to discuss issues vital to their life and mission and to discern where to focus their time, energy and resources. At Assembly 2007, the Congregation's delegates unanimously expressed their priorities for the next four years as follows:

Impelled by the love of Christ, faithful to the impetus of Vision 2000, and challenged by the words of Micah, "do justice, love tenderly, walk humbly with God," we Sisters of Charity of New York and Associates commit ourselves to deep contemplation, ongoing conversion and prophetic action, leading us to:

- continue and broaden our collaborative efforts with colleagues in ministry, especially in our sponsored works;
- embrace a preferential option for immigrant persons through public advocacy, networking and direct service;
- intensify efforts at our own ongoing formation and be open to a new vision of religious life;
- engage in honest respectful dialogue within and beyond the Congregation, as together we strive to create a more just Church open to the gifts and needs of all the faithful, especially women.

Meeting our grace in this new time of Charity, may we experience the "....awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace and the joyful celebration of life." (quote from the UN Earth Charter, March 2004)



Sisters Dorothy Metz, Margaret O'Brien and Helen McGovern wear the symbolic mantles of leadership.



Sr. Jane Iannucelli, outgoing asst. to the president, and Sr. Agnes Connolly, former president of the Congregation, bring up the gifts.



The Congregation's choir and orchestra provided music during the service.



Sisters, their family and friends greet each other outside the chapel after the liturgy.

The New York Experience: the Early Years

by Sr. Mary Mc Cormick

In 1808, Elizabeth Seton, recent convert to Catholicism, penniless, with few friends and fewer material resources to provide for her five children, left a hostile New York for Maryland, to establish a religious community whose work would include the education of young women and the care of orphans.

A mere nine years later, she was able to send three members of her newly-established community to the city of her birth, to begin the work that has connected the Sisters of Charity and the Archdiocese of New York for almost two centuries.

The story of the early days of both institutions, replete with hard-working, visionary pastors and equally hard-working, compassionate Sisters, is worth unfolding: it is our legacy and holds promise for our future.

Catholics in the new American republic constituted a small but growing percentage of the population, especially in port cities like New York. They were usually the poorest immigrants, the majority of them Irish, victims of intermittent famines and the harsh conditions of British rule.

Archbishop John Carroll, conscious that the material and spiritual needs of his flock needed attention, was anxious that those he sent as pastors would understand the significance of working with laity to create the infrastructure for the vast system of parishes, schools, orphanages, and hospitals necessary to serve the needs of the people. He also recognized early on the need for women religious to take on the tasks of organizing and running many of these works of charity.

The high caliber of priests that were assigned, over time, to the New York diocese, created in 1808, included Jesuits, Sulpicians, and diocesan clergy from Ireland. The first appointed bishop, Richard Luke Concanen, died en route to New York in June 1810. Because of the Napoleonic wars and the imprisonment of Pope Pius VII, the appointment of a new bishop was delayed for five years. In November, 1815, John Connolly, OP, became bishop of the diocese that included all of the state of New York and the eastern portion of New Jersey. He had four priests, three churches, and no permanent community of women religious. (A group of Irish Ursulines had come — and

gone.) On July 14, 1817, Bishop Connolly wrote to Mother Seton, begging her to send Sisters to take care of the growing number of Catholic orphans for whom little provision was made either by the city or the main Protestant denominations.

Mother Seton's response was quick and generous. On July 25th, she agreed to send three Sisters. Rose White had experience directing the orphan asylum in Philadelphia, opened in 1814. She was accompanied by Felicite Brady and Cecilia O'Conway, the community's first postulant. They arrived on August 28th to find their promised home "not yet ready for residence." After several weeks they were finally able to move to the house that would be the first mission of the Sisters of Charity in New York, at Prince and Mott Street, across from New York's old St. Patrick's Cathedral. The 200 year collaboration between the Archdiocese and the Sisters of Charity had begun.



This is the only known likeness of Mother Rose White.

Courtesy, Archives
Daughters of Charity,
Emmitsburg, MD

The first years were painfully difficult. The living quarters procured for the Sisters and the orphans was the 'Dead House,' a military hospital during the Revolutionary War. The Sisters received an annual maintenance of \$36 each, hardly enough even in those days to meet their barest necessities. In an effort to provide for their orphan charges, the Sisters slept on mattresses on the floor, and lived on a diet of soup, potatoes, and carrot coffee.

Soon enough, though, as the work of the Sisters came to be known and appreciated, generous assistance started to pour in from lay people, Protestant as well as Catholic, and the asylums survived and thrived.

By 1846, the year of the separation from Emmitsburg, three of the nine ministries begun between 1817 and 1833 were orphanages.

The three pioneers of the New York mission went on to other places, other life experiences. In 1821, Rose White was chosen Mother Seton's successor and became second Mother of the community. In 1823, Cecilia O' Conway withdrew from membership, and joined the Ursulines, a semi-cloistered community in Quebec. Felicite Brady also left the Emmitsburg community and returned to lay status some time after 1840.



We owe these women, and the clergy and laity who supported their efforts, great gratitude for the heroic charity they exhibited as they struggled to make the orphan asylums they founded not just places of refuge and safety, but homes of love and belonging.

(Material for this article from *The Sisters of Charity of New York, 1809-1959*, by Sister Marjorie Walsh) ■

Sr. Mary Mc Cormick is currently engaged in Retreat and Spiritual Direction programs and Charism Writing Projects for the Congregation.

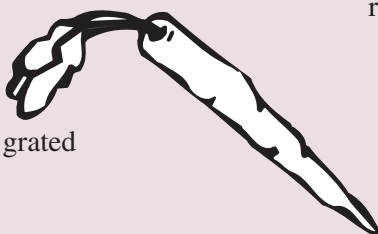
Carrot Coffee

Did the mention of carrot coffee in Sr. Mary's article pique your interest about what that might be like? If so, here's a recipe to try. (But we have to be truthful, we've tried it and Folgers and Starbucks will not be introducing this any time soon.)

Recipe for carrot coffee

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 lb carrots, peeled and grated
- 1 quart water
- 1 cup sweet cream
- sugar to taste



PROCESS:

Spread grated carrots on baking sheet and dry in oven, at low heat until carrot gratings turn dark brown, but are not burned.

Cover dried carrots with hot water, boil for 5 minutes, remove from heat and let infuse for several minutes.

Strain, warm if it has cooled, pour into cups, add cream, sugar to taste.

Store dried carrots in a tightly covered container, so that they are always at hand when desire for carrot coffee arises.

St. Vincent de Paul predicted:

“We will have to adjust to things we never expected, for Providence frequently upsets our plans.”

Mother Boyle Remembered

June 21st marked the 146th anniversary of the death of Elizabeth Boyle. As you may remember, Mother Boyle was elected the first superior of the Congregation when it broke away from Emmitsburg over the issue of caring for orphan boys in New York.

To mark the occasion, Sr. Regina Bechtle hosted a 20-minute interactive remembrance session about Mother Boyle's life. Afterwards, a small delegation walked to the cemetery at Mount Saint Vincent to visit her grave.

While there, they also left flowers at the grave of former President Sr. Margaret Dowling, who had died six weeks earlier.

All nineteen deceased Mother Superiors/Presidents of the Sisters of Charity of New York are buried here on the grounds of the motherhouse.



Honors and Happenings

Sr. Dominica Rocchio

received the C. Albert Koob Merit Award at the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) annual convention. It was given in recognition of her commitment to inner-city Catholic secondary school education. Sister had served for 14 years as the superintendent of schools in the Archdiocese of Newark. For 11 of those years, Sr. Dominica also was secretary of Catholic education.



Seton Hall University awarded Sr. Dominica a degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa* at its May 7th commencement exercises in recognition of her dedication to the highest professional standards and spiritual foundation of Catholic education.

Sister has served on many boards of secondary schools and colleges. She fostered the aims of school accreditation with service as a member of the Commission on Secondary Schools of the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges. She has served on the advisory committees of public policy and education for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and worked tirelessly to implement the National Directory of Catechesis. She served as a member of the NCEA board of directors and as vice president of Chief Administrators of Catholic Education (CACE).

Sisters on a Dais

Sr. Janet Baxendale, Professor of Liturgy at St Joseph's Seminary, was a panelist at the 30th anniversary celebration of their Institute of Religious Studies. The event was celebrated with a symposium, Mass of celebration and a cocktail buffet at the Seminary. Almost 600 graduates have passed through the Institute to share their knowledge of the Faith with others.

In recognition of Sr. Janet's work at the Institute, the award that goes to the outstanding graduate has been named the Sister Janet Baxendale Liturgy Award.

Sr. Margaret Donegan conducted a workshop on *Elizabeth Seton: a Woman for Every Woman* at the 23rd Annual Spirituality Convocation of the Archdiocese of New York. She spoke on how Elizabeth allowed God to lead her through roles as wife, mother, widow, and religious woman.

Sr. Mary Mc Cormick gave a presentation at the Annual Mary Magdalene Gathering at Mount Saint Vincent. This year's program included prayer, song, conversation and ritual, followed by refreshments.

Sr. Catherine Smith served as co-chair of the Auxiliary Spring Luncheon & Fashion Show for St. Joseph's Medical Center. This fundraiser was officially titled "Go Diva" *Step Out Against Stroke*.

Sr. Regina Bechtle was a guest on the Sirius Satellite Radio program *Pathways of Learning*. She spoke about Elizabeth Seton's role as a Catholic mother who made a difference. The show aired on May 8th on The Catholic Channel 159, which is sponsored by the Archdiocese of New York.

Cardinal Egan and the Archdiocesan Catechetical Office honored catechetical program founders, directors and coordinators at a June 7th ceremony marking the 35th anniversary of the creation of leadership positions for parish religious education.

Sr. Theresa Capria and **Sr. Dorothy O'Brien** were presented with the Terence Cardinal Cooke Award for Outstanding Leadership in the Field of Catechesis. This new award is presented to the pioneers of the Catechetical Office and to those leaders who have given 20 or more years to the ministry. Sr. Theresa is the former director of catechist formation and sacramental preparation. Sr. Dorothy was the first regional director of Ulster County.

Sr. Miriam Eugene Fenton was presented the Good Shepherd Award. She served 24 years as regional catechetical director for Dutchess County. At various times during that period, Sister also covered the adjacent counties of Ulster (10 years), Putnam and Rockland (5 years in each).

SC Associate Frances DeFrange, retired regional director for Staten Island, received a Director's award.

Cheers for Volunteers

The Bridge Building program would not be possible without volunteers at ten sites visited by young women from the high schools involved. As the school year ended, the site coordinators were honored for all of their work with the young adults throughout the year.

Sr. Joy Pellegrino, Director of Bridge Building, was the Mistress of Ceremony at the thank you dinner held at the Convent of Mary the Queen. She presented the site coordinators with framed certificates of appreciation and items appropriate to summer fun, such as kites.



Sr. Joy is about to present Sr. Maureen Dunn with her gag gift. From left, Sisters Mary Carmel Craig and Ann Reynolds watch the fun. The three Sisters with Sr. Joy are on staff at Mary the Queen.

The staff at the Sisters of Charity Administrative Center saluted the volunteers who help with various projects here. Without these extra willing hands, our jobs would be much harder.



From the left, seated in front, are Sr. Marion Hunt, who maintains the Resource Center, and Sr. Mary Elizabeth Kenny, who works in the New Membership Office. Behind them are Sr. Helen Scoltock and Sr. Mary Catherine Ryan, both in Development, and Associate Margaret Comaskey, who is organizing Congregation photos.



Sr. Rita King, the Congregation's Archivist, watches to see what goodies are in Sr. Angela Rooney's gift bag. Sr. Angela volunteers in the office of the Secretary of the Congregation.

Charity in Action: Our Sisters, as individuals, donated a total of \$3,430 to aid the victims of the May 4th tornado that wiped out 95% of Greensburg, KS. A check was sent to the President of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, KS to administer to those in need.

Victims Still Suffer: Trafficking in NYS

by Sr. Claire E. Regan

On May 2nd, ten Sisters of Charity of New York went on a road trip. They joined 35 other religious women and colleagues from the *New York Coalition of Religious Congregations – Stop Trafficking Of Persons* (NYCRC – STOP) to lobby for legislation in New York State that would make human trafficking a crime. Even though there is Federal legislation in place, local statutes are needed to define the crime and offer various punishments for it. There is also a need to educate first line enforcers – local law enforcement officers and district attorneys – on the issue.

I and nine other Sisters of Charity – Theresa Courtney, Gloria Degnan, Dorothy Gallant, Mary Ann Garisto, Geraldine Hanley, Eileen Kelly, Mary Ellen McGovern, Mary Ellen O’Boyle, Charlotte Raftery – met with State Senators and Assembly members to urge them to take action against this horrible crime.

It was a full day. Our chartered bus left Mount Saint Vincent at 6:30am. We picked up more NYCRC-STOP delegates at the Sparkill Dominican compound at Sparkill. Then, it was on to the NYS Capitol in Albany. We watched the video “Lives for Sale” during the drive.

Our group, representing five congregations from NYC’s northern suburbs, met up with Sisters from congregations in Albany, Syracuse and Ogdensburg. Earl Eichelberger, Director of Human Services for NYS Catholic Conference, represented the Bishops’ support of the issue. He was on the planning committee for the day with me and sisters from three other congregations.

We were greeted by Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz whose northwest Bronx district encompasses Mount Saint Vincent. He worked tirelessly with us for three years to pass a decent and strong anti-trafficking bill. Dinowitz briefed us on the measure and his hopes that it would pass during this legislative session.

We had 27 appointments with leading figures on the NYS Assembly and Senate Codes committees, as well as with staff from the offices of Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and Speaker Sheldon Silver.

Sisters spoke eloquently of the need for strong penalties and broad definitions of the crime. They also pressed for comprehensive services for victims and the right to a

defense for those charged with the crime of prostitution.

We met many who were supportive of the need for legislation in this area, yet were wary about how to encode it in the law. At that time, there were many legal points still to be negotiated. A budget for services for victims needed to be ironed out at high levels.

We gathered on the Capitol steps where we prayed, sang and carried signs supporting victims and calling for a law. We heard moving first-hand testimony from “Mae” (a pseudonym), a Filipino survivor of eight years of abusive treatment as a domestic worker.



Sr. Charlotte Raftery is front and center at the microphone. Sr. Mary Ann Garisto is to her left. Sr. Claire E. Regan is 2nd from the right on the steps, holding a sign.

In their evaluations of Lobby Day, many Sisters spoke about what an opportunity it was to educate and inform their legislators about their concerns for all who continue to suffer at the hands of traffickers. They hoped that their presence in Albany was meaningful and effective.

And it was! Governor Eliot Spitzer signed bill number A.2771 into law on June 6. Now victims of trafficking will receive assistance for physical and mental health needs, housing, and legal services. Perpetrators of this crime can be sentenced from three to 25 years. Police personnel will be trained to be effective first responders where human trafficking is suspected. ■

Sr. Claire E. Regan has been the Justice Effectiveness & Corporate Responsibility Coordinator for the Congregation for eight years. Before that, she spent many years working with the poor and homeless of East Harlem. Sister served on the Board of the NYC Coalition Against Hunger for five years and is a member of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility.

Charities on Tour

by Sr. Irene Fugazy

To Emmitsburg: The weather on the weekend of April 21/22 was ideal for traveling 500 miles, and back almost 200 years in time, to sites in Maryland where Elizabeth Seton had lived and worked. There were 22 pilgrims in our group, including Sisters from both the NY and NJ Charity congregations, and some laywomen – all devotees of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. We felt her presence with us all the way.

Our stops in Baltimore included the little house on Paca Street to which Elizabeth moved in June of 1808. The young widow had come there to open a school for girls at the invitation of a Sulpician priest whom she had met two years earlier in her native New York. We imagined what it must have been like there with eight Setons (Elizabeth, her five children and two of her sisters-in-law), some teachers, and school children.

Then we went next door to the original St. Mary's Seminary, where we prayed silently at the little chapel where Elizabeth and her first sisters pronounced vows. My only prayer was to ask our Mother to bless us with vocations. I'm sure she listened.

Next, we were off to Emmitsburg, northwest of Baltimore. It's around a 70 minute drive now. Our bus driver was astounded to learn that Elizabeth Seton had *walked* the 55 miles in the early 1800s!

To New York: In late May, our novitiate community in Yonkers hosted representatives of other congregations in the Sisters of Charity Federation: Sisters in Formation from the Daughters of Charity in Indiana, novices of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, KY, and three professed sisters from their Eastern Province (India).

Sisters Regina Bechtle (NY) and Judith Metz (Cincinnati) led the party in a pilgrimage to the holy grounds of Mother Seton in the New York City region. During this "Way of Elizabeth Tour" they visited Mount Saint Vincent (MSV) where they met the SCNY Council, toured the archives, and experienced the Elizabeth Seton Multimedia Traveling Museum at its home base.

Other stops included sites where Elizabeth had lived in Manhattan, Staten Island and New Rochelle. The Convent

The Daughters of Charity welcomed us with great warmth to their motherhouse in St. Joseph's Valley on the Pennsylvania border. Mother Seton's fledgling group had relocated there in June 1809.

We visited the Stone House (c. 1750) where Elizabeth's party lived for six months and where the congregation was established on July 31st.

We toured the White House to which they moved in February 1810. Elizabeth opened a free school her first month there, and an academy three months later. This is the birthplace of Catholic parochial school system in the U.S. It is also where Elizabeth died on January 4, 1821.

Three of our party carried the cross and candles in the procession at Sunday Mass in the beautiful Basilica of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, where her remains repose. All there, Sisters and Daughters of Charity, joined in thanksgiving for a very special woman and our very special heritage.

We left reluctantly, and during the drive home reflected quietly on the sites we had visited and their significance. Elizabeth Seton's 12 short years as a vowed religious woman had brought great good to many, both in her own time and down to our own time. ■

Sr. Irene Fugazy promulgates the life and legacy of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

of Saint Elizabeth in New Jersey was visited as they journeyed to Emmitsburg, MD.

In the U.S. and Canada, the 13 congregations that trace their roots to Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton make up the Sisters of Charity Federation. ■



Federation visitors pose with Sr. Margaret Beaudette's sculpture of St. Vincent de Paul at MSV.

On Aging Joyfully

by Sr. Yolanda De Mola

It was inwardly kicking and screaming that I came to the Congregation's retirement convent, Mary the Queen, for some post-hospitalization recuperation. My thoughts at that time were "Lord, why can't You wait until I am *really* old?"

Much to my amazement, after several months here I find that I have never been happier in my life.

The administration at The Queen is thoughtful, competent, creative, generous and hard working. (Editor's note: Well, of course — they're Sisters.) The lay staff emulates that example. Religious and laity are at the ready anywhere and at any time to respond to a need or desire. We residents want for nothing.

Days seem to fly by, and never is there a dull moment. Mass is offered daily in the beautiful chapel on the main floor, precluding the need to go out and face the elements. Sisters who are less mobile can opt to view the Liturgy via closed-circuit TV in their rooms.

The opportunities for prayer, private and communal, are plentiful at Mary the Queen. The companionship is priceless and the choice among reading materials is endless: multiple copies of *The New York Times* come daily and several libraries satisfy even the fussiest bibliophile. I have read more books in a few months here than I would have at home.

In most religious congregations in the United States today, there are more elderly Sisters than young ones. So many careers are open to women these days and salaries are generally good. Why then should a young woman seek to serve God and others by living the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience? Love is the answer. It has been said: "Fall in love, stay in love and it decides everything."

The person and ministry of Jesus, when He dwelt among us, served as a magnet, a unique example of a life lived in keen awareness of the needs and desires of others. That sort of

selflessness stands in conflict with the norms of the so-called "me" generation. Too often, the Thou is replaced by the I. How often do you hear "I want..." or "I must have..." or "I would be happy if..."

As a child, I had a recurring dream in which a voice would tell me: "You can be happy when you are young or when you are old, but you cannot have it both ways." Always, I chose to respond: "when I am old." I instinctively knew that youth, with all its strength and buoyancy, is able to withstand any adversity, while in later years, when mental and physical resources are ebbing away, one would be less likely to weather well.

Childhood (before miracle drugs) brought me pneumonia, measles, whooping cough, chicken pox, etc. I was not a happy camper. Without caring and resourceful parents, I might not have survived. But I did, and as a senior in Cathedral High School, made a three-day retreat that turned my world upside down.

There I was, seated near the stage of our imposing auditorium, listening to a Franciscan priest with a rich and resonant voice say, "I have called you by name and you are mine." His words came as a clarion call to drop all previous plans and follow Christ as a Sister of Charity of New York.

Yet I dreaded telling my parents of that insistent call because religious life held little attraction to the Latins of my day. After overcoming many hurdles though, I arrived at a moment of peace and joy, thanks to God and a caring Congregation.

When I entered in September 1942, I was alone but happy. It was the start of 65 years of prayer, education, teaching, joy and sorrow with noble, dedicated companions who shared my dreams and support and care for me to this day.

No regrets, only gratitude. ■

Sr. Yolanda De Mola has taught school through the college level and is a writer and translator.



Sr. Yolanda with a good book

BOOK REVIEW

Full of Grace: An Oral Biography of John Cardinal O'Connor

By Terry Golway / © 2001, Atria / 256 pages in hardcover

by Sr. Yolanda De Mola

From the time of his birth in a row house in Philadelphia on January 20, 1920, to the moment of his passing on May 3, 2000, the life and career of John Cardinal O'Connor is a saga of achievement in various careers: parish priest, school teacher, high school guidance counselor, radio show host, administrator, military chaplain, scholar (MA & Ph.D. degrees), Bishop, and Cardinal.

Terry Golway is a columnist and city editor for the *New York Observer*, as well as a book author. For this manuscript, Golway interviewed over 50 people – Catholic and non-Catholic, vowed religious and lay people, military personnel and civilians, men and women, the famous and the obscure – whose lives were touched and changed by New York's eighth Cardinal. In 121 vignettes arranged within nine themes, we hear from the Cardinal's family; from nuns, priests, brothers and rabbis; from union leaders, politicians, admirals, and writers.

O'Connor enjoyed a personal relationship with Pope John Paul II, made stronger by the Pope's visit to NY in 1995. He had a remarkable friendship with New York City's Jewish Mayor Ed Koch, with whom he wrote the book *His Eminence And Hizzoner, a Candid Exchange*.

Cardinal O'Connor also played a pivotal role in the life of NYC policeman Steven McDonald who was paralyzed by a teenage gunman. McDonald, inspired by the Cardinal, forgave his assailant and regained his will to live.

In these anecdotes, we learn how O'Connor's sincerity, kindness and generosity touched the lives of countless

individuals through his life, especially during his 16 years as top prelate in the New York Archdiocese.

The Cardinal's ecclesiastical motto was "There can be no love without justice." Despite his 27 years in the Navy, as a chaplain, he was a severe critic of military spending. He was often portrayed in the media as rigid and judgmental, but he was just doing his job – upholding and communicating the teachings of the Church on issues such as abortion and gay rights. He left little doubt where he and his Church stood.

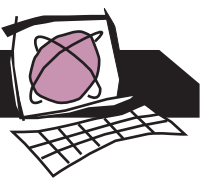
Even though he had risen to the "top of his profession," O'Connor reveled in his role of priest and pastor. He celebrated Mass daily at the Cathedral, heard confessions, counseled couples preparing for marriage, visited the sick, and buried the dead. He scheduled no appointments on Wednesdays so he would be available to his priests.

O'Connor knew there was a reason for everything. Some might say there's no such thing as a coincidence; the Cardinal would agree, but called it "God-incidence."

At the end of his life, the brain tumor that afflicted him thickened his speech; the medical treatments disfigured his body. He said his last Mass shortly after his 80th birthday. Cardinals Baum and Law were with him at the end, reciting the prayers of the dying.

It was clear from the words spoken at his funeral that the Cardinal had won the love and respect of Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Golway's interviews show that John O'Connor was not just a Prince of the Church; he was also a prince of a man. ■

Sr. Yolanda De Mola, who has taught school through the college level, is a writer and translator.

WEB REVIEW

We're sure you know that *Catholic New York* is the official paper of the Archdiocese of New York, and that you read it *religiously*. (Sorry, we couldn't resist that.) But did you know that it's available online, too?

At its web site (www.cny.org), you can read the main stories and featured columns, scan the "Out & About" section for activities around the Archdiocese, check the obituaries, and link to the top daily stories carried by Catholic News Service, the oldest and largest religious news service in the world. You can even read back issues of *CNY* in its Archives section.

If you want to check other Catholic newspapers across the country and around the world, you'll find a list at www.catholicnews.com/list.htm ■

Sr. Margaret Dowling • Educator / Administrator / Leader • 1917 – 2007

Religious Name: Sr. Clare Marie • Entered: 1934 • Final vows: 1940

Teacher, administrator, civil rights advocate, publisher, pastoral minister, retreat director, innovator and Congregational leader – Sr. Margaret Dowling served in many ministries during her lifetime.

Margaret grew up in Brooklyn with her two brothers and her parents. She began thinking about religious life as a child and entered the Sisters of Charity after graduating from Bishop McDonnell Memorial H.S. She would go on to earn a BS in Mathematics and an MS in Elementary Education.

Sister's early ministry was teaching, but it didn't take long for her organizational and leadership skills to become apparent.

Her administrative positions included Headmistress at St. Francis Xavier Academy in Nassau, The Bahamas (1943-47), and Principal at St. Augustine's School (1950-56), and at St. Barnabas Elementary School (1956-62), both in the Bronx. She was Director of Elementary Curriculum in the Office of Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of New York (1962-67).



Sr. Margaret in 1972

Sister's leadership positions within the Congregation included 17 years as Local Superior and four years as General Councilor of Administration. She was elected President of the Congregation, and during her two terms (1971-79), raised the Sisters' awareness of, and involvement in, justice issues. Sr. Margaret embraced the Vatican II declaration that "justice is a constitutive element of the Gospel." While in The Bahamas, she integrated St.

Francis, to the consternation of some. Back in NYC, in 1965, she co-founded the justice movement *Full Circle*, which evolved into the *Summer in the City* program. On March 14th of that same year, she and 700 other sisters took part in their historic protest march through Harlem for racial equality.

After two years in pastoral ministry in Guatemala in the early '80s, Sister began publishing a monthly bulletin to report on the misery and injustice there. *Focus on Central*



Sr. Margaret Dowling is 2nd from the right in this photo taken on March 14, 1965 when the Sisters of Charity marched through Harlem in support of civil rights. The other Sisters are, from left, Sr. Elizabeth Maria Fleming, Sr. Rose Mary Commerford, Sr. Rose Frederick Jones and Mother Loretto Bernard Beagan.

America became an authoritative, credible source on political, social and economic developments in that region.

Sr. Margaret served for six years on the board of *Network*, a national organization founded by women religious to lobby for and monitor human rights legislation in Congress. She also was coordinator for *Network* in lower New York State for 15 years and served as a human rights advocate with the *Intercommunity Center for Justice and Peace* in Manhattan for eight years.

At age 72, Sister began a 16-year ministry as a Spiritual Director, giving retreats while still advocating for human rights in Central America. In late summer 2006, she cut back on her schedule, but still was active in Congregational activities. She was a delegate in this past February's Assembly and took part in the leadership elections in late April.

Sr. Margaret died peacefully in her sleep at age 89. She was a visionary and prophetic member of the Congregation for 73 years and helped shape its renewal. Her wise leadership will be missed. ■

In Memoriam

Sr. Miriam Ambrose O'Connell • Educator / Administrator • 1907 – 2007

Baptismal Name: Mary Bridget • Entered: 1925 • Final vows: 1931

Mary Bridget and her two younger sisters grew up in Manhattan with their immigrant parents. She earned a BS in History and taught for 29 years: at St. Joseph's in the Bronx; St. John's in Goshen; St. Paul's in Brooklyn; and Sacred Hearts of Jesus & May in Southhampton. She became principal at the last school in 1956, then also served as principal at Our Lady Star of the Sea on Staten Island and at Sacred Heart in Manhattan. After running schools for 14 years, Sister became a coordinator for religious education, first at St. Boniface in Wesley Hills (Rockland Co.), then at Our Lady of the Angelus in Queens. Sr. Ambrose always felt a strong desire to serve her senior Sisters and, after retiring from teaching, she supervised the food service at the MSV Convent where she always was ready to listen to the Sisters' needs and stories. Although sickly as a child, Sr. Ambrose worked until she was 82 and lived beyond the century mark. We are most grateful that 82 of her 100 years were dedicated to the Sisters of Charity of New York.

Sr. Marguerite Fleming • Educator • 1916 – 2007

Baptismal Name: Margaret • Entered: 1939 • Final vows: 1946

Margaret was one of three children in a Brooklyn family. Although related to two Sisters of Mercy, she attended the College of Mount Saint Vincent (CMSV) and entered the Sisters of Charity after graduation. She earned both a BA and MA in Math and taught in 16 schools – from elementary level through college, both Catholic and public – over 51 years. Her longest missions were at Bishop McDonnell Memorial H.S. in Brooklyn (1951-59), Blessed Sacrament in Manhattan (1945-51), and in Beacon public schools (1970-85). On the college level, she taught math and physics at St. John's in Brooklyn and at CMSV. Sr. Marguerite was an untiring and ever-curious learner and did post-graduate work at CCNY and Tufts University in Theoretical Physics. She also did research in bio-physics at St. Vincent's Hospital. Sr. Marguerite was 90 at her death. We are grateful for her 68 years of service as a Sister of Charity.

Sr. Marian Helen Collins • Educator / Administrator • 1927 – 2007

Baptismal Name: Helen • Entered: 1947 • Final vows: 1951

Helen Collins and her sister grew up in Brooklyn. She had dreamed of becoming a nun since she was seven and first encountered the Sisters of Charity at Bishop McDonnell Memorial H.S. She earned a BA in History and MA's in Education and School Administration, which she put to good use during her 36 years in education. Sister's longest ministries were in Manhattan: 12 years at St. Ignatius Loyola and 15 years at Holy Trinity, where she was Administrator (1971-80). She also was Administrator at Immaculate Conception School in Stony Point (1981-84), and a teacher at Sacred Heart on Staten Island and Sacred Heart in Manhattan. Sr. Helen encouraged students to reach their highest potential. Her thoroughness made her an effective patient representative and data clerk for 13 years at St. Vincent's Hospital in Harrison. That was followed by office work for the Franciscan Friars and at St. Anthony's Guild, both in Manhattan. Poor health plagued her final years, but did little to dampen her spirits. Sr. Helen died at age 80 after having served faithfully as a Sister of Charity for 60 years.

Sr. Mary Ellen Butler • Educator / Administrator • 1937 – 2007

Religious Name: Sr. Marian Edmund • Entered: 1959 • Final vows: 1967

Mary Ellen grew up in Brooklyn, the youngest of five children. She had the Sisters of Charity from elementary school through college: Our Lady Help of Christians, Academy of Mount Saint Vincent in Tuxedo Park, and CMSV. She earned both a BA and MA in French. Sister's first ten years of ministry were in teaching: St. Joseph Academy, Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Holy Cross Academy, all in Manhattan. Then came two years as Dean of Students at St. Joseph by-the-Sea on Staten Island. Her next ministry would be her longest – 1974-88, at Resurrection Academy in Rye, where she was a teacher, administrative assistant, and finally, Administrator. After that, Sister served two terms as Regional Coordinator on the Congregation's Council. For the past 11 years, Sr. Mary Ellen was the Coordinator of Pastoral Services for the Congregation's retirement houses. Her sister Marguerite is a Daughter of Charity in Emmitsburg, MD. Sr. Mary Ellen died at age 69 after a long illness. She gave the Sisters of Charity 48 years of loyal, dedicated service.

SEASONALITIES

Calendar

August

- 20: In 1814, Congregation Council Minutes note that it was “unanimously agreed that no personal inconvenience should prevent the Sisters of Charity what duty and charity required.”
- 28: In 1774, Elizabeth Ann Bayley was born in New York City.
In 1817, three Sisters from Emmitsburg, MD arrived in New York to open the orphanage that became known as St. Patrick’s Asylum. This is the first mission of the Sisters of Charity in New York.

September

- 8: Fourteen of our Sisters will celebrate their Golden Jubilees; one, her Silver Jubilee. The occasion will be celebrated with a Liturgy and reception at Mount Saint Vincent.
- 13: In 1847, the Academy of Mount St. Vincent opened with 40 boarders at McGown’s Pass, in what is now Central Park in Manhattan.
- 14: The 32nd anniversary of the canonization of Elizabeth Ann Seton.
- 24: In 1859, the First Mass was celebrated in Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at the new motherhouse at Mount St. Vincent, Riverdale.

Save the date: October 15

That’s when we’ll sponsor our first golf tournament to raise funds for the needs of our senior Sisters. This is the first major fundraising activity for the Sisters of Charity of New York.



We hope you’ll join us for a good cause and also have fun at North Hempstead Country Club in Port Washington, NY.



For more information, contact Bill Hurley
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