



SISTERS  
of CHARITY  
NEW YORK

# Vision

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 1, Winter 2006

## Meeting Today's Needs: Affordable Housing

Eric Feldmann

Over the past 20 years the Sisters of Charity of New York have created a growing presence in providing affordable housing to the elderly and special populations. Today the congregation operates eight housing projects with 466 apartment units. The projects span a wide geographic area in New York, from Staten Island to Manhattan and Rockland County.

All of the housing has been developed in furtherance of the Sisters of Charity mission, "to reveal God's love to all in need, especially the poor."

The four projects on Staten Island are known as "202's," a reference to the federal regulation section which provides 100% of the development fund, and then funds operations so residents need spend no more than 30% of their income for housing. The income level for individuals is currently \$22,000 or less and for couples \$25,100 or less. Applicants must be 62 years of age or over. The projects include Joseph House in West Brighton with 75 units; St. Vincent's Manor in Port Richmond with 72 units; St. Elizabeth's Manor in Seaview with 80 units and Sr. Elizabeth Boyle Manor in Stapleton with 65 units.

The three Manhattan projects are Casa Cecilia in Washington Heights with 35 units for families; Seton House in Harlem with 16 units for families and Fox House, also in Harlem,

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To read this issue's History and Heritage story visit

[www.scny.org](http://www.scny.org)



*Staff and residents of Fox House  
East 117 Street, New York City.*



# Letter from the President

Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends,

In the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the earthquake in Pakistan and the mudslides in Guatemala, housing has become an urgent need for the survivors. Surely we have all read or heard poignant stories of people who have lost their homes along with all their possessions. As one woman in New Orleans gazed at the destruction where her home once stood, she asked with great anguish, "Our home wasn't much, but it was ours. Now where will my children sleep? Where will they go to feel safe?"

In this issue of *Vision* you will read about the efforts and accomplishments of the Sisters of Charity in sponsoring housing for persons with a variety of needs. Housing is a fundamental human need. No one chooses to be in the position of depending on the compassion of others for shelter. As Christians following the example of Christ we are urged to welcome strangers and treat them justly. St. Paul says in his Letter to the Hebrews: 13: 2: "Don't neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it."

I hope you will be encouraged by our efforts with regard to housing. Perhaps it will increase your own mindfulness when you have an opportunity to extend hospitality to another.

Let us together reflect on the words in Matthew (25: 34-35): "Come you blessed of my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world! For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

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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*All submissions are subject to editorial and space constraints.*



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# Happenings and Honors

## Memorial Mass

The annual Memorial Mass for our deceased loved ones was held on November 6. Although the emphasis was on those who had entered into eternal life over the past year, the congregation honored *all* deceased sisters, associates, former members, and family members. The Mass was held at the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at Mount Saint Vincent. It was celebrated by Msgr. Thomas P. Leonard, pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Manhattan. Around 280 family members and friends were in attendance.

## Sister named local legend

Sister Katherine Seibert, a physician, has been chosen as one of four Local Legends from New York State by the National Library of Medicine. Originally nominated for this honor by U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey in October 2003, Sister Kay was honored because her “contributions to our community have been unparalleled. She embodies the highest ideals of the medical professions.”

Local Legends is a joint project of the American Medical Women’s Association and the National Library of Medicine with the goal of celebrating the lives and achievements of America’s women physicians. You can learn more about this award on the SCNY website ([www.scny.org](http://www.scny.org)).

## Congratulations to...

Sister Charlotte Raftery who has completed 18 years of service at the Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service, Inc., NYC. Sister Judith Garson, executive director, wrote, “Under Sister Charlotte’s leadership the program has almost doubled in capacity and has earned a reputation for wholehearted, creative commitment to some of the most vulnerable East Harlem families. Sister Charlotte has motivated her staff and graduate student interns as much by her example as by her words. She has shown what ‘best practices’ in community social work mean, put into action day after day.”

## Cathedral honors Sister Mary de Sales Collins

Sister Mary de Sales Collins received special recognition at the Centennial Anniversary Opening Mass held on September 25, 2005 at St. Patrick’s Cathedral from her alma mater, Cathedral High School. This graduate of the class of 1931 was honored “for embodying the true essence of a Cathedralite with strength, wisdom and character.”

## SCNY receives Angelus Award

St. Vincent’s Hospital Manhattan presented its Angelus Award to the Sisters of Charity of New York on October 25, 2005. The SCNY founded St. Vincent’s Hospital over 150 years ago.

The award was presented during the Angelus Awards Gala, the hospital’s most significant annual fundraiser, which was held at the Waldorf Astoria in Manhattan. It was accepted by Sister Dorothy Metz, president of the SCNY, on behalf of her congregation.

The impressive brass bell on a walnut base was bestowed in “...deep gratitude for the lasting legacy provided by Mother Seton and the caring Sisters who followed her – including those who still play such a vital role at St. Vincent’s today.... Without all of you St. Vincent’s, as we know it, would not exist.”

If it’s true that “every time a bell rings, an angel gets its wings” there have been many additions to the heavenly hosts since the award arrived at Le Gras Hall.



## SCNY honored in Westchester

The Sisters of Charity of New York were honored at the 50th Annual Luncheon and Fashion Show of the Auxiliary Board of St. Vincent’s Hospital Westchester, Harrison, NY. The event took place on November 3, 2005 at the Westchester Country Club in Rye and featured fashions by Saks Fifth Avenue.

The congregation was awarded a beautiful crystal pyramid from Tiffany inscribed, “To the Sisters of Charity, With Much Gratitude And Appreciation/The Auxiliary Board, Staff and Patients/St. Vincent’s Hospital Westchester.”

In 1879, the congregation opened a 17-bed facility in Harrison where women suffering from mental illness could find hope, respect and compassion. It was staffed by seven Sisters and one physician with a progressive vision for those days. These pioneers believed that each life was valuable and deserved respect.

St. Vincent’s Retreat for the Insane, as it was called in the early days, expanded over the years into an impressive complex of inpatient and outpatient programs, preventive and residential services, and partnership with employers and school systems and teaching collaborations with New York Medical College.

Sister Margaret Beaudette sculpted a statue of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton for the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Shrub Oak. The bronze statue depicts Elizabeth receiving her first communion. Sister Margaret attended the dedication in September.

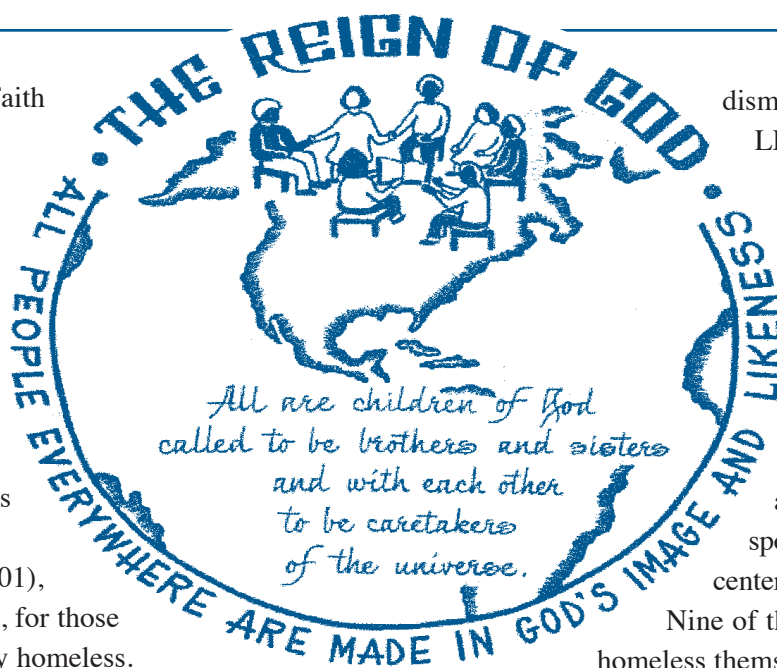


# Ministering with the Homeless

Patrice Athanasidy

The Life Experience and Faith Sharing Association (LEFSA) logo “expresses the heart and soul of its ministry. The vision of being a part of extending the Reign of God in our lives and in our world is what is aimed for and is that which orients the association’s direction.” Based in Manhattan, the Association was founded in 1986 by the late Sister Teresa Skehan, RSM (2001), and Sister Dorothy Gallant, SC, for those who are homeless and formerly homeless.

LEFSA began in 1985-86 after Sister Dorothy and Sister Teresa saw the conditions of a large city shelter. They knew that there was another way to help people to experience their dignity and worth. “The shelters offer food, some clothing and a bed. People also need to heal themselves on the inside. LEFSA helps them to find that strength and healing from within themselves,” Sister Dorothy explained. “We wanted to walk the journey with them.” She explained how much she has learned about life from people that many have



dismissed. Sister Dorothy believes LEFSA helps people to find hope within themselves through prayer and sharing and proves that all people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

The program began with the two sisters visiting three shelters and one hotel. Now, 11 team members and one associate work in nine city sponsored shelters, two drop-in centers and one HIV/AIDS residence.

Nine of the team members are formerly homeless themselves, giving them a deep understanding of the program and how it helps. Sister Dorothy says, “The people who participate in our meetings draw hope from the team members who are formerly homeless.”

Sister Dorothy explained, “The primary purpose of LEFSA is to provide a weekly forum for people in the shelters to come together, to form a faith community with one another, share around life issues of concern to us and search for direction and a solution to problems within the context of faith community in the light of God’s Word. We look at what God is calling

## What We Confirm In Our Ministry

The statements below come from the team members of LEFSA:

- We confirm a world of peace and justice in our role in bringing that about within ourselves, our community, the world.—Ann Quintano
- We confirm God’s presence in each person we meet.—Rosemary O’Donnell, SC
- We confirm the identity and dignity that God gives everyone through forgiveness. God’s love and hope transcends tags. God sees us through love.—Vaughn McLamb
- We confirm people can love, get along and work together. We express this when we are in the shelters as a team—bringing people together in harmony. No one is up and no one is down.—Dorothy Gallant, SC
- We confirm willing changes turn into blessings.—Georgia James
- We confirm we don’t have all the answers.—Jimmie Robinson
- We confirm people need to believe in themselves.—All
- We confirm there are unjust structures and we all have a responsibility to work to change them. People often blame themselves when they become homeless. It is not all their fault. The system often plays a role in someone’s becoming homeless.—James Addison
- We confirm people can work together without being in competition with one another.—Lucy Lumsby
- We confirm it doesn’t matter whether we are Catholic, Protestant, etc. We can get together without one being better or worse. Outside Christianity, others are welcome.—Frank Brandon
- We confirm LEFSA’s ministry is also mission. Our ministry is our mission.—Timothy Dunnington
- We confirm Christ’s love message: We are all our sisters’ and brothers’ keepers—God’s family.—Godfrey Xaba
- We confirm that giving people respect and affirmation helps them to grow.—Sister Cecelia Palange
- We confirm we share our thoughts and dreams with one another.—Eve Thomas



## A personal testimony

Lucy, Team Member and formerly homeless

In the beginning, being homeless was depressing. I was angry, ashamed and upset for being in that predicament. I had no relationship with God. One day, I came in early from work and went to the Rec room and walked in on a Life Sharing Community Gathering. If I can remember straight, the gathering was on love and it got me thinking about God's love for me. I decided that I would let these Gatherings be my connection back to God. Whenever I was going through anything, I kept coming back and each time there was food for my soul. My spirit would be lifted, and I would be able to continue through that situation.

After about six to seven months of participating in LEFSA gatherings, I learned to keep the focus on God and putting my life together. I am now living in my own apartment; I have custody of my grandson; I am a Deacon in my church and I am privileged to be with people in the shelters as a LEFSA team member.

Getting housing was a long, hard road for me. Besides the unavailability of sufficient low income housing, the systems in our society presented many roadblocks along the way. I learned a lot about the housing systems and I am now sharing the fruits and learnings from my struggles in this area with people searching for apartments and a place to live. I am LEFSA's Housing Advocate.



*Lucy Lumsby presents Barry Markman with a gift from LEFSA. Barry has been donating shrimp to monthly Leadership lunches, holiday meals and annual picnics for over two years. What a blessing he is to us!*



*In September 1986, Sisters Dorothy Gallant, SC(r.) and Teresa Skehan, RSM were on their way to their very first shelter where Life and Faith Sharing Gatherings were initiated. They went equipped with a lot of love, faith, coffee and bibles.*

us to do on personal, communal, and structural levels. Extending God's Reign in our lives and in our communities and world is our mission." These weekly gatherings, on average, include 200 people at 12 sites located in Manhattan, the Bronx and Brooklyn.

The Association also sponsors other programs including monthly programs for Leadership Development, Women's Empowerment and a Men's Spiritual Development

Group. LEFSA also has a Street Ministry Program that goes out into the streets on a weekly basis; a weekly Team Enrichment Program and a weekly Creative Arts Workshop; and four Annual Retreats for persons who are homeless and formerly homeless. The Housing Advocacy Program and holiday programs round out the Association's offerings. Voicemail and resource sharing is also available to help people with the process of moving out of homelessness.

Everything centers around the objectives of the Association which include:



"You just feel all alone, no familiar faces and no familiar voices. You're in your land but you feel like a stranger in your own land. Then you feel like people are taking advantage of you because you're at their mercies and you have to obey them and their rules. It's almost like you have no more voice. (You can speak but no one is listening to you.) But again I say thank God for the Lord Jesus Christ."—Deborah Byrd



*LEFSA gathering at a shelter.*

- To be a caring presence within the shelters
- To provide those who attend Base Christian Community gatherings and those encountered within the shelters with referral information and support towards making concrete steps to remove/lessen the causes of homelessness

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which is a Tier II Shelter, serving 17 families. All three of these housing programs respond to the needs of the formerly homeless.

The newest project is Seton Village in Nanuet with 106 units for those 55 years of age and older. Rents are based on income and currently range from \$630 per month to \$956 per month.

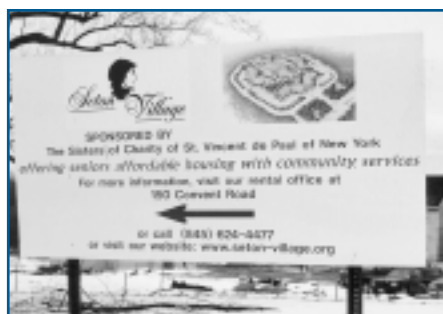
At each of the housing sites social service support is offered to meet particular resident needs and to assist in tying residents to community based services.

Sisters of Charity are active in the day-to-day operation of the housing. Sister Sheila Finucane currently serves as the social service coordinator at Sister Elizabeth Boyle Manor; Sister Marie Trinita Flood serves at Seton House as the resident liaison; Sisters Kathleen Gilbride and Eileen Walsh, R.N. are at Seton Village as the executive director and resident services coordinator, respectively; and Sr. Anita Miriam Lavelle is receptionist at Seton Village. Sister Florence Speth serves as the executive director of Fox House and chairs the Boards of Directors of Casa Cecilia and Seton House. She is also spearheading the development of new housing for mentally ill mothers, with children – an Assembly initiative of the Sisters of Charity.

A number of sisters are also involved as board members, including Sister Miriam Kevin Phillips who serves as chair of the Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation established in 1998 as the corporate parent of many of the housing companies.

It also is responsible for housing management and undertakes the development of new housing programs.

New projects can take many years to develop and may ultimately not become realities. The Sisters



*Sign erected during construction phase of Seton Village*



*Dedication of Seton House, Lexington Avenue, NYC*

of Charity are continually pursuing new housing opportunities. Currently, in addition to the Assembly project, the congregation is seeking to develop a 19-unit facility for the chronically mentally ill; three additional “202” projects with a total of 220 units; 120 market-rate rental apartments for seniors and 49 units of single family homes for seniors for purchase. The single-family homes, one of the “202” projects with

80 units, and the market-rate rental apartments are proposed to be combined on a single site with appropriate amenities including a community center. The complex would be known as St. Vincent’s Village.

Besides offering a basic human necessity, affordable housing has provided other possibilities for many of the families. It has enabled some persons to further their education, thus opening the door for the opportunity of a better job. Children’s education is stabilized because of consistent attendance in the same neighbor school. In addition, tutoring is often available to improve grades and self-respect. Affordable safe housing offers more than four walls and a roof. It contributes greatly to a better quality of life for all of us.

For further information regarding the housing programs – present and planned – or to apply for housing, call the Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation at 718-477-6803.

Eric Feldmann is the Executive Director of the Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation, overseeing all housing projects with Sister Jane Iannucelli.

- To be involved in weekly outreach to people who live on the streets and around the parks
  - To work together with people who are homeless, formerly homeless, and advocates to address the systems and structures that keep people oppressed, and to work toward their transformation
  - To address the drug epidemic in a focused way, and to deal with it on personal, communal and structural levels.
- James summed up how LEFSA helps by quoting

Langston Hughes about an injured bird. He said, “That is what life for me was like being homeless. I remembered sitting on the steps of Franklin Men’s Shelter watching a bird that was hurt that could not fly. He was trapped, hovering in a corner with fear, and vulnerable to everything and everybody. This is a very lonely and isolated situation for me and this bird to be in.

“Life and Faith Sharing helped me to dream again and heal through our life and faith sharing gatherings in the shelter. This Empowerment Model helps you to take the steps that are necessary that eventually helped me to fly again.”

# Associate Retreat 2005

Jean Anthony

In mid-October, as the eight days of rain ended, Associates gathered at St. Mary's Villa in Stanfordville, NY, for their annual retreat. It was a glorious time as friendly faces and loving hearts came together to share the journey, to pray, to be open to the wisdom and love found in community.

Sister Mary Mc Cormick graciously led us as we looked anew at relationships in our lives. Gleaning insights from a variety of sources (from the *Book of Ruth* to *Fried Green Tomatoes*) we examined our lives and particularly our relationships with our mothers and daughters. The gentle pace and content proved fruitful as we shared significant moments, deepening our understanding and our friendships. We could savor what our own Elizabeth Ann Seton valued so well in being friends.

We walked around Sisters Hill Farm as the sun reappeared and enjoyed the balmy autumn weather. On Saturday evening

we drove to Bangall for Mass. The tiny, wood framed church cozied us as we sang and prayed. Our meals were simple, delicious and full of lively conversation. As Sunday afternoon arrived we were talking of when we would meet again. This precious time goes all too fast!



*Sisters and Associates enjoy Stanfordville.*

## Former Members Sponsor Discussion on Lay Ministry

In November, a group of former members of the congregation and some Sisters met to hear Sister Regina Bechtle and Zeni Fox talk about their newly published book, *Called and Chosen: Toward A Spirituality for Lay Leaders* (Rowman and Littlefield). The afternoon

consisted of presentations by Zeni and Sister Regina, time for personal reflection, and small group sharing and reflection. It was an energizing afternoon as participants focused on a topic close to their hearts and enjoyed meeting with each other.

## Extending Charity

Have you noticed the charism of Charity in an unexpected person or situation? The committee studying a variety of ways people outside the Sisters and Associates of Charity exhibit the charism in their lives invites you to acknowledge the lived charism in others. The committee is providing attractive cards (pictured) to be given to those who partner with us in revealing God's love to all, especially



Sr. Mary Ann Daly

the poor. Recognizing the charism in its varied forms is a way for us to acknowledge the generosity of God who gives the charism to many. It is also a way of supporting those who are in relationship with us in mission and ministry. It reminds us that the charism is alive and well and that it is our responsibility to recognize it when we see it. If you would like some cards to distribute, please call 914-377-0494.



# Sisters of Charity of New York Respond to Natural Disasters

Chris Haggerty

Storms, floods and quakes were regular newsmakers throughout 2005. Each event left devastation and distress in its wake. The Sisters of Charity of New York responded, especially to the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The congregation, through its members, relatives and friends — especially those associated with institutions where the Sisters of Charity minister, including schools and healthcare facilities — raised over \$26,000 for hurricane relief in under five weeks.

Thanks to insights from Sister Eileen McGrory who had served in Louisiana for many years and Federation connections, the SCNY knew where to best direct the funds raised. The Daughters of Charity West Central Province have hospitals, convents and other ministries in the areas hit by the two storms. The Dioceses of Shreveport and Houma-Thibodaux, LA, both opened numerous shelters for evacuees, including the Sisters of the Holy Family who normally live and minister in New Orleans.

In addition, the congregation has initiated a permanent disaster relief fund which will enable it to respond more readily to future emergencies. Already, this has been used for victims of the Guatemalan mudslides and the Pakistan earthquake.

The Sisters did not limit their involvement to fund raising though. Three of them were part of a team from St. Vincent Catholic Medical Center (SVCMC) NY that went to Alexandria, LA, to provide relief to the overwhelmed staff at CHRISTUS St. Francis Cabrini Hospital. The SVCMC team consisted of doctors, nurses, social workers and two chaplains.

Alexandria in central Louisiana was spared the direct devastation that befell the coastal regions. However, its population swelled 20% when 10,000 permanent evacuees settled there. CHRISTUS hospital took in patients from facilities further south. In the weeks after the storm, it was operating at 51% above capacity.

Sister Sheila Brosnan and Sister Karen Helfenstein are both registered nurses and both work for SVCMC. Sister Sheila is a vice president of mission in Staten Island. Sister Karen is the director of spiritual care for behavioral health in Harrison, NY. Sister Carol DeAngelo is the director of mission integration at St. Cabrini Nursing Home in Dobbs Ferry and a part time ecospirituality minister.

Sister Karen headed up a 16-person team that worked 12-hour shifts for two weeks. They staffed a 40-foot long mobile hospital unit that was stocked with medical supplies, including



*Sisters Karen Helfenstein, Sheila Brosnan and Carol DeAngelo (L to R)—who went to Alexandria, LA, with the St. Vincent Catholic Medical Center NY relief team—are reunited in Smith Hall, Mount Saint Vincent, on Congregation Day, Oct. 29th.*

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# Katrina Relief: Schools Open Their Hearts

Sr. Eileen McGrory

Concern for the victims of Hurricane Katrina was felt keenly by students in schools where there are Sisters of Charity as teachers or administrators.

♥ Sister Margaret McEntee at **Notre Dame High School in Manhattan** was approached by the girls of her *C'est la Vie Club* saying that they wanted to begin an activity immediately to help the Katrina victims. So club representatives sold N.U.T. cards (No Uniform Today) for \$2 each. By the end of two days, the money from these cards and donations from administrators, faculty and staff amounted to \$1,000! This generous donation was added to the money collected at the Sisters of Charity Center.

♥ The students of **Sacred Heart School in Hartsdale, NY**, put their lessons about the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy to action. They raffled off four of the new Harry Potter books and raised \$532.75. The eighth grade Confirmation students collected school supplies, new toys, and baby clothing to ship to the disaster area. The value of the 605 items amassed was \$2,000.

*Students at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School in Shrub Oak, NY, show some of the 1,000+ stuffed animals they collected for the youngest victims of the hurricanes in the Gulf Coast. Many of the children donated their own favorite toys so that other children could get to love them as much as they did.*



The children of Sacred Heart School have listened to the message of Jesus, “Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, that you do unto me.”

♥ The girls of **St. Raymond Academy (SRA) in the Bronx** found it hard to imagine what it would be like to live and go to school as an evacuee in a new city, in addition to worrying about family members who were missing or injured. They heard about 74 evacuee students from Louisiana and Mississippi who were taken in by St. Pius X High School in Houston, TX. So the girls of SRA collected \$500 and wrote letters

of support and compassion to the students there. SRA intends to continue this connection with St. Pius X via additional donations and letters throughout the year.

♥ Try to imagine collecting, packing and shipping over one thousand stuffed animals! That is exactly what the girls and boys of **St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School in Shrub Oak, NY**, did for the young victims of Hurricane Katrina. Many of the children gave up their favorite stuffed toys so that other children could love them as much as they did.

♥ The hearts of the children of **Our Lady Queen of Apostles Regional Catholic Elementary School in Center Moriches, NY**, were touched by the TV images of the hurricane disaster. As one third grader wrote, “. . . made me feel very sad and sick on the inside that little kids my age had to live in a sports dome. It was upsetting to think of them being frightened and just wishing they had some water to drink.” Through walkathons and basketball shooting contests, they raised \$5,000 that was given to Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Rockville Center.



*Sister Eileen Martin, SC (at right), principal of Our Lady Queen of Apostles Regional Catholic School in Center Moriches, NY, poses with six of her students involved in fund raising for the families of Hurricane Katrina. Laura Messano of Catholic Charities accepts their check for \$5,000.*

# Sr. Kathleen Aucoin Professes Final Vows

Patrice Athanasidy

Sister Kathleen Aucoin professed final vows on October 15, 2005 in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at Mount Saint Vincent, focusing on the message of love.

When asked to explain what brought her to profess her vows Sister Katie said, "I think the invitation cover says it all. Love is the reason.

"Final Vows is the external manifestation of what has been happening in me from the beginning. I have always been drawn to live the mission of Jesus in the vowed-consecrated life. I used to invade my mother's linen closet, pull out towels, and dress up like a nun, Then I'd parade down to my father's basement carpentry shop. There among the wood chips, tools and grime of the floor, I would imagine children sitting in their desks while I taught them from a blackboard fixed in its place by vise on my father's work table."



The liturgy included song, dance and prayer. Father Ned Coughlin, SJ celebrated the Mass with Sr. Mary Mc Cormick providing a reflection.

Sister Katie included people from all aspects of her life in the celebration, including members of her family, the Sisters of Charity, as well as children and colleagues at the Elizabeth Seton Pediatric Center in Manhattan. She said, "The day brought many worlds together: my community, my ministry at Elizabeth Seton Pediatric Center, my life-long friends and eternity. I have no doubt that every Sister of Charity from Elizabeth Seton and Elizabeth Boyle to our own day was present in Chapel that day celebrating God in dance and song. Charity will always live in the hearts of those whose lives we have touched!"

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prescription drugs. They made the rounds of four improvised shelters for thousands that included the local sports arena and an old Wal-Mart. In three days they also visited 13 area hotels that housed hundreds of refugees who were less visible than those in the large shelters.

Sister Sheila served in CHRISTUS hospital. She said that many of her colleagues at St. Vincent's Staten Island wanted to go to Louisiana. Those who were chosen were eager to serve in any way. They had a sense of being "sent." Sister saw patients at CHRISTUS hospital, the Coliseum, and smaller shelters. During 12-hour shifts, she and her associates dispensed needed medications and treated blood pressure, dialysis, diabetes, AIDS, severe burns, skin conditions, terrible infections, emotional problems and stress. One man had not slept for 10 days! Another

evacuee, a heart transplant candidate, was rescued after five days on a rooftop. Hardships for volunteers included lack of privacy and absence of traditional amenities, such as lights and running water.

Sister Carol went as a chaplain for spiritual care and branched out into stress-relieving therapies, such as back massage and Reiki (pronounced Ray-Key). This gentle Japanese technique results in deep relaxation and a sense of well-being. The therapies were much appreciated by traumatized evacuees and exhausted National Guard troops and Red Cross volunteers who slept 20 to a room on cots.

Sister Carol felt that St. Vincent de Paul and Mother Cabrini were her constant companions and mentors who guided her as a healing presence. In return, she also experienced healing. Despite the fact that they had lost all

their material possessions, and even loved ones, many evacuees were optimistic about the future amidst the coldness and confusion of the shelters.

One example was the 44-year old father who had come to this country as a teen, a survivor of the Cambodian Killing Fields. The Khmer Rouge had murdered his parents and all but one of his siblings. He became a fisherman on the Gulf Coast. Katrina cost him his two boats — his livelihood — but he was ready to begin a new life again. He said that he had learned "to take one day at a time and to appreciate the present moment."

Although the Sisters had different experiences, each felt that she had received more than she gave. All three felt privileged to have been able to serve the evacuees and volunteers.

# Bridge Building: Images of Early Fall

Bridge Builders from St. Catharine Academy, St. Raymond Academy and St. Barnabas High School were commissioned as *Witnesses to the Spirit of Charity* during rituals at each of their schools. Soon after, they ventured to their first site visit of the year at Sisters Hill Farm in Stanfordville, New York.



Bus to Stanfordville



Bridge Builders' destination Farmhouse



Students from St. Barnabas with Sister Mary Ann Garisto, director of the farm



Sister Margaret Donegan pinning SRA Bridge Builders with ministry pin



SCA students socializing after ritual



SCA ritual of commissioning



Bridge Builders from St. Barnabas H.S.



Sister Lynn Ann Dalton with students from St. Catharine Academy



Student receiving her journal from Ms. Gonzalez & Sister Lynn Ann



Waiting for the bus to return home



## BOOK REVIEW

### *Moral Wisdom* by James F. Keenan, S.J.

Sr. Yolanda De Mola



Author Fr. James Keenan

During the years I lived on the Bronx campus of Fordham University, I came to know the Jesuit scholastics who lived in a building nearby. Among them was a lively young man, Jim Keenan, who, as I recall, had a great sense of humor while quite serious about his desire to be a good Jesuit priest. It was during those years of his formation that he suffered the loss of his brother who was only just

26 years old. Perhaps this sorrow contributed to his growth as the excellent moral theologian he is today as may be seen in the many books he has had published on the spiritual life.

Ordained in 1982, Father Keenan studied at the Gregorian University in Rome and subsequently at the Weston School of Theology in Massachusetts where he currently teaches. He has served as consultant to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops as well as on the editorial board of *Theological Studies*, is editor of *Moral Traditions* published by the Georgetown University Press. Now in the fifth decade of a very busy life, he has produced several books on theology

and Christian Ethics as well as hundreds of essays in some 25 international journals.

This latest of his books makes absorbing reading. The author's rich background as student, Jesuit, and professor has prepared him well for this latest of his works. Divided into three sections, it discusses love, conscience, sin and suffering in Part I. The second section explores in creative ways the Ten Commandments and provides rich insights into the Jesus of the New Testament, the practice of the corporal works of mercy and the cardinal virtues.

The third and final section turns one's attention to the future in its exploration of Hope and Leadership. Here Keenan writes compellingly and candidly of personal experiences that have served to support his conclusions.

*Moral Wisdom* is well documented and beautifully written. A personal touch sets it apart from abstract and theoretical works with a similar theme. Keenan strikes a delicate balance between the God-human relationship that resonates in the heart of a reader. While theologically sound, the work is deeply personal and much of it merits re-reading and re-thinking. One can study it only with enormous and enduring personal and spiritual gain.

## MOVIE REVIEW

### *March of the Penguins* Challenges Us on Many Levels

Anne M. Magner

Last Spring, Anne Taylor Fleming, essayist on PBS, had a superb review recommending the film documentary, *March of the Penguins*, contrasting it with current screen offerings of violence and corruption.

A highlight of last summer, now on DVD, this documentary is thoroughly enriching and delightful to view.

To be introduced to these creatures of God, to visit with these emperor penguins in their habitat in Antarctica, to become acquainted with and marvel at the lifestyle—close family relationships, search for food and concern for all in their community of thousands is a remarkable, engrossing and entertaining experience.

Morgan Freeman is our guide into this heartwarming journey. With his narration as a backdrop, we see warmth,

love, care for one another and compassion amidst an extremely hostile, challenging environment. (Note especially the frigid scene of the penguins in concentric circles as they protect each other, rotating so that all have time to be in the center, the inner circle of warmth.)

Let their messages come to you – messages of birth, trust, endurance, survival, perseverance, family life as well as grief and loss. These nurturing creatures welcome us into their life pattern, their rhythm of life.

Certainly, you will want time for reaction and discussion. This will come later. For now, let the penguins come to you.



Photo: Warner Brothers

The Sisters Hill Farm (SHF) closed out its seventh year last November. This organic farm in Stanfordville (central Dutchess County), NY is just one of the projects overseen by Sister Mary Ann Garisto, director of ecological/global concerns for the Sisters of Charity of New York (SCNY).

SHF is a CAS – a Community Supported Agriculture project. It benefits 206 shareholders who retrieve weekly portions of the harvest either at the farm or at Mount Saint Vincent in the Bronx. Shares range from 4-15 pounds of produce.

Part of the farm's mission is to share a portion of the weekly harvest with those in need. Part of the crop is donated to individual families, soup kitchens and organizations that serve the materially poor. These food donations are a natural extension of the Sisters of Charity's service to the poor.

Despite the extreme weather — the driest summer and the wettest fall the staff had ever seen — 2005 was another successful season. "Farmer Dave" Hambleton, his apprentices and volunteers grew 38 types of vegetables in 150 varieties. Over 60,000 pounds of produce were harvested and distributed. The farm also provided "pick your own" flower beds as an extra thank you to supporters.

The only disappointment last season was that the fall potluck picnic could not be held. It rained so much in October that even rain dates were rained out!



*Farm apprentice Justin Dansby poses with Sister Mary Ann Garisto at Mount Saint Vincent after having driven 78 miles with the final weekly shares of the 2005 season.*

These days Farmer Dave is planning for the 2006 season. He's reviewing feedback from shareholders to determine which crops to cultivate this year. He's also reading resumes.

This year, SHF needs replacements for three experienced farm hands: two apprentices and the editor of the SHF newsletter, who also ran the local Meals on Wheels program.

In the spring, the "cover crops" that were planted in the fall to improve the fertility of soil, prevent its erosion and control weeds will be plowed under to make way for the 2006 crops.

One of the first "harvests" next spring will be a personal one for Farmer Dave and his wife—they're expecting their second child in April.

Even though it's winter now, you can enjoy a virtual visit to

## VERY VEGGIE OMELET

Taste of Home's Light & Tasty, 7/20/2002

Yield: 2 servings

1 small onion, chopped  
1/4 cup chopped green pepper  
1 tbsp butter or stick margarine  
1 small zucchini, chopped  
3/4 cup chopped tomato  
1/4 tsp dried oregano  
1/8 tsp pepper

4 egg whites  
1/4 cup water  
1/4 tsp cream of tartar  
1/4 tsp salt  
1/4 cup egg substitute  
1/2 cup shredded reduced fat cheddar cheese, divided.

**DIRECTIONS:** In a large nonstick skillet, sauté onion and green pepper in butter until tender. Add the zucchini, tomato, oregano and pepper. Cook and stir for 5-8 minutes or until vegetables are tender and liquid is nearly evaporated. Set aside and keep warm. In a mixing bowl, beat egg whites, water, cream of tartar and salt until stiff peaks form. Place egg substitute in another bowl; fold in egg white mixture. Pour into a 10" ovenproof skillet coated with nonstick cooking spray. Cook over medium heat for 5 minutes, or until bottom is lightly browned. Bake at 350° for 9-10 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Spoon vegetable mixture over one side; sprinkle with half of the cheese. To fold, score middle of omelet with a sharp knife; fold omelet over filling. Transfer to a warm platter. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Cut in half to serve.

**Nutritional analysis:** One serving (half an omelet) equals 197 calories, 9 g fat (5 g saturated fat), 21 mg cholesterol, 639 mg sodium, 10 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 19 g protein, Diabetic Exchanges: 2-1/2 lean meat, 2 vegetable.

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# Government: An Essential Partner in Housing

Sr. Claire Regan

Government programs to create and preserve housing are vital components in an overall housing industry especially for very low income households (<30% area median income) where market-driven incentives may not perform efficiently. Government at all levels is a major player in the industry as it sets interest rates, finances mortgages, creates tax incentives as well as provides direct financing of new construction. Government regulates housing and its essential services, water, utilities, etc. Economic indicators for housing point the way as to where the overall economy is going because it is such a prominent industry.

There are many proposed initiatives pending in Congress and at the state and city level of which we should be aware. Efforts to create a national housing trust fund have met resistance in House-Senate reconciliation. Whether and how to garner funds from the government sponsored enterprises, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, to support the creation of low income housing is a core source of contention. H.R.1461 would include a requirement that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac put 5% of their after-tax profits into an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to support housing production of 1.5 million units by 2010 for extremely and very low income families (<30% area median income). Homes constructed or rehabilitated with Trust Fund dollars would remain affordable for at least 50 years; 60% of the funding would go to local governments and 40% to states; 25% of the funding would go to homeownership opportunities and housing placement near jobs, transportation and services would be encouraged.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has put an emphasis on housing the chronically homeless. It has defined the “chronically homeless” as an “unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past

three years.” It overlooks homeless families, those not disabled, and youth in its definition and so pits needy populations against each other for service. Yet there are many homeless people who are in need who are not chronically homeless. We should be supporting measures that assist all persons experiencing homelessness.

HUD Section 8 housing vouchers were facing serious cuts, but after Hurricane Katrina were restored. Yet this is the third consecutive year of no funding for new vouchers. There are efforts to block grant Section 8 and to remove the requirement that housing authorities target 75% of vouchers to extremely low income households. A recent report from the 2000 Census showed that New York State had only 35 affordable and available units per 100 extremely low income renter households.\* This points to the dire need for rental assistance to this population. Other income groups fared better during the 90s with the highest rates of housing available for the highest income categories.

The Sisters of Charity of New York have developed many and varied housing programs for the poor, ill and elderly. Many of these projects were partnerships with government. Housing for persons in special need will require long-term commitments from both government and the private sector to be cost effective and successful. Each of us as citizens needs to express our concerns for the vulnerable in our society, assuring them a place at our table.

As Sisters of Charity, we take risks on behalf of the poor. We try to work effectively with government agencies on various levels to provide housing for the underprivileged and elderly. Our goal is to keep government accountable to the least of our brothers and sisters.

\* “*Losing Ground in the Best of Times: Low Income Renters in the 1990s.*” A report of the National Low Income Housing Coalition (March 2004).

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SHF farm at [www.sistershillfarm.org](http://www.sistershillfarm.org). While you're there, check out the great recipes (see page 13).

Without the vision of Sister Mary Ann and the support of the SCNY, this farm—and the good it does—would not be possible. If you'd like to aid the mission of SHF and supply produce to the needy without receiving any yourself, send a check to: Sisters Hill Farm, P.O. Box 22, Stanfordville, NY 12581.



*Bill Hurley, Director of Development for SCNY, packs up his share of produce while Sister Mary Ann Garisto and farm apprentice Justin Dansby chat in the background.*



The facts are astounding – 36 million Americans, 13 million of them children, live in poverty. This 2005 estimate shows us that poverty in America is growing. Since 2003, 1.3 million more people in the United States are now classified as poor. The Sisters of Charity of New York cannot reverse this trend alone but they do commit themselves to serve more and more of the poor each year. While decreasing in numbers the Sisters are forming partnerships, seeking assistance of others and promoting their mission throughout the area. They are faithful to this mission. It calls them to reveal God's love in their lives and to do so through service to others – especially the poor.

Recently our world has suffered numerous disasters. Through them we have seen the faces of the poor. While the Sisters of Charity have assisted with the needs created by these tragedies, they also recognize that the poor in their care must continue to be served. It is a delicate balancing act but one made easier by the generosity of so many of our benefactors.

As each tragedy has occurred, many benefactors have provided donations to the Sisters with a request that they seek a way to provide these funds to direct needs, thus eliminating the costs associated with administrative expenses. The Sisters have been grateful to do such. Several other stories in this publication cover where the funds have been sent.

My gratitude is that, with almost every request received, a commitment is made to continue contributions for the

ministries of the Sisters of Charity. As the poor of our nation and our world are being assisted, so too are we remembering our local poor. This is true generosity and true stewardship.

Congress has also recognized this desire for donors to give more and have included special allowances in the *Katrina Emergency Tax Relief Act of 2005*. While it provides tax benefits for businesses that donate food, books and cash, it also provides special tax treatments to individuals who volunteer their time or give cash assistance to those affected.

Of particular note is the provision temporarily suspending limits on deductions for gifts of cash made between August 28, 2005 and December 31, 2005. Thus you should know that gifts of cash to the Sisters of Charity qualify as charitable gifts in amounts up to 100% of your adjusted gross income. The gift does not have to be directed to assist those directly effected by these tragedies. The law recognizes that all poor face special needs this year.

Other provisions are also provided for in this law which we can make available to you by calling the Sisters of Charity at 718-549-9200. Just leave your name and mailing address and we will forward a brochure to you detailing the specifics of the *Katrina Emergency Tax Relief Act of 2005*. If we can be of additional assistance to you as you prepare for year end giving, please give me a call at extension 234. As always, our Development Office will be pleased to assist you in any way possible.

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## St. Agatha's Home closes after 135 years

Patrice Athanasidy

St. Agatha's Home in Nanuet, NY, opened in 1884 by the Sisters of Charity of New York, recently closed after 135 years of caring for boys and girls who were waiting to be adopted. The final Mass was celebrated by Fr. Rudolph Gonzalez, who is pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Spring Valley where many former St. Agatha residents live.

According to newspaper accounts of the Reunion at St. Agatha's, former residents had very different memories of their time at St. Agatha's. Some remembered the warmth of the sisters and considered St. Agatha's the only home they knew. Others remembered the sadness they felt while living there.

St. Agatha's was connected to the New York Foundling Hospital, providing a residence for children from broken homes. Sister Katherine King told *The Journal News*, "It's sad to see the school come to an end. Hopefully, the land will still be used for children."

One resident, Long Vando, who lived at St. Agatha's in the 1950s with his brother and sister, told *The Journal News*, "Every night Sister Christine would come to our bed, say good night and kiss us on our foreheads—every single night."

William Baccaglioni, executive director of the New York Foundling, has promised the alums of St. Agatha's that they will always be provided with a place to gather.

Seven sisters were at St. Agatha's when it closed: Sister Thomas Donohue, Sister Robert Fimbel, Sister Sheila Finucane, Sister Katherine King, Sister Shelia Normoyle, Sister Josephine Rog, and Sister Mary Christine Rogers.

The quote on a plaque of a statue dedicated to the Sisters summed up the alumni's feelings, "In loving appreciation to the Sisters of Charity for their unwavering dedication to the children of St. Agatha Home. Your time and effort in developing us was not in vain." St. Agatha Alumni Association, 2001.

## *On Memoriam*

### **Sr. Mary Patricia Byrnes (Sr. Marian Dorothy), Educator 6/22/1916–10/5/2005**

Sister Mary Patricia Byrnes entered the Sisters of Charity on February 2, 1942. With degrees in English and Library Science she had a ministry in education which spanned all grade levels and all boroughs of New York City and to Pennsylvania. Sister Mary P's interests were many but she especially enjoyed the cultural offerings of New York City and all of its bookstores! Sister Mary P served faithfully as a Sister of Charity for sixty-four years.

### **Sr. Mary Bruno (Sr. Marian Anthony), Educator/Administrator 1/11/1928–11/24/2005**

Sister Mary Bruno entered the Sisters of Charity on September 8, 1946 and began her teaching ministry while in Nanuet, Manhattan and Shrub Oak. Her next assignment as administrator of the Convent of Mary the Queen brought out her creativity, her skill in improving things and her talent for "making it happen." Her next set of renovations were at Ventnor, NJ, and then at the Convent of Mount Saint Vincent. While Sister Mary's last years were those of suffering she tried valiantly to maintain a positive outlook. She was an inspiration to all of us. Sister Mary died in the 60th year of her commitment as a Sister of Charity.

### **Sr. Eileen Storey (Sr. Marie Joseph), Educator/Prayer, Peace and Pastoral Ministry 4/7/1925–12/7/2005**

Sister Eileen Storey entered the Sisters of Charity on September 8, 1942. Her early teaching experience was in several parts of New York City, Nassau in the Bahamas and Rye, New York. Obtaining a Ph.D. in Modern Language and Literature and a M.Div. in Theology, she taught in several New York City colleges. Sister Eileen was director of the Aletheia School of Prayer in New York City for almost twenty years and authored several prayer books. She devoted many years to working for peace in Israel and Iraq, along with studying and experience Eastern Spirituality. Sister Eileen died in the 64 year of her religious life.

 *A Blessed New Year to All! Sisters of Charity of New York* 

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