

*Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters*

*Paraclete Province*

*(United States and the Caribbean)*

*Stories of Life*

*and*

*Mission*



## *Introduction*

### *God Is Present In Our Stories*

Story telling is a part of our tradition, part of our lives. The stories contained in this booklet are stories of faith, shared by the Sisters who wrote them. Each one was moved to see and feel God in her life in the story she tells.

Gathered together, they form a series of pieces of the puzzle of God's gift of Mission, which God allows each of us to share. We have shared these stories with each other. Now, we share them with you! May you experience God's love in your life as you read these stories and contemplate your own story of God working through you.

## *The Phone Call from Jesus*

I have a clear memory of the event when I received a phone call from Sr. Scholastica who was the president of Holy Spirit School, Akita, in Japan. At that time, I had not known anything about our school because I moved to Akita only after university and I was working at a public high school.

When I received the phone call, I was in a hurry to go out and I felt that it was a strange call. I never heard of a school named Holy Spirit. Also, I wondered how she knew my name. I immediately refused her request to work at her school. After I put down the phone, I felt uncomfortable and anxious about her. Then, I went out to meet my friends.

When I met my friends, I told them about that strange phone call. They showed great surprise and explained about Holy Spirit School. It was one of the historic girls' schools in Japan and the only Catholic school in Akita Prefecture. The music activities of the school, especially, the chorus choir and hand bell choir were widely known all over the country. Their talk aroused my interest in this school. However, I had already refused Sr. Scholastica's request and I was very disappointed in myself. After that I continued to think about the school.

As soon as I returned to my house, I picked up the phone to call the president. I apologized honestly and I asked her to tell me about her school.

The next day, I set foot in that school. I was welcomed by the big statues of Jesus and Mary who opened out their arms to me at the front of the entrance. Also, I encountered two Sisters for the first time in my life!! I had never seen a real Sister with my own eyes. I was deeply affected by the atmosphere of the school. I felt that it seemed just like something in a movie. From that time, I started to work in our school as a music teacher. However, I never expected that I would become a Sister!!

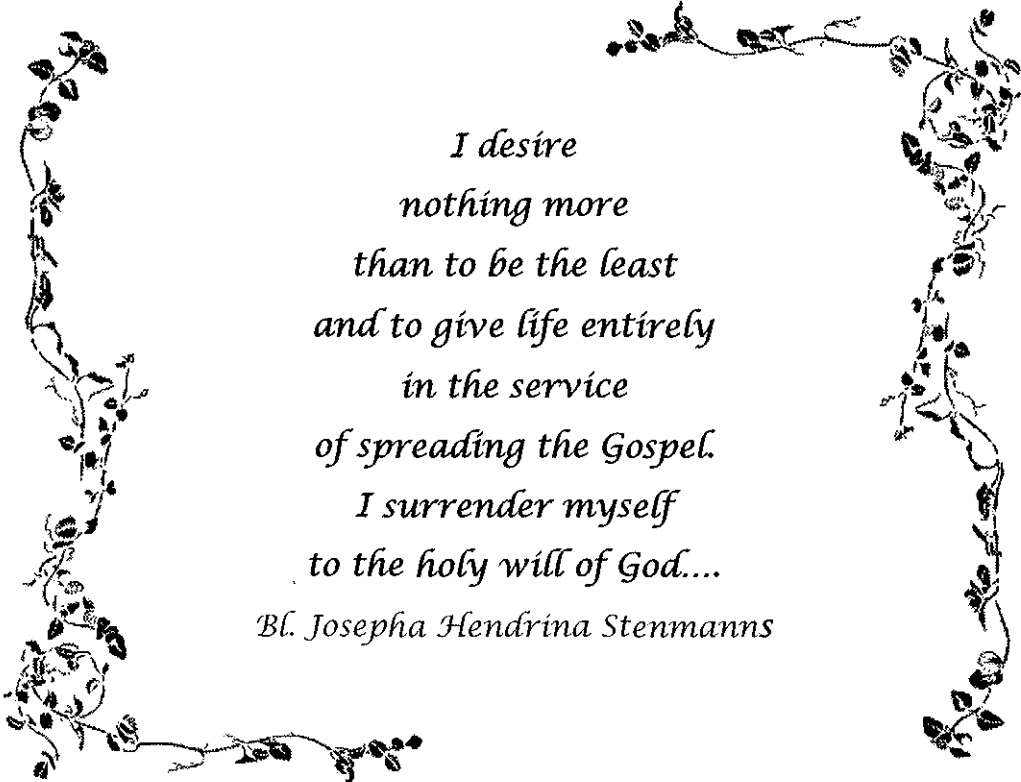
I worked in the junior high school and the senior high school with seven Sisters for ten years. I received my baptism eight years after I began to work in our school and I joined our Congregation two years after my baptism.

Right after my initiation ceremony to join our Congregation, I asked Sr. Scholastica, who was the provincial at that time, about how she knew my name when she called me. She told me about it with her little smile. She had asked

the Prefectural Board of Education to find a music teacher who could conduct our school choir. They introduced my name to Sr. Scholastica. When I heard this story, I felt that it was Providence. There were many names on the list of the music teachers of the Board of Education. My name was chosen from the names on the list. I believe that the phone call of Sr. Scholastica was the invitation from Jesus because if I hadn't received that phone call, I would not be here now.

I always offer my deep gratitude to God and our Congregation for I was given the Catholic faith through the encounter with our Congregation and nurtured to be a missionary Sister. I have an image - I was in God's arms before I was born, before I received my baptism, now, and in the future.

*Sr. Josephina Kudo, SSps*



*I desire  
nothing more  
than to be the least  
and to give life entirely  
in the service  
of spreading the Gospel.  
I surrender myself  
to the holy will of God....*

*Bl. Josepha Hendrina Stenmanns*

## *A Missionary Walk*

It was a rather sunny day, full of warmth. A Sister and I were treading our way along a railroad track toward the city jail in Greenville, Mississippi. It was in the early 1950's and our SSps High School and Grade School (Sacred Heart) had been flourishing for many years for the "colored" children of the area.

Sr. Immolata knew the young adult she was to visit in the jail. Acey had committed murder in a quarrel with a rival teenager. I went along as a moral support and as a missionary pray-er.

Entering the jail, one door clanged behind us and locked. A second door, the same, bang, and locked. We finally were led into the cell where Acey was, but I was surprised to see a second elderly colored woman lying on the second cot. I turned my attention to her, while Sr. Immolata greeted Acey.

The woman sat up, seemed very much afraid, whispered, "Sister, don't you hear them? They are setting up an electric chair, to put me in it. They want to kill me." I listened, heard noises, but could not identify the source. I listened again to her fears. Then she reached under her mattress and pulled out some jewelry. Again a whisper, "Sister, take these with you or they will steal them." What was I to think? How true was her story? Jewels! Electric chair! I tried to calm her. I listened. Breathed a "Come Holy Spirit, what to do!" I knew I would not take the jewelry out with me. Again, I tried to calm and comfort her. Should I "ask" at the front desk about the electric chair?

It was time to leave. Saying our last words of hope, we again were led out, clanging and locked doors behind us. Coming out of the jail, we met a woman and companion whom we greeted. They were here to visit their sister who was in jail. To our surprise, they were coming to visit the same woman I had visited. I told them my story. "Sister," they said, "we know how she talks. She imagines things going on; her mind is crumpled with many visions. Do not worry about the things she told you." Suddenly, the sunshine seemed brighter!

*Sr. Engratia Gales, SSps*



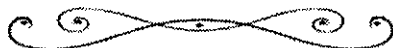
## *An Immigrant Who Touched My Heart*

While I was a postulant living in our convent in Mexico City, a man called at our convent. I could see he needed help. He was exhausted and haggard and his feet were badly wounded and swollen. At first I listened to his story. He had come from El Salvador and was passing through Mexico to go to the USA. In Mexico, a gang of youth had ambushed him and took the little money he had. The only way he had to go forward was to walk. He had no money for food or bus or train. He told me he had a wife and three children whom he loved dearly. His leaving was very hard for him and his wife, but they had nothing to feed or educate their children. He and his wife had decided that they needed to make a way for their children. They needed to sacrifice and maybe even give their lives for them.

I went to Sr. Emiliana and told her, "This man really needs help. He has nothing. Look at his feet." The man showered in the visitors' room and I took care of his wounded feet and gave him something to eat. He asked for further contacts of people who might help him. I gave him some train tickets I had and 50 pesos (about \$5.00). After that he would have to walk again. I also gave him a blanket and a map to help him along his way.

I tried to give him hope. I told him, "I will pray for you. I am sure you will find a job. People will help you along the way." There were tears in the man's eyes and he said, "You think I will find a job?" He told me that he would never forget my help and his experience with the Sisters. Then I realized that the poor, like this man, need someone to listen to them and understand their story as much as they need food. I saw that such people need our help and to be true to our mission, we need to help them. This man really touched my heart. God gives us so much in our communities. HOW CAN WE USE OUR RESOURCES TO HELP THOSE IN NEED?

*Sr. Sara Guardado, SSps*



## *Kwame*

We were still new in our novitiate house in Dumasua, a village outside of Sunyani, Ghana. Our Provincial, Sr. Marese Ramsel, came for a visit one weekend and we took a walk through the village to greet the people. As we were talking to a group of people, a little boy who looked about three years of age and all naked, slid out of one of the houses and wanted to see what was happening. His parents tried to shoo him away and said, "You get into the house; that is where you belong." I protested because I had never seen this little boy in the village before. His parents were ashamed of him and kept him inside all the time where others couldn't see him. He slid along the earth like a snake, unable to use his legs. Sr. Marese, a nurse, took special interest in him. She looked at his useless legs and said, "This little boy has had polio. He could be helped. Carol, I will talk to you when we get back home."

When we finished visiting, we walked back to the novitiate building and Sr. Marese asked me to take the little boy, Kwame, to Brother Tarcissius who ran the Orthopedic Center in Nsawam. This Center was about seven hours away from our novitiate and on the way to Accra. So the next time I went to Accra, I took Kwame with us and we had him examined at the Orthopedic Center. Brother Tarcissius told me that the boy needed a double operation and then would need calipers, or crutches, and therapy to learn how to walk. The whole procedure would take about nine months and he would have to stay away from home the whole time. In two months some orthopedic surgeons from Holland were coming to operate on such lads as our Kwame. So I took Kwame home and told his parents what was possible. In two months doctors from Holland were coming and one of them would operate on Kwame. After the surgery, Kwame would need to go to Nsawam to get calipers and learn to walk with them. I assured the parents that if they would allow Kwame to go through with this, it would be possible for him to live a more ordinary life. I also promised the parents that I would take care of the transport for Kwame wherever he needed to go and that the Sisters had a benefactor who would pay for the hospital services. The doctors from Holland would operate for free. The parents agreed to let Kwame go.

The next step was to prepare little Kwame who was only about five years of age. It was difficult but I tried to explain that the doctors can help him to walk, but it would be a long and painful process and would take a lot of time and a lot of hard work to learn to walk. It was beautiful to see his determination. I talked

to him nearly daily during the months we waited for the doctors to come so that he would know as best he could what was in store for him and what were the hoped for results. I showed Kwame pictures of children walking with calipers and crutches and explained how hard these children worked to be able to do this. Kwame seemed really ready and determined to do what he had to do to be able to stand and walk upright.

Finally the doctors arrived and Kwame was one of the first on the list for surgery. After the surgery, Kwame was very brave and patient as he endured the painful healing process. About a month later he was ready for the move from the hospital to the orthopedic center to be fitted with calipers and crutches and to begin his long time of therapy and learning to use legs that never could be used before. Kwame was diligent and hardworking. He took the painstaking exercises each day and finally many months later, I received notice that Kwame could come back to his village in Dumasua. This young lad had not seen his parents since he left home for the operation.

I informed the parents and went to get Kwame on my next trip to Accra. Kwame was ready to come home. With a big smile, he showed me how well he could walk. When we got to Dumasua, I parked the car on the village street and before I had the crutches out of the trunk, the whole village was gathering around. I gave Kwame the crutches. He arose out of the car by himself and began walking with his caliper and crutches down the street. There were cheers of jubilation from all over. I, too, was overcome with joy and jubilation and could only think that this must have been what it was like to witness Jesus' healings back 2000 years ago. Jesus still heals, but he does so, usually, through His disciples.

Kwame proceeded to go to school and even played soccer. He was a good goal-keeper. Later he learned to make and repair shoes. As far as I know, he is still in his little shop in Sunyani making and repairing shoes. Other children who suffered from polio in the village, but who had less severe handicaps also came and asked for help. In all, four children in Dumasua alone were helped to be more independent and mobile because of Brother Tarcissius and the Orthopedic Center. Throughout Ghana thousands of children were healed and learned to use their arms and legs.

As missionaries we continue the mission of Jesus: "The poor have the Good News told to them, the blind see, the lame walk, and prisoners are set free."

*Sr. Carol Welp, SSps*



## *Unmet Expectations?*

The other day I passed through Elk Grove Village. The name evoked my first mission experience in the United States as a young professed Sister, newly arrived from Steyl.

A number of young Sisters would drive on Sunday mornings to the houses, and sometimes mere sheds, of seasonal migrant workers to pick up the children for Sunday school in the Elk Grove Village Church. It was hard for them to pay any attention. I am sure not many of them had any breakfast before being picked up. Some were bundled up in layers of clothes reeking of kerosene, because the kerosene burner was the only source of warmth in their places.

They sat quietly and their expectant eyes were on me. When I asked them for instance: "Have you had any breakfast?" There was silence and then a boy in front said earnestly: "God." Another question: "Did you bring your books?" This time nodding: "Jesus." This went on for a while with similar answers to all my questions until I gave up. Don't they understand even a little? What was I to do? There was still some class time, so I made sure that they heard the content of the lesson for the day, at least that. Maybe they were just shy? Or, maybe my English was too poor?

By the time the bell rang they were all fidgeting, using their elbows, even their feet, kicking, but still mostly looking devotedly at me until they could noisily storm out of the classroom. I thought about those tough beginnings often. Tough for me and tough for them! I was disappointed; were they disappointed? I didn't speak Spanish; they didn't understand (my) English. Why did they come? Well, obviously, there was something about God in this class, about Jesus, about anything holy. Their parents might have told them. They came to a place in a nice church for it. They were expectant and I could not deliver or so I thought.

Driving through Elk Grove Village made me reflect on this beginning and many more such helpless moments in my missionary life. It was not always a language barrier I experienced, but barriers from within and without, in many forms and shapes and shades. By the grace of God I also witnessed in joy and gratitude the Holy Spirit at work in others with my presence or in spite of it. The grace of faith in God was never earned, taught, or produced with my help. It

was always a miracle, a pure gift of God. And yet God needs these vehicles, I came to understand, to carry God's gifts to all who are expectant, seeking, longing, as well as to those who seem not to care, not to understand, who are closed and full of spite, rejection, or boredom concerning all questions of God.

I am certain that the creativity of God's Spirit is powerfully alive, meeting all the expectations and secret longing of all creation for union with the creative love of God.

*Sr. Agathe Bramkamp, SSFS*



*God knows our weakness  
but  
God also knows our good intention.*

Bl. Maria Helena Stollenwerk



## *My Vocation*

I first felt called to religious life around the time of my First Communion. I wanted to give myself totally to Jesus. There were Dominican Sisters, from St. Catherine, Kentucky, in our parish. But I wanted to give myself completely, either in the cloister or as a missionary, like Fr. Damian with the lepers.

This calling never left me, but I thought I should have more experiences in the world when I left high school. I finished high school at the age of 17. Then I went to Omaha to work. I lived in a boarding house with my older sister, Marg, and our friend, Marita van der Heiden.

Marita was invited to join a small group of people who travelled by car from house to house selling children's books. She wanted me to go with her, so I joined them.

My younger sister, Fran, finished high school and planned to go into Nurses Training. That would leave my mother, who had had a heart attack, without any of her five daughters to help her. So, I decided to leave Omaha and go back home to help my parents for a while and then to enter the convent.

After being home with my parents for two years, Sr. Mary Charles told me that if I intended to enter the convent, I had better get going or I would end up being an old maid!

So, I did enter the convent in Techny on September 12, 1951. After the postulancy and novitiate, I made first vows on June 24, 1954.

*Sr. Mary Helen Sullivan, SSps*



*Proceed with tranquility.  
God's work cannot be forced....  
Good things take their time.*

Bl. Josepha Hendrina Stenmanns



## *Missionaries Need to Take Risks*

When asked by Bishop Joseph Brunini of the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi, to take on the ministry of Diocesan Director of Religious Education, I was reminded that, "For the first year, don't make any changes; just take notes." At that time, the Diocese of Jackson included the entire state of Mississippi. Our goal was to design programs or offer services which would implement the teachings of Vatican II and address the most pressing needs of the Diocese. As I traveled from parish to parish and school to school that first year, I did take many notes. If any programs or changes were to be effective, it would be necessary to involve as many people as possible. During the second year, a committee was formed consisting of priests, sisters, principals, parish directors of religious education and anyone else interested.

During meeting after meeting, we discussed our most pressing needs and ways to address them: establish programs for anyone teaching religion so he/she could obtain a degree in theological studies; search for materials reflecting Vatican II; research the best methods of communicating our faith to others. If we were to offer credits for high school religion courses, the chairperson of that department would need to be professionally qualified; if teachers in the elementary schools and the parish schools of religion were to be adequately qualified, then the parish Director of Religious Education would need the skills to assist them.

After months of brain-storming, we came up with what we considered a possible solution. Of all the possibilities, we decided to search how we might set up a satellite Masters Degree Program in Theological Studies. We began by scheduling a meeting with Rev. Paul Tipton, S.J., the President of Spring Hill College, Mobile, Alabama. Spring Hill is the oldest Catholic College in the deep South, established by the Jesuits in the 1800's. During the month of October, Bishop Brunini, Father Tipton and I met to discuss the committee's plan. Both hailed our plan as an excellent idea. Immediately, Bishop Brunini picked up the phone and called Mr. Dick Briscoe, Director of Finances, to join us. We had decided to assist the students by seeking grant money for one-third of their tuition; one-third to be paid by the parish or school; and one-third by the student. Mr. Briscoe was to be responsible for

the grant money; Father Tipton would assign a Jesuit, Father Chris Viscardi, S.J., to assist in setting up the courses and so forth; and "Betty will do the rest." Though the committee thought it would require at least a year or more to get started, Bishop Brunini asked that we aim for the coming June/July. "We are a missionary diocese and missionaries need to take risks", he encouraged.

Our first order of business was to contact the Southern Accreditation Association for Higher Learning to find out what the requirements were. Mr. Jules Michael, Principal of St. Joseph High School in Greenville, was a very strong supporter of the plan and volunteered to work more closely in getting it started. He accompanied me to New Orleans, Louisiana, to meet with members of the Southern Accreditation Association. On our return trip, we discussed the reality of having all the requirements completed on schedule. We needed to do much advertising, find a place for the library, decide where the classes would be held, order the required books, recruit students, work with Father Viscardi in scheduling courses, complete endless forms, and so forth. By the time we arrived back in Jackson, we had planned to rent a room for classes at the Holiday Inn, across the street from the chancery. We would clear out a large storage room on the lower level of the chancery for the library, work with the communications department in getting our "good news" on T.V., and request the services of a part time secretary. We would involve as many people as possible.

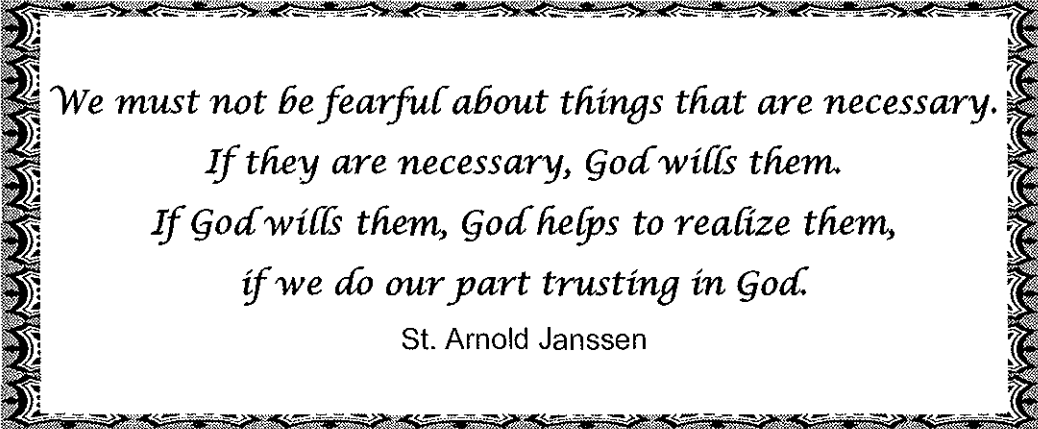
Our next major trip was to Spring Hill to meet with Father Viscardi. The first two courses would begin June 15<sup>th</sup>. During the year, classes would be held on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Professors would drive the three hours from Spring Hill to Jackson on Friday evenings, and be offered hospitality at the Cathedral Rectory. We would follow the required courses as directed by the Southern Accreditation Association but add a required course on prayer and require a directed retreat prior to graduation. All the courses would reflect the teachings of Vatican II. The method of teaching would reflect the progress of how students learn; "no lecture style but student engagement." Therefore, class sizes were to be limited to 15 to 20 students. At this point, we were on the road to making our dream come true, knowing there was much work to be done between now and June 1<sup>st</sup>, when a team of five persons from the Southern Accreditation Association were due to arrive in Jackson. During this visit, they were to give their final approval. We were a bit nervous but Bishop Brunini assured us that during our brunch together, he would off-set any

problems. He had a strategy. Conversation and laughter continued during brunch until 2:00 p.m. Their plane was due to depart at 3:00 p.m. This gave the team about ten to fifteen minutes to inspect our set-up. In a flash, they announced, "Wonderful! Everything is excellent!"

The first classes began with seventeen excited students; some from as far away as a four hour drive from the northern part of the diocese and some from a four-hour drive from the southeast part. Five years later, this same group graduated with a Master's Degree in Theological Studies. It was a celebration only to be experienced in the Deep South. The Southern Accreditation Association required that the graduation ceremonies take place on the main campus in Spring Hill. It was a beautiful campus and marching down the Avenue of the Oaks was most impressive. Prior to that, a special Eucharistic celebration and banquet were part of a celebration in Jackson. It was during this time that students shared their stories of joys and struggles; expressed their experiences of a "new life with Christ." They were convinced that "the Church in Mississippi will never be the same." Their words were prophetic. As of today more than 1,250 students have graduated and are impacting the Church.

After thirty years, not only does this program continue as of today, but in evaluating the effect it had on the Church of Mississippi, the Jesuits re-established a Master's Degree Program in Spring Hill and set up two additional satellite programs, one in northern Alabama and one in Georgia.

*Sr. Betty Tranel, SSps*



*We must not be fearful about things that are necessary.*

*If they are necessary, God wills them.*

*If God wills them, God helps to realize them,*

*if we do our part trusting in God.*

St. Arnold Janssen

## *The Same Spirit but on Different Soil...* *Celebrating Pentecost in Jamaica.*

I confidently agree with the text in the Bible, "though different people as we are, we are all given to drink of one same spirit". Our first experience of Pentecost was enriching for me. The whole Church was encouraged to pray the novena, as families, in preparation for the Feast of Pentecost. We had our community novena spliced with the one received from the parish.

We started our feastday with morning prayer, celebrating the presence and the manifold gifts of the Holy Spirit in the world. Then we joined the Church for the celebration of the Eucharist. The three parishes gathered at Morant Bay making the attendance great. We three SSpS Sisters were recognized and appreciated by the Church on our feastday. We were called and adorned with dainty bouquets. The Church began the Mass, already full of spirit through the songs that we sang. Fr. Frank Power, SVD, started the introductory greeting in French and Latin and the Church responded in English, giving the atmosphere a feeling similar to that which happened on the day of Pentecost. The Church was given the readings in English ahead of time. Then I was asked to proclaim the first reading in my language (Asante Twi) which I did with joy. The second reading was in Malayalam by an Indian.

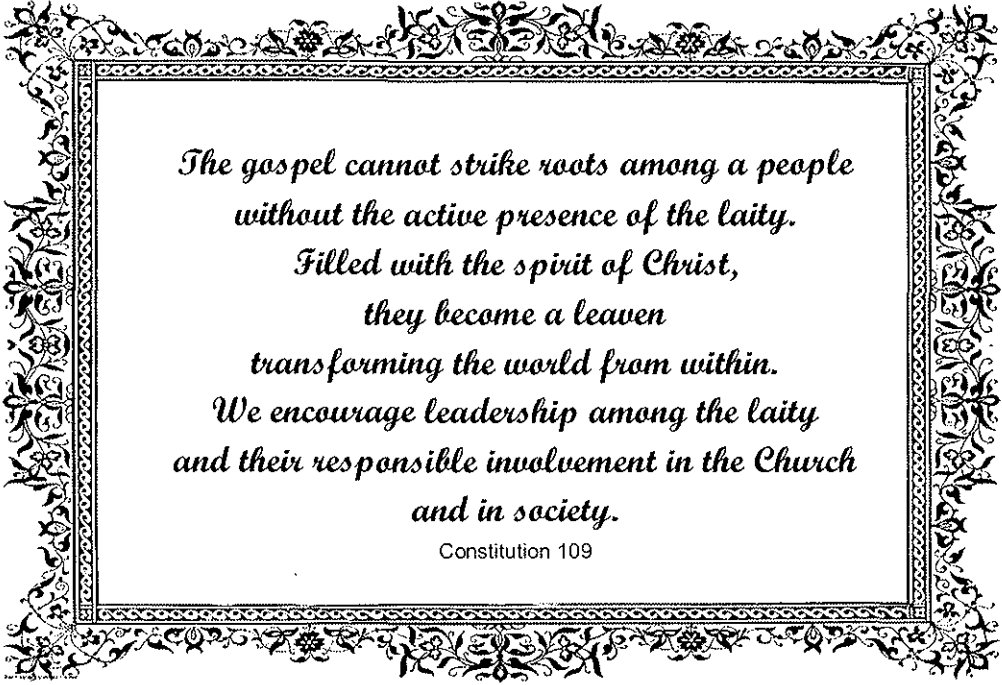
Fr. Frank gave a powerful homily. The message of belonging to a universal Church where we are bound and called to speak the language of love was emphasized. This was followed by the Prayer of the Faithful in different tongues - Polish and Bahasa (Srs. Barbara and Rosalia), Spanish, French, and Patois. I felt inspired and elated as we sang heartily during the Sign of Peace, the members beaming with smiles as they shook hands and embraced one another.

After the Mass, we had the opportunity to share the love of God with the communities in an outreach program. We were divided into three groups to go to the nearby communities. Our aim was to be instruments of peace and love to one another on this day. To empower those who went for the outreach program, a prayer team stayed behind and spent the time lifting them up to the Holy Spirit.

I was touched by the active participation of the people and their eagerness to go 'in outreach' to the homes. Like the disciples, they were filled with joy! In the feedback we heard: "It was good; let us do it again!"

The blissful occasion could never have ended well without saying hello to the stomach. The Church treated all with refreshments to end the day's program. Indeed, the Spirit is everywhere doing wonders in mission, including Jamaica. I felt touched and renewed at the close of the day.

*Sr. Theresa A. Tawiah, SSps*



*The gospel cannot strike roots among a people  
without the active presence of the laity.  
Filled with the spirit of Christ,  
they become a leaven  
transforming the world from within.  
We encourage leadership among the laity  
and their responsible involvement in the Church  
and in society.*

Constitution 109



## *God's Presence in My Missionary Life*

Over the course of my 56 years in the community, the Lord has “reminded” me on more than one occasion that I am where He wants me to be, and not to want to be anywhere else. This is the story of one of those times.

In 1972, I had been in Vicksburg, Mississippi, for five years; had been principal and teacher at St. Mary's Elementary for four years; and after we closed St. Mary's in favor of integrating the Catholic schools, I was a counselor at St. Aloysius High School.

I was returning to Vicksburg in July, when I heard that one of the students who had been in our school had died, after an incident with her “nephew”, who had also been in our elementary school.

John had been born in May 1957, the child of a single mother who had been a student in St. Mary's School at the time. Raised by her mother, she was forced to walk the distance of several miles, while she was in labor, to the county hospital, to give birth, without any help from her mother. She died giving birth and the child lived. The “grandmother” took the boy to raise and had another child, a daughter, herself, the following year. The two, John and Gail, were raised as brother and sister and were very close. Grandmother did not let John go to school until Gail was ready to start first grade, so they were both in the same class. When St. Mary's closed its doors, they were in third grade. They both went to the public school.

The grandmother worked nights, taking care of a well-to-do family's children, while her own spent the nights alone. She was very strict with the two of them. They played quietly in the apartment while she slept. They could not get anything to eat without her permission and only what she told them they could have to eat.

That July day, they were at home and she was at work at a new fast food restaurant which had opened on the highway. They called her to ask what they could have for lunch. (Now there was food in the apartment and the children were always clean, so the welfare department assumed that she was taking good care of them. However, both of the children were smaller for their age and there was not an extra ounce of flesh on their bones.) She told them

that they could have one apple – cut in two for their lunch - this for two growing, hungry youngsters.

Well, they got the apple out of the fridge and cut it in two, and then they got in an argument as to whether she would want them to peel it before eating it. In the course of the argument, they both reached for the knife and in the tussle, Gail ended with the knife between her ribs and in her heart. Scared to death, John washed the knife and put it away. He then called the grandmother to tell her that “he had been in the bathroom and someone broke in and stabbed Gail.” Naturally, the grandmother rushed home, called the ambulance and the police and Gail was rushed to the hospital where she was pronounced dead.

The story of what really happened came out and the grandmother wanted nothing to do with John. He was taken by the police, indicted for murder and put in the city jail. John had poor eyesight and wore glasses. These were taken away from him when he was put in the jail cell. All night he cried, “Gail come back. Gail come back.” By the time morning came, the jail staff thought he had suffered a nervous breakdown, so they took him across the state to the mental institution in Meridian. The only person related to John was the grandmother, and since she wanted nothing to do with him, they figured that he could stay there for the rest of his days, as many inmates did.

I arrived back in Vicksburg before Gail was buried. The sight of this very small girl in an adult size coffin was in itself sad. After the funeral Mass at St. Mary’s Church, she was taken to the cemetery, a small and ill kept one outside town. At that point, we knew that John was no longer in the jail, but no one knew where he had been taken.

The newspaper carried the story of Gail’s death, but John was not named, since he was a minor. In the next block from the convent, lived a recently retired PhD. She was not a member of our parish and we did not know her before, but she contacted me because she felt for John, that this was an accident and not murder. Surely anyone who grows up with a sibling has a scar or two from sibling squabbles. (I know I do.) After some investigation, I found out that John had been taken to Meridian, and I drove there to visit him.

At the time, we had two SSPS Sisters in Meridian in St. Joseph Parish. They arranged to pick John up every Sunday morning at the institution, bring him to St. Joseph Church where he served Mass and then after having him join them for dinner, taking him back to the mental institution. Naturally this was a spark

of hope for him. And for me, it was a sign that God was taking care of him.

Meanwhile, I made appointments to see anyone I could regarding John's case, the sheriff, the judge who would preside, the welfare department. While I was doing that, the Lord was assembling others to act on John's behalf as well. A woman I knew had gathered a group of persons to act as tutors on Saturdays for kids who were in trouble with the courts – mainly because they did so poorly in school. She recruited me as well. Her husband was a lawyer, and they decided to gather some young lawyers who would do their work for these kids without charge. A lawyer who had recently returned to town after some years (the brother of one of the Mercy Sisters) agreed to represent John. Another group of men and women, African American and Caucasian, were gathered to become mentors for these young people. A recently retired Army Colonel, Colonel Money, returned to town at this time and agreed to be John's mentor. So the Lord had gathered the four of us – the PhD, the lawyer, the mentor, and I – to fight for this young boy whom the authorities had taken to the hospital in Meridian figuring that he would spend the rest of his life there. The Lord was clear and center to this whole situation.

We heard from the hospital that they wanted to release John and have him return to Vicksburg for the spring session of the court. When I went to see the sheriff to see if I could go along when they went to get him, he informed me that he had been brought back that day and was in the Vicksburg jail. We wanted to get him out, but I could not post the bail. My PhD friend posted the bail, and I brought John from the jail to our convent to stay. The grandmother was still so angry she wanted nothing to do with him and I could not ask the black parishioners to take him. I had white friends, who would have taken him, but the KKK was still active in the area and there could have been trouble. I asked the principal of the high school and he allowed me to bring him to school every day and he was in class with the seventh graders. John lived with us for the next six months or so.

The judge agreed that he would dismiss the case if the Welfare Department would place him with a family. The Welfare Department authorities, who had never laid eyes on him since the incident, never came over to see him, and did not even go out to the car in the parking lot to meet him, said they would pay for his placement, but did not find any family in the state.

I approached Catholic Charities in Jackson, Mississippi and they agreed to find

him a place, but could not pay for him. The Welfare Department would do that. However, I was not to have any direct knowledge of his placement. If I wanted to contact him, I should write to the Welfare Department and they would forward the letter to John and vice versa.

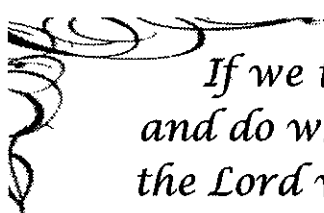
John was taken to his new place of residence with his foster parents. They were a couple near Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, and brought John to register at St. Rose de Lima School for eighth grade (a school run by our Sisters). So we knew where he was and he knew that he was in good hands!

John graduated from St. Rose, and from the local Catholic high school, and then went on to college, where he took a work study program and got a degree in business. The last I knew he was working for a bank. The Lord's hand was so visible all through this time in my life and in John's. I knew I was in the place the Lord wanted me to be!


One evening when John was staying with us, I told him that I had a brother named John and two nephews named John and I went to get my picture album to show him my three "Johns". He looked at every picture in the album and saw some of me before I entered the convent. He noted that I wasn't always a Sister and he asked me why I became one. When I told him that I felt God calling me to do that and I responded to that call, he came up with the following: "If a boy had come along and married you, then you wouldn't be a Sister and you wouldn't be here, and I wouldn't be here either. I'd be in the jail." Several days later I realized that John had been born in May 1957 – the same time that I decided to enter the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters. Both of our lives had been leading up to this time – when they crossed one another!

God had me where he wanted me to be!

*Sr. Priscilla Burke, SSPS*



*If we trust in the Lord  
and do what is in our power,  
the Lord will not abandon us.*



St. Arnold Janssen

## *Memories*

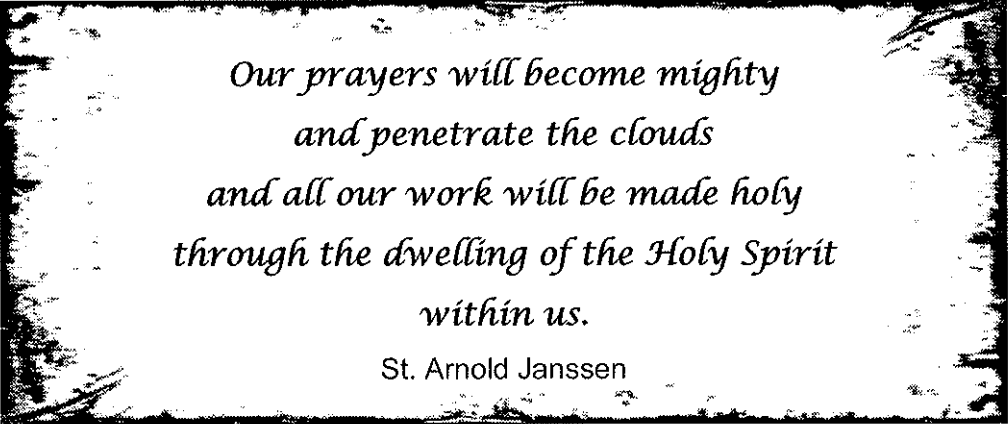
As another Sister and I were taking our usual after-school walk, a middle-aged man stopped us, not far from our convent in Jackson, Mississippi. He asked us a question. "Where is Sr. Arseniana (Arlene)?" She taught me when I was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Holy Ghost School in Jackson and I loved her."

"I'll always remember Sr. Arseniana because she often called her students to go to the chalkboard and write the times tables up to 12. Some could – some could not. Sr. Arseniana always came to their assistance and helped them even when they went into the 5<sup>th</sup> grade."

We told the man who had asked about Sr. Arseniana that she fondly remembered her former students, and that she had died a number of years ago.

I was teaching the sophomore class at Sacred Heart School in Greenville, Mississippi, in the early 1960's. For an assignment, the students were to report about the Civil War which they had studied in class. During the next week, one student went to the public library to find good material for his report. The librarian told him he could not check out any books, but only use them in the library under close supervision. The student's report was very good. He received an A+ for his perseverance and determination.

*Sr. Dolores Marie Kuhl, SSPs*



*Our prayers will become mighty  
and penetrate the clouds  
and all our work will be made holy  
through the dwelling of the Holy Spirit  
within us.*

St. Arnold Janssen

## *My Vocation and Other Memories*

My call to the religious life came to me very early. I started school at the age of five and loved the Sisters, Adorers of the Blood of Christ. I began praying to St. Rita, my patroness, to “help me become a Sister.”

Our pastor had a cousin who was Brother Lawrence, SVD, at Techny. A cousin of mine was interested in the SVD Brothers and SVD literature came from the Techny Mission Press – in various forms.

Sister Norma (Hilda), my sister ten years older than I, at 18, entered Holy Ghost Convent in 1925. Already I was reflecting seriously about becoming a missionary. I asked myself, “What would my life be like if I did not know Jesus? So many do not know Him! I must become a missionary.” My goal was set.

I made it known to my family. Mother generously gave permission to enter at eighteen. At eighteen, I applied and was accepted. All the while the fire of the Holy Spirit within me was nurtured by a Mission Press booklet “*Living with God in My Heart*”. Its author was Father Adolph Noser, SVD, later Archbishop Noser.

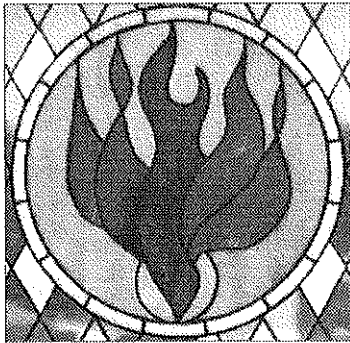
In the east wing, on the first floor of St. Ann’s Home, a resident, the father of a nun was dying. He was alone, no family member was present. Sister Irenaea and I kept vigil while sitting at his bedside praying the rosary. The atmosphere was one of quiet peace. Quietly, peacefully, he was slipping into eternity. Suddenly Sister Irenaea said to me, “I think he is gone.” Quietly, peacefully, unnoticeably, he breathed his last into the embrace of His God and Maker.

It happened at Sacred Heart Home in Hyattsville, Maryland. I was going to my room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor at about noon. Suddenly, I thought of our very sick patient and abruptly turned to go to her room. I found her alone. It was the noon hour. On entering I saw immediately that she was dying and alone. Aware of a visiting priest in the area, I reported to him. He immediately came to her bedside. Very soon personnel on lunch-break came. Soon the room was filled, gathered in prayer, as our resident died. She had served Washington, DC, as its first woman pharmacist.

My love for the elderly was like a ‘Call within a Call’. The greater part of my active years as an SSpS was spent in serving the elderly. I loved doing so.

Sister Xavier Ann Schwacha, from Czechoslovakia, taught many years in the South. Now she was a patient in Maria Hall. On my way to chapel for noon prayers (it was near the dinner hour), I briefly entered her room. Mickey, our head nurse, was with her but left briefly. I remained. Very soon Sister Xavier Ann's condition changed suddenly. She was dying. Alone with her, I accompanied her with prayer into the embrace of our God and eternal peace. When Mickey returned, Sister had already died.

*Sr. Sienna Ressel, SSps*



**God Holy Spirit,  
be  
my light  
and  
my Strength!**

Bl. Maria Helena Stollenwerk

## *A Mission Story from Oaxaca*

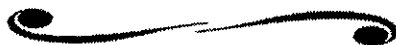
One October when Sisters Soccorro, Pilar, and Lupita were novices, the grandmother of a neighboring family died. Her daughter had abandoned four children and the grandmother was raising them. Luisa, the eldest, was sixteen. Then there were a twelve-year old boy, an eight-year old girl, and a six-year old boy. Some neighbors wanted to split the family up, partly with an eye to getting the little piece of land where the children lived. Luisa left school and began to work two restaurant jobs so that the family could stay together.

The house was in very poor condition and there was no bathroom. Cooking was done outside. Laundry and dish washing, when done, was also done outside. Fr. Ricardo Thibeau, Rector of the SVD novitiate, and I talked about how we could help Luisa and her siblings. A few days before Christmas, Fr. Ricardo and the SVD novices brought materials, tore down the one-room shack, cleaned the area and put up a new one-room house and a little latrine. Meanwhile, our novices and I helped clean the rest of the area and showed the children how to wash clothes and dishes. Fr. Jerzy/Jorge, a newly ordained Polish SVD who was staying at the novitiate over Christmas before going on to his mission in Nicaragua, carved a nativity scene for them. Then, at Christmas, we and a Maryknoll lay mission family saw to it that there was some festive food and a few gifts for the family.

From that time on, the younger children, who had been somewhat rebellious toward Luisa after the grandmother's death, accepted more responsibility for cooking and cleaning and there was harmony in the household. We always enjoyed visiting them or having them come for a visit to us on their way home from school.

A few years later, Luisa married a young man who was very good to her and to the children. Even though they continued to be very poor, there was a loving atmosphere in this home.

*Sr. Margaret Anne Norris, SSps*





## *Mission in Ethiopia*

It was a sunny but chilly afternoon, January 15, 1998, the feast of Bl. Arnold Janssen. While walking leisurely in the garden of the Generalate in Rome, I heard the sound of my name uttered from above. It reminded me of the Biblical vocation stories. Looking around, I spied Sr. Agada Brand, our Congregational Leader, leaning from her office window and calling once more "Dorota". She asked that I come to meet with her.

At the time, our Congregation was engaged in a new mission initiative in Ethiopia. Due to the illness of a Sister there, Sr. Agada asked if I would be willing to go to Ethiopia and take up the temporary service as secretary in the Nunciature in Addis Abeba. Although I had neither preparation nor interest to be a secretary in a Nunciature, I realized that the invitation to mission came on the feast of Blessed Arnold.

Within two weeks the visa for Ethiopia was obtained, the ticket purchased, vaccinations were given, and I was on my way! I flew Ethiopian Airlines. Thus, I gathered my first images of the people: flight attendants wearing their national dress, with beautiful chocolate skin, dignified posture, and gentle behavior. I admired them from the very beginning!

Gazing at the rising sun and landing on a narrow runway strip in the middle of a meadow where sheep and goats grazed, I began to see other images. This was my first contact with Africa! Here I was shocked to see people, bent over under a load of luggage or fire wood, walking the streets of the city. The roads were shared with people, donkeys, and cars. An open sewer, with a strong stench, ran along the side of the road. Tiny shops, with all sorts of goods for sale, caught my attention. In particular, I was taken by the way meat was sold. In the already warm temperatures, large pieces of meat were hanging or lying around, covered with flies and other insects. Groups of poor children were begging at the intersections only to receive hostile looks and harsh treatment from drivers and passengers. Suddenly, a terrible odor filled the car. Even though the windows were rolled up, the odor penetrated the inside of the car.

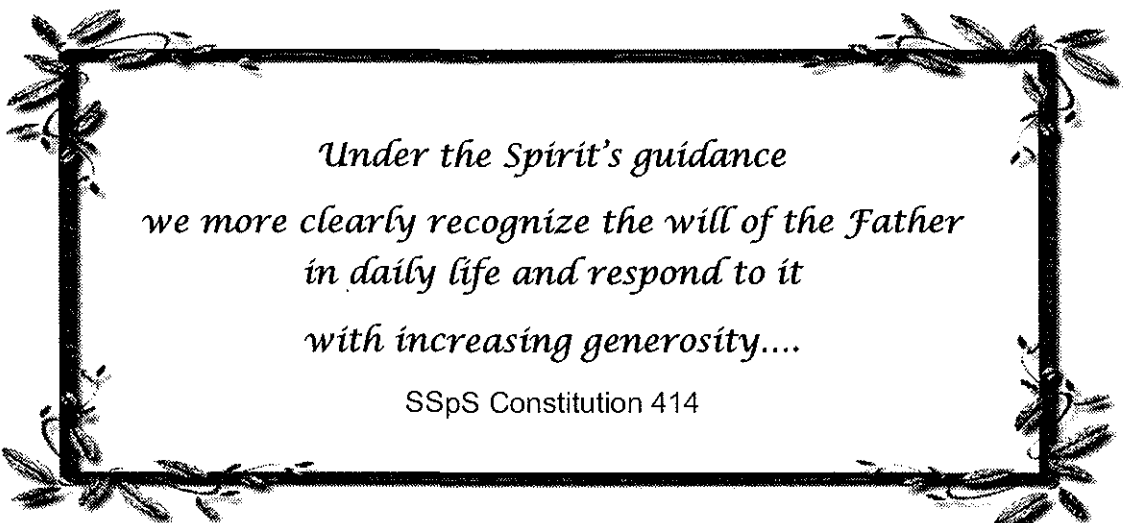
We were in the vicinity of a slaughter house and a high mound of animal bones appeared in front of us. Vultures were continuously flying overhead. This was the capital city of Ethiopia, home to almost 90 embassies, a seat of the UN and the Organization of African Unity!

Although the work in the Nunciature was almost 24/7, I was falling in love with the people of Ethiopia. I had the opportunity to meet many wonderful people. Through the missionaries, I got to know their joys and problems, their activities and involvement as they worked to develop the Catholic faith communities in various regions of the country. Through these contacts, I developed a broader vision of the Church and of a deeply religious, sensitive people who knew little about God but trusted God deeply.

During my brief stay in Ethiopia, I had the opportunity to visit the mission stations where our SSpS Sisters were working. Thus, I got to know more people, admired their deep faith, their acceptance of the conditions of life, and their spirit of gratitude for the little they had. Because of the political, social, and economic conditions in the country, I became painfully aware of the dichotomy between piety and life, between adoring God in heaven, and ignoring God in the 'other person'.

I loved Ethiopia and my experiences there. After five months, I returned to Rome greatly enriched by this mission experience and more enthusiastic about the mission of the Congregation all over the world. This experience helped me to gain a better understanding and appreciation of administrative service as ministry in the Congregation and in the Church. Truly missionary service!

*Sr. Dorota Maria Piechaczek, SSpS*



*Under the Spirit's guidance  
we more clearly recognize the will of the Father  
in daily life and respond to it  
with increasing generosity....*

SSpS Constitution 414

## *Hilde*

After my graduation from the university as an SSpS, I was assigned to a community located in the interior of Timor Leste among the poor. Our Sisters opened a boarding hostel for secondary school girls there. The parents had to pay a boarding fee of 10,000 rupiahs (in US \$1.00) per month. The provincial appointed me as matron for the girls. Unfortunately there were two students who were very poor and their parents could not pay the school and boarding fees. One day when all the girls gathered for school, Hilda, one of the poor students, was missing because the teacher had asked her to leave the day before. After morning worship, as usual, I made my rounds checking the hostel. There Hilda was sitting in the kitchen crying. I approached her and said, "Why are you crying, my sister?" She replied, "I was expelled from the school because there is no money to pay for school fees. I would like to go to school with my friends, but my parents can't afford it. My Father was killed by the Indonesian soldiers when the East Timorese wanted independence."

At supper, I told Hilde's story to the other Sisters in my community. They said we are also poor. We can help her in the Boarding Hostel, but we do not have anything to pay her school fees. I felt it was useless sharing my story, because there was no solution. I looked for ideas to help Hilde. How can I help this girl? I prayed for God's help. Two days later, I went to the big convent and asked Sr. Paulana for help. She gave me 250,000 rupiahs (about \$25.00) to help Hilde. I brought the money to my community and we discussed how best to help Hilde.

The next morning, I paid the school fees of 150,000 rupiahs and then went and bought flour, oil, ripe bananas and gave them to Hilde. I told her and her mother that Hilde would come home early to fry and sell bananas and plantain. They should put the money into the credit union to save for her education.

Last month, while in Epworth, Iowa, I was on the phone with Hilde's aunt. She told me Hilde was very diligent in frying and selling and has made enough money to go to high school. I was so happy. Starting with only \$10.00, this girl, with the help of her loving mother, had made enough money to continue her education. This teaches me not to just sit and think and be sorry for the poor, but to be enterprising and really do something to help them.

*Sr. Rosa da Costa Menezes, SSpS*

## *Charism? What's That?*

I often gratefully recall the many gifts and blessings I received during my early formation years, as well as the varied experiences of teaching and ministering through education in different areas of the United States from North, South, and East; city and rural; small and large groups; mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic environments. My life, through the years as a lay woman, teacher, and principal, was deeply affected and enriched by the gifts and blessings of those formative years in the candidature, postulancy, novitiate, and early professed life in the Congregation. The foundation stones of prayer and meditation; love for mission, the poor and marginalized; devotion to the Holy Trinity (God, our 'Abamma' and life-giver, the Divine Word and self-giver, the Spirit of loving presence); deep love and sense of 'belonging' to the Congregation; liturgies and sacramental life; and openness and adaptability to life's challenges and blessings.

I was gifted by the mother of one of my Confirmation students with a simple comment that helped me to realize the deeper understanding of "charism". The mother was an "associate member" of another religious congregation and was struggling to understand the meaning of "charism of her congregation". She knew of my earlier religious life with the SSpS. As part of the Confirmation preparation, the students to be confirmed and their parents gathered once a week for class, discussion, Bible sharing and prayer. One evening, after class, this mother approached me and said: "Now I understand what 'charism' is! Your enthusiasm and joy when speaking of the gifts of the Spirit and the whole spirit of these classes radiate your charism and devotion to the Holy Spirit!" Years later, a Sister in Rome likewise made reference to my 'missionary charism' and love for the Congregation. Through both these experiences / encounters, I grew in a deeper understanding and appreciation of our SSpS charism. The gifts and blessings of those earliest years have shaped the "stained-glass" image of my life through which the charism of our Congregation shines through. Once formed within the person, the charism permeates and infuses all that we do and is never lost or abandoned!

*Sr. Mary Miller, SSpS*

## *St. John the Evangelist Girard, Pennsylvania*

In 1974, I was reappointed to St. John's School in Girard. I say "reappointed" because I had been there from 1949 to 1952 teaching second grade. This time around, I was teaching children of some of the students I had taught before.

After the first year of being there, the pastor mentioned to me that a new family had moved to the parish. The parents had asked him if there was a prayer group in the parish. He told them to see me if they wanted to start one. When they asked me about it, they were adamant about having it in the church building so that it would be seen as a parish activity. We decided to hold the meetings in the activity room of the school which was in the basement of the church. In the beginning the group grew slowly. Many people came and went, but the group eventually had eight to ten members who were constantly there. When the leaders moved to another area, we decided to continue to meet weekly to pray for the needs of the parish. We shared Scripture, sang songs of praise, and prayed for the needs of the parish and individual needs. After twenty-three years in Girard, I was reassigned to the Chicago area.

The following year, I had a call from Kathy who had been with the prayer group from the beginning. "Sister," she said, "you know, all those things we were praying for, for the parish, are beginning to happen now."

God is faithful, even when we are not!

*Sr. Marie Sheehy, SSps*



*I have prayed fervently  
for the light of the Holy Spirit,  
so that I may be led  
where God has planned to lead me  
from all eternity.*

Bl. Josepha Hendrina Stenmanns

## *Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace*

In the year 2001, I was doing pastoral ministry at Cook County Hospital. I enjoyed visiting and ministering to a diverse array of people who were patients there.

One afternoon I was making rounds in one of the Intensive Care Units and I saw that a middle-aged Hispanic woman was on my list. She was in critical condition and was very weak. I introduced myself and we chatted a little bit. I offered to pray with her and give her Holy Communion. She was glad for the prayer but she said that she was not able to receive communion and she began sharing her story of coming to this country.

As she spoke, I realized that she was deeply burdened with guilt. As I quietly listened, she poured out her heartache and sorrow. Though she was weak, she wanted to talk and I simply let her do that. I listened, opened my heart to her, and tried to offer my care and support. I assured her of God's love for her. We prayed and I left promising to return the next day.

The next afternoon, I again went to visit her. She was very happy to see me. She looked brighter and lighter, even though her physical condition was very poor. She told me that the concerns she had shared the day before were things that she had told a clergy person several years before but she could not let go of the guilt. Then she said, "He told me that one day someone would come to me and I would have the peace I needed". She felt it was a prophesy of sorts. Then she said, "Sister, yesterday when I talked to you, I felt all the guilt and sorrow leave me and I was at peace. You are the person he was talking about. God sent you to me."

She spent several more days in the hospital and I visited with her whenever I was on duty. I do not know what happened to her after she went home, but I was deeply touched by this experience. I did very little. I showed up at her bedside; I listened to her; said a few words of care and prayed with her. But in that brief encounter, I felt that God was able to work through me to bring her the healing and peace she had been waiting for.

I believe that this is the reason I became a Holy Spirit Missionary: to allow God to use me to bring healing and peace to others.

*Sr. Margaret Hansen, SSps*

## *My Mission*

When I came to the United States from Germany 60 years ago, I was in the Provincial House for some time. My first mission assignment was for Mississippi, where I served in three places, Vicksburg, Meridian and Jackson, as the homemaker for the sisters. This is an important service, to keep the Sisters well and healthy to do their work as missionaries.

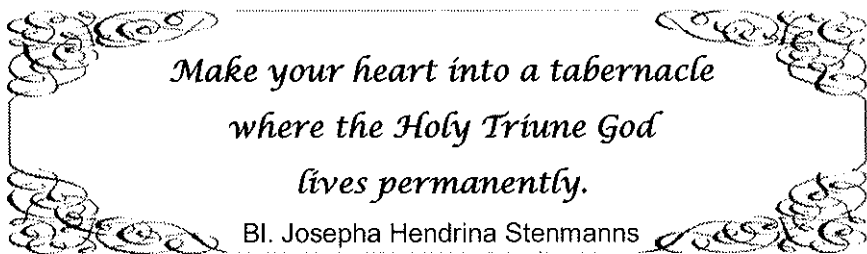
Later, I was missioned to Watertown, Wisconsin, where I worked as a cook with some ladies, a nice work team. From Watertown, I was sent back to the Provincial House where I worked for 30 years. I liked working in the Provincial House where I could work together with others. In the small houses, I was always alone at my workplace.

When I was in Jackson, I had a special joy. A little boy came to the door and asked for a drink of water. I gave it to him. I was surprised when he said, "Sister, you are my auntie." I said to him, "What makes you think I am your auntie?" He responded, "If God is my Father and you are his sister, then you are my auntie."

At present, I am enjoying my retirement at the Provincial House. I have time to do some extra praying and needlework, making Holy Spirit symbols, to make the Holy Spirit more known and loved.

This year, I will be 88 years old and I realize that any year could be my last one. I look forward to the day when the dear Lord calls me home and I thank God for all that I could do for others.

*Sr. Maria Agnes Petersmann, SSps*



## *Christmas*

This day is one of the most special days of the whole year for me. But this time everything was different. This was a warm and sunny day as usual in Jamaica. Christmas Eve and the following two days are special for all Polish people. This year, on the day before Christmas, four of us celebrated Mass in the morning. Music from the street was loud and played from early morning until the morning of the next day. A lot of people sold and bought all kinds of things; some people cooked food on the street; some drank. Everything happened because it was Christmas, but there was nothing about the Church and Jesus.

On Christmas day, the music stopped playing around 7 a.m. This was the time when I started to prepare for Christmas Mass. Some people came to celebrate Mass together and some slept after spending the whole night on the street.

After Mass, Sister Theresa and I took Holy Communion to one of our sick members, Ms. Bee. She was lying in her bed waiting for somebody. She lived alone in her poor house and had no family, so she was happy to see us. Ms. Bee didn't know that this day was Christmas. We sang Christmas songs, prayed, and gave her Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Later, we gave her food because she hadn't eaten that day. We washed her, changed her clothes, and she was so grateful. Ms. Bee's faith and humility touched my heart.

I came to understand that Christmas is not about snow, a Christmas tree, or dinner on Christmas Eve with family or friends. In her simple house and by her endurance of pain, I found a sense of Christmas Day, and through Ms. Bee, Jesus showed me how sensitive and humbly He comes into my life.

*Sr. Barbara Miensopust, SSps*





## *My Story*

I have a thousand stories to tell about community life as an SSPS, but one story in my almost five years in the community really struck me. In July 2011, I had the most wonderful experience in my life. From that time, I knew what it means to be a Holy Spirit Missionary Sister.

At 11:00 a.m., Rebecca David went to the hospital. Sisters Edel and I went with her. At that time I did not know Rebecca well, but I wanted to be there.

The nurse came and took Rebecca to the room to get her ready for surgery. Sister Edel and I waited outside. As soon as the doctor came, they took her to the surgical room. I saw her leaving and I felt so much compassion. I did not understand why I felt this way since she is not part of my family. For almost five hours, we were waiting and waiting. Finally, the doctor came and we asked immediately how she was. He answered, "In a couple of minutes they will transfer her to a single room, and then you can see her." As soon as they brought her to her room, we went to see her. She was unconscious. At that moment I felt something very strong in my heart that I could not explain. I found myself feeling her pain, even though she was not my blood sister, nor my family. I had not even known her before. At that moment, I realized that God has called me for something bigger than I could dream. It was not my eyes anymore; it was the eye of God. I learned how much we are interconnected with each other.

*Sr. Salud Osornio, SSPS*

*Most beautiful is the love among the Sisters.*

*Where LOVE is LIVED  
there heaven is anticipated.*

Bl. Maria Helena Stollenwerk

## *I Will, but Not Now*

When I was very small, I wanted very much to have a watch. It was during the 1980's. There were not many people in my town in Indonesia that had a watch, only the teachers or those who worked in the offices or in certain institutions. My parents could not afford to buy a watch for me; they could buy one for me only if they bought one for each person in the family. So I asked my grandpa to buy one for me. He said, "I will, but not now." Time came and passed without any news about the watch. When I finished my sixth grade, I reminded grandpa about a watch and he told me that I was too small to have a watch. So, I just waited. Again time passed by. Before I went to high school, I reminded my grandpa again about a watch and he said, "Oh... I will, but not now."

I was dreaming that I was going to have a watch in my hand. I would look at my watch regularly to check the time. The time passed and still I did not get a watch from grandpa. Three years later, I came home after finishing my high school without a watch in my hand. I reminded grandpa again. The time passed by so quickly, and I was ready to make first vows.

Grandpa came to the convent to attend my first vows. It was a big deal for the family because I was the first granddaughter; the first niece, the first young lady from the area and from the parish to enter the convent and to become a Holy Spirit Missionary Sister. During the ceremony, grandpa whispered to me, "I have something for you." I was so happy and said, "Oh God, finally my dream is coming true, a new watch from grandpa." When I opened the gift it was a comb with a note: This is a comb to comb your hair. Your road is very long and sometimes it is not easy. Just like a comb to comb your hair, the prayer can make you stronger in your religious life. Three years later grandpa passed away on my birthday without giving me a watch.

*Sr. Kristina Jawa Lajar, SSpS*

*The Holy Spirit is the life and strength of my spirit.*

St. Arnold Janssen

## *A Vocation Story*

In an article once written about Rochester, New York, it was stated that twice in half a century, surveys acclaimed Rochester, New York, as the most caring city in America. In my time, it was the center of the manufacturing of photographic and optical goods, precision instruments, clothing, and it had a Medical and Musical School. It was a thriving city of many parks with an abundance of flowers, especially lilacs. The Catholic Church was, along with its many Catholic Schools, growing and well attended.

I belonged to St. Margaret Mary Parish and attended its school which was run by a happy bunch of Franciscan Sisters from Alleghany, New York. That's where my three brothers and I were given a very solid spiritual formation. Going to school, which we had to walk a mile to attend, was a lot of fun because of all the bantering we did.

Every day, when I entered my third grade classroom, I would admire the beautiful spiritual saying that Sister had printed so artistically at the top of the blackboard. One day, one of our assignments was to write a composition about what we wanted to do when we grew up. My Mother saved mine and some years later told me that I wrote that I wanted to be a Sister because I like to write on the blackboard. Doesn't sound like too good of a motive, but God, in His marvelous ways, was drawing me more and more to Himself and to religious life.

At school it was the custom to save 'pagan babies' by means of the Holy Childhood Association. I really became excited about that and did my utmost to save as many babies as I could. Also, every once in a while a missionary priest would come to our school and give a talk about his mission work. That really fired up my desire to be a missionary. I especially wanted to go to China to save the abandoned baby girls. My attraction to God flourished during the last couple of years of elementary school as I began attending daily Mass. The Franciscan Sisters felt pretty confident that they had a vocation to their congregation.

The following summer, after graduation from elementary school, my grandmother, aunt and uncle were going to Techny to visit Fr. Charles Erb, the son of my grandmother and sibling of my mother and aunt. So, when my aunt asked me if I wanted to go to Techny with them, I happily said that I would. We had a great time with my missionary uncle who had a tremendous sense of humor. I

also met with a couple of the missionary sisters and even though I felt the place seemed a little cold, I was determined to return there one day.

Fr. Erb occasionally came for a home visit to Rochester. It was through him that I learned about the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters. The Holy Spirit always played a very important part in my life, guiding me and keeping me on the straight and narrow path in following God's will in my life.

When it came time to enter high school, my mother had to go back to work as there was tuition involved. My parents would have done anything to make sure that we were well grounded in our faith. From the two all Catholic girls' high schools, I chose Nazareth Academy. This time it was the Sisters of St. Joseph who assisted me on my faith journey and to become a missionary. Sr. Callista was my first homeroom teacher. She was so nice. My classmates and I cracked up when it came to closing time on our first day of school. She announced that we should "lift our seats and pass out quietly". We all knew what she meant, but it just sounded so funny that we couldn't stop laughing. Sr. Callista was always very helpful to us.

During my days at Nazareth, I became more activity-minded than study-minded. If there was anything to get involved in, especially sports, the sodality, and mission club, there was I. I also made a lot of friends, and am still keeping in contact with them till now. About seven of them became St. Joseph Sisters. Yes, during my high school days, I experienced some of the happiest days of my life.

After I completed high school, I started my preparations for entering the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters. My Mother went shopping with me to purchase the clothing that I needed and those that were on the list for me to bring. When it came time to buy the long johns, I refused to go into the store to buy them and delegated my mother to do that. She graciously consented to do it.

When I completed all that was asked by Techny, my "good-byes" were not sad ones because everyone knew I was about to finally reach my goal of becoming a missionary. My wonderful parents travelled with me by train to Techny. When time was up and they had to leave, I accompanied them to the car which was given for their use by Mr. Hart, the Techny postmaster at that time. Just as they were ready to go, my mother rolled down the car window and said: "Please miss us a little!" She knew well that I finally reached my goal!

*Sr. Helen Marie Yockel, SSps*

## *Reflections on Life*

Looking back on my life, I see it as a gift from God. I grew up in a small family with much love and with values that my parents lived everyday in life. My father grew up in a modest family and home. He was one who showed me how to share and what I could do for others.

At an early age, I learned photography from my father. So much of my life has been viewed through the eye of a lens. Even what I chose for my life's work had photography in it. In school I was the one with a camera. My father and I spent much time in the darkroom printing pictures.

After much searching on what I wanted to do with my life, I planned on having a family like I had. Dating and having fun was on the top of the list. I became engaged and life was moving along as planned. However, seeing life through a lens, I met Sister Rita, SSps, who opened my eyes to other challenges in life. That's when I felt a different calling. I became involved with the Sisters in Techy and they asked if I would take some pictures for them during a celebration. It was then that I started to feel the call but I thought my background would not fit in their way of life. So I let go of the pull to that way of life.

The seed was planted, however, and God kept watering it a little at a time. I put off planning for my wedding; I prayed and asked what God is calling me to. I wrote to the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters. Forty-eight years have passed and I'm still seeing life as a gift through the lens of a camera in mission service to the Lord. Each time I pick up my camera, I remember my Dad.

*Sr. Veronica Marie Mikkelsen, SSps*

*Let us dedicate our memory  
to the Heavenly Father  
so that through God's grace  
our minds will be filled  
not with the created but the Creator.*

St. Arnold Janssen

## *James Jr.'s Dream*

While I was working in the Intensive Care Unit during my CPE, there was a man named James in very serious condition. One day I met his wife and the patient's little boy. James Jr. was crying and crying. I stood next to the boy and held him. The little boy asked, "Is my father going to die?" I told him, "We will pray for your father, and the doctors are doing all they can to save your father. Have courage and trust."

Several times I met the family and the little boy was always there crying.

Once while I was at the bus stop on my way to the hospital, the little boy saw me from afar. He cried, "Sister, Sister!" I didn't notice, but the person next to me nudged me and said the little boy is calling you. He came over to me and told me his father in the hospital was his only parent. All the other children were children of his father's wife. They all went to school, but he alone did not go to school. He wanted so much to go to school. We prayed again for his father and I told little James to have courage.

Later during a faculty meeting, I told a young doctor about James Jr. and his desire to go to school. The doctor was interested so I told him the story as fully as I could. He told me he wanted to meet the boy. He went back to intensive care with me and sure enough James Jr. was there with his dad. The doctor talked to James Jr. and liked him. The doctor was ready to take responsibility for James Jr. and send him to school.

Gradually the father got better so I could talk to him and tell him how his little boy missed him and how badly he wanted to go to school. The patient said, "Of course I want him to go to school." Then I told the father about the young doctor who was ready to take the boy with him and send him to school, since the father was not able at the moment. The father was overjoyed. He gave the doctor permission to assume responsibility for the boy and to educate him. As the father got better he was able to visit with his son.

The father rejoiced in how the son was learning and the son rejoiced in the improved health of his father.

*Sr. Uloma Akpa, SSps*



## *Convent Beginnings*

The day I entered the convent was actually two days after other members of the group had started. We had experienced a severe ice storm and we could not travel.

Before I arrived, the group had been instructed on how things go, but I was clueless. Soon we were told it was time for meditation. Not knowing any better, I took out a pad of paper and started writing a letter home. I had no idea what meditation was!

The other story I think of took place in New Guinea. Another Sister and I were crossing a river. We were in a jeep and I was driving. I just thought I would drive through the river, jeeps being so good in water and such things. In the middle of the river, the motor died. .... We sat and sat in the jeep. I noticed up on the bank of the river, in the distance, were some native New Guineans. They just stood and watched us. I didn't know if they did not want to help us or were waiting to be asked. Either way, they didn't move.

After sitting quite a while, I attempted to start the jeep again – this time it started! Sister and I said, "Thank you, God." As we drove by the group standing and watching us in the river, we thanked God again, but did not thank those standing and watching!!

*Sr. Margaret Simon, SSps*



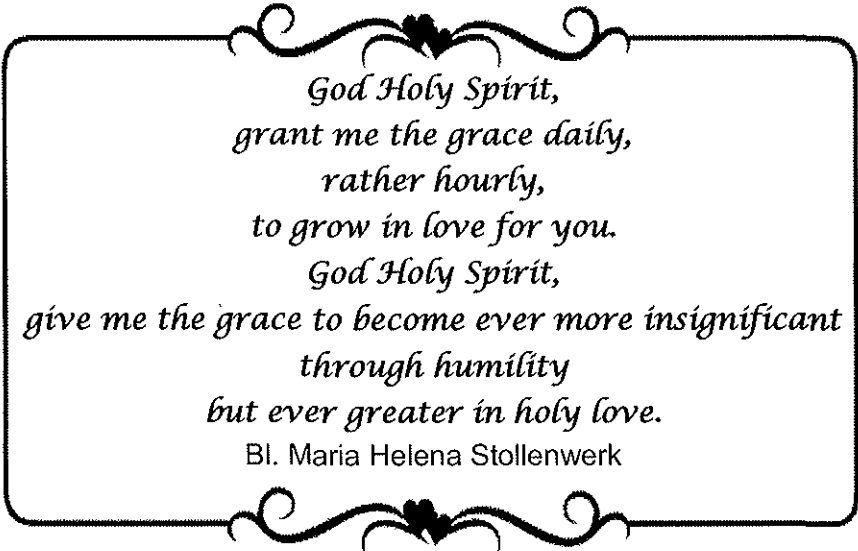
## *Helped by the Holy Spirit*

It was a bright sunny day, 1927. I was nine years old. I came into the house to take a drink of water. My curiosity peaked when I saw my father sitting in the doorway leading from the kitchen to the dining room. He was reading to my mother, not from the Montreal "La Presse," but from a book. He had bought the book at the parish mission.

My parents were, no doubt, full of admiration for the young nun in the story. My father said to me: "Look, there is 'Therese' asking her father to enter Carmel at fifteen! "Would you like to be a nun like Therese?" "Yes," I said! I did not dwell on the possibility of being a nun then. However, I can remember a time when I did imagine the possibility of my being a nun.

Yes, within me it seemed that someday I would be a nun. During my high school senior year, I decided to send penny post cards to the congregations that advertised in our *Sunday Visitor*. Only the Sisters in Techny answered my request. Why? I found the other cards still in a corner of my desk. Was it the Holy Spirit that took advantage of my disorderly habit?

*Sr. Patrice Coutu, SSps*



*God Holy Spirit,  
grant me the grace daily,  
rather hourly,  
to grow in love for you.  
God Holy Spirit,  
give me the grace to become ever more insignificant  
through humility  
but ever greater in holy love.*

Bl. Maria Helena Stollenwerk



## *Do You Have a Special Very Helpful Guardian Angel?*

All day we had been transferring from St. David's to a new convent at St. Mary's. I was alone at St. David's. After a quick supper, I went to my second floor bedroom to read awhile before retiring.

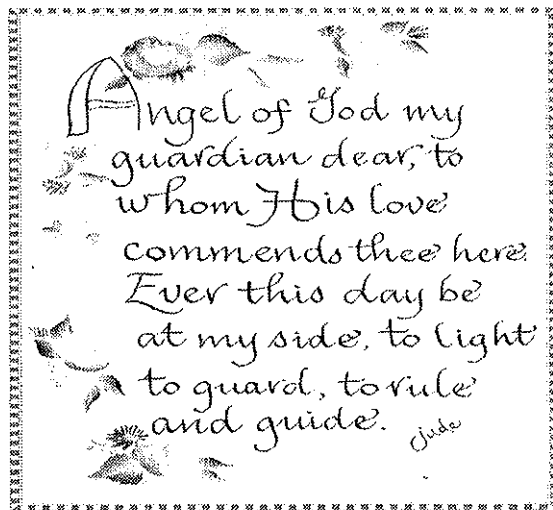
Sometime later I distinctively heard heavy footsteps on the stairs. My heart froze, and I quickly and quietly closed my bedroom door and begged my Angel for protection.

I heard the invader walk down the hall stopping at each room on the east side. After reaching the end, he turned around and retraced his steps, now checking the west side rooms.

I continued to beg my Angel's protection. The man passed my room not trying to open my bedroom door. What a relief to hear the steps retreat down the stairs, out the back.

I determined to take my last load over to St. Mary's the next day. My Angel is now a close friend and helper.

*Sr. Mary Pardy, SSps*



## *Someone Might Be Listening*

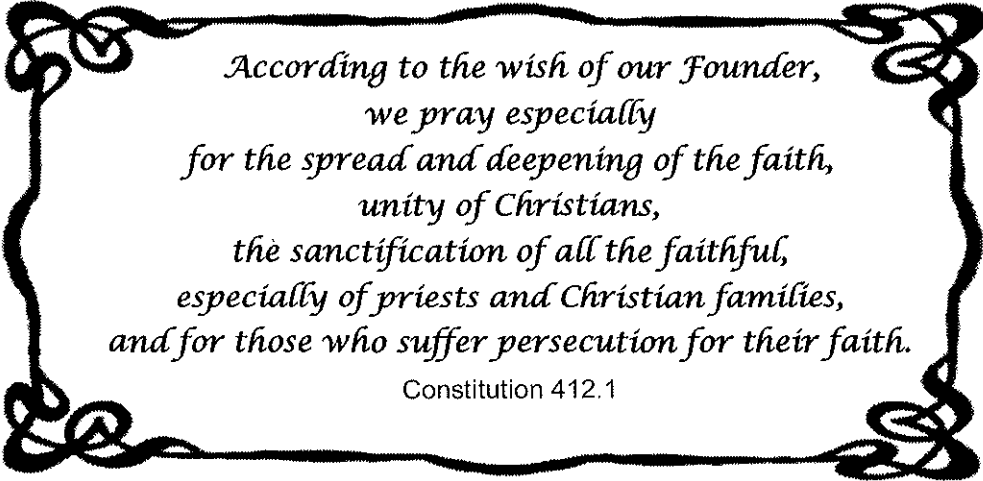
When I was on mission in Accra, Ghana, one of my weekly tasks was to clean the sacristy and sanctuary of the parish church. Usually two students from the secondary boarding school would accompany and assist me. However, when the students were on vacation, one or the other of the young men from the minor seminary was available. Often, when they were helping me, we would polish the brass candlesticks.

One warm sunny Saturday morning as we were busy with the candlesticks and chatting, one of the young men turned to me and remarked, "Sister, it's going to be seven more years of study before I can be ordained. It's so long; I don't think I can make it."

I turned to him and showed him my hand with my ring on my finger and said: "Joe, it took me twelve and a half years to get this; and I have no regrets. I will be praying for you."

Some years later, at his Ordination Banquet, he spoke and in his message he mentioned: "One of the reasons that I am here today is due to Sister Francetta's ring." Father Joe is a diocesan priest. He has done further studies in Rome. He has celebrated his 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Priesthood and is presently pastor in one of the parishes in Accra.

*Sr. Francetta Kunkel, SSps*



*According to the wish of our Founder,  
we pray especially  
for the spread and deepening of the faith,  
unity of Christians,  
the sanctification of all the faithful,  
especially of priests and Christian families,  
and for those who suffer persecution for their faith.*

Constitution 412.1

## *A Weekend in Bethany*

Everyone and anyone who comes to the Paraclete Province sooner or later gets to know Bethany: a place of rest, a place of prayer and retreat. It's just a special spot on earth!

Through all the years of service in the kitchen, I always enjoyed a break now and then to go to Bethany. I enjoyed the lake or a walk through the woods, the colored leaves in the fall, and checked out the ice and snow on the lake in winter.

But the January trip one year stands out as more memorable. A few of us chose to go to Bethany for a winter weekend. On the way, we decided that we were going to stop and buy ice cream – even though it was winter. During Friday night, the strong north winds started to blow over the lake. Temperatures continued to drop all day Saturday. We found that the car wouldn't start...the battery was dead from the cold. On Sunday morning, two rooms were warm: the chapel and the bathroom. We kept the oven on and open in the kitchen. We spent our time stuffing towels and washcloths in the windows in the bedrooms to keep the north wind out.

On Sunday morning, we used all the extra scarves, sweaters and jackets as we went over to the chapel for Mass. We were quite a sight! Later, on Sunday evening, we wrapped ourselves in blankets as we watched TV and enjoyed our ice cream in spite of the winter weather.

Next morning, Brother Bernie brought our car battery (all recharged) and got our car running and later sent us on our way.

There's nothing like a weekend in Bethany! Don't you agree?

*Sr. Mathilde Steffens, SSps*



## *Intercultural Living*

Living in an intercultural community in a foreign country means to let God transform us and to learn new ways to interact with one another.

It happened to me a couple of years ago, after coming to the United States. I was still studying the English language and trying to understand the American culture.

After finishing the first period of classes in Epworth, Iowa, I came to Chicago and that summer I went to Bethany (East Troy, Wisconsin) for one week to enjoy vacation time with two other Sisters. While there, we met our SVD brothers and they were kind to us, especially Fr. Vince who gave us a ride on the boat in Lake Beulah.

Being back in Chicago, some weeks later, I met Father Vince in our dining room. I was so happy to see him in our house. Without having a second thought, I approached him and I wanted to give him a warm hug. He looked at me and extended his hand so we just shook hands. I felt so embarrassed and I didn't know what to say. I stepped back and after exchanging some comments and awkward questions I went to take a seat at another table.

That experience helped me to realize that, as a missionary, we need to be careful and mindful. Sometimes, adjusting ourselves in a new culture can provoke pain and misunderstanding, but if we are open to learn and to let the other culture shape us, then we can walk more confidently. It requires a lot of humility and good self-esteem to assume this new reality and to take the best that the other culture is offering to us.

*Anonymous*



## *Special Person in My Life*

In 2010, when I came to New York, I was excited to offer my life in the capital of the world as a missionary. Sometimes this kind of dream happens in my mind and heart!

At the beginning, I thought it would be easy. The Church and the people will be very happy to have an SSpS in the parish, school, and so on. Slowly, I understood that it was not easy, nor true, because they did not know me; they did not know us.

I visited different places. I met many people, and for several months I came back home discouraged. My prayer was: **“Oh my God, what I am doing here? Give me hope.”**

One day I was sitting and drinking coffee in the living room of our convent and suddenly my eyes stopped on the picture of Mother Leonarda. You are my solution; you can help me and from that afternoon I started to pray to her and my prayer was: **“If you want me here in mission, please send me to the correct place.”** From that day, I felt that I did not walk alone. Mother Leonarda visited many places with me. She walked with me. On many afternoons, when I drank my cup of coffee, we spoke about the situations that we met.

In January 2011, God sent us (Mother Leonarda and me) to a better place to live and work: Our Lady of the Angelus Parish, in Rego Park, New York. I tell you, she knew that it is a privileged place. The ‘Big Apple’ is a very multicultural place that invited and challenged us to share our spirituality, charism, and talents. Just for us!

Be sure, Mother Leonarda continues to be a very special Sister to me.

*Sr. Gladys Smith, SSpS*



*LOVE*  
*is the great active and moving power*  
*in the world.*

Mother Leonarda Lentrup,  
Foundress of the SSpS Province in the USA

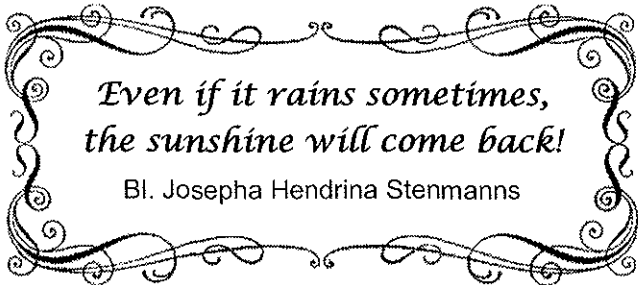
## *Faith and Trust*

It all happened some years ago, when Sister Marie Sheehy and I returned from Techny, Illinois, to Girard, Pennsylvania. The weather was rather nice; the sky was covered with white fluffy clouds. It was great to be out on the highway and trying to keep the speed limit. Besides, we were not looking for a ticket from the police.

There was much traffic on the Interstate 90/94 going east, going our direction. We did not talk too much. We were still thinking of the wonderful retreat which we completed in Techny. As we drove on, I noticed the change in the sky. Dark clouds slowly filled that beautiful blue sky, warning about oncoming storms. Sister and I were driving straight into it. At this time, I was plenty scared and I really prayed hard that God would protect us and all the other travelers. I was never afraid of thunderstorms, but here in the United States they are very frightening. I kept on driving and praying, not letting my eyes off those vicious clouds. I didn't have to turn to see them, they were in front of me. Sister Marie had nothing to say, perhaps she just kept on praying for protection.

In the meantime, we entered the Indiana Turnpike, the traffic kept on moving according to the prescribed speed. I believed that God had heard my fervent prayers. I noticed that the dark clouds dispersed in different directions. The humming sound of the motor in our car seemed to be telling us to keep on going. It was as if the Lord said: "Fear not, I am with you." Indeed, the sky cleared to a beautiful blue with white clouds. I felt relieved and thanked God for his protection. Have faith and trust in God.

*Sr. Martha Fass, SSps*



*Even if it rains sometimes,  
the sunshine will come back!*

Bl. Josepha Hendrina Stenmanns

## *Insight of the Very Young*

January 1984, I arrived in Wewak, East Sepik, Papua New Guinea. Two days after arriving, the superior of the house asked me to teach religion to the kindergarten and first graders at the international school. I was to start the following day.

“Start at the beginning” was my strategy. The children were much smaller than the high school children I had been teaching the year before my accident, but that really wasn’t a problem. After the usual introductions, we got down to the Bible stories. Most of the children came from broken homes or non-practicing-religion homes, knowing very little if anything about God. But the parents wanted them in class.

The first half of the year we covered the stories of the Old Testament with the help of a series of large poster pictures which I had obtained from the local Lutheran book store. Jesus and His life were to be the main topic of the second half of the year. We covered the infancy stories and went to His public life. After we covered the usual miracles, I took the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fish for the 5,000 people. When I got finished, young Michael raised his hand and excitedly exclaimed, “Sister! Sister! Sister!” I called on him and asked what the “trouble was.” Then came the enthusiastic response, “Sister, Jesus is God!” I questioned, “And what makes you think that, Michael?” (I had never mentioned the fact that Jesus was God to these inquisitive minds.) The response was immediate and this young child was determined to convince me. “Don’t you see, Sister? Only God can feed 5,000 people with only five loaves and two fish!!! And Jesus did that! Therefore, Jesus is God!!!” The entire class agreed. Michael’s twin brother looked at me and stated as a matter of fact, “You knew the whole time, didn’t you, Sister?”

I smiled at them. In my heart I knew that God had entered the hearts of those little ones. They had put one and one together and come up with the correct answer. In his own way, God works mysteriously with those who seek him.

*Sr. Vincent Wolff, SSps*



## *How Hard It Was*

I lived in a small village while preparing for my final vows. It was one of the poorest areas in the country in the past ten years. People who lived there had very difficult, simple, and poor lives. When I lived in that small village, there were stones all over the place. Right now, some areas of the village are still covered with stones. Some of these stones have different colors and beautiful pictures on them. According to the history of this village, nobody could live in this place because everywhere was full of the stones above and under the ground. That was a reason why the people dug the ground very hard, especially in winter.

At first I had a very hard time. I needed to adjust to the new environment. Everything was new for me, a foreigner and stranger. Different areas of the country have different cultures; even a small village has different customs. The only language that I could communicate in was the common language of the country. However, the local people had their own dialect which I couldn't understand. The food also was different from the food in my home town, and the ways of cooking were totally different, too. You can imagine how hard it was, but I had to take it. People say that a bad thing could become a good thing. These many challenges became my precious experiences for my future ministries. I used them as my treasures. I learned a lot from an experience which I will never forget.

In my community there were seven Sisters. We were from different areas of the country. I had met some of them before in other communities. We lived together in one big house. That house was beautiful and modern, in comparison to the other houses in which the local people lived. Everyone admired the house and wished they could live there. We also had a huge yard in which was standing a water pump house. Inside of it was a well which we used for drinking. It was interesting that they put a small machine which could pump the water out through a pipe into the house. When I visited some of the homes of the people, I discovered that they also had this kind of system for the running water. That was very convenient.

One day, during winter, an accident happened. In that small village, it was very, very cold and windy during the winter time. If you looked at the faces of the local people, they all were red because of the very strong wind. People



just didn't want to go out, but they had to. One day in January, 2009, I turned on the water tap, and the water didn't come out. I looked everywhere in our house, but I could not locate the problem. I realized that we couldn't live without water, so I hastened to my leader and explained everything I had done.

"Calm down, calm down," she said in a kind voice, and she thought about the problem: "Our water tap is new. It is impossible that it doesn't work. I guess there are two possible reasons for what caused it. One is the water pump and another is that the pipe under the ground is frozen."

"So what can we do about it in this extremely cold weather? Call someone to fix it?" I asked.

"Think about others. Everyone wants to stay at home. They have their family, too," she responded.

Her response hit me like a bolt of lightning. I should think about others who are probably in the same situation and can't afford to have someone come in and fix their pipe.

"That means we have to fix it by ourselves?" I answered. "Yes, we ourselves can do it." She confirmed my thinking.

"First thing that both of us can do is to go out and check the water pump, to see if it is OK." So we went to the pump house, turned on the sluice, and it worked perfectly. The same with the pump, we heard the sound that came from it. "Oh, no, don't tell me that we need to check the water pipe underground!" I was disappointed.

It would take time to do it. We had to dig the frozen ground to find where the frozen water pipe was buried. We discussed how we would do it, and then started our hard work. We met some difficulties, but we were one in heart. People say that if everyone cooperates, all will go well. So we did what people said. We accomplished what we set out to do. We had water again.

After our rejoicing was over, something struck me to the core of my being, which moved me deeply and brought back to my mind what my leader said about thinking about others. Sometimes in life when disastrous things occur, we learn that often some good comes out of the situation. My experience with the pipe may not have been a big disaster, but I did come away from this situation with a few good lessons for the rest of my life.

My leader tried to keep calm when she met the situation. It taught me to be a good listener, to always be considerate of others, and to be calm when difficulties occur. The members of my community, who cooperated with one another and faced the difficulties freely and bravely, also taught me that in difficult times, when all looks hopeless, not to give up, but to keep on trying. It is true! Life can teach us many things, but we have to be open and willing to change.

*Sr. Monica Z, SSps*



*We human beings  
do not exist for this earth, but  
for something much higher.*

*We do not live in order  
to take pleasure in life,  
but to work in the place  
to which  
the Lord has assigned us.*

St. Joseph Freinademetz

## *Neighbors in Need*

Going to see the creek behind our Convent of the Holy Spirit at 2600 Waukegan Road in Techny, Illinois, Sister Dominic and other Sisters discovered the Glenview Trailer Park. Soon afterwards, Sr. Dominic began visiting the people in the trailers for two hours, three times a week. Consequently, the children of these people came to our Convent for first confession and first communion classes.

Two couples heard about Sister Dominic's ministry to the people in the trailer park and came to the Convent to check it out. Sister Dominic took them over to the trailer park to see the conditions there. After that, the two couples and other people from Crystal Lake came every Christmas with toys, clothing, blankets, towels, microwave, TV, other gifts and money for these families. When Sister was no longer able to go visiting, the money and gifts were given to Sr. Lauren and Sr. Therese Mary for their ministries to the poor. The people from Crystal Lake continued to make monetary contributions until 2006.

Once, the two couples and other friends of theirs, provided a Thanksgiving dinner in the meeting hall in the trailer camp. The people sat around a long table. They also had bingo for the grownups once a week.

Another time, the couples held a picnic outdoors for all in the trailer camp. They provided cookies, fruit, candy and games for this occasion.

Her ministry continued for perhaps 10-15 years, even as she moved from 2600 Waukegan to 319 Waukegan!

Sr. Xavier Ann Schwacha and Sr. Anacleta Kaiser also participated in this ministry to the trailer park.

*Sr. Dominic Bartsch, SSps*



## *God's Call to a New Ministry*

When I came to St. Therese Hospital in 1951 for nurse's training, I had no idea that I would eventually become a hospital chaplain. Following nurse's training and getting my RN, I went for more studies as they wanted me to take the position of Sister Sophia as the head dietitian, a position I assumed in 1960.

So where did I get the idea of pastoral work? Article 409 of our Constitution reminds us "That in the daily reading of Sacred Scripture, we encounter the Word of God and open our hearts to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. He will help us to understand God's message, to assimilate it and to announce it to others." It was in 1970 when I really began to read the Word. The Word was speaking to me of a new calling which I did not understand. "Make use of your time by reading to the people, preaching and teaching. You have in you a spiritual gift which was given to you. Do not let it be unused. But put it into practice." (1 Timothy 4: 12-16)

Like Mary, my question was "how"? Again an answer came, "All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, correction and training in holiness so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3: 16, 17)

Another scripture spoke again to me. "Make the preaching of the Good News your life's work."

I knew that I was being called, but to what? In the coming days I found myself in the evening spending much time with patients, not in giving dietary instructions, but reading Scripture. And I began to see God's grace at work. The first time that I read Scripture to a patient was to a woman with terminal cancer. I had not met her, but had seen her husband who came to the cafeteria for his meals. One day I told him that I would visit his wife and read Scripture to her. I had no idea what I would read and merely put a marker in my Bible and decided that I would read from that page whatever it was. When I got to her room I found that she was in an oxygen tent. I told her that I would read to her. She asked if she needed the Bible and I told her she could just listen. She was very alert. So I opened the Bible to the place I had marked. I had not checked it before. The text was from 2 Cor: 5-11 "For we know that when the tent we live in on earth is folded up, there is a house built by God for us, an everlasting

home, not made by human hands in the heavens.” After that I prayed for her and for her husband.

I had promised him that I would come back later. Since he told me that it was his birthday, I had sent a little gift for her to give him. I also brought a small birthday cake. Later that afternoon when I came to the hospital someone from the business office told me she had died and they were trying to locate her husband. I went to her room and waited a long time for her husband. The events that followed could fill a small book. I sat with the husband as he wrote thank you notes to various nursing staff members. One was for me as if his wife had written it. He believed that it was through my prayers that his wife was finally released from her sufferings, and I believe that it was the Word of God that set her free from her earthly tent. The husband said farewell to some patients he had gotten to know and told them that he would not see them, but I would and he requested that I visit a patient in the Psychiatric Department and tell her that his wife had died. This visit, the next day, opened a whole new ministry to me and I would have many stories to tell about my ministry there.

The ministry with the cancer patient confirmed for me the Lord's call to pastoral work. I spoke to Sister Agnes Marie Crabb, our provincial. She said to wait until autumn and ask again. Autumn came and I was hesitating about giving up dietary work. At a charismatic prayer meeting, a man said: “It is time that you follow what the Lord is asking of you.” I had not spoken about it to him or anyone. Another time when I was questioning giving up dietary work, I again received an answer from the Word of God. “It would not be right to neglect the Word of God to wait on tables.” (Acts 6:2) So I finally wrote to Sister Agnes Marie and her council for permission to go into pastoral work. Then I began CPE. In 1974, I began to work as assistant chaplain at St. Therese Hospital.

*Sr. Marie Louise Jilk, SSps*



## *Operating Theater*

Sisters had been about ten years in Ghana, several established. The Sisters saw that a hospital was maternity and a school were already there. A large one made into a laboratory. A new school was built a one made into the operating department.

Afram Plains closed because the people could not and Sisters also had no transport. The Sisters were Sr. Mary Catherine and I got our appointments and I was to set up the operating department which was g. When I arrived, it was already screened and painted. The operating table was in place. The first one fell. It is still there. We had a sterilizing room, changing room, and all that was needed.

Operations were performed and many interesting things happened. Operations were in the afternoon or emergencies. We did the operations. We performed many C-sections. Sometimes bringing the patient on a rough sidewalk, from the maternity to the operating room to place and arrived normally, but usually it was an emergency. Operating staff was called. The patient was brought from the operating table. The circulating nurse was preparing, the doctor was changing. While all were busy, the patient ran out the door, somehow got over the high wall, and lay on the ground. For a moment we stood in stunned amazement. The operating room was the theater, and this day it really was. Realized our preparations and some staff went looking for the patient. Only her hospital gown. She was finally found in town. She came back to the hospital sometime later. This time, for the patient, a baby boy. Be prepared for anything in the missions!

audience. We did many emergency operations with beginning we did not have an anesthetic machine or all the equipment in the emergency rooms today, I have a handful of medals attached to the bottom of the dress. In the help of the saints. I know the Lord was with us! I have the presence with us.

*by Joseph Hofschulte, SSps*

## *Almost Dismissed...*

In early 1946, after many years of praying and thinking about becoming a Missionary Sister, the war ended and wanting to make sure I was called, I wrote to the Provincial Superior of the Missionary Sisters in Germany to ask for permission to enter the Convent. Surprisingly, I received the notice of admission quite promptly. Together with the letter of admission, was included a number of leaflets, prayers, and so forth. Among them was a small brochure entitled: "The Twelve Levels of Silence."

Naturally, I left the leaflets lying on the cupboard at home where I had found the letter, which was always the place for mail that anyone had received that day. So when my brothers came for a visit (they came often), they found the leaflets. When they saw the one "The Twelve Levels of Silence," and learned that it was part of my admission letter from the Convent, they chuckled: "She'll never make it!" But I said nothing, only thinking: "We'll see!"

It was very hard to leave my family, because we were all very close. Because of the number of air raids and bombardments, especially toward the end of the war, I was happy to leave the ruins behind.

We were a big group that entered the convent at that time (I believe we were 28) because during the war Religious Orders could not receive any applicants, or only those who had worked with the Sisters before and found a way to continue that relation with the Order. Our ages were from 20 to about 40 years; also in other ways, we were quite a mixed group: nurses, teachers and other professionals. Most of us had worked in various surroundings necessitated by the war and at quite different jobs from the ones we had now as Postulants. Naturally, we attended almost daily classes, among others also in the German language. To explain this, one must know that in the various districts in Germany the colloquial language is often used which is a bit difficult when it came to letters and compositions. At one time I found in my "homework" a correction made that I thought was wrong. So I showed it to the teacher, but she did not agree with me and wanted me to correct it her way. However, I insisted, thinking that after a number of years writing business letters and reports, I should know what was correct. She waved a finger at me.... Then it was that it dawned on me that I had made a mistake.... By not obeying so close to our investment. I thought, "This is it! They will not keep me!..." In one sense, I

was almost glad since there were a number of things I did not like. But they kept me anyway.

And so, in spite of my many wrong doings and failings – I am still here after more than 65 years, thanking God and our Superiors!

*Sr. Maria Fischer, SSps*



### *Quarter Hour Prayer*

Written by St. Arnold Janssen  
and recited throughout the day on the quarter hour

*God, eternal Truth,  
we believe in You.*

*God, our strength and our salvation,  
we hope in you.*

*God, infinite Goodness,  
we love You with our whole heart.*

*You have sent the Word as Savior of the World,  
let us all be one in Him.*

*Send us the Spirit of Your Son,  
that we may glorify Your Name.*

*Amen.*



## *My Story: 1951-2013*

1951: Under a clear sky and a bright sun, the ship is slowly gliding into New York Harbor. The Statue of Liberty shows all it stands for: Freedom – Liberty. I am in love with America, my mission country.

1951 – 1958: Manage English, high school, B.A. in nursing; assignment; Saint Mary's Hospital, Watertown, Wisconsin. Soon I was supporting the labor pains of a mother; hearing the first cry of new life became an experience in the routine of daily duties. The pain of parents at the death of the child they longed for belongs in the experience of birthing. An angel passes by and ever so gently returns the little soul to its creator; a first baptism. The agony of the parent is a loud or silent "WHY!!!" "God knows best!?!"

"Sister, you are transferred to St. Joseph Community Hospital, New Hampton, Iowa. Assignment – Director of Nursing (60) beds. "No, I am not qualified. God knows best. Amen!!!" Daily routine is manifold – not certain but readiness for surprises, great and small is the rhythm of a rural hospital. A tornado strikes Charles City, a neighboring town. The disabled hospital is sending all the victims our way. The wailing of ambulances seems not to stop. The victims, 54 in all, are checked, helped and admitted to our care. All receive a helping hand and compassionate concern. Thank you God, we were spared.

1970: "You are just getting good and efficient and now the Sister Superior in Techny wants to pull you out!?! " a young doctor said, when I announced my leaving. I do not understand..... Perhaps there was a little of that in my own heart. Lord, forgive me.

It was a hot August day when the plane landed in Baltimore, Maryland. Sr. Othberta and I followed the call to Sacred Heart Home, a 102 bed medium care nursing facility. Sister was sent for the business office and I for administrator and local leader. Making my first rounds I was appalled at the lack of order, confusion, and complaints. A slice of bread with jelly and peanut butter was the evening meal. Requests for a glass of milk between meal time was a charge of 10 cents. Thinking and praying, I concluded my round. Where to start? The cooperation of the staff was a vital beginning. In-service classes started with "What is our Motto?" Soon the answer came back: "TENDER LOVING CARE." This saw me through a lot of trouble and doubt.

The County Health Inspector stated: "You are an R.N. and we expect that you turn things around before we are forced by rules and regulations to close this facility." It was hard work planning and doing and being diplomatic with the staff, the doctors, family and visitors. But it paid off. By the end of one year the inspector acknowledged and was pleased with the effort and success.

Tender loving care was one side of the coin. The other side was the financial situation. The Home had a mortgage of \$480,000. What to do with that? Sister Othberta was a top notch person in financial matters. What a blessing she was!!! Sister reviewed and altered the paying of bills. Soon we could do justice to the residents and the State of Maryland. In return, the Home received prompt and correct payments from the State. The annual State Auditors and the Inspectors followed suit. To make a long story short, on the day we, Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit, handed over the Home to the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate, the Home was in excellent standing and one of the five best and most desired Homes in the State of Maryland. At the end of my 27 years and ten months at Sacred Heart Home, I asked my staff and visitors to sing with me, "Thank God from Whom All Blessings Flow."

In 1998 before joining the Techny Community, I was blessed with a Sabbatical of three months at the Monastery of the Benedictine Sisters in Idaho. Allow me to share with you the poem I wrote at that time.

*Holding Hands with Jesus*

*The other day - I listened to my heart*

*Just as I listen to birds in a tree*

*The beat sounded deeper - very*

*Holding hands with Jesus must make it so*

*I listen to my heart and there it was*

*More active - like a babe to be born*

*More peaceful - as a silent resurrection morn*

*Holding hands with Jesus must make it so.*

*Again - I listen to my heart*

*Beating deep and strong - deep ever deeper*

*Love is gathering riches all along*

*My heart full with peace, love and joy-*

*Holding hands with Jesus*

*Sr. Mary Agnes Fahrland, SSps*

## *God's Providential Care for His Children*

On January 12, 2004, I, Sr. Maria Elisabeth Klodt, received a forwarded e-mail from Sr. Monica Darrichon, in Argentina. Some years before, Sr. Monica had been with me in Melrose Park, Illinois, to study English. Usually, our Sisters went to Dominican University for their English studies. For some reason, God's Providence, Sr. Monica's superiors decided to send her to DePaul University in Chicago. Mr. Jacques Bahati, a Xaverian Seminarian, had also just come to the United States and was in the same English course as Monica at DePaul. On January 7, Jacques's sisters, Rosette and Marie, and a friend of theirs were in a horrible car accident in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, Africa. Rosette lost both legs, her friend, Justine, lost one leg and Rosette's sister, Marie, had her legs crushed. Jacques e-mailed Sister Monica, asking for prayers and e-mails to encourage the patients and also to e-mail others and ask for the same favor. Thus, I got involved. I prayed, e-mailed, and asked others to do the same.

After some time, I felt the Lord asking me to do more to help the girls. I had received some physical therapy at Vista Physical Medicine and continued going there every Saturday for physical exercise for seniors. I asked Mrs. Inge Crowley, one of the therapists whom I knew from St. Therese Hospital, if she had anything on rehabilitation for amputees. She gave me a brochure and also the calling card of Mr. Donald Ray McKinney of MCKINNEY PROSTHETICS L.L.C. in Gurnee, Illinois. I called him and asked if I could see him. He invited me to come. I went immediately, taking with me the forwarded e-mail from Sr. Monica. He read it, looked up, and said: "I'll donate the legs, if you can get them here." I could only say "WOW!" Wow for the unexpected and tremendous generosity of Mr. McKinney, but also "WOW! How am I going to raise the money for the airfares?" Inge Crowley encouraged me to try the newspaper. After clearing it with the IRS and with my superiors, I set up an account for AMPUTEES RWANDA at the FIRST MIDWEST BANK in Waukegan, Illinois. Their Cash Management Consultant, Luisa Medrano, was very professional, helpful, and kind. A News Sun Reporter, Mr. Art Peterson, published my appeal in the WAUKEGAN NEWS SUN. Small and large donations came in slowly but surely. Thanks to a few very large donations, I was able to close the account in February.

Often during this time, when the money came in so slowly, I got discouraged. Each time I heard the Lord telling me not to give up, that it was His doing and that He would see it to completion. I could only praise and thank God for His Goodness.

In December 2004, I was transferred from Waukegan to our Provincial House in Techny. On January 6, 2005, Jacques Bahati told me about the visit of his friends in Barrington. I was overjoyed to see how God's loving Providence was at work again. In my situation now, I would be unable to take care of the details of the stay of Rosette and her mother. Paul and Adrienna Kalmes assumed the entire responsibility for that. I had done my part in raising the money for the airfare. Now I could sit back and watch God's plan unfold. Jacques now had to try to obtain passports and visas for Rosette and her mother. That was difficult and sometimes frustrating. It seemed like an obstacle course; but finally, that too was accomplished. On March 18, I received an e-mail from Jacques that the tickets had been bought, that their friend Jacalyn Griffin would fly to the Congo on March 23 and return with Rosette and her mother on April 5. What Joy! I called McKinney Prosthetics and got an appointment for Rosette for April 12.

On Saturday, April 9, Jacques came to Techny with his mother and sister for a short visit. All the Sisters and employees were very happy to see them, since all had prayed hard that the visas would be granted.

After several appointments with Mr. McKinney, Rosette received her permanent prostheses and was busy practicing to walk with them. Inge Crowley watched her progress and helped her to become independent. It was a joy to see Rosette's happiness and the joy of her mother as she watched her daughter.

Our Sisters were happy to see Rosette and her mother and brother again on Saturday, May 14, 2005.

The Faith and Justice Committee of St. Anne Catholic Church in Barrington, Illinois, invited all donors and all who helped restore Rosette to health to a Mass of Thanksgiving and reception on Sunday, May 29th, to celebrate Rosette's journey. The Celebrant gave a powerful sermon, connecting the Eucharist with the efforts of those present. As Jesus gave Himself in the Eucharist to give us life, so our efforts gave new life to Rosette.

Sunday, June 5, Jacques came one more time to Techny with his mother and sister so that they could say good-bye before leaving for the Congo on Monday, June 6, 2005.

We hope that Rosette will be well on her way to independent walking. She might need elbow crutches because of the hilly and uneven terrain of her homeland. One sad note in this story is that Rosette's friend, Justine, was not able to come. Her mother was too afraid to let her go far away to America. As far as we know, she has a simple prosthesis and is back in school.

*Sr. Maria Elisabeth Klodt, SSps*



*To GOD the honor,  
to my NEIGHBOR the benefit,  
to MYSELF the burden*

Bl. Maria Helena Stollenwerk

## *Evergreen Tree of Techny: Little Mexico's Main Ministry*

In 1958, a few Sisters found some families that needed help. During the evening recreation they were giving Sr. Michael, the provincial, a report about what they found. Sr. Michael asked them "What about their religious instructions?" They answered, "The way they live, I don't think anybody cares about them." Sr. Michael suggested that they go and find out more. She also suggested that they take Sr. Therese Mary along, since she could speak Spanish. Ever since that first visit, Sr. Therese Mary has been going for the last 55 years.

At the time, the greatest need we found was housing. There had been a fire in one of the shacks where a family lived and two children had been burned to death. The whole town of Elk Grove Village was in an uproar and their solution to the problem was to force the many families out. They were many! Father Morrison of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish became very involved. We went to several companies to ask for financial help to build homes. They denied our request, saying that we would be building a ghetto.

Sr. Michael called me to her office one day. She had some blueprints for a house and told me I should get a group of men to build a home and then help one another to build homes. I answered her, "I am sorry, but I don't know how to tell a man what to do!" But I told Father Morrison if we are going to help, we need to take one family at a time. This was the beginning of the Home Start Project. Later a social group of ladies from Our Lady of the Brook Parish, in Northbrook, had read the Bishop's letter about housing and wanted to do something about it. One lady suggested that they help Sr. Therese Mary since she worked in the area. I told them that the only way to help was to take a family at a time! They agreed and held a fund raiser in the parish and a Lenten almsgiving, collecting \$20,000 for Little Mexico. People from the parish still send us donations, especially at Christmas time. More than 200 families have been helped over the years.

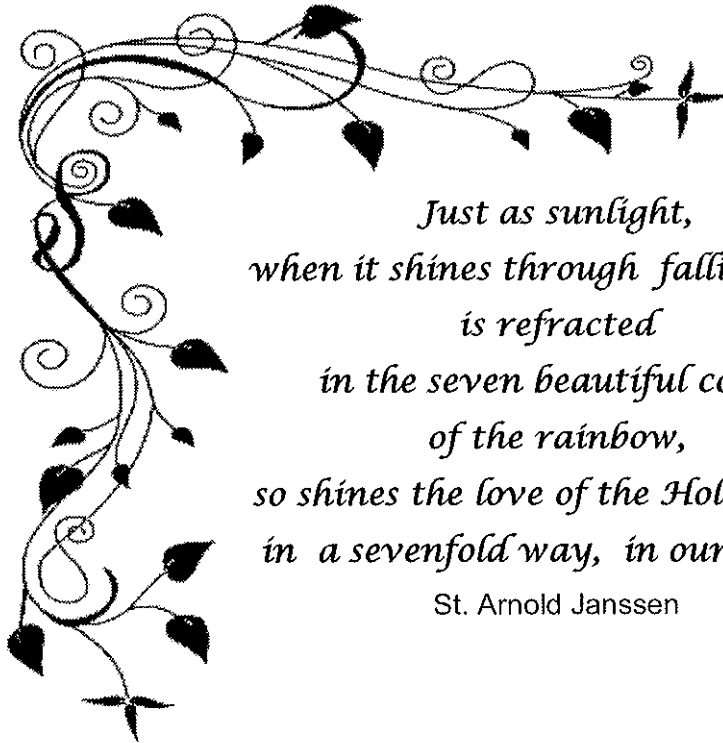
My favorite memory is from the father of one of the families as we were standing before the teller at the bank withdrawing the money for the down payment

on their house. He tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Sister, if you were not standing there, I would not be standing here either."

The Convent of the Holy Spirit has been a great support all these years. Individuals also helped us every year. We also had a lot of support from some parishes in the Northwest area.

Our Lady of the Brook – Northbrook  
St. Patrick – Lake Forest  
St. Thomas a Becket – Palatine  
St. Mary - Des Plaines  
St. Catherine Laboure - Glenview

*Sr. Therese Mary Martinez, SSps*



*Just as sunlight,  
when it shines through falling rain,  
is refracted  
in the seven beautiful colors  
of the rainbow,  
so shines the love of the Holy Spirit,  
in a sevenfold way, in our hearts!*

St. Arnold Janssen

## *My Vocation Story*

A little girl, Yuliana, was born as the first child from the farmer family of Joseph and Elizabeth. Three years later my brother, Thomas, joined the family, then Laurensius (deceased), Apolonia (deceased), Lusia, and Aurelius. Mom and Dad worked hard in order to raise and educate their children. Dad had never finished his grammar school education because he and his brother, Johanes, were suddenly orphaned and the two started to find shelter from house to house among the relatives. Uncle Johanes ended up staying with a relative who was careless but he stayed with this relative until his teens. Dad ended up staying with his blind uncle on the farm. My Mom never went to school because she was just a woman and the importance of education for girls was not emphasized at that time. Anyway, Dad had been a catechist for a long time. I have seen prayerful people in my family, especially my parents, who remain prayerful to this day. My parents' hearts were always big for others. I remember once it was the season of hunger; Mom and Dad went to the farm to get bananas, and when they were on the way home they met four orphaned children. The children asked if they could have some of the bananas. My parents gave all the bananas to the children and arrived home with empty hands. Of course, we were upset. Mom and Dad said, "Don't worry, we will have something to eat, but these children have nothing."

One day, it was raining heavily and it was very muddy. On my way home after school I saw a dirty piece of newspaper on the street. I was so curious, (*I liked to read during my elementary years; reading was one of my favorite subjects*) so I picked it up and tried to clean it. There was a picture of a tiny boy about six or seven years old lying down on the street and under that picture was written, "Please help me". All of sudden I felt my heart beat. I brought the paper home and put it under my pillow. At night I would look at this picture. I felt so sad, and I promised myself **to help people like this boy**. "How?" I asked myself. I was just a fifth grader at that time. We went for Mass every Sunday and every first Friday. One Sunday there was an ordination of the first priest from our parish. The Mass was held in the soccer field, there were many people, and many people had no place to even stand, plus the children...countless numbers. But we were lucky; we got space around the sanctuary which was a little high so we could see everybody in the field. When the time came to stand up I saw a big group of women wearing white with their head covered - a habit and veil - that was a group of nuns of which



I had no idea. Right away I thought, "Wow....maybe if I live like them I will be able to help people who are in need (like the little boy)". This thought was so strong....and I was happier than ever before.



As I continued my education in junior high, then high school, the dream of helping others was still ringing in my heart. In my sophomore year in high school (teacher training high school), I approached my parents to share my dream and my desire to enter a convent, although I did not have a particular congregation in mind yet. Dad was ok, but mom totally disagreed. I finished high school with an elementary teaching degree and I was asked right away to teach in a local public school which is my alma mater. I taught third graders for one year. During this time of teaching, I got a letter from my friend Yasinta, a friend from elementary school. Yasinta was an aspirant in the Holy Spirit Convent. She asked me to visit her in the convent. At our first quarter break I visited her, but something which surprised me was meeting a nun. It was the first time I met a Holy Spirit Missionary Sister. Sr. Andrea, the one whom I met, was the principal of the Junior High Girls School. She was so nice, and she gave me a brochure. There I found something very special, something about which I was dreaming...to help people who are in need. I said to myself, "Yes! This one! Thank you Lord, you have answered my prayers." The second week of July 1992, which was about the time to start the next school year, I decided to leave home and enter the convent. I was accepted as an aspirant along with 6 other young women. After a year and half, I was accepted as postulant, and I had to go to another city quite far from home. I experienced homesickness all the time. As postulants we were 25 young women. After a year in the postulancy, I was not accepted to enter novitiate because I was diagnosed with Hepatitis B. I extended my postulant year. It was hard. The doctors, nurses, and the medicine were helpful. My illness was gone at my last check up before entering the novitiate on the first of July 1995.

After professing my first vows on July 2, 1997, I was sent to another city called Lewa-East Sumba-Sumba Island (Indonesia). There I taught social studies to the seventh graders, music to grades eight and nine, and art for grade seven. I also coordinated the boys and girls dormitories, and did some pastoral ministries. This was a very poor place. The people were so simple. There were many thieves. It was an unsafe place and community life was difficult. There was no support, no understanding. I felt so alone and

depressed. One day I fainted in the classroom. Two teachers carried me to the dorm. None of the sisters came to see me. This added to my feelings of aloneness, of being uncared for, and abandoned. During this chaotic time, I spent my time praying... I prayed with tears all the time...

I embraced this difficult situation. I valued it as my special lesson. From this experience I learned the meaning of following Jesus radically. This chaotic situation taught me not to give up, speak the truth, face to face and when time is come, to be patient, and to understand more. I am so happy that I am still hanging in there with the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters.

*Sr. Yuliana Meno, SSps*



*In spring, we see how the plants,  
beautifully formed,  
sprout from the dark, dirty soil  
and soon stand before us  
in all their colorful beauty  
and with sparkling,  
affectionate eyes  
gaze at us  
like messengers from God.*

*Where do they come from?*

*The finger of God the Holy Spirit  
is at work here!*

*St. Arnold Janssen*

## *My Mission Experience in Antigua*

I was happy to be sent to Antigua for my mission experience. The Sisters received me warmly and were ready to show me how they carry out their mission and how I could help them during the four months of my stay. Initially, I had a hard time finding my daily rhythm of activity and prayer, since their schedule was so different from the one in the novitiate. But soon I could engage with people in various works which I enjoyed very much. Here are some of the things I was involved in: I volunteered with the St. Vincent de Paul Society and visited at a home for mentally challenged youngsters. As a group we went from one building to the next, singing and praying together. I felt great compassion for the young people locked in. They suffer at a young age.

Also at this same place, a man read on my T-shirt. "God's got your back." He asked me, "Where is God?" I said, "God is everywhere, in heaven, on earth, around us, and within us". He asked if I believed in God. I said "yes". He asked me, "Why?" I said, "because God sent Jesus to show us the way, and Jesus is our Savior". He asked, "He saved you from what?" I said, "from my sins". He paused and said, "They killed him!" I said, "Yes, and he came back to life. He went back to God, and he will come back". He asked me, "Who said he will come back?" I said, "Jesus said he will come back again". He said, "When he comes back where will he take you?" I said, "to God". His questions impacted me. I thought to myself, wow this man is struggling with himself, yet he knows God! For me that was a testimony of sharing faith with this person who wanted to know more about God.

I also volunteered at the St. Vincent de Paul Society Day Care Center for the elderly. I served breakfast, collected the dishes, washed dishes, made beds. I prayed with them, sang to God, did Scripture reading and faith-sharing in a way that everyone could participate. I was invited by Sr. Annlta Walsh, to join her and others from the Holy Family Cathedral for the RCIA (Right of Christian Initiation of Adults) program and preparation for Baptism classes as well as prison ministry. Besides the simple tasks of helping to set up chairs and tables, I led the prayer sometimes and read the Scripture for the group. I grew from observing to feeling comfortable as a participant in the group and on the team. Together with Sr. Margaret Anne Norris, I went to the ALPHPA group (a course which explores the basic Christian faith). I participated in the small discussion group. I helped Sr. Margaret Anne prepare food to take to the

group. I was surprised to see how delightfully different denominations come together to share their faith as Jesus Christ's disciples. I felt happy for sharing my faith and having new friends.

Finally, I had the chance to train for street pastors. I was impressed to see persons from different denominations committed to serving our brothers and sisters in the street without focusing on their differences. There was no selfishness, only the love of God and of neighbor which unites us in Christ.

At night, we went to the dark places of the city, where we found the marginalized people. There was a very bad odor. I felt very uncomfortable with the bad smell and tempted to move away from these poor and sensitive people. I caught myself in that attitude, then I took a deep breath. I moved closer and joined the conversation carefully. They were very happy to see us, listening to their stories and problems. They said to us: "God bless you!"

I also saw a man who held himself together at first like someone blind and cold, but he recognized our presence. He looked tired and disturbed. We prayed for him in silence. After we gave him some sandwiches and cookies, he opened his eyes and looked at us and smiled. Amazingly he started to kneel down and began to pray. Our presence helped him remember that he needs to pray to God.

Seeing many poor people made me feel like I was in another world. I felt that the world needs more evangelization than ever before. We need not only to pray, but to plant the seeds of love and peace in the hearts of our brothers and sisters who are vulnerable and rejected by the society. Just being with them, talking, listening to their problems, and praying gave them a great feeling of being loved. That's the way they experienced our care for them.

Being in mission is a blessing! Working with marginalized is truly going deep down to the root of God's love. The poor need our presence the most.

I am grateful to God, to all the Sisters and to people of Antigua who made my mission experience so fruitful and memorable.

*Sr. Rebecca Chaan David, SSPS*



*SSpS Pastoral Administrator  
of St. Julia Church  
Siler City, NC*

St. Julia Church, in the 1990's, was a bi-lingual community of some 800 families in Siler City, North Carolina. As a mission church, the extent of a priest's presence was mostly for the Sunday's Eucharist. With my presence as an SSpS full-time pastoral administrator, the status of St. Julia Church changed from being a mission to that of a parish. For this, the "new-born" parishioners were grateful!

The parishioners' gratefulness and joy increased on my visiting them when hospitalized. Up until then, they had not experienced the Church's presence in this manner and to such an extent!

One of my goals as an SSpS Pastoral Administrator was to bring the English and Spanish-speaking parishioners together, as one parish. For big Church feast days and on special occasions, I enabled the celebration of the Eucharist to be bilingual. For this, the only large space was outdoors. This provided a relaxed atmosphere, close to nature and to God the creator of nature and cultures. The English and Spanish music and the Eucharistic prayers in two languages created an opportunity for fuller participation of both cultures at one time!

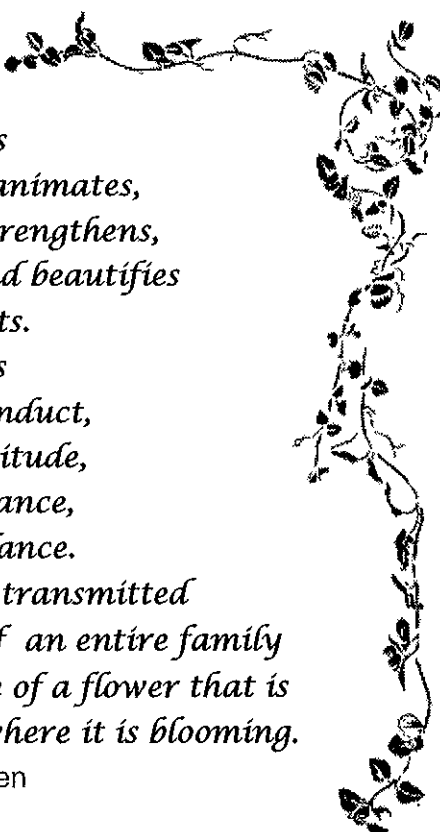

With the Eucharist as the basis for unity, bingo was also a time for creating one community. On one bingo occasion, in the lower level of the church, a call of a number set forth a loud "*BINGO!*" response from a Spanish-speaking person. An English-speaking parishioner, unconsciously and hardly audible, mumbled that he had wished that prize! To his astonishment, the prize was gently and beautifully brought to him! Tears were in the eyes of those who witnessed the *transaction!*

On another occasion, a story with a more serious tone: around six o'clock in the evening, when I was ready to close the church, there came a married couple, with marriage challenges leading toward divorce. The discussion went late into the night. To this day they are happily together and their children are now parents.

Finally a story, but not the only significant story within my story as an SSps Pastoral Administrator, involved a lady and her children of a non-Roman-Catholic rite. They wanted to join the St. Julia Catholic Community. All was OK'd by the Bishop, who advised me to let them join the sacraments without having to change rites. Because her husband was a non-Christian and a Catholic unbeliever, who would have destroyed the children's sacramental certificates, I placed these in St. Julia's safe. For this, the lady was ever grateful, but also for the time when I held a communion service and buried her brother who had laid unidentified at a funeral home for months.

Thus some stories within my story as an SSps in North Carolina.

*Sr. Anita Marie Gutierrez, SSps*



*Amiability is  
the sweet word that animates,  
uplifts, consoles and strengthens,  
just as dew refreshes and beautifies  
withered plants.*

*Amiability is  
graciousness of conduct,  
naturalness of attitude,  
peace of countenance,  
benevolence of glance.*

*It is communicated and transmitted  
from one heart to the hearts of an entire family  
or community like a fragrance of a flower that is  
diffused all around the place where it is blooming.*

St. Arnold Janssen

## *My Favorite Mission*

after they know how many years I have been a  
u enjoy the most?" Without hesitation, I would say  
g in Greenville, Mississippi!

reason, I could walk to work. When I would walk  
s to the Delta Greenville Health Department, the  
eting to me from their homes and would wish me a  
ay it was so good to have the Sisters back.

most needed and was loved by all the people who  
nent trusting that I knew how to care for their chil-  
lack as well as the white children. I turned down a  
e the doctor wanted me to care for only the black  
ny studies in pediatrics was for all children.

ille, along with her family, adopted me into their  
their daughters. Ann Littleton's dear mother would  
me as I was interested in everything and in every-

Health Department and to travel on given days to  
nts where I had to work: Belzoni, Greenwood and  
t the young doctor who was mentoring me felt I  
that he was now free to go to St. Jude's Hospital in  
t up and he did. Whenever I took the bus back to  
Memphis, I would call him at the hospital and he  
ors in Greenville were happy to have me there.

ers had shown in Greenville and now I was enjoy-

es at the Health Department to have the law en-  
ould be prosecuted; at this time in Mississippi the  
e I became so vocal, I had to be silenced and this  
y bedroom on the day I was to drive to Jackson,  
n in pediatrics. I was not afraid to travel alone and I  
thing would happen.

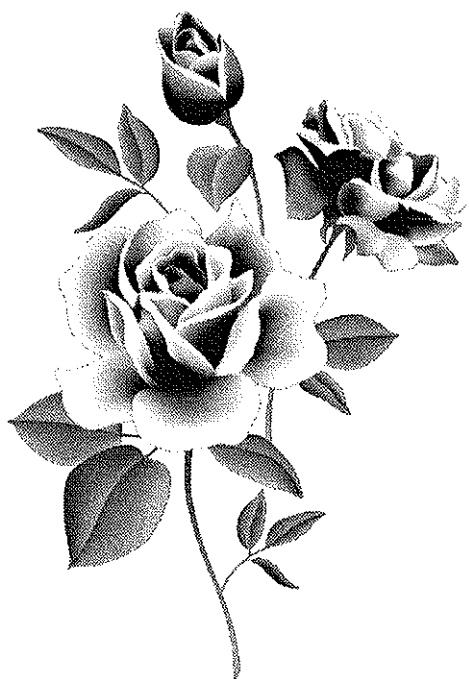
parish priest, gave me the blessing and to this story to you as he was proud of me. I knew I appointed when I was told later they had to fail that I did.

nd is truly a dear person in my life. She has

tudents as she drove me back to Memphis from e. When we stopped at the school where her the student introduced her to her kindergarten and the two women embraced as if it was the the little children as we looked at this wonderful embrace I felt in Greenville!

*e Martin Glenn, SSps*

*Life  
Living free  
Living,  
Accomplishing  
Gift,  
Holy Spirit  
With Jesus.  
Blessen*





## *Protection of God in Ministry in Ghana*

These three short incidents are a part of my experiences in Ghana that have strengthened my faith in knowing personally that God supports and protects me. I'm so happy to have been able to minister in Ghana and work there as a teacher and then working with the catechists and teachers in the Religious Education Office for the Accra Diocese.

Yearly, I had courses for catechists in the various districts of the diocese. One time I had a catechists' course in Kwaho Tafo which is a mountain area at a Presbyterian School. The roads are very steep and curvy. Since the catechists were coming in from all over the district, I was trying to pick them up in Nkawkaw where they could get transport and bring them to the school for the course. I was ready to go down for another trip to get the catechists, when the gears of my car just would not move. We used shift cars – so I could not use my car. I did not know what to do and was upset – but through the generosity of the school, they gave me a bigger bus and driver to go down and pick up the catechists. I found out later that if the gears would have locked on my way down the mountain – I probably would not have been able to control or stop the car with the steep decline and the curves..... I truly felt the protection of God, but also the help from other people in that situation.

I have also experienced several coups in Ghana. Often, after these coups, there were road blocks. I was going for a catechists' meeting up country, and there was a road block. One policeman waved me to go on....., but a second policeman, further down the road, did not see that and shouted at me and waved his gun and told me to stop. He put the rifle in the window and was very angry. Another policeman was there just smiling..... and I really did not know what he would do. I told him I was stopping but the other policeman had waved me on.... but he would not accept it. Finally the other policeman, who waved me on, came up and said to let me go. Again, I really felt the protection of God through the policeman who helped, although I was a bit shaken.

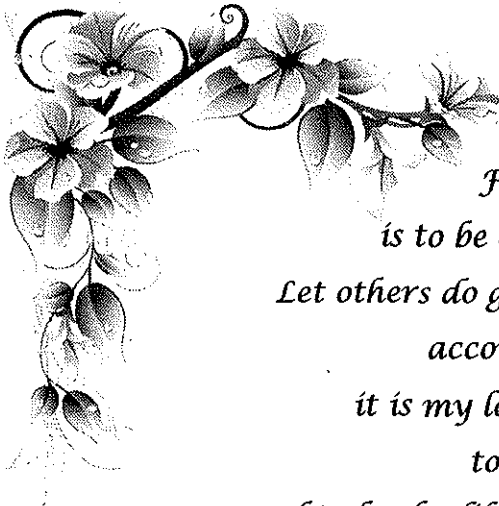
During some years in Ghana, there was little rain and therefore electricity was rationed, as well as gas or petrol. I needed to have enough gas for myself, but I also gave gas to the priests who were coming to give the catechists' course. One time I remember I left for a catechists' course on empty and went about 20 miles ..... but I got there and just had to wait for gas to come to town.

I ran out of gas only once, and that was right in front of a gas station – that had both gas and electricity.... Even though there were lines.... I got some gas. The people were also very good to me in those situations. Yes, God is good.

In Ghana after the coup, there was a curfew. I was having a catechists' course and one of the catechists had an asthma attack in the middle of the night during the curfew. They came to wake me up for they wanted me to take him to the hospital in town. During a curfew at night, if the police saw you on the road, they shot the tires at the best. The catechist was getting worse – so I took him to the hospital..... He got the treatment he needed and we got back and forth safely.

I have so many stories of God's care and protection from my fifteen years in Ghana. As I look back over God's care, it came through the hands of the people. So many times, when I did not have gas or something else, I experienced that I always received what was needed..... The people were very good to me. Yes, I received so much in Ghana..... God is Good! I am very grateful for my time there.

*Sr. Rose Therese Nolta, SSps*



*From now on my life  
is to be one of love and gratitude.  
Let others do great things for the common good  
according to their vocation;  
it is my lot to burn with love for God,  
to persevere in prayer  
and to lead a life that is poor and held in contempt.*

Bl. Maria Helena Stollenwerk

## *The Gift of Music*

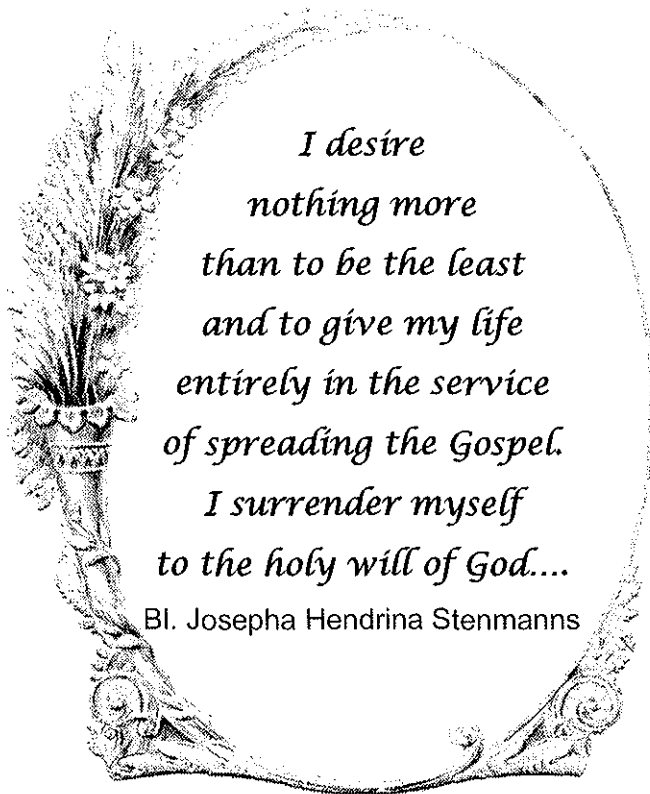
Holy Names of Jesus and Mary Parish was a small African-American Community located in a very poor neighborhood of Memphis, Tennessee. Parishioners were often related or were friends who supported one another in their faith and life. My role as the Pastoral Administrator was to coordinate the activities of the parish. Most of the time everything went smoothly because people knew what needed to be done and took the initiative. We even had a small choir and an organist who played each Sunday.

During the week I did not see most of the parishioners because our only Mass celebration was on Sunday and they were not in need of using our soup kitchen or food pantry most of the time. One Friday afternoon, I received a voicemail that our organist had a conflict with someone else in the parish community and was not going to come again to our parish to play. It was troublesome to me because I knew that music plays a very important role during church services, especially in the African-American community. I also knew that the choir would not sing, or lead the members in singing, when the organist was not there. I did not know anyone else who could help us. While sitting in the office and thinking how it would be on Sunday, I received a phone call from a young lady who offered to play a keyboard on Sundays if we ever needed her. This was like a miracle to me and a response to my earlier prayers. It seemed like something unbelievable so I was cautious to express my joy until I saw that young lady on Sunday morning before the Mass. On that Sunday, I came to the church earlier to open the doors and check if everything was in order. Suddenly, about half an hour before our Mass, I saw a young lady whom I did not know with some of her friends bringing some musical instruments into the church. I was surprised and very grateful; even more so after the celebration for such inspiring music. There were four young men and women who sang and played on keyboard, guitar and drums each Sunday after that without any remuneration for their efforts.

Only later I learned that one of the Missionaries of Charity had mentioned to that young lady that she could help sometimes in our church if she would like to volunteer and at the same time use her talents. For me those young people were truly an inspiration. Some years later, when I attended the National Catholic Youth Conference, I met that young lady who was one of the

main performers at that event. She even came to our display table to talk about our community. I am grateful to know her and her music, and I am confident that she continues to inspire young people through her ministry in the Church.

*Sr. Elwira Dziuk, SSPS*



## *Index of Stories*

The Phone Call from Jesus - Sr. Josephina Kudo	1
A Missionary Walk - Sr. Engratia Gales	3
An Immigrant Who Touched My Heart - Sr. Sara Guardado	4
Kwame - Sr. Carol Welp	5
Unmet Expectations? - Sr. Agathe Bramkamp	7
My Vocation - Sr. Mary Helen Sullivan	9
Missionaries Need to Take Risks - Sr. Betty Tranel	10
The Same Spirit but on Different Soil... - Sr. Theresa Tawiah	11
God's Presence in My Missionary Life - Sr. Priscilla Burke	15
Memories - Sr. Dolores Marie Kuhl	16
My Vocation and Other Memories - Sr. Sienna Ressel	20
A Mission Story from Oaxaca - Sr. Margaret Anne Norris	22
Mission in Ethiopia - Sr. Dorota Maria Piechaczek	23
Hilde - Sr. Rosa da Costa Menezes	25
Charism? What's That? - Sr. Mary Miller	26
St. John the Evangelist Girard, PA - Sr. Marie Sheehy	27
Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace - Sr. Margaret Hansen	28
My Mission - Sr. Maria Agnes Petersmann	29
Christmas - Sr. Barbara Miensopust	30
My Story - Sr. Salud Orsonio	31
I Will, But Not Now - Sr. Kristina Jawa Lajar	32
A Vocation Story - Sr. Helen Marie Yockel	33
Reflections on Life - Sr. Veronica Marie Mikkelsen	35
James Jr.'s Dream - Sr. Uloma Akpa	36
Convent Beginnings - Sr. Margaret Simon	37

## *Index of Stories, continued*

Helped by the Holy Spirit - Sr. Patrice Coutu	38
Do You Have a Special...Guardian Angel? - Sr. Mary Pardy	39
Someone Might Be Listening - Sr. Francetta Kunkel	40
A Weekend in Bethany - Sr. Mathilde Steffens	41
Intercultural Living - Anonymous	42
Special Person in My Life - Sr. Gladys Smith	43
Faith and Trust - Sr. Martha Fass	44
Insight of the Very Young - Sr. Vincent Wolff	45
How Hard It Was - Sr. Monica Z	46
Neighbors In Need - Sr. Dominic Bartsch	49
God's Call to a New Ministry - Sr. Marie Louise Jilk	50
The Operating Theatre - Sr. Mary Joseph Hofschutte	52
Almost Dismissed... - Sr. Maria Fischer	53
My Story: 1946-2013 - Sr. Mary Agnes Fahrland	55
God's Providential Care... - Sr. Maria Elisabeth Klodt	57
Evergreen Tree of Techny: Little Mexico's Main Ministry - Sr. Therese Mary Martinez	60
My Vocation Story - Sr. Yuliana Meno	62
My Mission Experience in Antigua - Sr. Rebecca Chaan David	65
SSpS Pastoral Administrator of St. Julia Church, Siler City NC - Sr. Anita Marie Gutierrez	67
My Favorite Mission - Sr. Rose Martin Glenn	69
Protection of God in Ministry in Ghana - Sr. Rose Therese Nolta	71
The Gift of Music - Sr. Elwira Dziuk	73

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