Editor’s Notes

As we enter the New Year of 2002, words from the song, *Rise up in Splendor* by the Dameans are apt:

Rise up in splendor  
Our Light has come  
The glory of God  
Shines upon us

See how the darkness covers the earth  
And clouds of gloom drape the people  
Yet on us the Lord shines  
Appearing to us in glory

As a light for the earth  
A beacon of hope  
The life of God will shine through us  
To lead the world to peace

All people shall come to our God with joy  
Drawn by the light of the Lord  
And gathered in the brilliant glow of love  
Offer their gifts of peace.

Yes, clouds of gloom continue to drape the people of the USA as well as many throughout the world after the event of September 11th. But we lift our hearts in hope during the Holy Season.

Fr. Michael Amaladoss, S.J. In his article, “Religions for Peace”, *America* December 10, 2001, gives an excellent reflection on what is demanded of us at this time. Here follows a summary:

Every crisis, as the saving goes, is an opportunity. The crisis we are living these days and months is a challenge to think of a new world order based on principles of freedom, justice and community inspired by the different religions in dialogue. The flushing out and in bringing to justice of a network of terrorists is not going to bring peace. It is not even the first step. It is simply the removal of an irritant. If the situation is not changed radically, new terrorists will replace old. The real task is to start building up a society of justice and equality.

In short, we need a conversion. A time like this brings out the best and the worst in us—our courage and generosity, but also all our prejudices, our individual and collective egoism, our narrow nationalism, our double standards, our sense of hurt pride. We need a new vision of human and world community. We have to find new ways of empowering people to shape it. This is the only way to true peace in the world.

To this reflection we say a resounding Amen!

We wish all of our readers here and abroad blessings for the New Year 2002.

Shalaam, Shalom, Shanthi!

Rosemarie Higgins, fmm

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Changes of Address

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The next issue of Sharings will feature more about the Novitiate move as well as the new dwelling of O.L. of Millbrook community and of Incarnation Community.

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New Province Directory

The new province directory is being printed. We have not included individual sisters’ E-mail addressees. Instead, we ask each one of you who has an E-mail address to send us a message so that we will know the latest and the correct address. Then, we will publish a list to send to each community. Thank you.
Please remember in your prayers:

Our sick relatives and friends:

Alma Dufault who is recuperating from surgery. She is doing well.

Alice Dorothy Smilanich, who is hospitalized following a fall;

Frances Monks who is not well.

The mother of Phi Uong, who is seriously ill;

The father of Sheila Lehmkuhle, who is recovering from a heart attack;

Mrs. Anne Foley who is very ill, sister of Margarida Tavares.

Roger Higgins, seriously ill, brother of Rosemarie.

Community News

Georgia

Interesting work

I never thought I would be good working as an Activities Person, especially in an Assisted Living facility with a specialty in caring for Alzheimer’s residents. I’m not convinced that I am particularly good at it, but I do know that I have learned much – some of which is successful and some does not seem to attract or interest the residents. Some days some activities entice and other days the same activities are rejected. (I guess we all react the same to various interests of our own. For instance, some days I like to paint with watercolors, or read, or cook and other days, I don’t find that particular activity of interest).

One of the first and necessary things I have learned is that persons suffering from Alzheimer’s are the same as we are!!! They have moods; if they had a good sense of humor before the disease struck, they continue to have a good sense of humor after. If they tended to be serious before, they continue to be serious after, but in a different way. And, of course, medication affects each of them, dulling, generally, reactions and many times causing them to sleep much.

Much depends upon what stage the particular resident is in as well as how quickly or slowly, the resident moves into a more advanced stage. Experts name three stages of the disease. Of the eight residents with whom I work, half are in Stage 2 and the other half are now in Stage 3. When I began working at this facility over a year ago, only one resident was in Stage 3 and two were in Stage 1 the rest in Stage 2. (This delegation of levels of functioning is my own-and the experts may differ with me as they view the residents medically).

The one activity that seems to work with ALMOST all of the residents, almost all of the time, is tossing or bouncing a ball to the leader and then on to the others. Two of the residents, in Stage 3 cannot participate in this. One says she wants to play but then does not try to catch the ball or attempt to enter in. The other catches the ball but then will not return it and it is difficult to take the ball away from her as she clings to it. (One of the Aides who is assigned to this group says she thinks the woman feels we should not be tossing a ball in the “living room”!!! (She is remembered as a wonderful mother and housekeeper.)

Tossing the ball, as in any activity, holds attention for approximately 15 minutes. This is generally true for most activities.

I learned early on that the residents could not do picture puzzles that were more than 8-10 pieces. I learned to make my own by cutting pictures out of magazines and mounting them on cardboard, then cutting them into 8 or 10 pieces. This activity goes well and the same puzzles can be used frequently, even with the same resident, as he or she does not remember doing the puzzle before.

We also have looked at pictures, taken from old calendars, and trying to draw them-at least getting similar colors on a sheet of drawing paper.

More recently, I have found the residents enjoy listening to a story that I will read to them about an anticipated holiday, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Halloween, Easter, etc. We then discuss memories of these feasts from our past. This has proved helpful and there is a general response.
Unfortunately, one of the residents, (the one who clings to the ball when we play “toss”), mumbles incoherently, constantly and I have had to remove her from the room when I am reading and discussing a story. It is interesting that most of the residents are intolerant of this woman’s ramblings and confront her with strong words at times.

Another interesting phenomenon is that the “healthier” residents are almost always hungry and talking about food. The food in the facility is more than adequate, but as is typical in most institutional settings, food is always a topic of interest. I have attempted to bring in some home cooked sweets from time to time and this has been appreciated. We do pop popcorn in the unit’s microwave from time to time and this seems to bring them pleasure.

Several of the residents come from farming families and love gardening. I occasionally take them, one-by-one, for a walk outside to see a flower or plant that is in bloom. One of the residents loves to work in the garden, mostly pulling weeds, and she finds great joy in doing this. She and I work outside several times a month. After working, especially when it is so hot, as it tends to get in the south, we sit in one of the rocking chairs, and sip ice water and she also gets a banana. She is a diabetic and what I can get for her is limited.

This particular resident, (whose deterioration is very evident) demands much attention and that attention must be undivided! One day while sitting outside after working in the garden, she asked two questions which continue to haunt me. The first was:

Where can I go to be an individual?

And the second was similar:

Where can I go to be myself?

I have found working with these residents a challenging, but very satisfying ministry. Although I work only two days a week for 4 hours each day, I prepare to meet them at each encounter with joy but also with sadness as each week I notice some deterioration in each one of them. I pray that some cure or medication can be found that will slow the deterioration if not cure the causes. While old age brings many changes to our bodies and minds, one hopes and prays that each person will be able to find some joy in the life and breath that the Lord continues to allow them. I pray that my time with them brings some joy and color to an otherwise darkened enclosed world.

Mary Petrosky, fmm

A Christmas Message

On September 11, 2001, our entire lives were touched For our Brothers and sisters were injured or killed, These folks we love so much.

The act was so horrible, so evil, and so cruel It showed us so clearly what hatred can do.

But then came the Firefighters, Police, EMS workers And other volunteers too, And they showed us so clearly what Love can do.

We now call them our heroes — their aim was to save Their unselfish love was truly heaven-made.

For you see way back in time when evil first occurred Its ugliness and darkness we all have endured.

Then an all-caring, unselfish, God of Love for all Sent His SON to die on a Cross to save us from the fall.

So on December 25 in the year 1 A.D. Our own “HERO” JESUS came to set us free.

Like the Firefighters, Police, EMS workers and volunteers too,, With a heart full of Love He risked His life to save both me and you.

September 11th showed us the reason. Jesus came. His love yearned to save us and make us whole again.

May all September 11th innocent victims, Now join with Our God above And experience all the warmth, the joy and all the bliss Of His all-embracing LOVE.

And may their families, relatives, co-workers and friends Be filled with Christmas Peace Knowing that their loved ones are in the Arms of God Where their joys will never cease.

Sr. Marie Cinotti, fmm
North Smithfield

An extract of an article on Pearl Harbor taken from “The Call” Woonsocket, RI Friday, Dec. 7, 2001

Sister Ella Berg, FMM with Elaine Nazareth on the day she was interviewed

News of Pearl Harbor reached Sister Berg when she was living in a convent in Manila, Philippines. It was the year her world turned upside down. Shortly thereafter, the Japanese took over Manila, placing Berg under house arrest.

After that, she was placed in an internment camp, where she was held until American Soldiers freed them in 1945.

That December day, with news of the attack at Pearl Harbor the people on the island knew their lives would change. “We were in church,” said Berg, now 98. “The father announced it at the First Communion of the little children. He said the U.S. was at war.

“I was just numbed to think they would do something like that,” she said. “I felt dead.”

“The New York disaster is just as bad,” she said. “They’re just trying to ruin our country and break down the morale of all our country, but they can’t do that.

“We’re praying for strength and so we can resist all those feelings of revenge,” she said.

Letter from Father Barry Connerton

Ed. Note: Fr. Connerton, pastor of St. Augustine’s Church, Providence, has involved his parish in assisting our Sisters in Vietnam. The parish has been very generous.

Father Connerton spent his days off in New York with Father Edward Byington, from the Fall River Diocese. They visited “Ground Zero” at the time and saw hundreds of workers still hard at work.

While in New York they visited a lawyer friend, Martin Dockery. Father Connerton in Saint Augustine’s bulletin wrote about his meeting.

“Mr. Dockery fought for several years in Vietnam during the war. He is retiring from his law practice this month. He expressed a strong desire to return to Vietnam to do some sort of volunteer work for a year.

I told him about the blind orphanage in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) and how you good people sent so many Braille machines and Braille watches, etc. to the children. I suggested that he consider volunteering at the orphanage. Amazingly, he speaks Vietnamese and would be excellent to teach English to the children.

I immediately faxed the Provincial Superior, Sister Elizabeth, of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Vietnam. Sister Elizabeth responded immediately with a fax asking if he would be willing to teach English to the Franciscan Missionary sisters, too! Once Martin has his visa, etc., he’ll be off to Vietnam for a year. His wife and two grown children fully support his endeavor. Pray for him. Isn’t that wonderful? God has His ways of providing for the poor.

Isn’t that wonderful? God has His ways of providing for the poor.
Enlarged Provincial Council

The EPC met recently at Peace Barn.

Front- L-R: Lucy Kristofik, coordinator of Emmanuel Cmte, Georgia; Marie Cinotti, coordinator of Holy Name Cmte., New York and Provincial Councilor; Yvette Hubert, coordinator O.L. Lourdes Cmte., N. Providence; Barbara Dopierala, Provincial Councilor; Beatrice Costagliola, Coordinator O.L. Millbrook Cmte., New York; Anne Kelly, coordinator O.L. Wisdom Cmte., St. Louis; Standing-L-R: Cristina Sanchez, coordinator St. Francis Cmte, Long Island; Emilie Duchaney, coordinator St. Bartholomew Cmte, Waukegan; Helen Holowinski, coordinator O.L. of Peace Cmte, Fruit Hill; Pauline Gilmore, coordinator and Novice Directress Mary of Nazareth Novitiate; Anne Richards, coordinator Trinity Cmte Fruit Hill; Margaret Gargan, coordinator Holy Family Cmte, Fruit Hill; Rosalie McNaughton, coordinator DeChappotin Cmte, Fruit Hill; Noreen Murray, Provincial Councilor; Berenice Moreau, coordinator St. John Baptist Cmte Pawtucket; Beatrice Ferrari, coordinator Myriam Cmte, Bronx; Claire Napoleon, Provincial Councilor; Emilia Palma, coordinator O.L. Guadalupe, N. Mexico; Pauline Williams, coordinator Visitation Cmte, Cambridge; Mary Motte, Provincial; Agnes Begley, coordinator, Ein Karim Cmte, N. Smithfield.

N Providence

Dear Sisters,

Well, here I am again, to bring you the third and final part of my sharing on St. Mary’s Home for Children. It will include a little about the campus, the referral guidelines, the Programs.

Lois Houlihan, fmm

St. Mary’s Home for Children
Part III

The Campus:
The campus is located at 420 Fruit Hill Ave., across from the FMM Convent buildings. The central building, which is of red brick, is the Administration Center. It contains offices, library, rooms for counseling, therapy and psychiatric treatment, the kitchen and dining rooms. In previous years, the children were housed on the second floor above the offices-not a very homey atmosphere for them. The white house near the street contains more administrative offices. Further to the right is a gray building which is the school. Next to that is a red brick building built in 1999, where some of the children now have their home, (private rooms, lounge area, small kitchen-snack place, etc.) There are several other houses on the property which house more children. In the back of the central Administration Center is a large playground, built in 2001. This contains a jogging track around the grassy center, and this center has equipment for play-climbing, sliding, etc. More of the playground extends over in back of the school, where there is a mini golf-course and shelter.

Notes:
Each child who comes to St. Mary’s has an individual program-plan designed for them.

The school is organized into ungraded classrooms with each child placed in the room that best meets their needs. Students to teacher ratio is very small so that attention can be given to each child’s needs according to the individual program.

There are some day students coming on school buses to St. Mary’s sent by DCYF, who need individual plans also.

At a certain point in a child’s progress, they may be sent out on the school bus to public schools to see how they manage, after their training at St. Mary’s.
Referrals:
For Residential: Females-ages 6-18, Males-ages 6-14

INAPPROPRIATE REFERRALS:
Active chemical addiction
Active psychosis (uncontrolled by medication)
Active suicidality
Adjudicated Sex-Offenders
Conditions requiring 24 hour medical supervision or nursing care.
Mental Retardation
Pregnancy
Violent aggressive behaviors

APPROPRIATE REFERRALS:
Angry acting out, defiant, oppositional behavior
Attention Deficit Disorder
Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder
Behaviorally Disordered
Conduct Disorders
Depression, suicidal ideation.
Dysfunctional Behavioral patterns
History of drug and alcohol use
Learning Disabled
Opposional Defiant Disorder
Physically or Sexually Abused
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
Sexual issues
Socially and emotionally distressed
Trauma
Truancy, school avoidance, phobia

Programs:
* IEP (Individualized Education Program, already explained.)
* St. Martha’s—a group home on campus, where eight girls can live to learn the components of independent living. The girls have reached 18, or are near completing high school. Under staff direction, they are taught independently living skills: planning, shopping, cooking their own meals, community living, how to write a job resume and go for an interview.

The following programs of St. Mary’s home are based in Cranston:
* Shepherd Program—serves boys and girls aged 2-18, where sexual abuse is suspected or confirmed. Seven therapists serve over 100 clients in any given week, to reduce the incidents of child sexual abuse in families and the community, and to alleviate trauma suffered by the children. They also work with abuse reactive children, juvenile sex offenders, and non-offending family members: parents, caregiver and siblings. Seminars and workshops are designed for groups of laypeople, civic, school and church organizations. The Shepherd Program is the largest, most comprehensive sexual abuse treatment program in Rhode Island.
  * St. Mary’s Parent Aide Program-intensive service providing home based parenting assistance to families who are at-risk of separation due to neglect and abuse of their children. Also helps families in the process of reunification. Assists an overwhelmed parent with household management skills, nutrition, budgeting, and access to community resources.
  * Sophia Little’s Independent Living Program—one of the many service of St. Mary’s. It maintains its own corporation and Board of Directors. Founded by Sophia Robbins Little in 1872, it later became a subsidiary of St. Mary’s Home for Children. It focuses on female adolescents, who must be at least 16 years old, pursuing full-time education or employed. The program assists young women in need who have been separated from their homes. Services provided include: housing acquisition, procuring household goods, money management, skills training, vocational assessment, parenting skills, training, clothing exchange, advocacy for medical care and transition into community. For young mothers, it provides living skills training to teach them how to provide safe environment for their babies. The young women are referred by DCYF, Women and Infants Hospital, Providence Center, Dorcas Place, Catholic Social Services, Children’s Friend and Service, Eastman House, Talbot House. Masters level clinicians provide expert consultation and training to other professional and community agencies on issues of evaluation, treatment of sexual abuse and therapeutic parenting.
  * The newest Program, begun within the past three years, is the Foster Care Program. This is for children who no longer need the structure and clinical intensity of the Campus I.E.P. They have learned new coping skills, and how to “talk out” rather than “act out”. St. Mary's continues to provide services in the foster home to help the children continue to achieve their individual treatment goals. Foster parents are licensed by DCYF and are highly trained and supported.