

UNITED IN MISSION

Atlantic-Midwest Province • Transforming the world through education

December 2016

Dear Colleagues,

On April 11, 2015, our Holy Father Pope Francis declared an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy which began on the feast of the Immaculate Conception,



A message from Judith Schaum, SSND

December 8, 2015 and ended on the Feast of Christ the King, November 20, 2016. During this Holy Year we were invited to open our hearts to those living on the fringes of

society. It was the desire of Pope Francis that all people reflect on the spiritual and corporal works of mercy and to live out of the spirit of mercy.

This newsletter features some School Sisters and SSND Associates whose ministry or volunteer work exemplifies one or more of the works of mercy. May these stories inspire and encourage each of us to enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel of mercy.

Living in the spirit of mercy never ends. May the words of Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger find a welcome space in your heart and prayer: "I have no other or greater resources than the mercy of God."

Sincerely,

Judith Schaum, SSND

Associate Director of Ministry Services



Reflect on the spiritual and corporal works of mercy

Visit the Sick

For the past four years, Sister **Eileen Donohoe**, SSND of Whiston, Mersyside, England has been a volunteer chaplain at Whiston Hospital. Each week she visits the mother and baby unit plus the women's medical and surgical wards. For her, hearing the women's stories is very humbling and gratifying, and she is amazed at the openness and candour of their sharing. Visiting those who are homebound is still another aspect of her ministry.

As a chaplain, Eileen also visits a local hospice several times a week. Her ministry there is not only to the patient but also to the family who needs a great deal of support. After the death of a patient, Eileen visits the family

and as far as she is able, attends the funeral services to continue supporting the families.

Eileen knows that the presence of a friendly face does wonders for those who are sick and suffering, but she also knows that this ministry is a source of blessing to her as well.

Care for the Dying

For eight years, Sister **Celine Marie Flynn**, SSND has ministered at a Bereavement/Grief Program at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton, CT. Celine makes contact with the family of one who has passed away by sending a letter of condolence and inviting them to the monthly bereavement

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meetings. She also makes herself available to the family for one-to-one meetings of support.

The monthly bereavement/grief program consists of prayer, understanding the different phases of grief, and trying to find God in their sorrow. During these sessions, Celine's focus is on listening to others' experiences of grief and loss.

Every November the families are invited to a special Mass during which they light a candle in memory of their loved ones. The Mass is followed by a brunch, which is another opportunity to share and comfort one another. In her ministry, God's healing peace and mercy are brought to those who are suffering loss.

Instruct Those Who Need Knowledge

Sister **Caritas Wehrman**, SSND teaches Conversational English at St. Therese Catholic Mission Church in Chicago. The students are Cantonese or Mandarin speakers who have had a little bit of English instruction. By finding out their areas of interest as well as their strengths and weaknesses, Caritas is able to facilitate their ability to communicate in English. Many of the students hope to further their education or wish to communicate better at work.

There have been occasions when Caritas has tutored individual sisters and priests who need help with English as they study at local universities. This is in addition to



her teaching sisters and priests at DePaul University what she calls basic survival skills.

This experience has been challenging for Caritas but also rewarding as she sees the progress students make. An added benefit for her is learning about the individual students, their countries of origin and their culture. She also may learn a few Chinese words in the process.

Feed the Hungry

In March 2001, St. Ann's Catholic Church in West Palm Beach, Florida initiated an outreach center for services to homeless women and men thanks to the efforts of School Sisters of Notre Dame **Carleen Cekal** and **Mary Oliver Hudon**. The Center has grown since 2011 and now includes breakfast and lunch, shower and laundry services, a food stamp program as well as other services to help ease the burden of those who are homeless.

Throughout the 14 years St. Ann's has been in existence, services have expanded to include securing birth certificates and IDs for clients, an address so they may receive mail and a Health Advocacy Program. A nurse

practitioner also cares for the health needs of the clients. More than 85 volunteers help to ensure the success of the many programs. At the present time, three SSND Associates serve at St. Ann's: **John Pescosolido, Marsha Burkhardt, and Fran**

Maher. Sisters Carleen and Oliver feel blessed to serve at the Center and it has caused them to reflect on their own habits of eating and buying and inspires them to live more simply.

Counsel the Doubtful

Sister **Claire Marie Czerwiec**, SSND is a Pastoral Counselor and Spiritual Director in Chicago Ridge, Illinois. One of her guiding principles is from John 10:10: "I came that they may have life and have it to the full."

In her ministry Claire Marie meets with people who are experiencing sadness, stresses, relational problems or personal anxiety. Through counseling sessions, she helps them reach peace within themselves and wholeness of being. It isn't true that she gives them answers to their problems, but rather helps them find ways to live with uncertainties and anxieties. Claire Marie truly believes that the definition of education as found in our SSND Constitution, *You Are Sent* is "enabling others to reach the fullness of their potential" is a perfect description of her ministry, whether in pastoral counseling or spiritual direction. And this brings her great joy.

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Clothe the Naked

Sister **Virginia Brien**, SSND is a retired sister at Villa Assumpta in Baltimore. Several years ago at one of the Solidarity prayer experiences, she felt an urging to reach out and serve others who are materially poor. After consulting with others, she began an association with Wilson House, a home for recovering alcoholics sponsored by John Hopkins Hospital. This house provides shelter for up to 14 women who attend daily meetings and instruction at Hopkins.

Virginia has set up a network of people who bring her new or gently used clothing. These people are sisters, associates and other SSND friends who generously contribute to this endeavor. Twice a month, Virginia packs bags and boxes of clothing to take to the women at Wilson House. Since the women may stay in this house for only six months, there is constant turnover



in the clientele. Virginia loves meeting the women, talking with them and seeing their delight in the clothing she brings. Obviously this ministry is a source of great joy and satisfaction for Virginia and her many helpers.

Pray for the Living and the Dead

As a retired Sister at Notre Dame Convent in Waterdown, Ontario, Sister **Pauline Girodat** doesn't seem to have enough hours in

the day for her many ministry activities. In addition to her prayer ministry, she practices many corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Daily she feeds one of the sisters in the health care area of the building, and she also takes a turn at being a Eucharistic Minister to the sisters in health care. Frequently she transports sisters from the health care floor to other events within the building. Pauline takes a turn leading the Communion service when there is no priest celebrant and she also serves as lector, acolyte, cantor and Eucharistic Minister at liturgies.

As part of her prayer ministry, Pauline leads the rosary, prays Vespers with a group of sisters, and participates in a weekly evening of contemplation. As you can see, Pauline combines her ministry of prayer with an active living out of the works of mercy. ■

“Let us be renewed by God’s mercy... and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish.”

— Pope Francis 3/31/13

Reflection Question:

- As you review this past Holy Year of Mercy, how has your ministry or volunteer work been influenced by this call of our Holy Father?
- How can you continue to be the face of mercy to all whom you meet?

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