



Servants of Mary

Volume 13 Issue 3

Discover!



Letter from the Prioress



Cover photo:

The Healing Garden after a snowstorm.

Dear Friends,

A couple of months ago I was visiting our sisters and associates in Jamaica. While there we attended Mass at the local parish. Like parishes all over the country, the topic of stewardship and time, talent and treasure was mentioned. Every week at the end of the Sunday Mass, the parishioners recited a stewardship prayer. I was impressed by the wording and asked for a copy of the prayer. It began like this:

"Lord God, we realize that this very moment is an opportunity, a channel of Your grace, an invitation to grow in your love."

It went on to speak of the many gifts God has given us and how God generously sent his only Son to show us how to live. It asked that through conscious, intentional stewardship we may, "live as You live, to love as You love and to share as You share."

The prayer ended with these words:

"We pray with surety that

You will show us what we are to do with the many gifts You have given. Let us use them to proclaim Your love, Your life, in our parish, in our community and in our world."

As we ended our 125th Anniversary year, I reflected upon the many gifts we as Servants of Mary have been given. We have been blessed by ministering with and to so many wonderful people around the country. You, our family and friends, have shown us how generous you are by sharing your time, talent and treasures with our Community. Through your many good works, prayerful and financial support, you have proclaimed God's love. It has been a privilege sharing our gifts with you as we ministered together in your area.

Thank you for making 2018 a year of celebration, fond memories, renewal of friendships and deepening of gratitude for all God has given to us. Know that you are remembered in our daily liturgies and prayers. As it states in Philippians (1:3-6) *"[We] thank our God for you, and*

when [we] pray for you, our prayers are always filled with joy because of your partnership [with us] in the Gospel."

May you continue to make every moment an opportunity, a channel of God's grace and an invitation to grow in God's love.

Sr. Mary

Sr. Mary Gehringer, OSM

US/Jamaica Servants of Mary Prioress

Servite Stitches-n-Stuff: Stitch up a little love...

By Lisa Sheridan, OSM

Servite Stitches-n-Stuff is an Omaha Servite Associate Project developed to provide outreach to others through different sewing projects and fundraising.

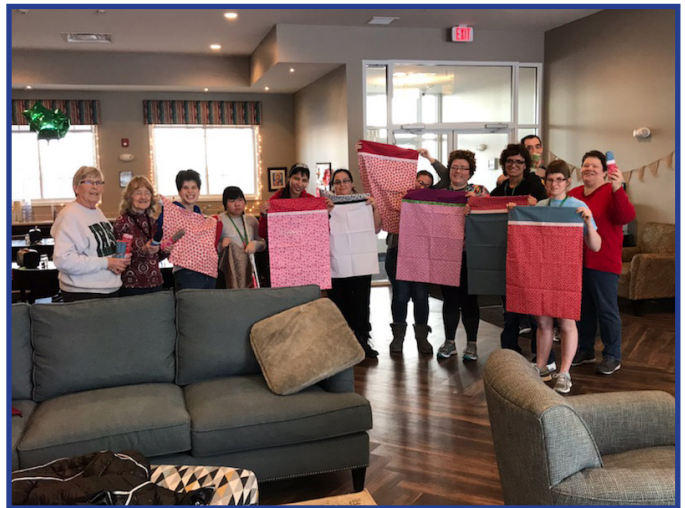
The group originally began 4 years ago following the idea of an old-fashioned Quilting Bee. It has expanded its purpose by creatively providing outreach to others. They

have provided fabric bags for foster children, lap quilts for residents at nursing homes, and receiving blankets for a local home for unwed mothers. In the last three years the group has spearheaded the Servite Craft Sale that is held in the Fall at the Motherhouse. They have been able to donate to our Servite Mission in the Congo with proceeds from sales.

The group has just finished its most current project in honor of Valentine's day. They have just completed personalized Valentine pillowcases for our newest neighbors, Sheltering Tree.



Servite Stitches-n-Stuff pillowcases



The pillowcases being delivered to the residents of Sheltering Tree.

Servite Associate Conference

By Lisa Sheridan, OSM

What a Great Favor God does Placing Us in the Company of Good People.

There is quite a buzz of excitement as we plan for our first Associate Conference in April! On the 27th and 28th of April this year, over 50 Associates will gather in Omaha for their first-ever national gathering.

Keynote speakers Susan Naatz (Omaha) and Mark Piper (Chicago) will lead the group in discussions on community, leadership and future planning. Associates are expected from nine different states

and Jamaica. For many of our Associates this will be their first opportunity to meet one another and the Omaha Sisters.

The Servants of Mary have had Associates for the last 30 years. Associates are lay men and women who share our Servite values and desire to share the compassionate presence of Mary. Associates gather with Sisters and one another for prayer, faith sharing and ministry. Our Associates serve in over 20 different ministries our mission and charism stretching Servite values

and way of life beyond what our Sisters are now able to do.



What a great favor God does placing us in the company of good people!

Teresa of Avila, adapted



Sr. Val, with a group of Mercy sisters and others during her immersion trip to the US/Mexico border.



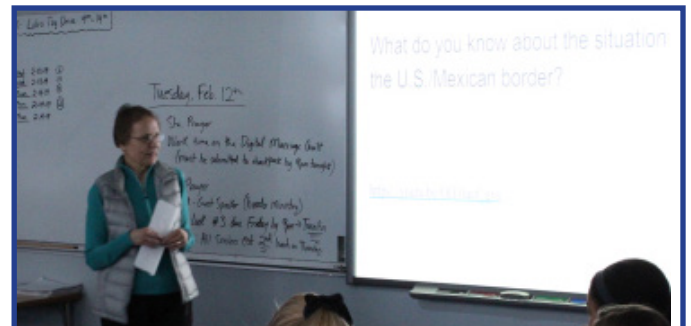
The border between Juarez, Mexico and El Paso, TX.



Interfaith Vigil at Tornillo Children's Detention Center.



"Let our Children Go"



Sr. Val Lewandoski, OSM sharing information from her trip to the border with Marian High School classes.

Experience at the Border: Information and Reflection

By Val Lewandoski, OSM

This past November I participated in an immersion trip to the US/Mexico border. It was a powerful experience, as I was able to witness the complicated and harsh ways people seeking asylum in the United States are treated. It also offered a way to explore the root causes of migration. Most immigrants crossing the border into the US from Mexico come from the Central American countries of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. People flee these countries due to rampant violence, poverty and corruption. According to international and federal law, they have a legal right to seek asylum in the US.

My border experience was at the point of connection between El Paso, Texas and Juarez, Mexico, but the US border extends some 1,954 miles with 330 ports of entry. After traveling thousands of miles, immigrants can wait days or weeks on the Mexico side of the border before being allowed into the US. Once they enter, the process of requesting asylum involves being detained for more days in an overcrowded, frigid "holding cell" while paperwork is completed. As they are released, local shelters are normally notified, but there have been instances when hundreds of asylum-seekers were released onto the streets of El Paso with no shelter plan in place. At that point their only possessions were the clothes they wore and ankle bracelets to monitor their location. This situation became dire during the winter months; volunteers assisting in the shelters reported that almost all the children had colds and fever, and the unthinkable happened when

two Guatemalan children died in December.

Immigrants stay in the shelters only a short time. If they have relatives or friends in the US to sponsor them, they are helped to make travel arrangements and will be assigned court dates accessible from their new location. This system sounds organized, but in reality is filled with loop-holes. Some people have no contacts in the US and are then placed in a detention facility. The former policy of separating children from their parents resulted in thousands of children being placed in detention facilities with no knowledge of where their parents were. Additionally, because the courts are backlogged, it can take many years for a person to know whether he/she will receive asylum or be deported. I can only imagine the trauma of waiting endlessly for others to make this huge decision about my personal future.

While some incorrectly categorize immigrants as a threat to US security and safety, it is important to remember that these individuals and families are people just like us. Who among us would not leave a place where adequately feeding our family was impossible and threats of violence made them fearful? The immigrants I met in El Paso were so ordinary: families, fathers and children, mothers and children. They were tired, hungry and grateful to finally be in a place of welcome. The border wall, the poverty of Juarez on the "other side" and the fear and confusion of people so far from home, presented a stark contrast to the secure and privileged

life I enjoy in the United States. I am not by nature an activist, but since this experience my conscience will not allow me to rest easy in my privilege. I feel a responsibility to address the suffering migrants face, both in their home country and in the US. I follow closely the intensifying situation at the border, talk with volunteers who have worked at shelters there, and study the long history of US influence in Central America. I wonder what is needed to alter destructive national and global structures.

I believe that we on earth are one family. This belief was strengthened and coupled with an awakened heart as a result of my experience at the border. As my eyes opened to the reality of human beings being willing to leave everything familiar in order to secure a better life for themselves and their families, my sense of being one with their suffering penetrated to a deep level of feeling and spirit.



DESTINATION HAITI!

By Sr. Mary Chamberlain, OSM

"Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me."

On November 16th, 2018 five of us set out from Spalding, NE for our destination, Haiti! Our goal was to visit our sister parish. Only Fr. Antony, our pastor, had been there before so we were apprehensive and excited. The three parishes of St. Michael's in Spalding, Sacred Heart, Greeley, and St. Theresa's, Ericson sponsor St. Rafael's Parish in L'Etang Rey which is about 3 hours from Port au Prince over very rough roads up in the hills. We were anxious to meet Fr. Riche, the pastor at St. Rafael's, and the 175 children who attend the Pre-K through 6th grade Catholic school. Each sponsor pays \$200 a year so that the parish can furnish a mid-day meal for the students who walk a great distance to and from school. In return we receive a picture of the child we are sponsoring and a letter from them at least once a year. So far we have approximately 110 children sponsored.

I had never been to a developing country so I wasn't sure what to expect. We arrived in Port au Prince and were picked up at the airport by Fr. Frank and his driver Rulo. We spent the first night at the mission house there. Fr. Frank has lived in Haiti about 18 years and works to educate groups who come to minister. He speaks French Creole very well! Over dinner that evening he told us about Haiti's history and its struggles. We learned that about 70% of the people are unemployed. Haiti was self-sustaining in the 1960's until politics got involved and

Haiti couldn't export their products as cheaply as other countries. People are desperate for food and work. There are food stands along the streets, even on the road leading up to St. Rafael's, because people are anxious to sell their produce or handmade articles to make money. Water is a precious commodity, especially in Port au Prince. Showers had to be quick to save water and there was no hot water so it WAS quick! We drank only bottled water as the water in the faucets was rainwater and not for human consumption.

After 6:30am Mass on the 17th Rulo drove us up to St. Rafael's. I was excited to meet Fr. Riche and his sister Sheila who cooked for us and the children at the school. Sheila is hoping to get her visa to come to Greeley and Spalding to improve her English. If she is able to come, she will stay with me. There was no electricity at St. Rafael's although Fr. Riche has a generator for the rectory where we stayed. I didn't expect that luxury! Attending Sunday Mass was wonderful. The church is very simple but when the people gathered it was definitely the Body of Christ! Everyone dressed in their Sunday best, as if they were going to a wedding. And did they ever sing praises to the Lord! The children came dressed in their school uniforms. What a joy to hear them sing and meet some of them after Mass. On Monday we went to the school and got to spend time with the children in their classrooms and be present for their morning ritual of raising the flag. The children were pretty timid in the beginning but opened up as

we went from room to room. I was thrilled to meet Louis, a second grader whom I sponsor with 2 other people from Greeley! Fr. Riche is so proud of the kitchen they have built and the gas stove they use to provide the meal for all the children.

I am so grateful that Fr. Antony Thekkekkara, pastor of our 3 parishes, invited me to go on this adventure. It was an eye-opening experience into how people in this very poor country live with joy and simplicity. May I never take things like water, electricity, and plentiful food for granted.

If anyone would like to help sponsor a child for a mid-day meal, you could send your donations to: Haiti Sponsorship Program, St. Michael's Church, PO Box 310, Spalding, NE 68665.





St. Rafael's Church



One of the cooks in their kitchen preparing the meal



Kindergartners at the flag raising ceremony



Louis & his 2nd grade class

A Planned Gift Solved a Big Mystery from the Past

By Tom Marasco, Director of Development

Have you ever had to deal with a mystery that you just couldn't solve? The clues you received put the answer on the fringe of your mind, but you just couldn't complete the puzzle and were left wondering? Sometimes, you keep digging and digging and more clues lead to more questions but eventually they reveal the answer. Sometimes though, the answer comes completely out of left field for you. Maybe even from an unexpected source. When that happens, you reflect on your journey of discovery and smile at the answer.

Here is a background to our mystery and how our friend solved it for us. In the fall issue of the Servants of Mary publication, under the donation section there was a donation listed of \$50,000+ from the Medical Trust of Patricia Courtney. We had no idea who Patricia Courtney was, but were assured by the Trust Department of a local bank that it was legitimate.

We recently received a telephone call from a long time Servants of Mary friend and supporter. He was aware of the entire transaction and filled us in. This included who most graciously donated the money, Robert L. Lewis (Pete).

Pete started Holy Name in Kindergarten and graduated from Holy Name in 1950. After High School, he worked for the FBI in Washington, DC and after a while moved back to Omaha. During the Korean War he was in the Army and after being discharged was involved in a few business ventures,

including the Trackside Lounge on 60th & Woolworth in Omaha.

Many years ago, Pete made a will with his stepdaughter, Patty, as beneficiary. Pete set up a medical trust at a local bank to handle Patty's needs during her lifetime. Upon her death the trust fund was to distribute the balance to three charities, one of which was the Servants of Mary. Our friend was involved in the original will and with Pete's taxes, etc. during his lifetime. He was also the Executor of Pete's will and worked with the local bank on the trust.

After the Servants of Mary newsletter was published, we received an additional gift. The total amount of the gifts from the trust fund was over \$250,000.

The Servants of Mary wanted to bring this information to light and to acknowledge Pete for his generosity. According to our source, Pete had a lifetime love affair with the Servants of Mary, not only for the years of education at Holy Name, but for the many years of friendships.

Pete's generous gifts have been put toward the retirement fund for the Sisters. In this way, Pete's gift will help to take care of the Sisters for whom he had great affection, into the future.

I'm told that Pete was never one to want any publicity for his generous acts. Our friend said that Pete had such strong love for the Servants of Mary that lasted a lifetime. After having our mystery solved,

we decided that we needed to acknowledge and thank Mr. Pete Lewis for his planned gift to us. In his mind back all those years ago, he knew he wanted to share his resources with the Servants of Mary and he took steps to be sure that we received his thoughtful and generous gifts many years after his passing.

Planned giving is a very important element for the long-term care of the Sisters. We are fortunate to have received the benefits of Pete's planned gift, which he created many, many years ago. We are also fortunate to have several benefactors who have let us know we are part of their planned giving when the time comes for their resources to be shared. We are extremely grateful for being a part of these planned gifts. If you would like to discuss methods of planned giving, such as bequests, life insurance, retirement plans or other financial products, I would be happy to meet with you. We can discuss basic concepts that you can then address with your legal advisor and financial planner. As always, we are so very thankful for the generosity of all our family, friends and benefactors. Your support of the Servants of Mary allows the Sisters to continue their many ministries and to serve those in need with compassion. God bless you.



Tom Marasco
Director of Development

Servite Center of Compassion Supports Service Providers

By Margaret Stratman, OSM, Servite Center of Compassion Director

For the last several years the Servite Center has made an effort to reach out to the Omaha community both to educate the public and to help support various groups as they advocate for populations in need or significant social causes. The groups have presented films on the social issues involved in their work, presentations on the specific services they provide, and ways that citizens can get involved. A freewill donation is taken to help support the group's efforts.

The Center has hosted a variety of groups which include the following: Omaha Lutheran Family Services, which partners with Omaha families

to welcome and resettle refugees in the area; NE Interfaith Power & Light, which actively addresses climate change issues; IXIM, a partnership of solidarity between the Omaha Archdiocese and the Diocese of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, which promotes cultural understanding and sharing of resources; One World Health Care, which provides culturally respectful and quality health care to the under-served; and the Coalition on Human Trafficking, which helps citizens to realize the extent to which trafficking is happening, to recognize the signs of trafficking, and to respond safely and appropriately.

On Wednesday, April 10th at 6:30 p.m. Dr. Tom Kelly, Ph.D. from Creighton University will be offering a presentation on the complex issue of immigration in our country. For years Dr. Kelly has been involved with immersion experiences on the Arizona/Mexican border through the KINO Border Initiative. If you are in the area, please join us for his presentation. If you would like to help support the programs of the Servite Center of Compassion, contact osmdev@osms.org or 402-951-3061.

St. Peregrine

By Linda Hess, OSM, Director of the St. Peregrine Ministry

"The Memorial Candle and Mass were beautiful remembrances to me as I received painful graces to be with my husband as he went to the Lord."

"Thank you, Servants of Mary, for all the ministries you have been part of over the years. As I walk with my wife through cancer, I am very grateful for the St. Peregrine Ministry."



The above quotes are just a couple of the testimonials that I received from people that have been blessed though the St. Peregrine Ministry. I am grateful for all those who donate in various ways, who attend

the monthly St. Peregrine Mass, the ones who enroll people with cancer, the sisters who pray daily ... well, I could go on and on. THANK YOU! On May 18th, there will be the special St. Peregrine May Gathering. Fr. Kevin Schneider, SJ,

will be our speaker before the Mass. I am sure many of you know of Fr. Kevin – a very entertaining and spiritual man. After his talk that begins at 9:45, we will have Mass and Anointing of the Sick at 11:00. All are welcome to attend this event. The talk, Mass and anointing, take place in the Servants of Mary Chapel located in the Convent at 7400 Military Ave. There is a free-will offering lunch following the Mass. We hold this event in May to honor the Feast Day of St. Peregrine on May 4th.

Remembering Sr. Viola



Sr. Viola Miksch, O.S.M.
1931-2018

"As Sister went through her life she was always aware how gifted she was in God's grace, and realized that it wasn't her doing but it was God working through her, and that she was God's handmaid and God had a vision for her.

My first response was one of, 'Wow!' what an incredible journey she must be on, and one that she will be on for eternity. "

Fr. Joe Miksch
Brother of Sr. Viola

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We gratefully acknowledge the following donations received from September 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018

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We gratefully acknowledge the following remembrances received from September 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018

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Faisel Ali

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Vivian Fitzharris
Donald Fitzharris



Photo of Healing Touch training group in the Servite Center. Srs. Suzanne Vandenheede and Mary Hogan met with the group; they have been Healing Touch practitioners for many years.

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We gratefully acknowledge the following honorariums received from September 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018

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Social Media Corner

By Tom Marasco, Director of Development

We Want Your "Likes" and "Shares"!

Please check our social media sites regularly for updates, photos and general information on what the Sisters are involved in currently. Our website, facebook and twitter pages are updated regularly with photos of the Sisters and other happenings around the Motherhouse.

Our social media sites continue to gain in popularity each quarter. Our numbers are up on both Facebook and Twitter. We are now up to 899 followers on our Facebook page. Like our page and invite others you think would enjoy it, and help us get to our next goal of 1,000 followers. We are at 196 followers on Twitter. Please help us spread the word by liking our pages and sharing our posts with your own social networks. With your help, the Sisters can connect with more friends and spread the word about our ministries.

If you are a graduate of a Catholic school in the Detroit, MI area, I invite you to check out www.bishopgallagher.org and the FaceBook group "I Went to Catholic School in Metro Detroit" (search for this group from your FaceBook page). There is a lot of history and great interaction from people you may know.



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We invite you to visit all of our sites and to follow, share, tweet, watch, pin and scan on your own social media sites in order to help spread the word about the Servants of Mary.

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