All Jesus does reveals who God is:
an incredible Lover.

Jean Vanier
Editors’ Notes

"Iam hiems transit." Yes, the winter gives signs of passing. The voice of the turtle dove is heard. A flock of robins and other birds have made their spring appearance a week early. Buds of trees and bushes are bursting eager to bloom. Crocuses popped up through the snow. As Ed Hayes writes in “Springtime Overture:”

“God of all seasons,
with artistic splendor
you have given us an overture
to the resurrection of your Son
in the resurrection of spring
from the cold tomb of winter.”

On Ash Wednesday we began Lent by the imposition of ashes with the words, “Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.” Three different sources reminded us that Lent is not just about penance. Pope Benedict wrote: “Lent is a precious gift of God; it is an intense time full of meaning in the journey of the Church; it is the itinerary to the Lord’s Easter.”

Fr. Michael Himes in his weekly reflections on the meaning of Lent writes: “Lent is a forty-day communal retreat in preparation for renewing our baptismal promises once again this year.” He illustrates this by going through each promise made and applying it to our lives as adults today.

Fr. Robert Caul emphasized God’s mercy and great love. To better appreciate how rich is God’s mercy and love he recommended reading the Passion of Jesus as contained in all four Gospel accounts. He suggested that this be done during our time of Adoration.

Convinced that Lent is a joyful, intense time - “Let us continue our Lenten itinerary confident and joyful.” (Pope Benedict, adapted)

Rosemarie Higgins, Anne Turbini, Annie Nebres and Maryann Alukonis, fmm

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Sharings is published at:
Provincial Communications Office
399 Fruit Hill Ave
North Providence, RI 02911
Tel: (401) 353-5804 Ext: 130
Fax (401) 353-8755
Please send articles either to
Fmmcom@aol.com or
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NEXT ISSUE: SUMMER

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As I read through some of Josie’s papers I came across one of the questionnaires that Josie had completed. One of the questions on this particular questionnaire was, “What are your special interests?” Josie’s answer was simple, yet so powerful, and so very Josie. She wrote, “HELPING PEOPLE”. On another questionnaire asking about her ministries at the time she was living in Manhattan she listed as her ministry, “TOUR GUIDE - NEW YORK CITY”.

Josie has now been called to go on the greatest tour imaginable - a tour with her God to whom she has been so faithful all her life.

May our dear Josie now enjoy her eternal rest.

Lois Pereira, FMM

PROVINCE NEWS

Souham Yalta, from Iraq, has joined Kyong-Ha Yim and Thuy Nguyen in the interprovince novitiate in Gatineau, Canada. She officially entered the novitiate on February 2. Kindly pray for her as she begins the next step of her FMM journey. Souham made her prenovitate in Syria.

We bade farewell to Isabelle Ravaorisoa who returned to Canada on January 30. She had been at Fruit Hill having ESL lessons from Anne Dundin. Isabelle arrived back to the novitiate community in time to welcome Souham into the novitiate.

Surprise, Surprise: Nzenzili Mboma arrived in time for the Sending Prayer of ToAnh Bui and My Hoa Nguyen. Nzenzili came for a planning meeting for our FMM Sabbatical Month and also for a meeting with the Conrad Hilton Fund for Sisters out in Los Angeles. Nzenzili also had a chance to spend two days with Thao Phi’s family while out on the west coast. Nzenzili will be back to assist this summer with the Sabbatical Month.

ToAnh Bui left for her new mission in Australia on January 24 and arrived safely in Sydney. From all that we hear she is settling in well. She arrived in the heat of the Australian summer and actually arrived on Australia Day, a national holiday for Aussies.
Helen Klumpp turned 101 years old on January 30 and enjoyed a much quieter celebration than that of last year on her 100th birthday. Helen is still very much interested in all that is going on at St. Antoine Residence while still enjoying reading and listening to music.

The various committees for the 2011 Provincial Chapter have been busy and have given us our work to prepare for a smooth running Chapter. In February the committee chairpersons met to share their progress. Sr. Jean Marie Sullivan, RSM, our facilitator joined them to make a more solid plan for daily agenda for the Chapter. Please keep this gathering in your prayers.

Sr. Sheila Lehmkuhle has been missioned back to the US Province. At the moment Sheila is following a program in England. She expects to arrive in the US in late April-early May. Welcome Home Sheila.

We also welcome Sr. Huyen Chi from the Province of Vietnam who arrived on March 12. At the moment she is with her family on the west coast while her paper work is being completed with her family. Once that is in order she will come east to the Bronx to discuss her future ministry.

Helen Klumpp

March 4th marked our five months anniversary since our canonical year started. It has been five months of being in “the Nazareth” of deepening our prayer lives and plunging ourselves into the studies and reflections on the life of Mary of the Passion, the Constitutions and the charism of the FMM Institute. Also in January, we have been gifted with the arrival of our new companion novice, Souham, who comes from Iraq and belongs to the Middle Eastern Province.

With addition of Souham, we are now seven in the community with five different cultural backgrounds. It has been a very enriching experience to live this “internationality” as Mary of the Passion wanted in the FMM communities. The sisters of our community support and encourage us in all that we do including furthering our study of French. Little by little we are getting comfortable with communicating in French and that has been indispensable in getting to know our sisters as well as the people of our parish.

We are now also studying with six other novices from the Congregation of the Queenship of Mary, a newly founded local congregation from the Archdiocese of Ottawa. They started their canonical year in February and are residing in the Presland Road Community with our sisters.

We wish you a grace filled Lent and we pray for each and every one of you, especially for our sisters who are not well. We thank you for your prayers and thoughts for us and please keep us in your prayers. Please continue to journey with us as we deepen our Love for God and our FMM Charism, and please also know that we hold each one of you in our heart and prayers everyday.

United in prayers,

Thuy and Kyong

CORRECTION
In our last issue we neglected to mention Assunta Kitslitzin with the four sisters who went home to God in 2010.
Poetry Writing at St. Antoine’s:
A Way of Creative Expression and Sharing

“These are some verses from several poems put together to honor each month by some residents at St. Antoine Residence.

Before the month begins, Sue Haas, Activities Director for Unit 2B, gathers some residents for morning coffee to compose a group poem appropriate for that month. The group on Unit 2B likes to call themselves “The Busy Bees”. The poem they put together is then published in the monthly St. Antoine Bulletin. Not only does this activity become an expression of the residents’ creativity, but is a sharing of what the holidays mean to each person and to the group as a whole. The poems can also articulate some of the feelings and sentiments of the persons in the group and whatever situation they find themselves in. Besides being relaxing, then, this time can be helpful in other ways.

Rita, one of the 2B residents said, “I like to think of rhymes and if they are not accepted when we are composing, I think of other ones.” Rather than thinking of rhyming words, Jeanne, another resident, likes to give ideas about the month-- what it is known for and what it will bring. Resident Catherine, says she just loves being together with the others to do this, thinking of ideas and hearing the rhyme suggestions of others.

Sometimes poetry can be a prayer or something from the heart, which is perhaps difficult to express aloud but can be said on paper. The following poem-prayer is by Frank Wey, an 86 year old resident at the Villa who comes to daily mass at St. Antoine. He is not part of Sue Halas’s group but writes poetry on his own.

Abba’s Answer

I asked:
Why have you loved me?
You gave me love, life and laughter.
You gave me caring, concern and compassion.
You gave me the whole universe.
Yet, every day the gifts continue.
Why, with all my faults, do you still love me?

He answered:
Because I am.

Frank Wey

Joyce Gardella, fmm
Care of Creation

Thirty five tree stewards participated in a workshop on deciduous trees presented by John Campanini, arborist, technical advisor to the Rhode Island Tree Council, and hosted by Franciscan Missionaries of Mary at Fruit Hill, North Providence.

Once again Franciscan Missionaries of Mary will host a spring Tree Steward Course May 3rd to June 7, 2011. Sr. Anne Dundin, fmm will be one of the participants.

April 9, 2011, a free pruning workshop with hands on experience will be held on the grounds of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. There will be 20 graduated Tree Stewards. John Campanini will give instructions on how to execute removal and subordination cuts on young trees. The Tree Stewards will use these cuts to eliminate structural defects. Our facility is described as one of the most beautiful ones in Rhode Island.

Thanks to all this winter’s snow and rain, we expect our trees to flourish.

Rosemarie Higgins, fmm

EL PASO, TEXAS

Recently we FMM’s in El Paso attended a workshop for the World Day for Consecrated Life. Sr. Clare Fitzgerald, SSND gave an excellent presentation. Here are a few of her thoughts which we like to share with you.

Sr. Clare stated that religious life is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the church and the world. Therefore, we belong to the Holy Spirit and the mystery of God. According to Cardinal Metz in the book “The Followers Of Christ”, religious congregations are to remind the establishment why it was established. She spoke about how after Vatican II religious congregations courageously and quickly conformed to the mandates of “Perfectae Caritatis.” She also mentioned the difficulties of this time of transition going from a more enclosed to a more active form of religious life. Somehow, she stated, we lost what we should be in the church.

Sr. Clare said that we have to move from the workplace and be a “sign.” This sign should signify Eternal Life and proclaim that God is still in our lives and in the world. We must be a Sacrament of the Church...keep it holy. Catherine Norris once asked a monk about cloister life and he replied: “We live our life in vigili...that is, waiting for our eternal time. Sr. Clare stated this is what religious life should signify...that there is a life hereafter. We should be praising God and looking forward to being with Him forever. All of life is a quest for God. We as religious did not enter to do something but to follow this quest. We should live this quest with gratitude and joy. There should be more laughter in our convents...remember...we are going home...we are waiting in vigili. After Vatican II we went out to everyone. Now we must go inward to the very soul of our being to find God and become holy.

Sr. Clare continually stressed that IT IS NOT WHAT WE DO THAT IS IMPORTANT, BUT WHO WE ARE.

We survive because God loves us and He toughens us for what He has waiting for us. He tells us: “Follow me and you will never die...you will live with Me forever”. Sr. Clare stated: “You can’t get a better deal than that!!”. She said that if we are on fire with the love of God, the flame of religious life will blossom. But if we are cold, the flame will go out.

When young girls come to visit our convents, Sr. Clare said not to stress our works but invite them to “Come with us and Praise and Glorify the Lord!”

Marie Cinotti, fmm

A Weekend of Double Blessings:
Las Cruces, NM

Las Cruces is certainly not a big metropolis, but it does its best to provide cultural and spiritual enrichment opportunities. During the last weekend of January it hosted two special events:

1. An all-day workshop Jan. 28th on “Compassionate Listening: Healing Our World from the Inside Out” - sponsored by NMSU and offered free of charge to any faculty or staff member of the university or community college.
2. Jan. 28th 7 pm through all day Jan.29th until 9 p.m.: a mini-retreat on “Contemplative Prayer” given by Fr. Tom Smith, OFM Conv., at the local
Franciscan Holy Cross Retreat Center
Sr. Nancy and I attended.

Compassionate Listening Workshop:

It’s a wonder in this era so preoccupied with the First Amendment that this workshop was held at all in a public university. But as the day progressed, each participant realized it had much to offer for everyone - of any religion or no religion - though in my opinion it would have been richer if a Gospel and Franciscan dimension could have been included.

The Compassionate Learning Project was begun by American Jews, with a background in world religious traditions, psychology, and communications. Its original purpose was to provide techniques for Jews and Palestinians to connect, to dialogue, to really forgive and be reconciled with each other. The Project then moved to Germany, bringing Jews from Israel whose family members had been Holocaust victims to meet Germans on their own ground and re-connect! Now the movement is world wide, and one of the presenters, Susan Partnow, recently gave training workshops in Liberia, Ghana, and Nigeria. In Liberia she worked with victims from both sides of the bloody civil war and stayed with the FMM’s of St. Theresa’s Convent, Monrovia.

Our Las Cruces workshop had more than 80 people sign up, so it was given on two subsequent days with a waiting list unable to attend. Our group included a Muslim woman from Iraq, Hindus from India and Nepal, four Chinese (some of them Buddhist), and Anglos, Latinos, and African Americans from various religious traditions or none at all. During the whole workshop “God” was not mentioned, but participants themselves sometimes brought up spiritual or religious themes.

We began with a centering exercise, then went on to group exercises in twos, fours, and groups. During one total group exercise, participants shared how they personally calmed down when “triggered” by something or someone that upset or angered them. The answers ranged all the way from whisky and chocolate (!) to exercise, walking, visualization, music, meditation, and prayer… At least three others besides myself mentioned prayer, and the leader encouraged us to draw from our own spiritual traditions.

Basically, the central idea was to listen to others, even “the enemy”, with the heart rather than just the mind, to put oneself into the other’s mocassins, as a Native American proverb would say. The premise is that conflict can really be a cry for intimacy. Something is disconnected that longs to be connected, so one moves “from protection to connection” by listening for facts, feelings, and - at a deeper level - values of the other. Love, gratitude, and appreciation then lead us to compassionate listening, and to do this a whole range of proven techniques from spiritual traditions, psychology, and social communication fields can be employed. A few quotes from the session:

“Don’t get furious; get curious” – curious to know where the other is coming from. “An enemy is someone whose story we haven’t heard.” (Dalai Lama).

“Every act of violence comes from an unhealed wound.” (Gene Knudsen Hoffman)

Some basic principles:

1. Conflicts recycle, often in another form, if the basic, underlying needs are not addressed.
2. Follow each conflict to its source.
3. Listening is accepting but not necessarily agreeing.
4. The opposing view is always valuable. Look for underlying commonalities to build solutions of mutual benefit.
5. Compassionate Listening is not satisfying curiosity or problem solving. It is about being present to another.
6. In resolving conflict, focus on the problem—not the person. Reach toward unconditional love for the person….

Sound familiar? Perhaps that’s because of our Gospel and Franciscan orientation as FMM, and it especially resonates with the kenosis and reconciliation themes of the 2008 General Chapter. But it’s wonderful to hear this circulated across the board to people who want to become peacemakers in their own family, workplace, or situation!

Each of us was given a 24 page booklet to study, but for further information also go to www.compassionatelistening.org.

Contemplative Prayer mini-retreat:

The three themes of this intensive weekend were centering prayer, lectio divina, and prayer in the Franciscan tradition. None of this was “new”, but the time away from our regular pursuits was an opportunity for deepening our spirituality. Another bonus was the chance to share and be with so many others whom we knew. Only three of the 17 participants were new acquaintances to me; the others were either SFO’s (Secular Franciscans) or fellow parishioners - all of whom had a thirst for a deeper, more integrated prayer life. Both Sr. Nancy and I found this time very enriching and look forward to more days of prayers to be offered by the new director of the retreat house.

Sheila Patenaude, fmm
Human Trafficking

“We are called to defend life, justice, and human dignity especially among persons and groups who are exploited, victims of human trafficking or other abuses”. (GC 2008, C2)

Sr. Mary Soh, fmm was invited by Franciscans International to share her experience in her ministry of hope, healing and empowerment to women immigrants ensnared in trafficking.


Later, she shared some of her experiences with FMM Communities in New York and at Fruit Hill, North Providence. In an earlier presentation, Mary said, “Very often all that we do is just wiping away tears and witnessing to God’s loving and healing embrace. In the midst of a suffering world, I have come to a new found meaning of being. For me, it is an experience of bringing hope, healing and empowerment to those in the ‘edges’ of society Eucharist through the sacrifice of the many women migrant workers who leave their countries in search of rice to be placed on the table, so that their families may have life. Inasmuch as we bring hope to the suffering our response becomes truly Franciscan and Eucharistic.

Human trafficking is currently a thriving business. Franciscans International is working to shut it down.

Human trafficking affects men, women and children in their deepest being. From recruitment to exploitation, trafficked persons lose their identity and desperately struggle against a situation that reduces them into slavery.

Few can undertake the risky ministry of directly doing the “street work” entailed but all can offer their prayerful support. Here is a prayer composed for those caught in trafficking composed by a Franciscan Sister, member of FI.

Prayer to End Trafficking
www.FranciscansInternational.org

Lord of freedom and love, we are saddened to know that more than one million people are trafficked into slavery each year. The effects of contemporary slavery are felt in every one of the 180 countries where Franciscans serve. As sons and daughters of our father St. Francis we are tormented by this reality that will leave devastating repercussions for generations to come. Our hearts grieve for what our minds can barely comprehend, particularly when we hear of women, men, and children who are deceived and transported to unknown places. We recognize this sexual and economic exploitation occurs because of human greed and profit. We are sorrowful and our spirits angry that human dignity is being degraded through deception and threats of force. Help the violators to be transformed and enlightened to realize the scope of their unjust actions. Allow them to see the value and the dignity of every human person. As Franciscans who serve the poor in a spirit of peace and justice, we must protest this atrocity and work against the demeaning practice of human trafficking. Lord of Life, strengthen those whose hearts have been broken and lives have been uprooted. Give us the light, grace, and courage to work with you so that we can all participate in the goodness of creation. Fill us with the wisdom and courage to stand in solidarity with the victims so that we may all enjoy the freedoms and rights which have their source in your Son and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Guess Who

This is a childhood photo of a Senior Sister at Fruit Hill.

The first responder to contact Sr. Rosemarie Higgins (by phone, email or directly) with the correct name, gets the reward.

Reward: The Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary, prayed by Identified Sister for all of your intentions.
Temporary Vowed Religious in Action

On December 27, 2010 the temporary vowed religious (TPR) from USA and Canada met for the second time with a specific objective in mind and that is to create a video for vocation promotion bearing in mind that as FMMs we all have a responsibility to pass on to other women our charism and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit the FMM will continue on to help in building God’s kingdom here on earth.

Each sister has a story to tell about her experience and it seems that all five sisters expressed how precious it was to be together and how much fun it was to work together and to learn together. It was truly a gift given by both provinces. The TPRs extend their gratitude to Sr. Lois, fmm Sr. Simone, fmm, Sr. Isabelle, fmm, Sr. Pauline, fmm, Sr. Liliane, fmm and Pam Heffernan for making the gathering possible through their input, support and encouragement.

Let us now read on what the TPRs have to share:

Peace to All,

Due to bad weather, we missed one day for the session and started late. We had the opportunity to meet a professional woman named Pam Heffernan from Cumberland, RI. What I found helpful from her presentation was the brainstorming of what our objective message is and who is our audience before thinking about making the video. She referred to it as “the triangle” - What, Who and How? We came up with that we are Missionaries who are called to train, serve and empower the people to whom we are sent to work with. And we do that by being contemplative women living the Gospel. This model helped us to focus on the objective of our video. We worked as a team, Karen, Ludmilla, Arlene, Annie and I which, was an enriching experience for me. Further, during our meeting, we had Sr. Liliane Alam, fmm share with us interesting inputs through captivating powerpoint on St. Clare of Assisi and Communication. Sr. Liliane’s presentation was very reflective and insightful. Pax et Bonum

Cathy Tshitenge, fmm

The goal of making a video for vocation promotion may seem far-fetched and yet along the way we discovered that it is possible if we put all our efforts together. Pam Heffernan, a lay person who gives training on strategic planning, helped us focus on the content of the video. As someone looking from outside into the FMM sphere, Pam shared that we should use words that are understandable to the public.

Our very own Sr. Liliane Alam, fmm emphasized that we have to speak from the heart just as St. Clare did. St. Clare’s deep prayer life excluded out of her. Her wisdom was spread throughout the land through St. Francis and his brothers. Thereby throngs of people came to seek her advice. Sr. Liliane’s powerpoint presentation gave subtle tips on how we can stress the keywords by using some animation techniques and matching the images with words. We were also given t-shirts with the slogan “PRAYER, the world’s greatest wireless connection.”

Working on the video was truly challenging and fun at the same time. We all wrote our mini-scripts and recorded ourselves several times. The process itself was a learning experience for it opened our eyes to the complexity of making a video. The best realization for me was that as young religious sisters it is possible that we can work together in harmony and peace no matter what task is given. This quality can certainly be carried over wherever we are missioned in the world.

Annie Nebres, fmm
For my part I want to share with my sisters in both provinces what touched me the most during my precious time in the United States. The day after Christmas we got on the last bus to Boston (because of a storm that had hit the area) and were welcomed warmly by the sisters in Brighton. I was immediately struck by the internationality of this community and the joy of the sisters. I felt right at home and it brought me back to my original experience of visiting the FMMs in 2005. The following day we went by train (where I wished I had brought my swimsuit for it was boiling hot) to Rhode Island. The first session given by a lady named Pam, helped us to see that it is witnesses’ stories that speak to the young of today. Messages need to be brief, to the point, and in a language that the young can understand (she gave us some pointers for our website). On Wednesday, Sr. Liliane, fmm (who had quite the adventure herself to get to Rhode Island in the storm) gave a well prepared powerpoint presentation on communication and another one on St. Clare. She stated that it is important to create opportunities so that St. Clare can speak to the young of today. However what struck me the most during her sharing was: it is how we use the communication methods of today that matters. I can often brush them off saying that they do not lead to true communication, but through this reflection I was able to look at these methods in a different light. Thursday and a bit of Friday, we worked hard to try to put what we had learned into a video format. We put our ideas together and started filming one another. Then the following day we had another session on St. Clare and communication by Sr. Liliane Alam, fmm. She taught me how it is important to bring to reality one of my dreams since pre-novitiate.

In the afternoon we went back to Brighton and visited St. Anthony’s, where Sr. Pat works. We attended a mass that was full of life … what a treat! The music was phenomenal and the church was full of families, children, and young adults! Wow! It was a true celebration to start the New Year! After the mass, we were invited by a Franciscan friar to visit the fraternity. I was absolutely floored by the beauty of their chapel. They welcomed us with open arms, another unexpected treat.

The thing I will treasure the most however, is the time spent with my ‘young’ sisters. We had a great deal of time to share our experiences, our joys, and our pains. Because of this, I was able to come home with a new spirit and outlook. Thank you so much to everyone who works to make these gatherings possible. It is a real joy and gift for me; I look forward to it every 6 months!

Dear Sisters, I like to share you my experience with you of my session in Rhode Island, USA.

Getting there is a story of itself, as we four TPR’s (temporary professed religious) were coming into a snow storm travelling a Voyageur bus. It was quite an experience: the snow blowing, the strong wind and many other main transportation was closed down and so Sr. Lois Ann, fmm, the provincial of USA was not able to pick us up at the Boston Terminal to bring us to Rhode Island. So, Sr. Pat Barett, fmm from our prenovitiate house in USA, came to pick us up and bring us to Brighton. We stayed one night then next day we hopped on the train to go to Rhode Island as the sisters were eagerly awaiting for us. Sr. Pauline Gilmore, fmm the young religious director of TPR’s of USA picked us up to bring us to Bethany (the retreat house) in R.I. At last we reached our destination and the next day we started our session with a lay person named Mrs. Pam Heffernan who spoke about how to put a video together for our project. It was quite informative, as she asked us to question ourselves what the FMM is about and to put in a young person’s language for the ages 18-35 years. We had to look in many areas e.g. our mission, our strengths and weakness, threats of our Institute.

So with this helpful information we took the whole day of putting our vocation promotion video; we each had to write a script and put into a video together. It was a wonderful experience as we spend the time together, figuring out what and where to start etc… the video. As TPR’s we worked as a team in harmony and in peace with one another. Then the following day we had another session on St. Clare and communication by Sr. Liliane Alam, fmm. She taught me how it is important to get into today’s technology because our young people of today who are very much advanced with it, so that we can bring the Good News to them through technology and/or those who are searching in their vocation.

St. Clare in her time was quiet in her ways, living in a cloister community and yet people knew her, she was a famous person. The word went out in the world about Clare and so this is how important one needs to be involved of bringing the word of God to the people and the young in today’s world and/or to those who are searching. Later in the week, travelling back I came back with joy, knowledge and insight for the institute and for young people of today of how to communicate to them, that living a religious life is rewarding.

Ludmilla Grabetz fmm
We finally arrived in Rhode Island after having been on an airplane, bus, car and train. Our goal during this session was to create a vocation promotion video. The first session which was presented to us by Pam, helped us to identify more clearly our objectives and goals for the video. This helped us to narrow down our content and focus on what was important to our audience (young women who are seeking to answer a call to religious life). Sr. Liliane, fmm helped us to connect with the spiritual aspect of communication, the importance of words and the need to use vocabulary which will speak to the young adults of today. Also to use methods of communication which are relevant to today’s fast moving world. It was interesting to see the connection between Saint Clare and communication. Even though Saint Clare lived in a monastery without any modern day technology she was able to communicate with God, her sisters and the outside world. How can I learn from this Saint who was able to touch many lives and communicate the love of God through her life?

After having received input from both Sr. Liliane, fmm and Pam we began the process of creating the video. We each shared our personal stories and our specific calling to FMM life. We put forth all the materials (photos, video clips) we had gathered for the video. Sr. Annie our ‘Video Specialist’ began putting it all together, but due to time limitations we were unable to produce the final product before the end of our session.

Karen Corera, fmm

Sending My Hoa and To Anh

It was a frigid January day but the chapel at Fruit Hill was warm and electric with joy and excitement. We FMMs gathered for the Sending Prayer for My Hoa Nguyen and To Anh Bui for the service of evangelization to the province and people of the United States and Australia respectively. Lois welcomed us … We have gathered here on this cold, winter afternoon to mission our sisters, My Hoa Nguyen and ToAnh Bui to their respective missions. the United States and Australia. As you see we have used red, white and blue for our ambience. These colors are in the flags of both the US and Australia. The flow of the material symbolizes our going forth from the table of the Eucharist to the entire world. Mother Foundress said that the whole world is our homeland and today our two sisters will continue to carry out our mission of going to all parts of the world. The picture of “Mary On The Way” and the 2 candles are Hoa and ToAnh’s signs of bringing the Word and Light of God to all those whom they will meet.

We sang – “life is a journey we travel together” … we prayed Psalm 121 “My help comes from You who created heaven and earth.” We recalled excerpts from our Chapter Document 2008 “God, Who is Love, comes to us every day in His Word which nourishes our contemplation …”

After the prayer sending My Hoa and To Anh as Gospel women, all FMM present came forward to embrace and send our sisters.

We concluded in song “We are all one people…” and the celebration continued in room with conversa-cious treats.
The children and mother’s playgroup is an attempt to help mothers deal with their children and the challenges that are inevitable in the growing up years. Jeanne brings her vast knowledge of Montessori education and understanding of early childhood to this group. On this particular day, at Morningside Park which is surrounded by tall apartment buildings, the following conversation took place:

Jeanne was passing by a group of about 7 to 8 kids playing jump rope. Both boys and girls whose ages were about 8-11 years old were present. One of them started to talk to Jeanne.

Are you Chinese? No
Are you Korean? No
Are you Japanese? Yes

Immediately he turned to the group and yelled, there is a Japanese woman here, come on.

Several came over and surrounded Jeanne and began to talk.

They began talking about the earthquake in Japan and the different things that happened, like the big wave that came and the cars which were swept away and the houses that floated in the water.

More kids came over to talk.

One big one said, “The nuclear power has been broken, fire is there. This is not a movie, it’s the real thing. I saw it on TV.”

The children became much more serious in what they were talking about, perhaps influenced by school or TV.

One boy said, Lady, I want to help them, what can I do?

I said, they need a lot of help but I can’t give an answer right away.

One boy said, “I know what to do, I will give them my snack.” Another one said how about a jacket, it is very cold. An older boy said, No, Japan is far away, you cannot bring it there.

How can I bring them? Some children said, you have to go by airplane, ship, train, or a car. We need a lot of money for that.

Another boy said, I have $6.10 in my box. Everyone said, Wow.

The older boy said that’s not enough, the only thing you can buy is McDonalds.

They had more ideas such as bringing a hammer to fix the houses, but then someone else said, the houses have gone into the ocean.

Many ideas and challenges were discussed among themselves of what they could do.

One boy said, we need Superman. “How can I call Superman?” Another boy said, “No. Superman is very weak for the water. He cannot fly in the water.”

Another boy said, I have a good idea.

We can pray to God, God can do whatever he wants to. We can tell Him the people are having trouble, the waves took them away. God knows what to do.

Afterwards I left and said bye bye.

They said, “Good Luck, you are okay, you won’t get into trouble.”

When I left them, I was so touched. These were very ordinary street kids who reached out to me and through me to Japan.

They were very seriously struggling to find answers. They are already connected to the people of Japan and are not dependent on the internet, twitter or facebook to do this. It is a heart to heart connection, a human characteristic.

There is much hope for the future when at this age they already are trying to reach out and help others.

It gave me much to think about as I went to the subway.

Jeanne Mera, FMM

From Blessed Mary of the Passion ...

Do not let grace pass by. Love is born of pardon.

25 July, 1886