



THE MESSENGER

of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, Kansas

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The *spirituality* of love, lace & tradition

ABOVE: Sister Kathleen Berube of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston keeps her fingers in contact with each of the bobbins as she creates a red, white and blue design as part of this summer's lace-making retreat at Manna House of Prayer.

RIGHT: Sister Ramona Medina, right, explains an intricate technique of bobbin-lace making to Sister Cathy Morin of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield, Mass.



Seventeen women gathered at Manna House of Prayer for a week this summer, to continue a tradition that the earliest Sisters of St. Joseph practiced more than 350 years ago.

Sisters Ramona Medina and Janet Lander, both members of the Concordia congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, have developed a retreat titled "Weaving Threads of Love," designed to give participants the opportunity to experience and integrate the spirituality and practice of making bobbin lace in a contemplative setting.

Participants came from across Kansas and six other states to learn bobbin-lace making. In addition to the Concordia congregations, other Sisters of St. Joseph taking part were from the Boston, St. Augustine (Fla.), Springfield (Mass.), Orange (Calif.) and Philadelphia congregations. There are also two laywomen in the workshop.

The Sisters of St. Joseph was founded in LePuy, France, in 1650, and members of that early congregation made bobbin lace as a way to support themselves and their works.

Today, Sisters Ramona and Janet, with assistance from Sister Cecelia Green, share the craft as a spiritual practice that "creates in us heart-space where the connections with God and the dear neighbor may be woven in prayer, as surely as the design of threads and spaces evolves on the lace pillow before our eyes."

A special
place to
rest, learn
& grow

The topics are diverse as the women who staff Manna House of Prayer. Yet a single theme runs through all the workshops and retreats — and all the women, for that matter: Spirituality.

Since its beginnings in 1978, Manna House has been a place for spiritual journeys and personal growth, and it's open to everyone. Today the path

might just as likely help you traverse the Twelve Steps as the Seven Storey Mountain.

To learn more, go to www.mannahouse.org. Or better yet, register for one of the many retreats and workshops offered throughout the year so you can meet the staff and experience Manna House for yourself. *For a list of Upcoming Events, see page 3.*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

'Visitation' update	2
Vocation & new study	5-6
Newest Agrégée	8-9
Homecomings	13-15

\$1.1 million inquiry probes all aspects of sisters' lives

A little background

Sisters of St. Joseph left our congregation in Rochester, N.Y., in 1883 to travel to the "frontier" of Kansas, and in 1884 established the independent Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia.

For the first 65 years of our existence, we were a "diocesan congregation," meaning we answered to the Bishop of Concordia, and then the Bishop of Salina.

That changed in 1948 when we became a "pontifical institute," approved directly by the Vatican.

As called for by the Second Vatican Council, we began a "renewal chapter" in 1969; ultimately, that led to a new constitution based on our original mission from our origins in 17th-century France. That constitution, which remains our living document today, was approved by the Vatican in 1987.

Our mission, as stated in that constitution and lived by our sisters every day, says, in part:

The life and works of our congregation are directed to a single end:

The union of ourselves and of all people with God and with one another in and through Jesus Christ.

In order to fulfill this mission, we are willing to be led by the Holy Spirit to undertake, in accordance with our tradition, works which respond to the needs of the times. We encourage and assist those who desire to follow Christ more closely, and we work with others to alleviate conditions which cause ignorance, poverty, suffering and oppression.

Phase II of the "apostolic visitation" of women's religious orders in the United States arrived in late September, in the form of a massive in-depth questionnaire.

At the same time, sisters learned that the Vatican has budgeted \$1.1 million for the inquiry, and has asked U.S. bishops to chip in to cover the cost.

The first section of the questionnaire delivered to leaders of congregations across the country requires 36 detailed answers that "quantify" membership in women's religious orders — everything from how many vowed members, when each entered the congregation and her age at the time, to specifics on any facility that provides care for infirm sisters.

The second section is made up of more than 80 essay questions, ranging from some that are simple to answer ("Are your superiors elected or appointed?") to many others that require theological and philosophical responses ("What are your hopes and concerns about the future of your religious institute in living its charism in the Church?" or "Describe your sisters' commitment to praying with the Word of God in Sacred Scripture, to the practice of Marian devotion, and to communal and personal prayer:").

The third section requires that each congregation provide copies of a wide range of documents, including its constitution, a list of all properties owned by the congregation and financial statements and cash flow reports.

The deadline for providing information to the "apostolic visitor," Mother Clare Millea, is Nov. 20.

Sister Marcia Allen, president of our congregation, is beginning work on her responses.

"We have worked assiduously since our renewal to constantly adapt to the changing needs of the people we serve," she said. "Our mission remains as it always has been: To live God's love by serving our neighbor."

Phase I of this comprehensive study — initiated in January by Slovenian Cardinal Franc Rodé, head of the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, to examine "the quality of the life of women religious" in the U.S. — was a series of interviews with leaders of American congregations.

In late September, a letter from Cardinal Rodé to American bishops became public. In it, the cardinal asks each American bishop "for your help in offsetting the expenses" of the apostolic visitation.



SISTER MARCIA ALLEN

According to the letter, the three-year projected budget for the inquiry is \$1.1 million, and the "donations" should be sent directly to the cardinal's office at the Vatican.

Cardinal Rodé was the one who appointed Mother Millea, Superior General of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as "visitor."

She reported that by the end of July she had had "personal conversations with 127 superiors general" and had received letters from about 50 other congregational leaders. She met with Sister Marcia in Chicago on June 9.

There are nearly 400 apostolic religious congregations of women in the United States, with about 59,000 vowed sisters. (Communities of cloistered, contemplative nuns and some monasteries are not part of the study.)

Mother Millea was scheduled over the summer to be recruiting members of religious orders to help with on-site visits, which will be Phase III and was expected to begin in early 2010.

As of the end of September, the Sisters of St. Joseph had not received any information on those on-site team members.

Although there is no deadline for submitting a report to Cardinal Rodé, Mother Millea has said she hopes to complete the task by 2011.

That final report has been described as "comprehensive and confidential," with information included on each of the congregations assessed.

One unanswered question, however, is how the information in the report might be used or if there could be action by the Vatican based on it.

When the Leadership Conference of Women Religious met in New Orleans in August, the group focused both on the opportunity offered by the visitation and some specific concerns with the way it is proceeding.

With about 800 leaders of American orders of Catholic sisters taking part in the LCWR assembly, they emphasized that they have remained faithful to the renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council and remain committed to what they view as the unique and needed role of religious life.

At the same time, the leaders expressed concern about a lack of full disclosure about the motivation for both the apostolic visitation and a separate Vatican inquiry into the LCWR itself.

The leaders also object to the fact that their orders will not be permitted to see the investigative reports about them that are being submitted directly to the Vatican.

► The official web site of Mother Millea's inquiry is www.apostolicvisitation.org



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Signs on the Year of Peace float during the Fall Fest parade Sept. 26 list organizations that have expressed support for the 16-month effort.



Concordia Year of Peace rolls out

The Concordia Year of Peace had a showy beginning Sept. 26, with support from a number of local organizations for its float in the 2009 Fall Fest parade.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia have taken the lead in the 16-month-long "year" to celebrate peace and teach about living a nonviolent life, but other local groups and service organizations have rallied to the cause. In the Fall Fest parade, the Year of Peace float had signs recognizing support from the Concordia Rotary Club, the Concordia Lions Club, the Frank Carlson Library and Manna House of Prayer.

More than 30 people have joined the committee organizing events throughout the year.

For Fall Fest, there was also a Concordia Year of Peace booth at Sixth Street and Broadway, staffed all day by sisters and members of the Year of Peace committee. In addition to providing information about nonviolence, the booth featured Year of Peace T-shirts for sale, buttons with the Year of Peace logo, and children's games. Two songs composed by Patrick Sieben of Cloud County Community College specially for the Year of Peace were playing on the booth's sound system.

In September, Mayor Greg Hattan issued a proclamation officially marking the Concordia Year of Peace.

The Year of Peace Committee has received a \$500 grant from the Community Foundation for Cloud County, to help



cover some of its initial expenses, and foundation chairman Bob Steimel and his wife Lorene were on hand at the parade to show their support. Bob drove the pickup pulling the float while Lorene joined the sisters who rode on it during the parade.

The idea for the Year of Peace grew out of a series of community forums the sisters have hosted at the Motherhouse this year. The hope had been to bring people from throughout the community together, to identify what they view as the problems in Concordia and to seek solutions.

The next meeting in the ongoing series of "working lunches" is set for Oct. 22.



Barbara Henry, left, a member of the Concordia Year of Peace Committee, signs up for a workshop with the assistance of Sister Pat Eichner, at the Year of Peace booth during Fall Fest Sept. 26.

Upcoming Events

▶ **Oct. 17, 9:30 am-4:30 pm** — "The Spirituality of the Twelve Steps" at Manna House of Prayer, Concordia. This workshop will identify the spiritual dynamics of addiction and investigate the Twelve Steps as a path for health and wholeness. Presenter: Sister Carolyn Teter. Contact: retreatcenter@mannahouse.org or 785-243-4428.

▶ **Oct. 17, 9:30 am-4:30 pm** — "Agrégee Information Day." (See full information in the box on page 9.)

▶ **Nov. 20-22**, "Quilting Retreat: Christmas Quilts" at Manna House. Quilters who can find a time and space to spend time quilting in a relaxed and enjoyable place benefit by coming to Manna House for a weekend. Both experienced quilters and those learning to quilt are welcome; you will need your own sewing machine and your own materials. Leader: Sister Betty Suther. Contact: retreatcenter@mannahouse.org or 785-243-4428.

▶ **Dec. 5, 9:30 am-4:30 pm** — "Guided Writing" at Manna House. Come to this day of meditative writing to continue your awareness of life's experiences through this process. If you haven't kept a journal, this day will teach you how simple it is. Presenter: Sister Liberata Pellerin. Contact: 785-243-4428 or retreatcenter@mannahouse.org.

▶ **Dec. 12, 9:30 am-4:30 pm** — "Improving Our Conscious Contact With God" at Manna House. This one-day workshop/retreat will examine the ancient path of contemplative prayer; for anyone who is looking to deepen their faith by means of a prayer life that gives meaning, shape and purpose to their life. Presenter: Sister Carolyn Teter. Contact: retreatcenter@mannahouse.org or 785-243-4428.

▶ **Dec. 13, 2-4 pm** — "Christmas Open House" at the Motherhouse, for neighbors and friends. Contact: cgarciac@csjkansas.org or 785-243-2113, ext. 1223. (See page 11 for more details.)

▶ **Jan. 8-10**, "Quilting Retreat: Quilter's Choice" at Manna House. Both experienced quilters and those learning to quilt are welcome; you will need your own sewing machine and your own materials. Leader: Sister Betty Suther. Contact: 785-243-4428 or retreatcenter@mannahouse.org.

▶ **Jan. 16, 2010, 9:30 am-4:30 pm** — "Winter Spirituality: Grace for living our winter days" at Manna House. This day will include journaling, personal and communal prayer, and plenty of opportunity to sink into renewing silence. Presenters: Sisters Janet Lander and Liberata Pellerin. Contact: retreatcenter@mannahouse.org or 785-243-4428.

▶ **Jan. 22-23**, "Quilting Retreat: X-Block" at Manna House. Both experienced quilters and those learning to quilt are welcome; you will need your own sewing machine and your own materials. Leader: Sister Betty Suther. Contact: 785-243-4428 or retreatcenter@mannahouse.org.

▶ For information about the Concordia Year of Peace or any of the planned events during the year, contact Sister Jean Rosemarynoski, who is heading the committee. She can be reached at 785-243-2149 or at sisterjean@csjkansas.org.

Let the volunteering begin!

Neighboring local churches step up to help sisters' downtown center

The volunteer effort to create the new Neighbor to Neighbor center continues to grow.

At the end of August, the volunteer crew was a dozen or more teenagers from the local Catholic Youth Organization. Last weekend it was what was expected to be a volunteer "demolition and cleanup" crew numbering more than 100 from the First United Methodist Church in Concordia.

Pastor Sandra Moore and two members of the Methodist Church's Stewardship Committee — Loren Swenson and David Edwards — made the offer and then worked with facilities administrator Greg Gallagher to coordinate the huge volunteer project.

(The Messenger went to press before the actual clean-up day, so we don't have the final number of First United Methodist workers who turned out Saturday.)

It may be proof that while the Sisters of St. Joseph hope their center in downtown Concordia can become a communitywide asset, getting it ready to open is broadening into a communitywide effort.

With demolition within the 121-year-old brick building at 103 E. Sixth St. now essentially complete, reno-



Among the teens hauling loads of trash down the rear fire escape of the building at 103 E. Sixth St. during the CYO work day Aug. 29 are (clockwise from top left) Paige Evans, Taylor Chrisco, Raef Chrisco and Christa Deneault.

vating the space into the center can begin.

The work will include repairing old water dam-

age throughout the building, and then installing all new plumbing and fixtures, plus new sheetrock, dropped ceil-

ings, carpet and other flooring, lighting and paint. Many of the windows will be replaced as part of the restoration, and the front entrance will be modified to be handicapped accessible. There are also plans to restore as much of the 19th-century decorative facade as possible.

When Neighbor to Neighbor opens — probably early in 2010 — it will provide a wide array of services for women and for women with young children and be a resource center to help them find other services they need.

The three women who will operate the center — Sisters Patricia McLennon, Ramona Medina and Jean Befort — expect that the services offered will include nutrition and parenting classes, workshops on healthy living, personal counseling and information on what help is available through other agencies.

Sister Ramona noted that services and volunteer opportunities will be added and developed as the need for them is identified.

This spring, the Com-



Sister Patricia McLennon shares the floor with 17-month-old Noah Brown on a recent Monday morning at the Motherhouse, as Noah's mom, Emily, and big brother Elijah take part in other activities.

'Interim program' for women available now at Motherhouse

As the renovation work continues on the new center downtown, Neighbor to Neighbor has started a limited program at the Motherhouse. The "interim program" began Sept. 21, for two hours on Monday and Wednesday mornings.

For information on the interim programs, call Sisters Jean, Pat and Ramona at 785-243-9689.

community Foundation of Cloud County gave \$2,500 in its first-ever grant to a project of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, as seed money toward Neighbor to Neighbor.

The sisters continue to seek grants and gifts to ensure Neighbor to Neighbor can serve the women of Cloud County.

Drawing for quilt will benefit new downtown center

On Sunday, Dec. 13, a friend of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia will win a quilt created and donated by Sharon Corpstein. A colorful rendition of "Sticks and Stones," the quilt combines blue and green with high-

lights of scarlet. It is large enough to fit a full-sized bed. *(See the color photograph on page 16.)*

Tickets for the quilt drawing are available at the Motherhouse reception desk and from the Development

Office (785-243-2113, ext. 1223). Donations are welcome, but no donation or purchase is required to participate.

Proceeds will benefit Neighbor to Neighbor, helping with the renovation of the center at 103 E. Sixth St.

Lighting the way at Relay for Life

The 28-member Motherhouse Relay for Life Team raised nearly \$6,300 for the annual event, bettering its goal by nearly 25 percent.

This year the Motherhouse Team had a fundraising goal of \$5,000, just slightly more than team members raised for the 2008 event. But at the Relay on Sept. 12, they announced that had raised \$6,281 to be donated toward cancer research.

The total raised at this year's event was \$28,997.

At the overnight walk and rally at the Concordia Sports Complex, the team also received the traveling plaques for Best Team Spirit, for willingness to help other teams, and for most luminarias sold — a total of 550.

Relay for Life is a nationwide fundraising event that began in 1989. The theme of the 2009 event was "Celebrate 25 Years of Hope." In 2008, some 4,900 communities in 19 countries hosted Relay For Life events, raising an estimated \$420 million for the American Cancer society, making this the largest fundraising event of any kind.



Team members sold — and then created — more than 550 luminarias, like this one honoring Sister Mary Agnes Drees, as part of their fundraising efforts for the 2009 Relay for Life. TOP PHOTO: After dark, luminarias mark the path for Relay walkers throughout the overnight event.

2009 MOTHERHOUSE TEAM MEMBERS

Team Captains: Mary Jane Gallagher & Alfreda Maley

- ▶ Sharon Bates
- ▶ Sister Jean Befort
- ▶ Connie Bonebrake
- ▶ Donna Breault
- ▶ Sister Julie Christensen
- ▶ Rita Collette
- ▶ Rope Dorman
- ▶ Sister Pat Eichner
- ▶ Michelle Gallagher
- ▶ Tina Goff
- ▶ Sister Lucille Herman
- ▶ Arlys Hubert
- ▶ Sister Joan Ice



- ▶ Sister Loretta Jasper
- ▶ Vikki Jochems
- ▶ Virginia Johnson
- ▶ Sister Dorothy Marquez
- ▶ Sister Ramona Medina
- ▶ Sister Shirley Meier
- ▶ Marcia Mick
- ▶ Kayla Ramsey
- ▶ Sister Judy Stephens
- ▶ Sister Betty Suther
- ▶ Paula Tatum
- ▶ Dottie Vohs
- ▶ Lynn Weaver



ABOVE: As the evening begins Saturday, Sept. 12, some members of the Motherhouse Relay for Life Team relax in the well-stocked "base tent," waiting their turns to walk laps around the edge of the Concordia Sports Complex.

AT RIGHT: As darkness falls and Saturday night becomes Sunday morning, Relay participants find a variety of ways to stay entertained between walking duties. (From left) Nola Charbonneau of Concordia, Sister Lucille Herman, Sister Ramona Medina and Anita Labarge of Aurora concentrate on a game of bingo.



VOCATIONS

Answering an invitation

New director brings 'inclusion' to ministry in Manhattan, Diocese

As Sister Beverly Carlin moves into her new role as vocation director for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, she also hopes to move the definition of "vocation" beyond its usual link to the word "religious."

"I see 'vocation' as an invitation from God, calling everyone to some kind of vocation," Sister Beverly explains. "It's being who God wants us to be — whether we're married, single, in religious life, in church or not."

That is the inclusive message Sister Beverly takes with her as she moves to a new home — and her new ministry — in Manhattan, Kan., where the congregation has historically had a strong presence.

Sister Beverly succeeds Sister Anna Marie Broxterman, who had served as vocation director for 18 years. Sister Anna Marie was elected to the sisters' Leadership Council last year, and asked the congregation to appoint a successor.

In appointing Sister Beverly to the duties, the Council also created a three-person "vocation team" to support her, and offer assistance and feedback whenever she needs it.

Sister Anna Marie is a member of that team, along with Sisters Janet Lander and Jean Rosemarynoski, all of whom live in Concordia.

Sister Beverly has moved the vocation office from Topeka to Manhattan, to be a part of the Salina Diocese and to be able to coordinate her work with that of Father Jarett Konrade, the diocesan vocation director. She also notes the vibrant program that operates at St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center in Manhattan, and hopes she will be



Sister Beverly Carlin, speaking during the community assembly in June, is the new vocation director for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, and has moved the vocation office to Manhattan, Kan. There she is a part of the Salina Diocese.

able to volunteer there.

"She has a deep love for the Salina Diocese," noted Sister Jean, "and now Bev can maintain her ties throughout the diocese in her new ministry."

Sister Beverly entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in 2000, and has served for the past three years as religious education director and RCIA coordinator for St. Matthew Parish in Topeka.

A native of Osborne, Kan., she is a graduate of Marymount College with bachelor's degrees in business administration and general psychology.

As vocation director, she is responsible for a variety of events throughout the year, including Discover Camp, "Come & See" programs and other outreach projects in areas where Sisters of St. Joseph serve.

Sisters respond to landmark study of newer members

A landmark nationwide survey that garnered responses from 4,000 women and men who have entered religious communities since 1993 has drawn considerable media attention since it was released in August.

The conclusions drawn from the first-of-its-kind survey are as varied as the media outlets that have given it print space and air time.

The "Study of Recent Vocations to Religious Life" was undertaken by the Center for the Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), a Georgetown University-based research center, on behalf of the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC), a professional association of religious vocation directors, based in Chicago. The study sought to determine best practices for religious institutes in attracting and retaining new members.

Mercy Sister Mary Bendyna, executive director of CARA and principal author of the study, called the men and women religious who participated "a sign of hope for religious life and the Church."

"They face many challenges and are making a choice that family and friends don't understand," she said, "but they are embracing their call with faith and enthusiasm."

The Leadership Council of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia asked our members to reflect on the study in preparation for our November Assembly, where its finding will be on the agenda.

Sisters were asked five specific questions about what is now called "the CARA study." At right are a few representative responses to two of those questions.

▶ To read more about the CARA study, go to www.nrv.org



Longtime vocation director Sister Anna Marie Broxterman remains a part of the Sisters of St. Joseph vocation team.

Where did you feel an invitation as you read the new CARA vocation study?

The invitation is to believe religious life gives breath and life to the Church and the world. I desire to collaborate as far as possible with the Sisters on the Vocation Team. I will continue to initiate and encourage women to consider religious life. It is a life choice to share our spirit and spirituality that seems to resonate with them through our particular charism. It is the dynamic energy that is lived out through our personal gifts and talents. I want to spread the "good news" of the value of religious life in our



SISTER CHRISTINE DOMAN

world today that is witness through our total self giving as it is exuded in our members. Always a challenge!

— Sister Christine Doman
El Paso, Texas



SISTER PAT LEWTER

I felt an invitation to keep on keeping on! I am a CSJ more and longer than I have ever been anyone else.

— Sister Pat Lewter
Grand Junction, Colo.

I continue to feel hopeful about Religious Life. It is God who inspires, calls and connects women to us and to the community. I want to be present and reflect the joy I feel in being a woman religious, a Sister of St. Joseph. I want to be available to serve as a witness.

— Sister Jeanette Wasinger
Orange, Calif.

The study only served to renew and revive my zeal for the mission. I know I am a CSJ

in the fiber of my being, and everyday, I see the implications of that for our world: how I live the charism, how I pray, how I live community, are all for the mission.

— Sister Jodi Creten
Atlanta, Ga.



SISTER MARY FRAN SIMONS

I felt an invitation to be true to myself and our community to be true to who we are. We are called to a prophetic life, which often is not popular.

— Sister Mary Fran Simons
Chandler, Ariz.

I feel invited to be more active in relating to the young women who come to the Motherhouse for vocation programs — such as Discover Camp and others. It is incumbent on all of us to be role models for interested women.

— Sister Norma Schlick
Concordia, Kan.



SISTER NORMA SCHLICK

What do you see as the implications for our future regarding new members?



SISTER BETTE MOSLANDER

Some recent articles on religious life suggest that there is an upturn in priestly vocations and intimations of a similar trend in both forms of women's religious communities. But we cannot predict whether that will prove true. We must continue to move out to young women of all ages.

— Sister Bette Moslander
Concordia, Kan.

parents, gainfully employed, or actively retired human beings. We are in a different time/historical framework in 2009.

I am far more concerned about the quality of living in the day-to-day for human beings as a whole vs. the quantity of canonically vowed women religious. LOTS of folks have our spirit and live it without being canonically, vowed women religious: CSJs.

That is my intent/driving force — to pass that on!

— Sister Loretta Jasper
Concordia, Kan.



SISTER LORETTA JASPER



SISTER JODI CRETEN

God calls. God invites, and we are the instruments and nourishers, as women are attracted to our way of being in the world. The charism will draw, because we draw. Are all women who are seeking God looking for that Elusive Being in the same way? I doubt it! We have something only we can offer, and the same for other communities.

I believe that religious life will continue and I want to help in the molding of its future by my being.

— Sister Jodi Creten
Atlanta, Ga.

I think there is room in this world for diversity regarding consecrated life.

— Sister Jeanette Wasinger
Orange, Calif.



SISTER JEANETTE WASINGER

I believe there will always be women who relate to our charism, spirit and spirituality as CSJ of Concordia. They will come and they will stay. They will energize that same spirit and spirituality in the future to the world. It is God who calls women to a religious life style who seek to deepen their prayer life and give their lives in ministry.

— Sister Christine Doman
El Paso, Texas

Our founder told us to go out into the neighborhoods, find out what people needed, and respond to that need as best we could. Initially that was caring for and educating new immigrants and their children. That group has now moved into the mainstream of American life. We are still going out into the neighborhoods, and we are finding very different needs, and we are doing what we can to address them.



SISTER AGNES IRENE HUSER

— Sister Agnes Irene Huser
Independence, Mo.

Sister Rosemary Foreman beams as the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia gather around her to sing "We Are With You on the Journey" at the end of her profession ceremony Aug. 2.



We are

The newest agrégée helps define 21st ce

On her first full day as a Sister of St. Joseph of Concordia, Rosemary Foreman acknowledges that her "exterior life is not going to change much."

It's Monday, and she's taken an extra day off work, to give her time to drive back to her apartment in Topeka. On Tuesday morning she'll be back at work in the public information office of the Kansas Corporation Commission. She hasn't decided yet whether she'll wear to the office the black and gold cross she received Sunday morning.

But then she reflects on her "interior life" as Sister Rosemary, who a day earlier joined the Concordia congregation as our second agrégée:

"There's an inner warmth," she begins, trying to find the words. "It's a belonging, an inner strength, a different kind of energy, a greater confidence in what I'm about and what I'm doing... That all feels like part of the mystery of religious life in today's world."

And she understands that she is part of what will define 21st century religious life.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia went back to our roots in 17th century France to discover agrégée membership, and then revived — and, perhaps, redefined — another way for women to enter religious life.

As the congregation envisions agrégées, they are mature individuals, probably well established in their professions. They may have debts they are paying off or other financial obligations; they may have family responsibilities, such as caring for aging parents. Or they may have profes-

sions or professional contracts that would keep them from entering into a long orientation process required by most religious communities.

Rosemary Foreman understands many of those factors. During the time she was feeling called to the Concordia congregation, she faced what she calls the "middle-of-life stuff" that is common: Both her parents became ill and required care before their deaths, and she now finds herself a couple of years away from a state retirement.

She also realized that at age 58, she is older than the "cut-off date" religious communities generally use when talking about vowed members.

That, too, was an issue for Rosabel Flax, the first agrégée to join the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia as part of the reconstituted program.

Sister Rosabel had retired as a high school principal in 2004, and although she says she "felt called," she didn't really intend to pursue a religious life. "I was too old to become a sister," she says now with a laugh.

What she wanted to pursue was a career teaching math.



All the Sisters — including even those in the choir loft — face toward the center of the Chapel to welcome our newest member after Rosemary Foreman professed her vows as a Sister of St. Joseph of Concordia during a special ceremony and Mass Aug. 2.

She did that — but she also gathered around the Sisters of St. Joseph. Today, at her sixth year as a high school math teacher in Kan., and her second full year as an agrégée, she discussed her vow of fidelity in June 2008 after two years of prayer and discussion as a candidate.

She was joined by Sister Rosemary in her discussion. The two of them helped define the agrégée form of membership for the Concordia congregation. They both talked with Sister Marcia, who in 2008 became president of the congregation.

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21st century religious life



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spoke before the Congregational Senate when final approval for the agrégée program was up for a vote.

"I told them this is 21st century religious life," Sister Rosabel recalls of that Senate session in June 2006.

Sister Rosemary told the members of the Senate about her life, and about getting to know two Sisters of St. Joseph. She also told them about falling away from the Church in her early 20s and being attracted back by the way those two sisters — Anna Marie Broxterman and Jean Rosemarynoski — lived their lives.

"I had the benefit of watching how they lived and how they served 'the dear neighbor,'" she said. "At the time, I was one of those 'neighbors.'"

As she got to know more sisters and visited the Motherhouse in Concordia, Rosemary said she was "just drawn to what I felt here, what I saw here. I was overwhelmed by the historical strength of community that carries forward to today."

Without having had that same experience, Rosemary's family was surprised by her decision to join the Sisters of St. Joseph, she says. They, like her, had the experience of growing up in a Catholic home in the 1950s and '60s, but no real exposure to religious life today.

But having those family members — four sisters, a

SEE "NEWEST SISTER," page 11

Sisters reach into our history to find a definition for today

In reaching back to our roots in 17th century France, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia have discovered — and revitalized — a type of committed spiritual life for women known as "agrégées."

The order, which has grown worldwide over the centuries and now has autonomous congregations in more than 50 countries, began in the French city of LePuy in 1650. Based on research into the congregation's original constitution and rules, written by founder and Jesuit priest Jean-Pierre Medaille, the sisters now recognize that in addition to vowed members of the order, there were also *agrégées*, from a French word meaning *attached to* or *aggregated with*.

An agrégée — pronounced ah-gre-ZHEY — did not make vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. But she lived according to the rules of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and was recognized by the local people and the local churches as a Sister of St. Joseph.

In the past decades, the modern Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia studied our origins and our original spirituality, and have now revived that early practice based on what we learned. The Senate of the Concordia congregation approved agrégée membership in 2006.

The first modern agré-



SISTER ROSEMARY FOREMAN

gée professed a vow of fidelity to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia a year ago. Sister Rosabel Flax is a high school math teacher in Ness City, Kan., who spent more than two years talking and praying with the Concordia sisters before making her vow in July 2008.

On Aug. 2, Sister Rosemary Foreman became the second agrégée to join the Concordia congregation.

Three other women are currently agrégée candidates.

Agrégées are defined as those persons who commit themselves to active and inclusive love of God and the dear neighbor as expressed in the spirit and spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia. In almost every aspect, they are viewed as full members of the congregation, meaning they have a voice and a vote on congregational issues.



SISTER ROSABEL FLAX

Want to know more?

Women interested in learning more about the Sisters of St. Joseph agrégée program are invited to an information day Saturday, Oct. 17.

The day begins at 9:30 a.m. at Manna House of Prayer in Concordia and will conclude no later than 4:30 p.m. Lunch is included and is free.

For information, please contact Sister Bette Moslander at 785-243-4428 or bmoslander@mannahouse.org.

SEE "AGRÉGÉE DEFINITION," page 11



Videographer and Marymount College alumna Audrey Kalivoda poses in Lourdes Park during a late-August visit to the Motherhouse in Concordia.

Capturing an idea

Kalivoda begins work on Kansas video

When Audrey Kalivoda planned her trip to the Marymount College 2009 All-School Reunion in July, she knew she would come away with revitalized friendships and new memories.

But she couldn't have known she'd take with her an idea for a project that could benefit the people of Kansas and serve as a tribute to her love of the Sunflower State.

Kalivoda, who graduated from Marymount in 1976 with a degree in English and drama, has lived in Fairview, Tenn., almost since leaving Salina. Her first career, as she explains it, was as a photographer. But in about 2000, "I just stumbled into a second career — of videography."

Today, with a growing list of documentary videos from her Mesquite 90 Productions to her credit, Kalivoda is bringing those

Alumni UPDATE

skills home as she develops the idea that began at the Marymount reunion: A video that will be released just as Kansas begins its 150th anniversary of statehood in 2011.

She hopes to incorporate history, people and a sense of place into the project. To begin with, she has divided Kansas into six geographic regions — although she concedes that it's her home territory she knows best. Her parents still live in the tiny town of Brantford, just 10 miles northeast of Concordia.

Late in August, she was back in Concordia, video camera in hand, to capture views of the 107-year-old Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Joseph and its

SEE "VIDEO," page 11.

Alums 'Celebrate Good Times' at July's All-School Reunion

Dear Marymount Alumni, Another Marymount All-school Reunion is history, and what a wonderful piece of history the July event is. From the Friday night downtown camaraderie through the Saturday evening banquet and dance, the weekend definitely captured the theme: "Celebrate Good Times."

The liturgy in the Marymount chapel and the memorial service in the Sunken Garden were both very beautiful but emotional celebrations. Even some of the fellows admitted to tears.

The Saturday evening banquet was delightful. John Quinley, MC '79, was the emcee, and Sister Lucy Schneider, MC '48 and faculty member, opened the event with the invocation. The keynote speech by Jacquee Meredith Belcher, MC '66, was second to none.

The "homegrown" talent shared as entertainment brought back memories of the many exquisite performances presented by the music and drama departments with Barbara Evans Nichols, '85, singing "Anything Goes" from Anything Goes; Denise Seifers Slaven, '84, "Just a Housewife" from Working; Ramona Hernandez Witt, '89, "Maybe This Time" from Cabaret. John Ellis, '83, was the DJ for the dance.

We all really did "Celebrate Good Times" throughout the weekend.

For those of you who were not able to attend the reunion, as well as for those who did, check out our Web site — <http://csjkansas.org> — and click on the Marymount link to enjoy some of the



reunion. When Jacquee Belcher sends a copy of her speech, it will be posted there, too. If you have pictures you would like to share, please send them to me (address below).

Responses for the purchase of a new computer for the office

were great, and I thank each of you.

Roberta Beaudoin Bolduc, MC '65, saw to it that a new computer was delivered to the office, and Steve Bryan, '85, spent a week in the office setting it up and making sure it was all in working order before he returned home to St. Louis.

I am most grateful to all who donated to this project. It is a great feeling to know that now all of the documents are as safe as possible.

I continue to hear from alumni saying they are not getting the mailings that go out of this office. If you change your address or know of someone who is not on the mailing list, please notify me so we can keep information updated. Also, some are not aware that the MC alumni office is in the Marymount administration building, second floor north. You are most welcome to stop by anytime you are in Salina.

Wishing many blessing on each of you and all your loved ones, I remain

Sister Lucille Herman
Marymount Alumni Director

Marymount Alumni Office • P.O. Box 2485 • Salina KS 67402
Email: lcherman@yahoo.com • Phone: 785-823-8803

Eternal rest grant unto them, O God!

Members of the Marymount family we've lost

Patricia Madden McMurrer '68 Dec. 23, 2006	Doris Brodine Wrigley '46 June 10, 2008
Rawlie Sullivan Admin. April 28, 2008	Jane Lewis Kucharo '54A Feb. 20, 2009
Marcella Lecuyer Kovanda '64 March 22, 2009	Kizzie Faye Stanford Zook '60 April 9, 2009
Jeanette Reichert Jenkins '69 July 2, 2009	Mary Jo Ryan Kalivoda '61 Sept. 14, 2009

Video will show off Kansas history, landscapes

CONTINUED from page 10.

grounds and gardens.

The Motherhouse was a priority, she says, because, "Growing up, when we came to town, it was just there. It was so much a part of what Concordia was to me."

On this visit home and to the area around Concordia, Kalivoda also shot video at the World War II-era prisoner of war camp north of the city and the Hollenburg Pony Express Station near Hanover, in Washington County. "I also shot lots of flowers —

they were just so beautiful in the fields and everywhere," she said.

In future trips she hopes to capture the Brown Grand Theatre, the National Orphan Train Complex and "The Wall" in downtown Concordia.

But she also wants to capture the grandeur and variety of the Kansas landscape.

"People in Tennessee all think Kansas is flat and boring," she says with a laugh. "I want to be able to

▶▶ To see more of Audrey Kalivoda's work, check out her web site at www.mesquite90.com

show what a wonderful state this really is."

One of her earlier video projects was designed in part to dispel that "flat" notion. "Kansas Canyon Lands of the Arikaree Breaks" features the landscapes and history of the unexpectedly rugged area just north of St. Francis, Kan., in the far northwestern corner of the state.

Kalivoda expects the finished 150th anniversary video to be about 80 minutes in length and to be available in the fall of 2010.

Christmas Open House set for Sunday, Dec. 13

We invite neighbors and friends to our second annual Christmas Open House on Sunday, Dec. 13, from 2 to 4 p.m., at the Motherhouse.

Please let us know you'll be attending, by calling the Development Office (785-243-2113, ext. 1223) or emailing Sister Carmel Garcia (cgarcia@csjkansas.org).

During the open house, we'll have a drawing for the quilt to benefit the new Neighbor to Neighbor program. (See page 4.)



As part of the rehearsal Aug. 1, Rosemary Foreman, foreground, and Sister Anna Marie Broxterman arrange decorations at the altar of the Sacred Heart Chapel.

Newest sister shares celebration, 'whole new view' with family

Continued from page 9.

brother-in-law and a nephew — attend the Aug. 2 Mass and profession of her vow "opened up a whole new view for them," she says. "They had not seen this community and had not seen what it is to be a sister today."

She sees herself — and the agrégée form of being a sister — as part of the way the congregation will move from today into the future.

As religious communi-

ties, and the broader Catholic Church, struggle with the challenge of fewer people making a serious commitment to serve, Sister Rosemary believes agrégées and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia can be a model that could be emulated.

"This is a true blending of real everyday life experience and the spiritual charism of this congregation," she says. "It allows us to benefit from the strengths and wisdom of both."

'Agrégée' definition may change with time

Continued from page 9.

There are three significant differences, however.

▶▶ "Vowed sisters" profess the canonical — meaning governed by Church law — vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. As part of the vow of poverty, an individual sister relinquishes all personal wealth and income; at the same time, the congregation assumes responsibility for her economic well being for the rest of her life.

"Agrégée sisters" profess a vow of fidelity to the congregation, but it is noncanonical, meaning that it is not part of Church law and is instead a private vow between that sister and the Concordia congregation. It also means that the agrégée does not relinquish her finances to the congregation, and the congregation assumes no financial responsibility for her.

▶▶ Also, vowed sisters begin their religious life with a formal "formation" that includes a postulancy and novitiate that are, together, about three years. During this time, they have left their previous life, but haven't yet taken up their works as a Sister of St. Joseph. For agrégées, the period of being a candidate may be about the same length of time, but they do not leave behind their outside lives. Instead, they meet with mentors and study around their regular work and life schedules.

Other congregations of St. Joseph have developed similar definitions or are doing their own study, but the Concordia congrega-



Rosemary Foreman, left, and Sister Marcia Allen pour water from two pitchers to join together in a bowl, symbolizing the joining of a new sister with the Sisters of St. Joseph. The bowl used was one Rosemary's parents received as a wedding gift. Rosemary's pitcher was a gift she made while in high school for her mother.

tion is believed to be the first to recognize agrégées as full members of the community.

In Concordia, the definition of who may be an agrégée will be refined as individuals feel called to the community, explained Sister Marcia Allen, the president of the congregation.

"This opens up our charism to people who might not have traditionally given thought to religious life," Sister Marcia said. "We haven't answered all the questions, but we will — as they're asked."

Honoring the land, honoring the Sisters

Bishop Coakley presents 2009 Century Farm Awards

The Sisters of St. Joseph received a surprise honor Aug. 16 when we hosted the annual Rural Life Day at the Motherhouse in Concordia.

Seven Roman Catholic families received the Monsignor John George Weber Century Farm Award for owning or farming the same land in the Salina diocese for 100 years or more.

But an eighth award was presented at the end of the program, honoring the Sisters of St. Joseph for farming our land in Concordia since we arrived in 1884. Receiving the plaque on behalf of our Catholic congregation of women were Sister Anna Marie Broxterman, who had welcomed the crowd that filled the Motherhouse auditorium, and Sister Judy Stephens, who formerly served as a member of the diocese's Rural Life Committee. Both sisters currently serve on the congregation's Leadership Council.

Another surprise Sunday was the presence of Monsignor Weber, for whom the awards are named. Monsi-



As part of his presentation at Rural Life Day Aug. 16, organic gardener Steve Mitchell discusses plans for a community organic garden on a large plot in the northeast corner of the Motherhouse grounds.

gnor Weber, who recently celebrated his 93rd birthday, was a longtime advocate of the Rural Life Committee and the stewardship of the earth it represents.

Also taking part in the presentations was Salina Bishop Paul Coakley, who gave both the opening and closing prayers.

The main speaker was

Steve Mitchell, a native Concordian who is now in his second growing season as the organic gardener for the Sisters of St. Joseph. He also farms land west of Concordia that has been in his family for more than 100 years.

"One of the joys in farming," Mitchell told the standing-room-only audience, "is to grow a crop and see it go

into the kitchen and be prepared, and then see people enjoy it — that's what I have at the Motherhouse."

Mitchell explained the crop rotation he's using on the 170- by 105-foot garden just to the south of the Motherhouse and detailed his efforts toward using organic substances and practices "for the good of the earth, and for the sisters' health."

But shunning non-organic chemicals is not without its difficulties, he conceded, "Squash bugs are still a challenge," he said with a laugh. "We keep trying different things..."

As part of the program, the work done by Sister Ann Glatter — who was the Motherhouse gardener for 60 years — was also recognized. And Sister Ann was on hand to offer her encouragement to Mitchell and his efforts.

Mitchell also discussed plans for a community garden that will use organic methods. The garden, in the northeast corner of the Motherhouse grounds, will be a 100- by 200-foot plot broken



Bishop Paul Coakley of the Salina diocese listens to the history of one of seven Roman Catholic families that received the Century Farm Award Aug. 16.

into individual garden spaces that will be the responsibility of the participants.

The only stumbling block has been access to water, Mitchell said, and sisters are seeking grants or gifts to pay for a well that will serve the garden plot.

Sister Betty Suther, who is on the committee planning the community garden, said they hoped to have it available next spring, but that depends on finding the needed funds to get a well drilled and operating.

Century Awards recognize seven Catholic farming families for longevity in Salina Diocese

Sister Lucy Schneider speaks on behalf of her brother, John J. Jr., right, and the Schneider family that has farmed on land west of Salina since 1905.



The seven families receiving the 2009 Century Farm Awards were:

▶ **EDWARD H. KEGLE** of Clyde, who farms land that was homesteaded by his great-grandparents in 1876.

▶ **DEAN KOCH** of Clyde, whose great-grandfather homesteaded near Clifton in 1877 and moved to the land west of Clyde in 1908.

▶ **HERMAN J. KOCH**, who farms the land near Clyde that his grandfather bought for his father in 1902.

▶ **THE MUTHS FAMILY PARTNERSHIP**, which began with Joseph Muths when his

family moved to the Tipton area in 1887.

▶ **JOHN J. SCHNEIDER JR.**, who farmed land west of Salina that his father, John Sr., purchased in 1905. John Jr., who took part in the Aug. 16 program, deferred to his younger sister — Sister Lucy Schneider, a member of the Concordia congregation — to relate the family's history.

▶ **THE EDGAR SCHROEDER FAMILY**, which farms land southwest of Tipton that was purchased by Charles and Frances Schroeder in 1905.

▶ **PAUL SPLICHAL**, whose grandparents purchased their farm in Munden in 1905.

Sister Venard Venus: Feb. 13, 1910-Aug. 26, 2009

Eulogist: Sister Mary Jo Thummel

Vigil: Aug. 27, 2009, at the Motherhouse in Concordia

Sister Venard Venus was born Feb. 13, 1910, on a farm south of Gorham, Kan. Her parents were John Wesley and Johanna Elizabeth Donovan. She was given the name Mabel Cecilia. Her two brothers, Raymond and Chester, and her sister Beatrice Steinert all preceded her in death.

For her first four years of school, Mabel attended the one-room Winterset School.

True to her middle name of Cecilia, Mabel started piano lessons at the age of 7.

At the age of 9, Mabel and her family moved to Longmont, Colo. There she was taught by the Franciscan sisters until she graduated high school in 1927.

In the fall of 1929 she went to Marymount College. It was there that she decided to enter the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia.

She pronounced temporary vows on Aug. 15, 1936, along with her band members Sister Ann Loretta Moore, Sister Marie Norbertine Dreiling, Sister Carmella Heidrick and Mother Therese Marie Stafford.

One early mission that was important to her was Lake Linden, Mich., because it was there that she was invited to teach Latin in the public high school. She was always proud of that accomplishment and of the students whose lives she touched there.

An appreciative student, on the occasion of her 50th Jubilee, wrote:

You were my Latin teacher, I know, but too, you were something more than that. You were an understanding, sympathetic and most rewarding teacher I had ever known.

Over the years Sister Venard also served on our Kansas missions in Salina, Damar, Leoville, Beloit, Park, Junction City, Tipton, and in Chicago and St. George, Ill., and Grand Island, Neb.

Then, she said, "My last 16 years on mission were spent in Oakley, Kan. Even after retiring, I helped with the liturgies and became involved in Bible study groups, and activities in the parish. I left there with many beautiful memories."

People there also had beautiful memories of Sister Venard. Mayor Mona Close proclaimed May

3, 1991, as Sister Venard Venus Day in Oakley.

Music, of course, was Sister Venard's priority and her teaching ranged from kindergarten through high school.

She earned a bachelor's degree in music education from Marymount College and a master's in music education from Chicago Music College.

I lived with Sister Venard in Lake Linden, Mich. After a bout of locking horns, we became fast friends. She had an all-school (first- through eighth-grades) marching band that won all kinds of awards throughout the Upper Peninsula. The parents help design and make the uniforms and we were all proud of how good our school band sounded and looked.

Sister Venard and I crossed



Homecomings

paths once more when we both served in Oakley.

I remember one very monotone fifth-grade boy there who was determined to canter for the children's Masses. Instead of discouraging this young man, Sister Venard worked with him all through the fifth and sixth grades before he left for public school. A number of years later, I heard the then-college-age young man sing at his grandfather's funeral. His voice was rich and full and he sounded wonderful. This is only one of the many acts of encouragement and caring I witnessed Sister Venard perform with the young and later the old.

Along with her musical talents, Sister Venard was a craftswoman. She crocheted, made fancy pin cushions out of tuna cans, crafted scratchers from milk jug handles and nylon netting, and made Christmas ornaments and many other things out of plastic canvas. Most of what she made, she gave away.

She taught me to crochet and to read crochet patterns while we were in Michigan and I have always been grateful for her calling forth this talent in me. Many a Christmas stocking has been filled because she taught me this skill.

Sister Venard had a great love of life and adventure and wasn't afraid to try anything new. We ventured together to many craft and county fairs, corn festivals, hot air balloon festivals, and card clubs, to name a few. The fun was in the adventure, the challenge, the trip and those who accom-

panied her.

One of the highlights in her life was the little "care packages" Dick Lewis (Sister Eucharista's nephew) sent her and which she gleefully shared with others.

In her last months, Sister Venard had to surrender her life little by little but I know she never let go of trying to pray or be present to God in prayer. Her rosary was constantly in her hands and she appreciated an Our Father or Hail Mary being prayed at her bedside. Sister Venard's last Commitment to Mission Statement reads: "As I enter into my 100th year of life, I peacefully look to God's presence in prayer, knowing that all is in God's hands."

Sister Venard finished her life review (written on Aug. 12, 1997) with these words: "I will finish with the same thought as I did on my jubilee in 1991 — The journey which began on Sept. 7, 1930, continues and, through the people and events in my life, I know that God walks with me. I listen and witness with my life."

On the last page on her notebook Sister Venard has "My Resolution." It may be something she wrote herself, but I can't be sure. Here it is:

*I won't look back;
God knows the fruitless efforts,
the wasted hours, the sinning, the regrets;
I'll leave them all with Him who blots the record,
and mercifully forgives, and then forgets.*

*I won't look forward;
God sees all the future,
The road that, short or long, will lead me home,
and he will face with me its every trial,
and bear with me the burdens that may come.*

*But I'll look up —
into the face of Jesus,
for there my heart can rest, my fears are stilled;
and there is joy and love, and light for darkness,
and perfect peace, and every hope fulfilled.*

Thank you, Sister Venard, for listening and witnessing with your life for 99 years. We are glad you have looked up into the face of Jesus and found joy, love, light and peace and that your every hope will now be fulfilled.



Sister Helen Urban: July 10, 1914-Sept. 17, 2009

Eulogist: Sister Bette Moslander

Vigil: Sept. 20, 2009, at the Motherhouse in Concordia

We come together to honor and to celebrate the life of Sister Helen Urban, a Sister of St. Joseph for 75 years who died around supper time on Thursday, Sept. 17, 2009, at the Motherhouse. Helen's death comes as something of a shock, not because she was not ready to die, but as far as we knew she was neither the oldest nor the sickest. As a matter of fact I remember with clarity that as we were leaving the Chapel to go to the cemetery for the burial of Sister Venard a few weeks ago, Sister Helen took my hand, pulled me down to her level and her eyes laughing, she said in a loud clear voice, "I'm the next one. Remember what I say, I'm the next one."

In her characteristic direct, no-nonsense manner Helen has left a long and beautiful "life review." It is a very human account of the woman she has become. She recounts the ups and downs of her growing-up years on the plains of western Kansas. She writes with uncompromising honesty about her life as a young woman as she attempts to adjust to the rigors and restrictions of convent protocol and the pain of frequent moves in her early teaching career. An earthy kind of woman, Helen never hesitated to say it the way she saw it.

Helen was born in Topeka on July 10, 1914, and baptized at St. Joseph's Church. Not long after her birth the Urban family returned to Pfeifer, Kan., to live on a farm that Helen's grandmother had given them. Her family, like that of so many of our Sisters from western Kansas, was not well to do, but they were a close family and faithful and dedicated to the Church and their Catholic faith. The small town of Pfeifer was a school mission of Sisters from Concordia, and each fall the sisters came to teach in the parish. Several of the incidents Helen records in her life review give insights into day-by-day parish life in those days: baptisms, first communions and first confessions; pastors and sister teachers; births and deaths; real life, lived in the flow of seasons in a rural community and in the dynamic and very human reality of a small Catholic village on the plains of Kansas.

Helen wanted to go on to high school but there was no high school in the town. Eager for learning she took the eighth grade over again and Sister Alcantara gave her extra supplementary work. Her fortunes changed when Sister Helena Robben was assigned to Tipton as principal of the high school

there. Recognizing Helen's ability and desire for an education, her family with Sister Helena's help, made arrangements for Helen to board with the Hake family and go to school. After graduation, and a few months of discerning and hesitating, Helen decided that she really did want to become a Sister of St. Joseph.

"I did find the postulancy and novitiate a big challenge," she wrote, "but I took it all in stride, not considering anything too difficult or unreasonable. Some times however it seemed such a waste of time to ask so many trivial permissions. All seemed routine and I don't remember ever spiritualizing them."

The early years of Helen's life in the convent were a mixture of wonderful ex-



Homecomings

periences of closeness to God, and difficult experiences of putting up with the all too human limitations and trivial injustices of the hierarchical rules and customs of religious life of that time.

Frank and uncensored in her memories, Helen reflects on the first year on mission where she was assigned as a cook and music teacher, and in both departments found herself untrained and overburdened. Mid-year the Sister who taught the upper four grades fell ill and Helen was asked to take over her classroom.

The following summer Helen began the process of achieving her college education. That fall she began a three-year assignment in Michigan where she taught the seventh grade, returning to Marymount College each summer for a few more hours toward her degree.

In the years that followed Helen experienced short-term assignments in various western Kansas schools. Her story of those years provides a good historical account of the rigors and the poverty of the Church in western Kansas in the first half of the 20th century. It was an immigrant Church and each small town had its own character determined by the concentration of ethnic majorities, Volga German, French, and Irish, the people, strong in the faith, but poor in most other ways.

Vatican II 1963-65 was a critical event in Helen's life. On one page that she left in her personal file she wrote, "The Holy Spirit has been very

present in my life since Vatican II. I welcomed the word freedom, but I was not sure of the real meaning at first. I came to realize that it meant the right choices, the right values in living my religious life. I soon became aware that I was the one to make the ordinary decisions in my life, not my superiors. It was a great feeling and my self-image developed tremendously."

She seems to have come to a new love for the Church and a new sense of herself. She continued, "The Church took on an entirely new meaning: The People of God. It seemed that I became one with every person and my commitment to make the reign of God evident became very, very real. From here on my vows became very special for I could see the purpose of each as being related to God's People."

In 1991 Helen retired at Medaille Center, Salina, where she served as a hospital visitor and was active in the parish. Reluctantly, she retired to the Motherhouse in 2002, having spent 50 years in the parish schools, and several more years in various volunteer services in Junction City and Salina.

Helen's life is a telling account of the energy and the self-emptying love that characterizes the lives of many of our women who contributed toward the education in the faith of hundreds of children throughout this central plains country. Her life, not unlike that of hundreds of other grade and high school teachers, was spent laying the foundation of the Church here in Kansas.

So now, we remember Helen, her steadfastness and her tireless energy in serving others. Her life reminds us of the letter Paul wrote to Timothy (II, 1: 5-10): "We find ourselves thinking of your sincere faith — faith that first belonged to your family ... and which we are confident you also had... The Spirit gave you no cowardly spirit, but rather one that made you strong, loving and wise..."

Helen, your life has been poured out generously, lovingly, in the service of the Church and God's people. We give thanks for you and for the simple, direct forthrightness of your life. As you surrender your life into God's loving hands may you delight in the fulfillment you know now, hearing the voice of your Divine Lover, "Come my beloved, enter into my everlasting peace." We join you in your own great "AMEN."





Sister Mary Keller: Feb. 25, 1917-Sept. 19, 2009

Eulogist: Sister Christella Buser

Vigil: Sept. 21, 2009, at the Motherhouse in Concordia

It was an honor when Mary asked me to give her eulogy. Her death is a loss, but also a gift to us.

Sister Mary's parents, Peter and Mary Volk Keller, and most of her siblings, came from Russia to America in May 1908. She was born Feb. 25, 1917, in Collyer, Kan., and was given the name Mary Magdeline. She was the 11th of 14 children; all of her brothers and sisters preceded her in death.

Her childhood and teen years were lived on a farm 1½ miles east of Collyer, and she attended grade and high school there. From 1935 to 1938, Mary and her sister Sue went to Denver to find work. They managed to find something with very minimal pay. On their days off a group of them got together to go to the movies, dances or amusement parks.

In 1937, she decided to join the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia. After much prayer and discernment, on Feb. 12, 1938, she joined two of

her sisters who were already in the community: Sisters Francesca and Renilda. In her Life Story, she wrote: "Sister Sabinus, the Postulant Mistress, took me upstairs and had me dress in the postulant uniform. I immediately experienced a deep peace and joy and a feeling of "Yes, this is the place for me and this is where I am going to stay." She received the habit and the name Sister Anthony on Aug. 15, 1938.



Homecomings

She recalled, "The novitiate years were good, but I had no desire to do them over."

Mary's first mission was Fairbury, Neb., where she was housekeeper for two years. The following year, she began her studies toward a bachelor's degree to qualify to teach grade school. Her 33-year teaching career took her to Chicago and Aurora, Ill.; Concordia, Beloit and Salina in Kansas; Silver City, N.M.; and Grand Island, Neb.

After Mary received her master's degree in education, she was assigned as principal of the grade schools in Grand Island and Salina.

In 1973, she changed her ministry from teaching to parish work. She said of her years visiting the elderly and shut-ins, "They were very appreciative of everything and they were life-giving to me."

In her yearly commitment statements, Mary repeatedly committed herself to praying for justice and peace in a world of violence and war, for the whole world that human rights and freedom may be respected everywhere: "To be a loving presence to one another and to be united in heart and spirit through our charism and the Eucharist."

In her Life Story, she wrote, "I have always valued my religious life highly and have appreciated community life. I considered the renewal in the Church and religious life a great blessing. I welcomed the changes whole-heartedly."

I visited Mary every week while she was at Mt. Joseph. Each time she would ask me to water her plant even though it did not need it. She would always ask me when I was coming back.

Toward the end of her life, she was not able to react to conversation, but her eyes always responded to the blessing I gave before leaving her.

Mary, this is my last blessing, but you will always continue to be a blessing to me. May you rest in God's love.

A special reflection by Sister Helen Urban: My life after Vatican II

EDITOR'S NOTE: With new questions being asked about the role of sisters in the 21st century, we want to share the thoughts of Sister Helen Urban, who added this short piece to her life history in 1990. Sister Helen celebrated her 75th anniversary as a Sister of St. Joseph of Concordia in June, and she died Sept. 19, 2009.

The Holy Spirit has been very present in my life since the Second Vatican Council. I welcomed that word freedom, but I was not sure of the real meaning at first. I came to realize that it meant the right choices, the right values in living my religious life. I soon became aware that I was the one to make the ordinary decisions in my life, not my superiors. It was a great feeling and my self-image developed tremendously.

The Church took on an entirely



Sister Helen Urban, on her 75th Jubilee, June 6, 2009

new meaning: The People of God. It seemed that I became one with every person and my commitment to make the reign of God evident became very, very real. From here on my vows became very special for I could see the purpose of each as

being related to God's people.

My vow of poverty gives me the freedom to become very involved in helping spread the Good News in so many ways. Only by relinquishing possessions can I minister to the poor. My vow of chastity makes me free to keep moving. I can take risks

that married people with concern for their families and for each other cannot be asked to take. Obedience is a public statement, that I bind myself to listen within and am commissioned by a community through its leaders.

Prayer has always been very important to me, but during these years after Vatican II, my prayer became important in developing a contemplative attitude toward life. It helps me keep a proper perspective of life. It helps me focus on the most important values of the kingdom. Sincere and regular prayer returns me to the center — to love, which is the greatest gift and the greatest commandment.

Our culture is characterized by segregation and alienation. My religious community, by living the Gos-

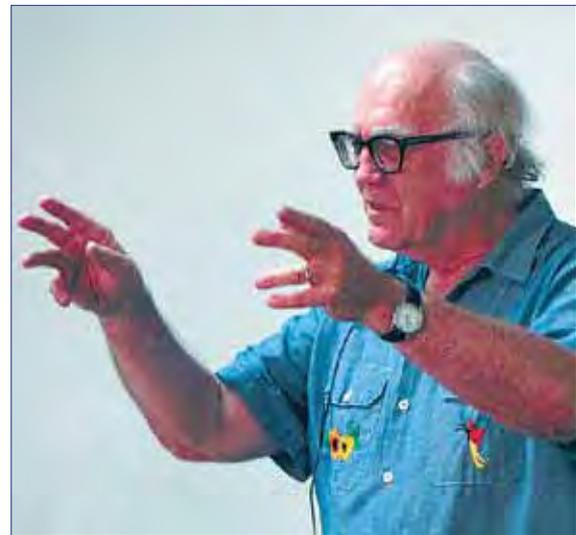
pel, can challenge these structures that depersonalize and alienate; it proclaims an alternative way: "This is how all will know you for my disciples, your love for one another" (John 13:35).

The Eucharist has always been the heart of my spiritual life as long as I can remember. However, when the Mass was allowed in the vernacular, my longed-for dream was fulfilled. It is now and always will be the most fundamental expression of the reality of my life.

For me the vowed life after Vatican II was a deep call and a deep grace. Lumen Gentium (*The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, 1964*) called me to enrich, challenge, encourage and stimulate the Church by my life and my action.

All the news that didn't fit

Snapshots of events at the Motherhouse and Manna House of Prayer



FAR LEFT: Two of the monks from the Buddhist Temple of Kansas in Salina chant a peace prayer during the International Day of Peace ceremony at the Motherhouse Sept. 20.

TOP LEFT: Sister Julie Christensen, right, laughs with the children taking part in the first-ever Kids Camp at the Motherhouse in August.

ABOVE: Peace activist Jim Douglass talks about the life of Robert F. Kennedy during the 2009 Theological Institute at Manna House of Prayer.

BOTTOM LEFT: This colorful quilt will be given away at the 2009 Christmas Open House, to benefit the Neighbor to Neighbor program. *For details on the quilt and the open house, see page 11; for more on the new center in downtown Concordia, see page 4.*

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