



Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate

Dedicated to Service for Six Decades

Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate

General Council

Sister Miriam Mitchell, SHSp
General Superior

Sister Marian Murray, SHSp

Sister Mary Fagan, SHSp

Sister Marguerite Connors, SHSp

Sister Gabriella Lohan, SHSp



Eight Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate celebrated their 60-year anniversaries this summer, and there are more common denominators: all were born in Ireland, all journeyed to Texas in 1947, and all were professed in 1948. But the lives of these consecrated women have a more remarkable common thread that affect all the children, families, and communities which have been touched by these consecrated women: all of them have dedicated their lives to the Service to Others.

Sister Madeleine joined the community in Mt. Bellew, Co. Galway on July 2, 1946 and arrived in San Antonio less than a year later. She has held a variety of teaching ministries in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. As a working retiree, Sister Madeleine is a catechist at Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish, a social minister at Christian Assistance Ministry, and



one of the Motherhouse receptionists and kitchen supervisors

Also a working retiree, **Sister Florita** entered the Holy Spirit community on December 8, 1946. She came to Texas on June 24, 1947 and began her college education at local universities. Both her BA and MA degrees are in education. She taught in Texas and Louisiana until she retired in 2006. At the present time, Sister Florita enjoys making rosary beads and doing some household chores. On Thursdays, she ministers to Catholics at Baptist Hospital.

Sister Bertha came to San Antonio from County Longford, Ireland, in 1947. She earned a degree in education from St. Mary's University and taught in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Sister Bertha then worked in health care ministries for ten years before retiring. She devotes time to helping prepare breakfast and supper at the Motherhouse. A native of County Galway, Ireland, **Sister Lucy Collins** was the tenth of twelve children. She entered the convent in

(Continued on page 2)



*Sister Mary Bonaventure,
SHSp
1914-2007*

Remembering A Life Committed to Others

Sister Mary Bonaventure was born in 1914 in Limerick, Ireland. Sister Bonaventure was nineteen when she made her first vows, and four years later she made final vows, dedicating her life to God and the service of others.

This lifelong educator became a legend in Tarrant County, where she was principal of Mother of Mercy School (1962-1975) and associate

superintendent of Fort Worth Catholic schools (1974-1983). Sister Bonaventure's most remarkable achievement was the co-founding of the Cassata Learning Center (now Cassata High School), an alternative school for students who had dropped out of school but wished to return and finish their educations. Sister worked at Cassata until she retired in 1998. Sister Bonaventure died peacefully at Holy

Spirit Motherhouse on November 29, 2007.

A few months ago, a posthumous service was held at St. Mary of the Assumption Church to honor Sister Mary Bonaventure and her work in the Diocese of Fort Worth. The service was celebrated by Bishop Kevin Vann of the Fort Worth Diocese and attended by hundreds of Sisters friends, supporters, and former students.

Dedicated to Service for Six Decades...

(Continued from page 1)

1946 and arrived in San Antonio a year later. She was formerly known as "Sister Grace." Her educational ministry was in Louisiana, in Texas' Rio Grande Valley and in Dallas. Sister Lucy retired from teaching in 2002. She is currently on the board of directors for Habitat for Humanity. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, arts and crafts, and most spectator sports.

Sister Patricia entered the convent on January 6, 1947. Her first assignment was at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in San Antonio; she taught there for ten years. She also taught in Dallas, Corpus Christi, Ft. Worth, Bellaire, and Houston, Texas and in Shreveport, Louisiana. At the present time, Sister is sacristan for the Motherhouse. She prepares for liturgies, makes flower arrangements, and takes care of the altar linens. On Saturday mornings, she serves as a catechist at Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish.

While a high school student in Ireland, **Sister Gabriel** answered God's call to religious life and entered the convent in 1946. In 1947, she came to San Antonio where she completed her religious and professional formation. For the next twenty years, Sister Gabriel taught in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. She then became a school administrator and devoted the next

thirty years to that ministry, including four years as the Associate Superintendent of Schools in the Diocese of Fort Worth. In 1995, Sister Gabriel was chosen by the U.S. Department of Education to be one of the fifty state recipients of the "National Distinguished Principal Award." She was one of only two Catholic school principals in the country to receive this award. In 2001, Sister Gabriel developed a literacy program at the Healy-Murphy Child Development Center, where she has worked until the present time. As she considers her role as a working retiree, Sister Gabriel is currently devoting her energies to promoting vocations to the Community.

Sister Mary Walsh entered the community in 1946 and arrived in San Antonio in 1947. After she completed her formation and formal education, she began her teaching ministry in Texas and later included Louisiana and Mississippi. Sister Mary has also devoted her service to the sick and infirmed Sisters at the Motherhouse. She prepares meals for the Sisters who are in the infirmary and are unable to come to the main dining room.

(Please see page five for a full story on Sister Madelen and her ministry.)

The Legacy Continues: New Motherhouse Progress



Sisters, building personnel, and convent staff gathered on the grounds of the new building for the blessing and elevation of the new cross. The ceremony began with a hymn and a prayer service prepared by Sister Gabriella. The 17-foot cross which will

be a beacon for all on the San Antonio community's eastside was guided onto and secured on the 56-foot tall tower.



Alan Neff, of Robey Architecture describes the cross saying, "the cross is based on the Congregational cross for the Sisters of the Holy Spirit. Thirteen feet of the cross projects above the tabernacle roof. The width of the cross is six feet, and the circle diameter is three feet. The cross is constructed of galvanized square tube steel sections which were ground smooth to create the appearance of one monolithic material. The highest point of the cross is approximately

69 feet above the surrounding grade. The cross appears to be delicately resting atop the tabernacle tower, whereas, in fact, it is fully welded to an 18-inch steel sleeve that is rigidly connected to the superstructure of the tower. Four decorative steel cables from the bottom of the cross anchors it to the surrounding interior wall corners of the tower."



The photo above is a view from the roof of the current Motherhouse, and it shows the Cross and the ongoing work on the new Motherhouse. Below is the complete architect's model. Come and see the building's exciting development and growth!



Now Featuring: Sister Magdalen

Gaelic and the Spanish language similar? What an outrageous thought! Indeed, but much of what Sister Magdalen thinks (and does) might be considered outrageous. Defined by Merriam Webster, *outrageous* means “exceeding the limits of what is usual or that which is not conventional or matter-of-fact.” Outrageous possibilities often unleash our creativity to see a new angle, or free us to explore the unknown, or place us into the hands of Providence to find a way, begin a new journey, or be led by the Holy Spirit.

In Sister Magdalen’s case, for most of her 60 years as a Sister of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate, embracing the outrageous has characterized her service to others. In the true spirit of Mother Margaret Mary, Sister Magdalen’s work has usually set out to exceed the limits of what was usual! Whether she was teaching literature or managing a school or bringing life’s basic needs to those in need of care, Sister Magdalen did not let conventional expectations or arbitrary boundaries limit her service to God’s people.

Born on the Achill Island in Ireland, Sister Magdalen was the fourth of eight children born to Patrick & Brigid Kilbane. She joined the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate in 1946 and came to the United States in 1947. Her formal education includes a bachelor’s degree in English and History from St. Mary’s Univer-

sity and a master’s degree from Our Lady of the Lake University and St. Mary’s University, where she majored in English and education.



During the academic year, Sister Magdalen taught elementary and high school from 1952 to 1977 in Mississippi, Texas, and Louisiana. She typically spent summers at the Motherhouse — until one particular summer began to change the pattern of her days.

In 1970, an invitation from the Oblate Priests to work in some of their missions in Oaxaca triggered in Sister Magdalen a desire to serve the indigenous people. This experience also put her in touch with our Congregation’s former roots when she visited Casa de Cuna — an institution where Mother Margaret and several of her Sisters ministered from 1901-1915. In 1982 after investigating several ministry possibilities, Sister Magdalen, along with her companions, decided in 1984 to accept an invitation to work in *Santas Perpetua y Felicitas*. Living and ministering in this area of Oaxaca kept them in close contact with the Indigenous from the Sierra Nevada mountains, and they soon found themselves ministering to the Zapotecs and Mextecos. Besides training catechists and providing for cooking and sewing lessons, Sister Magdalen also introduced some new and very creative projects.



These included rural stoves, solar ovens, ecological toilets and the introduction of glass windows in people’s homes.

On occasion the Sisters were called on to help individual families, as was the case with Arsenio, who suffered a stroke at the age of seven after he witnessed the onslaught of Hurricane Paulina, which devastated the Oaxacan coast. Through the Mission Fund for the Poor, Sister Magdalen took care of his hospital treatments and accommodations for the entire family for one year until he was discharged. Before the family returned to their Sierra, she also used some of the funds to build the family a new home, which they still enjoy. Arsenio, now nineteen years old and still paralyzed on his right side, will finish his high school education in June, after which he plans to enter a seminary to study for the priesthood. If not accepted, he will pursue a degree in engineering.



In a few more months, Sister Magdalen plans to retire, but not really *retire*, as she is looking forward to some other type of ministry in the San Antonio area.

Message from Sister Miriam –

Dear Friends,

Already half way through Spring we were feeling the heat of summer here in San Antonio as the thermometer inched close to 100°F. Each sizzling day, I thank God for the blessing of air conditioning. At the same time I am so aware of the multitudes of people who are without, not just comforts, but the basic necessities of life. So as many of us take a little time with family and friends to relax and be refreshed this summer, we continue to strive to be “a sign of hope in a world of injustice and poverty.”

It is with great joy we send you this second issue of **Sisters’ Journey**. Thanks for all the feedback I received after we published the first issue. Your feedback and comments will help us improve

the information we share with you.

In addition to the wonderful stories in this issue, there are many other signs of hope all around us, which we will cover in the next newsletter. We just celebrated the Profession of First Vows of one of our Sisters here in San Antonio, and in August we will celebrate the Permanent Commitment of two Sisters in Zambia!

After a year of prayer, study, and discernment, we have given a new “face lift” to our Vocation Program. Sister Gabriel Hession and Sister Genevieve Cunningham are the new Co-Directors of the Vocation Office. The harvest indeed is great, please pray with us that God will send an abundance of laborers into the harvest so that the mis-

sion of bringing the Compassion of Jesus to the poor will not only survive but flourish!

Thanks for your ongoing love, prayers and support. On the second Sunday of every month, Mass is offered in our Motherhouse chapel for all our friends and benefactors. Know that you are also remembered daily in our prayers. May God Continue to bless you abundantly.

Blessings always.



Sister Miriam Mitchell, S.H.Sp.
General Superior



...Please pray with us that God will send an abundance of laborers into the harvest so that the mission of bringing the Compassion of Jesus to the poor will not only survive but flourish!

Sister Albert’s 100th Birthday Celebration Continues a Legacy



Sister Albert Franer celebrated her 100th birthday this year. The gift of her life was recalled by all present at her birthday celebration at the motherhouse.

The Irish government provides a “Centenarian Payment” to each Irish citizen or Irish-born person who reaches 100 years of age. In commemoration of her birthday, Sister Albert received a beautiful letter from Ireland’s president, Mary McAleese, along with a check for \$3,967.05! Sister Albert presented the check to Sister Miriam to help with the new building fund.



50-Year Jubilarian Sister Marian – In Her Own Words

My journey towards becoming a Sister of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate began on August 7, 1956, when I entered the convent in Mount Bellew, County Galway, Ireland. I was 18 years old then, and I had just finished high school in June of that year. Shortly thereafter, my two companions and I came to San Antonio, Texas, where we finished the first phase of Religious Formation.

I feel I feel blessed to have lived in these particular historic times during which some major events and changes have occurred within the Church and in society: the Second Vatican Council, the Civil Rights Movement, the Kennedy Administration, the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King and of both President Kennedy and his brother Robert, the overthrow of many Latin American dictators, the anti-Vietnam movement, and the deaths of several of my former students in that war. These events affected me profoundly during the 60's and 70's as a young Sister. I believe my values and attitudes as a vowed Christian woman were honed and solidified during that time.

Since 1958 when I made my first vows as a Religious, I've had an interesting, varied, and challenging life. My geographical hub has always been San Antonio, but different ministries or study experiences have taken me to different



places: Shreveport and Crowley in Louisiana, Dallas, San Antonio, and Alice in Texas, Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, and finally, during the past 19 years, I have worked in Mexico, the first year in Mexico City and the next 18 years in the Diocese of Tepic, Nayarit.

My ministries over the past 50 years include teaching in high schools and elementary schools, internal ministry in my Congregation as part of the Leadership Team, and parish ministry. During the 1980's our Congregation decided to respond to the desire of many of our Sisters to live our charism beyond the U.S. boundaries. While some volunteered for Africa, along with other companions, I volunteered for Mexico.

My ministry in Nayarit has become more varied over the years. I have been involved in neighborhood organization in rural areas, bible study with adults, formation of catechists, promoting and coordinating a farming project through Heifer International. After 11 years in that rural area, I moved to the city of Tepic, the center of the diocese, where I serve with Sisters from two other congregations in a Huichol indigenous neighborhood in the city. In this neighborhood the housing was substandard, so we invited Habitat for Humanity to help. Over the past few years, 11 families have either built a new house or improved their existing home.

This past year I became part of the Congregation's Leadership Team, which has involved crossing the border each month for meetings and other activities in San Antonio or other places where our Sisters live and work. The challenge to do justice to both ministries is great but, ultimately, very rewarding.



Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate

*Founded in Texas in 1893
to Serve the Poor in Their Need*

301 Yucca Street
San Antonio Texas 78203-2399

Phone: 210-533-5149

Fax: 210-533-3434

E-mail: mmitchell@shsp.org

www.shsp.org