



Sisters of the  
Holy Spirit  
and Mary  
Immaculate

# Sisters' Journey

Summer 2011

## Rejoicing With Our Jubilarians

Ten Jubilarians – Sisters Laura Melody and Kathleen Mary Walsh (70 years); Sisters Eileen Mannion, Marguerite Connors, Marie Leonard, Mona Gavin, Rosario O'Connell, Theresa O'Toole, Theresa Queally (60 years), and Janet Nall (25 years) – were honored on June 3 for their service to others through their commitment as Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate. A special Mass was celebrated at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church to mark the important milestones for these Sisters.

The individual Jubilarians are as follows:

### 70 Years

**Sister Laura Melody:** Sister Laura grew up on a farm in Ireland, and during evening chats by the fireside, her mother often would encourage the children to consider their life path and think about "doing something for God." By the time she was in high school, she felt more and more drawn to religious life to educate poor children. After joining the Holy Spirit Sisters, Sister Laura spent decades moving through teaching assignments in elementary and secondary schools in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. These assignments confirmed for Sister Laura how education could change lives, but none so much as her 20-year career teaching English at St. Philip's College. After her "official" retirement from college teaching, Sister Laura became an active advocate for housing and neighborhood improvement. She also further developed her artistic gifts as an acrylic and oil painter.

**Sister Kathleen Mary Walsh:** Sister Kathleen Mary was born into the family of Daniel and Maria Walsh. When she was 15 years old, she went to live with her aunts in Cappamore, County Limerick, Ireland. Her Aunt Lena's faith and prayer life greatly influenced her openness to religious life, and soon



Despite a recent fall, Sister Kathleen Mary enjoyed her Jubilee celebration.



### 585 Years of Service!

Front, L-R: Sisters Laura Melody, Janet Nall, Mona Gavin, and Marie Leonard.  
Back, L-R: Sisters Eileen Mannion, Theresa Queally, Rosario O'Connell, Marguerite Connors, Theresa O'Toole, and Kathleen Mary Walsh.

Sister Kathleen Mary asked to join the Sisters at the convent in Mount Bellew. When, as a postulant, she hurt her knee and was sent home to recuperate, she was devastated. Her fondest memory of those early years was when Sister Magdalen invited her back to prepare to go to Texas.

Her greatest challenge was encountering injustice and being unable to do anything about it. Sister Kathleen Mary's ministry as a Sister of the Holy Spirit has taken her to some memorable places, but one of the most compelling was teaching at Blessed Sacrament School in Shreveport, Louisiana, where she taught for nine years. It was her first encounter with African American children, and she thoroughly enjoyed teaching them. Another was her work in Natchez, Mississippi where she served in pastoral ministry for 26 years. She recalls that there was a wonderful family spirit among the parishioners who genuinely appreciated her efforts to help their children.

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## Holy Spirit Sisters Welcome Alexis Aikins



Surrounding Alexis (center) with their support: (L-R) Sisters Kathleen Huguet, Gabriel Hession (Vocations Director), Theresa O'Toole (Spiritual Director), Veronica Cahill, Katrina Ruane (Formation Director) and Marian Murray ("Sister Companion" during Affiliate Program).

Alexis Aikins was joyfully welcomed into the Pre-Novitiate on Sunday, June 19, 2011. This is the first formal stage in her journey of discernment towards becoming a member of the Sisters of

the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate. The ceremony was held at St. Cecilia Convent, San Antonio, where the Formation Community currently resides. Participating in the ritual of welcome were members of

the Formation Community as well as other Holy Spirit Sisters who have walked with Alexis as faith companions on her journey.

Alexis was born in Inglewood, California and moved to Plano, Texas when she was twelve years old. She continued her education in various parts of Texas, eventually qualifying as a Licensed Master Social Worker. She currently serves on the staff of CEMA Hospice in San Antonio.

During this coming year Alexis will continue her ministry as a Social Worker while also participating in the Inter-Community Pre-Novitiate program. Here she will meet members of other religious communities who are on a similar journey, and she will learn more about religious life. We rejoice with Alexis and pray that the Holy Spirit may continue to guide and strengthen her on her journey of faith.

## SHSP Heritage Notes: Led By the Spirit

*The following vignette continues our series on the heritage of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate.*

Mother Margaret Mary Healy-Murphy, the foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate, was led by the Spirit to begin her work with a commitment to serve the African-American community. On Pentecost Sunday in 1884, a priest's sermon preached about the need to educate African-Americans, and Mother Margaret commented to her niece, "This will be my work someday. It is the great need of this time. The Holy Spirit has helped me to make this decision."

Anticipating the importance of community support, she visited with a San Antonio banker who said, "for your senseless Negro venture I will give you not one penny, but if you assure me that you will exclude Negroes, I will gladly erect an entire new school." Not easily daunted, Mother Margaret went on to build St. Peter Claver Mission in 1887 with her own re-



*A basement auditorium was converted into a classroom to accommodate the families seeking a Catholic education for their children. Photo by Bill Wood, circa 1950.*

sources, the first Catholic Church and first Catholic free school for African-Americans in Texas.

Excerpted from: Hickman, Sister L.E. (2010). *Led By the Spirit: Mother Margaret Healy-Murphy*, **Momentum**, September/October 2010, pp. 59-61.



## Rejoicing With Our Jubilarians

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### 60 Years

**Sister Marguerite Connors:** Sister Marguerite says the greatest blessing of her life was being born into a family of Irish immigrants who highly valued faith, family, a good work ethic and "stick-to-itiveness." Such an environment led her to examine possibilities of becoming a missionary, and "back in the 1950's, every place south of St. Louis was considered 'mission land'." Her early years as a Sister of the Holy Spirit were marked by happy memories listening to stories and tales by the older professed Sisters, and "their example and willingness to serve rubbed off" on her. The ministry example of the Sisters and the college education she was provided prepared her to become a teacher, a principal, an associate superintendent and a superintendent of schools. As she elaborates, "Working hard has been easy for me; I had two great teachers: mother and dad."



The Jubilarians' Mass included a renewal of their vows. Pictured L-R: Sisters Eileen Mannion, Marie Leonard, Theresa Queally, and Marguerite Connors.

**Sister Mona Gavin:** Living in Mount Bellew, County Galway, Ireland close to the convent, Sister Mona felt the influence of the Sisters in her life from a very tender age. That, in addition to her mother's deep religious faith, led her to join the Congregation at the age of 16. She recalls that one of her fondest memories is travelling to her first mission to Lebeau, Louisiana with Sister Eithne: "She was so gentle and kind and she told me all about Lebeau, so by the time we arrived I was at ease." In the late 1970s, Sister Mona developed a program geared to the needs of retired Sisters, and she worked with other religious congregations to enhance care for their elderly. Sister Mona currently serves as the coordinator of the retired Sisters of the Holy Spirit, keeping them active in volunteer work in hospitals, nursing homes, and day care for the elderly.

**Sister Marie Leonard:** Sister Marie grew up in County Meath, Ireland, where her Catholic education and her cousin, Sister Concepta Clarkin, triggered her interest in religious life. Hearing of Sister Concepta's missionary experiences moved Sister Marie to follow in her cousin's footsteps. After joining the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and com-

ing to San Antonio, Sister Marie found two challenges: intense Texas heat and teaching while pursuing her studies. But the support of the Sisters helped her through her religious and educational formation and for that Sister Marie is grateful. Her teaching career was gratifying, but after retiring from teaching, Sister Marie found a fulfilling second career for the past 17 years as a hospital chaplain. She says, "it has been the highlight of my life as I minister to God's suffering poor."

**Sister Eileen Mannion:** Sister Eileen was born in County Galway, Ireland to Ellen and John Mannion. Her first career was that of an educator, serving as a teacher and principal in several schools in the Dallas-Ft. Worth and San Antonio areas. She served as director of religious education at Little Flower Catholic Church in San Antonio before her most recent ministry shift: serving as the Coordinator for the Sisters of the Holy Spirit Formation House in San Antonio. Sister Eileen also has "gone green" — she is an accomplished vegetable and flower gardener.

**Sister Rosario O'Connell:** Sister Rosario had two great influences in her life that prompted her to answer the call to be a religious. One was her family, "a constant example of a solid prayer life with a sense of reaching out beyond themselves." The other was the French order of Sisters who staffed her high school and taught her to seek to "do something significant with her life." Her first degree, in teaching, left her with positive and loving memories of children and their parents; the second degree, a master's in social work, prepared her for a new direction. She worked in Houma, Louisiana with the poor and abandoned for seven years before she was moved to found the Louis Infant Crisis Center. For 32 years now, the home for bruised and abandoned children has expanded into three sites that help children have a sense of love and belonging and God's care for them. Their goal "always was, and is, to prevent bruised children from becoming bruised adults." She continues to work in the homes and is grateful to God and the people of Houma and communities beyond who support her ministry.



Sister Rosario presented roses to Our Lady on behalf of deceased Jubilarians.

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## Serving God's People: Sister Dorothy Carey



This narrative continues our series of stories highlighting the service of particular Sisters. Here, in her own words, is Sister Dorothy Carey's story.

I am the oldest child born to Patrick and Eileen Carey. Two other children followed in quick succession, Marie and Rosaleen, and a few years later, Paddy and Mona. I feel blessed to have been planted in such a warm setting nestled in the singular beauty of the West Clare countryside and in a home where faith practices were a regular part of everyday life.

A big picture of Jesus pointing to his heart loomed over us children from the wall of the kitchen, in Ireland the heart of home life. His eyes used to fascinate us because they seemed to follow us wherever we stood. In retrospect, it seems to me that He started arranging my destiny at a very early age as a Holy Spirit Sister.

We knew Sr. Magdalen, the director of our convent in Mount Bellew to which a secondary school for girls was attached. My mother some-

times spoke of Sr. Magdalen and Mount Bellew; the name had a musical ring to it and my child's imagination pictured it as a most beautiful place. After my First Communion, my mother sent me into her bedroom to pray before another big picture of Jesus. I recall pouring out my child's heart to Him, and though I had never met a Religious, I told Him I wanted to be a nun!

Later on after two years at the Convent of Mercy Secondary School in Kilrush, my adolescent consciousness balked at a very strict nun principal's requiring that we translate Ceasar and Virgil from Latin into Gaelic, so I begged my mother to let me go to the convent school in Mount Bellew. What a change! I greatly admired and loved our Holy Spirit Sisters—Sisters Ignatius, Fidelis, and Concepta—to the extent that a few years later found me landed at the Motherhouse in San Antonio.

*I feel very grateful to have been God's instrument in many areas of service and very privileged to have had the energy and the opportunities to share his love...*

I cannot thank God enough for my vocation as a Holy Spirit Sister. Though like everyone's life it has had its share of ups and downs, it has also been wonderfully enriched by the sup-

port and friendship of sisters, by opportunities for educational advancement, and especially by opportunities for spiritual growth and Christian service. I feel very grateful to have been God's instrument in many areas of service and very privileged to have had the energy and the opportunities to share his love as a Catholic school teacher, as Catholic school principal, and for a few years as public school teacher. After Vatican II, I felt God's Spirit urging me to move into a wider scope of service: to make as many as I could possibly reach aware of His infinite love and the wonderful eternal destiny He has in store for us.

Particularly fulfilling have been my many years directing religious education, starting the RCIA process in three parishes, working with Valley Interfaith, helping undocumented immigrants, securing through effective advocacy housing for needy families, and meeting incidental needs of desperate economically poor persons.

All my thanks is to God, to my birth family, to my Holy Spirit Sister family, and to the many friends who have been the channels of his love and support along the way. May he continue to uphold me in my present part-time parish ministry to adults at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Edinburg, Texas. May he bless our Community with generous energetic young persons eager for Christian service, because the harvest is full of spiritually starved persons but the laborers are fewer and fewer.

Remember "Thursdays in Black" :

Wear black in solidarity against violence of all kinds!



## Recent Activity at The Motherhouse

### General Chapter 2011

Every four years, the Sisters gather to set direction for the Congregation for the next term of four years. The Sisters met March 13-19, 2011 for prayer, reflection, conversation, and goal-setting. Below is the Congregation's "Direction Statement" for the next four years.

#### Direction Statement

*In this time of hope in the midst of darkness and the transition that is taking place in religious life, we Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate, gathered in Chapter 2011, have heard and shared with each other the promptings of the Holy Spirit. From our personal and communal prayer and sharing, we know that God has called each one of us:*

- *to extend the mission and charism of Mother Margaret*
- *to be aware of, and responsive to, the changing needs of our society and church, and*
- *to understand that our own suffering enables us to respond compassionately to the sufferings of others.*

*In response to the promptings which we have heard, we, as women of faith, are called to develop a more contemplative lifestyle that will sustain us and compel us to become a stronger prophetic witness for justice in our world today.*



### General Council Installation

On June 24, 2011 the new General Council of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate was installed during ceremonies at the Motherhouse. The new council includes General Superior Sister Miriam Mitchell and a team of Councilors: Sisters Marian Murray, Gabriella Lohan, Bernie Barrett, and Marguerite Connors.

During the installation and blessing ceremonies, each new Council member presented a reflection. Sister Gabriella commented on the fact that every leaf on a tree is important to the life of the tree. She remarked that so, too, is every member of the Congregation important to the life of the community. Her remarks were echoed with the planting of a tree after the service.

*Each Council member chose a Sister to sign her with the Sign of the Cross. Here, Sister Bernie is signed by her cousin, Sister Mona.*



*The new General Council is installed. L-R: Sisters Miriam, Marian, Gabriella, Bernie, and Marguerite.*



*Following the installation service in our chapel, a tree was planted in expression of our commitment to care for the environment.*



## In Remembrance: Sister Mary Garrehy



Sister Mary Garrehy died peacefully at Holy Spirit Convent on June 15, 2011.

Sister Mary was born in County Clare, Ireland, on April 28, 1921. She had three brothers and two sisters. She was preceded in death by her three brothers, Denis, John, and Patrick Garrehy. She is survived by two sisters who live in

England, Ann Garrehy Sims and Joan Garrehy Crick, several nieces and nephews and a host of friends.

Sister Mary joined the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate on October 3, 1938. She loved to teach, and she earned her master's degree in education at St Mary's University in San

Antonio. She taught in the Congregation's various elementary and secondary schools in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. She also was an adjunct Professor of English and Spanish for St. Mary's University.

After retiring from teaching, Sister Mary continued to remain active in many volunteer ministries. An exceptional soprano, she led singing for the Sisters' Mass almost to the end of her days. Additionally, she devoted herself to support the Congregation, especially the mission work of her Sisters in Mexico and Zambia, Sister Mary kept a sewing machine in her small room, and she devoted her time and her modest resources making and selling items at craft sales. She organized several annual craft sales at the Congregation's area schools, and she encouraged other Sisters to contribute handiwork that would benefit the Congregation's ministries.

Her Sisters, her family, and her friends remain in fond remembrance of Sister Mary Garrehy's many talents and the generosity with which she shared her gifts.

### Next Come and See:

Oct. 21-23

Spend a weekend with us; come and see what it is like to be a part of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit.



For more details, contact Sister Gabriel Hession at [sghession@hotmail.com](mailto:sghession@hotmail.com) or check our website: [www.shsp.org](http://www.shsp.org)

### Jubilarians 2012

Preparations for next summer's Jubilee Celebration will be underway soon.

Our celebrants are:

#### 60 Years

Sister Anne Finnerty

Sister Beatrice Donnellan

Sister Bernadette McNamara

Sister Mary Margaret O'Grady

Sister Mildred Gordon

Sister Sheila Sullivan

#### 50 Years

Sister Christina Mitchell



## Rejoicing With Our Jubilarians

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**Sister Theresa O'Toole:** "God breaks into our lives when our spirit is ready to listen," begins Sister Theresa's narrative, and her story is one in which she has listened to God's call from her early years growing up in Ireland and hearing from her parish priest about the important missionary work to be done in Texas, to her joining the Congregation and adjusting to convent life. She has listened to the "God of Surprises" and has welcomed varied ministries as elementary and secondary teacher, school administrator, convent superior, and later a missionary overseas, when God led her to work in Zam-



bia for almost five years. Sister Theresa is now at Oblate Renewal Center, where she has been a spiritual director for the last 15 years.

**Sister Theresa Queally:** Born in Lisconner, County Clare, Ireland, Sister Theresa Queally's inspiration to become a nun came from God as well as from her parents, Mary and John Queally. After joining the Sisters of the Holy Spirit she received her degree in education from Incarnate Word College and her life-long ministry as a teacher has taken her to numerous Catholic schools in Texas and Mississippi, with the majority of her work in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area. Sister Theresa remains active as a teacher at St. George School in Ft. Worth. She says "my joy in life has been and is in teaching children. When I



Jubilarian Sister Laura Melody cuts the celebratory cake with Sister Miriam Mitchell.

can see the joy in a child's face that she has grasped the concept I am teaching, that is the greatest joy that I could have."

### 25 Years

**Sister Janet Nall:** Working as a hospice RN, Sister Janet began discerning her call to religious life when she was 31 years old. A retreat at the Motherhouse was one circumstance that influenced her openness, and she recalls that the biggest challenge was learning to live in community. Sister Janet's fondest memory of the early years was "getting to know the Sisters and developing my relationship with Jesus Christ." As a second year novice, she lived in Oaxaca, Mexico with Sisters Magdalen and Kathleen. She describes those months as "a profound conversion experience,...it began my desire to work with the poorest of the poor." She later ministered in Zambia for 11 years, and says it "was the happiest time of my life."



The Jubilee Mass was celebrated at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in San Antonio, Texas. A reception followed in the parish hall.



## *Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate*

*Founded in Texas in 1893  
to be a passionate voice for justice*

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### *Message from Sister Miriam—*



Dear Friends,

In this moment in the history of religious life, when its very meaning has been called into question, I am honored and humbled to be re-elected by my Sisters to this position of leadership, to be able to lead with wonder and gratitude who we are and what we are as Sisters of the Holy Spirit in today's world.

Praying with the texts of Scripture following Easter and Pentecost can lead us to wonder what it was like to live in that time of new birth. The courage, the generosity, and the living faith of the new disciples were extraordinary. Reflecting on that leads me to recall the conversations that generated so much excitement during, and in the days that followed, our General Chapter: truly a time of “new birth” for our Sisters.

There was an eagerness to commit ourselves to live more contemplatively and more prophetically—that is, to deepen our commitment to our mission and charism as Sister of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate.

Our voices have always been present wherever we minister. Now, more than ever, we are called

to be recognized as having voices that truly matter. Although fidelity to justice for people who are truly marginalized and voiceless has been consistent and clear throughout our history, we must now be committed to speaking in a way that requires new courage, new generosity, and new expressions of fidelity to the Gospel.

We are committed to speaking clearly, in solidarity with our co-workers and all of our brothers and sisters, with absolute conviction. At the same time, we are committed to speaking in a contemplative and humble manner. And we are committed to inviting young (and maybe not-so-young) women to join us in this commitment. How else will we be attentive and faithful to the “something new” that God is doing in our midst?

Thank you for helping us make that “something new” become a reality in our world.

Gratefully in the Holy Spirit,

Sister Miriam Mitchell, SHSp  
General Superior

*Behold  
I am doing  
something new;  
do you not  
perceive it?  
Isaiah 43:19*

When you have finished reading this newsletter, kindly pass it along to a friend.