



Sisters of the
Holy Spirit
and Mary
Immaculate

Sisters' Journey

Winter 2010-2011

Exploring and Preserving Our Heritage

Preparations for the Heritage Room in the new Motherhouse unearthed some treasures that had been long forgotten as well as some that had been waiting for an appropriate display opportunity. Some of the items included items that had belonged to our foundress, Mother Margaret Healy-Murphy, as well as research and articles that had been written about her.

One such article that re-surfaced gives us great insight into “a fifty-four year old widow of definite affluence and social prestige” who relocated to San Antonio in 1887 and “came with a solid reputation as a community activist and a Catholic philanthropist.” The research was compiled in 2002 by Dr. Anne M. Butler, former editor of the *Western Historical Quarterly* and now Professor Emeritus at Utah State University.

Dr. Butler’s article, “Building Justice: Mother Margaret Murphy, Race, and Texas,” appeared in the *Catholic South-*



A visitor to the Heritage Room examines many of the photos and artifacts on permanent display.

west Journal (Vol. 13, pp. 13-36) and details the hotbed of racism prevalent in the developing city of San Antonio. Into that fray marched Margaret Murphy. A woman of “formidable energy and determination who alone donated money for the construction of...a church that allowed black Catholics to leave the back pews and balconies of white churches for their own house of worship.” The new parish included a 500-seat church and a free school for children.

Dr. Butler notes that the new parish was “a launching place for cultural and spiritual expression among blacks,” and it also was the springboard for Mrs. Murphy’s new vocation: “one that promoted social justice for persons of color and wedded that cause to the religious activism of young women.” Butler describes Margaret Mary Healy Murphy as a force to be reckoned with, a woman of definite affluence and social prestige who confronted the “nineteenth century race, class, and gender constraints and joined with others...to reorder the dynamics of equality in the Lone Star State.”

In addition to Dr. Butler’s exceptional article, Mother Margaret recently has been featured in museum displays in Gal-

Meet the “Angels of the Archives”

Mrs. Andi Estes (right) and her friend, Mrs. Cecilia Gutierrez Venable spent many days setting up our Heritage Room in the new Motherhouse. Mrs. Estes owns the ranch that once belonged to Sister Margaret Mary.



Mrs. Venable is an archivist for the library collections of Texas A&M Corpus Christi. They both are committed to preserving our heritage. We are so blessed to have their assistance with the congregation’s archives.

Sister William



Sister William Dwane, S.H.Sp.

Sister William Dwane died peacefully at Holy Spirit Convent on Saturday August 7, 2010. Sister William was born Mary Ann Dwane in County Offaly, Ireland, on August 17, 1918.

She felt called to religious life at an early age, and when she discussed her call one afternoon her parish priest, he suggested he write to the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate. He had just received a letter from Sister Assumpta O'Dwyer, who asked him to help get vocations for San Antonio, Texas.

She became a Sister of the Holy Spirit on December 8, 1935. After receiving a B.A.

degree in Education, Sister William devoted most of her religious life to teaching black children in underserved areas in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. In her autobiography, Sister William described two great joys of her life as the opportunity to earn her bachelor's degree and her Silver Jubilee trip in 1960, allowing her to go back home after 25 years away from her homeland.

At her rosary service, it was remarked that Sister William's life was marked by a steady, quiet "Yes" to that command of Mary, "Do whatever He tells you." Sister William's life was a series of saying "Yes" to the Lord and to the people she loved and served so faithfully.

Sister Mercedes

Sister Mercedes Kiely died peacefully at Holy Spirit Convent on July 6, 2010. She was born Catherine Therese Kiely in San Francisco, CA on January 8, 1927. She lived in a home where Catholic values were stressed and appreciation of education was a part of everyday life. She recounts in her autobiography, "my father read aloud to my mother...he also recited English poetry he had memorized as a youth." She joined the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate in 1945 and became known as Sister Mercedes.

Sister Mercedes received a B.S. in English,

earned an M.Ed., then she completed her Clinical Pastoral Education. She wrote, "although I am willing to serve any patient to whom I am assigned, I ask to have an opportunity to minister to inmates from local correctional facilities, battered and abused family members, and patients with AIDS."

Sister Mercedes lived a full and happy life, doing what she loved to do: bringing the compassion of Jesus to the poor and marginalized through her ministry in school and in the jail. We trust that God smiled and said to her, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"



Sister Mercedes Kiely, S.H.Sp.

Sister Teresa



Sister Teresa Healy, S.H.Sp.

Sister Teresa Healy went home to God very suddenly on August 1 while visiting her family in Ireland. Sister Teresa told them she was not able to go to Mass on Saturday evening because she was not feeling well. When the family went in to wake her on Sunday morning, they discovered she had passed away, and the doctor pronounced her dead "of natural causes." The family requested that Sister Teresa be buried with her parents in the cemetery in Moylough.

Several Sisters were in Ireland on their vacations and they changed their plans to be with Sister Miriam and Sister Gabriella at the funeral for Sister Teresa.

Born in 1932 and professed as a Sister of the Holy Spirit in 1949, Sister Teresa ministered as a teacher in schools operated by the congregation in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Her final ministry was a position as Coordinator of Religious Education at Mother of Mercy Church in Houston.

Preserving Our Heritage, *continued from page 1*

veston at the Texas Seaport Museum and this fall in a national magazine, *Momentum*, a publication of the National Catholic Educational Association. The museum exhibit includes a larger-than-life photo of Mother Margaret and describes her passage to America and entry into the states via the port of Galveston. It applauds her pioneer efforts to educate African-Americans in Texas long before it was popular to so do.

The *Momentum* article describes Mother Margaret as “a woman of the West,” anxious to respond to the needs of her time. The publication details Mother Margaret’s attention first to the poor and the sick and then to the need for educating African-Americans. The needs of immigrants consumed the resources of the American church and local towns, but the growing African-American population made its presence known.

The forward-thinking Mother Margaret was quick to identify the needs of the people. As she wrote to her adopted daughter, “...this will be my work someday; it is the great

need of the time. The Holy Spirit has helped me to make this decision.” Sister Lou Ella Hickman notes, “the call of the Spirit was for her anything but simple or easy...she would become God’s instrument in helping to heal the aftermath of a national conflict, a brokenness that would continue for years to come after the war was over.”

The adventuresome nature of the foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate, Margaret Mary Healy-Murphy, is being noticed by people around the nation. For the Sisters and our friends, it is a gentle echo of our heritage and our charism of the Sisters: a commitment to be a passionate voice for justice.

Butler, A.M. (2002). Building Justice: Mother Margaret Murphy, Race, and Texas, *Catholic Southwest*, vol. 13, pp. 13-36.

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

Look for more excerpts from these articles about Mother Margaret in future issues of *Sisters' Journey*.

Although not unexpected, Sister Betty’s death came rather quickly and peacefully on February 24, 2010. Sister Betty was alert and responded with a smile and glint in her eye to the whispered messages and prayers of the Sisters who spent time with her.

Some of the significant “mysteries” in Sister Betty’s life were highlighted in the rosary reflections prepared by Sister Miriam. After the rosary, several of the Sisters, including her long-time friends, Sister Maureen Finnerty, Sister Mary Garrehy and Sister Ferdinand, shared their memories of Sister Betty. Beneath

the seemingly cynical quick retort, so characteristic of Sister Betty, was a very caring and perceptive person. As we fondly remember Sister Betty, we recall her favorite Psalm as shared by Sister Mary Fagan, “Work new signs and work new wonders; show forth the splendor of your right hand and arm.” Today she has met the God of her life face-to-face and so we join with her asking God to continue to “work new signs and work new wonders” for our Congregation and for each one of us. God be with us all Sister Betty, ‘til we meet again.—*Sister Mary Margaret*

Sister Betty



Sister Elizabeth (Betty) Higgins, S.H.Sp.

*Message from Sister Miriam—**For all you do and have done
for us, we are grateful.*

Dear Friends,

We have crossed the threshold into 2011, and we pray that, during each day of the New Year, you will experience some of the quiet that Advent held as well as the jubilation of Christmas morning with the celebration of God's gift to us: Christ the Lord.

On behalf of all the Sister of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate, thank you for the many ways by which you continue to help us bring the compassion and love of Jesus to some of the world's most oppressed people.



We, as a Congregation, are blessed by your partnership with us as we carry out our mission to serve the poor in their needs - and this includes children, families and individuals from all walks of life and from a variety of faiths. Thank you so much for all you have shared with us this past year: you have supported us in prayer, you have given moral and financial support, and you have spent time with us. For all these gifts we are very grateful, and we continue to "live simply, so that others may simply live."



We continue to carry out the mission and charism of our beloved foundress, Mother Margaret Mary Healy-Murphy. I am very grateful to those of you who have supported us on a regular basis over the years, even despite the economic challenges we have all faced. We all realize that, when the economy is bad, those who suffer most, are the people who, every day, struggle for survival— even in good times.



If you have traditionally responded to our annual mission appeal, we ask you at this time, once again, consider a gift. Every gift is a blessing to us in our ministry!

May you experience God's unconditional love during the new year and enjoy success, happiness and good health in your personal life and in the lives of those you love. May Christ's Peace be with you always.



Gratefully in the Holy Spirit,

Sister Miriam Mitchell, S.H.Sp.

General Superior

Recent Activities at The Motherhouse

Seven young women recently spent a weekend at the Motherhouse for our most recent "Come and See." Sister Gabriel Hession and Sister Genevieve Cunningham, vocation directors, planned the time to include liturgy, various presentations, opportunities for reflection, and visits with our Sisters in the retirement center,



"Come and See" Weekend: February 11-13, 2011



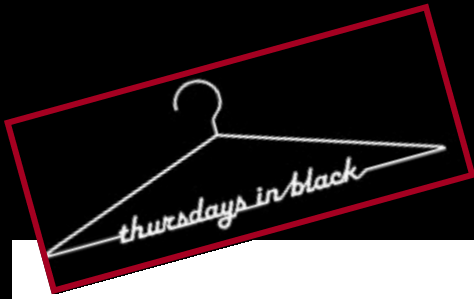
Come and experience what it's like to live in a convent. Participate in prayer, meals, and recreation with the Sisters. Walk in the shadow of Mother Margaret, our foundress. Learn about our charism, our ministries, our spirituality, and our great love for God's poor.

Spend a day, a weekend, a week with the Sisters to learn first-hand how the Sisters live out their lives through the vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience. We have two "Come and See" weekends annually. Our next date is February 11-13, 2011.

To add your name (no strings attached) to our "Come and See" mailing list, email Sister Gabriel Hession at sghession@hotmail.com or call 210-533-5149, ext. 142.

Last spring, nine women participated in the "Come and See."

THURSDAYS IN BLACK



In solidarity with The Domestic Violence Prevention Network, The Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate encourage you to wear black every Thursday and on other appropriate occasions as a statement against violence. Wearing black symbolizes saying NO to all kinds of violence.

Tell others about the symbolism and invite them to participate., too!

The idea for the *Thursdays in Black* project emerged from the *Women in Black* movement, a spontaneous, worldwide, grassroots movement, where both women and men gather to protest violence. Their goals are to build a greater awareness of world violence, to support peace efforts, to provide support for those who are suffering, and to encourage actions that help to implement these goals. They say "no" to all forms of violence, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, societal violence, torture and war. The *Women in Black* movement has inspired people all over the world to stand in their own towns and cities, in market places or squares, and other public places, dressed in black, silently protesting the many forms of violence that are becoming increasingly forms of violence that are becoming increasingly intrinsic to the everyday realities that characterize our different cultures and societies.

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



*Sisters of the Holy Spirit
and Mary Immaculate*

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to be a passionate voice for justice*

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