

Holyoke SPs Bless, Dedicate 140th Anniversary Window

Nearly 200 people gathered at Providence Place on November 17 for the unveiling, blessing and dedication of the Congregation's 140th Anniversary commemorative stained glass window. Sisters from area Congregations, clergy, colleagues, family members, and Providence Place residents, joined the Sisters of Providence and Associates in this final public Anniversary celebration.

The event opened with a brief concert by cellist Peter Dzialo and pianist Tamila Azadaliyeva. Their moving



performances filled the chapel with exquisite music.

Sister Kathleen Popko then shared the history of the development of the stained glass window including engaging artist Brother Martin Erspamer, OSB, a Benedictine monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in Indiana.

Brother Martin visited the chapel, walked the grounds, engaged in in-depth conversations with the Sisters, and studied their history before applying his talents to designing the window. He chose the

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Group photo of Sisters of Providence and Bishop Timothy McDonnell posing in front of the Anniversary window.

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From your executive director ...

As I write this page for our Winter newsletter, it is very snowy and frigid here in the Midwest. Winter has definitely arrived and with a bit of a vengeance it seems. We have a foot of snow in our yard and were kept inside by temps not seen in decades here! Yet there is something a bit cozy about the winter season that I enjoy.

The air is sharp, there is the crunch of the snow beneath your feet, and the wind chill sweeps across your face and tingles in your bones....and then thankfully you make your way inside. Ahh...the warmth, the coziness of afghans around you, the quiet and stillness you experience as you peer out the window and observe the silence of a land snow bound and covered in pure white as far as you can see.

Winter is a time for solitude, reading, contemplation, and long conversations with friends. A certain peace can take possession of your inner being. Maybe it is because the sometimes frenetic pace of the Christmas season is over, the decorations are put away now as the feast of the Three Kings has come and gone, and life is starting to return to a bit of normalcy. Winter can be a great leveler, as its snows cover and make all things look clean, fresh and unmarred.

As I was musing about this season of winter and its gifts to us, I remembered a line from *The Little Prince*. Perhaps you know it. "To become spring means accepting the risk of winter. To become presence means accepting the risk of absence." We know that for spring to bring the new life it does there must be some "down time," some dormant waiting before the new life emerges. In my family we have been waiting, too....and finally, after two decades since my last nephew appeared, we welcomed a new baby boy, born on the feast of the Three Kings. As my nephew and the daddy says: "there's a new little man on the throne now!" Welcome, Spencer!



Sister Barbara McMullen, CDP
WPC executive director

In this issue of Collaboration we see new life emerging already. We see wonderful projects celebrating years of life, ministry, history, anniversaries, and justice-making. We witness new endeavors bringing hope and healing to poor countries, like Haiti. We welcome new members, celebrate vows, welcome new associates. Providence women and men do so much good in this world!

I close with a little quote by Vesta M. Kelly that I came across a few years ago. "Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look what they can do when they stick together."

May you experience the gift of winter, see a really great movie, like "Philomena", or "Saving Mr. Banks", curl up with a good book, or snuggle up with a quilt, and make yourself a cozy cup of tea. Winter has wonderful lessons to teach us. May you be blessed in your winter learning.

Barbara



Holyoke SPs Dedicate Commemorative Window

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Gospel image of the Sower of the Seed for the window explaining: “Just as the Sower scattered the Word of God to take root wherever it could so the ministries of the Sisters of Providence have spread the Good News to the people whose lives they have touched.”

Sister Kathleen shared Brother Martin’s interpretation of the window’s symbols: “The Sister of Providence depicted in the window lets the seeds of the Congregation’s good works fall from her hands to those in need. The olive branch reflects the Sisters’ works of healing — body, mind, and spirit; the anchor, the renewed sense of hope their varied ministries bring to many; and the dove, their efforts for peace and justice. The passage of golden light projects the image of faith, the Sisters’ motivating force, and the result of their many good works. The water image references the Connecticut River, and the Sisters’ concern for all of God’s creation and the sustainability of Earth. The star, a symbol of hope,” she continued, “is the fixed point that helps the Sisters navigate the uncharted regions that must be crossed. It represents the Sisters’

hope — past and present — and their risking to move into the forefront of religious and healing ministries, following their vision with unwavering trust in God’s Providence.”

Sister Kathleen also used the occasion to thank publicly retiring Bishop Timothy McDonnell, “a pastoral leader to all and a good friend to women religious.” She added, “We are ever grateful for you, for your service to our Diocese, to women religious in general, and to the Sisters of Providence in particular.”

The chapel program ended with Bishop McDonnell and the Sisters processing to the window located in the chapel vestibule. As the Bishop blessed and dedicated the window, he read its inscription — “Never rest on what we have done, but rather press forward” in carrying on the ministries that have served the people of God for 140 years.

Guests then filed slowly by the window, several stopping for photos with the window as backdrop. The day closed with a reception in the dining room.

MCDP Sisters Elect 2014-2018 Leadership Team

The Missionary Catechists of Divine Providence, of San Antonio, Texas held their Chapter of Elections during the Thanksgiving Holidays. Standing strong on their communal values and Providence guiding them, they entered into prayer, dialogue, and reflection.

With a spirit of gratitude, the 2014-2018 Leadership Team was elected on Sunday, December 1, 2013. They are: Sister Esther M. Guerrero, Superior General; Sister Anne Garcia, Assistant to the Superior; and Sisters Arlene Vasquez, Carmen Sanchez and Marion Morua, councilors. We are grateful to these sisters for saying ‘yes’ to be in the role of congregational leadership. Installation of the Team will take place on May 31, 2014, at St. Andrew’s Convent, San Antonio, TX.



(L-R) Sisters Marion Morua, Arlene Vasquez, Esther M. Guerrero, Anne Garcia and Carmen Sanchez



Sisters of Providence, Holyoke

The Hillside at Providence Welcomes Mercy LIFE

The Sisters of Providence took another significant step in their vision to develop The Hillside at Providence as a ministry site for elders when they joined with officials of the Sisters of Providence Health System (SPHS) for dedication ceremonies for the site's newest occupant, Mercy LIFE.

Mercy LIFE is the third SPHS program to lease space in the building the Sisters have named the de Paul Center, in honor of their patron, Saint Vincent de Paul. Mercy Home Care and Mercy Hospice moved into their newly renovated offices in February 2013.

"For the Sisters of Providence," said Sister Kathleen Popko, SP President, "our vision is still not complete. We are doubling our efforts to build an affordable housing residence on this campus. We hope," she added, "The Hillside at Providence, once complete, will be a model of integrated housing and health care services for elders in our area."

Mercy LIFE, a new program of SPHS' Mercy Con-

tinuing Care Network, is modeled on Medicare/Medicaid's PACE, i.e., Programs for All-inclusive Care for the Elderly. It offers community-based care and services to elders and to people over 55, living with disabilities, who otherwise would need nursing home placement. Its interdisciplinary team of professionals will provide participants at the Mercy LIFE center with the coordinated care each person needs to live safely in the community for as long as they are able.

Dan Moen, SPHS President/CEO, and Sister Kathleen spoke with attendees about all the behind-the-scenes efforts that brought the Sisters and SPHS to Mercy LIFE's dedication day — a day, Dan described as "another opportunity" for SPHS to "live out the Sisters' mission."

To transition their vision into reality, the Sisters succeeded in having the property rezoned for its new purposes and oversaw the complete renovation and modernization of the 72,000 ft² de Paul Center.



Sisters of Providence, Holyoke

Bringing Health Care Where Critically Needed

Sister of Providence Julie Crane was all smiles as she personally welcomed over 150 clients to the 30th Anniversary celebration of the Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) ministry she founded in 1983.

The December event for HCH, a department of Mercy Medical Center since 1987, was held at the Friends of the Homeless Resource Center in Springfield, Massachusetts. The evening featured a catered dinner for clients complete with an anniversary cake and two gifts—a small first aid kit and a water bottle.

In HCH's first year of operation, Sister Julie, aided by volunteers, conducted 2,6000 medical visits to homeless persons visiting soup kitchens and shelters and living outside on the streets, under bridges and along the railroad tracks near the Connecticut River.

Today, 30 years later, Mercy HCH has grown into a 20-member team that provides primary care services onsite at 23 shelters, soup kitchens, job placement sites and transitional programs throughout three of the four counties in Western Massachusetts.

In 2013, Mercy HCH reports caring for over 2,400 homeless individuals. HCH staff logged approximately 12,000 encounters with these men, women and children needing medical, mental health and case management services. Homeless children make up 20% of the



Sisters of Providence Julie Crane (r) and Senga Fulton both helped to serve the dinner at The Friends of the Homeless Resource Center in Springfield, Massachusetts.

population served, with more than half of these children being under five years of age.

HCH staff also provides street outreach for those hardest to serve. The team searches for the "hang out" spots of the hardest to reach of the homeless population. Their goal is to reach those who avoid any contact with the mainstream health and social service system and who may never have received services before.

Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province

Jubilee Donation Benefits Sisters in Haiti

During the Jubilee banquet at St. Joseph Residence in Seattle this past summer, the local communities and sisters of Mother Joseph Province raised \$6,500 for the sisters in Haiti to use to support their ministries. At the request of the Peace Community, \$500 of the money was designated for installation of a Peace Pole in the garden at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Seattle.

That was just the beginning. Provincial Superior Judith Desmarais and the Provincial Council of Mother Joseph Province matched the funds raised, increasing the total to \$13,000. Of that amount, \$12,500 was sent to General Superior Karin Dufault in Montreal and to members of the General Council, who agreed to match the amount originally raised by the sisters of

Mother Joseph Province. The grand total is \$19,500, with \$19,000 going to the sisters in Haiti. Sister Rollande Malo, general treasurer, arranged for the funds to be sent via Sister Annette Noel, provincial of Emilie Gamelin Province.

"Congratulations to you for again responding to the call to support our sisters working in ministries that provide direct help for the poor in Third World countries," wrote Sister Jacqueline Fernandes, superior at St. Joseph Residence. "Haiti is among the poorest of the poor. Thank you also for your support for the Peace Pole to be placed in the garden at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish. Mother Gamelin must be very happy to witness your generosity."



Sisters Missioned to El Salvador, Chile

Three Sisters of Providence were missioned to international experiences early Monday, September 23, in the chapel at Mount St. Joseph, Spokane. Sisters Annette Seubert and Vilma Franco were blessed, embraced and offered good wishes as they prepared to travel to El Salvador. Sister Sue Orlowski was missioned to Chile.

For Sister Vilma, the ministry experience in El Salvador is also a homecoming to her native land. For Sister Annette, the cross-cultural experience in El Salvador fulfills a long time dream of being part of the Providence mission that began there in 1995. And Sister Sue has been brushing up on her Spanish in preparation for a cross-cultural experience that includes work with teenage girls in the orphanage in Valparaiso, Chile.

The opening prayer for the missioning ceremony was as follows:

“Creator God, we gather together this day to ask your blessing on the ministry of service of our sisters. You taught us that faith without works is dead, so with love and hope we entrust our sisters to the mission to

which you are calling them at this time. May they be strengthened by your Providence. Open their hearts and minds to the guidance of your Spirit so that they will recognize the opportunities for good that lie before them. May our time together be of benefit to each of us and to all the people we serve, reinforcing our sense of call to your service. May it enliven and refresh our spirits and our commitment to our ministry. Amen.”

Some of those attending the missioning offered their own thoughts about the sisters’ journeys. Sister Mary Wilson noted that “the world has become much smaller” with the congregation’s embrace of what is known as the “3 Is” – international, intergenerational and intercultural. Sister Rosa Sen Nguyen said that the more sisters go away for intercultural experiences, “the more the reality comes alive,” but she added that it was not easy to see three sisters from her own house leave. “My great desire for you is that you arrive with your whole being open to receive what God wishes to give you there,” Sister Marisol Ávila said in Spanish, which was interpreted by Sister Kathryn Rutan. May God bless and protect all these sisters as they go forth to minister in the name of Providence.



Provincial Superior Judith Desmarais, SP, (left) and Provincial Councilor Jo Ann Showalter, SP, (right) mission sisters headed for international experiences, (center from left) Sisters Vilma Franco, Annette Seubert and Sue Orlowski.

Two Chilean Sisters Profess Perpetual Vows

Two Sisters of Providence from Bernarda Morin Province in Chile professed perpetual vows in a liturgical celebration at St. Joseph Residence in Seattle on November 24. Sisters Marcia Elizabeth Gatica Aguila and Marisol de las Mercedes Avila Pacheco first came to Mother Joseph Province for about three months on the way to Montreal for a 3 ½-month international formation experience in early 2011. They returned to Chile and it later was announced by the General Leadership Team in July 2011 that they would return to Mother Joseph Province to continue their formation and discernment while remaining members of Bernarda Morin Province.



Chilean Sisters of Providence Marisol Àvila (left) and Marcia Gatica admire the cake bearing their images at the reception following their final vow ceremony in Seattle.

Sister Marcia was born in Patagonia, in the far south of Chile, and met the Sisters of Providence at their mission in Coyhaique. She entered the religious community in 2002. Her ministry in Chile had been serving as a campus minister while going to school in the evening to earn a psychology degree. Sister Marisol, born in Linares, Chile, also entered the religious community in 2002. Prior to that, she had been a member of another religious community for 17 years. She met the Sisters of Providence while working in one of their schools in Chile, teaching history and religion, and later spent three years in parish ministry in Argentina. The two sisters were postulants and novices together. They renewed their temporary vows while attending the Religious Education Conference in Anaheim, CA, in the spring of 2012.

The liturgical celebration and the reception that followed in November in Seattle were truly international, intercultural and intergenerational. Father Eric Watson, SJ, was the presider for the event at which Sister Alba Letelier, a General Council member from Montreal, gave the homily in English and Spanish. “This reign of God is not of this world, but it is for this world,” she said, describing the introduction of a “new way of loving and serving.” The prayers of the faithful were offered in English, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese. Among the attendees was Sister Isabel Cid of Holy Angels Province in Edmonton, Alberta.

The Chilean sisters’ perpetual vows of chastity, poverty and obedience were received by General Superior Karin Dufault, SP. Part of the response of

the community and the congregation was:

“We promise you our prayers as you live out your vows and extend the Reign of God through compassionate caring and love for all. As you walk in the footsteps of Jesus, may blessed Emilie Gamelin, Mother Joseph and Mother Bernarda be your constant companions and support.”

“... My heart is full of gratitude for those who were present, and for those who sent their greetings, prayers and gifts. I am especially grateful for those who helped with the numerous preparations of this celebration. My heart is filled with gratitude to the Sisters of Providence for their love, support and prayers. I pray that the peace, joy and love of Providence be with all of you always: -- Sister Marcia Gatica

“... Our good God has spilled joy on this beautiful party. Thanks for what each one contributed to this celebration so it could be a celebration of the Community. I ask our provident God’s blessing on each and for all in the Providence Community. . .” – Sister Marisol Avila



News of the Allison Park, PA, CDPs

Florita Rodman, CDP, Receives Cheverus Award

Sister Florita Rodman was one of the recipients of the Cheverus Award from the Archdiocese of Boston in November. The medal is awarded annually in Boston to outstanding lay leaders for their dedicated service to the Church.



A letter from the Bishop of Manchester, New Hampshire, to Sister Florita outlines her service to the people of God: *I continue to enjoy warm memories of our ministry*

together in the South Region (of the Diocese) and all you did with Bishop Hart for so many years. You were a true pastoral minister who, by God's grace, did many wonderful things in His name here in New England and then as a 'pastor' in Mississippi. Writing to you brings a smile to my face and I hope that it brings one to yours.

To Light through Love

"There are two ways of spreading the light – to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it." -Edith Wharton

In celebration of the birth of Jesus, the Sisters of Divine Providence throughout the Marie de la Roche Province kept lighted candles in the windows of their convents and chapels from December 1, 2013, through January 6, 2014.

The lights symbolized the annual To Light through Love appeal, and served as a reminder of the light and love of God's Providence in the world. The lights are a reminder, also, of the many Sisters who have carried--and continue to carry--the light of God's Providence to others since their arrival in the United States in 1876. This is the first year that all of the geographic areas participated in the effort.



Festival of Lights

For the 16th year, the Sisters participated with La Roche College in the annual Festival of Lights to usher in the Advent and Christmas seasons.



On December 6, the Sisters hosted choral groups in their chapel, which featured performances by the Providence Heights Alpha School band and chorus. There was a photo booth, Christmas karaoke, and a living Nativity with La Roche College students as Mary and Joseph and Alpha students playing the part of the shepherds, angels and animals.

Community Welcomes New Associates

Recently, the Community welcomed Judi Boone, Mildred "Millie" Howard, and Sally "Selma" Shamalla as Associates. Judi learned about the Associate program from Sister Marilyn McMillin, who was Judi's companion throughout the inquiry sessions. Millie first learned about the Associates from Associate Jane Kerr, whom she met on a plane when returning from a visit to her son's in Virginia. After some conversation, Jane said, "You might be interested in our Associate relationship." Selma Shamalla is a retired principal and teacher. At this time in her life, she finds the Community to be a source of comfort, a place of peace, and a resource for her spiritual life. Welcome Associates!



(L-R) Sally Shamalla, Judi Boone, and Mildred Howard



St. Mother Theodore Shrine Under Construction, To open for Congregation's 175th Anniversary

After months and years of planning and fund-raising, the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods are now watching crews begin the actual construction of the new national shrine of its foundress, Saint Mother Theodore Guerin (1798-1856).

The main area of the permanent shrine will be part of — almost encased within — a current structure and its entrance only a few feet from the conventual church. Entering the Shrine will be to not only experience the early history of the Sisters of Providence, but also learn how the legacy of Saint Mother Theodore continues today.

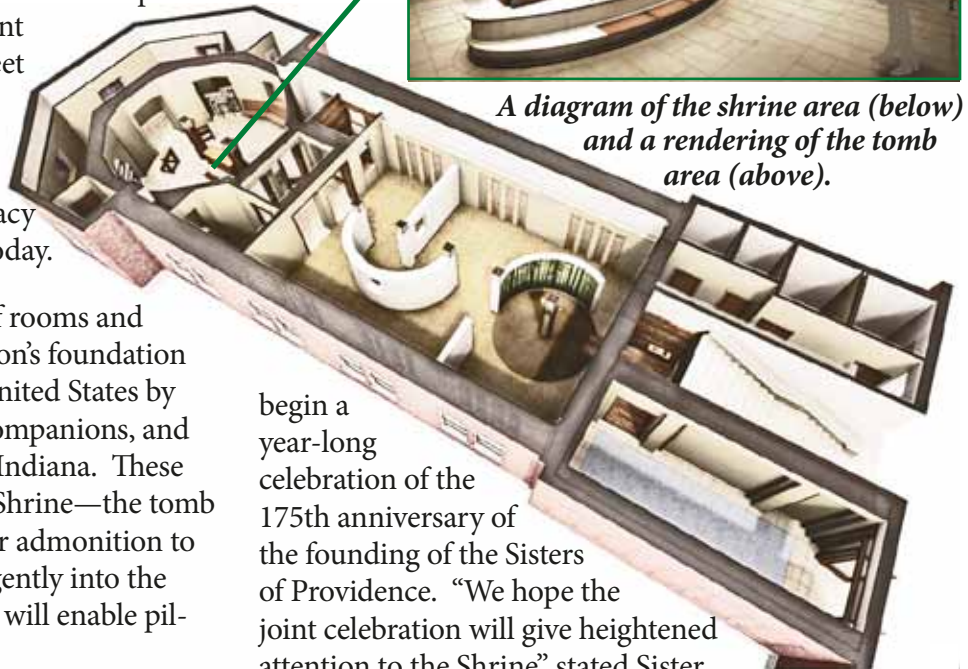
Visitors will pass through a series of rooms and display areas depicting the Congregation's foundation in France, the log ship voyage to the United States by Mother Theodore and her five sister companions, and their arrival in the midst of a forest in Indiana. These displays lead to the centerpiece of the Shrine—the tomb of Mother Theodore inscribed with her admonition to her small community—"Put yourself gently into the hands of Providence." This chapel area will enable pilgrims to pray in a quiet, private space.

The various exhibits in the Shrine area will contain other directives from her writings, and each "station" along the way will include questions for the pilgrim to consider about his or her own spiritual journey. The shrine experience actually begins at the front door of Providence Center, which has served as the hospitality center and entrance to the large O'Shaughnessy Dining Room at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. The entrance is entitled, "Journey with a Saint: The Shrine of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin. A living ministry of the Sisters of Providence."

Since the canonization of Mother Theodore Guerin in 2006, the Sisters of Providence have conducted fund-raising efforts to finance the construction of the Shrine and the renovation of the area leading up to the Shrine. To date the Congregation has raised about \$1.8 million which will cover the costs of all the major aspects of the project. The next step is to attract pilgrims by making Mother Theodore known and her intercession sought by those in need of her guidance. Plans are to open the Shrine officially in October 2014. That event will also



A diagram of the shrine area (below) and a rendering of the tomb area (above).



begin a year-long celebration of the 175th anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of Providence. "We hope the joint celebration will give heightened attention to the Shrine" stated Sister Dawn Tomaszewski, general officer who serves as liaison to the Shrine project, "bringing many more to this corner of Indiana to be touched by the loving care of our Provident God."



Sister Jan Craven, the Shrine Director, speaks at the outdoor dedication in the fall of 2013.

Sisters of Providence, Montreal

140th Anniversary of St. John of God Hospital

Established in October 1873 by the Sisters of Providence of Montreal, St. John of God Hospital (Hôpital St-Jean-de-Dieu), which became Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine Hospital in 1976 and more recently the Mental Health Institute of the Université de Montréal, celebrated its 140 years of existence in 2013.

To highlight this anniversary, an historical exhibition of photographs, archival materials, furniture, and equipment that marked the birth of the institution, recalls the role of the Sisters of Providence, the evolution of medicine and especially psychiatry, was presented to the public on October 8-23. The Sisters of Providence were invited to visit the exhibition. Some members of the General Leadership Team and some of the Providence International Centre's staff went to see the display and the institution itself, which had been a major work of the Congregation.

At the opening of this exhibition, a very touching

(Sister Gilberte Villeneuve, SP), symbolizes pride and continuity. I also thank the Community of the Sisters of Providence for their contribution to this exhibition: because of them, we can raise awareness of and bear witness to our rich history.

Over the years, despite transformations and upheavals that have marked Quebec society and how people with mental disorder are dealt with, one thing remains constant: the dedication that has characterized and still characterizes the team of professionals, doctors, researchers, managers and administrative and support staff of the Institute...."

Brief History Of St. John Of God Hospital

At the very beginning of the Congregation, the Sisters of Providence had experienced working with the mentally ill because Mother Gamelin used to welcome them at the Providence Asile in 1845. In 1852, the St. Isidore

Farm had been set to accommodate seventeen mentally ill boarders. In 1863, an annex called St. John of God was built and added to a convent of the Sisters located in eastern Montreal.

The construction of St. John of God Hospital took place on the site of the convent, beginning in the 1870s. Sister Thérèse-de-Jésus was the soul and Director of this important institution in the history of mental health in Quebec. In 1873, an agreement between the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence and the Quebec

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Sisters and staff view the historical items on display (above) and visit the hospital (below right).

tribute was offered to the Sisters of Providence by Ms. Denise Fortin, Executive Director of the hospital: "One hundred years ago, the Sisters of Providence founded Saint-Jean-de-Dieu Hospital to welcome the persons entrusted to them by the government ... Enriched by their heritage, I have the great honor to continue the work they carried out for a hundred years: to see to the well-being of particularly disadvantaged people in our society. I hope I can be up to what they have done, what they were. To me, being a woman and directing the largest psychiatric hospital in Quebec, forty years after the departure of the last woman to hold the position



140th Anniversary of St. John of God Hospital

government entrusted to the Congregation the care of persons of both genders who were referred to as insane.

On May 6, 1890, a fire destroyed St. John of God Hospital. Eighty-six people lost their lives and 1,200 patients were left homeless. Here is how *La Patrie*, a newspaper of the time, reported the news: "What was yesterday one of the most beautiful buildings in the province, where charity was practiced towards people deprived of reason, lies today as a pile of rubble which covers the charred remains of about one hundred unfortunates who could not be saved or did not want to..."

In the same year, the construction of temporary pavilions to accommodate the victims began, pending a permanent construction. In 1897, St. John of God Hospital became a stand-alone civil municipality and a canonical parish of the Montreal diocese. It included

183 religious, 141 lay, three doctors, two chaplains, and 1,579 patients. Members of the managerial staff of the Hospital remained professionally up-to-date by visiting similar institutions in Europe.

In 1975, after a little over one hundred years of existence and following the reorganization of its services, St. John of God Hospital gradually saw the Sisters of Providence leave the institution.

Lorenzo Morin (1918-1996), a psychiatrist and professor respected and recognized in his field for his research and numerous publications, wrote about the great work of the Sisters of Providence: "The sisters took up in that place (at Saint-Jean-de-Dieu Hospital) a significant challenge whose history tends to be forgotten though it participates in that of our country and our survival."

Allison Park CDP

New Website Launched

The new community website launched in late December. The new site, www.cdpsisters.org, contains many features that will enhance the ability to spread the mission of the Community.

New features include:

Find-a-Sister: Visitors can submit inquiries about a Sister's whereabouts and, if the Sister is agree-

able, contact information will be shared.

Meet the Sisters: This area will include a photo and brief description of the ministry that the Sister is engaged in, including retired Sisters who are in the ministry of prayer.

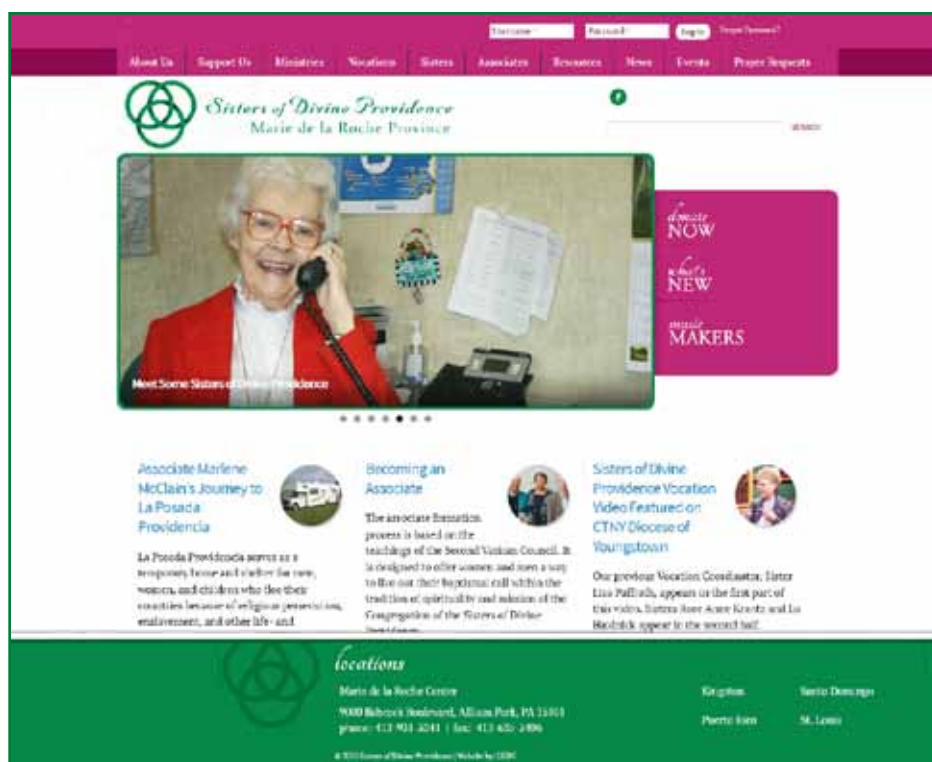
Expanded In Memory Section: This will include four past years of death/tribute letters for deceased

Sisters. From launch forward, notification of death will include a vintage and contemporary photo of the deceased, any links to media publications, and the death/tribute letter.

Enhanced Social Concerns Pages:

The social justice pages will be enhanced to include Cardinal Bernardin quotes in reference to the consistent ethic of life, Bishop Ketteler's sermons and quotes from his social justice teachings, select quotes from *Rerum Novarum* and examples of how Sisters of Divine Providence are meeting the needs of the contemporary age.

Password Protected Areas: The site will have password protected areas for Sisters only and Associates only. Each Sister and Associate will have their own unique username and password.



Providence in Action

The Congregation of Divine Providence believes in advocating for the marginalized. It works to become more aware of inequalities and denounce pervasive injustice and violence. ... The Sisters as individuals and small groups raise awareness of people's needs in various ways within the San Antonio community and nationwide.

A prime example of how the Sisters of Divine Providence practice their advocacy is through the decades of dedication, hard work and efforts put forth by Sisters Christine Stephens and Pearl Ceasar. For over 30 years, these women of faith have worked diligently to better the lives of thousands wanting for basic human needs and better education, infrastructure and wages. Their work and that of others from the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) has created a domino effect nation-wide that has trained thousands of ordinary citizens to be leaders and organize to be heard and bring about change. Hundreds of communities have become stronger, more viable and visible. IAF is a national network of organizers acknowledged by the Catholic Bishops to train and engage citizens within not only Catholic parishes and surrounding communities but from congregations of many faith traditions, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Unitarian, to help meet the needs of their area.

Sisters Christine and Pearl have worked in succession on various projects. On many occasions Sister Christine made the initial contact and established the ground work with organizations that call on IAF. Once the leaders were identified and needs were evaluated, Sister Pearl would take the lead and see the project through. An excellent example of this work relationship is through the roles each played in developing one of the premier organizations of the IAF that has served as a model to subsequent efforts: Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) based in San Antonio, Texas. Sister Christine worked with COPS between 1980 and 1984. COPS encompasses leaders in 26 parishes in the predominantly low-income, Hispanic West Side and South Side of San Antonio.

COPS has brought in over \$2 billion for water, sewer and infrastructure into low-income neighborhoods. It has brought about the demolition of substandard housing and the rebuilding of new housing. It has begun to direct economic development funds toward poor inner-city neighborhoods.

Sisters Christine and Pearl's roles in organizing COPS continue to bear fruit. One of many successful examples is Project QUEST. While Lead Organizer in San Antonio, Sister Pearl worked with the leaders of COPS and The Metro Alliance to research and develop QUEST. Sister Pearl took on the responsibility as QUEST's Executive Director in September 2012. This vibrant, non-profit organization is a primary economic development broker. It provides critical support, expertise, education and resources to develop highly qualified employees for in-demand occupations that offer a living wage, benefits and opportunities for a career path.



Sister Pearl meets with the QUEST staff.

This past October, another organization derived from IAF, Valley Interfaith, based in the Rio Grande

Valley of Texas bordering Mexico, celebrated 30 years of leadership and success. When Sister Christine Stephens was called to the Rio Grande Valley in the early 1980's she was met with the concern of the residents. For years, hundreds of thousands of families who had built their own homes on small land tracts lived in developing world country conditions that included lack of potable water, sewage services and paved streets. The use of outhouses was prevalent. Any generous rainfall, which is normally a blessing, became a problem for these neighborhoods because the rain caused the outhouses to overflow and the waste blended in with the mud. The school buses could not enter these neighborhoods due to the mud and lack of paved streets so the children were forced to walk in the mud and board the busses and attend school muddy and reeking with odors from the waste water. Consequently, diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis and others were rampant in these communities.

Sister Christine trained the community's leaders to identify and address their concerns and present them to their state officials. For the next five years she worked with five to six thousand people to make the politicians take notice not only of the urgent need for

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Providence in Action

infrastructure but health care, education and immigration issues as well. They drew the attention of local and state officials, such as Governor Mark White and Lt. Governor Bill Hobby. Hobby visited las colonias to assess the problems in the various Rio Grande Valley neighborhoods and returned to the state capitol to design a bond package that would go to the state for a vote. The initial bond passed, but changes came years later. By 1990 Sister Pearl replaced Sister Christine and began working with Valley Interfaith to make the initial funding and improvements come to fruition. Valley Interfaith has brought over \$700 million into the Valley to provide water access, sewer services, drainage and paved roads to its more than 160,000 colonia residents. Statewide, over \$1 billion dollars was leveraged for residents living along the Texas-Mexico border. The Rio Grande Valley's colonias are completely transformed with paved streets, gutters and running water and the important issues of education, healthcare and

immigration continue to be advocated and addressed.

Sister Christine has trained and developed leaders throughout the United States: Texas, California, Mississippi, Iowa, Nebraska, Arizona, and Nevada. These leaders have organized groups, similar to COPS and Valley Interfaith, and give the marginalized a voice in creating better job training and education, raising the standard of living and being the voice of the scared and silent. She served on the National Executive Committee of IAF from 1999 to 2008 when she became one of four National Co-Directors until 2012. Presently she serves as Co-Director of the West/Southwest IAF region.



Sister Christine

These exceptional women of faith have been able to see beyond what the human eye can see or limitations assumed by society. They see through the eyes of Christ and make

it their business to touch and believe in the spirit that lies within each of us regardless of origin, education, or economics. They along with many of their fellow sisters have put their beliefs into action.

San Antonio CDP

Providence Comes First

The Congregation of Divine Providence embraces its multiculturalism. Our 14 Sisters in the México region join their country's tradition of dedicating the first of every month to Divine Providence. Every noon Mass on the first of every month throughout México is in honor of Divine Providence. Therefore, our sisters and the families in Querétaro and the surrounding areas attend these masses without fail. This monthly custom re-starts each year on December 31. Every family or community takes their twelve candles that will be used monthly to Mass where these are blessed. A candle is lit each first day of the month at home and the following prayer to Divine Providence is recited:

Divine Providence assists us at all times so that we will not lack in faith, shelter, clothing, and sustenance nor the Sacraments in our last moments.



This lovely custom in México is one we all could imitate to express our belief that PROVIDENCE will see us through every situation and circumstance. The rich faith history of México is proof that PROVIDENCE provides.

San Antonio CDP

Sophia Women's Learning Center Fills the Gap

Much of the history of the Congregation of Divine Providence of San Antonio is a story of education. The Sophia Women's Learning Center is a prime example. It was established in 2002 for women who did not finish high school, providing them an opportunity to complete their course requirements and get their high school diplomas.

The idea for an outreach program for women began in the heart of Paul Hass, a retired Air Force

Colonel who served as the Assistant Principal at Providence High School, a sponsored institution of the Congregation of Divine Providence. In the course of his years at Providence, he watched students withdraw due to family circumstances, personal reasons, or the difficulty of juggling demanding academics with the student's need to contribute to her family's income. He often wished there was a way to help them complete their education at Providence, to continue to

Continued on the next page.

San Antonio CDP

Mutual Blessing Abound at Nursing Center

McCullough Hall Nursing Center (MHNC) is a licensed facility sponsored by the Congregation of Divine Providence in San Antonio, Texas. The majority of its residents are Sisters of Divine Providence who require full time medical care. It is located next to the university they also founded, Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU). The proximity makes MHNC a very convenient choice for its students to complete their practica in certain fields of study. Although proximity can be the main reason for students to choose MHNC, the main reasons cited are the warmth and gratitude the students receive from the Sisters and the blessings received by doing the simplest of things for the Sisters.

In the Fall, 2013 semester students Erica Valdez, Kimberly Rodriguez and Timothy Soriano chose to serve at MHNC. All three express how their one on one conversations with the Sisters enriched their lives. The Sisters welcomed the opportunity to share their life stories that include the reason they became Sisters, their education and their ministries. The students are fascinated with the stories of the various cultures from which the sisters derive but the common thread is PROVIDENCE. Timothy Soriano, a psychology major at OLLU, cites PROVIDENCE as the reason he was drawn

to MHNC and how for him it was a natural choice.

His relationship with the Congregation of Divine Providence dates back to his elementary school years at the Catholic school, St. Martin Hall, founded by the congregation. The one thing he looked forward to Monday through Friday was his music theory class with Sister Anna Rose Bezner that also included violin and piano lessons. The passion and love of music instilled in his early years and the lessons taught contributed to

his success in his high school's drum line. Upon enrolling and minoring in music at OLLU, he was re-connected to the Sisters and became an Associate. The Associates' formation program quickly refreshed and deepened his memories of the charism and trust in Providence that he learned as a youngster.

The feeling of gratitude is mutual. Many of the

Sisters in MHNC welcome the fresh, young faces that greet them with a warm smile. Sister Adrienne Marie Schmidtzinsky related how one of the students recently helped her with a tongue twisting game she organized for the residents. As she led the activity, the student passed out the cards she had prepared. Simple things go a long distance at MHNC and both residents and student helpers feel mutual respect and friendship based on the belief that Providence indeed comes through in every stage of your life.



Sophia Center

provide them with the single gender environment and quality education.

The chance to fulfill this dream came in 2002 with a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce for innovative technology and distance learning programs. Initially, the grant was a means of providing dual credit courses and distance learning for Providence High School students. However, in the midst of planning for the new programs and technology, the window of opportunity opened to include an outreach educational program to include women in the community. With the support of the school's principal and the Superior General of the Sisters of Divine Providence, who sponsor Providence High School, the planning phase of the Sophia Women's Learning Center began.

The Sophia Women's Learning Center opened for enrollment in May of 2003 as a weekend program and held its first graduation ceremony in May of 2004 under the direction of Sister Ann Umscheid, CDP†. Shortly before the grant expired in October 2004, Sister Ann turned to the Sisters of Divine Providence for support. The Congregation determined that the program was an important and much needed service and they committed to continue funding for the Center. Their financial support grew in May of 2006. The Sophia Women's Learning Center moved from the Providence High School library to the convent and opened its new doors with not only a new online curriculum, but also with its own state-of-the-art classroom complete with 16 student desks, 16 Dell comput-

ers, a resource room, and an office for the lay Director who succeeded Sister Ann after her passing.

This ministry served the community well for ten years. The departure of its Director, the increased attention high schools were giving to their at risk students and the rise of prospering agencies that provided high school diplomas and GED certificates led the Sisters of Divine Providence to evaluate this beloved ministry. A decision was made in the summer of 2013 by the sisters to close the doors of Sophia Women's Learning Center after the graduation of the women currently enrolled in the program.

On December 21, 2013, Sophia held its last graduation for ten women which brought the total number of graduates to 51 women, ages 19 to 59. Many have gone on to further their education by enrolling in college or career training schools. Every graduate has improved the quality of life for herself and her family by increasing her knowledge and job opportunities. As one graduate stated, she was hired on the spot for a stable position with benefits "all because I have a high school diploma."

The story of helping and empowering women continues and the initial dream has expanded to include men. The Congregation of Divine Providence now leases a portion of its convent center to a non-profit organization called Project QUEST. Sister Pearl Ceasar, CDP serves as the QUEST Director and oversees this successful program that has seen its participants graduate from college and earn the wages and salaries necessary to transform their families' lives. Coincidence? No, it is called PROVIDENCE.



The final graduating class of the Sophia Women's Learning Center.

18 Years of Witness and Many Hands Make Dolls

It was eight years ago that the Silent Vigil for Social Justice marked its tenth anniversary. That's when Sister Anne Hudek and Sister Mary Labouré set about sewing dozens of white sheets together to form a 400 meter white banner. Vigil supporters gathered at City Hall and held up the Make Poverty History banner. It was long enough to surround Kingston City Hall. Last fall, the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office staged another event at City Hall. And to recognize the 18 years of vigil-keeping, the 90-something Sisters have been back in action. "Life has come full circle," laughs Sister Anne. "I now find myself cutting out paper dolls."

Some 3,900 paper dolls were displayed at City Hall on November 28. It made quite a spectacle. Yet each little paper figure represented ten of the 390,000 children living in poverty in this, one of the world's richest places.

"As I was cutting out the dolls I was aware that these are hungry children," says Sister Anne. "It's a wonderful idea to show how disgraceful it is to have so many children living in poverty."

The silent vigil began in 1995 when federal and provincial budgets took the rug out from under the poor



Sisters Anne Hudek (left) and Mary Labouré cut many of the paper dolls for the anniversary.

with cuts to welfare and the social safety net. A local demonstration against the cuts had turned violent and one of the Sisters of Providence figured there was another way. She began a small action outside of City Hall. Ever since, the weekly vigil has been held. Every Friday, 12:15-12:45, a faithful crew of vigil keepers gathers to hold signs, witness for justice, and act as a visual reminder that the job isn't done. They do this through heat, cold and wet.

Public provision for the most vulnerable has not been restored. Far from it. Precarious jobs that keep workers below the poverty line have become a permanent feature of a two-tier labour market. Too many working class jobs no longer provide enough to live on.

The 18th anniversary effort was a truly collective project. Sisters from the other two religious orders who live in the Providence Motherhouse and the Sisters of Providence all pitched in. So did the vigil keepers themselves, and students of Sister Kay Morrell, who led the work of organizing the display of figurines that have been mounted on used appliance boxes.



The anniversary display with the paper dolls.

The event had good attendance and media coverage. It was a real success. But still the vigil continues, at least for now. As we say each week as we gather, "We stand in hope."

Community and Veggies Grow Together

It's 1:30 pm and, while the Community Harvest Market won't open until 2:00, the Wally Elmer parking lot is buzzing with activity. Under the oppressive heat and humidity, threatening skies and a forecast calling for severe thunderstorms, the market crew decide to risk it and set up as usual out of doors. Market coordinator Kathy Sturmey and volunteers raise tents, assemble tables and chairs, hang bright banners, put up signs, and encircle all with a fringe of colourful flags.

Next they package the produce, most of it grown in Community Harvest's (CH) own urban gardens, freshly picked this morning. After four years of trying to increase affordability for low-income customers, while assuring farm producers a fair price for their wares, CH decided to embark on a new market model. Three weeks of the month, volunteers sell produce grown in Community Harvest's own organic gardens at very affordable prices, with all proceeds returning to CH's garden and market projects. It also has an arrangement with the local convenience store to sell its vegetables at the same rates, giving Rideau Heights' residents another opportunity to purchase economical local, healthy food. Then the last Wednesday of each month is a festive occasion with outside produce vendors, free food, face-painting, entertainment, and the opportunity to acquire a \$5 coupon to spend at the market that day in exchange for filling out a CH market survey.

A new volunteer, Lise, who helps sell produce is also an accomplished violinist. She was hired, with her pianist friend, to provide entertainment at CH's first special event. Lise thinks it's a "fantastic effort." She has been pleasantly surprised by the number of customers and those who return as regulars each week.

On hand from the CH gardens are bags of lettuce and purple kale, bunches of beets, green onions, basil

and Swiss chard. The first of the red cherry and yellow tomatoes are for sale, along with a few small zucchini. Due to an unusually wet spring, some seeds rotted in the ground before they could take root. So today CH has supplemented its harvest with snap peas and beans from a local vegetable and fruit farm, along with a few baskets of raspberries. Prices run from 10¢ for a young zucchini to \$2 for a basket of berries. Succulent heads of lettuce cost 50¢.

Monique, a vendor who has been with the CH market since its inception five years ago, has dropped off several containers of spanakopita – still hot from the oven. They go like hotcakes. Yvonne, another long-time vendor, offers a variety of baked goods, including biscuits, cookies and fruit pies.

Children gravitate to their designated activity area where they are greeted warmly by Anisha, the children's activities coordinator hired by the local agency Loving Spoonful, with her two volunteers, Trish and Didier.

Today the kids are creating their favourite veggies out of modelling clay, pressing leaves and flowers in wax paper and, for their snack, making macaroni salad with homemade vinaigrette and fresh herbs from the garden. Seven-almost-eight-year-old Ben fashions a tiny red tomato and an orange carrot with a bright green stem. He tells us that he loves corn and raw peas, while 10-year-old Corbin declares that he loves peas – raw and cooked – and is especially fond of pea soup. Later they will stake tomatoes in their own children's garden, water and weed it.

One customer picks up spanakopita, lettuce, beans and raspberries. Leaving a \$2 donation she quips, "Thank you! Dinner's already made." The storm stays north of us. In all respects, it has turned out to be a fine day.



Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation
office staffer Tara Kainer and a volunteer
at the Community Harvest Market.

Sisters of Providence, Kingston, Ontario

Printing Room Museum Shines in Doors Open Kingston

In 2013, for the first time, the Printing Room Museum was open to the public as part of Doors Open Kingston. Held annually, Doors Open allows the public to tour historic buildings free of charge. The Printing Room Museum, located in the basement of Our Mother of Sorrows Chapel at Providence Manor, is usually open by appointment only. Doors Open was a great opportunity to showcase this hidden gem and to introduce the public to the history of the Sisters of Providence of St.

Vincent de Paul. In all, 341 people toured the museum that day.

In 1897, the Sisters of Providence set up a printing department to produce congregational material such as obituary notices, small prayer books, circulars, and the Rule of the Congregation. An ambitious fundraising campaign began and soon raised the \$430 required to purchase the first press and other necessary equipment. On January 1, 1899, the first printed work was completed – a selection of “Monthly Meditations” for the community. In February 1900, the Archbishop asked that the Sisters print their Rule and Constitution. The Archbishop took a personal interest in the project by proofreading the books himself before they were printed.

Sister Mary Gabriel is considered to be the driving force behind the establishment of the Printing Room. She became the founder and editor of *The Guardian*, a children’s magazine published monthly by the Sisters of Providence from January 1916 to the late 1950s.

The Guardian was distributed in schools throughout the Archdiocese of Kingston and beyond. Proceeds from the sale of the magazine helped support St. Mary’s of the Lake Orphanage. *The Guardian* proved to be so popular with the Kingston public that the Printing Room was commonly referred to as the “Guardian Office.”

The Printing Room also did work for outside companies, including printing dental charts, forms, menus, invitations, stationery and business cards. The proceeds assisted the Congregation’s work with the poor, orphaned and aged.

Over the years, the printing room equipment was updated regularly as the operation provided a valuable service to the Sisters of Providence and many outside clients. At least 20 Sisters and three lay employees worked in the printing room over the course of its history. A few of the Sisters devoted years

of their lives to the Printing Room, including Sr. Phyllis Genore (Sr. Mary Emile) who worked in the Printing Room for over 30 years.

Due to advances in computer technology and the advent of desktop publishing, the decision was made to close the printing room in 1989, leaving all the printing presses in place. Ten years later in 1999, the Sisters of Providence restored and reopened the printing room as a museum.



A letterpress (foreground) and type cases (right) are on display in the printing room museum.



Sisters of Providence, Kingston, Ontario

Unexpected Treasure Comes Home

In June the Archives received an unexpected treasure from Father Gilbert Bertrand, OMI, pastor of Saint Clement's Parish in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

Fr. Bertrand purchased a silver ciborium last summer at an antique shop in Shakespeare, Ontario. A ciborium is the vessel used to hold hosts before and after Eucharist. Fr. Bertrand was going to use it in the Oblate community chapel. When he was cleaning the ciborium he discovered an engraved dedication plate on the inside of the base. The dedication reads "Presented to Rev. Mother M. Edward Kingston March 25, 1889."

Fr. Bertrand contacted the Archives to see if Rev. Mother M. Edward might have been a Sister



of Providence. It was quite exciting because Mother M. Edward (Catherine McKinley) is considered the Congregation's foundress and March 25, 1889 was the 25th anniversary of her religious profession.

The archives has a list of the gifts that Mother M. Edward received on the occasion of her silver jubilee and included in that list is a "Solid Silver Ciborium" given to her by the "Community" – probably this very ciborium!

Fr. Bertand kindly donated the ciborium to the Archives. We do not know how or when the ciborium was separated from the community, but are very pleased to welcome it home. The ciborium is on display in the Heritage Room at Providence Motherhouse.

Join With Others As They Reflect On Providence This Lent!

A limited number of copies are still available of the "Lenten Providence Journey" reflection booklet from Women of Providence in Collaboration! The booklet contains reflections on quotes from our Providence publications written through a Lenten lens by our Providence Sisters and Associates. The daily reflections are not date specific. The reflections are day related, taking you from Ash Wednesday through Holy Week. The handy size fits easily into your purse or pocket. ***Supplies are limited, order your copy today!***

**Contact Sister Barbara McMullen at 314-209-9181
or by email at bmcullen6650@aol.com.
The booklet costs \$4.50 plus shipping.**



Save The Date!

**Plan To
Attend!!!**

**Mark Your
Calendar!!!**

**June 19-21, 2015
PROVIDENCE EVENT
St. Mary-of-the-Woods**

**Speaker will be
Ilia Delio, OSF**

The Providence Event Core Planning Team met in Chicago, IL at Guerin Convent September 27-29, 2013, to begin planning the event! It was a weekend of brainstorming, of wonderful ideas, of synchronicity, of prayer, music, and some recommendations for the Board. Members of the Core Planning Team are: Dianne Brennen, SP; Debbie Dillow, SP Associate; Donna Esposito, CDP Associate; Norma Guiterria, MCDP; Diane Mason, SP, Carol Stenger, CDP and Barbara McMullen, CDP. Look for details in future newsletters!



Future Dates/Coming Events

2014

February 25-27: WPC Governing Board Meeting--Seattle, WA

March 13-16: VFL Conference--Allison Park, PA

2015

June 18: Associate Leadership Group Meeting--St. Mary of the Woods, IN

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