

InTouch



***Christ led,
Christ fed,
Hope filled!***

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Creating a Culture of
Vocations

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Strengthening Faith
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Stones

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FOR RELIGIOUS**

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**Diocese
of
Ogdensburg**

The following poem reflection was shared with me on a retreat a few years back. I pass it on to you with the prayer that God will grant each of us the grace to joyfully and generously give Him our whole house!

Covenant

By Margaret Halasta, OSF

The Father

knocks on my door seeking a home for his Son.

Rent is cheap, I say.

I don't want to rent, I want to buy, says God.

I'm not sure I want to sell, but you might come in to look around.

I think I will, says God.

I might let you have a room or two.

I like it, says God. I'll take the two; you might decide to give me more some-day. I can wait, says God.

I'd like to give you more but it's a bit difficult. I need some space for me.

I know, says God, but I'll wait. I like what I see.

Hmmm, maybe I can let you have another room. I really don't need that much.

Thanks, says God. I'll take it. I like what I see.

I'd like to give you the whole house but I'm not sure.

Think on it, says God. I'll wouldn't put you out. Your house would be mine and my Son would live in it. You'd have more space than you've ever had before.

I don't understand at all!

I know, says God, but I can't tell you about that. You'll have to discover it for yourself. This can only happen if you let him have the whole house.

A bit risky, I say. Yes, says God, but try me.

I'm not sure. I'll let you know. I can wait says God. I like what I see.



Musings

Pandemic in Ecuador

You asked me about what is happening in Ecuador and our mission there. Many bodies were abandoned on sidewalks, wrapped in garbage bags, packed into cardboard coffins and stacked by the hundreds in morgues. It is clear that Ecuador was devastated and continues to be devastated by the Coronavirus. Mass graves had to be dug. Many coffins from the cemeteries were stolen and the remains left in the hole to be able to reuse the coffin for loved ones.

Many poor people could not "shelter in place". They had to take to the streets to try to sell anything they could, to make some money. The way poor people are crammed into small shacks and dwellings, makes social distancing a joke and ignored by the vast majority of the poor and immigrants. The government tried to impose curfews but these too, were ignored by many.

Our mission was closed the first part of March since it is recognized as a school and social program. We were able to continue to make up care packages of food that the families could come and pick up at the door. Since the majority of our families do not have access to the internet the children were not able to keep up with their studies. Our medical clinic did continue to help member families with emergency health issues.

The Post Office in Ecuador is not functioning. So no mail can go in or go out until they privatize the mail system. No international flights were going in or out until last week and these, too, are sketchy. There were humanitarian flights in and out to get foreigners out of Ecuador.

Our mission still cannot open. The directors are meeting to try to purchase all the materials they need to allow them to reopen. So, I continue to raise money for them to cover all these new costs of masks, gloves, shields, sanitizers etc. Once they have everything in place, and have the tables arranged for social distancing, they will open up the meal program again which is so important. I speak with the team in Ecuador every week and they remain very positive through it all. They hope to once again serve these poor families with all of the programs we have for them to become agents of change in their own lives and in the lives of others. We pray that our mission will be able to get back to whatever the new normal is going to look like.

-Sr. Cindy Sullivan, BVM



The following is a reflection Sr. Brian Marie Latour wrote for their parish bulletin on the centenary of the Sisters of Mercy arrival at St. John's in Plattsburgh.

A little bit of history for you...

In the early months of 1920, exactly one hundred years ago, the pastor of St. John's Church, Plattsburgh, Rt. Rev. Msgr. James Driscoll, DD, DCL, "one with striking appearance and noble bearing, possessed fiery zeal for the things of God. It had long been the desire of the erudite priest to build an elementary and then a high school in the parish. A building for such was purchased on Broad St., and a small brick building behind this house was erected. This was to be the elementary school. A strong desire arose among the parishioners for a high school also. While this edifice was rising, the Doctor, as he was called, turned his attention to the matter of obtaining teachers. He approached Mother M. Patricia Craven, RSM, in Gabriels, NY, who was willing to supply Sisters of Mercy. Through months of negotiations Mother Patricia and Monsignor, both of whom were cultured and charming, exhibited a respectful and business-like manner. One very warm afternoon Mother Patricia and Monsignor sat down for some further consul-



tation. The chair, selected by Monsignor, had been newly painted! When the talk ended, only Mother Patricia was able to arise. Quick recognition of the very embarrassing situation caused Mother to withdraw discreetly while the lordly Monsignor extricated himself from his predicament.”

Upon reflection, that scene will make all of you smile. The above quote was taken from a book of the history of the Sisters of Mercy in the Diocese of Ogdensburg written by Sr. M. Agnes Harding, RSM. Sister was a high school English teacher at St. John’s.

Further on in the St. John’s chapter, Sister remarked that the Superior, Sr. M. Irene Clarke and a teacher, Sr. M. Rita Hanhart, died. They both died in Saranac Lake of complications from a cold. Isn’t that ironic? Another Sister, Sr. M. Virginia Foley, died at Champlain Valley Hospital and is buried in the priests’ plot in Mt Carmel Cemetery. Years later, there was some discussion about removing her remains and Monsignor declared: “Absolutely not. I want one saint in the cemetery.”

The history continues with many tales of educational and civic feats, the closing of the Boarding School in 1944, a listing of the then known physicians, lawyers, priests, sisters, brothers, legislators – all graduates of the school. During WWII more than 200 “boys” served in the Armed Forces, with 12 giving their lives. Their memorial is on the Oak St. side yard of the church today. (in Plattsburgh)

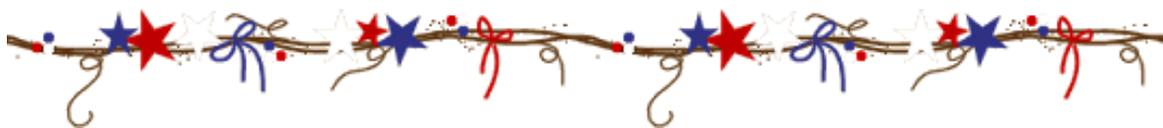
Sister Mary Agnes suggested that if the walls could talk, there would be many things learned – both from the teachers, as well as the students!

We know that today all of the older Sisters who frequented the halls of both the elementary and high school are deceased.

During this pandemic time, we have had time to reflect on many things. Maybe you could think of some of the Sisters and teachers many of you had at St. John’s. The Sisters were great ladies.

Perhaps the biggest gift the Sisters imparted was their love of education, their devotion to the students and families and their desire that students succeed. Many will recall being corrected and disciplined, but hopefully there’s a spot of gratitude for at least one particular Sister in your heart.

The presence of Sisters of Mercy in the parish for 100 years is a cause for gratitude.



Independence Day 2020

Needless-to-say in so many ways this Independence Day is different. In reflecting on this Day sitting under the maple tree at our Motherhouse I found myself with mixed emotions. One emotion is one of deep gratitude for the incredible blessings that we enjoy as American citizens and often take for granted. While the other feeling is one of deep sadness and grief over the pain and suffering that has been the price paid for the prosperity that we have. Especially painful is the genocide and harsh treatment of Native Americans, and slavery and structural racism of Blacks that are a part of our history. The temptation is to get caught in either deifying or demonizing our attitude towards our country. The challenge is to recognize both Godlike qualities and demonic tendencies in our Country and in ourselves, give praise for the goodness, ask forgiveness for the wounds we have caused, and beg our loving God for the wisdom and guidance as we move forward.

My musings led me to think about the name of this Day, Independence. Historically, of course, it commemorates our liberation from English dominance and it is certainly something to be celebrated. However, as we all



know, the development of the human person moves from total dependence as babies to independence in adolescence and young adulthood. This period of development focuses on the discovery of one's identity and role in society with little thought of its effects upon others. This stage is not the end; but rather a necessary step towards adult maturity. This includes a recognition of one's interdependence within the human family, and the acceptance of the responsibility it carries to collaborate with each other to create a just and peace-filled world.

Is it possible there is connection in the last months with the pandemic, the racial uprisings and the commemoration of the 5th Anniversary of Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home? Could they be a call for us as a Nation to move beyond our adolescent sense of **INDEPENDENCE** and our striving to be the best **IN** the world, to a sense of **INTERDEPENDENCE** where we strive to be the best **FOR** the world? Embracing both our feelings of gratitude and grief we are blessed with the light of the Gospel Justice and the Catholic social teachings embedded in Laudato Si to give us direction for moving forward in these troubled time.

As T.S. Eliot would say..."be ye satisfied that you have light enough to take your step and find your foothold."

-Sr. Bethany Fitzgerald, SSJ



FYI

Many thanks to all who sent in items for the newsletter. If your reflection does not appear in this month's letter, it will be in the August issue. For those who have not had a chance to jot down your thoughts, you still have time!!!! Don't be shy. The topic is relevant for the foreseeable future.

Sr. Cindy sent me a link to her retreat director's final talk. I am posting it here for anyone who would like to listen/watch it. It can be difficult to hear at times but there are slides that go with it. It's well worth the time.

I highly recommend listening to the last day of our 6-day virtual retreat. It is 33 min. long. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UYXhhwQ5dk> on link. The write up of some of Mary Greenan FMA's (Salesian Sister) is in the pdf above.

--a beautiful Saturday reflection and prayer...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UYXhhwQ5dk>

Please keep two of our Sisters of the Cross, Sr. Rosie and Sr. Jackie in your prayers. They are in India and have not been able to return to the Diocese. I suspect that it will be awhile before they can get into the country.

