



Next Step News

December, 2014



What **IS** the “next step?”

The invitation and the call is loud and clear. Pope Francis declares a year focused on consecrated religious. Priests and religious are challenged to WAKE UP the world...to the joy of living the Gospel message and God's love for all creation.

Advent is here! The Gospel says it clearly: Watch! Be alert! Christ is here, NOW! Christ is born, dies and rises daily...in each of us. Stay awake, watch, be alert, because we are still being called to BE Christ to one another.

We are Christ's hands and feet, Christ's voice and listening ear. We are called to witness Christ to all people. It may take a lot of courage to take that “next step.”

Wake Up the World With Light!

Sister Diane Couture reflects, “I have been called and privileged to be able to create stained glass as a ministry of our Congregation for 35 years. Each day I enter the studio is one filled with newness and change. I go in knowing what needs to be done; then the mystery of God and the wind of the Spirit takes over. I may receive a phone call to go out and end the day repairing a stained glass door in someone's home.”

“My ministry of stained glass could not happen without the wonderful glass artists that God has called to travel with me on this journey. Day by day in our quiet warehouse studio we create with light and our pieces truly wake up the world around us. For this I am thankful!”

One of the projects that Sister Diane is presently producing is a series of stained glass portraying the life of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton for St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Palm Coast.

In her spare time, Sister may be found serving on various committees and boards or serving meals to the homeless.



Ministry to the Elderly



Sister Josephine Marie Melican was missioned to St. Joseph Convent, Orlando, earlier this year. Involved in volunteer parish ministry at St. Margaret Mary Parish, Sister visits and takes Communion to several homebound parishioners as well as to the assisted living facility in the parish. Sister especially loves being with the elderly who have such rich life experiences, sharing what they wish to share. “It broadens my perspective on life rather than having a narrow focus always on myself,” Sister reflected.

When Sister is not doing her parish ministry, she accompanies Sister Kathleen, Diocesan/Congregational Vocation Directress, to vocation presentations, workshops, retreats and conferences. In the middle of all these activities, both Sister Josephine Marie and Kathleen are taking a computer class.

Vocation Ministry to Wake Up the World!

Sisters Kathleen Power and Josephine Marie Melican attended the 25th National Religious Vocation Conference. 340 Vocation Directors and administrators of religious congregations gathered in Chicago on November 6-10th to pray, learn and share the mysterious grace of God in vocation ministry. For 25 years, new vocation directors have been given training, while those in the ministry have received workshops annually, excellent written materials and an annual conference every two years. Many diverse cultures were represented at the conference.

A panel of newer members (multicultural) in religious life shared the experiences that drew them to enter their own communities. Several of the responses included:

- the Sisters were so joyful;
- Sisters had a special relationship with God;
- I could be myself and be accepted;
- Sisters were normal;
- compassion: I felt that I was heard;



Pope Francis announces three aims of the Year of Consecrated Life:

*Look to the past with **gratitude**;*

*Live the present with **passion**;*

*Embrace the future with **hope**.*



From the Vatican, November 21, 2014, Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Embers in the Members

I am writing this reflection on the plane flying home to Miami, and flying high in so many ways after spending a weekend with about 60 of my Sisters of St. Joseph. It was a great gathering of the Sisters of the Atlantic Region who are 62 years old and younger. We met in Hampton Bays, New York, at the Brentwood SSJ Sisters' spirituality center. On Thursday, November 20th, the warm embraces of seeing old friends and meeting new ones were enhanced by the excitement in voices and sounds of laughter. New energy, new life, new smiles transforming faces, new ideas being shared, new possibilities, new hope was bursting forth like a stream in a desert, and precious hidden dreams were being shared in new ways. The sparks of our C/SSJ charism were flying as connections were igniting the flame in new but ever so familiar ways. Pope Francis is calling all vowed religious to Wake Up the World throughout this Year of Consecrated Life. There was nothing dormant in the hearts of our Sisters as we went our separate ways together, carrying the fire of our charism. The fire was burning in our hearts as we were awakened to something that had always been there but now was given the space to breathe, and leap, and dance.

The pilot of the plane just announced that much of our flight will be smooth but there will be bumpy parts, so keep your seatbelt fastened. Great advice...when we fly with God's Spirit, much of our life is smooth; but when it isn't, we need to fasten ourselves together with prayer and great companions along the way.

I feel like I am flying home with some embers that were ignited in the little stove in the Le Puy, France, kitchen and has burned in the heart of every Sister of St. Joseph that has gone before us, is burning in the hearts of the Sisters today, and will be passed on to those yet to come.

Today's gospel reading calls us to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, and visit the sick and imprisoned, for y doing this you will be serving Jesus. The Sisters of St. Joseph have been lining these Corporal Works of Mercy since 1650, when our founder, Jean Pierre Medaille, SJ, recognized the Spirit that burned in the form of desire with a group of women who wanted to start something new...together. And when they connected, the sparks ignited; the dreams were shared; new fires were lit; new initiatives were started; new ways of living as vowed religious were embraced, and the needs of the "dear neighbor" were met. They woke up to a whole new world and Jesus would say, "you did it for Me...you are doing it for Me..."

And so as I continue to fly high, both literally and spiritually, I feel deeply fastened to my Joseph Family, reignited, filled with hope, and called to bring God's burning light to a world in need of healing and reconciliation.

I am so grateful this Nov-EMBER that we came together to re-MEMBER, and to stroke each EMBER of our C/SSJ charism.

Kathy Carr, SSJ

"That all may be one" (John 17:21)



The Father Miguel O'Reilly House and the Sisters of St. Joseph

by S. Thomas Joseph McGoldrick, curator



Continued from November newsletter...

Our first eight Sisters lived in the O'Reilly House and slept in what is the attic for several months shortly after arriving in St. Augustine in September 1866. It was December of the same year that we were blessed with six postulants. Father Dufau, who accompanied the young women down the St. Johns River from Savannah, made the arrangement for the eight plus six women to live in the Christian Brothers House on Charlotte Street. This was on the west side of the street just about where the east school yard is for Cathedral Parish School. The Christian Brothers left St. Augustine at the time of the Civil War. The house was empty and in need of repair. By the early part of 1867 we were living in the Charlotte Street house. It is interesting to note here that our well-loved eight French Sisters lived with the Sisters of Mercy when initially coming into St. Augustine in 1869. The Mercy convent and school were on the west side of St. George Street on the corner of Cathedral Place and St. George Street.

The Sisters continued to live on Charlotte Street until the completion of the Motherhouse in 1876. It is true that ground was broken for the convent in 1874, but was not complete until 1876. Sister Stanislaus Bertrand designed the Motherhouse and was "clerk of the works" during the construction. A little anecdote in connection with this fact is that we did not have title to the property upon which we built the Motherhouse. We did get title to the property in 1876 when we were chartered by the State of Florida. The piece of land was not what we have today. It was approximately the middle two-fourths of our holdings on this property. This included the O'Reilly House.

To conclude in January: "And Today?"



The Sisters at Our Lady of Lourdes Convent, whose ministry is specifically one of prayer, have begun their year-long ministry focusing on the consecrated life and its purpose:

- December — an increase of vocations to the consecrated life.
- January — an increase of vocations to the priesthood.
- February — renewed joy and zeal in consecrated religious.
- March — deepening devotion to St. Joseph.
- April — transformation of hearts toward Christ.
- May — greater love and devotion to Mary.
- June — renewed devotion to the Eucharist.
- July — unity and reconciliation among all people.
- August — respect and care for the poor, and all life stages.
- September — gratitude for the call to religious life.
- October — for God's peace and mercy on our world.
- November — for the faithful departed in priesthood and consecrated life.

