

Caritas

A publication for the Sisters of Providence and Friends • WINTER 2002

Christmas Greetings

Every morning in our community prayer we recite these prophetic words:

"In the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace."

(Luke 1:78-79)

Jesus is this dawn from on high. He came as light and peace hidden in the neediness of a newborn child. Our Christian faith tells us that we discover God among us by kneeling at his manger in Bethlehem—or wherever poverty and vulnerability call forth a response of love. It tells us that here we will find the God of peace. Our faith also teaches that there is no peace without justice and compassion. Throughout *Caritas* you will find stories of people whose work in Providence ministries is this way to peace. During the Christmas season we celebrate them in a special way. We believe that you also contribute to our Providence mission and ministries, so we celebrate all of you, whose friendship, service, and generous giving manifest *the tender compassion of our God* toward people in need.

This year in particular the birth of Jesus calls us to join in prayer for all who live *in the shadow of death*. We pray for world peace not only as Christians, but also as followers of one God who guides diverse peoples into the path to peace. May earth, and all who live on this earth, hear the Christmas message of Peace on Earth and good will toward all.

Best wishes for a peaceful and joyful Christmas.

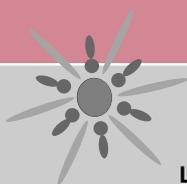
The Leadership Team/Mother Joseph Province

שלום
(sha-LOHM)
Hebrew

paz
(pahs)
Spanish

hózhó
(hoh-zho)
Navaho

Мир
(meer)
Russian



The journey of healing is filled with
a time for tears, reflections and prayers for peace.
Let each of us ask for the grace and wisdom to be peacemakers.

Muslim Jewish Christian
PRAYER FOR PEACE

*O God, you are the source of life and peace.
Praised be your name forever.
We know it is you who turn
our minds to thoughts of peace.
Hear our prayer in this time of war.*

*Your power changes hearts.
Muslims, Christians, and Jews
remember, and profoundly affirm,
that they are followers of the one God,
children of Abraham, brothers and sisters;
enemies begin to speak to one another;
those who were estranged
join hands in friendship;
nations see the way of peace together.*

*Strengthen our resolve to give witness
to these truths by the way we live.*

*Give to us:
Understanding that puts an end
to strife;
Mercy that quenches hatred, and
Forgiveness that overcomes vengeance.*

*Empower all people to live
in your law of love.*

Amen.

Prayer courtesy of Pax Christi, USA



peace
(pēs)
English

평화
(p'yong-hwa)
Korean

paix
(pay)
French

friede
(free-dah)
German

Sisters of Providence in Mother Joseph Province unanimously adopted a resolution in August opposing “a United States act of aggression or war against the people and the state of Iraq.” The sisters also called on President George Bush, members of his administration and the U.S. Congress to proactively seek “a negotiated, multi-lateral resolution of the conflict with Iraq” and to “stop using language and making pronouncements that create an environment of fear and aggression.”

Editor’s note: In early October, both houses of Congress passed a resolution giving President Bush broad authority to use force against Iraq.

The Sisters of Providence passed their resolution opposing aggression against Iraq at their annual Provincial Chapter, which was held in Spokane, August 8-12. About 100 women religious attended from throughout the province, which includes Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, California and Alaska in the United States, in addition to El Salvador. A similar resolution also was later passed by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR).

“Our awareness of our common humanity and our respect for the life and dignity of persons and for the earth, which is our common home, leaves us no choice but to oppose first-strike, unilateral acts of war,” read the resolution passed by Mother Joseph Province. “Furthermore, we cannot support actions which will shift resources,

human and financial, away from being placed at the service of the very real human and ecological needs of our society and world.”

In embracing the resolution, Sister Margaret Botch, a member of the province’s Leadership Team, recalled living in Iraq for a two-year period 50 years ago, when her father served as an agricultural specialist as part of an aid program originated by President Harry S. Truman. Henry K. Botch worked throughout northern Iraq, introducing people to modern agricultural techniques and equipment. He helped rid villages of rats,

taught how to prune fruit trees to increase their yield, established dairy farming and taught how to improve grain production.

“Like the Peace Corps and similar programs, the aid programs my Dad was part of recognized that the earth is our common home and that we humans share a common humanity,” Sister Margaret said. “As members of the same human family, we are more alike than different. If we come to know one another as friends and neighbors, we can mutually enhance one another’s lives. My Dad brought technology and skills to the people of Iraq, but he and our entire family formed friendships with Arabs, Kurds and Turks that enriched our lives in numerous ways,” she added.

Her experience in Iraq solidified her opposition to aggressive acts and intensified her call for a negotiated resolution to problems, she explained. If the United States invades Iraq, it will send missiles that will destroy the infrastructure of Baghdad or other cities, including the homes of vulnerable people, Sister Margaret said.

“I look at this as destroying families, killing children and their parents, bringing additional suffering, grief and death to people already decimated by the sanctions we have waged against them. I have opposed the sanctions against Iraq, which have done nothing but cause suffering for ordinary people,” she added. “I oppose the projected aggression against this people because, in my judgment, it is both morally wrong and against international law.”

The resolution passed at the Provincial Chapter urged individual sisters and Providence Associates to join with others working to prevent a first-strike, unilateral aggressive action of the United States against Iraq. Since then, many sisters have joined in the anti-war effort and several have participated in rallies for peace in communities throughout the West. ●

LCWR speaks out on clerical abuse allegations

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) has more than 1,000 members who are the elected leaders of their religious orders, representing 75,000 U.S. Catholic sisters. The following statement on the “crisis of allegations of clerical abuse” was issued by the national organization at its conference in St. Louis in August.

As women religious leaders who are an integral part of our church and society, we, the Executive Committee of LCWR, are deeply troubled by the current escalating crisis of allegations of clerical abuse.

We are saddened by:

- the suffering and violation of the victims and their families;
- the actions of the perpetrators;
- the allegations against the falsely accused;
- the way in which the actions of some have implicated the whole clergy;
- the institutional Church’s pattern of silence;
- the erosion of trust in church leadership among the faithful;
- the deep hurt experienced in all parts of the Body of Christ.

Acknowledging the wrong that has been done, aware of the hurt and the scandal, we ask how can we use this moment to address the causes that permitted the current crisis. This calls for openness, radical honesty, and transparency. We believe that, in this crisis, there is an opportunity for us to be self-critical rather than defensive, thereby creating together a more whole and healthy church. We reach out compassionately to all who have been affected: the victims and their families, our brother priests and bishops, the unjustly accused and the perpetrators. We support the countless priests and bishops who continue in faithful and selfless ministry in the Church.

In spite of the dark place in which we find ourselves at this time, we are filled with hope. We know that we are all part of a broken world; and, in our faith, we trust that the brokenness can be healed. The journey toward wholeness is long and hard. We see this time as part of the Paschal experience moving toward a new Pentecost. As we journey together, we are confident that the Spirit is working in us to renew our Church and our world. ●

Editor’s note:

It has come to our attention that Sister Cecile Fournier, General Superior from 1970 to 1974, was an American citizen. That would make Sister Kathryn Rutan the second U.S. citizen to serve in that position.

Mother Joseph Province speaks out

against acts of aggression or war against Iraq

- 2 ● Calls on Bush and Congress to seek negotiated, multi-lateral resolution; tone down language



Margaret Botch, SP

Province chooses
two co-recipients for

2002

Mother Joseph Award

Two recipients will be presented with the 2002 Mother Joseph Award in ceremonies in December – Dr. Ken Kapstafer, a Spokane pediatrician and leader in the medical community, and Mitzi VandeWege, retired assistant administrator at Providence Centralia Hospital. The award is named in honor of Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart, the first Provincial Superior of the Sisters of Providence in the West, who was a distinctive figure in early Northwest history. (See inset.)

There were 10 nominations, “each worthy of an award,” said Sister Roberta Rorke, who coordinated this year’s award process.

This is the first time the award has been presented since Mother Joseph Province was formed by the merger of the former St. Ignatius and Sacred Heart provinces in 2000. The Mother Joseph Award is given to a person within the boundaries of Mother Joseph Province who “exemplifies the values and courage of Mother Joseph.” It will be presented by the Provincial and the Leadership Team on behalf of all the Sisters of Providence in the province, which includes ministries in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana and El Salvador.

Dr. Kapstafer will receive his award at a reception from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. December 6 at Mount St. Joseph, 12 West Ninth Avenue, in Spokane. Mitzi VandeWege’s award will be presented at a reception from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. December 8 at St. Joseph Residence, 4800 37th Avenue SW, in Seattle. This weekend was chosen because December 8, 1856, was the date that Mother Joseph and her sister companions first arrived in the Northwest. ● → →

Mother Joseph,
a woman of extraordinary compassion and vision, arrived in the Washington Territory in 1856 and encountered a strange new world of physical hardships, cultural and religious diversity, and rapid change. There were no hospitals, few schools, and little in the way of charitable services for those suffering the misfortunes of life on the frontier.

Equipped with simple tools, enormous gifts for creating and building, and deep faith in Divine Providence, Mother Joseph and her sister companions stepped into the breach to fill these unmet needs. Under her leadership, more than 30 hospitals, schools and homes were opened for orphans, the elderly, and the sick in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and southern British Columbia.

In May 1977, Washington Gov. Dixy Lee Ray signed into law a bill authorizing a statue of Mother Joseph to be placed in Statuary Hall in the nation’s capitol, Washington, D.C. Mother Joseph is Washington State’s second such honoree. In addition, her birthdate of April 16 has been declared a state holiday by the Washington Legislature.

2002 Mother Joseph Awards

Mitzi VandeWege

“Mitzi VandeWege lives out the mission in a way that makes other people want to serve, to improve, to love, to help, to give, to reach out, to be more like the women who have come before us. Mitzi can be the body of Christ in a hurting world without calling attention to herself. She can care for other people, the lonely, the poor, the unlovable, like Mother Joseph cared without judging or hesitating to do the right and good thing. She is a strong woman like Mother Joseph – of strong character, undying spirit, endless energy with a caring compassionate heart.”



the nominators wrote. “She knew that social services are an essential part of our mission.”

Mitzi was the model for supporting programs to benefit the underserved, including helping out at the dental clinic on weekends, handing out free helmets to children at the bicycle parade, and bringing donuts, paint brushes and her husband John to the annual Paint the Town fundraiser to paint the homes of seniors with limited resources. Generous with her time, Mitzi attended Chamber of Commerce events, the Habitat for Humanity fundraiser, Economic Development Council gatherings and meetings of the Centralia Community College board. She has been equally generous with her resources, contributing to the United Way, the Patient Emergency Fund, and the Employee Assistance Fund.

She is the one who shopped for gifts when the hospital sponsored a family at Christmas and who supported the hospital foundation by making purchases at the Festival of Trees and bringing them to the hospital lobby or the long-term care center’s gathering space for others to enjoy. No hour was too late, even when she stayed and slept on her office floor when Centralia experienced a flood. “She wanted to make sure that staff who needed to go home to be with small children could get out – she would do their work,” her nominators said.

Everyone at Providence Centralia Hospital had a favorite joyful Mitzi story, it seems. Calling her “the Martha Stewart of hospitality,” they recalled her delivering ice cream to the night staff at midnight, hosting a party with “silly white elephant gifts” for managers at Christmas, sending birthday cards to employees who reported to her, and being dunked in a dunk tank and taking cream pies in the face to raise money for the Patient Emergency Fund.

Mitzi VandeWege, a “woman of commitment and compassion,” has earned the respect and admiration of her former colleagues at Providence Centralia Hospital, and her dedication to living the values of Mother Joseph and the Sisters of Providence has earned her the 2002 Mother Joseph Award. ●

them that they would have the support they needed when they returned to work.

“When an employee took her own life, Mitzi went to visit the family and sent counseling staff to assist other employees,” the nomination letter said. “When a nursing supervisor’s husband died suddenly, Mitzi, a social worker and our sister representative spent a day at the employee’s home, helping the employee cope with her intense grief. Mitzi is appropriate and capable to reach out and care, even when the situation is uncomfortable or painful. She will drive anywhere to attend a funeral of an employee’s family member. Her presence is always noted – and welcomed.”

Her nominators described Mitzi as a coach and mentor with great listening skills who is able to “motivate individuals to a higher level of stewardship, compassion and service to others.” Her style of leadership is by example and “she never side-steps difficult issues or difficult people,” her nominators said. “She recognizes the business aspect of healthcare and can make tough calls.” She acts with a “broad world-view, thinking of what is best for the whole organization. As hospitals began eliminating Social Work Service, Mitzi continued to view Social Service as valuable to patients/residents and their families,”

The characteristics that inspired others to nominate Mitzi for the award include her dedication, her compassion, her leadership, and her advocacy for excellence. She arrived at Providence Centralia Hospital one year after the merger of St. Helen Hospital and Centralia General Hospital. “Factions still existed among the staff,” her nominating letter said. “She focused on uniting the various factions among staff and between departments. She accomplished a sense of unity by valuing everyone. She brought us together and we became a team.”

Her energy on the job was endless, evidenced by her long work hours and a door that was constantly open to managers and employees. Part of her daily schedule was to walk around the hospital, chatting with staff, her nominators said. Mitzi really *knew* the hospital community, and she was there to show her comfort and compassion when employees faced illness or tragedy, bringing homemade food and assuring

Mitzi VandeWege, an employee of the Sisters of Providence for 34 years, was nominated for the 2002 Mother Joseph Award by a dozen of her former colleagues at Providence Centralia Hospital. She came to the hospital when it opened in 1989 as an experienced professional who had worked for nearly 24 years at St. Peter Hospital in Olympia, first as staff charge nurse, then nursing supervisor and later director of nursing. Mitzi was only on loan to Providence Centralia as assistant administrator, but she stayed and selflessly served patients, employees and her community for 11 years before retiring in 2000. Even as a retiree, her dedication and commitment remain, and her face still is a familiar one at hospital events and activities.

“Mitzi believes that her work does not end within the hospital,” her nominators wrote. “She is a woman who is committed to the Lewis County community, even though she lives in Olympia.”