

# Christina Wong comes to Spokane for novitiate

**C**hristina Wong has been enjoying fall in Spokane, where she is spending a year as a novice before she returns to Holy Angels Province in Edmonton. The proximity and convenience of the novitiate house to downtown, her synoptic gospel class at Gonzaga University and the natural beauty of the Centennial Trail are particular enjoyments. And she delights in life with her housemates, her novitiate directors Sisters Josie Ramac and Marilyn Charette, as well as Sister Liz Gress.

Born in Hong Kong to a family of 10, in 1988 she moved to Edmonton, "a very cold place," joining her parents and sisters. When told that Spokane, where she arrived on August 21, is another "very cold place," she offers a broad smile and an infectious laugh. "This weather," she says, "is a different kind of cold."

Christina worked in property management in Edmonton for a number of years, then began caring for her aging parents. After their deaths, she became more deeply involved in her church. Christina says she met the Sisters of Providence more than a decade ago, at a retreat at the Providence Centre in Edmonton. "I met a schoolmate there, a religious from another community who later transferred to the Sisters of Providence." Christina, in her early 50s, says she thought about religious life over the years, adding that people were always asking her about it. "I studied in a convent school and they always asked me," she recalls. "The same with the Sisters of Providence, but I was not ready at the time."

She became a candidate for the religious community on August 25, 2004, and entered the novitiate on August 18, 2005.

"I had been volunteering in a hospital, visiting patients, and I knew many of the sisters there," she explains. Helping people through health care was one of the encouragements for her to enter the community, but a clinical pastoral education course she took last year has become a new interest, as well.

Three days a week, Christina takes her synoptic gospel class at GU, "learning to read the gospel in a different way." While not taking the class for credit, she is doing all the coursework and says she is really enjoying it.

On Thursdays she visits with the sisters at Mount St. Joseph, and she also is a volunteer at the Women's Hearth ministry. In addition, she has joined the Justfaith group at St. Aloysius Church, where a handful of women and a couple of facilitators talk about social justice issues.

Asked about hobbies, Christina says she loves to cook, and does so without recipes. "I cook whatever I like," she says. When asked about Christina's culinary skills, she relates that Sister Josie simply says she cooks "quite a lot of exotic things," which brings more laughter.

She also loves to travel, and says the only one of the five continents that she has not been to - yet - is Africa. One of her favorite journeys was to Rome for the beatification of Blessed Emilie Gamelin in 2001, a year after she became a Providence Associate. "After the beatification, my calling became more clear to me," Christina says. "I want to make sure I'm on the right direction." ●



Christina Wong

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## Relic of Blessed Emilie graces St. Joseph's Church in Yakima

Following the beatification of Blessed Emilie Gamelin in 2001, a first-class relic was given to Bishop Carlos A. Sevilla, of Yakima, who asked the sisters where to place the relic so that it could be known and honored. At the suggestion of the sisters, the relic now has a home at St. Joseph Church, with which the sisters have been associated since their arrival in the Yakima Valley in 1875.

(A first-class relic is a part of the body, e.g., bone, hair, blood, nail, etc. A second-class relic is something that has touched a part of the body. A third-class relic is something the saint may have worn or used.)

The project had the financial support of the Leadership Team and the blessings of the church's pastor, Father Michael Pope, SJ. The sisters designed and ordered built a large shadow box featuring a cut-out with a bronze-like finish of the statue of Mother Gamelin that stands at the subway entrance in Montreal where she once had a soup kitchen. The words chosen, including her quote, "I prayed that you may always love the poor and that peace and unity may always be with you," are written in English and in Spanish. The reliquary is designed so that it can be opened and the relic removed for veneration.

The reliquary was erected at the St. Joseph/Marquette School children's Mass on September 23, when the sisters also chose to hold their annual renewal of vows. Accompanied by Vice Principal Sister Rebecca Berghoff, Sister Alice St. Hilaire visited classrooms earlier that week to explain to students what would be special about the Friday Mass. "The children were excellent listeners and participants as we

explored the connections of Blessed Emilie, Sisters of Providence, saint, process of canonization, relic, and so on. Each child got a good look at the relic. Their interest was intense."

Sister Alice adds that the school is to be congratulated for how much some of the students knew about Blessed Emilie. She left each classroom with a second-class relic which they could venerate when they returned to their rooms after the Friday Mass. ●



Reliquary for first-class relic of Blessed Emilie Gamelin graces St. Joseph Church, Yakima.

## "Always Room for One More"

An historical photographic display of St. Elizabeth Hospital/Providence Yakima Medical Center, from its beginnings through its sale to Health Management Associates in 2003, has become a permanent exhibit at Yakima Regional Medical Center. The display contains many vignettes from the hospital's chronicles. Title of the exhibit is "Always Room for One More." ●



This new exhibit at Providence Regional Medical Center displays the facility's history.

## PA is 2005 recipient of Sister Peter Claver Award

Mary Butler, PA, who served as vice president at Sacred Heart Medical Center for 20 years, was presented with the institution's Sister Peter Claver Award in October.

"Constantly finding ways to help the disadvantaged, Mary is truly a saint to the poor and an angel to children," said Sacred Heart CEO Skip Davis. "It is hard to find a person who cares more deeply and responds more quickly to needs than Mary Butler."

At SHMC, Mary worked to ensure health care for the poor. Since her retirement in 2002, she has pursued other passions, including ensuring the safety and security of children. She is board president of Partners With Families and Children and of the Sacred Heart Foundation. She also serves as victim assistance coordinator with the Diocese of Spokane and participates in the Big Brothers, Big Sisters program. Mary also is involved with human services projects in Nicaragua. ●





## New Seattle PA

**M**arcie Madden, PA, (right) sponsored Veronica Freeman of Seattle as a new Providence Associate at a commitment ceremony in September. ●



## Heart Follies 2006

**S**ister Lillian Deslauriers put on a new face for her role as a dancing clown in the 2005 edition of Sacred Heart Medical Center's fundraising benefit, Heart Follies. She's joined here by fellow thespians Mike Wilson, president and COO of Sacred Heart Medical Center (left) and Bill Bouten, PA, owner and president of Bouten Construction. ●

# Rest in Peace

**Anne Kovis, SP (Sister Mary Jerome)**



**S**ister Anne Kovis, SP, age 87, died September 13, at Mount Joseph in Spokane. She had been a Sister of Providence for 68 years.

It was at her final ministry, as director at the Poverello Center in Missoula, Mont., that Sister Anne felt she learned the true meaning of poverty. Joan Lefler, president of the center's board of directors, said of Sister Anne: "We all want to love God, but few of us can follow her lead in doing ordinary things with extraordinary love. She put love into action, and with a clear vision she moved Poverello into the 20th century.

"Sister Anne helped take the ugliness out of poverty. She was not concerned about how the money would keep up with the expenses; instead she focused on what Poverello needed and through prayer asked God to do the rest.

"Her whole life has been a prayer. She is an example of God's love and always kept Jesus' words, 'feed my lambs,' at the forefront of her life."

Sister Anne was born in 1918, the year the Armistice was signed, in Trident, near Helena, Mont., to Charles and Marie (Dosen) Kovis. She was one of five children, with two sisters and two brothers. When she was 6, the family moved to Sandcoulee, Mont. Her mother died in a car accident on the way home from a Fourth of July picnic that same year, and her father placed the children at St. Thomas Home in Great Falls.

"He knew that the Sisters would take good care of us," Sister Anne related. "My first carefree years were spent in the little girls' department under the loving guidance of Sisters Annette and Louise Dorothy. My thoughtful years during the

hard time of the Depression were lived under the careful training of Sisters Evangelista, Flavia and Georgius. I always attributed the grace of my vocation to the fervent prayers of Sister Flavia."

She graduated from high school at St. Thomas Home in 1936, then entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Providence in Seattle in January 1937. She professed first vows in July 1938 and final vows in 1941.

She received a bachelor's degree in education from the College of Great Falls in 1951 and a master's in religion from the University of Notre Dame in 1959.

Sister Anne's ministry assignments were highlighted by 45 years of teaching, including at Our Lady of Lourdes Academy, Wallace, Idaho, 1938-39, 1943-46; Providence Mary Immaculate School, DeSmet, Idaho, 1939-40; St. Francis Xavier School, Missoula, Mont., 1940-43, 1959-60; St. Joseph Academy, Sprague, Wash., 1946, 1957-59; St. Mary's Training School, Des Plaines, Ill., 1946-57; Central Catholic High School,

Great Falls, 1960-63, 1966-68; DeSales High School, Walla Walla, Wash., 1963-66; College of Great Falls, director of Emily Hall, 1968-70; and Sacred Heart Academy, Missoula, 1970-74. She was social work director at the Poverello Center, Missoula, from 1981 to 1995.

She retired at Mount St. Joseph, Spokane, in 1995.

Survivors include her sister Evka (Jenny) Kovis Hruz and niece Diane Hruz, Knoxville, Tenn.; sister-in-law Florence Kovis, Boise, Idaho; niece Charlla Adams, Boise, and nephew Charlie Kovis, Dreary, Idaho.

Vigil Service was held September 15 and the Funeral Mass was celebrated September 16, both at Mount St. Joseph, Spokane. Arrangements were handled by Hennessey-Smith Funeral Home, Spokane.

Donations in memory of Sister Anne Kovis to support the ministries of the Sisters of Providence may be sent to: Sisters of Providence, Office of Development, 9 East 9th Avenue, Spokane WA 99202-1209. ●

## PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

*Carol Dunn-Johnston, mother of Beverly Dunn, SP, died September 5 in Sunland, Calif.*

*Jeanne Gagnon, sister of Claire Gagnon, SP, died September 6 in Montreal, Quebec.*

*Rita Simpson, sister of M. Therese Kohles, SP, died September 14 in Livermore, Calif.*

*Sue Ann Schattenkerk, sister of Jeanette Benson, SP, died September 20 in Spokane.*





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## NEW CHALLENGES

**O**nce again, nature has tested the mettle of the people of Central America. In what has become the most active storm season in decades, more than 1,000 people were killed in October in Guatemala and El Salvador by floods and landslides unleashed by Hurricane Stan. Among the living are those who have lost everything – again.

New challenges are being faced by the people of the Salvadoran villages of Angela Montano and La Papalota, where our sisters serve in ministry, and of Santa Catarina, Guatemala, where Providence Associate Chris Halter has established health clinics and a technical school. Neil Rifembark, a university student sent to Guatemala by the Sisters of Providence as a volunteer, arrived just in time to be a big help in the relief and rescue efforts.

Chris reported: "At one point in the day, Neil tied me to a 100-foot climbing rope (which he had brought with him) to try and dislodge some rocks that were preventing water from flowing and were causing some great flooding. I was up to almost my neck with water and mud. Suddenly, some people shouted at Neil to pull me back in up to higher ground. By the time I got untied and climbed to the roof top, there was a sudden rush of water and mud that brought down a house just about 100 feet beyond where I had been working."

Later, Chris added, a neighbor named Victor asked if he would brave the water again and see if he could find Q110 (\$14.66), his life's savings, in his flooded house. "I willingly jumped back into the muddy water that again reached close to my neck and brought back his entire life savings. We all stood there and held the money as the first of our tears were able to fall from our tired and saddened eyes."

The department of Usulután in El Salvador has experienced not only the effects of the hurricane, including torrential rains, flooding and mudslides, but also the eruption of a volcano to the west for the first time in a century. Sister Fran Stacey reported – by phone rather than e-mail because there was no electricity -- that conditions were bad in her area

### *Providence brings aid to storm-damaged Guatemala and El Salvador*

but much worse in the city and in the west of El Salvador. Still, at least eight of the communities in her parish were underwater. Sister Fran immediately turned her efforts to helping displaced people at the center in Tierra Blanca. Sisters Maria Antonieta Trimpay and Monica Campillay were helping the more than 425 people who had flocked to the church at San Marcos.

A national state of emergency was declared and thousands fled their homes to seek safety in shelters. Houses, roads and crops were lost. Families were sleeping on floors, wet and cold, but Sister Fran reports that food and clean water were thankfully not a problem at the area shelters. Roads were reportedly fine above the water line.

The storm is over now, and once again the minds and hearts of the people of El Salvador and Guatemala are focused on repairing and replacing damaged structures and building new ones. They need your prayers, as well as your support, as do the many poor and disadvantaged people throughout Mother Joseph Province that the Sisters of Providence strive to serve.

We invite you, on their behalf, to continue your generous support of the ministries of Providence. Your gifts, large and small, are a blessing to those who benefit from them.

"I ask for your prayers and your generosity for all of these people around the globe that are suffering," Chris says. "In times such as these, I believe God does not ask us to turn a blind eye but to reach out a hand of love and concern."

As Sister Fran said, we are "united in prayer for the poorest, who always seem to suffer the most in times of natural calamities, in the heart of our Mother of Sorrows." ●

**T**he Providence family also has contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to Hurricane Katrina relief efforts in the southeastern United States. Sister Karen Hawkins also spent two weeks in New Orleans as part of a team of mental health, pastoral care and addiction counselors. Read more about her time there in the next issue of *Caritas*. ●