Caritas

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Dear Sister Beatrice,

Thank you for coming to our school.

Thank you for teaching us more about being a nun.

Thank you for giving us the bookmarks, book/pamphlet, and other information about becoming nuns.

Thank you for teaching me that nuns don't just pray all day, that they can still do the jobs that they originally wanted to do before God called them to be nuns.

I really enjoyed you visiting our school.

Thanks.

Sister Beatrice LaFramboise loves to share her letters from schoolchildren.

Vocation Team
answers questions about religious life for all ages

In the past school year, Sister Beatrice LaFramboise visited 14 Catholic grade schools and high schools throughout Mother Joseph Province. Many of the letters from the young students she has met bear colorful, elaborate drawings and uncertain penmanship, spelling and grammar, but the sentiments expressed are from the heart.

Sister Beatrice and the other members of the Vocation Team, Sisters Clare Lentz and Maria Lourdes Cleto, are employing lots of different ways to heighten awareness about religious life by sharing information, answering questions and being a visible presence, even while dressed in street clothes. Aided by Sister Judy George, Vocation Office manager, they also correspond and network with women who are discerning a religious vocation. Queries from interested women come by telephone, e-mail or personal contact, and through response to advertisements in Catholic newspapers and magazines or the Sisters of Providence website. Vocation Team members answer these women's questions, share their own stories and explain what religious life is about and ways to determine if a call is coming from God.

"We're all planting seeds," Sister Beatrice says. "Let's wait and in 10 years let's see."

Just the act of being available to answer questions and to dialogue can bear fruit, Sister Bea explains. At Mass, three young girls recognized Sister Beatrice from seeing her in their school the week prior and engaged her in conversation. And an invitation to speak to the Serra Club has led to donations for the education and formation of sisters. "These are the surprises of life; the seeds that are blooming," Sister Beatrice says. "They will lead to new life and a new community."

Sister Bea's visit to Blanchet High School in Seattle to meet with its chaplain, Father Gordon Douglas, led to a discussion of just how many Sisters of Providence had graduated from there. The unofficial answer was that at least 24 Blanchet graduates have entered the priesthood or religious life, including Sister Maggie Pastro. →→

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Vocation Team

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Sr. Beatrice at the Run for Vocations

"This is a school that had not had a vocation presentation for a long time," she says. "I asked several people to answer three questions: How did Blanchet High impact your decision; what are you doing now; and what would you say to students today?"

Fostering vocations is something the entire church can get involved in, she says, through things like vocation committees in parishes that encourage each family to take time to pray for vocations. Within the religious community, promotion of vocations is everyone's job, not just the work of the three team members, she believes. "I ask the sisters, 'How many have you invited to *Come and See*?' "

Sister Bea participates in Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Living (SEEL) to help with her own spiritual development. And she still had enough energy to join the students from Providence High School, Burbank, in the Run for Vocations marathon sponsored by the Los Angeles Archdiocesan Vocation Office.

A primary focus for Sister Maria Lourdes and Sister Clare has been Busy Person's Retreats at colleges and universities. (See page 3.) "We go where the young people are," Sister Maria says. Discussions range from the practice of Lent to prayer life and everything in between. "Their questions are many: How do you become a sister? What do I do to find out if religious life is for me; where do I go? What is the difference between a sister and a nun? What is the practical experience of the vows?"

On Washington State University's Pullman campus, Sister Maria shared with 29 students and seven spiritual directors. On the Spokane campus of Gonzaga University, it was 40 students and six spiritual directors. She also has done vocation ministry at Walla Walla Community College and at Whitman College with Sister Helen Mason.

Sister Clare led a Busy Person's Retreat with 22 students at the University of Great Falls. "It was the second time on the campus, and faculty, students and the community were invited. "Their interest is hopeful, as is their attention to stories from the sisters on the fullness of their lives," Sister Clare says.

The Vocation Team also hosts *"Come and See"* activities designed to introduce women to the community, such as an annual summer vocation discernment weekend. A promising new activity introduced last December was a Compassionate Service Experience for a New Year. Nine women, most in their 20s and 30s, enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to spend a night of sharing and dialogue with the sisters, then converge on Providence Hospitality House the next morning to experience hands-on ministry. The 24-hour experience offered a chance to sample the kind of prayer, community and service life that young women today are seeking, as reported in survey results in *Horizon*, the journal of the National Religious Vocation Conference.

One of the questions children and sometimes adults ask is, "Do you think the sisters will die out?" The answer, as Sister Beatrice sees it, is a positive one: "No, there will be at least one if you will be the new community. It may not be the way we are today, but it will be here. The needs will be the same; the difference will be in how you respond to them." ●

Renewal of vows

Sister Jessica Taylor ***is hugged by Sister Marilyn Charette after renewing her vows in a simple ceremony in August at the West Seattle home that she shares with Sisters Karen Hawkins and Blanca Sagles. Also among the attendees were pre-candidates Rosa Nguyen and Mary (Hong Nga) Nguyen, who share the same household. Look for a ministry update on Sister Jessica in the winter issue of*** **Caritas.**

Too busy for a retreat?

Perhaps a "Busy Person's Retreat" is the answer.

What, exactly, is a "Busy Person's Retreat" you ask?

Just ask Sisters Maria Lourdes Cleto and Clare Lentz, who participated in four of these college and university vocation events this year: at Gonzaga University, Washington State University, University of Washington and the University of Great Falls. The purpose of the retreat is to provide college students with hectic schedules an opportunity to experience a deepening of their relationship with God and others, to take advantage of spiritual direction, and some guidance for making decisions about life choices in a setting that matches their needs.

The Busy Person's Retreat runs evenings from Sunday through Thursday.

Each day the retreatant receives a scripture passage to pray with that day. Every retreatant commits to praying one half hour a day and meets with a spiritual director for a half-hour daily. In the evening, the group gathers for half an hour of prayer together. Usually, a different form of prayer is presented each evening. Some universities offer the retreat to faculty and staff, as well as to students.

Comments from participants indicate the success of the retreats:

- *"feeling refreshed and ready to explore my spiritual needs more"*
- *"I've grown more spiritually"*
- *"more loved by God"*
- *"having grown in my faith"*
- *"closer in my relationship with God"*
- *"happy and more peaceful"*

The University of Great Falls retreat began on Palm Sunday with Vespers and continued until Holy Thursday afternoon. Students, staff, faculty and members of the Trinitas Chapel community blended well into a praying community. Approximately thirty took part in some features, such as the evening prayer, and about twenty retreatants availed themselves of the daily spiritual direction that followed their private prayer with scripture. In the course of four days, they experienced a variety of prayer forms and leaders, including Sisters of Providence, a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth, a Poor Clare sister, a lay, married university campus minister, and a Protestant pastoral leader. Students responded enthusiastically, asking for more music, singing and food in a future retreat. Spiritual directors noted how generously the retreatants entered into this Holy Week time of prayer and search for God in their lives. ●

Editor's note: College or university officials interested in a Busy Person's Retreat may contact Sister Clare Lentz at 206-923-4028 or via e-mail at clare.lentz@providence.org

Pre-candidates welcomed in Seattle

Rosa Nguyen and Mary (Hong Nga) Nguyen were welcomed in a simple ceremony marking the beginning of their pre-candidacy on May 31, the feast of the Visitation of Mary. The two recently completed a six-month Come and See experience that began when they arrived from Vietnam in mid-November. They are sharing a house in West Seattle with Sisters Karen Hawkins, Blanca Sagles and Jessica Taylor.

The yearlong pre-candidacy will focus on their acculturation to the American culture. This summer they began taking English as a Second Language classes at Seattle Central Community College and they worked in a day camp program at Providence Hospitality House.

Rosa Nguyen

Mary Nguyen

This fall they are continuing their language classes and are working in the after-school-care program at St. George's School. They also will go through the R.C.I.A. program to learn about the Catholic Church in America.

Rosa, 22, and Mary, 20, are interested in working in ministry with the poor, children and the elderly. ●