

# 2009 Jubilee Celebration

14 Sisters of Providence  
mark 50 to 80 years of religious life

Fourteen Sisters of Providence celebrated 50 to 80 years in religious life on June 20 at Sacred Heart Parish, in Spokane. The Reverend Stanley Malnar presided at the liturgy, which was followed by a luncheon at Providence Auditorium.

## 80 years

**Sister Eva O'Hare** (Sister Lauren), born in Olympia, Wash., turned 100 years of age last December. Her parents were from Ottawa, Canada. She graduated from high school in 1927 and entered the Sisters of Providence a year later. For 40 years she taught in Vancouver, Walla Walla, Tacoma, Seattle and Moxee, Wash., and also was a teacher and principal in Yakima, Wash. Sister Eva also served in Burbank, Calif., where she taught at St. Finbar School and was treasurer at Providence High School. She later served in health care ministry in Tacoma, Olympia and Yakima, and she



was the registrar and bookkeeper at the conference center at Providence Heights in Issaquah, Wash. For 18 years she was the receptionist at St. Vincent Hospital and Medical Center in Portland, Ore.

## 70 years

**Sister Louise (Ursula Emily) Beaulieu**, age 95, was born in Rimouski, Quebec, and was baptized Marie Louise Anne. Four girls in the family entered the Sisters of

Providence; two became nurses and two became teachers. She entered the religious community in 1939 and was sent to Seattle, where she cared for the sisters in the infirmary and worked in the kitchen while learning to speak English. She went on to serve as a nurse for more than 30 years, and to work in the pharmacy. In addition to Seattle, her health care ministry took



her to Walla Walla, Moxee, Olympia, Vancouver and Port Townsend, Wash. She returned to Seattle as a parish worker and spent 14 years in pastoral care in Anchorage, Alaska.

**Sister Claire Gagnon** (Sister Marcelle Odile), born Marie Claire, was a toddler when she and her sister lost their mother and were sent to the orphanage run by the Sisters of Providence in Three Rivers, Canada. She entered the religious community in 1938 in Montreal and was immediately sent to Seattle, where she cooked for the sisters at a convent in Tacoma and learned to speak English. She graduated from the School of Nursing at Seattle University, and then served in hospitals in Seattle, Tacoma, Walla Walla and Yakima, Wash., and Medford and Portland, Ore. In 1961, she became the administrator at St. Peter's Hospital in Olympia, where she remained for 13 years. After completing clinical pastoral education in San Francisco, she



was assigned to Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage to develop the Pastoral Care Department. She retired in 2003 after 28 years in Alaska.

## 60 years

**Sister Helen Brennan** (Sister Dympna) grew up in Camas, Wash., and met the Sisters of Providence when Sister Beatrice Ann (Reda Perrault) came to her parish in Camas, Wash., to teach Sunday catechism. Another strong influence was Sister Mary Claver, who was the first person to ask Helen about religious life when she was an eighth grader at Providence Academy in Vancouver, Wash. Sister Helen entered the religious community and made first profession in 1951. She holds a bachelor's degree in education from the College (now University) of Great Falls and a master's degree in religious education from Seattle University. She taught grade school in Seattle, Yakima and Vancouver, Wash., and then in Fairbanks, Alaska. In 1968 she became director of religious education at St. Catherine's in Seattle. Religious education was her career for the next 23 years. She returned to ministry in



Alaska in the 1970s. Since retiring in 1996 she has been active in the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center, in Call to Action, and in Habitat for Humanity.

**Sister Rose Byrne** (Sister Kevin) is a fixture at Providence St. Joseph Medical Center in Burbank, Calif. Born on a farm in County Offaly, Ireland, like many in her family she chose religious life. She entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Providence in 1948 after a visit from a former neighbor who was chaplain at Providence Mount St. Vincent in Seattle. Her sister Philomena and their neighbor, Sheila Moore, joined the order the following year. From 1953 to 1972, Sister Rose taught in schools

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in Washington and California. She earned her bachelor's degree in summer studies at the College of Great Falls and her master's degree in education at Seattle University. In 1978 she was drawn to health care, beginning in the medical records department at Providence St. Joseph before earning her certification in clinical pastoral education. She worked as pastoral care associate in Portland and in Oakland before returning to southern California.



Since 1998 she has served in the Valley Service Area. She ministered to the elderly for 16 years at St. Patrick's Parish, and also has worked in parish ministry at St. Finbar Parish.

**Sister Susan Marie Fitzmorris** (Sister Clare of Assisi) was born in Olympia, Wash., and was taught by the Sisters of Providence at St. Michael's School. She entered the novitiate at Mount St. Vincent, Seattle, in 1948. Assigned to teach, she continued that ministry for 23 years in a range of grades and subjects in Seattle, Walla Walla, Vancouver and Moxee, Wash., Fairbanks and Anchorage, Alaska, and at St. Finbar's and Providence High School in Burbank, Calif. Summers at the College of Great Falls led to a bachelor of science degree in education. When she left teaching in 1974, Sister Susan began working with elderly sisters at St. Joseph Residence, Seattle. Over the next 20 years she moved from assistant superior to team member/assistant coordinator. She then served as housekeeper at nearby Mount St. Vincent and later as supervisor of housekeeping and laundry at The Mount, where she continues to volunteer at the Emilie Shop since her retirement in 1994.



**Sister Marleen Hull** (Sister Anthony), born in Havre, Mont., was about 7 years old when her sibling Catherine, 13 years older, became Sister Mary Louise, SP. The Providence Sisters were Marleen's teachers from the eighth grade at St. Thomas Home in Great Falls through high school at Our Lady of Lourdes in Wallace, Idaho. She entered the religious community at age 17 and was professed at 19. Her first ministry was in teaching, eight years in primary grades and kindergarten, and then she entered Sacred Heart School of Nursing, graduating in 1960. Her nursing ministry took her to Wallace, Idaho; Colfax, Wash., and Great Falls. She also served as supervisor of obstetrics and surgery and as director of nursing. Her education included a bachelor of arts degree from the College of Great Falls and a master's degree in hospital administration from St. Louis University. For six years she was assistant administrator for patient services in ten departments at St. Vincent Medical Center, Portland. In 1979 she was elected to the Provincial Council of the former St.



Ignatius Province, and then became administrator at St. Mary's Hospital in Walla Walla, Wash. She also visited shut-ins in St. Aloysius Parish in Spokane.

**Sister (Ruth) Virginia Miller** (Sister Virginia), who grew up in Longview, Wash., met sisters from Providence Academy who taught religious education every Saturday in her parish, St. Rose de Viterbo. Her older sibling, Sister Mary Leona, entered the religious community first. Sister Virginia followed in 1948. Her teaching ministry took her to Walla Walla, Moxee City, Yakima and Vancouver, Wash. When Providence

Academy closed in Vancouver, she was asked to remain in the city as a presence for girls who would be moving into the public school system. In 1967 Sister Virginia was joined by Sister Elizabeth Joyce and they began the Vancouver Apostolate, an outreach program to train volunteers in five rural parishes. They continued this ministry in Snohomish, Monroe and Poulsbo, Wash. In 1978 they became the first rural ministry team in the Archdiocese of Seattle. For eight years they served in 12 parishes and 10 mission



churches. In 1995, Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen appointed Sister Virginia as pastoral life director in Holy Family, Frances and St. Joseph, and Pe Ell parishes, where she presided each weekend in rotation.

**Sister Lucy St. Hilaire** (Sister Marisita) first thought of becoming a Sister of Providence in the sixth grade at St. Joseph Academy in Yakima, Wash. Two aunts belonged to the religious community and today she and her older sibling, Sister Alice St. Hilaire, are Sisters of Providence. Sister Lucy was first assigned to teach first grade at Holy Family School, Seattle, which began 27 years in education. She taught in Olympia and Vancouver, Wash., Des Plaines, Ill., and then spent 10 years as a teacher and dean of studies at Kennedy High School, Seattle. Five years on the team at St. Joseph Residence in Seattle was followed by clinical pastoral education (CPE) classes, and then 15 years as chaplain at Providence St.



Vincent Medical Center, Portland. She retired 10 years ago but has continued as a volunteer in Portland at the hospital, the child center and in parish work, particularly RCIA.

**Sister Silvia Troncoso** (Sister Maria Silvia de Jesus) was born in Chile in the Province of Concepcion and works with Hispanics in Yakima, Wash. She learned about the Sisters of Providence when she attended Santa Rosa High School as a boarding student in 1943. Two siblings also arrived as boarding students in 1946. Sister Silvia entered the Sisters of Providence on December 24, 1948, Christmas Eve,

thinking of it as a gift to her God. She was a teacher for more than 35 years in the Province of Bernarda Morin in Chile, including 15 years as director of educational ministry. For 17 years she was superior of her local community and she also served in parish ministry and pastoral care. She was asked to come to the United States to work with Hispanics, and has been involved in the



evangelization and catechization of adults, teenagers and adolescents ever since. She also works with the Family Congress of Evangelization each year.

50 years

### Sister Edeltrudis (Deling)

**Fernando** (Sister Miguel) grew up in Laoag City, Philippines. After graduation from a Catholic high school in 1956, she wanted to pursue her desire to become a sister, but none of the orders would accept her because she was just 15. Instead, she enrolled at Divine Word College, working on a degree in elementary education. After seeing an ad for the Sisters of Providence she contacted the vocation director and was helped to get a scholarship to study at the College of Great Falls. She entered the religious community at Mount St. Vincent, Seattle, in 1958 and made first vows in 1960, becoming the first Filipina woman to enter from her native land. Sister Deling taught for 20 years in primary grade schools in Great Falls, Missoula and Glasgow, Mont.; Wallace, Idaho, and Spokane and Walla Walla, Wash. She also was a pastoral associate in two parishes for 14 years, and at William Church in Shelby, Mont., and Holy Redeemer Church in Kissimmee, Fla. During the summers she worked in pastoral care at Columbus Hospital in Great Falls, Mont., and at Sacred Heart Medical Center, Spokane. She also taught migrant children in New York and Florida. After 38 years in the



United States, she was called in 1995 to return to the Philippines to serve her own people. She stayed there for more than 12 years, and then returned to Mother Joseph Province last spring.

**Sister Judith George** (Sister Mary Angela) was born in Missoula, Mont., and met the Sisters of Providence while accompanying her physician father on his rounds at St. Patrick Hospital. She later was taught by the sisters at St. Francis Xavier School and Sacred Heart Academy. Two months after high school graduation she entered the novitiate in Seattle. She made first vows in the chapel at Mount St. Vincent, Seattle, and then went to Everett, Wash., traveling daily by Greyhound bus to Seattle University for classes. The following year Sister Judy became one of the first students at Providence Heights, the College of Sister Formation in Issaquah, Wash., earning her bachelor's degree in 1963. Her ministry was in education, and she taught elementary at St. Gerard's in Great Falls, secondary at DeSales in Walla Walla, and college French at the College (now University) of Great Falls. For 10 months she studied French language and culture at the Sorbonne in Paris while chaperoning a former student. She earned a master's degree in French from the University of Montana, in Missoula. Ministry Training Services in Denver prepared her for a change to formation ministry, as well as retreat ministry in Edmonton



and serving on the leadership team of the former St. Ignatius Province. Currently, Sister Judy is vocation office manager and assistant librarian, and she offers retreat and spiritual direction ministry.

### Sister Ida Mae Marceau

(Sister Julia Marie) was born in Missoula, Mont., and entered the Sisters of Providence in 1958 in Seattle. She made first vows in 1960 and final vows in 1965. She grew up knowing the Sisters of Providence in Missoula, where she attended St. Francis Xavier School and Sacred Heart Academy. While working after school at St. Patrick Hospital the seeds of a vocation were planted. Several family members have been members of the religious community including her aunt, Sister Loretta Marie Marceau. Sister Ida Mae went through the sister formation program through Seattle University, graduating with a liberal arts degree. Her first ministry was teaching first grade at St. Patrick School in Walla Walla, Wash., then at St. Raphael's School in Glasgow, Mont. After being introduced to the Montessori teaching

method, she earned her certification and then taught at St. Thomas Children's Home in Great Falls, Mont. She found her true calling in nursing, enrolled in the licensed practical nurse course in Great Falls and for many years cared for patients at Columbus Hospital. She



later worked with elderly sisters at Mount St. Joseph in Spokane, where she became the superior. Today she is retired and volunteers at Sacred Heart Medical Center, Spokane.

### Sister Margaret Mary Wilson

(Sister Jean Ellen), born in Chicago, graduated from a Catholic high school at the age of 16 on a Sunday and the next day began four years of evening classes in practical nursing while working weekends at a nearby hospital. She first met the Sisters of Providence as staff members at Lewis Memorial Hospital, an Archdiocesan maternity hospital where she worked for nine years. In 1958 she requested admission to the novitiate in Seattle. She made profession in 1960. Because of her age and broader life and work experience, she did not enroll in the new sister formation program. Instead, she worked at Providence Hospital as an LPN and took classes in pharmacology, then was sent to Seattle University, where she earned her BSN in 1967. For the next nine years she was a staff nurse at St. Vincent Medical Center, Portland. In 1977 she became executive receptionist at the religious community's corporate headquarters, at 5<sup>th</sup> and Pike, where she became known for her gracious hospitality over the next 14 years. She also was the



office's sacristan, preparing for daily Mass. When she retired she became the sacristan at St. Joseph Residence, Seattle, where she continues to be a staff member and councilor to the superior.

*Once a person visits a Third World country, they will never be the same. We just don't realize how well off we are until we visit a country where the people struggle just to live. I can say that because I visited El Salvador in 1997, five years after the end of the civil war. I returned this year as part of a delegation from St. Aloysius Parish, in Spokane, to visit its sister parish, Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe, in Tierra Blanca, El Salvador. The delegation brought 100 pairs of black shoes for schoolchildren, in addition to \$7,000 collected at the parish for the Fondo, the Emergency Medical Fund. Two students from Gonzaga Prep also brought money for the food program for the schoolchildren. We brought needed items and money to the people, but the Salvadoran people also gave much to us: they shared their lives, their homes and their prayers with us.*

# Reflections

By Susan Orlowski, SP

## Sister makes return visit to El Salvador with Spokane parish delegation

**T**he trip began on a cold Spokane morning where we left 80 inches of snow. Because we were going to a country that would be about 90 to 100 degrees and humid, members of our group of nine dressed in layers.

While in El Salvador we met with catechists from some of the Base Communities, groups of people that work for each other and share the Gospel. They said Jesus didn't want people to stick too close to the doctrine of the Church but to be Christians on the inside. They told us that when we help the poor, we give what Jesus wants: love. I found it is impossible not to love the people there. Despite their poverty, they are a happy and proud people. They actually want for nothing because they share all that they have and they are poor together. Even though they had little, they shared from their need with each other and with us.

These are people who get up at 4 a.m. and work until 3 p.m. for \$4. Here we see the living God in the lives of the poor and the oppressed. They told us how much hope we had given them because we left our families and good food to come to visit the poor, who had very little food and

very simple housing. Even though the people themselves were poor, they fasted for the poor, met together, and decided what they could do for the poor. They felt that a Gospel without works was not a Gospel, and that there needed to be works to make the Gospel alive in the lives and hearts of the people. Each year when they fast, they evaluate and pray about what needs to be done. They said that Jesus called us to come, and that He also told us to spread the message of the poor people with our families and the parish when we returned.

Although the people of El Salvador are supposed to have free medical care, the poor do not share in that service since they are out in the country. In the 1990s, the Sisters of Providence started the Fondo and were responsible for collecting 25 cents from each family every month. Money also came from the Sisters of Providence, the Providence Associates and other organizations and private donors. Today, the Fondo is run by three Salvadorians who were educated through the Sisters of Providence scholarship fund for Salvadorian youth.



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*Among the delegation to El Salvador from St. Aloysius Parish, Spokane, were: Sister Sue Orlowski (center), George Waldref, PA, (next to her on the right) and his wife Rita Amberg-Waldref, PA, (far right).*

Recently, the Fondo purchased a bus to take people to the city once a week to get medical care. The trip costs \$2, compared to the \$4 cost to ride the regular bus.

We met with the young people who work with the Fondo, which uses the collected funds to pay for critical or chronic medical problems such as diabetes, malnutrition and kidney failure. Other means of making money are being explored, including fundraisers. In addition, some people were sent to Nicaragua to learn how to make natural medicines that can be purchased by patients for little money. Last year, about 146 patients went to Venezuela to have cataracts removed for free through Miracle Mission, however, there are no provisions for children who need vision and hearing screening. Providence Sister Fran Stacey went there and was able to get glasses for a few children who needed them. Currently, the Fondo is battling prostate cancer by providing information, PSA blood tests and examinations. The participation of 51 men was considered a big success since machismo is quite prevalent in El Salvador.

The Sisters of Providence started a scholarship fund in the mid-1990s to send girls to secondary school. Families pay what they can and the rest of the

Today, the scholarship fund helps both girls and boys in K-12 schools and also helps pay the cost for college or technical schools. With a better education, the graduates are able to get better jobs. This has a two-sided result. If youth get better jobs, they can either stay in the village in which they grew up or move to the cities. Salaries are better in the cities, but the move separates families.

**D**uring our trip we visited several primary schools and then visited some of the homes of the children. The children were so happy to see us and so proud to show us their homes, which were very simple, many of them with dirt floors. Inside the homes there were hammocks for sleeping and some beds made out of woven straw. Most of them had a little kitchen outside in a small enclosed area. One thing that was new for me from the last trip was that many of the villages now had electricity and some even had running water. Other villages did not have either, but still the people were proud and happy. After the war, the people were given bicycles, so there were bicycles everywhere. Also, there were more cars than there were in 1997.

Father Padro Declerq, a priest from Holland who has been in El Salvador for 40 years, told us that the children and youth are beginning to lose their culture. They have televisions and ways to play music now, so they are into Rage and Rap music. He said the first generation after the war felt that they didn't have to do what their parents did for 10,000 years: work the land. This is why the scholarship fund has two results: it helps youth get a better education which would lead to a better job, but it also provides the means for them to leave the land which their ancestors worked. Approximately

1,000 a day left El Salvador in 2005. Now, only about 500 leave each day, but Father Declerq said that in 20 years, he feels that most Salvadorians will be living in the United States. Many families are torn apart by this. The median age in El Salvador is 23 years old. At the Romero Center and in some of the villages, the older people are teaching traditional dance to help the young remember their culture.

One aspect that is remembered by all is the martyrs, among them four churchwomen who were abducted and killed, six Jesuit teachers and their housekeeper and her daughter who were murdered, 500 massacred at la Quesera, and Monsignor Oscar Romero, who was assassinated as he finished the homily in church in 1980. Romero had just told the people that if a grain of wheat does not fall to the ground and die, it just remains a grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit. He said that if he died he would rise in the hearts of the Salvadorian people. Just about everywhere we went in the villages there were paintings of Monsignor Romero. There also is a monument and a church in honor of the murdered churchwomen, another honoring the slain Jesuits, and a memorial in the mountains at la Quesera. The people of the Base Communities believe that the blood of the martyrs is in the dirt, so the memories are always with them. The people said they felt that they could forgive, but also felt it is very important that they not forget.

In San Salvador, the poor were even poorer than those in the country, where at least they had cows, chickens and crops. In the city, the people tried to sell things to people who were passing by in cars or they went to the cathedral to beg for money. Because of the beggars, we were told not to take out money or cameras while there, but to carry some change. While I was in the cathedral, an old woman who was very thin and small came up and just stood by me. My heart was moved to pity because I felt that she had very little to live on, so I gave her 25 cents. I really wanted to give her much more since I had more money, but I could not get to it since it was in my money belt. My heart just ached for her. After I gave her the quarter, she went to a pew and began to pray. I don't know what she was praying about, but it might have been for me and I only gave her a quarter. My heart was saddened for her.

**A**s I said at the beginning of this report, my life has been changed by meeting the happy but proud Salvadorian people. In the United States, we have so much and yet we have so many unhappy people. The Salvadorian people have much to teach us about helping one another, living with less and being more aware of the difference between our needs and our wants. ●



- Rita Amberg-Waldref, PA,
- (right) had an opportunity to
- meet Marta Franco, the mother
- of Sister Vilma Franco (center)
- and a friend Soyla Marquez.

money comes from donations. Most towns have a primary school that is free, but many children still cannot attend because they are required to have a uniform of white shirts, blue skirts or pants, white socks and black shoes. When the scholarship fund was started, it was mainly for girls since secondary school was in San Salvador. In addition to the clothes and supplies girls needed, they also had to pay for a bus ride back and forth to the city. Most families couldn't afford that cost, so if anyone went to secondary school it would be the boys. With the scholarship fund, families could be helped with some of the cost so girls could continue their education.



- A wall of remembrance
- honoring the martyrs
- of El Salvador is viewed
- by the delegation.