

SISTERS OF SOCIAL SERVICE SOCIAL IMPACT

Fall 2013

A Publication of the Sisters of Social Service

Women, Children, Poverty and Need

Today, we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others.

— Pope Francis

All are to be welcomed and received as Christ.

— Rule of St. Benedict

Lay people's names below have been changed for privacy and confidentiality reasons.

Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, stock images were used in this story.

PART II

Sometimes in our lives and ministries we help in bringing about large changes that impact many lives. We make a neighborhood safer for children and families by creating a community center that offers social services for hundreds of people each day. We invest time and energy into empowering individuals and groups to come together to ask for better education for their children, to clean up their neighborhoods, or to help the homeless. Our Sisters and other religious communities have helped to share their stories and show the impact of their work for those who often feel powerless in our world. Laws are passed with a more informed conscience and educated populace who have listened to the stories of those living in poverty.

Often in our works of service we are also faced with needs that challenge our ability to be of help. It may be a lack of tangible resources to provide food or shelter. It may be our own limited skills for a given situation. It may be that the person

before us is so overwhelmed by their situation that they are unable to respond to our offers. It is at these times that what we communicate through our presence is most important. ***By virtue of our baptism and again by our community commitment we are called to strengthen what is good and help to heal what is broken. Sometimes all we can do is mirror back what is best and holy in another.***

Upon arriving in the Philippines Sr. Naomi Cornejo met a young girl named Gemma—a homeless teenager with no parents who was living on the streets and trying to make it. Her mother passed away the summer before and she did not want to be placed in a home. She feeds herself by asking people for money outside of a JollieBee (fast food restaurant) and is known as JollieBee girl. Sometimes she helps the local fishermen so she can earn money. She has stopped going to school and Sr. Vangie Lasao is working with her to get her back in school.

"I have reflected much on this young

girl," Sr. Naomi began, "I have seen her almost weekly since I arrived here and I found myself asking, what am I called to do for Gemma? All I can do now is open my heart to her and invite her to know us and share her life story. She is always so happy to see us and looks for us every Friday."

Sr. Naomi reflected on the story of the Good Samaritan and how we are called to respond to and love our neighbor and to

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A Message from Sr. Rochelle Mitchell



Dear Friends of the Community:

Warm greetings from all of us!

In late September, Sr. Chris Machado and I had a day of prayer at the Holy Spirit Retreat Center which we entitled “Reclaiming the Sabbath.” A lovely and lively group of 25 women joined us for the day. There is something very compatible about the Autumn and Sabbath. We are asked to stop. The nights are longer, the harvest is complete and the earth is resplendent with color. It is a kind of contemplative time. We cease being productive for awhile and pause to give thanks to God for life, for all of creation—remembering what we have and becoming mindful that there are those who have so little. We connect to the earth and all her inhabitants.

In this edition of *Social Impact*, it is our hope that you will connect with the stories and realize how your partnership with us so positively affects those around the globe who often do not experience having their basic human needs met, let alone abundance. At this time, we keep in our prayers the children and families suffering in the wake of the devastating typhoon that hit the Philippines.

As we enter into this final quarter of the year, I wish to express my deepest gratitude on behalf of the Community for the support you have given us in so many ways. Please be assured of our daily prayers for you. ■

Most gratefully yours,

Rochelle Mitchell
— Sr. Rochelle Mitchell, SSS
General Director

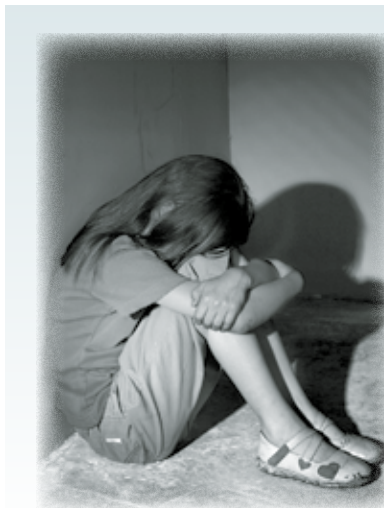
(Women, continued from page 1)

live a life in which people are more important than things. In reflecting on the Scripture passage, she became more aware of needs in our society that should be addressed—human trafficking, families who don’t have enough to eat, youth living on the street—the list goes on. She knew that whatever she was able to do in the present, including opening her heart and sharing the moment with this young girl, as a Sister of Social Service she would also help to develop systemic changes that could benefit all of the “Gemmas.”

“I am called as a baptized Christian to treat her with dignity and love, and to let her know that she matters. Gemma is a precious human being made in the image of God, who deserves a chance in life to be loved.”

Mary is an 11-year-old girl who has also touched Sr. Naomi’s heart during her time in the Philippines. Mary’s mother is a drug addict and her grandmother helped to raise her until she died last year. Mary was placed in a home for children—but ended up running away and returning to the social worker that she met at the co-operative center in Paliparan. She said she had felt like a robot in the home she was in and it was not working out for her there. Mary is a bright, intelligent girl who is in need of a loving home. She has run away several times and keeps returning to the co-op center.

“I have had the chance to visit with her,” Sr. Naomi said, “and it breaks my heart that this child has no real home. They are in the process of placing her again. When I see her, I see this hunger in her eyes for a simple embrace and some attention. She is a joy to be around but when I see her my heart melts. This child inspires me and has moved me deeply to continue my journey as an SSS and continue my education to be a social worker so that I



can help youth like Mary get the basic needs in life. All I can offer her in the few moments that I have spent with her is my love and prayers. I ask myself: What will I do for the “Marys” that I meet again and again in my life? How will I respond?”

Because as a community we tend to be “doers” feeling powerless when we can do little or nothing to “fix” a situation is hard to accept. In the rule of St. Benedict, the spirit of which we follow, he counsels us to “*listen with the ear of your heart.*” Listening compassionately takes an openness of heart and deep trust in the Spirit when there is little beyond “presence” that we can offer. Sometimes we have to trust that this, for the moment, is enough.

The early 1970s into the early 1990s was a time of drastic changes and ideologies within the adoptive services field. Many of our Sisters worked within this ministry and many of them provided services at Holy Family Adoption Services—including **Srs. Bertille Prus, Lois Marie Davis, Paula Vandegaer, Shaun Marie Wise, Susan Kam** and others.

Sr. Bertille and her staff saw their share of heartbreaking situations and broken spirits. Beyond the “placement” of a child from one family into another’s care, there was most often a complex spiderweb of emotional landscape—of loss, of letting go, of holding on, of society’s views of parents willing to give up their child. Sr. Bertille and the social workers at Holy Family Adoption Services were conscious that both families were often involved in their own states of grief—the birth parents with their decision and the adoptive parents with their inability to have a family of their

own by themselves. “And even grief is really an expression of love,” Sr. Bertille shared, “As I see it — all of us were in it as a **work of love**. Each of us involved in this child’s life — birth parents, foster and adoptive parents, the board, the guild and staff — we were wanting to give the boy or girl the life and love they needed.”

For the parents involved much of their time was filled with waiting, hope and worry. The staff were ready to counsel and give support whenever needed. Sr. Bertille’s colleague said quietly, “So much of our work was really about just being present — to the grief and the joy.”



Every Saturday, **Sr. Camille Mantigue** visits the public hospital in Trece Martires in the Philippines to volunteer with patients of all ages. The wards are full of people because many of the services are free. One Saturday, she met a woman who gave birth—but the baby died. The woman had no family to be with her during this mournful time. After she became pregnant, the man she was with left her. Sr. Camille met her while she was roaming around the hospital because she could not pay the bill and was unsure of what to do next. Sister listened to her story and in the end the woman expressed her gratitude saying, “thank you... this meant a lot to me.”

Another Saturday, Sr. Camille met a woman with diabetes who first went to the hospital to get a tetanus shot for stepping on a dirty nail but eventually needed an operation to amputate her foot because it would not heal. She could not afford this operation. “This was difficult because all I could do is listen to her but I felt that listening was not enough,” Sister recalled, “and so I prayed with her. I prayed for her family, too.”

In preparation for her visits with patients Sr. Camille prays in the chapel for spiritual growth. She says she learns from their stories. They share with her that they “feel human” when she visits with them and appreciate that someone cares enough to listen to them.

“I am called to be present and respond,” she said. “I hold their hands in prayer and ask God for a new beginning for them—a new hope and healing for them and their families and that God uses the nurses and doctors for their healing, too.”



*I hold their hands in prayer and ask
God for a new beginning for them—
a new hope and healing for them
and their families...*

—Sr. Camille Mantigue



It’s difficult sometimes because families don’t want to face that their loved one is dying and letting go can be very hard. I see patients giving up or holding on because of their families and I struggle in this moment of prayer. I say: ‘Jesus you know what our destiny is and you have a plan for us.’”



Sometimes in the moment of need there are few options available. What we can offer might be ways to learn from a situation in order to decrease the chances of repeating it. Recently, a mother came in seeking financial assistance from staff at Stanford Settlement Neighborhood Center in Sacramento where **SSS Associate Julie Rhoten** supervises the social work staff and interns. The family’s electric service was in danger of being shut off. Because the Center did not have funds to assist, staff suggested two other agencies to contact. The woman had already contacted both, and they were also out of funds. She felt overwhelmed and anxious at the thought of the power being turned off.

Staff invited her to use the Center’s phone to call the electric company and ask about making a payment arrangement. Julie recalled, “After the customer service representative who took her call turned her down, we encouraged her to ask for a supervisor, as usually it takes someone a little higher up to make special payment arrangements.” The results were good—a reasonable payment plan was put in place and her electricity was not shut off.

Staff also talked with her about ways to reduce her other expenses while she was paying off her electric bill. It was suggested that her children arrive at school in time to participate in the free breakfast program. She also received groceries from the Center’s food closet to help stretch out her monthly resources.

“The most important part about how we helped is not the groceries,” Julie said. “It is about the relationship we create with families. This mother felt connected enough to ask for help, because of our work with her children. She trusted our social work staff to help her. In turn, we were able to empower her to make a plan to help “fix” the situation herself. The next time she finds herself in a difficult spot, she will be able to draw on this experience, and not feel so helpless.”



As **Sr. Christine Banta** knows, giving teens hope who have seen the unimaginable and trying to open their hearts was not easy, especially inside the walls of juvenile hall in Los Angeles in the 1970s.

(Women, continued on page 4)



(Women, continued from page 3)

“I wanted them to know their faith—to know Jesus...that even in the midst of all they were going through—that they could depend on something. They had seen so much...” Sr. Christine’s voice trails off. “They weren’t ready to ‘plan their life’ yet—they were in crisis and just trying to get through the day.”

By spending time with them, letting them share their feelings and unpack some of what had happened to them in their young lives, Sr. Christine felt like they came to trust her. It wasn’t about “fixing” their situations or changing the difficult circumstances they faced—both inside juvenile hall and outside in their lives beyond.

“I wanted them to see that they were loved—that they were worthwhile—and that something—something more than they could imagine right now was possible for them.”

The greatest poverty is not lack of material goods, but to have nobody care about you.

—South Sudan’s Bishop Kussala on his visit to Los Angeles

Sr. Theresa Marie Chen was working once with a patient with bipolar disorder who stopped taking her medication. One day she was arrested after attacking a neighbor who had insulted her boyfriend. Since the patient was pregnant when her trial was due, the judge postponed it until after her delivery. Sr. Theresa Marie continued to stay in the woman’s life, and to accompany her on this part of her journey and visit her in prison.

As the baby’s birth became closer, the patient was transferred to Women’s Hospital. On the day Sr. Theresa Marie went to visit her, the guard outside warned her that the patient was very angry and dangerous. Meanwhile, she could see through the window that her patient was waving, and smiling at her. Sr. Theresa Marie later learned that the court had perceived the patient as a dangerous, incompetent mother; and as a result, her newborn was immediately taken away from her and they intended to place him with foster

or adoptive parents. Understandably, the mother was furious. Sr. Theresa Marie recounted, “I could only imagine how painful it had been for the woman to be separated from her baby—without a chance to hold him even once.

Fortunately, through Sr. Theresa Marie’s intervention, the patient’s sister adopted the baby. When the Christmas season came, Sr. Theresa Marie figured that the best gift that she could offer the patient would be pictures of her baby.

Sr. Theresa Marie shared, “I went to visit the patient’s sister, and took some pictures of the baby. On Christmas Eve, I visited the mother at the jail, and presented her my ‘Christmas gift’ fancily wrapped. When the woman opened the gift, she cried out ecstatically: ‘My baby...my baby!’ She turned to the guards around her, showing them the pictures of her little one. Everybody responded to her with a big smile! At that moment my own heart was singing ‘Joy to the world...’”



In México last August, a group of young Purépechan women from the countryside arrived at our house in Zacapú in the Michoacán for a year of support in their nursing studies. In the early 1960s, **Sr. Theresa Ávila** began a nursing school here for young women from the villages and the surrounding mountain areas. For many years now these young women have returned to their communities after finishing the nursing program, bringing with them the vital medical skills needed to support their families, neighbors and communities. Today, **Sr. Maria Teresa Velázquez** provides a daily presence making a home-away-from-home in Casa Quiroga for these young women. Their parents are willing to let their daughters leave their small villages because they trust that the Sisters will “watch out for them.”

Maria is one of the girls who came to the nursing program. She did not speak Spanish. She spoke only the Purépechan language of her indigenous people. The Sisters helped her to first learn Spanish and then to learn the medical terminology needed for her classes.

Sr. Olga Chávez Bernal and **Sr. Leticia (Lety) Tapia Espinoza** work with them in different areas of the women’s mental, physical and spiritual growth. “It is very important for us to

(Women, continued on page 6)

Our Time with the People of Culion, Alulad and Cagait

Sisters Camille Mantigue, Ada May Lagrosa, Naomi Cornejo, novices of the Sisters of Social Service, along with Kathy Cachombo, an inquirer, started an outreach project in March 2013. They went to Culion Palawan Philippines which was the site of a leper colony for many years. Today, the Tagbanwa indigenous people inhabit this same island. The Sisters spent four days living with the Tagbanwa people to get to know them in preparation for a day camp they also provided in May (the summer season in the Philippines). Below is an overview and then several of the ' reflections on the time they shared with the Tagbanwa children and families.



*Dinner with Jesuits to discuss the Tagbanwa immersion.
Back row: Fr. Bogs, Srs. Ada and Camille and Kathy, an inquirer
Front row: Rainey, Fr. Lito and Sr. Naomi*

Overview from the SSS Novices

Our time in Culion and on the Islands of Alulad and Cagait was amazing. We were quite humbled by our experiences with the families—their hospitality and generosity. We had a wonderful time but it was challenging as well, being without running water, electricity and no plumbing. It left us to question how the families have survived so well on these islands—in such a remote place and without what we city-dwellers consider basic “necessities.”

The Tagbanwa were very welcoming and it was inspiring to have them share so much with us—offering us their food—and especially the gift of their life experiences. The children and families were so kind and always offered us a smile. We were amazed at how dedicated the teachers are and what they are able to do on these islands, despite the distance from the mainland and lack of resources they may encounter. We were left in awe of the simplicity of life for the Tagbanwa, and yet their profound generosity and deep spirituality.

We are grateful for the opportunity to have had an immersion experience in all three islands. Thank you Rainey, Camille, Kathy, Fr. Lito and Fr. Bogs! Thank you Tagbanwa children and families!

—Srs. Naomi Cornejo, Camille Mantigue, Ada May Lagrosa, SSS

Reflections from Culion

Being with the kids is a precious moment—though it’s not always easy. It takes a lot of patience, thankfulness,

understanding, respect and love.

Understanding—because of language barriers, since not all of the children we work with understand Tagalog. Seeing them smile at us eases the problem!

Patience—because we are dealing and working with different people as well as different emotions. It was a challenge for us when we fetched water and had to paddle a boat in order to carry it back from another island.

Thankfulness—It made us realize how lucky we are—the ease of access to electricity, clean water, and technologies back home—but at the same time, we feel empathy for the people, because we know that they don’t have access to even just clean drinking water.

Respect—remembering to show it towards every person that we met, their culture and beliefs. It was a privilege to share and be a part of each other’s life—even for a short period of time.

Love—seeing them smile and laugh despite all of life’s difficulties; how they care for us; how the parents encourage their kids to join our day camp program; how the Tagbanwa people helped us in looking towards the future with positivity and hopefulness. The gift that in every problem in life there is a solution.

Now we believe that children and experiences with the intervention of God and the Holy Spirit are the best teachers in life.

— Srs. Ada May Lagrosa & Camille Mantigue, SSS
(Philippines, continued on page 6)

(Philippines, continued from page 4)

Adventure to the Islands of Culion, Alulad and Cagait!

Traveling to the “island of no return,” as people used to call Culion, was an amazing experience. Until the 1980s, this island was where people who had leprosy were sent to be until their final departure. I will always remember this immersion encounter of being with the youth in Culion and then continuing to help with family camp with the Tagbanwa. The *way of life* of the Tagbanwa and their hospitality touched me deeply. This journey—and I use the word journey because it did something to my core—changed me forever. I experienced the gift of

the Holy Spirit of awe and wonder. My short time there with the families left me in a state of profound admiration for how they live life and welcome others to the table. As a Sister of Social Service, I am called to follow the spirit of Benedictine Spirituality. Through the Tagbanwa, I experienced humility and hospitality. I felt a strong connection to their *way of life* of respect for God’s creation and their welcoming spirit. I hope and pray that I can live this *way of life* as I continue in my journey as a Sister of Social Service. ■

— By Sr. Naomi Cornejo, SSS



Left: Sr. Naomi and Tagbanwa children on Alulad. **Middle:** Summer Camp Training—Sr. Ada and youth from Culion. **Right:** Arts and Crafts—Sr. Camille and Tagbanwa children on Alulad.

(Women, continued from page 4)

walk with them until they finish with their studies,” Sr. Olga reflected, “in order to really see that they achieve their dreams and goals.” With help from the sisters, these young women develop a profession that not only helps to support their families, but also brings needed health care to their small villages.

Sr. Olga talked excitedly about the satellite program she was able to bring to Zacapú as an extension of the university in Mexico City. This program gives young women who would not be able to study in Mexico City an opportunity they would not otherwise have. Since the Sisters started the program they have been helping the students find ways to discover who they are in order to be good people and caring professionals when they graduate.

“As Sisters of Social Service it is very important to us for these young people to have an integral formation in the university, not only in the academic areas,” Sister explained, “because our society is hungry for genuine and well-grounded people. Last year, we introduced different psychological workshops to help with this process.” In a pilot class, for instance,

a small group of students met with the Sisters to learn about psychological issues and defense mechanisms that might block their own psychological and academic growth. Students found the class very helpful.

As Sisters of Social Service, every day God gives us the opportunity to be a better person and to serve God’s people. Here we have the opportunity to reflect the face of God to these young women.

— Sr. Olga Chávez Bernal

When asked about the many challenges in their work, Sr. Olga didn’t hesitate. “As Sisters of Social Service, every day God gives us the opportunity to be a better person and to serve God’s people. Here we have the opportunity to reflect the face of God to these young women.”

It is the Sisters’ daily presence, their living and working with these young women, that is at the heart of what they do. In México, the Philippines, Taiwan and the United States we are trying to help others “see

the light of hope” that Pope Francis speaks of. Indeed, we strive, even in small ways, to be a light that warms the heart, brightens the path, and invites the journey to healing and wholeness. ■

— Gathered and edited by Sr. Marti McCarthy, SSS, and Jamey Fitzpatrick

Comprehensive Immigration Reform

This year, we are celebrating the 90th anniversary of the founding of our Sisters of Social Service Charism. In 1923, Sr. Margaret Slachta and our other founding Sisters began our community with the bold idea that direct service in Social Work was only one aspect of doing the social mission of the church. They knew that direct service, group work, movement work AND legislation all needed to be connected in one focused effort to address the needs of those who struggle in our world.

Ninety years later, I am honored to have the opportunity to continue to live that insight. Last year, our organization **NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby**, had the opportunity to make a difference in our nation by going on a bus trip. Our *Nuns on the Bus* caught the public's imagination in a way that can only be explained as an act of the Holy Spirit. None of us involved in the project ever expected that there would be the outpouring of support and joy that accompanied us on our 2,700 mile journey through nine states lifting up the work of Catholic Sisters and pushing back against the House-passed Ryan Budget. But armed with the interfaith Faithful Budget we were able to make significant progress in making the needs of people working in poverty a focus of public conversation.

This year, we went on the road again to lift up the needs for true comprehensive immigration reform. For three weeks and 6,800 miles we traveled to speak to those who are struggling with a broken immigration system. On the trip we met many people, I will just name a few:

■ In Charlotte, NC, we met one of the leaders of the National Hispanic Realtors Association who told us that his organization had done a study and discovered that an estimated 3 million households will buy property within 3 years of having a clear path to earned citizenship. This will add \$500 billion dollars to the economy and help the struggling housing market to recover.

■ In Apopka, FL, we met agricultural workers and "DREAM Act" students who are building their community and working to be integrated into the U.S. society. They are doing essential services in their area, but are mostly unseen by established local groups.

■ In Phoenix, AZ, I met a 19-year-old woman who is the sole caretaker of her 11-year-old twin siblings. The pre-teens are U.S. citizens, this 19-year-old is a DREAMER and both of their parents have been deported. She worries every day that she is not doing a good job raising her younger sisters. What a struggle she faces!

■ In Los Angeles, CA, I got to meet about 25 women at South Central LAMP who are working to learn English and to be better parents. They learn how to advocate for their children

in the public schools and how to be a support to their children in academic achievement. This is a wonderful contribution to the future of our Nation.

All along our route I met so many people who are contributing to creating community and building our democracy. I came to realize that immigration is the glory of our past and the hope for our future.

— Sr. Simone Campbell

All along our route I met so many people who are contributing to creating community and building our democracy. I came to realize that immigration is the glory of our past and the hope for our future. As we export the "American Dream" we need to be responsible to that vision. Our current immigration laws are flawed. There is no way for needed workers to come to the United States in a timely fashion. There is no line for prospective immigrants to stand in. We need to be our best selves as a nation and solve this twenty-first century problem. We need to ground our solution in the real life experiences of our families and businesses. If our experiment in democracy is going to work we have to be problem solvers, not problem avoiders. The time is now to do this work. I am honored as a Sister of Social Service to continue to live our 90-year-old insight that more is required than just direct service. It delights my heart that, united with my Sisters, collaborating with our Church leadership, we have the opportunity to live the Gospel in the political world. We know that we can help to create a more perfect union if we live the social mission of the church in politics.

—By Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS



Sr. Simone walks with community leaders and Mayor Arturo R. Garino along the border fence. Nogales, Arizona

NUNS

on the bus 2013

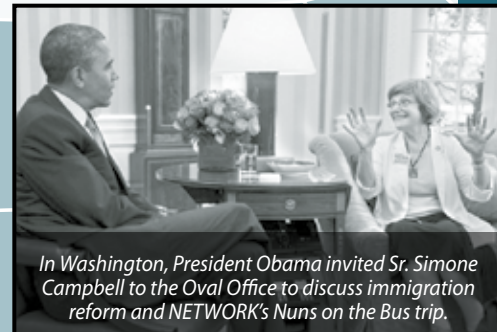
As they threaded their way across 15 states of our country and logged 6,800 miles all told, 44 Catholic Sisters heard stories and shared conversations with thousands of people who believe that comprehensive immigration reform is one of the most urgent issues of our times. Many people of faith and people of conscience believe it is our moral obligation to help make a clear path towards citizenship. These Sisters came together from various communities across America to inspire and be inspired, to speak directly and compassionately, and to bear witness to those whose lives and families have been torn apart by the broken system we have. Below are a few photos and stories from the bus, and you can find more on at www.sistersofsocialservice.com.



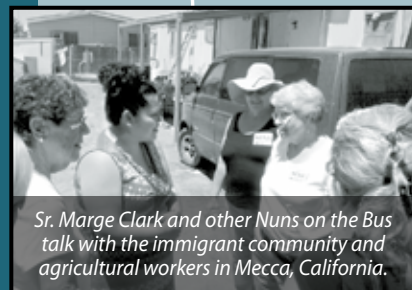
Srs. Simone Campbell and Mary Ellen Lacy and other "Nuns on the Bus" march with local leaders and community members including Dolores Huerta, renowned activist for farmworker justice and human rights. Bakersfield, CA



Sr. Diane Donoghue, Lupe E. Gonzalez-Hernandez and Monica Uriarte share Esperanza and the Mercado La Paloma's story. Los Angeles, CA



In Washington, President Obama invited Sr. Simone Campbell to the Oval Office to discuss immigration reform and NETWORK's Nuns on the Bus trip.



Sr. Marge Clark and other Nuns on the Bus talk with the immigrant community and agricultural workers in Mecca, California.

June 17-18

June 15-16

June 13-14

June 11-12

June 11

June 8-9

June 9-10

As a Californian, the one in four message is timely. One out of four of the eleven million seeking a pathway to citizenship live in California—That's 2,750,000. One out of four new small businesses in California are started by immigrants. That's job creation.

— Sr. Diane Donoghue, SSS



On a tour of Friendship Park, San Diego, CA, with Dan Watman from the Coalition of Friends of Friendship Park.

In each place we visited I saw the same hopes and dreams that my immigrant Irish and Czech grandparents came with on their journey to America. I saw the same entrepreneurial and work values that have given two generations in my family the life my grandparents hoped for. I learned that comprehensive immigration reform makes fiscal sense and would be a boon to our country at all levels.

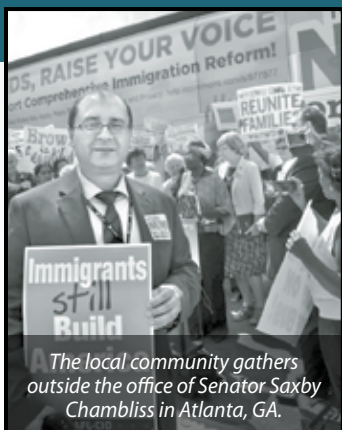
— Sr. Martha McCarthy, SSS



Sisters of Charity gather by the bus in Liberty State Park across from the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.



Sr. Mary Ellen Lacy, DC, speaks at a friend-raiser at St. Peter's Parish in Charlotte, NC.



The local community gathers outside the office of Senator Saxby Chambliss in Atlanta, GA.

Two Standout Stories

An Excerpt from Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS

Shared from NETWORK's Connection: Third Quarter 2013

There are two stories from the bus that shout in my memory to be told. They are entwined in motivation but so different in results.

The first occurred on a hot, hot afternoon in San Antonio, Texas. There we had an outdoor press event and rally to speak out yet again for comprehensive immigration reform. Congressman Pete Gallego, who had just come in from the airport after a political trip, stood at the podium with his prepared text. His eight-year-old son Nicholas saw him and (oblivious to the big crowd) ran up and threw his arms around his father's waist to greet him.

Congressman Gallego, obviously touched, put his papers down and said that he was not going to use his prepared text. Rather, he spoke from the heart and told us that his attitude toward immigration reform was forever changed the first time he held Nicholas right after he was born. He told us that he knew in that moment that he would do whatever he could to protect his son. He would even give his life for his treasure. Many of us had tears in our eyes as we listened and knew the deep truth that he was sharing as a parent.

The second story came a few days later on the Pascua-Yaqui reservation outside of Tucson, Arizona. There, after our "friendraiser," Chairman Peter Yucupicio of the Pascua-Yaqui nation told me of the horror of living on the reservation and having criminal activity channeled through their territory, as well as having desperate people trying to cross the desert. He told me that he had found the body of a woman curled

up under a large desert bush. When they turned her huddled body over, they found that she was cradling the body of her infant child.

What immediately struck me was that this nameless woman had the same commitment to her child as Congressman Gallego and most parents everywhere. The only difference is that her quest to protect her child ended in both of their deaths. It is this stark story that is at the heart of what comprehensive immigration reform is about and why we went back on the road to lift up the urgent need to reform our laws.

We can operate out of a theory of abundance rather than scarcity. There is enough to share if we take what we need, not what we want or we can all grab...

Before we exclude people, do we ask why they are seeking to come here? How would we like to be treated? What do we fear? When we overcome our fear, we will remember compassion.

— Sr. Bernadine Karge,
Dominican Sisters of Sininawa, WI
Chicago, Illinois

Remembering Sr. Rosanne

Sr. Rosanne Curtiss, one of the first Sisters of Social Service to serve at Oakland's St. Mary's Center, went home to God on April 4, just one hour before her ninety-first birthday. She was born Frances Bridgett Grant in Petaluma, and graduated from Mission High School in San Francisco in 1940. On the last day of World War II, she sadly lost her young husband, Bob Curtiss, who was in the army and was accidentally electrocuted.

Out of the depths of this great sadness and loss, Sr. Rosanne committed her life to working for the needs of the poor by becoming a Sister of Social Service. Friends and colleagues say she had a very strong work ethic and felt best when she was deeply immersed in her social work. She served in many different ministries throughout her life—many of them in the Bay area—and one of her favorites was her time at St. Mary's Center in Oakland.

While working with the people at St. Mary's Parish, our Sisters taught religious education, offered a daily soup kitchen for the homeless, conducted neighborhood census, and operated clothing and food pantries. Sr. Rosanne, Sr. Patricia Feeley (who helped begin St. Mary's Center), and Sr. Rita Anne Weitekamp, oversaw clubs for Filipino and Latino teens, and signed up campers for Sunshine Camp every summer. There, with the leadership of Fr. Charlie Phillips, the Sisters had worked to develop what social work would now call a "safety net" for those on the margins in



Sr. Rosanne Curtiss

Oakland—providing comprehensive social services, and access to support for finding jobs, housing and medical care, when needed.

Mr. Gerald Cox, former Catholic priest and colleague of Sr. Rosanne's, interviewed her for his book, *The Radical Peasant*. "I think I did more good in those days than what I am doing now as Director of Catholic Social Service... **We were really with the poor and part of their community.**" Surrounded by a wonderful group of diverse young people and families, she helped the parishioners with their critical needs and worked with local organizations to meet those needs in what Mr. Cox said was a "very progressive,

comprehensive way."

When asked about her memories of the many years she served the youth and families in Oakland, Sr. Rosanne said, "Most of the families in the neighborhood were the working poor," and she spoke to the deep feeling of community she felt there. Many of the children the Sisters helped returned as adults to volunteer in their community due to the strength of the relationships and support they received. Sr. Rosanne remarked that they, too, were "living Christ's message to tend to the poor."

To add to the beautiful tapestry of Sr. Rosanne's vibrant ministry work were her more secular passions. As Sr. Annamaria Rebus, a Sister of Social Service and a dear friend of hers remembers, "Rosanne was very proud of her Irish heritage. Her mother was an Irish immigrant and her father came from the Azores. So you could always count on her wearing the green on Saint Paddy's Day as she called it. She also observed all patriotic holidays—Remembrance Day, Memorial Day and the Fourth of July. On those days she usually wore something red, white and blue." It was clear to all who knew her, how important it was to remember and honor those who were lost during the war. She also had special tenderness for those who were in the grieving process, and helped many through the trials and challenges of their lives.



Left: Rosanne & Bob Curtiss on their Wedding Day; Left Middle: Sr. Rosanne Curtiss, SSS teaching with CYO (circa 1940s); Right Middle: Sr. Annamaria Rebus, SSS (left) and Sr. Rosanne Curtiss, SSS at Pentecost in 1997 celebrating Sr. Roseanne's Golden Jubilee; Right: (Left to Right) Srs. Rosanne Curtiss, Rita Anne Weitekamp, Merita Dekat, Denise Pocius and Angelia Ying, circa 1976

She was also a poet and a huge baseball fan. Those who knew her well know of her love for the Oakland A's, and her devotion to the young players who she watched grow up. Her poetry touched many who were close to her, and as Sr. Annamaria recalls "seemed to provide relief and expression of some of the sorrows that occurred in her life, like the death of Bob."

Her life was enriched by working with the young families, and Sr. Annamaria recalls her giving the family next door to the SSS Oakland house a beautiful crèche for Christmas on the bittersweet day she was leaving the neighborhood that she'd lived in for more than 20 years. She was a parish social worker most of her life, as well as a trained clinical social worker, which meant she dealt with the complex realities of impoverished people from all cultural and faith backgrounds. As Sr. Annamaria remembers, "No matter what Rosanne worked on, you could count on her giving her all." ■

— *Gathered and edited by Sr. Annamaria Rebus, SSS and Jamey Fitzpatrick*

Sounds of God

The thunder of the surf,
loud, crescendoing away to quiet mirth –
The twittering of the birds
cheerup-cheerup-cheerup –
The beauty in my soul
of passion felt, of warmth and cold –
Sounds of God.

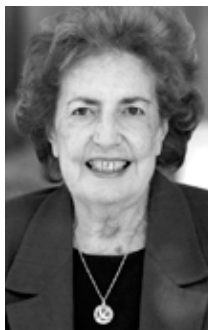
Sounds of God –
Of rocks worn smooth with age –
Of crickets swishing in the grass –
The clinking on of clams –
The eternal love I feel
of beauty unsurpassed –
Sounds of God.

Sounds of God –
The warmth of the sun through piercing
wind-swept clouds
The heat of life beneath the sands –
The joy of earth kissed by the breeze
of time –
Sounds of God.

Sounds of God –
The dampness chills my bones of pain
and ache of life
The moisture on my lips of love and
death –
The dryness of my soul –
O where art Thou –
Sounds of God.

— *By Sr. Rosanne Curtiss, SSS*

Remembering Sr. Sheila Walsh



Sr. Sheila Walsh, SSS, passionate advocate and tireless lobbyist for people living in poverty, went home to God on August 15, 2013 in Sacramento. During her career, Sr. Sheila served as Parish Social Worker in San Rafael and San Francisco, moving on after receiving her MSW to become the Director of the Department on Aging of Catholic Social Services for the California Catholic Conference. Here she worked with many faith groups in addressing the diverse needs of seniors and began programs such as Camelia City Center in downtown Sacramento (now called Downtown Senior Outreach Program).

In 1987, with Sr. Deborah Lorentz and the sponsorship of the Sisters of Social Service, she founded JERICO: Education for Justice and JERICO: A Voice for Justice, and both organizations were dedicated to an interfaith approach to informing policy-makers and the general populace about the inherent issues of poverty and the enormous ramifications of laws on those living in poverty. JERICO has worked to transform the way California politicians addressed systemic conditions, and support a bi-partisan and interfaith approach to long-term systemic change. With an unquenchable thirst to keep actively involved in the lives of those she cared so much about, Sr. Sheila was still volunteering at several organizations up until the end of her life. All who knew Sr. Sheila will miss her passion and tenacity. ■

Remembering Hna. Alejandra Samaniego



Hna. Alejandra Samaniego, SSS, (born María Eugenia Samaniego Maya) spent her life working for human rights and the needs of the marginalized on both sides of the border. She went home to God on August 28, after struggling with cancer. Hna. Alejandra was a gifted orator, a compassionate and strategic collaborator, and served the people of the Michoacán with a deep love and loyalty for many decades.

From her early years working with farm workers as a youth, and her time at Casa Quiroga in Zacapú, she developed a deep commitment to those experiencing the extreme challenges of poverty and injustice. Later, as a part of the leadership of women religious in her region, Hna. Alejandra was often involved in local and national humanitarian efforts. Archbishop Alcaraz of Morelia invited her to head the Caritas Diocesan and the Migrant Program, where she worked for 14 years to improve the lives of the marginalized. As a visionary and mentor, she supported the works and spirits of the sisters in Mexico, as well as reaching out to the international SSS community through her work in the Federation.

Within her ministries, Hna. Alejandra worked in concert with regional and national leadership – both inside and outside the Church – and was at home meeting with migrant workers one day and with top officials the next to encourage concrete help for those in need. Her open arms and heart enfolded all those she worked with and along side, inspiring and empowering individuals, guiding positive collaborations, and bridging the gap between those with the power to change laws and those who often feel powerless. Her profound vision and incredible spirit will be deeply missed. ■

Due to space and time constraints as we go to press, full coverage of Sr. Alejandra's and Sr. Shiela's lives and their ministries will appear in the next issue of Social Impact.

Globalization Transforming Our Cultures, SSS Challenges and Response 1923-2013

The theme of the SSS Federation meeting came to LIFE as we gathered in the places of our foundation—Kosice, Slovakia, Budapest, Hungary—and ministered in many towns and villages in between. We were inspired by Sr. Franciska Berkecz as she shared the writings and stories of Srs. Margaret Slachta and Sara Salkaházi. We were inspired by the reflections of Fr. Orobator and reminded of our mission in the world marketplace by Dr. Anna Zaborska. We came to understand, together, that Globalization is how God sees the world!

In our small group sharings, I was so fortunate to be in a group of women from all over the world. What I experienced is that Spirit of our loving God. We were able to open our hearts and share from the depths of our beings. We came to understand our common call by the Spirit to be part of and belong to the SSS, to recognize the needs of our broken world and our attempts to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to those whom we minister.

We are each given different gifts and abilities to offer to our sisters and brothers—in our ministries to the disabled and sick, families and children, in our own personal struggles and successes, administrative tasks and computer challenges, at home with sisters of different ages, in teaching

languages and sharing different cultures and ethnicities, in listening with the ear of our hearts to one another...we are gifted by the Spirit. We realize that we are stronger and our better selves when we can turn to one another, stand on each others shoulders and together we can make a difference in our world.

Later in the week we went our separate ways to various ministry sites. Even though we were in different ministries, there was a sense of connection with each other—we carried one another in prayer and care. When we regathered after our ministry experiences, there was a sense of deep connection. We each had different unique experiences, yet, there was a commonality and a feeling as if we were with one another in our various ministries! I had a sense of inner strength—because of my sisters, a sense of openness—because of my sisters, a feeling that I can do it—because of my sisters, an experience of God's grace—because of my sisters.

The Spirit of our loving God, in Her simple and mysterious way, can and does fill us with strength, courage, awe, commitment, openness, confidence, peace, understanding, knowledge, simplicity and love. ■

— By Sr. Una Feeney, SSS

*We are stronger and
our better selves
when we can turn
to one another,
stand on each
others shoulders
and together we can
make a difference in
our world.*



A group photo of all of the Sisters of Social Service and Associates from all over the world participating at the Federation Assembly in Budapest in Hungary, August 2013. More than 100 Sisters and laypeople participated from all three branches of the international SSS community: SSS Los Angeles, SSS Europe and SSS Canada.



Federation Assembly



This Summer, many Sisters of Social Service (SSS) and their Associates gathered in Budapest, the capital of Hungary, for a Sisters of Social Service Federation Assembly where they celebrated 90 years of International ministry. During the Federation Assembly they also looked toward the future and any challenges it may bring for the SSS internationally. The three worldwide SSS branches share a common heritage, mission and charism.

Accolades



The Sisters of Social Service were honored at the 16th Annual Loaves and Fishes Award Dinner hosted by Catholic Charities CYO in San Francisco, CA in honor of the Women Religious of the Archdiocese of San Francisco. The Sisters of Social Service, represented by General Director Sr. Rochelle Mitchell, were one of ten honorees of the evening who share the mission and charism of Catholic Charities CYO and received the **2013 Loaves and Fishes Award for Faith in Action**. Recognition was given to the vital role of women religious in building hospitals, schools, orphanages, homes for the elderly, and other institutions, as well as for their 105-year partnership with Catholic Charities CYO in their service to Bay Area residents.



Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS, was invited to give the commencement address at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, the West Coast Episcopalian Seminary this Summer. Sr. Simone was also awarded an **Honorary Degree as Doctor of Humane Letters** along with Bonnie Anderson, and The Right Reverend Mark Hollingsworth was awarded

an Honorary Degree as Doctor of Divinity. All three honorees participated in a public panel discussion titled "The Church and the Moral and Spiritual Future of America," which graduates and faculty also attended.



Olga Sarabia, longtime friend and **Sisters of Social Service Associate**, was honored in October by the Alhambra City Council for her leadership, community involvement and advocacy work. Due to an impending move, Olga resigned from her roles in Alhambra, after 15 years of service on several committees including: Housing &

Community Development, Parks & Recreation and most recently the Alhambra Arts and Cultural Events Commission. We are grateful for Olga's commitment and support, both for the SSS Community and for all those she works with and for in the greater community.



On October 15, 2013, **Sr. Teresita Saavedra, SSS**

was one of the women honored at "**Latinas Across Los Angeles**" for their accomplishments, contributions and positive impact that they have had in Los Angeles. Each Los Angeles Councilmember nominated someone and Sr. Teresita was nominated by Councilmember Mitch

O'Farrell (from District 13 where Regis House is located). October 15 was the closing celebration of "Latino Heritage Month." The ceremony took place at City Hall and there was a breakfast reception and music by a mariachi group. The honorees were presented with a Certificate of Recognition in the Council Chamber.



The 2013 Honorees of Latinas Across Los Angeles. Inset: Sr. Teresita Saavedra, SSS, Sr. Albertina Morales, SSS and Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell at Latinas Across Los Angeles



Former Social Service Auxiliary President **Diane (Mrs. Susan Diane Kelterer)** and incoming Auxiliary President **Kate (Mrs. Sullivan Farlow)** pose for a quick picture in the midst of a busy planning meeting for the new year ahead. We are grateful to both of them and to the Social Service Auxiliaries for their deep commitment and dedication to the SSS community and our ministries. ■

— By Barbara Chavez

A Potpourri of Cards: SSS All Occasion Greeting Cards

As many of you know, quite a few of our Sisters are visual artists or musicians, as well as working with those living in poverty through their other ministry work. Using some of their beautiful watercolors, pastels and pictures we have now printed an array of greeting cards for almost any occasion. You can choose from blank cards, or those preprinted with biblical passages or mass offerings.



You can even call us if you would like to include a particular passage that you have in mind, and we can print up several of the cards with this greeting or just one for a special occasion. Individual cards are \$1.50 a piece for a pre-printed card, and you can get sets of 4 for \$5 or 12 for \$15. The larger set comes inside a protective case, as well.

You can order the cards to be shipped in the mail, or stop by in person and pick them up. To order cards, please call Barbara at (818) 285-3376 or email: barbarasssdevelopment@gmail.com. Please visit our website (www.sistersofsocialservice.com) to see what images are available on the cards.

Mass remembrances are also available on the first Sunday of the month. Please let us know if you would like to honor or remember a loved one.

SSS Prayer Request

As Sisters of Social Service our life is a balance of prayer and work. Deeply rooted in our Benedictine Spirit we join with people throughout the world asking God to answer prayer. In daily prayer, in our book of remembrance, at our Villa Senior Sister's Chapel, at Eucharist and in quiet times throughout the day, we join your request with our community prayer.

God has supplied each person with many tools, but no tool is more important than the ability to approach him in prayer. Prayer is essential in life and a limit to prayer does not exist.

The Sisters of Social Service accept Prayer requests on the home page of our website www.sistersofsocialservice.com by clicking the prayer request button or by calling (818) 285-3376.

Thank you for thinking of us in your time of need. You and your loved ones will be in our prayers.



'And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.'

—Mt. 21:22

A Sighting From *The Arc*

Welcome all of you to the first sighting of the Archives of the Sisters of Social Service...

— known more lovingly as *The Arc*.

The navigators of *The Arc* (Sr. Merita Dekat, all our shipmates and myself) welcome the opportunity to send out interesting and little-known bits of knowledge which are contained in our little barque. Thus, the launching of this column.

So, what is the point of an Archives? Why preserve these "old" things? I think that it is made clear in the Archive Mission statement:

The Mission of the Archives of the Sisters of Social Service is to enhance and promote the mission of the community through the preservation of its history. The heritage speaks to the enduring values that have been lived by the members since its founding and the contributions of the Sisters of Social Service to society at large.

There are many interesting facts, pictures, stories, artifacts and antidotes in reference to our history, and we will be sharing them with you in this column, *"A Sighting From The Arc."*

For this inaugural column I would like to share a Federation story. As you remember, the Sisters of Social Service were established in Hungary in 1923. Almost immediately, the Sisters scattered to the ends of the earth. There were a number of years, partly because of the War, when it was not possible to be in contact with one another across the nations.

In 1955, it was decided that the Sisters in California/Canada would be separate from the Sisters in Eastern Europe, with the commitment to be in Federation with each other. This took a number of years of planning but finally it happened.

In 1972, the Sisters in Los Angeles met with the Sisters from Buffalo and established the Federation of the Sisters of Social Service. At that time because of the political situation in Europe, the Hungarian Sisters maintained their Motherhouse in Buffalo. The Sisters in Canada were part of the Los Angeles group.

Present at that historical meeting were Sr. Rosemary Markham, Sr. Petra Keller, and, Sr. Jean Marie Renfro, Sr. Natalie Palagyi, Sr. Nicoletta Csekey, and Sr. Suzanne Simo. It is very heartwarming that the last living member of that meeting, Sr. Suzanne Simo, has forged another connection. She is now retired and has joined the Villa Sisters in Encino.

Until the next sighting of *The Arc* ■

— By Sr. Rachel Shepard, SSS

Sisters of Social Service
4316 Lanai Road
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Look for these stories inside...



⤴ Nuns on the Bus 2013

(Read more on Page 8-9)



Our Novices' ⤴ Experiences in Culion

(Read more on Page 5)



Srs. Ada and Camille ⤵ with the Sisters of Social Service Hungarian Banner

(Read more on Page 12-13)

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