

Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, USA Province

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LETTER FROM THE PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR



Dear Friends,

Since returning from Rome, it has been a non-stop few months. While I am immersing myself in the “many happenings in the USA Province”, I carry in my heart God’s invitation to me — to all Handmaids — “The Lord is changing the Institute. May I rise to the challenge and allow myself to be transformed by Him”. This challenge can only happen with the “face of humility”.

What does this mean to me? “A humility that needs to pervade all my choices and translate itself into a new way of being present, of seeing, of relating and of working. A humility that makes me strip myself of my securities, embrace my weaknesses, and in simplicity share my searching with others. A humility that is a conversion to the faithful following of Jesus, poor and humble.” (Document – General Congregation XIX)

This is my “starting point”—humbly looking at Jesus, revealed to me in the Scriptures, as I rise to the challenges of everyday living, of searching for the truth in diverse situations, of collaborating with others to bring peace and justice to all of humanity. I invite you to join me. I hope you will.

With Gratitude and Hope,

Sister Dorothy Beck acj
Sister Dorothy Beck, acj

General Congregation XIX Meets in Rome

Every five years, the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus celebrate a General Congregation to elect its new leadership team and to look ahead together, trying to discern God’s invitation for the future of the Handmaids. A truly international gathering with sisters of fourteen different nationalities, working in twenty-seven countries, for US Province Sisters Dorothy Beck, Sagrario Núñez, and Margaret Scott, the six-week event was an amazing experience of St Raphaela’s vision of the Handmaids being universal like the church.

The theme of the Meeting was: *God is Changing the Institute. “Go for it”. Let God transform us.* In the midst of the great flux and change in our church and society, the Sisters identified how these movements have impacted them and the challenges they present to the Handmaid mission. Above all, there was a sense of urgency in reclaiming the dynamism and compassion embedded in the eucharistic-reparative vocation as Handmaids, as an answer to so much of what is happening. According to Sr. Margaret Scott, “We experienced a call to deepen our consecration and to work more for communion especially in the church. We also committed ourselves to make ministry with young people a priority. After all they are the future of our church and our society.”

One of the highlights of the Sisters’ stay was a General Audience with Pope Benedict XVI on Ash Wednesday. Addressing the Handmaids personally, he extended God’s blessings on their impending deliberations. Another highlight was a visit to Assisi and all the Franciscan shrines there. In Assisi, the Eucharist was celebrated in a private chapel in the Franciscan monastery, presided over by an OFM who worked closely with the Handmaids in Peru and survived a massacre there in which two of his confreres were murdered by the Sendero Luminoso, a terrorist group.

The Sisters agreed that the six weeks were long, at times very long, but very worthwhile - a wonderful coming together of Handmaids, being together, praying together and moving into the future together with enthusiasm and hope.

Sister Cecilia Tong, who has been missioned to the Philippines from the US Province, recently visited several of the communities in the US. In June, she will return to her position working with the Handmaid novices and formees.

Sister Teresita Motos, missioned in the Miami Community will be returning to her home in the Philippines in early June. For the past two years she has been involved with the homeless at Camillus House. She also gave classes in Scripture at St. Martha Parish, and she gave spiritual direction to various groups of Filipinos and others. While sad to leave the US, Sister Teresita is at peace and very grateful for the many ways her spiritual journeying has grown.

Also preparing for a new assignment is Sister Margaret Scott, director of the St. Raphaela Retreat Center in Haverford. Beginning in September 2012, Sr. Margaret will be the interim director of the Seisen International School in Tokyo, Japan. It is expected that the position will be for a one to two-year period. Acknowledging the significant change the move will bring about, Sr. Margaret is busy “brushing up” on her language skills and working on a smooth transition from retreat ministry to academics.

Sister Oanh Vo, a second year novice who has followed her formation program in the Wyncote Community, left in April for a ten-week experience in Chile. Novices usually have an experience abroad in order to get to know the Congregation better and to benefit from a period of immersion in Spanish, the language spoken in many countries where the Congregation serves. In Tierra Amarillo, Sr. Oanh’s mission assignment, the Handmaids engage in pastoral work on the parish and diocesan levels.

We wish Srs. Teresita, Margaret and Oanh the very best in their new assignments.

Sisters Cecilia Chen and Joy Payton were recently featured in publications of two dioceses (Miami and Atlanta, respectively). Both converts to Catholicism, each one’s story shares a unique perspective of her life and the path that led to the Handmaids.

In Miami - Sr. Cecilia Chen

In an article written by Marlene Quaroni, Sister Cecilia Chen is described as “under five feet tall, 70 years old and tough as nails.” As a member of the Miami Catholic Legal Services involved in immigration and refugee resettlement, she has to be.



In 1986, Sr. Cecilia came to the US initially planning to work in retreat ministry. A twist of fate intervened and Sr. Cecilia found herself employed by Catholic Social Services in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Three years later, she received full accreditation from the Board of Immigration Appeals. In 2002, Sr. Cecilia’s ministry took her to Miami, where she began working on asylum cases based on religious and political persecution. According to her superiors and the judges who hear her cases, her work in the courts has been exemplary.

To read the entire article and to learn more of the vital need Sr. Cecilia is meeting, please visit the acj website/gallery/press - (Sr. Cecilia Chen - She Fights for Immigrants).

In Atlanta - Sr. Joy Payton

According to the article in the Georgia Bulletin, written by Priscilla Greear, Sister Joy Payton was headed to Switzerland to begin a position at Swiss Air when 9/11 happened, and “her gig fell through.” Left without a job, Sr. Joy reluctantly decided to look into a vocational discernment group. The thought had been nudging her since her days as a philosophy major at Agnes Scott College.



Today she is up at the crack of dawn and prays while sipping her coffee. Before heading to teach middle school math classes, she attends Mass. She spends an hour each day in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and prays evening prayer in community. Her life is full. As one of the younger members of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the US Province, Sr. Joy is finding her way and loving what she does.

To learn more about Sr. Joy’s path to the Handmaids, please visit the acj website/gallery/press - (Life Is Rich for Sr. Joy).

CONNECTING TO VOCATIONS

While there are many factors that point to the continued decline in religious vocations, one of the findings of Catholic Church leaders suggests a strong disconnect in communications and personal contacts between men and women in consecrated life with individuals with the potential to become priests and sisters.

According to Provincial Superior Sr. Dorothy Beck, in recent years Handmaids have been working at maintaining greater visibility in print and online media, attending young adult meetings and inviting women for retreats and programs. As a result, in the US Province there has been a gradual increase in vocations with six women currently in formation. After careful examination into the future of their own vocations promotion and formation program, the Handmaids have embarked on a three-year initiative in partnership with their Development Advisory Board.

The Vocations Promotion Initiative, begun in September 2011, focuses on developing and implementing a strategic plan to increase Handmaid vocations and focus on best practices in Vocations Promotion Ministry. Handmaids’ Development Advisory Chair and Initiative Leader, Anita Alvaré provides her thoughts on the project: “*We will be spending the better part of this year conducting interviews with the Handmaids and their supporters to better understand what attracts young women to the Congregation. The discussions we recently completed with both the formation team and the formees were filled with inspiring personal stories. We will be analyzing all of the information gleaned from the interviews to develop a fact-based strategic marketing plan designed to build awareness and increase vocations for the Handmaids over the next three years.*”

Handmaids Celebrate 3rd Journey of Hope



A Silent Auction, coordinated by Rodie Henson and Susan Singer, and an exceptional dinner buffet planned by Beth and Jack Conroy, highlighted the dual theme of the 1960's and Handmaid "hospitality" and greeted guests as they arrived at the Knowlton Mansion on April 18, 2012. It was the perfect way to begin the *Third Annual Journey of Hope*, hosted by the Handmaids and the Province Advisory Board.

The event commemorated the fifty-year journeys of Consecrated Life celebrated by Sisters Kathleen Helbig, Maureen Gillespie, and Julia Walsh. Among the three hundred friends and family members in attendance were many current and former colleagues and alumni from the Handmaid's school in Wyncote, Ancillae-Assumpta Academy (AAA). Alumnae from the former Ancilla Domini Academy (ADA) were also in the audience, as were a number of families representing "legacy" (those with two generations of affiliation with the Handmaids.)



Co-chaired by Mary Mealey and Mary Trautwein Breslin, the evening began with a prayerful welcome offered by Sr. Dorothy Beck, Handmaid Provincial Superior. The co-chairs greeted the audience and introduced the families of the honorees before introducing the evening's special guest performers, former Academy Director Marian Dondero and current Assistant Principal Eileen Wolpert. The comedic duo feted the Sisters with a good-natured ribbing as they teased them about their "journeys". With unmatched witticism, humor, and satire, Marian and Eileen kept them and the audience roaring with laughter. Although Sr. Julia Walsh was unable to be present for the celebration, Marian and Eileen found a way to include her with a life-sized cardboard image.



The tone of the event shifted as Sr. Kayjoy Cooper and Handmaid Province Development Board Chairperson Anita Alvaré began the first of three earnest presentations to the honored

guests, first paying tribute to Sr. Julia Walsh. Interspersing fragments of humor along with the experiences Sr. Julia has had throughout her several ministries, (including her current work as a translator in Rome), Sr. Kayjoy delivered a memorable show of appreciation ending with, *"Thank you, Julie, an American Jubilarian in the Eternal City. It is because of your international availability that you cannot be with us tonight! We love you and we miss you at this special Journey of Hope."*

Former AAA administrator and teacher Peggy Seydow, was joined by ADA alumna and former AAA math teacher, Terry McConeghy in making a presentation to Sr. Kathleen Helbig. With poignant reflection of Sr. Kathleen's life and the multitude of roles and responsibilities she has maintained along the way, the presentation highlighted the commitment, faith, trust, and love Sr. Kathleen has demonstrated throughout her life as a Handmaid. Many in the captivated audience were moved as Peggy also referenced their mutual friend and colleague, the late Sr. Elizabeth McCoy, who "always sang Kathleen's praises" and shared so very much of the journey from ADA to AAA.

The final presentation, honoring Sr. Maureen Gillespie, was made by former AAA Montessori teacher and AAA alumna, Mary Minnich van Zyverdan along with longtime AAA administrator, Carol Thomas. Defined by her lifelong ambition to teach, Sr. Maureen was lauded not only for her sense of purpose, but as well for the influence she has had on the lives of countless students and teachers – including Mary. Acknowledging Sr. Maureen as her mentor, Mary described her as having an "innate ability to understand people" and shared a personal perspective of Sr. Maureen's dedication to teaching and to creating an environment that upholds and strengthens the Handmaid mission of "educating with love and for love."

In a heartwarming salute to the honorees, legacy members Dale and Amy Lintner, AAA '82 alumni and parents of four sons who also graduated from the school, offered a toast to the Sisters, which read in part: *May your contribution to the education of today's children and tomorrow's future be of timeless duration. May your love for families inspire all of us to be more giving daily in our own family life, and may you always have the resources to continue to share this gift of service. As we celebrate the gift of your calling and your willingness to follow for fifty years the journey that God created in your hearts, may you be abundantly blessed and richly rewarded for the blessing you are to each of us.*



The sentiment echoed then as now was a resounding FIAT!

IN THE HANDMAIDS' PRAYERS



We ask that you please keep in your hearts and daily prayers, the following special requests:

The intentions of those who wish to remain anonymous, all married couples who are trying to conceive, all who are undergoing surgery, all who are sick or suffering, all who are seeking employment, all married couples, family peace, our gracious benefactors, the souls of the deceased,

people of Haiti, those affected by natural disasters, AAA students and families, an improved economy, and religious vocations and formation.

Please pray for the souls of our dearly departed including: Marie Baron, Janice Beal, Tom Bilotta, Trisha Bowen, John Boyle, Donna Buonviso, Gottlieb Burits, John Burns, Esther Carroll, Anthony Centone, Maria MuTan Chen, Sheila Connor, Kathleen Corbidge, Marie Devine, Gelsomia Sabia DiFulvio, Tony D'Ignazio, Elena Duff, Isabelle Ferguson, Emmanuel Ferrero, Mary Fitzgerald, Ken Freeman, Lucy Gallero, Charles Genova, Mary Ann Green, Bartolo Gregori, Joseph Groetch, Massie Hewilt, Francis Horahan, William Householder, Connie Huber, Joan Ianieri, William Koller, Eileen Larkey, William Larkey, Sean Larkin, Janet Manion, Scott Marino, Elizabeth McCloskey, Sister Elizabeth McCoy, acj, Mary McCrossan, Bernard McDevitt, Sister Mary Ann McDonough, Harry Mitchell, Giovanni Morante, Sister Margaret Noble, acj Greg Osterle, Margaret D'Alfonzo Palopoli, James Paris, Dolores Perna, Francis "Gary" Petersen, Elizabeth Rath, Eugene Rissier,, Margaret Roberto, Marie Rooney, John Ryan, Mary Catherine Scanlon, Robert Schaefer, Walter Soboleski, Donald Stonestrom, Patricia Sundstrom, Stan Tomczyk, Mary Turnbull, Tom Turnbull, Nina Tyler, Rose Verratti, Ann Vondereau, Jimmy Walls, Richard Wester, Janice Yalch, and Al Zimmer.

Please pray for the requests offered on behalf of: Suzanne Altieri, Beck Family, Robert Calabrese, Carroll Family, Anne Colletti, Don Conover, Ruth Conover, Rev. Stephen Dougherty, Joan Durning, Sister Assumption Escauriaza, acj, Mary Lou Fazio and Family, Paul Fazio, Margie Flannery and Family, Sister Maureen Gillespie, acj, Gregor, Haggerty Family, Kathy Hearn, Sister Kathleen Helbig, acj, Sister Ruth Held, acj, Barbara Hylinski, Knight Family, Catherine Lombardo, Lynch Family, Sue Marina, Marie Miller, Sister Philomena Monte, acj, Sara Ann Mulholland and Family, Maurice Norris, Rev. John Pearson, Quigley Family, Barbara Sariano, Michelle Saxon, Mary Alice Simonson, Margaret Mary Spillane, Viola Stutzman, Angelo Valucci, Inés Villarino-Marzo, María Villarino-Marzo, Marta Villarino-Marzo, Kelli Walker, Edward Weinrich, Katherine Weinrich, Stephanie Weinrich, Brad Wiering, Winter Family, and Zimmer Family.

MASS CARDS REDESIGNED

The Handmaid USA Province has redesigned its Novena of Mass cards using original photographs taken by Srs. Oanh Vo and Belen Escauriaza.

Intentions and prayer requests made through using the cards will be remembered in the Sisters' daily Adoration and during a novena of Masses. Mass cards may be ordered on-line via the acjusa website.



Facebook Fan Page:

<http://tiny.cc/handmaids>



Facebook Cause Page:

<http://tiny.cc/helpthehandmaids>

"Love Always."

St. Raphaela Mary

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