

Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

USA Province

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FROM THE PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR

Dear Friends,

With the arrival of each new year, we have the opportunity to embrace a fresh start — to recall, to reflect, and to resolve. For me, it is a beautiful way to tie together the Advent season, the birth of Christ, the Epiphany, and yes, a new beginning.

This year as I ushered in 2014, I found myself invigorated in a way somewhat different than in recent years. I felt a clarity, an energy and a deeper conviction of the faith that drives me. I felt alive with the fire of the Holy Spirit, compelling me to live and proclaim Jesus amid a changing Church and a changing world. Along with this emerging stance, I felt an optimism that we are being called to a newness, a oneness — in our thinking and our being.

Admittedly, change can sometimes be difficult. But with change comes growth, and with growth, ideas are born, and what was once unimaginable becomes reality. I believe that we are on the precipice of something that has been sought and longed for — a unity that Christ preached at the Last Supper “that they all may be one.” (John 17:21)

My prayer for this new year is that you and I look with wide eyes and an open heart, and that through the Spirit of Jesus, embrace the unity He calls us to.

With Gratitude and Hope,

Sister Dorothy Beck acj

Sister Dorothy Beck, acj
Provincial Superior

The Legacy Gala - An Unprecedented Celebration



A photo from the 2003 Ancillae-Assumpta Academy dinner dance shows that in addition to Sr. Elizabeth McCoy's reputation as an outstanding educator and administrator, she always enjoyed mingling with Handmaid friends and supporters.

The Legacy Gala, which is being hosted by the Handmaids of the US Province Advisory Board and the Ancillae-Assumpta Academy Parents' Association and school community on Saturday, March 29, 2014, is being hailed as an event like no other! Stemming from an idea to combine two annual fundraisers (conducted independently by each of the sponsoring groups), the gala will include a cocktail reception, which begins at 6:00 pm., followed by a formal dinner. A program highlighting the Handmaids with a special emphasis on the ministry of the late Sr. Elizabeth McCoy will be presented. The event will also include a silent auction, dancing to the sounds of the Sofa Kings, and photo opportunities offered by Bradley Digital.

This event holds special significance as it coincides with the tenth anniversary of the death of Sr. Elizabeth, who for over thirty years served Ancillae-Assumpta Academy first as principal, and later as director. During her tenure, Sr. Elizabeth oversaw the expansion of the Handmaid school's physical campus and advanced its educational mission to include an extensive fine arts program and major technology initiatives, in addition to its excellent academic offerings. In 1990, she began the implementation of the R.I.C.E. process, a networking and visioning tool that she developed for school restructuring. The process continues to be central to the school's current structure and philosophy.

Chairing the planning committee are Mary and Dan Mealey, members of the US Province Advisory Board and Sr. Kathleen Helbig, Assistant Director of the Academy. Honorary Chairperson is Senator Robert Casey. Tickets for *The Legacy Gala* are \$200 per person and may be purchased via the Handmaid website at www.acjusa.org. or by contacting the US Province Development Office at 610-642-5715.

Handmaids Welcome Catherine Kirwan-Avila



The Handmaid US Province welcomed Catherine Kirwan-Avila into their novitiate on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 2013. This initial step is the first of several phases that Catherine will experience before

becoming a fully professed sister. Following her postulancy and novitiate training, which is a two-year process, Catherine will take temporary vows twice, for a total of six years. In the first part of this process, Catherine will move into the juniorate phase, and later, become a Sister of vows. The final phase of her vocation training will be her tertianship or third probation, where she will complete a thirty-day experience of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises prior to becoming a fully professed Sister. This long and extensive process allows for each Sister to engage in a meaningful period of spiritual growth, while taking part in additional opportunities that allow for professional and personal development.

In an exceptionally meaningful ceremony, with psalms, readings from Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, and from the letters of St. Raphaela Mary, Catherine received the crucifix she will wear during her postulancy. Luke's account of the Annunciation, which details Mary's Fiat and holds special significance for the Handmaids, was also read during the ceremony.

Catherine is the sixth woman who is currently in formation with the Handmaids, joining Srs. Uyen Chi Dang, Theresa Vu, Jessica Kerber, Oanh Vo, and Michelle Cimaroli.

Continued blessings are extended to Catherine and to all the women who have made the commitment recognized by both Church law and the Handmaid Constitutions.

Cuban Alumnae Extend Support



A group of Miami friends who are most appreciative of the influence of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in their early lives became enthusiastic with a recent visit from Sisters Eduarda Barata and Ana Cabo. On their way to Cuba, where they have become active in parish ministry, Sr. Eduarda (who hails from Portugal) and Sr. Ana (from Spain) shared their heartwarming experiences and photos from their community in Caibarien, Cuba, which is part of the Santa Clara diocese.

The Sisters explained that they are the first Handmaids to have returned to Cuba since the community left the island amid the turmoil of the 1960s and today are the only women religious on the northern coast in Cuba.

Detailing some of the hardships faced by those to whom they minister, Srs. Eduarda and Ana told stories of the family of four who shares a plate of white rice and an egg as their dinner; the elderly woman who cares for her grandchildren (ages 2 and 5) left as orphans by their single mother who died from a severe disease; the child born with severe birth defects, whose family's ability to care for him is severely limited. They also report a high incidence of alcoholism as many in the community find an escape in drinking rum.

When they are not walking to care for the residents of the island, the sisters' only other means of transportation is bicycles. The living conditions are precarious and the contamination is evident with running water in the streets.

The "friends" - alumnae from the former Handmaid school in Mirimar, were so touched by the sisters' stories that they committed themselves to a fund drive which has raised more than \$5,000.00 for the Cuban ministry. Aware of the very great needs in their homeland, they also responded to the sisters' "wish list" for working with the poor people of the island and have taken up the effort of sending contributions of crafts and other materials to Caibarien.

Anne Betancourt, an alumnae of the Colegio de Miramar puts it simply, "I have great admiration for the work being done by the sisters in Cuba and I am sure that Rafaela Maria is still opening doors and hearts in many corners on this earth."



Have you ever wondered about becoming a Handmaid of the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

DISCERNMENT RETREATS
will be held

March 21-23

April 25-27

June 27-29

August 15-17

Check our website (www.acjusa.org) for more information.

Prayer for Vocations

God our Father, we thank you for calling men and women to serve in your Son's Kingdom as priests, deacons, religious, and consecrated persons. Send your Holy Spirit to help us respond generously and courageously to your call. May our community of faith support vocations of sacrificial love in our youth. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



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St. Raphaela Center “On Tour”



In early December, 2013, a group of neighbors willing enough to brave the snow and frigid temperatures, took part in the Haverford Township Historical Society’s tour of local residences. Featured as one of only six homes in the area, the Saint Raphaela Center was on this year’s list to visit.

The history of the property dates back to 1903, when the thirty room mansion was built for the William Scull family, distributors of Boscul coffee in the 20s through the 50s. At that time it also featured a 1930s state of the art system where the owners could communicate with employees by phone.

In 1957, the Handmaids purchased the property using it first as a home for its novitiate and also beginning to offer retreats and days of prayer there. The property was named Blessed Raphaela Mary Retreat Center at the time, since the Handmaid foundress for whom it had been named, had not yet been canonized. The name was later changed and today the structure exists as St. Raphaela Center. In addition to its purpose as a retreat center, the location has become the United States Provincial residence and home to the Juniorate formees.

In conducting the tours, the Handmaids offered visits to the first floor conference room, enclosed sun porch, the Saint Raphaela Heritage Room, the dining room, the second floor bedrooms, and the heart of the center, the Saint Raphaela Mary Chapel. The tour included an explanation of the original use of the rooms and their current purpose, ending with a video presentation of the retreats and programs available year round..

Visitors were amazed at the size and beauty of the center’s interior and throughout the eight acre meadow and woodland surrounding the property.

Reverend Michael Minh, a Vietnamese Jesuit who lives in Paris, travels extensively to offer the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Having made this his life’s work, he is widely sought after, and recently spent several weeks at St. Raphaela Center. Friends of the Handmaids from the New Jersey Vietnamese community had the good fortune of taking part in one of his offerings.



“Renewing the Spirit” in Rome

Sisters Carmen Cabrejos, Dona DeMarco, and Kathy Gazie, were part of a group of twenty Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who took part in a renewal program held in Rome. Sisters from seven countries were represented at the renewal, which is conducted periodically for final professed sisters who have had more than twenty years of active ministry. During their stay, the sisters had the opportunity for personal reflection and enthusiastically took part in discussing the beauty of consecrated life and belonging to a community who so reveres the Eucharist. “Renewing Our Spirit” was the theme for the month-long community

One of the elements of their visit was sharing with the sisters from around the globe the happenings and news from the US province ministries. A prepared presentation highlighted the five US communities, as well as the Project Fiat mission in El Salvador. One of the more memorable opportunities they experienced was visiting the places where Saint Raphaela Mary lived. There, they were able to read excerpts of her writings, and envision the way their foundress quietly and humbly conducted her ministry.

Prior to returning home to the states, the sisters took part in an audience with Pope Francis, celebrating the closing of “The Year of Faith” on November 24, the Feast of Christ the King.

Handmaids Welcome All

Retreats and prayer groups at Saint Raphaela Center in Haverford continue to welcome groups of all ages, ethnicities, and faiths. Sister Cecilia Tong (seated third from right) recently offered one such opportunity for a group of Vietnamese young adults. According to Sr. Cecilia, the energy and enthusiasm of the young people is refreshing and surely

speaks to the Handmaids’ desire to facilitate human and spiritual growth by bringing the living presence of Christ to all. For more information on the Center’s offerings, please visit www.straphaelacenter.org.



Srs. Oanh Vo and Carmen Cabrejos recently spent time in El Salvador assisting with Project Fiat. Here they are pictured with a group of volunteers from Seattle, Washington.



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**IN THE
HANDMAIDS'
PRAYERS**



Please pray for the souls of our dearly departed including:

Angela Balbi, Fred Bartholomew, John C. "Jack" Bernhardt, Helen Rose Bily, Sam Boccella, Lorraine Bovenkags, James Boyle, Ramon Boza, Rocky Bryant, Annetta Campanella, Ellen Regan Carr, Dorothy Clark, John Clark, Audrey Cole, Joe Connor, Gene Conolly, Peter Del Rosario, Joseph Donnelly, Marie Doran, Thomas Dunne, Joan Durning, Don Edwards, Theresa Ferguson, Helen Firn, Bridget Flannery, Nicoletta Florentino, Martha Gargano, Gloria Gennaro, Vincent Gianini, Joseph Golosky, Mr. & Mrs. Harry Gosser, Garrett Grim,

Philip Hawley, Marie Helbig, Kathryn Henry, Peggy Iavecchia, Teresa Johnson, Vincent Johnston, Elizabeth Jones, Jack Karpowicz, John Klein, Jr., Joan Kling, Mary Jo Lacey, John Lafferty, Joseph Leonard, Malcolm Lindsay, Dale Lintner, Sr., Julio Lopez, Reenie MacDonald, Dr. James Madden, Domenic Mancini, Adele McLaughlin, Joseph McNamara, David McTamney, Danny Melillo, Carol J. Metropole, Marie Miller, Ann M. Mimszak, Richard Mirabelli, Mary Mitchell, Donna Monaghan, Patrick Mullins, Henri Murphy, Joan Murphy, Vincent Murray, Daniel Osini, Marie Paradis, Kathryn Pasquerello, A. Charles Peruto, Lenore Phipps, Charles F. Pollock, Eleanor Pompei, Mary Quinn, Patricia Quinn, James Reitmeyer, Kevin Robinson, Mary Robinson, Antonio Roma, Lois Ann Roscioli, Mary Ruggero, Josephine Rundall, Helena Salvatore, Carol Saracino, Amy Overstake Sheehan, Carl Skelton, Concella Smolenski, Elizabeth Spohn, Robert Slota, Jr., Raefeline Sweeney, Albert Trautwein, Edward Turner, Wanda Unen, Mary Watanabe, John Whyon, Anne Wiesenhitter, Hans Weil, and Mr. & Mrs. Charles Wisockey.

Please pray for the requests offered on behalf of:

Nicholas Acciariotti, Sarita Almeida - special intentions, Peter Albertini, Annie, The Araco Family, The Arnold Family, Doris Ashburn, John J. Beck, The Boyle Family, Peter Breitling, Pam Bemer, Ellen Bengamasco, George Beschen, Sr., Rev. Joshua Brommer, Robert Broughton, Joanne Callahan, Ellen Regan Carr, Marie Carr, Nicole Cashman, Sylvia DeAngelo Cashman, Nicholas and Joseph Cassizzi, Dan Christopher, Carol Christy, The Cianculli Family, Ann Ciarrocchi, Francis Connelly, Xavier Correia - special intentions, Joseph DeRaymond, Mary DiGregoria, The DiPietro Family, The Drew Family, The Donnelly Family, The Ferrier Family, The Ferullo Family, Jim Fitzpatrick, Joan Fitzpatrick, Rev. John Freeman, Erica Gray, Kathy Gray, The Greatti Family, The Grim Family, The Haggerty Family, Julia Harkins, Richard Harkins, The Hornic Family, Dr. Loretta Keil, Catherine Koenig, Lawrie, Linda Leininger, Richard Lingle, Dana, Helene and Mark Matkovic, The McAuliffe Family, John McCormick, Mary McDonnell, Lucille McDonald, Sr. Bridget McGarvey, acj, Francesca Molinari and Family, Sr. Philomena Monte, acj, Rev. Dennis Mooney, Marcelle Morrone, Michael Morrone, Dan and Terry Murray, Robert Nicholetti, Oksuzer Family, Edward Bupe Owens, Barbara Parise, Jan Peterson, Ron Peterson, Joanne and Brian Petruce, Manian Price, Rajesh, Nigel Richards, The Rio Family, Julia Robinson, Laura Robinson, Josephine Rullo, John Ryan, Joyce Serie, The Sheridan Family, The Singer Family, Rita Stefkovic and family, The Tedullo Family, Elaine Thaine, Francesca Toscardi, Mary Toscardi, Duncan Van Dusen, Carlo and Lisa Mirabelli-Vizuete, Ann Walsh, Fr. Matt Wiering, David and Frances Winter, Tracie Winter, Dale Wyker and family, Sr. Marie Carolyn, RSM, Bob, Cathi and Family, Vonnice, Wife, Children and Grandchildren, Young children in unstable homes, Third grade class in Chicago, Those less fortunate and most vulnerable, Daughter with Cancer, Counseling clients, Family, Jackie, Peace, For all the sick.