



FALL 2005

# Tidings

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF

ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

## A Journal from Guatemala

**S**ISTER Mariah Dietz journeyed to Guatemala with University of Mary nursing students. The following are excerpts from her journals:

### How do you say "Good morning" in Spanish? "Buenas Dias."

Buenas dias to our first day in Guatemala. Buenas dias to our host family and a breakfast of fresh coffee, pineapple, cantaloupe and, of all things, french toast. Obviously our host family was not traditional Mayan.

We all met at the basketball court near our host families' homes. It was summer vacation so the children were playing basketball, soccer, skateboarding, and bicycling all the time. From there we walked on dusty roads and cobbled streets to the Dreamer Center of the God's Child Project.

The Dreamer Center. I hadn't anticipated anything quite so beautiful. The longer we stayed in Antigua, the more we appreciated the Dreamer Center. It was designed to provide a place of beauty and rest for the mothers and their families who participate in the project. We walked past lush green trees and flowing water bubbling over rocks. There was also a cavern-like church. A sense of peace crept into your soul and made you want to rest there and be filled with beauty.

To the right is the Atkinson Family Clinic where the poorest of the poor receive free medical care. It was clean, uncluttered, and restful. Mothers and their children patiently waited to receive assistance.

Across the way was the school where students are given the tools to help pull themselves out of poverty. Here children earn money for their families by attending school rather than by picking coffee beans. Here they receive a ticket to a brighter future.

There were playground structures, basketball



**Sister Mariah and University of Mary nursing students serve and learn from the poor in Guatemala.**

courts, miniature zoo, and the sound of happy children. At first the children were shy but as they received little gifts from the students, they soon became fast friends.

### How do you say "speeches" in Spanish? "Habla."

Habla! Finally, something we were used to. In a classroom, we listened to someone talk about the civil strife in Guatemala, about the culture, what to expect from our host families, on the streets and in the market. We learned how important it was for us to stay together as a group, how to protect our pocketbooks in the market and how to exchange money. We learned where we would serve and where we would experience the culture of the Mayan people over the next days.

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## MESSAGE FROM THE *Prioress*



Dear Friends,

At a recent monastery staff meeting, Sister Patricia opened the meeting with the following prayer:

*"Father, grant us wisdom that we may come to know what is truly pleasing in your eyes.*

*Jesus, Wisdom of the Father, empower us to follow in your way.*

*Spirit of love and justice, instill within all of us the desire to serve generously and totally."*

*Bishop Robert Morneau*

In this issue of *Tidings*, you will meet Annunciation Monastery sisters who, with others, served generously and totally. Two articles feature observations and experiences about working with people in Guatemala and urban St. Louis and the neighboring Ozarks.

Another article introduces you to a new postulant of Annunciation Monastery, a woman who is listening to God's invitation to live monastic life as a member of our community. She desires to learn to "serve generously and totally" from her creative gifts in music, dance, theater and computers.

One of our sisters, after a full life of service and a brief respite, said "yes" to an invitation to serve, once again, with her expertise in canon law.

Many of us encounter opportunities every day that invite a response of service. We discover repeatedly that a response in faith and good will often makes a difference we didn't expect.

In our desire to serve, we pray together for wisdom to know what God desires of each of us. We pray that God instills in each of us the desire to serve as Jesus did.

At this time, we sisters of Annunciation Monastery ask your prayers as we move into a study regarding sponsorship of our ministries. We desire to reflect more deeply on ways that will guide us in our commitment to sponsor our ministries into the future. As Benedictine women of Annunciation Monastery, we are committed to collaborating with others to further the mission of Jesus. We believe that God continues to call us to share our Benedictine life and values in meaningful and enlivening ways at St. Alexius Medical Center, Garrison Memorial Hospital, University of Mary, and the monastery's Hospitality Center.

We sisters came to Bismarck to work with the people. We want to continue to work with you to serve others in God's name. We recall the courage of our Benedictine foremothers and all of our ancestors. We ask you to pray with us that we also live into the future with faith, vision, and courage as they did.

*Sister Susan Berger*

*To donate to the ongoing education of our new members and their formation in Benedictine monastic values, please use the enclosed envelope. Thank you.*

*Please remember us when making or revising your will: Our legal name is Benedictine Sisters of the Annunciation, B.M.V. Thank you.*

## Guatemalan People Touch Hearts of Visitors

### How do you say “tired” in Spanish? “Cansado.”

Si, cansada. We climbed a hill to overlook the city of Antigua. It was an awesome sight. The quiet little city was surrounded by volcanoes, some of which were spewing out smoke. We walked through the hillside village where many “homes” consisted of sheets of tin, cardboard, bed springs, and scraps of wood. The floors were packed dirt. We often saw maize drying on a blanket, skinny dogs running about, and always big brown eyes coming out to look and receive a little gift. We also saw colorful cement homes with real floors that were built by the God’s Child project. They looked like palaces compared to others. This is not a safe place to be if you are white or alone. We were escorted by members of the project and police.

### How do you say “How are you?” in Spanish? “Coma esta?”

Monday morning we went to the places in which we would serve for the next week. Some went to clinics, some to nursing homes, and some to the National Hospital. It is amazing how much you can communicate with so few words. We came to teach



*Guatemalan woman and child prepare a Mayan meal.*

and care for the people. We soon learned that we received much more than we gave. It was important to learn from them and follow their practices even though we thought we knew better. We watched the native health care workers do tasks different from our way and accepted that when in Guatemala, do as the Guatemalans do. We learned what it is to share the same comb with 30 women in the nursing home.

### How do you say “cry” in Spanish? “Llanto.”

We spent time at the Malnutrition Center for Infants. These children were brought to the center by parents unable to provide adequate nutrition for their babies.



*Students play with children at the Malnutrition Center.*

The first children we met were toddlers. They were sitting at little tables eating their lunch. We were taken to two large infant rooms, divided into 10 cubicles. In each cubical was a baby. Swoosh! Imagine 17 nurses — each one reaching for a baby. Each baby was changed, fed and held. As the nurses completed the care, there were big smiles on the children and tears streaming down the nurses’ faces. Llanto.

We played in the courtyard, ate marshmallows, blew up balloons, helped babies learn to walk, rolled balls and fell in love with the children. All too soon, it was time to put them down for naps and for us to leave. This time, both the babies and the nurses were crying.

### How do you say “culture” in Spanish? “Cultura.”

The culture seemed to seep into our hearts. We can now Salsa dance, eat black beans and tortillas for breakfast, bargain like the natives, appreciate different religious celebrations, see beyond the poverty to the beauty of the people and appreciate a simpler lifestyle.

### How do you say “goodbye” in Spanish? “Adios.”

All too soon we had to go home. We promised we would go back; that we would gather to share our pictures; that we would never forget these wonderful people. We certainly didn’t want to say, “Adios,” so we said, “Hasta luego” (“See you later”).

### How do you say “thanks” in Spanish? “Gracias.”

Thank you to the people of Guatemala, to the God’s Child Project, to our host families, to all of you who supported us financially and emotionally as we prepared for the trip. May God bless you.



# Mission Trip Gives Insight into Poverty

I WENT to St. Louis, MO, and the rural Ozark Mountains for a mission trip with Sister Kathleen Atkinson and seven University of Mary students.

We encountered people from many different cultures. My purpose was to help the people and organizations we were working with in whatever way possible. The trip was also an opportunity to be exposed to different lifestyles and circumstances than I am used to.

We volunteered at Whole Kids Outreach (WKO) in the Ozark Mountains and saw rural poverty. We also went to two homeless shelters for women and children in St. Louis, giving us insight into poverty in the inner city.

Whole Kids Outreach is a group that helps women and children by providing education about pre- and postnatal care, and raising children. Outreach specialists visit homes and host programs at the center of Whole Kids Outreach. They also run a day camp for children during the summer months. One of the major goals of WKO is to decrease child abuse in the area.

We spent two days at WKO and accompanied outreach specialists on home visits. The home I went to was that of a couple who had an infant son. The home was fairly nice and well kept. One of the first things I noticed was that there were three or four



*Sister Melissa Cote (far right) with students in the Ozarks*

other people who lived in the house as well. Almost everybody smoked, although they tried not to smoke around the baby. By 11 a.m. when we arrived at the house, one of the men was already drinking beer. Alcoholism is the norm. Both parents in this household were unemployed.

That evening, the volunteer coordinator talked



*Students and young boy shoot hoops at a homeless shelter.*

about what we saw that day. She said that abuse of all forms is rampant in the area. The parents love their children, but seem to think hitting them is normal. Many people drop out of high school and spend their lives in that town where jobs are almost nonexistent. They hold onto the one thing they do have, and that is family. As a result, girls tend to get pregnant young. Sometimes there is a boyfriend in the picture, but most of the time that isn't the case. There is a lack of healthcare in the area since a clinic couldn't survive financially because most of the population is on welfare.

Our next visit was to the Karen House, a homeless shelter for women and children and soup kitchen for the homeless and poor. People generally stay there anywhere from three months to a year. We helped make sandwiches, washed dishes, painted, cleaned, sorted donated clothing and played with the children. We ate lunch with the homeless who came as much for the social interaction as the food.

We also volunteered at Room at the Inn, another homeless shelter for women and children. People could stay there for several months as well, but there were more expectations for these people than at the Karen House. The day started at 5:30 a.m. when mothers prepared breakfast for themselves and their kids. Then they were expected to go out and look for a job. When they returned, they prepared supper and washed dishes. Kids had to go to bed at 9 p.m.; adults could stay up until 10. Since everyone slept in the same room, it had to be quiet pretty early. We spent the night with them. There were three adult women and four children. Most of our time was spent playing with and talking to the kids.

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## *Mission Experience Stirs Questions in Sister Melissa*

The mission trip made me realize there is a definite correlation between race and poverty. Out of all of the homeless people I saw, there were only two white people. Everyone else was African American. I came to more of a realization how poverty affects families, how it can literally pull them apart when they can't afford to support their children. I also saw a sense of

*"What can I do to help people get out of the cycle of poverty?"*

hopelessness within the cycle of poverty. People in the Ozark Mountain area didn't believe there was any way out of their situation, so the cycle continues. I also learned that discrimination and racism is alive and well.

We met wonderful people, whether they were the ones devoting their lives to helping others or those on the receiving end of that help. It gave me a new understanding of how people get into the situations they are in. I will not be as quick to judge people who

are homeless. Some were either addicted to drugs or alcohol, but most of them were normal people who had unfortunate things happen to them and just simply need help to get on their feet again.

Some questions that emerged for me were how was I contributing to the poverty of these people, and what could I do to help them get out of the cycle of poverty? I began to wonder how much poverty there is in North Dakota. While in the Ozarks, I thought about the people who live in the Turtle Mountains, which brought the problem a lot closer to home for me. I also thought about all of these people in poverty in the richest nation of the world. What about the billions of other people dying of starvation and disease?

I don't know what I will do for people living in poverty. It seems like an impossible task because it will never go away. At the same time, I know that little things that I do could have an effect on somebody, somewhere, whether they live next door or around the world. We are all connected.

*Sister Melissa Cote*

## *Five Benedictines Mark 75, 50 Years of Faithfulness*

IT WAS a joyous day as family and friends gathered June 18 to celebrate 75 and 50 years of monastic profession of five sisters of Annunciation Monastery.

Sister Janice Heiling, 75 years, taught first grade for 50 years and now enjoys volunteering at St. Alexius Medical Center.

Sister Stephanie Dolyniuk, 50 years, has served as a pastoral minister, worked with prisoners, the poor and immigrants and currently teaches theology at the University of Mary.

Sister Mary Alice Eckroth, 50 years, taught elementary grades for many years and has worked in the medical records department at St.

Alexius Medical Center since 1982. She explores archeological sites and has a great appreciation for the Native American culture.

Sister Glenna (Peter) Raybell, 50 years, taught elementary and secondary grades and served as a social worker in various settings. She is a canon lawyer and has an abiding interest in social justice issues.

Sister Hildegard Urlacher, 50 years, is creative in the kitchen and at the potter's wheel. She uses her creativity to cook delicious meals and craft vessels of beauty. She incorporates elements of Native American spirituality into her pottery.



**Annunciation Monastery jubilarians are from left standing: Sister Hildegard Urlacher, 50 years; Sister Stephanie Dolyniuk, 50 years; Sister Glenna (Peter) Raybell, 50 years. Seated: Sister Mary Alice Eckroth, 50 years, and Sister Janice Heiling, 75 years.**

## Desiree Adkins Becomes Postulant



*Left, Desiree Adkins and Sister JoAnn Krebsbach, affiliate director.*

**D**ESIREE Adkins became a postulant of Annunciation Monastery June 11. She comes to the monastery from Goose Bay, Newfoundland. She is majoring in computer programming and business administration at the University of Mary.

Desiree brings talents including acting, roller skating, playing instruments, singing and song-writing and computer technology.

At Annunciation Monastery she assists with computers, the web site and in the sacristy.

"As an artist, I have found the Benedictine prayer life an attraction because it allows me creative self-expression," says Desiree. "Through the daily chanting of the Psalms, studying the Word and Eucharist, I am involved physically and mentally in expressing praise to God."

## Sisters Give Monastery, University Taste of Vietnam

**T**O say thank you is not enough," emphasizes Sister Theresa, one of two Vietnamese sisters living with Annunciation Monastery sisters and studying at the University of Mary. "After I finish my education, I have to do something with my life to repay God, the sisters and the University of Mary. I want to become a good teacher to help others."

Sisters Joanna and Theresa, early childhood and elementary education majors, are from the Vietnamese community of the Sisters Adorers of the Holy Cross based in Portland, OR. Their community ministers to people of all nationalities, but mostly to Vietnamese children and youth in the United States.

"My community needs me to have an education degree," says Sister Joanna. "I plan to work in our daycare center when I return to Portland."

The Vietnamese sisters' room and board is sponsored by Annunciation Monastery and their tuition by the University of Mary, one of Annunciation Monastery's ministries.

"This is one way we can reach out and assist others to be of service," explains Sister Susan Berger, prioress of Annunciation Monastery. During the past four years the monastery and university have sponsored the education of four Asian women religious.

Sister Joanna has lived with the Benedictine sisters for three years and Sister Theresa a half year. "I never thought I would live in an American community," admits Sister Joanna. "It is not easy to live in a mixed culture, but the sisters are so patient. I learned a lot. I feel the sisters love me and I love them very much."

Sister Theresa adds, "When I first came here, I was so scared. It was so overwhelming, I didn't know if I could study. But the sisters, teachers and students



*Left, Sister Theresa and Sister Joanna are Vietnamese sisters living with Annunciation Monastery sisters and are students at U-Mary.*

were so helpful and welcoming. Now after one semester, I feel more comfortable and confident to continue with my studies. I am not just happy to be here; I am overly happy!"

Both Sisters Joanna and Theresa grew up in Vietnam so the English language has been difficult to grasp. "The sisters said it is good for me to speak English," says Sister Theresa. "They said, 'Don't worry about your English, talk, talk, and you will improve.'"

Sister Joanna is grateful to the sisters she lives with. "The sisters have done everything they could to make me feel at home. I appreciate everything."

*Sister Margaret Nelson*



# MORE GOOD NEWS ABOUT SISTERS

**Sister Joanne Graham** is the new vice chancellor of the Diocese of Saint Cloud, MN. She was appointed by Bishop John F. Kinney, Bishop of the Diocese of Saint Cloud. As vice chancellor, Sister Joanne works with canonical matters within the Diocese of Saint Cloud.



**Sister Joanne**

Sister Joanne served as chancellor of the Diocese of Bismarck from 1988 to 2003. She received her degree in canon law in 1988 from The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

Sister Joanne will continue her involvements in canonical issues for the Federation of St. Benedict and provide consultation to prioresses in Benedictine monasteries. She is also certified in spiritual direction and will commute monthly to maintain her responsibilities as a member of Annunciation Monastery.

**Sister Nancy Miller**, director of Campus Ministry at the University of Mary, was awarded the University of Mary Student Government Outstanding Staff Award for 2004-2005 in recognition of her service to the student body. This honor is special because students nominated Sister Nancy for the recognition.



**Sister Nancy**

**Sister Martha Jane Bonine** was elected president of the student advisory committee for the Christian Spirituality Program at Creighton University, Omaha, NE. She studies for a master's degree in Christian spirituality during the summers.



**Sister Martha Jane**

**Sister Renee Zastoupil**, chaplain at St. Alexius Medical Center, participated in the National Association of Catholic Chaplains Conference in Albuquerque, NM. She attended author Dr. John Izzo's presentation on "Soul Worthy Workplaces Renewing the Work of the Organization." Izzo spoke of four paths to soul work: self, contribution, craft and community. Self focuses on being connected with the cultural heartbeat of your organization or company. Contribution is finding ways to amplify the difference people make. Craft occurs when people discover and nurture their talents and gifts, then work becomes artistry. Community happens when people work with others, are able to speak the truth to one another and support and challenge each other to express values, gifts and contribution.



**Sister Renee**

## *In Loving Memory*

### **Sister Eleanor Mischel**

*October 24, 1914 - July 25, 2005*

Sister Eleanor had a colorful personality. She loved people and there was nothing she enjoyed more than a good visit. She was especially devoted to her family and they to her. Her smiling eyes, sense of humor, and faith and trust in Jesus kept her going through many years of ill health. She never went to bed without going to chapel to visit with Jesus.

A registered medical technologist, she organized and was the first president of the North Dakota Society for Medical Technologists. She also served as an X-ray technician, taught sciences, and was a researcher. She supervised the clinical laboratories and the School of Medical Technology at St. Alexius Medical Center.



### **Sister Norma Scharf**

*November 25, 1903 - September 8, 2005*

Sister Norma was a gracious and grateful woman. She taught 50 years in North Dakota schools and directed the monastery's oblate program for 12 years.

An avid reader, she loved history and delighted in learning about other cultures, peoples and events. Sister Norma had a probing mind, a large vision and always saw the positive in people and situations. A mentor and source of inspiration for others, she cultivated a deep spiritual life and found nourishment in the Scriptures. She will be remembered as a kind, loving woman whose goodness touched the lives of many people.



# Summer Snapshots



*Sisters put finishing touches on the labyrinth, the sacred prayer path.*

## *24 Hour Live-In Experiences for Women Exploring Monastic Life*

Sept. 24-25, 2005      Ages 18 and older

Jan. 21-22, 2006      Ages 18 and older

May 6-7, 2006      Ages 13-18

Contact Sister Agatha Muggli, (701) 255-1520 or  
email: [vocations@annunciationmonastery.org](mailto:vocations@annunciationmonastery.org)



*Sister Kathryn Zimmer waves to the crowd at Garrison's  
100th Anniversary Parade.*

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