

Mary Notes



Sisters of Mary of the Presentation

Maryvale Convent, Valley City, ND

Volume 54 No. 1 November 2023

Blessed Christian Celebrations

by Sister Suzanne Stahl



As we approach “the holidays” of Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s, let’s reflect on the true Christian reasons for these days of celebration. The word Eucharist, used to express our Sacrament of Eucharist, or the Mass, means *thanksgiving*. May we remember that all we have is a gift from God, including our life and breath, and in the United States, democracy and freedom.

The next season is *Advent*. It is a time of preparing to receive Jesus, the Christ, anew. This is a time, not for spending all our time and money shopping, but extra time to pray and be generous and loving to others.

Christmas, is again related to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, using the term Mass, *Christ-mas*. We remember Jesus being born into our world as a child, humble and innocent. He ends up dying for our sins and brings us New Life in Himself! So, we open our hearts to receive Jesus ANEW!

New Year’s is a secular holiday but the Catholic Church uses it to remember the Holy Mother of Jesus, Mary, and to pray for peace throughout our world.

So, **let’s NOT say**, “Happy Holidays” to one another, but rather:

Let’s say, “*Blessed Thanksgiving*”, remembering that everything is a gift from God. (November 23, 2023)

Let’s say “*Blessed Advent Season*” which is a time of preparing to receive Christ anew in our heart and lives. (December 3-24, 2023)

Let’s say “*Merry Christmas*” (December 25) celebrating the great gift of Jesus, our Savior. This season extends through the Epiphany of the Lord, (January 7, 2024) and the Baptism of the Lord (January 8, 2024.) Jesus is becoming manifest to the whole world.

Let’s say, “*Happy New Year*” (January 1, 2024) remembering Mary, the Mother of Jesus and striving to imitate her generosity.

"I THIRST" WOMEN'S RETREAT

It is not surprising in North Dakota to have winter weather in March. That is exactly what happened during the March Women's Retreat. The winter storm, icy roads and blizzard like conditions (eventually causing Interstates to close) did not stop 15 women from attending the March 17-19, 2023 retreat at Maryvale which was lead by Sister Anne Germaine and Sharon Eversvik, SMP Associate.

The same retreat was also held July 7-9, 2023, under much better weather conditions! It was the largest summer retreat with 40 women coming from all over North Dakota, and for a few it was their first retreat ever!

The retreat leaders focused this retreat on, "**I Thirst.**" When an individual is thirsty, the person drinks to satisfy their thirst. **God is thirsting for each and every one of us!**

Are you going to satisfy God by receiving Him? St. Teresa of Calcutta is a wonderful example of living a life of prayer and service dedicated to the Lord Our God.

The retreatants reflected upon this writing which was the source of our spiritual growth over the weekend.

Do you thirst for love?

"Come to Me all you who thirst ... " (*John 7:37*).

I will satisfy you and fill you.

Do you thirst to be loved?

I love you more than you can imagine... ..

to the point of dying on a cross for you..."

With St. Teresa, Sister Anne Germaine and Sharon stated, 'I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world.' God's graces were poured out upon us and all the women. "I Thirst for God."

Mark your calendars! Next years Women's Retreat will be held on July 19-21, 2024.

We will only be having a summer retreat Register by calling 701-845-2864.



March 2023 Women Retreatants



July 2023 Women Retreatants

WATCHING AND WAITING

*I sat at the foot of the Cross today,
watching and waiting in her final hour
for God's call to come home.*

*I heard her pray, "It is finished."
with cries and groans in utterance to her God,
a struggle between heaven and earth.*

*Take my life, do not delay, as I return to You, with memories galore,
with fruitfulness as I used my talents,
with bruises from my trials,
and emptiness that only You can fill.*

*I saw her face glowing in Peace and Hope
I felt her heart beating in the heart of her God.
I heard the pain of separation of family and friends,
a balance between heaven and earth.*

*She drank deeply of God's merciful love
as she cried out to Jesus, "I thirst."
I thirst for God as the dry, parched earth thirsts for the rain;
I thirst for God's Word as the deer thirst for running streams;
I thirst for God's hand as I cry out,
"My God, have you abandoned me?"*

*In gratitude I give you all that I am and have become -
Your daughter, Your friend, Your disciple.*

*"Into your hands, I commend my spirit."
Suddenly in the midst of darkness came the True Light,
and with Jesus, she bowed her head and died.*

*Hospice and friends stood with her to the end of life's journey,
Clothing her body with the final garments of Faith, Hope and Love,
because together we watched and waited,
knowing our Savior lives.*

Sister Anne Germaine Picard

Featured Chaplain for 2023

Sister Debra Berry, SMP

Every year the North Dakota Long Term Care Association features a Chaplain at their annual convention in Bismarck, North Dakota. This year they asked me if I would be the featured Chaplain. Needless to say, I was shocked, as I never considered that I might be asked. The Chaplain is either working in a Hospital setting or a Long Term Care facility.

In accepting to be the Featured Chaplain, I was asked to write an autobiography that was to be in the Long Term Care booklet. I was also asked to give the opening Prayer at the banquet that was held May, 3, 2023 in Bismarck.

Many of the staff at St. Raphael's, where I am the full-time Chaplain, were planning to attend the Conferences so they also supported me by attending the Banquet. I could invite a few guests/friends. A friend and fellow Chaplain from Dickinson, ND, and his wife were my honored guests along with Sister Elaine Lange, SMP and Fr. Donald Leiphon, the Chaplain at Maryvale.

It was a very humbling experience for me as I usually do not like to be the one getting all the attention.

I also felt very honored. Being a Chaplain at a Long Term Care facility has been a growing experience for me. Being with residents who are dealing with terminal illnesses, aging, and at times younger than myself, I have come to value and treasure each day as a priceless gift from God. Being a Chaplain has taught me much about life, the aging process, and how God works, not only in my life but in others. I am thankful for each day that God give me to minister not only to residents but also the staff and family members. It is a feeling of being on sacred, holy ground and I am forever thankful.

Sister Debra Berry



Sister Debra Berry

**SMP Health-St. Raphael, Valley City
Featured Chaplain 2023**

BEEN A TOUGH WINTER FOR DEER TOO....

According to the National Weather Service, the average number of blizzards for the Red River Valley is 2.6 blizzards per season. The winter of 2022-2023 was especially high for blizzards, coming in at **12 blizzards for the season!** It was extremely difficult for the deer to find food with all the deep piles of snow.

This deer was spotted walking under the front veranda of Maryvale to a bush near the front of the building just outside of the St. Agnes guest wing. We learned that the digestive system of the deer undergoes a change from being able to eat and digest seeds, grass, nuts, flowers, vegetables, etc. in the summer, to being able to digest small tree branches, shrubs, and bark in the winter.



Superior General and Councilors Elected July, 2023

The Sisters of Mary of the Presentation (SMP), an International Religious Congregation, met July 15-August 1, 2023 in Broons, France at their Motherhouse. These General Chapter meetings, which are held every six years, are their highest governing assembly. Each time they meet they elect their International Leaders - Superior General and three General Councilors.

July 24-26, the delegates at the General Chapter, engaged in an extended time of prayer, silence and dialogue. They elected as their **Superior General, Sister Therese LeMee**, who has been a General Councilor for the past twelve years. **Sisters Adele Andele, Suzanne Stahl and Madeleine LeClaire were then elected as General Councilors.** Their terms of office are six years. They were commissioned into their leadership roles August 1, 2023. These Sisters, often called “the Generalate” met initially September 13-25, 2023 at the Motherhouse to create a plan for the next six years.

Sister Suzanne will continue to reside primarily in North Dakota but will travel periodically to the other entities of the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation located in: France, Belgium, Canada (Quebec), Cameroon and Democratic Republic of the Congo. She will continue her present responsibilities as leader of the United States entity of the SMP, at this time. She can continue to be reached by text, email or telephone at suzanne.stahl@smphs.org and 701-840-0000.



Sisters Madeleine LeClaire, Suzanne Stahl, Therese LeMee and Adele Andele

BEAUTY OF NATURE

By: Vi Wysocki, Associate

My appreciation of nature and its beauty, was found last summer while volunteering for a week at Medora, ND. Medora is one of the most beautiful places in North Dakota!

While I worked, conversed and aided the visitors, my eyes were drawn beyond the town as I saw wonders of God's art in the hills and bluffs.

To admire the beauty further, I went for a hike in the bluffs, skirting the cliffs on a narrow and steep path. Along the way, I sat on a bench to rest and gathered my thoughts, thanking God for giving me health to be able to enjoy His art and beauty.

The solitude of peace overcame me in God's picture of nature's art. As I contemplated and pondered my path of life that He gave me... the narrow, the steep and the tribulations along the way, by the grace of God, I continue this journey.

I know my love for God, my faith, my prayers, and my hope to please Him, will one day lead me to the gates of His Kingdom.

There I hope to see the beauty of God's creation of Holiness.



Sisters of Mary of the Presentation's Newest Associate- Ralph Dyrness

October 13-14, 2023, the Sisters gathered for their annual fall meeting at Maryvale. It was an opportune time to also have an Associates' gathering, Mass with covenant signing and potluck meal.

Sisters Anne Germaine Picard, Suzanne Stahl and Elaine Lange gave a presentation on the 2023 Vision Statement written during the 2023 General Chapter that took place this past July in Broons, France. The Vision Statement describes the focus and direction the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation world-wide will follow for the next six years.



Ralph Dyrness is not someone new to the Sisters. His life's work has been in Catholic Education within the Diocese of Fargo for nearly forty years and during the latter years he was principal at St. Catherine's School in Valley City, ND before retiring. He is and has been a living image of the charism of the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation in Catholic School

Education. We are happy to have Ralph as an Associate, as well as his wife, Sue Judd-Dyrness.



Sister Suzanne Stahl, Regional Superior, and Ralph Dyrness as they sign the Associate covenant..



Ralph Dyrness receiving his Associate pin from



Ralph Dynress receiving a Blessing from Sisters, Associates and Guests.



Sister Suzanne Stahl, Regional Superior, Father Donald Leiphon, Chaplain, Ralph Dynress, Sue Judd-Dynress, Sister Anne Germaine Picard, Associate Co-Director,; and Amanda Kunze, Associate Co-Director.



Back row L-R: Sr. Suzanne Stahl, Mary Anne Michelet, Father Donald Leiphon, Ralph Dynress, Sue-Judd Dynress, Tim Burchill, Tom Musgrave, Colleen Musgrave, Sister Anne Germaine Picard.

Front row L-R: Angela Hoggarth, Nancy Orthman, Sharon Linnehan, Emmie Fiebigger, Sophya Rose, Vi Wysocki, Ann Marie Wuolu, Amanda Kunze.

Seated: Mariana Rumer and Bob Wuolu



Potluck Meal was served in the dining room

SMP Health Retreat



Sister Elaine Lange and Matt Ahrndt, Administrator of SMP Health—St. Catherine North and South, constructing paper airplanes.

The Sisters of Mary of the Presentation Health Board of Directors and Ministry Administrators and Chief Executive Officers met at Maryvale for their annual retreat, October 3-5, 2023. Father William Slattery used the University of Mary, Bismarck, ND book written by Monsignor James Shea to lead off their reflection. The book is titled Christendom to Apostolic Mission and invited them to think about the past culture, the historic changes and the present culture. It demands that we share the message of Jesus Christ's salvation through different means than what worked in the 1800 and 1900s. This led them into personal reflection on their relationship with God and what is one's vision of the future.

Father Slattery then wove in the three key elements of The Ideal Team Player by Patrick Lencioni. Each team member needs to foster:

- Being **Humble**: being more selfless, focusing more on what will serve the team best, sharing credit for positive outcomes and seeing others' contributions. Scripture that illustrates this is Romans 12:2 "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed..."
- Being **Hungry**: having a thirst to learn, a hunger to succeed and to serve. This virtue leads a person to be self-motivated and to strive for excellence rather than mediocrity. Luke 12:49 - "I came to set the world on fire and how I wish it were already blazing!."
- Being **Smart**: knowing how to build positive relationships and to have emotional intelligence. John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him, will bear much fruit..."

The attendees also joined together in prayer, worship, fraternity and joy.



Father William Slattery speaking to the SMP Health Board and Administrators.



God's Tree



By Sister Anne Germaine Picard

God's Tree

It's me, Anne Germaine
seasons come and go
warmth and cold fill my soul
I know death and I know life.

God's Tree
I started as a seedling
planted with Love and Hope
I've known life and death
fear and courage.

God's Tree
I grew in stature
with grace and care
life flowed to me and for me
gracing me with beauty and grandeur
with strength from my roots.

God's Tree
My roots tell me who I am
pine, maple, oak, fruit
but it is God who feeds me
calls me by name for

I am
God's Tree
I face warmth sun that
nourishes me.
I face storms that break me.

I am God's Tree
and embrace
life, fruitfulness and death
Knowing and Trusting my gardener
To be broken is painful
to endure and experience Violence
The Storms in my life
help me remember and trust my gardener
I'm God's Tree!

About a year ago, as I was walking the grounds of Maryvale, I was struck by two evergreen trees which were sharing the same space of ground. They were rooted together and growing into one tree. When I walked from one direction I could see two trees. When I came from another direction it looked like one tree! It symbolized to me, being rooted in Christ through my life of prayer by utilizing:

- Spiritual direction,
- Attending all types of retreats - charismatic, Cursillo, directed, and
- Many hours of personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

When I make my annual directed retreat, at the end, I make a spiritual resolution of how to live it out each year. Last year it was "Keeping God's Graces Alive as God's Evergreen Tree:" This year, the year of the Eucharist, I am drawn by the Eucharistic Lord to sit before the Lord for my daily meditation. It is a way to emphasize that I am rooted in Christ, in the Eucharist. Therefore, I am "rooted in Christ, [and] will start afresh from Christ" (General Chapter Vision Statement) early each morning. It empowers me to live "radical evangelical religious life" (General Chapter Vision Statement) as I carry out my daily ministry in our parish and nursing home.

I also attended a weekend retreat at Maryvale, led by Bishop John Folda, focused on our Eucharistic Lord. Bishop Folda re-affirmed the biblical foundation of the Eucharist. Jesus gave us himself, at the Last Supper. "Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it and giving it to his disciples said, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.'" (Matthew 26:26-28) This is the Eucharist, found in all of our churches and celebrated at every Mass! The Eucharistic Lord says, "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28-29).

2022-2023

Keeping God's Graces Alive
as **God's Evergreen Tree:**
"Not I that live but Christ lives in Me"

Sunday: John 15:4
"Live on in me,
as I do in you."

Tuesday: John 15:9
"Live on in my Love...
That my joy may be
yours."

Thursday: John 15:4
"...meditates on His Law
day and night... like a tree
planted near running
water- bears fruit in due
season."

Saturday: Psalm 54:6
"I have God for my
help. The Lord
sustains my soul."

Monday: John 15:5
"I am the vine you are the
branches." Live in Him-
produce abundantly.

Wednesday: John 15:16
"I chose you to go and
bear fruit."

Friday: John 15:16
"You did not choose
me but I chose you."

"Maryvale Tree"

Each day I will use The Scripture for that day to be the **"Evergreen Tree"** of **God's presence alive in me** and around me to help keep the graces of my retreat flowing with God's grace by being **The Presence of Jesus.**

Evening Reflection: How did I abide with God today?

“My flesh for the life
of the world.” -John 6:51

Ministries abound at Maryvale, through the Diocese of Fargo. Most weekends are filled with persons coming for some type of retreat or conference. This brings a richness to us Sisters as well. It is wonderful to see all the spiritual activities taking place.

Recently Bishop John Folda offered a retreat for women on the Eucharist. His input was valuable, leading us to reflect on the Eucharist as food for the soul, of Jesus' real presence and our responsibility to grow in appreciation of this spiritual food which Jesus gives to us daily. Love yearns to share itself with the beloved to bring about union. Besides conferences, there was daily Mass, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, confessions and sharing. Approximately 53 persons attended. I am happy that I was one of them.

Every fall the Priest of the Diocese, with Bishop John Folda, get together for a retreat. This year it was held at Maryvale. At least 100 priests attended. It was a full house for three days. We, the Sisters, having our own Oratory, living room, and living space were not disturbed and were able to carry on as usual.

An evening with Christopher West and Mike Mangione is planned for November 16, 2023 at Sts. Anne & Joachim Catholic Church in Fargo. It is called “Made for More: Visions of the Promised Land” and is **an evening of visual beauty, live music, and reflection that will open the senses to the secret of God revealed in all of creation.** A conference on Saint John Paul II's “Theology of the Body and the Holy Eucharist” is planned for November 17, 2023. It will also be held at Sts. Anne & Joachim Catholic Church in Fargo. Saint John Paul II invited married couples to live with “marriage nourished by the Eucharist and the Eucharist illumined by your sacrament of marriage; the future of the world depends upon it.” In this series of reflections, Christopher West will unfold the “great mystery” of the profound interconnection between these two sacraments, what it means for us to be members of the Body of Christ, and how the Eucharist is the supreme sacrament of the redemption of the body.

However, Saint John Paul II has not forgotten women and men of the consecrated life. He wrote Vita Consecrata. This book richly shows the relationship of the consecrated life to the Trinity. Jesus' life on earth was one of chastity, poverty and obedience. Jesus lived in communion with the Father and the Son here on earth. His life was Trinitarian. Jesus invites us into this way of life. He invites us into a special relationship with the Trinity.
(Vita Consecrata NO. 21)

There many opportunities for us to grow in our faith, the seed is being planted.

Sister Sharon Houle, SMP

Sister Elizabeth Rose Muscha

1925-2023



Sister Elizabeth Rose (Mabel Therese) Muscha of Valley City, ND died at Maryvale Convent on July 20, 2023 at 98 years of age. Visitation was Friday, July 28, 2023 from 6-8:00pm with a prayer service at 7:00pm. The Funeral Mass was Saturday, July 29, 2023 at 1:00pm. Both the visitation and funeral was held at Maryvale Convent Chapel, 11550 River Road, Valley City, North Dakota.

Sister Elizabeth Rose was born on May 9, 1925 in Harvey, ND to Ferdinand and Mabel (Specht) Muscha. She attended school at Wells County District #2, graduating from Harvey High School in June 1943. On August 22, 1946 she professed her vows as a Sister of Mary of the Presentation in Spring Valley, Illinois. Sister Elizabeth Rose was highly educated. She received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Elementary and Secondary Education and Chemistry from College of Great Falls, Montana in 1957. In 1968 she received her Master of Arts Degree in Educational Administration from Creighton University, Omaha, NE. In 1987 she received a Master of Arts Degree in Religious Studies at Mundelein College in Chicago, IL. She held numerous credentials within the Educational System and in 2004 received her Counselor Designate Degree from North Dakota State University.

Sister Elizabeth Rose served in the education field for 55 of her 73 years of ministry: St. Aloysius School in Oakwood, ND from 1946-47, 1949-54, 1957-1960. Catherine's School in Valley City, ND 1947-49, 1956-57, 1969-1975, and was also the Assistant Principal in 1968-69. St. Boniface, Walhalla, ND 1954-56. Principal at Little Flower and St. Leos Schools, Minot, ND 1988-91. Superintendent at Esmond Public School in Esmond, ND 1991-92. She was a Religious Education teacher at St. Mary's Parish in Munich, ND 1992-95. Superintendent in Upham Public School in Upham, ND 1995-1997. She was a Principal at St. Wenceslaus School in Dickinson, ND 1997-2000. Her last 13 years of ministry she served as a counselor at Christ the King School in Mandan, ND 2001-13 and St. Bernard Mission School in Fort Yates, ND 2013-19. Sister Elizabeth Rose also served on the St. Aloysius Medical Center Board of Directors in Harvey, ND, for many years. After 73 years of service, she retired to Maryvale in July of 2019.

Sister Elizabeth Rose Muscha was preceded in death by her parents, brothers Robert and Myron and sister Jean Allmaras.

She is survived by her Religious Community – the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation, brothers Kenneth and Jerry; sisters Lois Martins, Patty Sauter, and Betty Kiser, as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

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