



SISTERS OF THE DIVINE SAVIOR

Salvatorian News

SPRING 2014

focus

Dear Friends,

As religious sponsor for Divine Savior Holy Angels High School (DSHA) in Milwaukee, our Salvatorian Sisters recently took part in the inaugural VOCARE send-off prayer service. VOCARE, a Latin word meaning to draw forth, to call, is a two-week service program in which all members of the senior class volunteer full time at schools, eldercare facilities and community outreach agencies. They live out their chosen organization's mission to serve vulnerable populations, and then share about their service experience when they gather with classmates the weekend between the two weeks of immersion.

VOCARE was many months in the making by DSHA's Campus Ministry team, and is now the capstone for the service learning component of DSHA's curriculum. It is a hope-filled testament to the next generation of women leaders in our world, faith communities and homes. It is also a humbling witness to our Salvatorian core values reflected in the stories we share in this issue.

You'll read about our Filipino Sisters' commitment to the vital role of education in lifting up entire families to a better life. Their Salvatorian School in Cebu City, Philippines continues to grow in one of the world's fastest urbanizing countries. In addition, our second-year novice, Sister Sally Anne Leyda, SDS shares about her four-month immersion in our Sri Lankan missions, where she witnessed how people struggle with far more than simply economic need.

Whether instilled at the high school next door to our Community House in Milwaukee, or lived out on islands halfway around the world, our mission is sustained by your friendship, prayers and financial support. Again and again, you show us your faith in that mission and your trust in us to remain true to it.

In the Savior,

S. Carol Thresher, SDS

Sister Carol Thresher, SDS
Provincial Leader



"Learning=Living" at Salvatorian School

Imagine waking up in the morning not knowing if your home will be there when you return in the afternoon. It's reality for children at Salvatorian School in Philippines, but you'd never know it to see their joyful faces. Their ramshackle houses are always at risk for the kind of devastation that came with Typhoon Haiyan. The children are vulnerable in other ways too, often lacking adequate nutrition and clothing. Their parents, many without jobs, are strongly motivated to send them to Salvatorian School for its Christian values and supportive environment. Our Filipino Sisters appeal to local supporters for scholarships to give these most vulnerable children all that Salvatorian School has to offer.

Salvatorian School in Cebu City is located in one of Philippines' oldest cities where Magellan planted the first cross of Christianity upon arrival from Portugal in 1521. Some students come from middle-income families, but many live hand-to-mouth. Our Filipino Sisters say, "Learning equals living," and they have a strong commitment to help families lift themselves out of poverty through education. They're laying the groundwork for change at a very young age. The school serves preschool-age children with a play-based curriculum in a warm, welcoming setting.

Founded in 2006, Salvatorian School opened with 25 students. Enrollment steadily climbed to 100 in 2009, same year it earned accreditation by the Department of Education and Culture. With 110 students in 2013, the school was granted Government Recognition in Preschool Education. Class size is limited to 20

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Salvatorian Sisters see each child as a gift, molded in the image of the Divine Savior. The school lays a strong foundation to promote Christian values and lifelong learning.

“Learning=Living” *continued from page 1*

children with one teacher and one assistant. An outdoor playground promotes physical and social development, and indoor activity centers for block play, reading, and engaging in dramatic, visual art and music activities, provide balance and diversity in the play-learn program. Daily activities are designed to meet students’ individual needs and foster physical, cognitive, social, emotional and moral development. A combination of child-initiated and teacher-directed activity helps guide youngsters to make responsible choices.

With increasing enrollment and expanding programs, Salvatorian School is feeling growing pains. The school uses movable dividers in its six classrooms, and lack of space strictly limits how many family members can attend special ceremonies and programs. They include Eucharistic celebrations, nutrition month activities, feast day and holiday celebrations, as well as orientation sessions and life



Salvatorian School children engage in hands-on learning during October Nutrition Month.

education workshops specifically for parents. Enrollment of 140 children is expected for the 2014-15 school year. Those 30 additional students will push capacity of the school playground, which



Salvatorian School is situated far from commercial and industrial centers and high traffic areas, an ideal setting for young learners.

the Sisters consider a vital component of their play-based curriculum.

School Directress Sister Marianne Felisilda, SDS says plans are approved to build a two-story, multipurpose building in two phases. The structure will accommodate a playground on the first floor and eventually, a flexible, multipurpose activity center on the second floor. Plans for the expansion go so much deeper than a solid foundation for a bright and spacious structure. The Sisters know it will strengthen the foundation for a lifetime of faith and learning that offers hope for a bright and open future. ☙

You embraced our 2013 Christmas appeal

Your generosity affirms our faith in the goodness and kindness of people who know all blessings come from our gracious and loving God. Thank you for sharing your gifts to help some of His most vulnerable children.

For survivors of human trafficking

You warmed our hearts with gifts ranging from \$1 to \$20,000. Salvatorian Sisters Sheila Novak and Jean Schafer are deeply grateful for more than 320 gifts we received. They ask for your prayers as SDS Hope House resident, Najat continues to strive toward self-sufficiency. The Sisters are collecting donations of household furnishings, hopeful that Najat and her daughter, Miriam can move to an apartment by mid-year. Faith, patience and Najat’s strong work ethic will lead to a better life. Meanwhile, Sisters Jean and Sheila rejoice in each small step on the healing journey of every SDS Hope House resident.

For Philippines relief

Your donations after Typhoon Haiyan totaled more than \$64,000, and as promised, 100% was sent to our Sisters in Philippines. Individuals, parish families, other religious communities, and Salvatorian family members reached out to support our Filipino Sisters’ urgent ministry to their local people. Now our Sisters are in conversation with Bishop Crispin Vasquez, DD, Diocese of Borongan Samar, about helping to fund a “livelihood recovery project.” If approved, the project would provide small fishing boats for fishermen in Guiuan, Eastern Samar, which was in the eye of the super-typhoon. Philippines Regional Superior, Sister Irma Caumeran, SDS says “it’s the number one need” for survivors to return to their normal life and move away from dependence on relief from the government and other organizations. ☙





Salvatorian novice shares international mission experience

Sister Sally Anne Leyda, SDS witnessed a level of poverty she had never seen before, along with a dramatic contrast in climate, landscape and culture from her home state of New York. Here, we share excerpts from her reflection on serving at Salvatorian missions in Sri Lanka for four months of her Apostolic novitiate year.

God chose me

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. (Luke 4:18-19)

While in Sri Lanka, I've come to believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to bring salvation to all, regardless of culture or religious beliefs. God chose me to be that instrument of his love and compassion.

Finding God in Sri Lanka

I felt the presence of God at the Montessori schools—in the innocence of children, simplicity of their lives, their eagerness to learn and need for affection. These children come from very poor families. Some walk for miles to school. I saw the likeness of God in every one of them, and they taught me the real meaning of humility.

I saw Jesus in the eyes of “roofless” men and women at the Netherland Welcome Village. They are there because nobody wants them or, they have no one. They arrive with only the clothes on their back and perhaps a rosary or article of their chosen faith. They all had hope that one day things would get better. One man was a pharmacist's assistant left homeless after a heart attack; another was a beggar all his life, and now has three meals a day and a roof over his head. One woman spoke very little English and had a heart of gold. With her crippled body and hands she spent the day praying and doing crochet. We spent time praying together. I found no language barrier in prayers to Our Lord.

Street children at the Samata Sarana Center come from broken homes, many with

parents addicted to drugs or alcohol, and grandparents caring for them. I had the privilege of visiting where they live and they were so happy to show me their homes. Where rain water enters at night, rodents run rampant; there's very little to eat, sometimes only what they get at school. They sleep on the floor, but are happy and play like other children.

Spiritual starvation

Sister Agnes took me to a fishing village along the Indian Ocean. People there were starving for spiritual guidance and were so happy to see a disciple of Christ among them. The village is 95% Catholic, has four churches in a 10-mile radius, but only one priest. Sister Agnes is trying to set up a convent there, but for now, she visits once a week.

Setting out with an empty heart

I came to Sri Lanka with an open mind and heart to experience life there with the Sisters and their ministries. At times, living in community with many different personalities in a different culture was the hardest place to find God. It gave me appreciation for why Jesus had a hard time with his disciples. Having God with me gave me strength to accept the way things were. There wasn't much difference among Salvatorian

communities I visited—all had mosquito nets and cold water showers.

My heart was empty as best as it could be, but after four months it is filled with God's presence. I found God in people, places, and chants of the Muslims; in the gentle touch of the elderly and the smiles of children. I gave my unconditional love and showed compassion by listening to their stories. I learned that I can talk to anyone even when language is a barrier. Many times on my way to church we exchanged smiles and greetings. Sometimes I would stop and give blessings to the beggars or the blind man who sat outside church.

The Sri Lankan people energized me. They taught me about humility and patience; to accept things as they are; to offer my day, actions and thoughts to God. I found myself thinking about how Jesus Christ felt while preaching to people who surrounded him on his travels, and how he also had the presence of His Father. Sometimes we're tempted to find excuses and complain, as if we could only be happy if a thousand conditions were met. I can say that the most beautiful and natural expressions of joy I have seen these past four months were in people who had very little to hold on to.

The places I visited and the people I met in Sri Lanka will always be a part of me. ☩

Now that she has returned to the U.S., Sister Sally has begun a two-year program at Cardinal Stritch University Saint Clare Center in Milwaukee. Upon completion of the program, she will receive a Certificate in Lay Ministry. Sister Sally also volunteers three days a week at Catholic Charities in Milwaukee. She asks for your continued prayers as she prepares to profess temporary vows later this year.

Beautiful statue sparks beautiful friendship

The statue that graces the Salvatorian Sisters' Community House grounds in Milwaukee has also sparked a beautiful friendship between the Sisters and Don Retzlaff and his wife, Lorraine.

Don was among the many former students of Salvatorian Seminary in St. Nazianz, Wis., who helped fund the Divine Savior statue restoration by Milwaukee sculptor David Wanner, also an alumnus. When the statue was rededicated in August 2011, the Sisters hosted a seminary reunion in gratitude for the restoration project. Even though the Retzlaffs couldn't make the trip from their home in Maryland to attend, they were touched by the Salvatorian Sisters' hospitality. Don recalled Salvatorian Sisters serving in the seminary kitchen more than 60 years ago. He also remembered the statue.

"All of us remember the statue," says Don. The bronze sculpture had been commissioned in Rome for the seminary in St. Nazianz. By the time Austrian artist Ferdinand Seeboeck completed the work in 1942, World War II had closed down trans-Atlantic shipping lanes. Finally, in 1948—same year Don enrolled at the seminary—the statue was put in place. The landmark stood tall in St. Nazianz until 1986,

years after the school closed. In appreciation for longtime service to the seminary community, the Salvatorian priests bestowed the treasured statue to the Sisters. For the next 25 years, the weather-worn image stood outside the Community House chapel.

When Don and Lorraine travelled through Wisconsin last summer, they stopped to view the statue, returned to its original luster. Seeing the work of art up close sealed Don and Lorraine's newfound friendship with Sisters of the Divine Savior. Lorraine presented the Sisters with hundreds of hand-strung rosaries, which Sister Mary Jo Schmidt, SDS distributed to members of her central-city Milwaukee parish. The Retzlaffs have become faithful friends who gratefully share special intentions for their loved ones through our Apostolate of Prayer Ministry.

When asked about his time spent at the seminary, Don describes a disciplined lifestyle—especially for a 14 year-old boy.

"We couldn't talk at meals, never saw any girls, and only got to go home at Christmas, Easter and summer break. Discipline was tough," Don recalls, "but the lifestyle prepared me for hardships in the Army. I've never regretted going those years to the seminary, ever."



Don and Lorraine Retzlaff, married 58 years, reach out often to Sisters of the Divine Savior, sharing news and requesting prayers for their four children, extended family and friends.

Don left St. Nazianz in 1951 and finished at St. Norbert High School in DePere, Wis. He went on to nearby St. Norbert College, where he was in the ROTC program. Now a retired U.S. Army colonel, Don spent 24 years as a master aviator, flying helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft. With just three miles between their Wisconsin hometowns of Luxemburg and Casco, Don and Lorraine return every summer for their high school reunions. Now, the Salvatorian Sisters' Community House is on their route. ☮

INSURANCE POLICY

Don't Leave Life Insurance Behind

If you're still paying premiums or have paid up an age-old life insurance policy, there might be a better use for it. Many people now outlive the need for long-held life insurance, and the policy becomes a forgotten asset until the annual statement arrives in the mail. If your loved ones are taken care of, consider naming Sisters of the Divine Savior as a full or partial beneficiary. If you wish, the proceeds of your policy can be designated to support a special project for our international missions or the ongoing needs of our retired Sisters.

For more information,
go to www.sistersofthedivinesavior.org
and click on *Ways to Help*, then *Planned Giving*.
Or call Lora Rosenbaum at 414-466-7414.



Our Mission As Sisters of the Divine Savior

Make known the goodness and kindness of Jesus, Savior of the world, and foster awareness of a loving God among peoples in whatever place and by whatever means the Spirit of God inspires.

As women of faith striving to be given over to the Father and open to all peoples, we collaborate to promote justice and improve quality of life in our world with a preferential option for the poor.

Lora Rosenbaum
Director of Mission Advancement
Jan Penlesky
Director of Communications/PR

4311 N. 100th St., Milwaukee, WI 53222-1393

414-466-7414 414-466-4335 (Fax)

missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org

www.sistersofthedivinesavior.org



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