



SISTERS OF THE DIVINE SAVIOR

Salvatorian News

SPRING 2015

focus

Dear Friends,

In this issue, we'll give you a glimpse of good things that have been happening in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since our Salvatorian Sisters founded missions there. Quietly, faithfully, our local Sisters have instilled hope in the hearts of impoverished Congolese people through their health care and educational ministries.

Another year has rolled over, and we joyfully look forward to our summer Jubilee celebration for eight members of our U.S. province. Inside, we share about their diverse gifts nurtured over 50 and 60 years as vowed Sisters of the Divine Savior.

By the time this issue lands in your mailbox, our U.S. sisters will have elected new Province leaders for the 2015-18 term. Our print deadline precluded announcing our new leadership team, but you can "meet" them on our website at www.sistersofthedivinesavior.org.

Also with this issue, I take my final turn speaking to you through this column. At the end of June, our new leadership will take office. I add my blessings to those of all our sisters for our new provincial team. And, in this Year of Consecrated Life proclaimed by Pope Francis, together, we'll renew our mission to make known our Savior's goodness and kindness to all peoples. Personally, I want to thank you for your friendship and ongoing support of our Salvatorian mission during my years of leadership. It has been an honor to get to know you and to witness your generosity. I ask for your continued partnership, as the new team leads our congregation into the future.

In the Savior,

S. Carol Thresher, SDS
Sister Carol Thresher, SDS
Provincial Leader



Education roots the Salvatorian mission in Congo

The choice to not send your children to school might not sound like a choice at all. Sadly, parents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have to make that choice because many schools will not accept families who cannot pay for services. The alternative: children "pick rocks" in the cobalt and copper mines alongside their parents. Like many of our Salvatorian missions around the world, our sisters serving in Congo understand the promise that education holds for their local people who struggle to survive. It's a promise that can open minds, instill dignity and empower people.

For more than 50 years, the Sisters of the Divine Savior have served in the country formerly known as Zaire in west-central Africa. In a land long associated with civil unrest and ethnic strife, Salvatorian Sisters have remained a beacon of hope to the impoverished people of Congo. Catholics make up almost 50 percent of the nation's population. Nearly 60 percent receive education in Catholic grade schools and 40 percent are graduates of Catholic high schools.

Good things happening there

In the Diocese of Kolwezi, our sisters operate nutrition clinics, dispensaries, two rural hospitals, three maternity facilities and a school. The Salvatorian School in Kolwezi opened in 2002. It stands on a piece of land donated in 1997 to the Sisters of the Divine Savior on one condition: that they build a kindergarten. Today, the kindergarten has five classrooms with 350 children. Over the last 12 years, the school has added primary grades in 13 classrooms with 890 children. It also serves 458 secondary-level students through grade 12. The physical facility is being pushed to capacity as students advance and enrollment climbs.

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Older students at the Salvatorian School attend classes in the afternoon using the same five classrooms used for kindergarten in the morning.

Catholic school connection leads to monthly giving



James Williams of Silver Spring, Md., says he and his wife Mary have supported many worthy causes over the years, but the Sisters of the Divine Savior will

always hold a special place in their hearts.

It goes back to the 1970s and '80s when their five children attended St. Joseph's Parish School in Beltsville, Md. Sister Georgene Faust, SDS was serving as principal then. Jim remembers St. Joseph as a great school, and appreciates the discipline his children received there.

"We just always liked Sr. Georgene," Jim says. As it turns out, the feeling is mutual. Jim still exchanges Christmas cards and letters with Sr. Georgene, who now teaches adult literacy classes at Rio Salado College in Phoenix. He's grateful that the former St. Joseph principal has continued to focus her ministry on education. It became his calling too.

Jim worked 33 years as a computer consultant and computer science/math professor at Montgomery College in Rockville, Md. Sr. Georgene recalls, "Once during Catholic Schools Week, we invited Jim to share with our junior high students about his experiences as a professor. Besides giving them a math lesson, he spoke to the students about the

importance of a good education. He stressed that the word *dropout* shouldn't even be in their vocabulary."

Since retiring in 2002, Jim continues to faithfully support the Salvatorian Sisters as he and Mary have done for more than 20 years. About three years ago, he decided to set up a monthly donation through an electronic funds transfer (EFT). It's a secure transaction that Jim knows he can change or cancel at any time.

Jim says, "I love the religious and supporting the Sisters of the Divine Savior is something I know I want to continue doing." He says the monthly EFT is more convenient and simplifies his charitable giving. ☪

Monthly, quarterly or semi-annual giving is a simple and efficient way to maximize your support for the Sisters of the Divine Savior. Your automated gift provides us with reliable funding and spreads out your charitable giving to fit your budget. Donating with a credit or debit card, or automatic transfer from a checking or savings account, still allows you to make an unrestricted gift or designate it for a specific need, program or ministry.

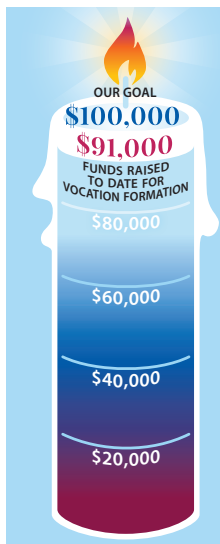
If you're interested in setting up an automatic monthly, quarterly or annual gift, contact Anne in the Mission Advancement office at 414-466-7414 or bezansona@salvatoriansisters.org.



Your generous gifts build hope for healing

Two years ago, we shared in this newsletter about our sisters' ministry at the Centro de Formação Divino Salvador, a community center known as CEFORDS in Fortaleza, Brazil. A few months later, we came to you for help in raising funds for a new pool for the center. According to Sister Terezinha Araujo, SDS, former CEFORDS director and now São Paulo Provincial Superior, the impoverished people who rely on CEFORDS for social, educational and health services include elders and youngsters referred for hydrotherapy for physical disabilities. Demand for time and space in the existing pool has far exceeded its capacity in recent years. With faith and trust, our Salvatorian Sisters in the São Paulo Province have also been raising funds, which a generous donor here in the U.S. has agreed to match. Now those funds will be combined with your contributions to make the pool a reality.

A 2015 construction timeline estimates pool completion by May 1. Meanwhile, the people served by our Salvatorian Sisters at CEFORDS are witnessing your faith in action to build a pool that offers hope for healing. Thank you for your generosity!



You fill our hearts with gratitude

Especially in this Year of Consecrated Life proclaimed by Pope Francis, your prayerful response to our 2014 Christmas appeal renews our spirit! As we shared in our Christmas letter, we are blessed to have one candidate and three temporary professed sisters now in initial vocation formation. Our yearly budget for these four women is just over \$100,000. Since December 1, you have contributed more than \$91,000 toward that goal. Your prayers and financial gifts are so important for preparing these women to follow Christ as a Sister of the Divine Savior. And, as we continue to connect with women who are discerning a call to religious life, your partnership will be vital to sustain our formation ministry.

We are equally grateful for all gifts you entrust to our stewardship. We received another \$80,000 in year-end gifts to support our anti-trafficking ministry, international missions, retired Salvatorian Sisters, and for wherever we find the greatest need. Your faith-filled generosity is a blessing upon all our ministries. We hold you in our prayers, that God may bless you in return.

Diverse ministries fulfill founding vision

Sister Carol Marie Haag, SDS (Sr. Carla) has lived our founding vision to serve “by all ways and means.” Her diverse ministries include teaching at Milwaukee’s Pius XI High School from 1971 through 1978; working in development at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland from 1986 to 1992; and serving with the National Institute on Aging in Baltimore from 1992-2000. She also served three years in the secretariat at the Salvatorian Mother House in Rome.

Sr. Carol Marie entered the Sisters of the Divine Savior in 1962 at our former St. Mary’s Convent at 35th and Center Streets in Milwaukee. She professed first vows in 1965 and final vows in 1971.

Most recently, Sr. Carol Marie served on a disaster clean-up crew with Kelmann Restoration in Milwaukee. After she retired, former Kelmann co-owner, Richard Niggemann invited her to join a group of volunteers who minister at the Milwaukee County Children’s Detention Center (CDC).

“I prayed a lot about his request,” Sr. Carol Marie says, “but I couldn’t say yes or no until I tried it.” Each week she found herself asking the Holy Spirit for inspiration, because, she says, “I haven’t walked a mile in these youths’ moccasins.”

The volunteers who call themselves “Team CDC” visit the detention center in pairs. Their visits are a privilege for the teens. Sr. Carol Marie knows many teens come just to get out of their cell block. “Even so,” she says, “they read Scripture and share with us.” Sr. Carol

Marie comes prepared with at least two talking points on the Scripture reading to break the ice.

“I am in awe of how transparent they can be about what brought them to the detention center. At the end of our time together, we ask if anyone has something to ask the Lord. They usually pray for their upcoming court dates and often for a close family member.”

Sometimes, they ask why the volunteers come.

“I tell them that as a teacher, I had 50 minutes to help 34 students learn to type, but never got to ask about their relationship with the Lord.” Sr. Carol Marie says faith sharing puts everyone on the same level – one human being to another. She recalls one boy who came to the sessions month after month for over a year.

“I could see a gradual change in him and he admitted responsibility for what he did. I am most certain it is the Divine Savior and Holy Spirit who give these kids the courage to change.” She also feels the Holy Spirit brought her to this ministry.

“In the U.S., the Salvatorian Family has three priorities: human trafficking, ministry to children and teens, and immigration. I didn’t plan it, but I’m grateful my ministry addresses one of these priorities. It’s what Jesus would have us do.” ☩



A companion on the journey

No matter what each new day brings, **Sister Darlene Pienschke, SDS** (Sr. Aaron), stays mindful of the mission. It helps her to focus her care for the spiritual needs of residents at St. Anne’s Salvatorian Campus in Milwaukee.

“Our mission is to make known the goodness and kindness of the Savior.

At St. Anne’s, I try to foster the compassion of God’s love among residents in the skilled care and assisted living areas. And, it extends to their families, and our staff and volunteers who share awareness of our mission,” says Sr. Darlene.

For many years, Sr. Darlene taught in baccalaureate programs at the University of Wisconsin, Marquette University and Saginaw (Michigan) State University. As a missionary in the Amazon basin, she established health teams, practiced midwifery, and taught and published herbal remedies, while serving villagers who had no access to conventional medical care. She also provided pastoral care to impoverished people in the slums of São Paulo, Brazil and rural areas where Salvatorian Sisters served.

Before joining the St. Anne’s team as Director of Mission and Spiritual Care in 2011, Sr. Darlene spent 20 years in Tucson, most recently as a full-time hospice nurse. She taught there too, and served in a parish while sharing the tribal way of life among people on an Apache reservation. She also ministered at St. Elizabeth Clinic serving people who lacked adequate medical insurance.

Now resettled in Wisconsin for four years, Sr. Darlene says she’s come full circle, back to her roots where she was born and raised and entered the Sisters of the Divine Savior in 1962. She professed first vows three years later and final vows in 1970.

Sr. Darlene thinks of her work at St. Anne’s as a companioning ministry. “For me, it’s about journeying alongside others and respecting all aspects of their human spirit. At times, I find I need to be still so I can be attentive to emotional and spiritual pain, and respond tenderly to the disorder and confusion brought on by illness or hardship. Other times, companioning engages us in the joy and laughter of life. It’s about honoring the sacredness of the soul’s journey—yours, mine, and those we meet along the way. There are many dimensions to caring for each other’s hearts. For me, companioning is a gift that urges prayerful mindfulness as we all go about our gospel-inspired service to others.” ☩

Still a teacher at heart

As a child, **Sister Carol Jean Zais, SDS** (*Sr. Mary Job*) rode her bike four miles to the two-room Sacred Heart School in Edson, Wis. She liked to stay after to help her teachers ready their classrooms for the next day. It's how she first came to know the Sisters of the Divine Savior.



"I found the Salvatorian Sisters to be warm and welcoming," Sr. Carol Jean says. Now she's on the welcoming end.

In her vocation ministry, Sr. "CJ" hosts visits from women who are discerning a call to religious life. As novice directress, Sr. CJ also leads new members in formation studies. She finds her current ministry challenging yet exciting. Fewer women are entering religious life than when she made first vows in 1965, but women who connect with her are passionate about serving in an apostolic community. Sr. CJ is grateful for how her congregation was preparing her for vocation ministry, even while serving in education for many years.

"When you're well trained, you can step into a new role and flex your skills and experience to serve in new ways," Sr. CJ says.

Sr. Carol Jean's four years as a principal in the Diocese of Green Bay in the 1990s were challenging yet exciting too. Tight budgets and shrinking enrollments pushed parish schools into survival mode. Under Sr. Carol Jean's guidance, schools in Antigo, Wis. consolidated and became All Saints Catholic School System. She also served as principal at Sacred Heart School in Sauk Rapids, Minn., and taught in Wisconsin at St. Pius X, Wauwatosa; St. Mark's in Rothschild; and Notre Dame Middle School in Chippewa Falls. Sr. Carol Jean served three years in Province leadership as well.

She earned a bachelor's degree from Marquette University, and a master's in education administration from the University of Wisconsin. She also earned a certificate from the Institute of Religious Formation at St. Louis University.

Still a teacher at heart, Sr. CJ encourages women to "be attentive to God's call, find a good spiritual director, and do their homework by visiting several different religious communities." ☙

Sister Denise Demulling, SDS

"My parents passed on many values, but hospitality was one that stood out because we hosted many guests for meals or overnight stays in our home." Today, **Sr. Denise Demulling, SDS** is the face of hospitality for the Salvatorian Sisters. Her artistic eye transforms the Province headquarters and Community House chapel to reflect the seasons and religious celebrations throughout the year. She has ministered as activities director for St. Anne's Salvatorian Campus, an elementary teacher and principal, and worked with students with hearing impairments.



Sister Margaret Hansknecht, SDS (*Sr. Liboris*)

Seven years serving in the Holy Land has had a profound effect on **Sr. Margaret Hansknecht, SDS**. "My time in Israel sparked many 'oh!' moments when, in the midst of daily life, I would realize anew that I was living in Nazareth." Especially since attending daily Mass at the site of the Annunciation, Sr. Margaret says her prayer life and life decisions have been deeply affected by Mary's words of The Angelus prayer, "Be it done to me according to your word."



Sister De Paul Schafer, SDS

Reaching the top of Mount Sinai at sunrise might be one of **Sr. De Paul Schafer's, SDS** most touching memories from four years in the Holy Land. She was on a sabbatical for the first year, and then resumed her longtime nursing ministry at a nursing home in an Arab village outside Jerusalem. Since retiring from active ministry, Sr. De Paul has distributed mobile meals through Milwaukee's Visiting Nurse Association, and reached out to elders in need through Interfaith Older Adult Programs.



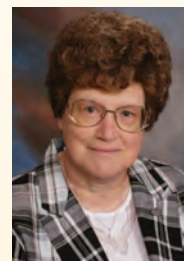
Sister Joan Wagner, SDS (*Sr. John Bosco*)

"She sets the standard when it comes to humble service and unselfish devotion." Principal Patricia Kuhn paid tribute to **Sr. Joan Wagner, SDS**, when Holy Family Regional School in Huntsville, Ala. honored her with a scholarship in her name in 2011. Sr. Joan began ministering in Huntsville in 1969. She taught first grade for 27 years, before shifting into the role of administrative assistant about 18 years ago. Sr. Joan has been the longest serving Salvatorian Sister in Huntsville.



Sister Mary Jo Witucki, SDS (*Sr. Mary Jerome*)

You never stand so tall as when you bend down to help a child. That quote served as the theme when **Sr. Mary Jo Witucki, SDS** was honored for excellence in education the same year she celebrated her 50th Jubilee. It was a fitting tribute for the lifelong teacher. Sr. Mary Jo always felt it was an honor and a privilege to help young minds grow and bloom. She still uses her gift today, helping our international sisters improve their English skills while in the U.S.

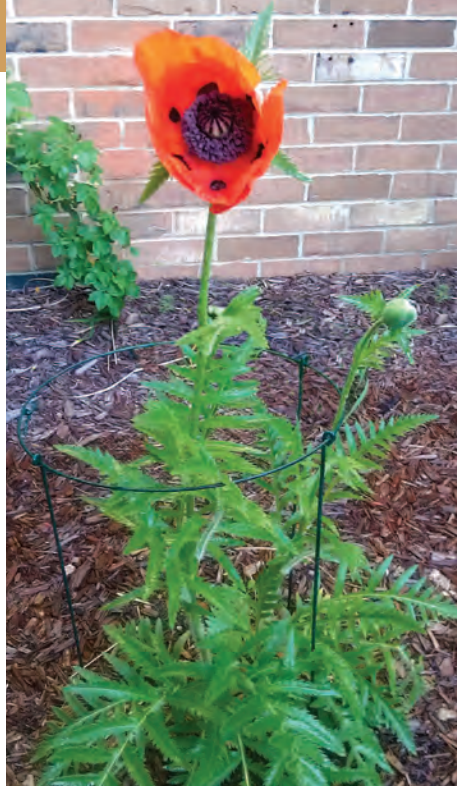


Send greetings to our jubilarians c/o:

SDS Mission Advancement Office

4311 N. 100th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53222

Or by email: missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org



Near to nature they're near to God

gift for spiritual reading and private prayer.” The courtyard takes her back to childhood too. Coming out of the Great Depression, Sr. Kathleen’s parents bought their first house, and she fondly remembers the flowers that lined their yard. Flowers and trees might be what she enjoys most when she settles in to read or pray quietly in the courtyard. Again come spring, with red accents to attract attention, Sister Kathleen hopes hummingbirds might pay a visit to her “little slice of paradise.”

Finding comfort in creation

Sister Margaret Bosch, SDS recalls in her travels for active ministry and annual retreats, she would always seek out bodies of water. She says, “The beauty of the water’s surface would give me a sense of peace; knowing there’s life in the depths reminded me there’s hope even in darkness.” Now as weather permits, Sr. Margaret finds spiritual comfort in the outdoor courtyard at Salvatorian Sisters Residence (SSR) in Milwaukee. When her mother died 30 years ago, she transplanted some of her poppies to her Pius West residence. One of those poppy plants came along when Sr. Margaret moved from Pius West to SSR. The courtyard poppies and birdsongs remind her of reassuring words from Scripture:

Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap... and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Consider the lilies of the field, they neither toil nor spin, yet even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. (Matthew 6:26, 28)

Fresh air and spiritual renewal

No matter the time of day, Sister Kathleen Dooley, SDS cherishes her quiet time in the SSR courtyard when warm weather arrives. “I don’t ever take it for granted. It’s a great

Daily swim becomes powerful prayer

For a long time, Sister Georgene Faust, SDS has made it a priority to preserve a body/spirit balance despite the “negative pulls” of daily life. One place she finds this balance is in the pool the BVM Sisters open to sisters in the Diocese of Phoenix. Sister Georgene makes time for her “daily blessing” of Vitamin D and exercise between teaching classes at Rio Salado College. She says her 30-minute swim is a gifted time to be in touch with the Lord.

“It’s a time to pray for the SDS family as well as for members of my family. My prayer in the pool is often simply, ‘Lord, be present to whomever is in need of you now, today.’” Sister Georgene shares about one of many times she got confirmation her prayer had been heard.

“Some time ago, a member of my family was kayaking with a friend and a strong undercurrent tipped the boat. Jack went under water, feared he was going to die, and then saw a tunnel of light in a flash. He thought of his wife and three young children. At that moment, he saw a branch floating by, clung to it, and found his way to shore. When this story was shared among family and friends, I realized it happened the same day and hour that I had asked the Lord to be there for someone in need now, this day!”

Lowly earthworm could be a role model

Have you ever considered the spirituality of *Lumbricus terrestris*? The lowly earthworm was actually the subject of a booklet Sister Patrice Colletti, SDS created during her novitiate. She describes earthworm farming (aka vermicomposting) and suggests the creepy-crawler might even be a role model: “Earthworms live in the dark, but must come to the surface to feed. They take in whatever the world offers, mostly what other living creatures consider refuse. Working solo, but often near others, they digest whatever is available to them, and provide an amazingly rich output that nourishes new life for our world.”

Sister Patrice, along with Sisters Virginia Honish, SDS and Diane Goetzinger, SDS infuse their Mater Salvatoris residence with the spirituality of creation. Each year, they strive to re-qualify for the City of Wauwatosa “Green Neighbor” program that promotes household sustainability. They recycle paper, aluminum, plastics and paints, and use two rain barrels to divert runoff onto their tomatoes, beans, and flowers. A mini-ecosystem thrives in their household compost bin, turning organic kitchen waste into rich soil for their garden. 🌱





Our sisters in Congo know that only children who have the chance to attend school, learn to read and write, and develop their talents will break through the curtain of poverty.

Our sisters believe that education will empower these young people to make a better life for themselves and their families. Our educational initiative goes hand-in-hand with our other priorities to combat human trafficking and improve quality of life through health care. Education supports these other priorities from the ground up.

Education is a challenge and an opportunity

Thirty-three-year-old Sister Anaurite, earned a bachelor's degree at the university in Kolwezi, and now teaches six-year-olds at the Salvatorian School. When her class of 67 children entered, some spoke Swahili and others spoke French. In a year's time, she has taught them to speak and begin writing in French. Many are challenged by having to stand at desks that are too high to reach while seated. In the afternoon, secondary students using her classroom find those same desks too low for their sprawling limbs.

School parents are challenged too. They compete with other families for a place for their children in the Salvatorian School. And, they're conflicted due to the economics of education. Families we serve are poor and not able to pay school fees. "It's the biggest challenge," says Sister Melpoméne Kayiba Mawanba, SDS, regional superior in Congo.

"We encourage parents to accept responsibility for educating their children by contributing according to their ability." Sr. Melpoméne says nearly a third of the families can only pay a "symbolic" amount that doesn't even cover the cost of books and supplies, uniforms and lunches. Benefactors have helped to bridge the gap to enable children to remain in the school. Salvatorian School does not receive any government subsidies. It depends on donations and the small contribution from students' families as they are able.

“Behold,
children are a heritage
from the LORD...”

Psalms 127:3

Breaking through the curtain of poverty

The Sisters of the Divine Savior believe in the importance of education and religious formation to lift children far away from lives of poverty and dependence.

"We will do whatever we can to empower these children to manage their lives, find a job, and build their own families. It is one of our most important priorities," Sr. Melpoméne says.

Sr. Anaurite adds, "Salvatorian School is a place where children can grow in their mind, in their body, and in their heart. They learn about themselves and others; learn to respect themselves and others; and learn to love themselves and others." ☸



In the last 10 years, generous people have contributed funds to add classrooms, benches and tables for the Salvatorian School.



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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
Anne Bezanson
Mission Advancement Associate

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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