

Sisters of Life

Consecrated for the Protection and Enhancement

of the Sacredness of Human Life

Issue 19, Christmas 2004

THE SIGHT OF THE STAR *Filled them with Delight*

Mother Agnes Mary, SV

Have you ever seen a lighted Christmas tree in an unlikely spot along an interstate highway? I have, and the sight left me 'surprised by joy.' I marveled at its maker's ingenuity. And recognized the delightful sight as an expression of joy - a gift given - from the heart of one who wished to share his or her own Christmas joy with a fellow, unknown traveler.

I suspect that these small Christmastide delights of warm, twinkling lights against the darkness resonate so within us for, like the star of Bethlehem, they point to the profound and sustaining joy brought to the world through the Incarnation. Like the Magi who were filled with delight at the sight of the star as it rested over the place where the Christ Child was (and only as it settled over the birthplace of Christ do the Scriptures report that it awakened joy within the travelers from the East), so too in these Advent days our joy is awakened by the truth we celebrate: God-is-with-us!

Each Sister of Life has in her cell a framed message which reads: "There can be no Sisters of Life without JOY", given us years ago by our Founder.

These words are not a mandate for a certain personality style or a demand to violate one's God-given temperament, but rather, a reminder that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and by that fact we are changed forever. Cardinal O'Connor explained it in this way:

"There is no virginal gloom in the Sisters of Life; that has been displaced by the presence of the Word.

They have mothered the Wandering Word. They mother that Word in the wombs of other mothers. They mother that Word in the world. They treasure the life of that Word in every human being."

As with the delight we find in a roadside Christmas extravagance, so the Magi were filled with delight at the sight of the star, because both point to the Child of Mary who is our cause for rejoicing. God-is-with-us!

*"Not only do we have a right,
We also have a duty to rejoice,*

*Because the Lord has given us joy
And the world is waiting for it."*

(attributed to Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger)

Let us who know Christ, who possess Christ in the Eucharist, give an account of our joy. Here in this edition of our newsletter we share with you the good news of what God has done for us and for the hundreds we serve through His abundant grace and providence.

A joyous, happy, holy Christmas to you!

...**A**nd, lo the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight. When they entered the house they found the child with Mary His mother. And falling to their knees they worshipped Him. Then opening their treasure they offered him gifts.

VILLA MARIA GUADALUPE

THE HOUSE OF MARY

Mary so many years ago. Bishop William Lori of the Diocese of Bridgeport, Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, Bishop Thomas Daily, Supreme Chaplain for the Knights, friends, neighbors, volunteers, and the Sisters of Life were all present as a beautiful collaboration between the Knights, who purchased *Villa Maria Guadalupe*, and the Sisters, who will live and host retreats inside its walls, commenced. As the Three Kings rejoiced at the end of their long journey to find the Baby Jesus in the arms of His Mother, so we pray that those who enter this "House of Mary" will, too, find the hope and joy of knowing Christ the King, especially in His merciful and loving Eucharistic Presence.

Though the only visible star in the sky was the sun at the official opening of *Villa Maria Guadalupe*, the hopeful anticipation of those present must have echoed that of the Magi as they approached the house of



"...**W**hen Christ arrives in the person of a weary pro-life worker, or a Knights of Columbus priest chaplain, or a Project Rachel volunteer, or a volunteer in a nursing home, he or she will be given encouragement, rest and fresh spiritual energy. When Christ calls out through the needs of pregnant mothers and in the cries of those suffering from the aftermath of an abortion, those calls will be heeded in the halls of Villa Maria Guadalupe!... This day we rejoice! This day, Mother Agnes and dear sisters, we welcome you! This day, brother Knights, we thank you! May what we do today be for the good of our society, for the benefit of the Church we love and for the glory of God's holy Name. Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!"

-Bishop Lori

WHEN THEY ENTERED THE HOUSE,

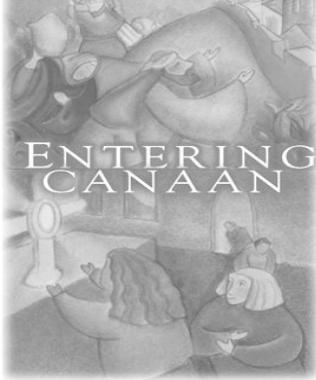
"In what we now refer to as the 'Vision Conference,' Cardinal O'Connor said: 'I have said from the very beginning...that one day we would have a retreat center...for all those who are hoping and praying for an end to this scourge, this Culture of Death...'

they found the child with Mary his mother."

"TODAY WE DEDICATE ...A PLACE WHERE THE CULTURE OF LIFE WILL BE LIVED - A CULTURE BASED UPON 'THE PRIMACY OF BEING OVER HAVING, OF THE PERSON OVER THINGS.' IT IS A PLACE IN WHICH CONCERN FOR OTHERS AND ACCEPTANCE OF THEM WILL BE PARAMOUNT." - Carl Anderson

"Your Eminence, today that retreat center is a reality! It is called Villa Maria Guadalupe." -Mother Agnes Mary





"THIRTY YEARS AGO I SUFFERED AN ABORTION. THIS 'MEDICAL PROCEDURE' IS THE MOST HORRIFIC INJUSTICE AGAINST WOMEN AND BABIES. AFTER YEARS OF FEELING UNWORTHY OF THE LORD'S FORGIVENESS, MY HUSBAND ENCOURAGED ME TO ATTEND THE GATHERING SESSIONS. IT IS HERE THAT I FEEL THE LOVE, MERCY AND FORGIVENESS OF OUR LORD. ON JANUARY 22, I ATTENDED THE MARCH FOR LIFE WITH OTHER PRO-LIFERS. I FELT SUCH PEACE AND GRATITUDE TO GOD FOR LEADING ME TO THIS EVENT. LET THE LORD GIVE YOU HIS PEACE-HE WILL!"

"AND FALLING TO THEIR KNEES

"I AM ABLE TO ENJOY LIFE ONCE AGAIN. THAT TERRIBLE DARKNESS I LIVED WITH FOR YEARS HAS GONE AND THE PEACE OF CHRIST HAS TAKEN ITS PLACE. THANK YOU!"

"I NEVER WOULD HAVE BELIEVED I COULD FEEL JOY AGAIN. IT WAS NOT EASY WORKING THROUGH MY ABORTION BUT AS I WAS TOLD WHEN I FIRST CAME, IT IS EASIER THAN CARRYING AROUND THE GUILT AND SHAME FOR MY WHOLE LIFE. I AM SO GLAD TO KNOW JOY AGAIN!"

Entering Canaan: A Sacramental Journey to an Inheritance of Mercy *for those Suffering Abortion*

"Go, pick up the pieces lest they be lost." (Jn 6:12) With these words of Christ, John Cardinal O'Connor directed the Sisters of Life to a mission of reverence for women and men who suffer following the tragedy of abortion. Since 1996, the Sisters, together with Theresa Bonopartis, have done just that.

Known as *Entering Canaan*, after the Exodus experience of the Jewish people who followed the Lord out of bondage into the Promised Land, these retreats are now available in manual form for the faithful across the country who are inspired to participate in this journey of healing based on the charism of the Sisters of Life.

they worshipped Him."

The manual, which chronicles not only the "how-to's" of retreat hosting, but also the Sacramental spirituality and reverence for each unique person and healing process that mark *Entering Canaan*, was published last Spring by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and distributed to every Diocese in the nation.

May all those who suffer from abortion, too often in silence and alone, find hope and healing in the merciful love of Jesus Christ!

Call if you would like to attend a retreat.

718.325.9002

† H E N O P E N I N G

N E W P O S



Meet our newest members with their postulant director, Sr. Veronica Mary

Elzbieta Milczarek



Home: born in Olsztyn, Poland and has lived in Canada for fifteen years
B.C. (before the convent):

A talented opera singer, she also received a Math degree from Queens University, Ontario

Favorite Saint: St. Faustina and many others!

Glimmers of Grace: Elzbieta's parents and six siblings live on their own organic farm in Mattawa, Ontario, Canada!

PERPETUAL PROFESSION SR. MARY, S.V.



A heart of compassion for the sick, and a profound sense of the Christian value of suffering moved her years ago to a career as a nurse. She brought comfort to the dying in California hospitals, solace to the aban-

doned in orphanages in Romania, and hope to the poor in the establishment of a new hospital in Saudi Arabia. But none of those noble activities could satisfy the desire of her heart to be and do all for her Lord. On August 6, 2004, at a Mass celebrated by Bishop Gerald Walsh, Sr. Mary offered her gifts of perpetual poverty, chastity, obedience and of protecting and enhancing the sacredness of human life. This heart of golden charity now belongs fully to Christ and His Church in service to the Gospel of Life.

THEIR TREASURES *they offered Him Gifts.*"

T U L A N T S

Katherine Bollig



Home: Argyle, Texas
B.C.: A Bio major at the Univ. of Dallas, she then studied art and taught for three years.

Favorite Saint: St. Bernadette
Glimmers of Grace: Her non-Catholic grandfather called her during his last days to ask, "You're going to be a Sister, aren't you?" He gave her his blessing when she responded "Yes!"

Judy Holmes



Home: Orlando, FL
B.C.: She spent lots of time with Mickey Mouse as an entertainer at Disney World for nine years.
Favorite Saint: St. Therese
Glimmers of Grace: God has brought her "full circle"! Born in a home for pregnant women run by religious Sisters, Judy grew up under the loving care of adoptive parents and entered the Catholic Church a few years ago.

FIRST PROFESSION

Echoing our Lady's fiat and declaration of being a "handmaid of the Lord," Sr. Shirley Ann of the Holy Cross, from Maine; Sr. Kathrine Marie of the Miraculous Medal, from Ontario Canada; and Sr. Theresa Elizabeth of the Cross, from Illinois, made their first profession of vows.



NEW NOVICES

June 1, 2004 gave us double cause for celebration as both the 13th anniversary of our Foundation and the entrance of five new novices. Taking the group title *Totus Tuus*, they are now known as (l-r):

- Sr. Maura Walter (Patricia Stevenson);
- Sr. Johanna Raphael (Judy Streit);
- Sr. Regina Caeli (Gina Barthel);
- Sr. Immaculata (Tricia Turek);
- & Sr. Mary Louise Concepta (Leah Yates).

"Fear not for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name - you are mine". (Isaiah 43:1)

THE LORD OF LORDS, THE KING OF KINGS

-Sr. Elizabeth Ann of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus

Many might remember the classic story, "The Secret Garden", read when you were but only a child. This story shares some of the same joy and wonder. However, unlike the secret garden of young children's dreams, this garden revealed *The Greatest* of all beauties and wonders. A Miracle in our very presence...

As the world outside continued about in an endless swirl of noise and confusion, there sat tucked away in the very back corner of my parish church, a room. One very small inconspicuous room that appeared no different from any other except for the simple wooden door that remained closed and left hidden the Treasure inside.

I reflect back to the very first time I opened its small little space, and I smile with unspeakable gratitude for all of God's goodness to me. It was a Sunday afternoon in late autumn, and I was just leaving the church. Suddenly, I paused as I noticed someone slip through a little door's passageway and disappear into the mysterious interior. Curious, I simply turned the knob and pushed open the heavy wooden door. It opened into a room no bigger than a large closet with eight chairs pushed tightly against one another and aligning its crowded walls. I let out a deep sigh as I turned and beheld in the center front, only feet away, enthroned in the most magnificent gold Monstrance, the Treasure of all treasures...The Lord of lords, the King of kings. I quietly slipped in and slid

into the back row. Kneeling, I lifted my head and gazed up at our dear Lord. He seemed to be smiling, and I smiled back. Not really knowing why I had come or what to say now that I was there, I began to wonder what really prompted me to enter this sacred space. Then I heard a gentle whisper echo within, "You have not come here by chance. I have been waiting for you. Sit and rest in My Presence for I love you." My heart melted and slowly the tears began to roll down my face. After precious moments seemed to pass, I quietly picked myself up, genuflected and bid Him goodbye with a promise to be back to visit Him again.

That first little meeting began a series of visits to the Eucharistic Adoration Chapel in Elm Grove, Wisconsin that would literally take me on a journey that would change my life forever. With each subsequent visit I made, each and every time I opened that little wooden door, my heart too would be laid open, and I would sit resting in a pool of God's infinite love and mercy. Slowly, as my heart began to expand, so too did my desire for something more. I began to ask Our Lord,

"What do you want of me? Why have you called me to Yourself? What can I do to return Your love?" First, a gentle whisper and then a growing, clear, strong voice began to echo in response. "I want nothing but your heart."

Today I sit in our chapel at Sacred Heart of Jesus Convent, gazing up at that same Lord who drew me to Himself over eleven years ago, and I wonder. I wonder about the many secret gardens around the world that lie hidden in the midst of the noise and confusion. Those Sacred Sanctuaries where dwells our Lord...waiting, just waiting for someone else to unlock the door and reveal another world of inexhaustible joy and hope and unspeakable love...

A place where Our Lord opens the very recesses of our heart. Then, calling each one of us by name, He beckons us to come, follow Him.

Love Himself made present in our midst.

"THE CHRIST IN BETHLEHEM IS THE CHRIST OF GALILEE, IS THE CHRIST OF THE CRUCIFIXION, IS THE CHRIST OF THE RESURRECTION, IS THE CHRIST OF THE EUCHARIST. IT IS THE SAME CHRIST."

-John Cardinal O'Connor

THE YEAR of the EUCHARIST



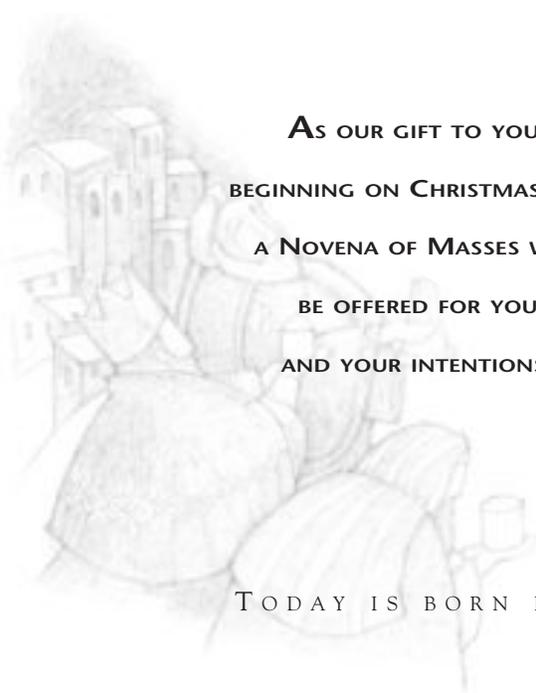
In the Eucharist, we find Mercy Himself at our mercy, vulnerable to all. We find the Word silent in a culture that equates communication with value, hidden in a culture that defies the tangible, faceless in a culture that longs for recognition. He is Our Life, and our faith in His Presence in the Eucharist helps us to discern His Presence in every human life, even, and especially when that life is vulnerable, silent, hidden or diminished in any way.

Join us this year in making a special Eucharistic Holy Hour on the first Thursday of every month, as we pray in reparation for sins of irreverence to the Eucharistic Lord and of irreverence to human life, made in His Image and Likeness.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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**As our gift to you,
beginning on Christmas Day,
a Novena of Masses will
be offered for you
and your intentions.**

May Jesus, our Eucharistic Lord, be born anew within you today, throughout the Christmas Season, and each day of this Year of the Eucharist!

"The Christ in Bethlehem, is the Christ of Galilee, is the Christ of the Crucifixion, is the Christ of the Resurrection, is the Christ of the Eucharist. It is the same Christ."

-John Cardinal O'Connor

In Christ our Life,
The Sisters of Life

TODAY IS BORN FOR YOU *a Savior who is Christ the Lord.*

<p>Sacred Heart of Jesus</p> <p>450 West 51st Street New York, NY 10019 212/397-1396 Fax: 212/397-1397 <i>(Holy Respite)</i></p>	<p>Our Lady of New York</p> <p>1955 Needham Avenue Bronx, NY 10466 718/881-8008 Fax: 718/654-2911 <i>(Retreats)</i></p>	<p>St. Frances de Chantal</p> <p>198 Hollywood Avenue Bronx, NY 10465 718/863-2264 Fax: 718/792-9645 <i>(House of Formation, Vocations)</i></p>	<p>Villa Maria Guadalupe</p> <p>159 Sky Meadow Drive Stamford, CT 06903 203/329-1492 Fax: 203/329-1495 <i>(Retreat House)</i></p>
<p>St. Paul the Apostle</p> <p>586 McLean Avenue Yonkers, NY 10705 914/968-8094 Fax: 914/968-0462 <i>(Generalate)</i></p>	<p>Dr. Joseph R. Stanton Human Life Issues Library</p> <p>1955 Needham Avenue Bronx, NY 10466 718/881-7286 Fax: 718/881-7287</p>	<p>Mission to Pregnant Women</p> <p>1955 Needham Avenue Bronx, NY 10466 718/882-8044 Fax: 718/881-2441</p>	