



February 7, 2025

FEAST DAYS - Gros Morne, Haiti

On February 3rd, we celebrated the feast of our foundress, St. Claudine Thevenet, which is also the feast day of Jesus-Mary Parish School.

Mass was held at Notre Dame de la Chandelaur church whose decorations included a picture of St. Claudine. After communion came liturgical dance.



Then students sang with the marching band, as they paraded to school.
(Two videos are attached to Bridges.)



Each class had beautifully decorated their classroom. Shown here is the 8th grade at the special meal which followed!

- Sr. Pat Dillon
Church photo by Sr. Liz Cornejo Carpio

PROVINCE RETREAT DAY

In the October, '24 letter convoking our 38th General Chapter, Sr. Monica Joseph put before us the biblical story of Ruth and Naomi as a context for reflecting on our personal history, recognizing God's work in the "stuff" of our lives, and discerning the signs of hope. Gathering via 'Zoom' on January 18th, members of the USA-Haiti Province took up that story in a prayer service that opened a province retreat day and looked toward our own March Provincial Chapter.



In preparation for the day, an essay on the Book of Ruth by the Old Testament scholar, Richard Clifford, SJ, had been sent to everyone. Two sisters came prepared to offer reflections on the biblical story. **Sr. Doris Bissonnette**, taking her cue from the relationship between the two women, shared the following on discerning kindness:

At a recent Support Group meeting, our leader reminded us that the season of Christmas – the season of giving and kindness – can be a great strain on caregivers. Caregivers need “to be kind to themselves” as well, otherwise your inner bank of kindness will be depleted, and everyone will suffer.

Sometimes, it is a kindness to let a ‘challenged’ person do something by themselves – even if it is awkward. Or they might need only a tiny boost and then they can manage by themselves. It might be quicker to just jump in and do it yourself, but a great kindness to allow someone to be rewarded by their own abilities. This could also provide the caregiver a small respite.

Sometimes, kindness requires discernment.

Or again, one of the caregivers related how her patient can, quote ‘still drive’ but the caregiver refuses to be a passenger in that car because of the danger. That caused another caregiver, a retired fire Marshall, to relate how a neighbor with mild cognitive impairment – ‘who could still drive’ – got into a car accident, causing physical injury to the other party. The other party’s family sued for everything the impaired person’s family had.

All this kindness-thinking instinctively brought to mind the prayer: “Take, Lord, receive all my....” well, you know the rest of it.

Sometimes, kindness requires painfully wise discernment.

Sr. Rosie Nicholson, pondering the role of Ruth as the ‘foreigner’ who takes a central place in the narrative, spoke in light of her own experiences in border ministry:

Seeing deeply that which is before us in the present moment opens our eyes to recognize the redemptive experience taking place through transformative relationships. Ruth having said to Naomi, “Wherever you go I will go” enters her and Naomi into a tender, faithful, compassionate relationship that becomes deeply admired by Boaz. He too enters into a transformative relationship as he becomes one with this homeless foreigner and through her vulnerability they both become strong, birthing a new reality, a new way of respecting the dignity of women, of welcoming different cultures and faiths, of men becoming truly men.

At the border wall we've met many Ruth's. Women alone or with children, sometimes with husband and family – all quite voiceless, invisible, disposable. As I look into their eyes while giving food, water, backpacks, clothing, a stuffed animal, listening and praying together I wonder what is their gift, who among these women and children might be the next teacher, doctor, a just leader, bishop, even pope who God is calling to enter into transformative relationships with us in building a holistic Global community.

"How we see" enters us into a deeper consciousness and empowers us to create new paradigms for constructing a web of relationships that are welcoming and life-giving to all people.

May the Ruth in our midst free us to recognize the Divine in our ordinary people, migrants, immigrants, the vulnerable. May we then be transformed and say to the Lord "Wherever you go I will go."

Finally, responding to a parable on the place of hope in our lives, Sr. Pat Dillon spoke to, "What gives me hope?"

4 candles -- only one lit-- hope -- can hope rekindle?

I ask myself, what gives me hope?

— the orchid attached to the tree in our front yard. It looks like a dead branch, but it's throbbing with life and again the buds are coming out.

— the humming birds, and other native birds, that I haven't seen in two weeks and I am afraid they are gone, but I hang out sugar water on the trees and the birds are there drinking.

— the children over the wall from us at John 23 singing, reciting their lessons, playing — signs of hope.

I asked four little children from the MEJ (Eucharistic Youth Movement) who were rehearsing with Woodjina outside our gate to come and share about the 4 candles story.

They spoke so softly that I had to ask a Haitian friend to help me understand: One of the boys said, "We have to have hope in Jesus and pray that bad things don't happen to us."

One of the girls said, "We have hope in God" and the other spoke about the Holy Spirit. Only one of the four was higher than my waist.

I was reminded of a saying by Maria Montessori or one of her followers - that we should never underestimate the capacity of children to experience God. I feel that in little children there is hope, and our challenger as adults is to protect that flame.

The day concluded with Sr. Mary Bourdon introducing some tasks related to the coming provincial chapter, consultations that call for the input of all the province members. We have further to go with Ruth and Naomi, but we've set out!

MESSAGE FROM THE RJM's OF HAITI

Attached to this issue of BRIDGES is a letter which has been recently sent to the whole Congregation, coming from our sisters in Haiti.

It emerged from a decision made at their December meeting to present an overview of the mission there in view of sharing the realities of ministry in this island nation and seeking support as we work to build a sustainable future for RJM presence.

Sr. Rosario Fumanal ('Charo') is the scribe, writing on behalf of the others.

GENEROUS GIFT FOR HAITI MISSION

Noreen Mastrangelo recently contacted the Leadership Team to say that her father, Mr. Patrick Scanlon, included a gift of \$20,000 to the RJM in his will.

The gift is the latest in many others made on behalf of Haiti from the Scanlon family, including Noreen's longtime volunteering at the AFJM flea market, a project that raised more than \$30,000 over the years.

Many will remember that Sr. Mary Scanlon was among those who explored the possibility of our going to Haiti and advocated for establishing the mission. **MESI ANPIL!**

MIGRATION, REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, MASS DEPORTATION

Information below taken from a recent cathsocialthought@georgetown.edu email; photo of migrant caravan headed to US from Creative Commons

The Georgetown University Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life is hosting a public dialogue on:

**"Migration, Refugee Resettlement,
and Mass Deportation"**
Moral, Human, and Policy Choices

Livestream

Wednesday, February 12, 2025

6:00 - 7:15 p.m. EST

[RSVP by clicking here](#)



A pledge of "massive deportations" was at the center of President Donald Trump's 2024 campaign, and steps are already being taken to carry this out in the early days of his administration. The executive orders and other actions taken by the administration pose serious threats to immigrant families and to refugees, as well as a pastoral challenge for Catholic and other faith communities, and a fundamental choice for the United States.

What are the moral dimensions, human consequences, and policy aspects of these commitments? How should the principles of Catholic social teaching shape a response for people of faith?

In this timely Dialogue, experts and leaders will discuss the administration's plans along with questions of human dignity, family separation, border integrity, and the right to seek asylum.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

Catholic Schools Week is celebrated nation-wide during the last week in January. At St. Frances de Chantal, in Bronx, NY, we began the week with Mass on Sunday Jan 26. Over 500 packed the 10am Mass and families received a special blessing at the end.



During the week, activities included crazy sock day... wear a pair and bring a new pair for the homeless (over 300 pairs were received);



Open House for current and new families and current;

Volleyball (below);



Friendship Bracelets;



and Reading Buddies, where older students or faculty helped the younger students with reading.

These are just a few of the educational and fun activities that our students enjoyed during Catholic Schools Week.

- Sr. Pat Brito, Principal
photos by Kathleen Piranio

IMMIGRATION: What Is Ours To Do?

Many religious groups have responded to recent presidential statements and directives on immigration with deep concern over their harshness, and their disregard for international law as well as human dignity.

It is worth noting that the right of asylum seekers to a hearing where their claim can be considered is enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention and is considered a fundamental principle of human rights law. It is also affirmed in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

When asked in an interview how the Catholic Church can contribute to the ongoing public debate, Archbishop Timothy Broglio insisted, "We offer primarily the Gospel, which says that we meet Jesus Christ in the person who needs us—and furthermore, that we'll be judged on the basis of how we have responded to those concrete situations." Specifically, he pointed to the vast network of Catholic relief agencies that help people in difficult situations. "We want to make those possibilities available to those most in need." He said the Church in America will continue to take this "two-pronged" approach in the coming weeks and months: first, "to continue to teach the Gospel and to try to negotiate as much as we can for changes"; and then, "to act concretely in front of our brother or sister who is in need."

The impact of this administration's immigration policy is being felt in many places but comes home to us especially through RJM presence in our California border ministry and our Haiti mission. Through our sisters in these places, we have firsthand knowledge of the poverty and violence that drive people to leave their homes, and the obstacles they face when seeking a safe haven for themselves and their families.

Writing from San Diego, Sr. Rosie Nicholson shared a recent experience at the border there:

Keep praying for the migrants. One Colombian family with a 4-year-old girl just had enough time to pray with us and receive a bottle of water when the Border Patrol came, asked if they were legal and proceeded to say to them, "You're illegal, you are under arrest".

A short while later a larger group from different countries arrived and the Border Patrol simply told them to get in the van and took them off most likely deporting them directly to Tijuana. Much fear in our areas.

The question of Pope John Paul II when he visited here is still with us:

***America! Lazarus is at your gate.
What are you going to do?***

- Sr. Rosemary Mangan



UPDATED CONTACT INFORMATION

Sr. Helen Scarry has a new room: Elizabeth Seton Residence, 125 Oakland Street, Wellesley Hills, MA 20481, **Room 1-B-3, room phone 781-997-1226.**

PROVINCE OFFICE

January 31 - February 8 Mary in San Diego

February 17 Office closed for Presidents' Day

February 21 Next *Bridges* published (articles due by Tuesday 2/19 at noon)

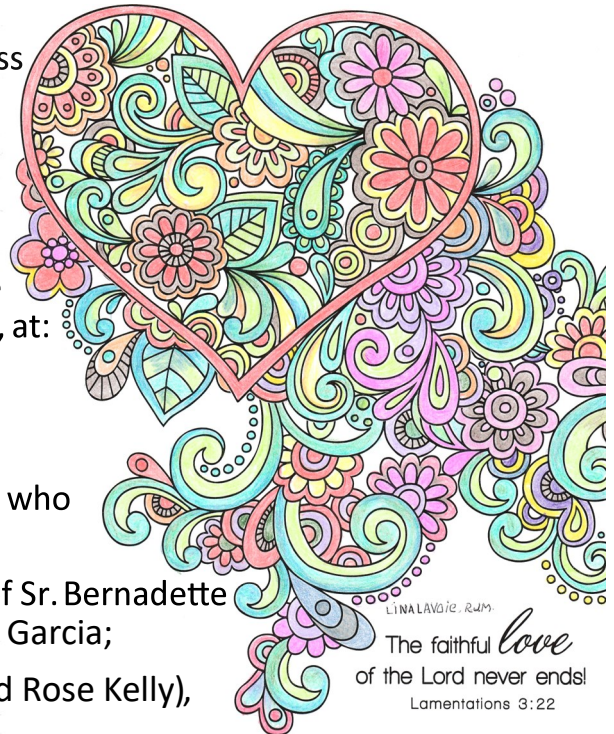
MESSAGE FROM SR. THERESE PICARD

Thank you all for your prayers and support! I am on-the-mend and doing much better.

- Therese

PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED FOR...

- Sr. Michelle Authier, who is at Study Memorial Hospital for observation, and to address weakness brought about by the flu;
- Jayson Nichols, step-brother of former-RJM Cheryl Nichols, who has colorectal cancer and faces a decision about ongoing treatment;
- Yvette Rondeau, a former-RJM, who is out of the hospital and in physical therapy to help her walk, at:
Cabrinia of Westchester
115 Broadway, Room 104A on 1West
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522
- Edward Stolba, the brother of Sr. Janet Stolba, who has begun chemotherapy to treat leukemia;
- Continuing prayers for: Carmen Silva, the sister of Sr. Bernadette Oliva; and Maggie Zamora, the sister of Sr. Dina Garcia;
- Kay Klodin (Srs. Valle Chías González-Blanch and Rose Kelly), as this week's community for special prayer.



**WE ALSO PRAY FOR ALL THE NEEDS OF
OUR RJM SISTERS, FAMILY AND FRIENDS.**

Praised Forever Be Jesus and Mary