

Bridges

July 10, 2026



Great News from Jesus-Mary Parish School



Mèt Kenson Valcin, Sr. Pat Dillon, Fr. Jeremie Bienazar, Mèt Leny Laguerre, Sr. Jackie Picard, Fr. Dachemy Destine

With great joy, the Religious of Jesus and Mary announce the appointment of Fr. Jeremie Bienazar to the newly created post of Director General of Jesus-Mary Parish School. At a small ceremony on June 23, Sr. Patricia Dillon offered the appointment to Fr. Jeremie, and Fr. Dachemy Destine read it aloud for the Management Committee. Present were Sr. Jackie Picard for the Religious of Jesus and Mary, Mèt Leny Laguerre who continues as Director of Pedagogy, and Mèt Kenson Valcin, coordinator for the Junior High.

Fr. Jeremie expressed his delight in accepting this post--recalling how he started his teaching career at Jesus-Mary School before entering the diocesan seminary in Gonaives. He also was a counselor at Camp Claudine, and when he was "lent" to the new Irish summer camp at Jean 23, he named that camp Camp Glady. For the past three years, Fr Jeremie has taught English in our Junior High. He noted that he learned English from Sr. Vivian Patenaude, RJM, during her years in Gros Morne.

This choice for the new director general post comes after a professional search aided by Summits Education and the Model School Network, who will continue to share their extensive experience. The school community is very grateful to the Religious of Jesus and Mary leadership who encouraged and engaged our new partners. You can read more about their work at www.summitseducation and www.modelschoolnetwork

Those who were at our provincial chapter will remember how I illustrated Mèt Leny's wearing many hats- having to look after the discipline, tuition, faith formation, kitchen, computer lab, toilets, and so on. Now that Fr Jeremie has so enthusiastically taken on directing some tasks, Mèt Leny, with the rest of the team, despite adverse countrywide conditions, can carry out significant government-mandated changes in teaching methods aimed at a more "child-engaged" model of education. St Claudine, pray for us.

Sr. Pat Dillon, RJM

Reflections on Bethany Center's Butterfly Festival



Children enjoying the butterfly Festival at Bethany

Upon the brink of summer, the usual sounds of breezes and chirps at Bethany Center, Hudson Valley, welcomed the company of giggles and quick footsteps as we welcomed preschool and elementary children and their families to our first Butterfly Festival. The young participants filled Thevenet Montessori School with glorious sounds as they visited pollinator-themed stations, labors of love created through the collaboration of Bethany and Thevenet's staff. As we set up for the day's event, I thought to myself, "Do I really understand a pollinator's function? How am I in relationship with pollinators?"

When asked what they knew about pollinators, or when being taught another piece, the children spoke and asked about it as if they were of great importance. Rather than the butterfly lifecycle being background information that takes great effort to recollect (as it may be for some of us), it was their focus. The pollinators were something worth seeing and understanding.

Festivities appropriately concluded with a pollinator parade. Before taking off, Dr. Anne Wibiralske, Bethany's ecologist, led the children through an embodied simulation of the life cycle of our crowd favorite and event's namesake: the butterfly. The group reenacted the stages of the butterfly, beginning as an egg curled up on the ground, then crawling as a larva (or caterpillars), then rising to our knees as a pupa (chrysalis), and finally maturing into winged adults, jumping to their feet and dressing with homemade, decorated wings (made out of old pizza boxes)! With their wings, the children were ready to take off, flying beyond Thevenet, seeing themselves as butterflies in Bethany's ecosystem.

This close interaction and engagement with the natural world at Bethany allows us to see the grandeur of these small creatures. The children were natural learners in seeing nature as a text, a teacher, and a friend.

Near the end of the parade, I caught a brief dialogue between a young participant and their parent. The parent said, "Ahh, I just saw a butterfly," for the child to respond, saying, "You mean us?" The parent snickered and clarified that they had seen a real butterfly, for the child to shrug and continue flapping their wings—or arms. Clothed with wings and their germinating wealth of understanding of pollinators, the child saw more similarities than differences between themselves and their pollinator company. The pollinator parade allowed the child to identify with the butterfly, sharing a love of (pretend) flight and Bethany's air.

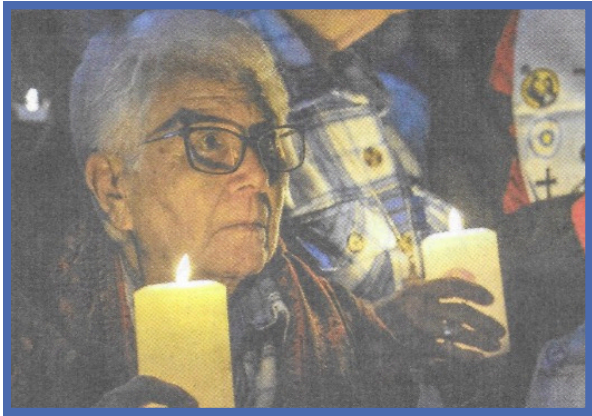
This child-parent exchange reveals the impact of the Butterfly Festival on Earth's future and humans' proposed role of stewards. By learning about pollinators and their importance to our ecosystems, the young participants received the seeds of a worldview that invites them to create intimate relationships with the butterflies, bees, and beetles—relationships that insist that we humans identify with them. This will stay with the children's imaginations much longer than their ice cream treats that concluded our festival.

Bethany's first butterfly festival served as a seed of a vision of companionship with Creation for the young ones, and a wellspring of hope and responsibility for all of us gifted with the opportunity to bear witness. This event makes me hopeful to see what the natural world can teach us, and what we can teach one another. In facilitating the event, the children taught me what it means to participate in the act of seeing ourselves in intimate relationship with creation and all of its intricacies. I hope that they can look back on this memory of imitating pollinators and running through Bethany's grounds and see how it contributed to worldviews built on empathy, engagement, and an ever-present curiosity for all creatures.

Bethany looks forward to cultivating ecological conversions and budding personal relationships with Creation in us all to come!

Fordham Theology and the Earth Summer Interns: AnnaMarie Pacione and Michelena DeNaples

Interfaith Border Ministry



Reprinted from the Southern Cross.

As of June, Friendship Park at the Border Wall is open for several hours on the weekend. Sandra Salazar, RJM, Natalia Mejia, RJM, and Rosie Nicholson, RJM, participated in the Sunday interfaith Border Church, which is celebrated on both sides of the border wall with phones and speakers. The Border Church also provides a free meal for the poor and migrants on the Tijuana side of the wall after the service. Natalia and I have celebrated with them for the last 12 years. Prior to the construction of the 2 border walls, families could meet each other without needing to cross the border, and the Border Church minister could also share Communion through the wall.

Sandra continues to visit migrants at the Detention Center and a Venezuelan family whom we assist with food. A woman who was in our JM Anti-trafficking program in Equatorial Guinea is also part of our outreach as she continues to get settled, as her asylum request has been approved. Please keep these and the many vulnerable people in your prayers.

Another first place - this time in the "Best Photograph Immigration/ Migration" category — went to photographer Charlie Neuman, a regular freelancer for "The Southern Cross." The judges said, "The image is a striking and beautifully composed photograph, using light and shadow to great effect while capturing a compelling expression that draws the viewer in and invites deeper curiosity."

The photograph (pictured above), which appeared on the cover of the December 2025 issue, depicted a woman at a candlelit prayer vigil for detained migrants outside the federal building in downtown San Diego.

In the light and darkness, quietly sitting in prayer for the migrants detained in this basement, Natalia Mejia, RJM's presence invited others into deeper reflection, connection, and hopefully transformation.

Rosie, RJM

Please Pray For...



Image Courtesy of MaggieMae Dethlefsen

- **Continued prayers for a friend of Mary Ann (Augello) Berdoe, Dr. Dee Tomeo, who is suffering from paralysis after back surgery.**
- **Edward Stolba, brother of Sr. Janet Stolba, who requests prayers**
- **Michele Higgins, the sister of Sr. Pat Dillon**
- **All the innocent victims of violence in the Middle East and around the world**
- **Continuing prayers: for the safety and security of the people of Haiti and our mission teams there**
- **Prayers are requested for Brenda Mejia, a member of the family originally from Guatemala, whom RJM in the DC/Maryland area befriended and worked with. Brenda has been diagnosed with thyroid cancer. She recently gave birth to her 4th child, a healthy baby boy who is now 3 months old.**
- **We also pray for the needs of our RJM sisters, family, and friends**
- **Please continue to pray for Colleen Pusateri, who, after waiting years for a kidney transplant, successfully received a pig's kidney—only the second successful one in the world so far. Colleen is the daughter of Lorrie Kenney, niece of Sr Eugenia Castanguay**
- **Please pray for St. Jill Weber, RSM, who has previously done work in Haiti, has had an unexpected medical emergency, and is in critical condition.**

Please see the attachments from the Franciscan Action Network about renewing TPS for Haiti.

Praised forever be Jesus and Mary