

150 Years Answering the Call

by Sister Mary Rehmann, CHM

The Sisters of Humility invite you to join us in celebrating our 150th anniversary of being in the United States. Our theme is "Celebrate the Legacy, Pursue the Vision." We will tell our story in a series of articles in *the Flame* centering on the four motherhouses we have had since landing in America in 1864. In this issue we tell of the foundation in France and the establishment of the first motherhouse in the United States.

In 1854 Father John Joseph Bégel was the pastor of parishes in Dommartin-sous-Amance and Laitre-sous-Amance in the Diocese of St. Dié in the Province of Lorraine in eastern France. He was an advocate for the education of women and found a willing partner in Marie Antoinette Potier. She had been reared by a priest great-uncle and a great-aunt who willed her estate to Antoinette and she, in turn,

handed it over to Fr. Bégel to manage. Joined by Julie Claudel, a certified teacher, in October 1854 Antoinette started a "free school" for girls. They taught religion, writing, reading and arithmetic. Antoinette's housekeeper, Marie Gaillot, added manual skills including lace-making and fine embroidery to the curriculum. Soon after, they asked Bégel for a "rule of life." He gave them the "Manual of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary." Other women joined them, some staying to make vows. Having enlarged the home, care of orphans was added to their ministries.

Several similar groups were established in other villages which were poor both financially and in practice of the faith. Bégel saw these "multiple associations" as different from both large established orders and small groups organized in one parish, due to the strength derived

from mutual sharing among the small groups and their independence from parish and civic authorities. Bishop Menaud of St. Dié approved the rules for the association in August 1858. Gerard, his Vicar General, proposed to name them the "Daughters or Sisters of the Holy Humility of Mary" rather than the proposed name "the Assumption of Mary." He preferred a name "less sounding."

This "independence" from civic authorities would soon be tested. Alarmed by the number of Church-sponsored schools, authorities began to require certification to teach in local schools. Also, the number of religious communities was growing—there were

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Photo: Original Mother House of the Sisters of the Holy Humility of Mary, Villa Maria, Pennsylvania. Approx. 1874

Fall 2013

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The Flame is published three times a year for the Congregation of the Humility of Mary and its friends.

Our Mission: We, the members of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary call one another to live the Gospel with simplicity and joy following the example of Mary.

Like our founders, we strive to be attentive to the call of the Spirit in the signs of our times, especially the needs of the poor and the powerless.

We commit ourselves as individuals and as a congregation to work for justice within the human family and to care for Earth itself.

Be steadfast and persevering, my beloved sisters and brothers, fully engaged in the work of Jesus. You know that your toil is not in vain when it is done in Christ.

-1 Corinthians 15:58



We express gratitude and blessings to Sandy Walters, who has retired after 23 years as the director of Humility of Mary Housing, Inc. (HMHI). Pictured here: Sr. Johanna Rickl, Sr. Mary Ann Vogel, Sandy Walters, Sr. Greta Fitzgerald and the new director of HMHI, Julie Bockenstedt.

Dear Friends,

November brings several topics to mind that I think give a nice introduction to this fall issue of *the Flame*. I think of ancestors, history, gifts, and gratitude.

Catholics, as well as some other Christians, remember and celebrate the lives and witness of deceased loved ones this month. These celebrations may vary from a Mass on All Souls Day to several days of festivities in homes, churches and cemeteries such as I experienced during my time of ministry in southern México. Día de los Muertos, Day of the Dead, included family, friends, food, prayer, ritual and remembering. I believe we could say that these same elements are present in our celebration of Thanksgiving. Within the context of these two “bookend feasts” of the month, we find our featured articles.

This issue recalls for us the legacy of earlier members of the congregation as well as ministries of current members. We remember the many ways that you have supported, and continue to support, the services that sisters, associates and staff offer in their distinctive times and places. We are grateful for the partnerships that have enabled us to sustain important ministries and ourselves.

The legacy of the community during its 150 years of service in the United States is worthy of celebration but equally important is pursuing the vision of the community into the future. Sisters, associates and staff have been engaging in various presentations and dialogues during 2013 regarding governance and ministries. We look forward to even more profound exploration of our future as we celebrate and give thanks for what has been lived during the past 150 years.

We hope you can join us in celebration at various events being planned throughout the coming year.

Sister Johanna Rickl
CHM President

Together Making Good Things Happen

by Lisa Martin, CHM Communications Director

The 4th Annual CHM Holiday Movie and Gift Swap in December 2012 was a great success. Over 75 people attended and enjoyed a short film "A Story of Change" with discussion about how we as citizens must join together to make good things happen. The Gift Swap is a good example, with guests



bringing items they have received but not used. They then enjoy shopping for Christmas presents from among all the like-new merchandise. All ages attend and pick out gifts for their family and friends with no money. Not only are we re-gifting, but also reducing, reusing and recycling! Following are stories that make this event even more worthwhile:

Four big bags of brand new gifts appeared during the Gift Swap with a note that read, "Girl Scout Troop 5005 in Bettendorf, IA, is composed of young ladies who have special needs. They are very kind and generous. The girls heard that there are many homeless teenagers and they know that Toys for Tots is only for children up to age 12. The girls purchased Christmas gifts to be given to teen girls and young women. Please help us to deliver to those in need."

- Nancy Frascone, Troop Leader

My friend, Ben, works for Bethany for Children and Families in Davenport. I gave him a call to see if he could help me find teenage girls in need. He told me that Bethany established a program called "Transitional Housing for Homeless Youth." At the time, Ben had several homeless teen girls in his program. So he dropped by the day after the event, picked up dozens of new things that teenage girls need and love and shook his head with wonder and joy. The teenagers sent thank you notes to Troop 5005.

Barbara, a local high school teacher, dropped off over 20 items for the swap early, and then called to say she was sick and could not make it to the event to pick out gifts. She had a student whose family had been evicted and were on the street with nothing. Barbara set them up in a hotel while arranging for a permanent residence. She called and asked if we would select some things from the Gift Swap that would be useful in setting up an apartment. I had fun picking out kitchen and bath items that had been placed on the Gift Swap tables. Barbara came to the Humility Center the day after the swap and picked up the items. She was so very grateful. Her husband dressed up as Santa and delivered the gifts to the family.

We invite you to attend the 5th Annual CHM Holiday Movie and Gift Swap on December 5th. You might be surprised to find presents for those on your list and who knows what joy your re-gifts might bring to others. See details on the back cover!



Sister Ann Therese Collins enjoyed Skyping with members of the St. Albert class of 1968 she taught in Council Bluffs, Iowa, during their 45th class reunion. Let us know if you'd like to Skype with a sister!



"Spirit of the Prairie: Catering to the Soul" —a cookbook from The Prairie—perfect for Christmas giving. It contains a short history of The Prairie, thoughts on ways to honor food, eat in a manner that is good for Earth, and features 298 scrumptious recipes that have been made at The Prairie. We think you will like it! Pre-order by contacting: kathleenstorms@yahoo.com or by calling 563-374-1092.

Resting in Heavenly Peace



Associate Janese Crowley
December 25, 1937-September 14, 2013



Sister Nancy Wooldridge
March 11, 1932-October 9, 2013

In Praise and Thanksgiving: Marycrest College Memories

by Karen Brooke, CHM Development Director

Mary Orr has warm memories of her years at Marycrest College in the 1960s, "I owe an enduring debt of gratitude to the Sisters of Humility." One of three children, Mary grew up in Davenport. She attended St. Vincent's day school in 2nd and 3rd grades—her first introduction to Sisters of Humility. She went on to Immaculate Conception Academy until its closure, and graduated in 1961 from Assumption High School.

Mary hadn't planned to attend college due to financial constraints, and at the time it wasn't presumed that young women would go on to college. A BVM sister at Assumption encouraged her to meet with Sr. Edith Kane, who helped her apply for admission to Marycrest College. She paid the \$25 application fee (a lot of money) and was accepted. She had a part time job at Eagles supermarket and received a National Defense Education Loan—unique in that if she became a teacher and taught for 10 years, each year 1/10 of the loan was forgiven. So with the loan, her cashier's salary and other jobs, Mary was able to attend Marycrest. She paid her tuition nine weeks at a time, for four years and lived at home, often walking three miles to school. She joined a credit union and saved tuition money from her pay.

The sisters provided an exceptional education, taking a personal interest in each of their students, as well as serving as advisors and mentors. They taught by day and supervised dorms at night.

For the "day hops" like Mary, Sister Annette Gallagher was amazing. She taught full-time and ran the luncheonette where day students ate and studied. "Serving as my academic advisor, Sr. Annette's wise counsel made all the difference in my successful completion of college." Sr. Barb Miller, in social sciences, and Sr. Kathleen Ebert, in history, also had a tremendous impact on Mary's future career decisions—emphasizing the importance of education and serving all people.

Following graduation in 1965, Mary volunteered for a year with the Catholic Extension Service, a VISTA-like program serving Catholic home missions. Assigned to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Fresno, CA, along with three other Extension Lay Volunteers, Mary taught 7th graders—all poor minority children. She saw a depth of poverty she had only read about in Michael Harrington's *The Other America*. It was a rewarding and enlightening year, one that planted the seed for a lifetime career in social

service and education on local and regional levels.

Mary returned to the Quad Cities and worked in all aspects of the Juvenile Justice System. First as a protective services worker at the Scott County Department of Human Services, Mary investigated child abuse or neglect complaints and supervised children in foster care. At Iowa Annie Wittenmyer Home, a state institution for dependent or neglected children, she was a social worker in the Evaluation Center helping new admissions adjust. Later she served as a juvenile court probation officer. For several years Mary was the first director of the Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging, serving 10 counties in western Illinois. The agency, a funding channel for Older Americans Act money, worked with communities to develop services to meet the needs of older people.

In 1995 Mary answered an ad placed by Family Resources for a teacher in the Summit Program, a "boot camp" for 14 to 17-year-olds who were adjudicated delinquent and spending 90 days in residential treatment. Mary worked with each student's home school to keep the student on course to graduate. For those wanting to earn a GED,

Mary partnered with Scott Community College to help them attain their goal. Before retiring, Mary was a substitute teacher at JFK Catholic School.



Mary credits her time at Marycrest as being life-changing. Her college degree opened doors of opportunity to work for a better world. She remarks, "The Sisters' mission of care and concern about social justice issues and using our talents to help others was a wonderful model to follow. We were encouraged to be the best we could be. My experience was not unique. Long after graduation, students stayed in touch with the sisters whose lifelong friendships enriched their lives.

"But the story doesn't end there. What is amazing is how the Sisters of Humility embraced cultural and economic change, transforming the pain it caused into new ways of service. Today they actively help those in need with Humility of Mary Shelter and Humility of Mary Housing, and continue to work for a just and peaceful world."

Sisters Honored

The new Iowa Women of Achievement Bridge spanning the Des Moines River in Des Moines, Iowa, displays the names of Iowa women of history who have made outstanding contributions to society.

The first four women were honored during a dedication ceremony for the bridge in October. One of those four was a past president of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary—Sister Bernadine Pieper.



As it read in the dedication ceremony program, “A quintessential Iowa woman, Sr. Bernadine was also a nationally renowned scientist and educator. She devoted her life to disenfranchised, low income and often marginalized people. In 1938, Pieper entered the CHM community. She served in numerous educational roles throughout her life, including her 25-year career at Marycrest College. She was a recognized leader in the fields of zoology and botany and was one of the first women listed in the American Men of Science directory of leading scientists in the U.S. and Canada.

“Her legacy as executive secretary of the North Central American Friends Service Committee lives on in her work with the Lakota people on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota; shutting down the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant in Denver, CO; and influencing President Reagan to negotiate an arms control agreement with Russia in 1984.”

Honorees were nominated by citizens and selected for recognition by a panel of judges. Visit principal.com/riverwalk for more information.

*Our youth are our future.
We cannot afford to give up on them.*



A Jubilee Celebration & Mass was held in September at Bishop Drumm Retirement Center in Johnston, Iowa. Honored were Sisters Marita Bartholome (70 years), Elizabeth Thoman (50 Years) and Charlene Olear (70 Years).

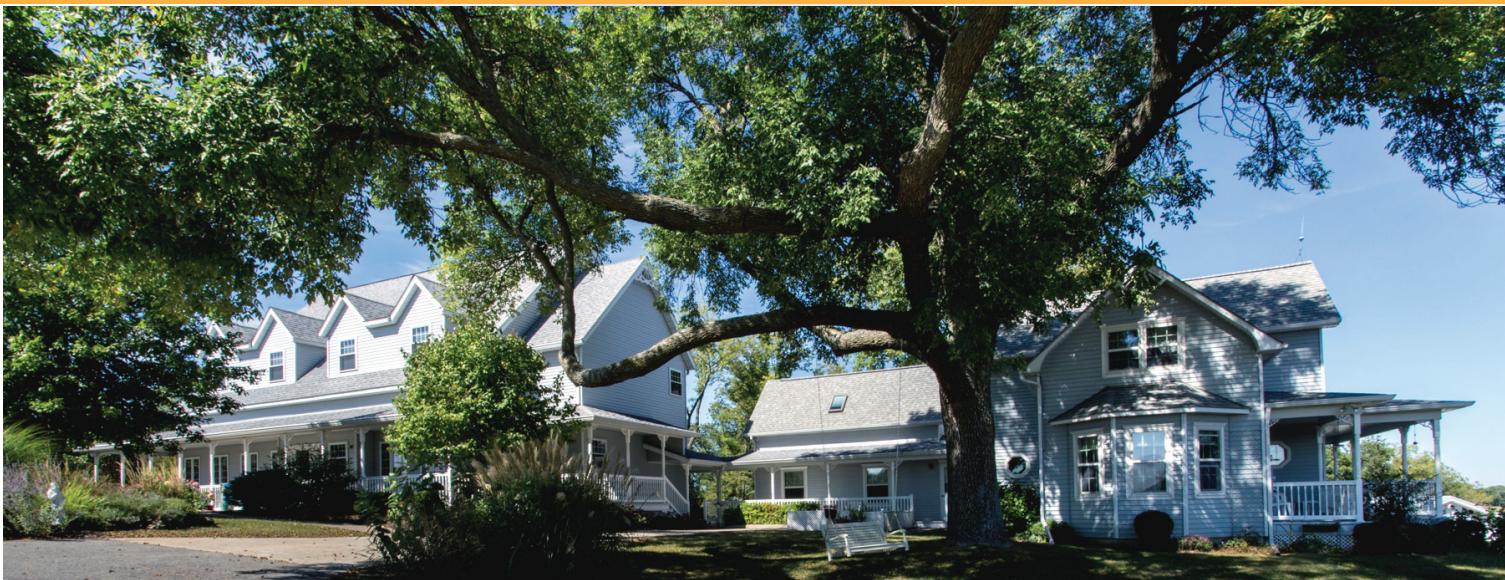
Sister JoAnne Talarico was honored by the Justice Reform Consortium (JRC), a group of 17 organizations that work together for the purpose of reform of the criminal justice system, from one based on retributive justice to one based on restorative justice. Each year JRC honors a person or group at its annual meeting in Des Moines, Iowa.



Sr. JoAnne believes young people who commit crimes “are children and should be treated as children” in the justice system. She has been active in lobbying on their behalf and was instrumental in forming the Iowa Coalition to Oppose Life Without the Possibility of Parole for Youth (<http://www.ic4jj.org/>). “Our youth are our future. We cannot afford to give up on them.”

The University of Rhode Island recently received the personal and business archives of Sister Elizabeth Thoman, CHM, founder of the Center for Media Literacy (1989-2007), a leading national non-profit organization in the United States, and editor of *Media & Values* magazine (1977-1993).

Renee Hobbs, founding director and professor in the Harrington School, calls the Thoman Archive “a unique and significant research collection for scholars from the Harrington School of Communication and Media and to the broader media literacy research community.”



Ten Years on The Prairie

by Sister Kathleen Storms, SSND

On October 4, 2003, Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat was officially blessed by Bishop William Franklin with a host of sisters, New Horizon of Faith Board members and many friends gathered for the event. As I pray through the ritual used that day, I am touched by how prophetic the prayers and blessings were. I copy some of them here for all of us to remember and to re-connect with this memorable part of our Prairie Heights history.

OPENING PRAYER

"...We thank you for the completion of this building. May it always reflect the gentle nature of the swaying prairie grass, the melodious songs of the birds and the regal beauty of the deer. May it be a welcoming refuge for all who seek closer union with You in a place of peaceful silence."

LITANY OF THANKSGIVING

•For the vision, faith and courage of our founders, Father Vincent and Sister Bernadine.
•For our donors, living and deceased, whose generous gifts and support made this vision possible.
•For our architect, Ken Steffen, who skillfully put our ideas and dreams into a blue print.

•For our contractor, Keith Meyer and Jodee Stepleton, his associate, who because of their commitment, careful attention to detail, loving concern, patience and outstanding craftsmanship gave living form to this dream.

•For our sub-contractors and artisans who took pride in their work with great skill, care and creativity.

•For our many volunteers who donated their time, talents and love for Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat.

•For the prayerful support of the Sisters, Associates and friends.

•For the bountiful harvest of crops.

•Let us be mindful of the needs of others as we rejoice in the bounty of God's goodness to us.

•For the beauty of the season, the creatures that live in the fields and woods in the stillness that invites all to know our Creator.

Today, we continue to celebrate how the land and buildings provide a space for silence and solitude, renewal and restoration of spirits. May Our Lady of the Prairie continue to be blessed for many years.

**Earth teach me stillness
as the grasses are stilled with light.**
**Earth teach me suffering
as old stones suffer with memory.**
**Earth teach me humility
as blossoms are humble with beginning.**
**Earth teach me caring
as the mother who secures her young.**
**Earth teach me courage
as the tree which stands all alone.**
**Earth teach me limitation
as the ant which crawls on the ground.**
**Earth teach me freedom
as the eagle which soars in the sky.**
**Earth teach me resignation
as the leaves which died in the fall.**
**Earth teach me regeneration
as the seed which rises in the spring.**
**Earth teach me to forget myself
as melted snow forgets its life.**
**Earth teach me to remember kindness
as dry fields weep with rain.**

Ute Prayer

The Prairie grounds express the care of the CHMs for Earth. The emphasis on honoring Earth's precious prairie grasses give voice to Mother Earth's love of biodiversity. The priority the Prairie plays in the use of resources honors the mission statement of the Sisters of Humility.

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Mother Madelaine Potier

10 motherhouses and 23 communities ministering in the Diocese of Nancy. Bishops favored some more than others, creating jealousy and competition. The Sisters of the Holy Humility of Mary were ridiculed for the severity of their practice of poverty, and financial dependence on Fr. Bégel.

In 1863 an opportunity arose when Fr. Louis Hoffer, pastor of a French settlement in Louisville, Ohio, contacted Fr. Bégel. At the direction of Bishop Amadeus Rappe of Cleveland, Hoffer was seeking three missionary sisters. However, Fr. Bégel saw this as a bigger opportunity and offered to send any of the sisters who wanted to go and to accompany them himself. Rappe agreed.

On June 1, 1864, all 11 sisters, 4 orphans and Fr. Bégel boarded the Saxonica out of Southampton, England, arriving in New York on June 14. They had delayed departure until after the death of Mother Madelaine (Antoinette) on March 7. This added to the sadness already felt by the sisters who knew they would never see France or

their families again. Sister Anna Tabourat succeeded as Mother Anna.

Unable to afford the \$8000 house in Cleveland that Rappe had proposed, Fr. Bégel purchased 250-acres the Bishop had offered near New Bedford, Pennsylvania. The property had severely tested two religious communities who had abandoned it. Of the \$3000 purchase price, Bégel paid \$1000 with the rest being waived.

Five of the eleven sisters went to New Bedford in July 1864; the other six stayed in Louisville with a flourishing French community. The sisters were appalled at the sight of the building that was to be their convent, the swamp that surrounded it and the weeds and untillable land. With help the sisters spaded the ground to plant a garden for winter food.

The sisters learned how to drain the swamps and remove trees, pulling them out with chains. Bégel planted a two-acre orchard with fruit trees. Busy just simply surviving, they felt they were of no service to others.

At Rappe's request, the sisters were caring for orphan boys left behind by the Daughters of Charity who had preceded them on the land. They were trying to support them, as well as themselves, and to pay off \$375 they owed for transport from France. Things were dire. When they told Bégel how challengeing it was, he responded, "Take one more orphan and God will provide for his own."



logo design by
Ben Resnick

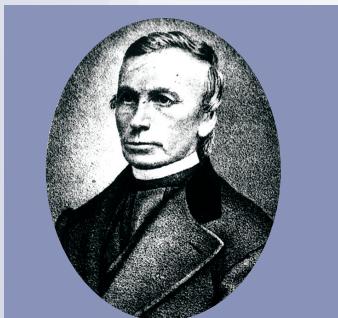
In August, when Bégel was ill, Mother Anna and two sisters went to Cleveland to see Bishop Rappe. Uninvited, he told them to wait and walked out. They were getting ready to leave when he came back and escorted them to another room where there was a meal prepared. They told him about their insurmountable problems and feelings of uselessness. He asked, "What if I ask you to remain and do the best you can, relying on Divine Providence?" Mother Anna answered, "We would obey, but we do not have enough food, clothes, or bedding. We have orphans, sick sisters and sick children. Please tell Father Bégel to take us home. France will not let us starve." He gave them a small amount of money and had them stay overnight with the Ursuline sisters.

The Bishop soon visited them and they served him sun-burnt potatoes, buttermilk and mutton soup. He arranged for a woman who knew French to stay for over a year to teach them English. He asked the Cleveland Ursuline sisters and the Religious of the Sacred Heart to find outlets for the sale of lace, embroidery, vestments and knitted articles. He suggested that priests of the Pittsburgh Diocese share Mass stipends with Fr. Bégel. He also recommended the

community to English-speaking local women interested in religious life and the community began to grow.

Once the sisters learned English, they began teaching in schools and taking care of the sick in their homes. These early, hesitant steps led to the thriving community that still has its motherhouse, Villa Maria, on the original property in Pennsylvania. They became known as the "blue nuns," having kept the blue color in their habits until the changes following Vatican II.

Our story continues with a move west from Pennsylvania. Look for it in the next issue of *the Flame*.



Father Bégel was a "Renaissance man." A priest, scientist, author and founder of a religious community. He belonged to the French Academy of Science and several other professional organizations. He published books on the lives of saints from eastern France. Among other things, he brought a microscope and slides to America.



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CHM Holiday Movie and Gift Swap

All are welcome to attend the 5th Annual Holiday Movie and Gift Swap
Presented by the CHM Care of Earth Committee

Thursday, December 5, 2013

6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Humility of Mary Center, 820 West Central Park Avenue, Davenport, Iowa
FREE

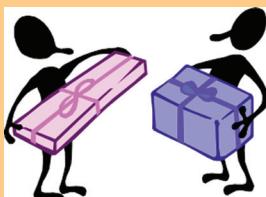
Doors open at 6:30, Holiday Movies start at 6:45

What if the goal of our economy wasn't more, but better—better health, better jobs and a better chance to survive on the planet? A new, fun and informative short film from the Story of Stuff project, "The Story of solutions," released in October 2013, explores how we can move our economy in a more sustainable and just direction, starting with orienting ourselves toward a new goal. PLUS a variety of inspiring short videos about people who care for Earth and are focused on making a difference and providing hope for the future!



CHM Holiday Gift Swap (after the films)

Why buy new stuff? As a way to reduce, reuse and recycle, everyone is invited to bring new or gently used items that are perfect for RE-gifting...then shop the swap for that perfect gift for one or more on your list! No money necessary.



Leftover items will be donated to Humility of Mary Housing and Shelter programs.

the FLAME