



The Most Forgotten People in the World

by Sister Dolores Schuh, CHM

I hope you are doing okay at this time.” This is how almost every letter I get from Danny, my death row pen pal begins. In fact, it is how the letters I get from several other men on death row begin. I guess it means the same as “How are you? I am fine,” which is how I used to start letters to my aunts, uncles and grandparents when I was a youngster.

Danny and I have been corresponding weekly for almost four years. I look forward to getting his letters and I

I was appalled when I learned that there is only one predominantly Christian democracy in the world that still retains the death penalty—the United States!

enjoy banging out a letter to him each weekend. I believe that every one of the 146 offenders (I don’t like the word inmate) on death row at Central Prison in Raleigh, North Carolina, likes getting a letter from a pen pal in the outside world.

In the January 2012 Oblate Newsletter from Saint John’s Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, there was a list of about a dozen names with a short article suggesting that readers might be interested in being a pen pal of one of the listed offenders, indicating that these incarcerated men are some of the most forgotten people in the world. I looked at the list and randomly picked Danny, simply because I could both spell and remember his name. I sent him a short letter introducing myself, and the rest is history.

As Danny and I continued to exchange letters I became interested in learning more about death row and I chanced upon an excellent book that had just been published by Liturgical Press. The co-editors, Vicki Schieber, Trudy Conway and David M. McCarthy, of “Where Justice and Mercy Meet: Catholic Opposition to the Death Penalty”, give a brief history of the Church’s stand on capital punishment.

—Pen pal continued page 3

Photos: L: Sister Dolores has filled six binders with correspondence and artwork collected from her pen pal, Danny, and other death row offenders. As a member of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty she collects signatures towards the goal of 90 million names supporting abolishment.

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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 the earth itself.

Finally, my sisters and brothers, your thoughts should be wholly directed to all that is true, all that deserves respect, all that is honest, pure, decent, admirable, virtuous or worthy of praise. Live according to what you have learned and accepted, what you have heard me say and seen me do. Then will the God of peace be with you.

Philippians 4: 8-9

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CHM sisters needing extra care live at Bishop Drumm Retirement Center (BDRC) in Johnston, Iowa. BDRC and CHM staff work closely in assuring quality of life for our sisters. Through a collaborative effort and financial agreement among CHMs, Mercy Sisters and BDRC, a chapel and new wing were added 20 years ago to accommodate new sister residents. Pictured l-r: Heather Rehmer, BDRC administration, Johanna Rickl, CHM president, and Brian Farrell, BDRC president and CEO.



Dear Friends,

November is the month in which Catholics celebrate the good memories of deceased loved ones while at the same time praying specially for them. We celebrate All Saints Day and All Souls Day as the month begins.

This issue of the "Flame" brings to mind some threads on the topic of death and resurrection. For starters, we have experienced a steady stream of loss as cherished members of the CHM community have followed one another in making the transition to the greatest joy that awaits believers. While firm and at peace in believing Jesus' promise of eternal life, we still need time to mourn the loss of the earthly presence of these sisters and associates. It is likely that many of you are united with us in struggling to deal with the loss of loved ones. Death hurts.

Another event that called death to my mind was through reading the book, "Just Mercy" by attorney Bryan Stevenson, and then hearing him speak about his work of providing legal services to persons given the death penalty. Some were proven innocent and many on death row got their sentence through lack of adequate or sometimes any legal counsel. I was struck by Bryan's comment about what is needed to bring change to the criminal justice system. He said we must be with and listen to people who are suffering or we will not be motivated to act. Sister Dolores Schuh's article certainly affirms that and offers ideas for action.

Resurrection is experienced by the innocent being freed through the sacrifice of others. We can all do something to promote resurrection in this life and to prepare for it in the next.

Another kind of resurrection is experienced when we celebrate loving service in our chosen vocation. CHMs did that by hosting a prayer day for those called to the consecrated life. Pope Francis did it during his U.S. visit by sharing his insights and actions as one committed to caring for Earth and all of the families who call Earth our home. How do you celebrate resurrection?

As we give thanks for our own experiences of death and resurrection, let us be attentive to a thought expressed by Karla Matternach ("Living Faith", Vol 31, Number 3, for Oct.26th): "...We must prayerfully consider what God is asking from us in every situation. As followers of Jesus, we must bear in mind his command to love and serve one another. He called us to reach out to those in need, especially the hurt, the poor and the vulnerable---"

The CHM community gives thanks for the ways you collaborate with us in doing just that. Happy Thanksgiving!

Sister Johanna Rickl
CHM President

-Pen pal continued

They include statistics about numbers of offenders on death row in the U.S. and in other countries; they list states that have abolished the death penalty; and they give strong arguments against the use of the death penalty anywhere at any time. I was appalled when I learned that there is only one predominantly Christian democracy in the world that still retains the death penalty—the United States!



After almost four years of weekly correspondence with Danny, Sister Dolores feels as though she has a son.

After corresponding with Danny for a few months, I wanted to do more for those offenders on death row in Raleigh. I recruited Benedictine monks and fellow Oblates of Saint John's, CHMs, friends and casual acquaintances to be pen pals with the offenders. To date, about 40 persons correspond with offenders in Raleigh. Some do it on a regular basis and others write three or four times a year.

After Danny and I exchanged letters (by snail mail) for about two years he became my "partner" in this ministry. When I find someone who wants to write to an offender, I get Danny to find someone with whom he lives who wants a pen pal. He tells me "There are some really bad guys here, but lots of really good guys. I won't give you names of bad guys." Of course, every

offender on death row in Raleigh has been convicted of murder. Many have long rap records; other have only one offense recorded. Most have been on death row for ten years or more. This information is always available to the public.

Besides writing to Danny, I also send each of the 146 guys a birthday card with a personal message on it; and I send each a Christmas card. I have had long letters from some of these men. A few claim their innocence; some claim they have found God while on death row; many are very talented as artists, poets, writers, etc. I'm always amazed when George or Billy or Stephen sends me his poetry or pencil drawings or essays on various topics.

As a member of the NCADP (National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty) I learn what other states are doing to abolish capital punishment and do my small part to keep up the spirits of the offenders in one death row prison. It is common knowledge that the criminal justice system in our country is broken. We've seen movies, read news reports and watched TV shows about death row. We know that race and money play important roles when individuals are arrested, accused and tried for serious crimes. This year at Central



One offender sent Sister Dolores this handmade, laminated paper cross which hangs in her room.

Prison in North Carolina, 75 of the 146 offenders on death row are black; 59 are white; 5 are Latinos; and 7 are Native Americans.

Although creating birthday cards with personal messages is time-consuming and is sometimes challenging, I find this ministry the most rewarding and fulfilling of anything I have done during my 61 years as a CHM.



Sister Dolores receives hand-made birthday cards from Danny, whose friend Billy does the artwork.

He Came as a Shepherd

by Kathleen Storms, SSND, Director, Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat

A month ago Pope Francis won the hearts, hopes and dreams of so many of us as he embraced the people of our country. He truly came as a shepherd taking on the stink of the sheep. He did not shy away from embracing the sheep where they were. The poor and the imprisoned felt his compassion; Congress respected his beliefs; the United Nations honored him as a statesman equal to the challenge of universal peace; the news media presented him as a gentle man with a mammoth agenda. *Time* magazine writers Nancy Gibbs and Elizabeth Dias summarize his visit, "The Pope was right at home as he balanced his spiritually driven, politically explosive agenda about the poor and climate change alongside the leaders of the country and world. It was a bracing demonstration of the strengths and limits of moral leadership in the modern age."

So what lasts in our hearts? Today I spent the day with women from our nearby St. James Church. One quickly shared her delight in the choice of a simple FIAT as his mode of transportation. His definition of prayer as looking into the eyes of love touched another. Ground zero and the ecumenical service for universal peace stays with another. His embrace of children and families facing all kinds of struggles and heartache warmed another.

As I reflect on all that I have heard, reflected on and prayed about, the image of a shepherd loving what

"Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn."

"Laudato Si" #160

he cares about touches me. His words were uncompromising when he spoke of climate change and the needs of the poor. He embraced the American people and undauntingly challenged us to face our moral obligation.

Pope Francis returned to Rome to be part of a historic "Synod on the Family," the coming together of 200 bishops and some experts on family to dialogue about issues of marriage and family. News stories about the Synod report that deep fault lines have been

exposed between traditionalists focused on shoring up doctrine, and those who want the church to be more open to Catholics who are divorced, gay, single parents or cohabiting. His hope for open dialogue has happened. We are yet to see whether compassion or division will reign. As a shepherd, Pope Francis wants all of us to embrace these issues without judgment and openly loving one another.

To that end, Pope Francis has declared a Jubilee of Mercy from December 8, 2015 until November 20, 2016. He is inviting all of us to see with eyes of mercy. Our Lady of the Prairie has taken up the shepherding challenge by offering programs in 2016 on the theme of mercy. Scheduled are a men's retreat on second mercy (God being the first mercy) and a

-Shepherd continued page 5



Every season is worth a visit to Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat. The 2016 Prairie Retreat schedule of sponsored retreats will be out in mid-December. Contact olpretreat@gmail.com to sign up to receive retreat and event notices either by snail mail or e-newsletter.

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women's retreat on women of mercy (Mary Magdalene, Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa of Calcutta to name a few). Join us for a Sunday afternoon dialogue on the Beatitudes (See Matthew 25) with people who are offering direct service to the poor. We conclude the year with a weekend on the promise of restorative justice for the incarcerated. Other programs include Hildegard of Bingen, the Enneagram, and 12-Step spirituality, care for people with Alzheimer disease and quilting as a metaphor for life weekend of reflection.

Our spring fund-raiser at St. Ambrose University features Sister Nancy Murray portraying the life of Sister Dorothy Stang, modern day martyr who lost her life protecting

Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator. "Laudato Si" #383

small farmers from the devastating deforestation of the Amazon. With our concern for care of our common home (Pope Francis' encyclical) we invite contemplation on nature through the arts, a five-week Lenten study of "Laudato Si," an Earth Day weekend on Compassion for Earth and a week long study of the Universe Story. Back by popular demand are monthly Come to the Quiet Days, Knit One, Pray Too!, and Basket Weaving. Watch for our 2016 calendar which should come to you in mid-December.



The Prairie Retreat Staff-l-r: Sisters Marcia Eckerman, assistant, Rae Elwood, program assistant, and Kathleen Storms, director.

If you wish to receive a monthly e-mail reminder of upcoming events, contact olpretreat@gmail.com.

Standing with Pope Francis Caring for Our Common Home

Catholic Sisters of the Upper Mississippi River Valley

Benedictine Sisters smmsisters.org
Clinton Franciscans clintonfranciscans.com
Congregation of the Humility of Mary chm1owa.org
Discalced Carmelites carmelitesofeldridge.org
Dubuque Franciscans osfdbq.org
Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration fspa.org
Sinsinawa Dominicans sinsinawa.org
Sisters of Charity, BVM bvmcong.org
Sisters of Mercy West Midwest sistersofmercy.org
Sisters of the Presentation dubuquepresentations.org
Sisters of the Visitation sistersofthevisitationdbq.org
Trappistine Sisters mississippiabbey.org

Midwest Catholic Sisters Support "Laudato Si"

Catholic sisters shared their support for Pope Francis' environmental message in his recent encyclical, "Laudato Si," through an ad in a national commemorative edition of USA Today. The special section was released prior to the Pope's historic U.S. visit, which began Sept. 22 in Washington, D.C. Twelve Midwest religious congregations in the Upper Mississippi River Valley collaborated on the ad. Learn more at : facebook.com/catholicsisters.

Celebrating Consecrated Life Open House

Pope Francis said “Wake up the World!” and proclaimed 2015 a “Year of Consecrated Life” to recognize the work of religious sisters, brothers and priests. In their own way the Sisters of the Humility of Mary celebrated this year with an open house at the Humility of Mary Center on October 18th.

About 100 guests had the opportunity to tour the Humility of Mary Center and Magnificat Chapel, visit with sisters about their prayer, service and life in community and learn about CHM history and current ministries. If you were unable to attend, you are welcome to call 563-323-9466 to arrange a visit, or stop by for our weekly Peace Mass at 11:40 on Wednesdays.



Davenport Mayor Bill Gluba was one of many who took the opportunity to be photographed with Pope Francis!



Sisters Maggie Bennett, Joan LeBeau and Joan Sheil enjoy Reba, Maggie's therapy dog, who she takes to hospitals and nursing homes.



Sister Luz María Orozco explains CIRIMEX - a Mexican ministry that empowers its students with the language skills and cultural knowledge needed to discover what they have in common with the Hispanic community and how to work and live (more richly) in a global society.



Sister Mary Ann Vogel points to a picture of herself with one of the many children that have benefited from Humility of Mary Housing.

To the Catholic Messenger Editor:

The Sisters of Humility presented to the public an open house on Sunday, Oct. 18. On display were exhibits illustrating their excellent work throughout this country, this hemisphere and, indeed, the entire world.

A few examples of this continuation of the work of Christ by the sisters are: providing education and resources to the people in Haiti about life-sustaining skills, developing wells for life-giving water and farming in Africa, educating our nation about the Catholic positions on climate change and ending all use

of the death penalty. Also featured was their outstanding service to the hungry, homeless and young women in distress here in Davenport and the diocese.

Many other exhibits were presented and individual visitors could discuss each project with an expert on the various projects. A visitor could join in some of the projects on the spot.

I was lucky to visit the event almost by accident. I thought it was too bad our Catholic high school and college students were not there to see what our faith is really all about. Maybe some might be encouraged to join in and even a few decide to dedicate their lives

by joining the order.

After leaving, in reflecting on the exhibits, I realized that not only the sisters, but all of us, the people of God, are called to carry out similar activities and see that our country chooses to support such activity with our enormous resources. Being responsive to such needs would be a much better and peace-developing activity for some of that more than \$600 billion spent annually on weapons of war.

Donald Moeller
Davenport



In September sisters celebrated their Jubilees at Bishop Drumm Retirement Center in Johnston, Iowa. From left: Rosalia Riedel, Dorothy Ann Chevalier, Lucille Feehan, Mary Hilary Veith and Mary Rehmann.



Sisters celebrate the years of service of dedicated employees. Sitting at left, Dorothy Davis, kitchen staff for 30 years and at right, Roxanne Gray, office receptionist for 15 years. Also pictured, top left Sister Bea Snyder and right Sister Johannna Rickl.

The Greatest Joy Awaits Believers



CHM Associate
Madonna Gilroy
February 4, 1923-
August 24, 2015



Sister Joanne Mauro
February 04, 1923-
August 28, 2015



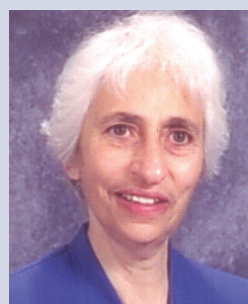
Sister Carolyn Mullin
August 18, 1920-
September 26, 2015



Sister Modesta Neubauer
May 30, 1925-
October 04, 2015



Sister Marie Ven Horst
February 08, 1916-
October 17, 2015



Sister Mary Rocca
September 26, 1935-
October 27, 2015

*Loving tributes to our departed sisters can be found at
www.chmiowa.org in the news section.*

National Catholic Sisters Week *Join us in celebration*

**Rooted in Love:
The Life and Martyrdom of
Sister Dorothy Stang**

Thursday, March 10, 2016 at 7pm

A one-woman play about Dorothy Stang, an American nun, who was murdered in Brazil because of her efforts to protect the rainforest and its people from disastrous and often illegal exploitation by logging firms and ranchers.

Starring
Sister Nancy Murray, OP
(sister of actor Bill Murray)

This event will take place at St. Ambrose University and is co-sponsored by the SAU environmental studies and campus ministry in support of programs at Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat.

Mark your calendars now!

For updates about this event and other news send your e-mail address to:
olpretreat@chmiowa.org

7th Annual CHM Holiday Gift Swap

Thursday, December 3
6:00 pm-8:00 pm
Humility of Mary Center
820 West Central Park Ave.
Davenport, Iowa
Cost: FREE

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.

prior to swapping enjoy a short talk entitled
The Pope's Message to the Paris Earth Summit
presented by:
Reverend Bud Grant

A professor of environmental theology at St. Ambrose College in Davenport, Iowa, Rev. Grant has a PhD in environmental ethics from the University of Iowa.

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

Presented by the CHM Care of Earth Committee
Sponsored by The Radish Magazine



Guests bring like-new items for RE-GIFTING, such as the coats modeled last year by CHM staffers. Music, books, and DVDs are a favorite at the swap plus many items of all kinds. After a short program shop the swap where you're sure to find the perfect gift for someone on your list, then, enjoy homemade cookies. An enjoyable evening for all!