

Charity Alive



Joyful Witness



New Beginnings

WELCOMING 2019

By Sister Joan O'Keefe

A time for new beginnings can happen almost any day we choose. Sometimes those decisions are easy, already a part of us. Other times there is a need to stir up energy, passion and compassion.

The messages I am mindful of these days are Cathy Sherman's words on a calendar by my desk and Martin Luther King, Jr's. words. I was at the tribute concert this past Saturday night. Cathy tells us to "Listen to the winter calling you inside. Listen to the darkness waiting for your dreams. To the silence, to the deep, come home." M.L. King said, "I have also decided to stick with love, for I know that love is ultimately the only answer to humankind's problems."

I am thinking I need to dream deeply and love widely! *What about you?*

Good wishes for 2019 to all who contributed to this issue of Charity Alive and for all who will read it.

[Check](#) out Cathy's whole song is on her CD, *Coming Home*, Ministry of the Arts.

Concluding 16 minutes of MLK's speech to Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Aug 16, 1967 - link [here](#)



Celebrations

Many celebrations were held over the past few months and we share a few pictures of the gatherings.



On October 4, 1968 the Sisters of Charity, Halifax began a mission of evangelization and solidarity with the people of Peru that would span the communities of La Victoria in Chiclayo, Cajamarca, Lima and Ilo. 50 years later, on October 13, 2018, many Sisters missioned to Peru, along with friends, family, Peruvian friends, and parishioners came together to celebrate at San José Obrero Church in La Victoria, Cajamarca.

Thank you to the Peru Celebration Committee for their hard work in preparing the celebrations. *Gracias!*

Click [here](#) for more of the Peru 50th celebration!



CELEBRATION IN PERU

L-R, first row seated: Sister Catherine Conroy, Bishop Robert Prevost, Archbishop Martin Currie, Sister Gabriela Villela. Second row standing: Sister Katherine McGrath, Sister Jeanne Cottreau, Sister Martha Loo, Sister Cecilia Hudec, Sister Mary Anne Foster, Armella Sontag, Sister Marybeth Moore, Father Ricardo Guerrero, Father Jim Richards

Joyful Witness



Sisters of Charity Kay Conroy and Katherine McGrath (top) pictured with Sisters of Charity Cincinnati sorting donations at the border - El Paso, Texas

AT THE BORDER

Compiled by Sister Kati Hamm

must keep our eyes and hearts open to see these little births and to meet the angels God is sending us everyday..."

Sisters Katherine McGrath and Kay Conroy went right after Christmas. They were in Nazareth House, El Paso, Texas. Among their group of volunteers were Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. We saw evidence of their collaborative efforts in their work to help organize mounds and mounds of donated clothing for the newcomers. At the border in Turnillo they met protesters who were there for the long haul. They also happened upon a detention center for teens on the other side of the "wall." A soccer ball came over the fence, which gave the volunteers the opportunity to pen words of encouragement on it, before tossing it back to the other side.

After a day at home just beginning to process the two weeks on the border, Katherine says, *"It was a soul moving experience ... and YES, I would do it again!"*

Melissa Gibilaro, Coordinator of Justice, Peace and Care of Our Common Home for our congregation, went to McAllen TX to the Humanitarian Respite Center run by Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley and shares her story in this edition of Charity Alive.

Over the last month four ambassadors from Sisters of Charity Halifax have spent time on the US / Mexico Border. This place of crisis, this place of conflict, this place of polarization has also been a place of grace. The mission of the many volunteers at the Border is to accompany the migrant, homeless and economically vulnerable people at the border. The experience of those who have gone to help is that they themselves have been changed.

Sister Cecilia Hudec arrived before Christmas. She shared with us from postings of her co-workers, the SSJ (Rochester) several stories of little miracles-- people bringing extra food, helpers arriving early and responding to 60 unexpected arrivals. The sharing concludes with this reflection: *"Christmas was born in so many little manglers these last days dispelling the gloom and darkness that can so overwhelm us. We*

From the Border



STANDING ON HOLY GROUND - MCALLEN, TX

By Melissa Gibilaro, Sisters of Charity

Melissa Gibilaro, Coordinator of Justice, Peace and Care of Our Common Home, accepted the call by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) and the Sisters of Charity's Congregational Leadership Team to volunteer with other agencies at the Humanitarian Respite Center run by Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley.

Heading to McAllen, TX to serve at Catholic Charities' Humanitarian Respite Center during the Christmas season, I set my heart to be like the Magi – searching for Jesus. In the faces of men, women and children seeking comfort and safety, I didn't have to look far to see the vulnerable Christ-child in need. However, I did not expect to feel myself truly standing on holy ground.

The story starts with a coincidence – Ericka, a friend of mine from New York, happened to be in McAllen for a wedding. Then, by Providence, she and some of her friends came to volunteer at the Respite Center on December 31. Their circle included a priest friend who offered to say the Vigil Mass that evening for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. At 9 PM, the nearly 200 guests of the Respite Center gathered in the dining area for Mass. Fr. Agustino Torres, CFR led the families in song repeating the verse "Proclama mi alma" over and over in praise during the homily. At the end of Mass, each person

received an individual blessing and a medal imprinted with Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Divine Mercy.

As countless people collapsed into tears, it was impossible not to weep with them. Imagining the collective stories in that room, of their struggle, their journeys, their risking their lives, one could only feel their ache and release in that moment. Through the Eucharist, prayers, hugs, smiles and warm exchanges, Christ was present, walking among us in this small space. This nursing home-turned-respite center had been transformed once more into a Sanctuary.

When St. Vincent de Paul was called to hear the confession of a dying man, his heart was moved upon realizing how the spiritual needs of this poor man, and others like him, had been neglected. Vincent had not guessed their hunger or need for Christ, but their yearning led to his own personal conversion.

Week after week, volunteers like myself work to provide for the physical needs of so many seeking asylum in the United States. Clothes, socks, shoes, showers and a warm meal are the order of the

day in the Respite Center. Yet, how many have not stopped to think of the spiritual needs that exist? The needs that go beyond extending kindness, but truly sharing Jesus with the families. I found myself blessed and humbled to be reminded that our basic needs also extend to the soul and to share that evening of prayer with my brothers and sisters.

(Melissa is now back home in New York)



Mass at the Respite Centre - McAllen, TX

[View](#) Melissa's interview on volunteering at the border.



In The Name of Charity

Sisters Kay Conroy and Katherine McGrath in El Paso, TX

REFLECTIONS FROM THE BORDER

By Sister Kay Conroy

Once when Jesus was in one of the cities, there was a leper in need of healing. Lk 5:12a

At that time, in Nazareth House in El Paso Texas, many migrants from Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Brazil and Uganda arrived by bus, delivered by ICE (Immigration Control). Men and women came as a single parent with a child/children.

Lord if you choose, you can heal me. Lk 5:12b Lk 5:12a

After a long-suffering trip to the US border from their countries, they applied for asylum, were processed and held by US Immigration for up to 15 days in detention camps before being released and given temporary asylum. At the detention centers they slept on cold cement floors with only a thin tin foil “blanket” and were fed sparsely. Some of the women

were pregnant.

***Jesus stretched out his hand. I do choose.
Lk. 5:13***

Nazareth House is one of many shelters of Affirmation House which offers hospitality to the released migrants: a respite where they are fed, clothed and given a place to recuperate their human dignity, freedom and hope. The shelters are staffed by volunteers (mostly Sisters and dedicated lay people) and have meals prepared by non-denominational groups and parishes. The “guests” are most grateful for this welcome and for the opportunity to communicate with their families.

***Be made whole....Go and show yourself to the
“officials”. Lk 5:14***

People are risking their and their children's lives to escape poverty/ violence in their country in an attempt to find peace and opportunity for their children in our country.

The arduous journey continues until they reach their destination in the US. Most of the people will travel by bus to California or Georgia, North Carolina, Maryland,

New York, Boston, etc and then complete a court date appearance which will decide their fate. Many do not speak Spanish or English.

***Many crowds would gather to hear him and
be healed. Lk 5:15***

How will we welcome these brave sisters and brothers of ours?

***But he would withdraw to deserted places
and pray. Lk 5:16***

Sustained by faith and the charism of charity, we could do the demanding work of hospitality and now our ongoing concern/prayer is for the migrants well- being.



Sister Kay Conroy, SC writes a message of hope on a soccer ball that strayed over the wall

Roots of Gratitude

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." John F. Kennedy

PROFILES IN GIVING: ANNETTE THIBODEAU

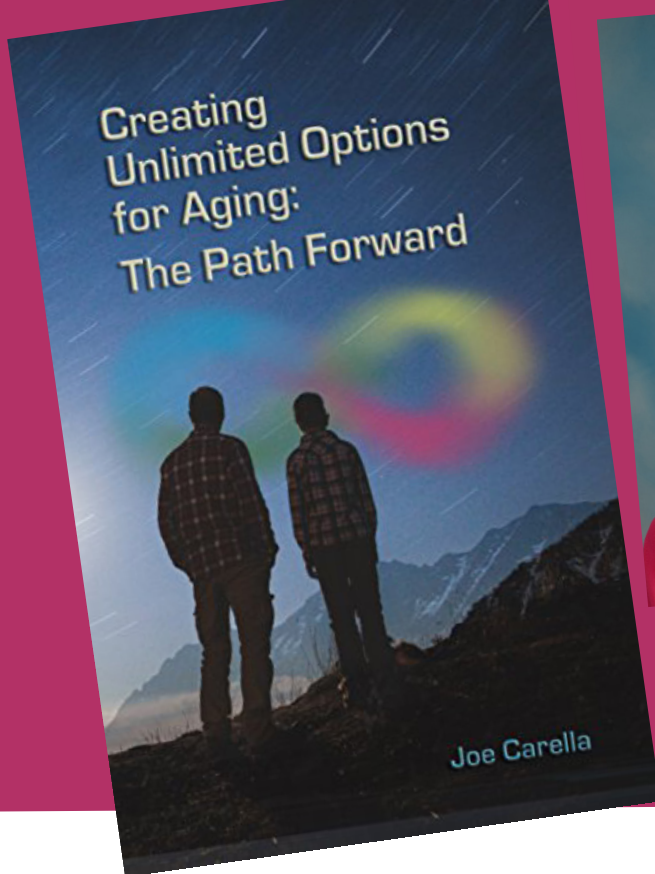
Annette Thibodeau's connection to the Sisters of Charity began as a child in her community of Church Point, Digby County, NS. There, our Sisters, including Sister Anna d'Entremont (RIP), taught her and her brothers. Annette remains a devoted donor, supporter and volunteer for the Congregation and close friend to our Sisters. Annette shares her reasons for giving to the Sisters of Charity.

"The Sisters of Charity came to my small village in 1867, the same year Canada became a country. There, a few Sisters educated generations of my family entirely in French. I have no memory of the Sisters not being part of our village community.

The Sisters taught my siblings and me in both elementary and high school. Later the Sisters taught me at Mount Saint Vincent University and the Halifax Infirmary School of Nursing.

A large part of who I am, and what I am, of how I see the world and my role in it, is the direct result of the influence of the Sisters of Charity. So the question is not why should I support the Sisters of Charity, but rather how could I NOT support them?"

If you wish to make a donation or to join our mailing list, visit schalifax.ca/donate, or call Carrie Flemming, Donor Relations Coordinator at 1-844-406-8114



*Sister Joan
recommends*

WHAT WE ARE READING

By Sister Joan Holmberg

This book is a fast read with wide-ranging implications. The author passionately advocates for community centered living in every long-term senior residence. He begins by giving kudos to the Sisters of Charity for the “neighborhood” design used in the construction of Elizabeth Seton Residence; a design that has served as a model for newer skilled nursing facilities.

But the author argues that innovative physical design alone does not guarantee that older adults will maintain their autonomy and community connections. Rather than limiting choices and institutionalizing residents, facilities are encouraged to promote independence and self-responsibility. Noting the sense of isolation felt by so many in long-term residential settings, the author supports inviting the outside” inside!”

Intimate spaces for residents to gather with family/friends, large common spaces to host community events, scheduled intergenerational activities, office space rented to NFP associations, a variety of clubs that serve the interests of residents and their neighbors – these are some of the elements of community centered living that according to the author create unlimited options in which “age does not limit one’s personhood.”

Note: The author serves on the Board of Directors of Elizabeth Seton Residence and Marillac Residence



The annual volunteer trip began yesterday at the House of Charity in New Orleans. L-R, Melissa Gibilaro welcomes Kayla Bernard, Halifax, NS, Amanda Scott, Bridgewater, NS and Alex Longo, Kelowna, BC.

SPELLING BEE CHAMPIONSHIP 2018



November marked the spelling bee championship at Caritas in Halifax, NS. A great time was had by all! Pictured L-R: Sisters Irene Amirault, Dorothy Mulcahy, and Joan DeGrace, and Ms. Mary Martin, the winner! Mary is one of our Victoria Hall residents.



Flashback from the Archives

1958

Sister John Cecilia (Margaret Molloy) by a sugar maple tree, L'Ange-Gardien, Quebec, 1958.

The Sisters of Charity ministered in the province of Quebec for 76 years, from 1935 until 2011. Over 500 Sisters served in schools, cared for orphans and foster children, ministered to immigrants and the elderly, and visited the sick and poor. In 1956, Sister Margaret, pictured above, was missioned to the newly opened St. Patrick's High School in Quebec City, where she taught and worked in the library.

To get in touch with our archivist, contact Mary Flynn at mflynn@schalifax.ca or call 902-406-8136.



Joyful Witness

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Follow us on [Facebook](#) to keep up to date and see many great happenings, just like this Christmas celebration in New York.

CHARITY ALIVE FUND

Our Charity Alive Fund promotes our mission, which is to give joyful witness to love, stand on the side of the poor, and address unjust structures in a world wounded by violence and stripped of hope.

Does your project qualify? [Apply](#) by April 5, 2019

Charity Alive witnesses to the life and mission of the Sisters of Charity - Halifax, which is to make the love of God visible in today's world.

Please submit articles and photos to:
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