

That all may know the Savior



SISTERS OF THE DIVINE SAVIOR

Salvatorian News

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focus



Dear Friends,

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to return to Fortaleza, Brazil where I had ministered for seven years. During that visit, I experienced our Sisters' work among the poor at Centro de Formação Divino Salvador, or CEFORDS. Our lead story in this issue shares about CEFORDS and how our Sisters strive to meet the growing need for services there. Their ministry beautifully reflects the mission of the Salvatorian Sisters as a women's religious congregation founded 125 years ago, a milestone we celebrate this year.

On December 8, 1888, Blessed Mary of the Apostles and two other women were received into the congregation by our Founder Father Francis Jordan in Tivoli, Italy near Rome. Over the years, this small group grew in members and ministries around the world. Joyfully, today we have more than 1,000 Sisters in 29 countries. Many of you have come to know these places as longtime readers of our *Salvatorian News*. In this issue, we share Fortaleza's story, as well as our send-off and welcome of U.S. Sisters who will be or have been serving in our General Administration in Rome.

In the Savior,

S. Carol Thresher, SDS

Sister Carol Thresher, SDS
Provincial Leader



Pool comes to symbolize quality of life for people in Fortaleza

You might not associate "life-giving waters" with a too-small, well worn concrete swimming pool, but Salvatorian Sisters in Fortaleza, Brazil can attest to the power of the pool. It's a focal point of Centro de Formação Divino Salvador, (CEFORDS), a community center run by Sisters of the Divine Savior São Paulo Province. The pool is heavily used for hydrotherapy by elderly people and disabled children and for swimming lessons for children and young adults.

Fifteen-year-old Marden came to the center after his parents saw physiotherapy doing little for his infantile paralysis. His legs

appeared very thin and weak, he walked with great difficulty and couldn't keep his balance. Due to his condition, Marden kept to himself at first and had little interaction with other children in the pool. After three years of hydrotherapy, he now walks steadily, and just as importantly, he is confident and happy. The Sisters say hydrotherapy and time spent with other children in the pool helped Marden become "a free boy."

CEFORDS is located in a former school building and also offers training in computer science and computer maintenance, as well

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A WORLDWIDE MISSION

International congregation of 1,200 Sisters • 29 countries on 5 continents



With gratitude for your prayerful partnership we commemorate 125 years of service in our Savior's name.

Reunion that began “on a whim” sparks thoughtful gift

Gail (Almgren) Mayer describes a recent donation to the Salvatorian Sisters from St. Mary’s Nursing School alumnae as a gift that began “on a whim.” Back in the mid-’90s, Gail mentioned to Wausau Hospital co-workers her plans to gather with a few former St. Mary’s classmates. Before long, lunch with a few friends from Gail’s class of ’56 snowballed into an all-school reunion.

“At that first luncheon we had 59 St. Mary’s grads and the room could only hold 60 people,” Gail recalls. Alumnae passed the hat that day for seed money for a second reunion. Ever since—for the last 18 years—Gail has helped organize the luncheon held in Wausau on the last Wednesday in September. More than 100 former students gather each year from all over Wisconsin and beyond.

“We have a mailing list of 300,” says Gail, who credits Sister Susan Staff, SDS, with researching Salvatorian archives and compiling a St. Mary’s alumnae directory. And that seed money grew into a tidy little bank account.



Over the last 10 years, alumnae have given \$23,000 in scholarships to nursing students at Wausau’s North Central Tech College. About a year ago someone suggested, “Maybe it’s time we do something for the Sisters.”

“At every reunion, everyone talks so positively about our years at St. Mary’s and the education we received from the Sisters,” says Gail. So she came to Milwaukee to see for herself how they could give back to Sisters of the Divine Savior. After her visit, Gail was eager to share what she saw. The courtyard at the Salvatorian Sisters Residence has become

a favorite place for prayer and meditation for retired Sisters. Among them is Sister Germaine Vandenberg, SDS, former dietetics and nutrition instructor at St. Mary’s.

Gail says, “When I saw Sister Germaine that day, I thought, it couldn’t be. But there she was sitting in a swing in the courtyard. Seeing Sister Germaine brought back a lot of good memories.” The nursing alumnae gift has been used to enhance the courtyard with a Crimson Queen Japanese maple tree as the focal point. Lush perennials are tucked into chocolate-hued mulch, and a beautiful path of granite stepping stones set in Irish moss leads to a statue of the Blessed Virgin. Come milder weather, the meditation area will be dedicated in all its natural glory. ☩

Sisters of the Divine Savior opened St. Mary’s Nursing School in Wausau, Wis. in 1923 and graduated the last class in 1967. Alumnae can contact Gail at gailmayer54@charter.net or (715) 845-1098.

Quality of life for people in Fortaleza continued from page 1

as classes in the arts for children and young adults. Their developmental and educational needs are a priority for the Sisters to help instill self-discipline and prepare young people to compete for future jobs. Special attention is also given to women of all ages through activities such as handicrafts, art therapy and psychotherapy.

The Sisters strive to make CEFORDS services available to anyone in need, regardless of ability to pay, to improve quality of life today and for the future. Fortaleza is a large city with significant socio-economic inequality. CEFORDS is located on the outskirts where people struggle to survive. Women, youth and children are exploited; alcoholism, drug addiction and the violence that comes with it are high. Many families depend on women of the household for support, but jobs are few and public transportation is lacking.

Former CEFORDS director, Sister Terezinha Fontana de Araujo, SDS says the pool offers hope for a better life regardless of age or specific need. She is now Provincial Superior for the São Paulo Province, but still shares



joyful stories from her time at CEFORDS.

Sister Terezinha recalls Mr. Messias, now 55, who suffered severe fractures to both legs in a car accident. He endured various therapies for three years but saw little improvement. Using two crutches and walking with great pain, he came to the center for pool therapy. After one year, he completely recovered his mobility, now walking and even running as he did before the accident. Sister Terezinha

says, “Mr. Messias is so grateful for the benefits of his hydrotherapy that he doesn’t want to stop. He expresses deep gratitude for getting back his health.”

The Sisters know that many people who derive benefits from the Centro de Formação pool feel as Mr. Messias does. They also see more doctors prescribing hydrotherapy to improve health and quality of life; often the benefits are as much mental and emotional as they are physical. The pool has become a gathering place and as Sister Terezinha says, “a focal point” for all good things happening at the center. People have been asking

the Sisters to build a larger pool. Because it is not possible to accommodate everyone who comes for its healing benefits, a larger pool is among the center’s greatest needs.

Sister Terezinha says, “In faithfulness to our charism, our goal is to offer a better quality of life to those in need, and we have seen how the pool offers that hope for many people we serve.” ☩

Grassroots giving puts tractor on a roll

No one could have imagined where Sister Virginia's newfound passion would lead.

After retiring from her longtime education ministry, Sister Virginia Honish, SDS (formerly Francis de Sales) was honored with the Milwaukee Archdiocese 2010 Service in Education Award. The following summer, she made her second trip to Tanzania to tutor local Salvatorian Sisters in English. The language course was designed to help Sisters pass national exams so they could advance their education to qualify for government nursing and teaching jobs. Higher wages would help the unit of seventy Salvatorian Sisters support themselves as they continue to minister among their local African people.

Our Tanzanian Sisters serve as teachers, nurses, midwives, and catechists. They also work closely with people in the villages to improve farming methods for greater harvests. As an agrarian culture, Tanzanian people live off the land, eating or selling whatever they grow and raise. A sad cultural reality is that some parents allow their daughters to be trafficked for sex in exchange for food for their families.

After her visits to Tanzania, Sister Virginia came away with a sense of despair for villagers struggling to feed their families. Our Tanzanian Sisters knew that educating the Tanzanian people in better ways to plant, grow and harvest their crops, would enable them to feed

their families and sell the surplus at market. The Sisters' 20 year-old tractor had been repaired many times and was no longer adequate for their vital working-learning partnership. A new, larger tractor could greatly improve productivity.

With endorsement from our U.S. Provincial Leadership team, Sister Virginia launched a personal letter-writing campaign. What soon became known as "Sister Virginia's tractor project" is a testament to her spunk and strong ties from her 30-year ministry as a Milwaukee-area Catholic school teacher and administrator. She wrote to former students, parents of former students, and others she believed would grasp her vision to help Salvatorian Sisters break a desperate cycle that erodes dignity of the Tanzanian people.

Sister Virginia's research showed \$67,000 would be needed to purchase a tractor with a plow and wagon. Her campaign that began in December 2011 raised more than \$70,000 in less than six months. Now, one year later, the new tractor and implements are servicing the villages of Masasi, Mekulani and Tundura. Next to the Sisters' motherhouse in Masasi,



Sister Virginia Honish, SDS

Salvatorian priests and brothers have a fully equipped garage and trained mechanics from the village to keep the equipment running smoothly.

Sister Virginia calls the response to her appeal humbling, and gives credit to creative, grassroots giving. She recalls, "Families sold lemonade in their neighborhoods; children saved babysitting money or sent in birthday cash. Donations came from people who knew how important a tractor was in their own family's life; some, in memory of loved ones who had lived on farms." Along with many financial gifts came heartfelt notes and letters, and Sister Virginia cherishes each and every one.

Throughout her fundraising endeavor, Sister Virginia continued her ministry as care coordinator for our retired Sisters at the Salvatorian Sisters Residence in Milwaukee. Drawing on very different gifts than those that spurred her on for the tractor project, Sister Virginia still brings the goodness and kindness of Jesus wherever she finds the greatest need. ☩



"Here is picture with the people surrounding us. They are happy to have tractor instead of using hoe, which takes lot of time, more work and poor harvest. Now their hope is to harvest more. We thank all of you who help us to get it. May the Lord God bless and reward you for all you have done for us.... We have nothing to give you but we will continue to pray for you always."

—Yours lovingly, Sr. Sophia C. Muhiba, SDS

Our Mission As Sisters of the Divine Savior

Make known the goodness and kindness of Jesus, Savior of the world, and foster awareness of a loving God among peoples in whatever place and by whatever means the Spirit of God inspires.

As women of faith striving to be given over to the Father and open to all peoples, we collaborate to promote justice and improve quality of life in our world with a preferential option for the poor.

Lora Rosenbaum
Director of Mission Advancement

Jan Penlesky
Director of Communications/PR

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Road leads to Rome... and back home

Sister Marion Etzel, SDS

Sister Marion Etzel is seeing quite the change of scenery and daily routine compared to her last 50 years as a Salvatorian Sister. In early February, she began a six-year term on the Sisters of the Divine Savior international leadership team, or Generalate in Rome. Sister Marion is serving as a general councilor as well as general secretary there. She was elected by SDS delegates from 20 countries who gathered in Rome last October to affirm priorities for serving needy populations worldwide.



Since 2009, Sister Marion ministered in new membership and vocation education for the U.S. Province, after serving six years as Provincial Leader. For nearly 40 years, she was an educator, including eight years teaching in elementary and middle schools. Sister Marion served on the faculty of Manchester College in Indiana, Roosevelt University in Chicago and Georgia State University in Atlanta. She specialized in training music teachers for schools in urban settings.

Looking ahead to her new ministry in Rome, Sister Marion expressed hope about building on the work of the previous Generalate. "From the vantage point of international leadership, I'll feel the pulse of the world's complex and ever-changing needs. It's what we're here for—to guide our community of Sisters to promote justice and fullness of life wherever we find the need." ☩

Sister Grace Mary Croft, SDS

The year was 1996. Bill Clinton was in the White House, the minimum wage bumped to \$4.50, and the Dow Jones average topped the 6000 mark. That year, Sister Grace Mary Croft began serving on the Sisters of the Divine Savior international leadership team in Rome. Now after 17 years, she's come home.



Sister Grace Mary, formerly known as Sister Mary Gerald, served for 12 years in leadership with the North American Province prior to her election to the Generalate. She previously ministered as directress for SDS candidates and novices, and on the faculty and administration at Divine Savior Holy Angels High School in Milwaukee.

Sister Grace Mary says she is happy and ready to return to the North American Province. "I have gladly contributed what I am able at the international level. I have met and worked and shared community with wonderful Sisters from Asia, Africa, Europe and North and South America and will miss them very much. I look forward to the unfolding of the significance of these past 17 years."

Sister Grace Mary believes her international experience has broadened her outlook and heightened her appreciation of the SDS mission around the world. "I trust these years have deepened my spirit and intensified my compassion for those who suffer." ☩

Share Your Memories of a Salvatorian Sister

Was she a favorite teacher, longtime co-worker, or special caregiver?

Cherished times spent with Sisters of the Divine Savior might go way back but feel like they just happened yesterday. We would love for you to share an anecdote or special memory about a Salvatorian Sister who influenced your life. Write your memory below and drop it in the mail or send via email to Jan at penleskyj@salvatoriansisters.org. We might even share your story with our readers, but we'll be sure to check with you first. We look forward to hearing from you!



Many the Gifts



Hope, joy and compassion poured in as you responded with prayers and financial gifts to our 2012 Christmas appeal. Your generosity enables our Sisters to continue sharing their diverse gifts through service in our Savior's name across the United States. From late November through mid-January we received more than 500 donations. Those funds will support our Sisters as they respond to the greatest needs, whether for education in an adult literacy program or preschool; advocacy in behalf of persons living with disabilities or the indignities of human trafficking; or pastoral care in a prison or long-term care facility. Sisters of the Divine Savior bring the goodness and kindness of Jesus and nurture resources among the people they serve to improve quality of life. We look on your gifts as true blessings upon our ministries and ask God to bless you in return. ☩