



# Ventures

Turning Faith into Action since 1859

Winter 2011, Volume 7, Issue 2

[www.sistersoftheholynames.org/oregon/](http://www.sistersoftheholynames.org/oregon/)

## Places we have loved: The Dalles is one

At one time the Convent of the Holy Names in The Dalles housed as many as 14 Sisters who staffed St. Mary's Academy. Today, four Holy Names Sisters, retired now, but former nurses, teachers, administrators, and counselors, make this convent their home, and a center of hospitality. There they make room for visitors—both short and long term, and minister to the people of the city, continuing a service that began over 147 years ago, with just four Sisters.

Over the past centuries The Dalles, Oregon, has seen the arrival of a number of notable visitors—some famous, some infamous. In the early nineteenth century, Lewis and Clark found the river there treacherous and dangerous, but the people friendly and helpful. The Rajneesh, a cult leader with a large, unruly following, on the other hand found the people threatening. In the meantime, the city prospered and the barren hills were covered with trees and flowers, and a Catholic school was founded which educated hundreds of wonderful children.

This school came into existence when, in 1864, a courageous group of four women left the provincial headquarters of the Holy Names Sisters in Portland, sailed down the Willamette, moved out onto the Columbia, and arrived, weary, and a little dispirited at The Dalles. According to the composer of 1864 *Chronicles*, "Our new home is dry, rocky and barren as a desert. The town is treeless. There is not a square inch to drop a seed. However, we're much more comfortable than we had anticipated."

From the beginning, their priorities were evident: their new residence had accommodations for living, a chapel, one classroom and a music room. Almost immediately they opened a class for girls and another for little boys. By the end of the year, they had established themselves as competent classroom teachers.

The spiritual welfare of the students was a primary concern from the

*"Our new home is dry, rocky and barren as a desert. The town is treeless, There is not a square inch to drop a seed. However, we're much more comfortable than we had anticipated." The Sisters' Chronicles, 1864*

first. The day began and ended with prayer; religion classes were the most important part of the curriculum, and preparation for the reception of the sacraments, and above all, love of God and concern for one's neighbor marked the daily instruction.

Anywhere the Holy Names Sisters taught there was music. From the beginning there were choirs—both school and church, lessons in piano, violin, cello, harp, even mandolin, operettas, recitals. Always a Sister or two devoted themselves solely to music.

Classes were rigorous: at the end of the year, examinations were oral, attended by the parish priests, parents and other interested citizens. At the end of the first school year, the student roster listed 143 students. During that first year a precedent that remains unbroken to this day again, from *The Chronicles*: "The ladies of the parish testify their appreciation of the Sisters' labors by offering a gift which was as welcome as unexpected, a purse containing four hundred and eleven dollars and twenty-five cents, the profits of a social assembly."



**Photo top: Sisters of the Holy Names in The Dalles area. From left: Sisters Beverly Miller, Joan Flynn, Patricia Pfenning, Mary Sullivan, and Barbara Gfeller. Photo above: Sister Beverly Miller provides tutoring assistance to a student. Photo right: Sisters Mary Sullivan, Joan Flynn, and Barbara Gfeller visit the old St. Peter's church in The Dalles remembering the long Catholic history of the area.**

Once again the convent houses four Sisters, and there is no possibility of listing all the ways the Sisters are involved in The Dalles community. At home they pray together, offer hospitality to those who need it, clean and cook and enjoy one another's company.

Sister Joan Flynn (Maura Kevin) has a long history in The Dalles. In the 1960s she taught fourth grade and after receiving her RN, she worked at the Mid-Columbia Hospital for 17 years. Now she cares for the upkeep of the convent and the three-acre grounds on which it sets. It was this yard work that led her to become a Master Gardener, and now she teaches gardening to grade school children through the Oregon State University office at Columbia Gorge Community College. She, like several of the Sisters, participates in the wonderful work of the local Habitat for Humanity, working in the thrift shop of that group.

Sister Mary Sullivan (Sheron Marie), and Sister Beverly Miller (Carol Jean) are also involved with Habitat. Sister Mary taught high school at St. Mary's in the 1950s and now, with Sister Beverly, serves on the Partnership Committee of Habitat for Humanity. Sister Mary works

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# Places we have loved ...



Photo left: Sisters Barbara Gfeller and Mary Sullivan with clients of St. Vincent De Paul Ministry, which is on the property of the old St. Mary's Academy. Teresa Yraqui Zemen (center), a St. Mary's alum, provides breakfast at the center, Monday through Friday, through her nonprofit, Bread and Blessings. Photo below: Sister Joan Flynn tends the three-acre grounds of St. Mary's Convent. Photo lower left: A customer chats with Sister Joan at Habitat for Humanity's Restore in The Dalles.



Continued from page 1.

with the Holy Names Associates in and around The Dalles, coordinating and assisting their activities. The work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society brings her to monthly meetings as part of its Ministry Committee. She also, through the sponsorship of the Society, makes home visits to shut-ins the parish.

Sister Beverly, who was a boarder at St. Mary's Academy in the 1950s, returned to a familiar part of Oregon (she lived as child in Arlington) when she came back to The Dalles. She now assists with the monthly St. Vincent de Paul community meal, tutors children at St. Mary's, and recently finished a course in literacy training, and now tutors adults. With her background in nurses' training, she has proved to be a fine companion to those who receive special medical care.

Sister Barbara Gfeller (David Maureen) also finds working for the St. Vincent de Paul Society satisfying. Through their sponsorship, she makes home visits, and is a member both of the St. Vincent and the Fellowship of Churches committees to establish a warming center on cold nights for homeless people, and serves as secretary for both groups. She also gets to know the St. Mary's children as volunteer part-time librarian at the school. She is also chronicler for the Sisters at The Dalles, keeping record of

the Sisters many activities and contributions.

In nearby Dufur, Sister Patricia Pfenning (Mary Arlene) uses her skills to help in the town and local parish of St. Alphonsus. As a volunteer she takes charge of the music, writes reflections for the weekly bulletin, teaches religion to the one child in the parish, and is a presence to the people of the community with the help of grants through the Catholic Extension Society, which supports the Catholic Church in rural areas. Sister also serves at the local high school as chair of the Site Council that works with freshmen and their position in class, and with seniors as they prepare for graduation. Although she lives in Dufur, Sister joins the Sisters in The Dalles regularly for prayer, food and good conversation.

Four Sisters came to The Dalles in 1864, doing good works and establishing themselves as part of the community. In 2011, four Sisters have found a home and have likewise made themselves a part of The Dalles community.

*NOTE: Article written by Sister Jane Ellen Burns.*

## SNJM TIMELINE IN THE DALLES

- 1864** The first Sisters arrived in The Dalles and started a school on 4th and Lincoln Streets.
- 1871** The school was moved across the street from St. Peter's and for 20 years was the only high school in the city.
- 1878** The following subjects were offered: Latin, French, Music, Logic, Ethics, Literature, elementary and advanced Algebra, plane and solid geometry, History, (ancient, modern, medieval, and United States), Elocution, needlework, Astronomy, and Mythology.
- 1883** The school was moved to 3rd Street and a new school began. A raging fire burned 18 blocks of business and residential buildings within 2 blocks of the Academy. The school became a shelter for those who lost their homes.
- 1884** The chapel was built.
- 1884** The river flooded 61 inches deep in the first floor hall of the school. The school was partially converted into a hospital due to disease and sickness that followed.
- 1931** Co-education began in the high school.
- 1932** A high school basketball program was started.
- 1950** There were 275 pupils in the grade school and 62 in high school, with 20 boarders.
- 1956** The high school was discontinued and a new grade school was dedicated on Cherry Heights road.
- 1962** The Sisters' convent near old St. Peter's was vacated and they moved next to the new school.

## US-Ontario Leadership Team



The 2011-2016 US-Ontario Leadership Team began their term of office this January. The team includes: First row: Sisters Marcia Frideger, Mary Ellen Holohan. Second row: Sisters Kathleen Hilton, Jane Hibbard, Mariellen Blaser. The provincial offices are located at Marylhurst, Oregon.

# Marylhurst chapel radiates newly renovated splendor



**Photo above: Father Richard Berg, CSC, presides at the new altar in the Convent chapel. Photo right: The magnificent chapel shows off its new paint, brighter lights and renewed charm.**



**Photo below: Mary's Woods resident, Greg Hadley, who headed the fundraising efforts for the chapel renovation, also serves as a lector, cantor, and Eucharistic minister.**



In 1952 the Sisters of the Holy Names rejoiced as they walked into their newly enlarged and painted chapel, special to each of them. For over 50 years, generations have worshipped and loved the beauty of this sacred place.

However, the years took their toll, and, in the summer of 2009, committees met and planned extensive renovations. A collaboration of the Holy Names Sisters and generous donors who call this chapel their spiritual home, provided the resources to restore this remarkable space. Fundraising efforts, headed by Mary's Woods resident Greg Hadley, were critical in the creation of a new altar and stand, designed and produced by master craftsman, Brian Rooney, extensive painting and lighting, ornamental rails to provide improved access to the Sanctuary, and beautifully refinished floors.

A Celebration of Restoration ceremony, held on November 28, 2010, honored the donors and the workers responsible for the completion of the project.

## In Memory



**Sister Agatha Aicher**

Sister Agatha Aicher (Florence), age 84, and a vowed Sister of the Holy Names for 59 years, died on September 9, 2010.

Florence was born in Woodburn, Oregon, and attended Mount Angel Academy. She served as student body president in her senior year, and earned a scholarship to Marylhurst College. After

receiving a degree in Sociology, she worked for Oregon Public Welfare Commission for two years, before entering the Holy Names Novitiate in the summer of 1949, taking the name Sister Mary Agatha.

A long career in high school teaching took her to Holy Names Academy in Spokane; St. Francis, Eugene; St. Mary's Academy, Portland; St. Mary's, Medford; Sacred Heart Academy, Salem; and Star of the Sea, Astoria, where she served as principal and superior. Along the way she earned an M.A. in History from the University of San Francisco. Later, she joined the faculty at Marylhurst College, teaching counseling and assisting in the Life Planning Center.

After leaving academia she turned to a new career particularly suited to her personality, hospital chaplaincy. For more than 20 years she was part of a team at St. Joseph's Hospital in Bellingham, Washington, listening, talking, praying and helping people in especially trying times. A gentle, soft-spoken person, she loved and was loved by both patients and their families. And she was fun—she loved a good bargain, a good movie, and a vacation at the beach with her Sister friends.

Sister Agatha is survived by her brother, the Rev. Boniface Aicher, OSB, her sisters, Gertrude Humpert and Catherine Nathman, her nieces and nephews and the members of her religious community.



**Sister Irene Zimmerman**

Sister Irene Zimmerman, age 86, died on October 2, 2010. She was a vowed Sister for 67 years.

Genevieve Zimmerman joined six brothers and a sister to form a staunch Catholic family in Milwaukie, Oregon. While attending St. John's school there, she came to know the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon, and in

August 1940, at age 16, entered their community and in 1941 received the name Sister Mary Irene. After vows in 1943, she taught, mostly primary grades, in schools in Portland, Hillsboro, Sublimity, Gervais, Verboort, and served as principal at Holy Trinity School in Beaverton.

In 1973 she started the process of transferring to the Sisters of the Holy Names, which was officially completed in 1975. She worked as the director of religious education at Sacred Heart parish in Medford, and as pastoral associate at St Peter's in Portland and St. Paul's in Eugene. As a pastoral associate she joined a group led by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon on a trip to the Holy Land, and several years later enjoyed a three-month session in Israel, sponsored by the Chicago Theological Union.

After retiring, she volunteered as a tutor at Rose City public school, and later worked with family groups. For years she had a special mission to Vietnamese children, helping them to get ready for school by honing their English skills.

Sister Irene is survived by her brother, Herman, of Bend, Oregon, nieces and nephews, and the members of her religious community.



**Sister Olivian Santilli**

Sister Mary Olivian Santilli, age 89, died on December 21, 2010. She was a vowed member of the Sisters of the Holy Names for 64 years.

The only daughter of Mario and Anna Scarelli Santilli, Olive was born in Portland June 25, 1921, and later joined by her brother Armand. She attended public

schools, and graduated from Commerce High School in 1939, but she never forgot the Sisters who taught her catechism in released-time programs during those years.

In 1944 when the United States was in the midst of World War II, she became aware of the world's need for prayer. Convinced of this, she entered the novitiate of the Holy Names Sisters in January 1944.

Making first profession in 1946, she went on to receive a B.A. in English Literature from Marylhurst College and taught at Holy Names College, Spokane; St. Francis High School, Eugene; Sacred Heart Academy, Salem; and St. Mary's Academy, Portland.

However, it was as a secretary that she spent the majority of her days. As secretary for the provincial administration, confidentiality became a necessary way of life for her, and contributed to her quiet air of professionalism. No one really knows how many people she helped with their typing and composition problems. She did so cheerfully, and perfectly.

She volunteered in several capacities: taking care of the sick and aged; teaching English as a second language; helping with the sewing needs of her Sisters. A life-long dream to visit the land of her parents came true when she visited Italy and Switzerland, visiting relatives and places she had heard of all her life, keeping careful notes on every step of the way.

A beautiful woman, she surrounded herself with beauty and helped others create equally beautiful spaces. The need for prayer that she had felt in 1944 stayed with her as she kept her family, community and friends close during her final days of suffering.

Sister Olivian is survived by her brother Armand and his wife Shari, nieces and nephews and the members of her religious community.

Remembrances may be made to the Holy Names Sisters Foundation, P.O. Box 411, Marylhurst, OR 97036. For memorial cards, obituaries or copies of the reflections given during the Mass of the Resurrection, contact Anita Lindsay, 503.534.3929.

The U.S.-Ontario Province Ministry Grant Committee reviewed 42 requests for assistance for projects that reflect the Holy Names charism. This year they awarded grants to diverse projects and ministries that



SNJMs and Associates participate in throughout the U.S. and Canada, as well as countries where they serve in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Of particular interest were projects related to the trafficking of women and children, water, and care of children of those imprisoned.

Among the grants in Oregon were: outreach support for the homeless and unemployed in the McKenzie Bridge area; Rose Haven in Portland, serving women and children who have been abused or are homeless; Nonprofit Association of Oregon to support the Hispanic Capacity Building Project; Housecall Providers, serving homebound patients who fall below the poverty level; L'Arche Nehalem, training and formation programs for adults with developmental disabilities; and water curriculum for Latina women belonging to Adelante Mujeres in Washington County.

## *Ventures: A Publication of the Sisters of the Holy Names*

*Ventures* is a publication of the Sisters of the Holy Names (SNJM), printed tri-annually for the use of the Sisters, their partners in ministry and their various publics. It aims to support the vitality of the SNJM mission, education in the faith in all its forms, into the future.

**Office of Development: 503.675.7113**  
**[www.sistersoftheholynames.org/oregon](http://www.sistersoftheholynames.org/oregon)**

Editor: Lynda Thompson, SNJM

Development Director: Adrianna Carr

Layout: Carole Strawn, SNJM

Contributors: Jane Ellen Burns, SNJM;  
Carole Strawn, SNJM; Lynda Thompson, SNJM

Photography: Steve Hambuchen

Sisters of the Holy Names  
P.O. Box 411  
Marylhurst, OR 97036

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Portland, OR  
Permit No. 714



# *Ventures*

*Turning Faith into Action since 1859*

A publication of the Sisters of the Holy Names

**In this issue: "Retelling a few of our favorites stories  
...where happy memories delight and ministry of the future unfolds"**

**WINTER 2011**

Journey up the Gorge to The Dalles Community... here history comes alive in the East wind, sun and turbulent waters... this place we love, where SNJMs have forged enduring friendships since 1864

Step into the refurbished Marylhurst Chapel... since 1911, the gentle glow of stained glass, the scent of prayer... here SNJMs and so many others have found God's solace and strength

Meet the new Province Leadership Team... arriving from East and West... companions who offer support and guidance for tomorrow's journey

In this VENTURES: People we cherish, Places of the heart... part of the hundredfold God has graced us with for over a century and a half.



### **The Chapel Candlesticks**

The candlesticks located on the high altar in the Chapel of the Holy Names at Marylhurst, Oregon, had an interesting journey to their present place of display.

The candles belong to a set of ten candlesticks and a crucifix which belonged originally to a religious community in Marseilles, France.

The community was suppressed by the anti-clerical French government in the early 1900s and its possessions were confiscated. The candlesticks and crucifix were seized and pawned.

In 1905, Bishop Edward J. O'Dea of the Diocese of Seattle came across the set in a Marseilles pawnshop. Bishop O'Dea purchased the set for the cathedral in Seattle where it was used until 1950 when the cathedral was redecorated.

In 1958 the candlesticks and crucifix were

presented to the Sisters of the Holy Names at Marylhurst by Bishop Thomas E. Gill, Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle.

Since Bishop O'Dea had been educated by the Sisters of the Holy Names in Portland, the gift had even greater meaning.

At that time the set was distributed to three places. Two candlesticks were sent to the Motherhouse of Sisters of the Holy Names in Montreal, Quebec. Two others were shipped to the Convent of the Holy Names in Spokane. The remaining six, with the crucifix, were kept at Marylhurst.

The candlesticks are 43 inches high.

On one face of the base of the candlesticks are the initials *J* and *M* for the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. On another face are the letters *IHS*, signifying Jesus. On a third face are two hearts, one wreathed with thorns (Jesus) and the other pierced by a sword (Mary).