

SPRING, 2011

April / May / June

ALL ABOUT US!

St. Francis Province Newsletter, Redwood City, CA



Let us "we"
our lives together!

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WHAT IS HAPPENING IN CHIAPAS and...?

"UN MUNDO LLENO DE ESPERANZA" (A World Full of Hope)

Today is the feast of the Holy Cross. It is a rather major celebration for the indigenous peoples in their villages. Communities take their wooden crosses, seeds used for planting their next crop of corn, candles, incense and flowers in procession to the nearest water spring. Everyone comes together for this occasion—no matter religion, culture, importance—families, friends, dogs, cats, chickens, pigs, etc. EVERYONE is part of this grand testimony that, in spite of the violence in Mexico with its organized crime, drug lords, kidnappings, horrific executions, plus lack of water and economic problems--- we have reason for Hope. What is this Hope? Because we come together as ONE, in procession, and we walk together as a people to the source of life: a natural water spring. There, we give thanks to God for LIFE, for our community, for our faith, for our crosses, for our seeds and we bless, we pray, we sing, we cry, we sit in silence and through ritual feed Mother Earth with the traditionally prescribed food and drink given us by our ancestors. Then we nourish our own bodies and return home, feeling renewed, refreshed.

It is quite a humbling experience to be part of these celebrations. No matter how poor, how much suffering is endured, how hungry, how thirsty, we walk together and receive strength if only just for today. That is all that matters. We have just today.

When I am here I enter into the lives of our Sisters and of their people, my people. I come to be of service, to minister, to accompany and be of help. Then, I return to the States. There I am the Director of Hispanic Catechesis for the Archdiocese of San Francisco and I am part of another reality that is equally full of the Hope that comes from entering into the mystery of the Cross. The people I walk with in ministry in the States are primarily undocumented immigrants who are responding to a call from God to be leaders in their faith communities, accompanying their people as they struggle to find a place within the Church in the USA. How do we live out of a spirituality of immigrants, in the midst of racial hatred, rejection and discrimination? Where is God in this? How do we profess Hope in this world we live in?

It is a rather paradoxical thing for me, but I keep finding "answers" to the situation in the States when I come to Chiapas. I enter into the faith expressions of the poorest of the poor, their joys and sorrows, strengthened by the roots of their Mayan faith. I return to the States and find myself going to Parishes all over the Archdiocese, entering into the life and faith experience of our Hispanic people, doing faith formation, doing theology, participating in the Hope they share.

Continued on next page

I run several faith formation programs in the Archdiocese for Hispanics, including one for accreditation as Master Catechists. On May 26th, after completing three years of study and reflection, I will know great joy when I see our Hispanic people receive their Master Catechist Certificates from the Archbishop. My students are ecstatic over this accomplishment. There's the Hope. Whether I walk with native indigenous people in Chiapas or our Hispanic immigrants, the testimony is the same. The Cross that they carry brings Hope because there are always "signs of Life" (*signos de Vida*), no matter the suffering.

....I am grateful to be part of the ministry of our sisters in Chiapas. Here, I accompany, I learn, I deepen in my experience of God. I teach, I live, I walk with Mayan peoples. I do the same in the States. I live in the Hope that the Cross gives to all of us. Because another world is possible, I live in a world full of HOPE.

....I invite you to reflect with me on how we live the Hope of the Cross, which was so significant in the life of Francis and Clare. S. Graciela Martinez

How did you celebrate
EARTH DAY?

What do you know about it?

1. Who organized the first national Earth Day?
 - George Washington
 - Gaylord Nelson
 - George Bush
 - Darby O'Gill
 2. When was the first Earth Day held?
 - 1900
 - 1970
 - 1982
 3. Who founded Arbor Day?
 - Johnny Appleseed
 - Julius Sterling Morton
 - Pete Arbors
 4. What is the number one littered item worldwide?
 - Cigarettes
 - Magazines
 - Newspapers
 5. What is the "greenest" way of lighting other than the moonlight or sunlight?
 - Incandescent Bulbs
 - Compact Fluorescent Bulbs
 - Light Emitting Diodes (LED)
- ANSWERS ON PAGE 6**



This is the only time we will see and live this:

This year, in July, there will be **5 Fridays, 5 Saturdays** and **5 Sundays!**
This happens once every 823 years.
WOW!



Book Review—this is a MUST READ!

I am devouring S. Ilia Delio's new book: *THE EMERGENT CHRIST, Exploring the Meaning of Catholic in an Evolutionary Universe*. This book has renewed my love for Jesus and his place in our lives today. When Jesus asks (us)—"Who do you say I am?" I now have much fuller, deeper, more meaningful responses. The chapter entitled "Jesus the Whole-Maker" challenged me and also confirmed some of what the Spirit of God has revealed to me in little ways over the years. The chapters on "Resurrection and Transformation" and "Can the Church Evolve?" were enlightening. I have read in the area of the new cosmology for years now, and this book puts so much of that together with the best in our Franciscan tradition. Although I believe Ilia is a Bonaventure scholar, she most often refers to Teilhard de Chardin in this work.

A few chapters were a stretch to understand, however, there is much to learn that is accessible in this book. I highly recommend it.



Cinema Review---this is a MUST SEE!

Please find the new documentary I AM and see it. It was directed by Tom Shadyac. It is the story of his transformation, from unhappy multi-millionaire, to wandering man with camera asking two questions: "What is wrong with our world? and What can we do about it?" The people interviewed are from various walks of life, primarily contemporary scientists and those who have been studying animal and human behavior. Two religious leaders appear: the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. At the end of the film I was aware more than ever of the hope arising in many quarters of the world today---the growing realization of the necessity of cooperation and compassion as we try to live in harmony on this small planet home together.

S. Susan Blomstad

A CELEBRATION TO REMEMBER S. Jeanne Rollins

It hangs from the top of the mirror in the bathroom I use very day and it is a reminder of last year's Jubilee time. It is a simple strand necklace with iridescent hearts, seed and tube beads and a shell hanging from its central point. It is a reminder of an evening when family and friends joined together in prayer and celebration of vocation—a calling for those to come and a thanksgiving of my own calling.

As part of the ceremony I had asked 7 people to bless me—people who had significant meaning in my life—and during the day preceding the ceremony, all of them called to say they could make the event for one reason or another. So, just before the opening song, I went to the microphone and explained my dilemma. I asked if there would be people present who would “fill in” and viola, seven hands were raised. These were others who had journeyed with me during the days, months and years of my ministry.

The ceremony “Santo” and was resisted, Carolyn, blest water. Ever so quietly others began their beatifying the blessings congregation stood from the story of the Matthew's Gospel.



It began with “Ven, Spirito peated a dozen times as my the congregation with holy the Native American drum and took up a song recognition of womanhood. Then the to listen to my sister Sue read calling of the Disciples in My homily was somewhat a

parallel of the Good News because I told my own story of following Jesus. Then I asked my substitute blessing representatives to come forward. They were Theresa Rice, a former parish leadership person; Philip Meany, a member of the Parish Finance Council; Jane Meyer, a representative of the Cowlitz Tribe; Judith Aguilar, the head of the ESL Department at Centralia Community College; Lucy Soldan, a Secular Franciscan; Teresa Bonegofski, who is a snow-bird friend from Mesa, AZ and my sister Sue. Jane was the one who gifted me during her prayer with song and the beaded necklace I see every day. And it was Lissa, my niece, who died in February, who lit a candle as each prayer was offered.

Those prayers lifted me beyond myself; they were so beautiful and sincere. Then we joined a circle and danced around the outside aisles of the church to the drumming of the Cowlitz representatives. We went on to the pray the Our Father together, and to add to the variety of voices being raised I did this in my broken Polish. Juan Carlos Zaragosa sang the beautiful “Praises of God” by Peggy Abbot to conclude the service. But no one left the church. After some time I figured I should lead by example, so I went down the middle aisle. People seemed to reluctantly follow. At first they offered their congratulations. I can't say exactly how or when it happened, but I was being asked to bless people as they were leaving. So that's what I did—one after another I blest them—and thanked them for joining in my celebration.

There were other celebrations and gatherings in my 50th Jubilee year but it is this one that I remember with the greatest fondness.

Photo: Jeanne's sister, Sue; Lissa, Jeanne's niece; Sr. Jeanne and her sister, Carolyn.

African Saying:

If you want to go quickly, go alone.

If you want to go far, go together.

MORE MISSION COMMITTEE GATHERING REPORTS

How do we live the Gospel today?

Northwest Sisters and Associates respond:

We emphasized the power of good example in carrying out each of our diverse ministries. These ministries include working with the elderly and homebound, hospital ministry, sacramental services, church office administration, retreat and prayer ministries.

We thank God for the inspiration we give one another.

Sisters at Marian Convent respond:

Being present to each other and to everyone we meet; a sincere intention to refrain from negative and unkind comments; ministry of prayer as a response to the call to live the Gospel; living through people God puts into our daily lives, being inclusive; opportunities are given to us without our asking; being fully present to all with attentive listening.

Providence House and S. Pat Rayburn respond:

- Recognizing and affirming each person we meet daily.
- Taking time daily to gratefully reflect on our calling as Franciscans.
- Realize that we are called to live communally and appreciate the gifts of each sister.
- Daily reflect on our beautiful Chapter 2009 statement that calls us to "know and be known, to love and be loved, forgive and be forgiving."

St. Patrick's Community responds:

I simply help people in our neighborhood and where I work; I am available when someone is in need; I am challenged to accept others and their needs graciously; all I have is time and it belongs to anyone who wants it; innately, we manifest a point of view that is uplifting for others. I can only be as I be—we agreed that each of us lives the gospel in our own unique ways. Comparisons have no place in our lives in this regard. We all agreed that in sharing these reflections with one another, we came to know each other better.

Please see page 5 for another response.



Summer Solstice, June 21, 2011
HAVE A SUN (SON)-SOAKED SUMMER!

CONGRATULATIONS

to the new leadership teams
in the other two USA provinces:



HOLY NAMES PROVINCE:

Provincial Minister: S. Edith Wyss
Councilors: S. Diane Gianadda, S. Mary Serbacki, S. Nancy Zelma

SACRED HEART PROVINCE:

Provincial Minister: S. Rita Cammack
Councilors: S. Patricia Podhaisky, S. Joan Linenbrink, S. Colleen Mahony

THE MIRACLE IN THE CEMETERY

I attended the celebration of our Jubilarians on May 28 – and a wonderful Jubilee it was. After lunch I was handed a manila envelope to give to another sister. I was unable to find her at the time. Then I was asked to go the cemetery to visit our Sisters' grave sites. I put the envelope by my left foot in the car so that I wouldn't forget it, (which I promptly did!). So when I got out of the car, unbeknownst to me, the envelope fell out! We visited the graves of our sisters which included my friend, S. Rosemary Lynch. After we left and returned to Marian Convent, I realized the envelope was gone and my heart in panic mode propelled me back to the cemetery.



It was 3:00 pm and very windy and the prayer service for the Jubilarians was at 4:00 pm. I looked all over for the envelope, up and down the rows of graves and in the trash can, praying all the time, but could not find it. Dejected, I decided to leave but turned around to look one last time and there at Rosemary's grave was the envelope with a small rock on top. Rosemary and my guardian angel saved the day, for within that envelope were the prayers for the Jubilarians for the prayer service. Truly it was the "Miracle in the Cemetery."

S. Lorraine Savage

Reflections of the Magdalen Community on how we live the Gospel today:

These reflections brought to mind many stories of "random acts of a sacred kind."

There was a story behind each of the following:

Taking time with others, listening, being present to them, sharing self as free gift.

Let go of outcomes, extend oneself, open your heart, share without expectation of receiving.

Preaching the gospel every day without speaking.

Recognizing loneliness by doing something special for someone else.

Learning from the strength and goodness of those in need, serving them with reverence.

Model self-determination, self-worth in the presence of demeaning behavior by officials.

Responding to the call of the Spirit to self-sacrifice and relishing the reward of a joyous day.

Pray for others, be with others in prayer, ask others, especially those in need, to pray for us.

Recognize we are in a particular place, at a particular time for a particular reason.

Be present, attentive, share what you are able to share and be content.

In dealing with the unexpected, remember "God will Provide" even when the car breaks down.

When faced with depression, self hatred for past failures for which there seemingly can be no forgiveness, described as "the window of the soul is covered over with dirt and grime, shrouded in darkness," remember "GOD DOES WINDOWS" (quote from John M. Talbott) and a story regarding a recovering alcoholic who received this special grace in his recovery.

Musings from the Archives

In 1929, the sisters were asked to start a Catholic kindergarten for the Japanese by Bishop Armstrong of Sacramento. Other religious denominations had been operating such schools for years. S. Robert Clauter, with experience in this field in Los Angeles, came up to Sacramento to begin this new mission. As S. Teresina Contris writes in the 25-year history of the province, "Joys and sacrifices go hand-in-hand as evidenced throughout the history of the Mission."

In 1931, the Holy Family Mission was blessed by the bishop after some fitful starts in attendance and in securing a suitable place for instructions and play. The chronicle states the first spiritual fruits of the Mission in 1932:

"...Kazue Iami, a little girl of 13 years of age and attending the Saturday sewing class developed TB and was taken to Sacramento County Hospital. S. Roberta visited her and finding her very low, baptized her May 4th, giving her the name of Marie Terese in honor of the Little Flower who made the baptism possible. Ashe died on May 12th. She and her father were taken to the hospital the same day, died the same day and had a double funeral from the Buddhist temple."

The spiritual joys continued hand-in-hand with physical sufferings especially for one family, the Kikuchis. During the 1936-37 school year, a group of six brothers joined the Sunday school class. The mother had contracted leprosy—Hansen's Disease—and was sent to Carville in Louisiana. The father lost his job, and after struggling for a time asked for help, finally landing a job with the WPA. The two youngest children were allowed to go to Grace Day School so that an older brother could go to school. In 1939, the six brothers were baptized with the father's consent; a long-time benefactor, Nettie Hopley, acted as their sponsor. During the summer of 1941, two of the boys were found to have the early symptoms of Hansen's. They were sent to Carville to join their mother at the U.S. Marine Hospital.

The last sacrifice for this Mission was the onset of World War II and the Japanese internment. Another story for another time.

A question for the readers: S. Teresina Contris wrote in 1964 a history of this province for the silver anniversary. She quotes from a diary by S. Dolorine Marthaller. **Do any of you know the whereabouts of this diary?** Contributed by our archivist, Kathleen O'Connor

Answers to quiz on page 2: Gaylord Nelson / 1970 / Julius Sterling Morton / cigarettes / Light Emitting Diodes (LED)

CELEBRATING A TWICE BLEST MAY 10th IN CHIAPAS

Today is May 10th, the day we celebrate Mother's Day in Mexico. It is also Foundation Day. As I am sitting here, in Palenque, writing this article, I do not know how to even begin sharing with you what is in my heart on this twice blessed day.

This morning we were called to our neighbor's house: the father of the household was murdered a few hours ago while leaving his work as a night guard. He was attacked by robbers who wanted the keys to the property he guarded. They cut his neck and face with machetes. We sat with his wife, Josefa, and some of their eight children. For me, Mother's Day will always bring Josefa's face to my memory. We will do the Vigil Services later today as well as the prescribed prayers over the next nine days in his home. Here in Palenque, the body is brought home right away and buried within 24 hours.

I am very aware of the Peace Marches and Vigils that have taken place all over Mexico these past few days. Thousands of people have taken to the streets, walking with canded silence, witnessing to the demand for a STOP to the violence. 40,000 people to date (we know that the statistics do not always reflect the truth – there are always more that what is reported) have been murdered or are missing due to the organized crime that has taken over Mexico. 1,000 people a month, since January, have been left dead in the streets, local neighborhoods or are found in large, common graves. Some of these victims are people migrating to the States, in search of work to provide a better life for their families.

Yet, in the midst of all of this, we have reason for Joy! A young woman, Nely Torres Cruz, has come to live with us to discern a call to our way of life. She came not too long ago for two weeks, sharing in our life and activities. She is a Cho'l Indigenous woman, 22 years of age, and the daughter of a Deacon. When she returned home she said she was missing us and wanted to come back right away. She returned with her simple belongings contained in two small plastic bags and is now living at Casa Nantic Magdalena. Her community, Letty and Mica, are her companions in her discernment. Happy Foundation Day!

Another reason for Joy: a group of Indigenous shamans and their families came last week to plant a Sacred Cross in our back yard, next to our newly built well. They were here a year ago on Foundation Day to ask permission from Mother Earth for us to plant corn and to ask forgiveness of Mother Earth because we had already built our house without asking her permission. There was an eight hour ritual with prayers, chant, incense, candles, processions, etc. Now, a year later, it was time to plant a Sacred Cross, asking for continued blessings on our planting and harvesting. The Cross was placed near the well we had built over a gushing, natural spring located on our property. We truly walk on Holy Ground every time we go outside to pick

bananas, papayas, pineapples or gather corn, squash, yucca – just to give you an idea about how much Mother Earth is bursting forth with creative energy on our property! *Continued on next page*

More Joy: we had a community day recently where our sister, Candy, expressed the desire to renew her profession to live the Gospel. We spent some significant time reflecting on how together we live the Gospel, affirming Candy in her desire to renew that commitment. This is what we said:

How do we live the Gospel here in Palenque?

*When we are out in the villages or doing our pastoral work here in our neighborhood, we visit families, care for the sick, prepare children and youth for sacraments, lead Services in our small Church every Sunday – all that we do comes out of the testimony we give: **we belong to the people**. They call us, “Lak ñá” (Cho’l for “our mother”) and “Nantic” (Tzeltal for “sacred mother”). We are their mothers because we walk with them in their sorrows and joys, we share their tortillas, sleep in their hammocks, wash in their rivers . . . **we are one with them**.*

Still more Joy: a reporter from NCR is visiting us right now. Barbara Fraser is a North American lay woman, based in Lima, Peru. She is writing a series of articles about new ministries that women religious are pioneering in Latin America. She wanted to write about Letty’s ministry that empowers Indigenous women and affirms their leadership. Letty is part of a Diocesan team (CODIMUJ) that organizes workshops five times a year and is followed up by visits to villages where the women give the workshops themselves. Barbara heard from Mica about her ministry: companioning Mayan peoples in the development of an Indigenous Theology. This means walking with the native Spiritual Elders who are reclaiming their rituals, traditions and teachings. She is on an international committee that plans yearly gatherings for 400 Spiritual Elders from Yucatan, Chiapas, Honduras and Guatemala. She also serves as the only woman representing Mexico in the translation of the Bible into the Cho’l language. This is part of an Ecumenical project. She is focusing on the Book of Judith and 1 and 2 Maccabees. She was in Costa Rica last month for two weeks of training at an Ecumenical Biblical Institute. Then, Candy and Consuelo shared how discernment to our way of life happens amongst us. Nely listened carefully as the community affirmed how cultural respect for everyone’s identity is integral to the discernment process. Whether Cho’l, Tzeltal or Mestiza, interior freedom in responding to a call to live the Gospel is central to our lives. Lots of wonderful things were said!

It seems like Mother’s Day and Foundation Day were “made for each other” here in Chiapas. We are the Lak ñá and the Nantic of the people of Palenque. Mother Magdalen, like Mother Earth, is giving fruit in abundance in this Mayan territory!

S. Maria Elena Martinez



Nely Torres Cruz

**ST. FRANCIS PROVINCE SISTERS AND ASSOCIATES
GATHER AT SAN DAMIANO, JUNE 19 – 22, 2011
FOLLOWED BY RETREAT, JUNE 22-24.**

Province Days, 2011: 42 Sisters and 19 Associates attended these annual days, this year held at San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville, California. The theme was: “We Move Together: We are Called to Share our Story.”

The Provincial Council presented a power-point presentation of the “Province Story” using the metaphor of a garden, and all who offer their efforts of prayer and ministry as the gardeners.

Those assembled gathered for three Eucharistic liturgies, prepared by S. Margie Will on Trinity Sunday, in which S. Margie gave an inspired and short homily around the Trinitarian God of love. S. Felicia prepared the liturgy for Monday, June 20 and S. Mary Mebane gave the homily, reflecting on the chosen gospel story of the Woman at the Well. Tuesday, June 21 was the Summer Solstice and S. Susan prepared the liturgy and gave the homily, highlighting the generosity of Brother Sun (that transforms 4 million tons of itself every second into light) as an example of the God of Generous Love. All singing was led by the capable piano fingers and voice of Pat Groves, former brother of Santa Barbara Province who came from Portland to be with us.

Morning prayers were led by the Council, Associates of the Northwest (in which we “stretched” for a spiritual “exercise”) and by Associates Jane Tobin and Vicki Post. The annual Prayer for the Dead was shepherded by S. Maria Elena Martinez and was very moving.

Two days of retreat followed which were led by two Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia: S. Helen Budzik and S. Mary Jo Chaves. The theme was: “God’s Extravagant Love: Reclaiming the Franciscan Theological Tradition.” 38 Sisters and Associates attended these two days. Response of S. Louis Provo and S. Mary Mebane: “The retreat was instructive, fun and well prepared. The time allowed for private reflection was adequate.”

**SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE of THE MAGDALEN DAMEN FUND DISTRUBUTED FUNDS
TO THE FOLLOWING RECIPIENTS November, 2010:**

Grants:

Bread of Life Center -- \$1000 / Capacitar, San Francisco -- \$1500 / Sophia’s Circle -- \$5000

St. Francis Church, Apaches -- \$5000 / Emmaus House -- \$5000

St. Francis Center, Redwood City -- \$5000

St. Vincent de Paul Homeless Help Center -- \$5000 / Asi es la Paz Franciscana (Palenque) -- \$5000

Scholarship Disbursements in November, 2010:

Special Ministries Helping Kenyan Orphans -- \$2000 / Cassandra Casias -- \$3000

Phuong-Anh Nguyen-Guach -- \$1,100 / St. Emydius Elementary School -- \$5000

St. Michael’s Catholic School -- \$3,500 / Teresa Maria Cardenas -- \$4000 / Ana Fabiola Chavez -- \$2,400

*Since this Committee had its beginning in June of 2007, it has provided a total of **\$355,000** in funding for programs/services/scholarships for the voiceless and vulnerable.*

CONGRATULATIONS!

S. Norberta Villasenor received two academic degrees this May
from the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley:

**MASTER OF ARTS IN MINISTRY
FOR A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH**

and

MASTERS IN THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

and as part of the requirement for the first degree, completed a thesis entitled:
“Maria, Una de Nosotras/os: Una Tilma de Justicia y Esperanza que
Abraza la Vida de los Pobres.”

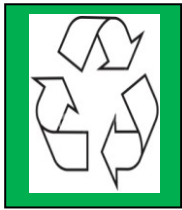
“Mary, One of Us:

A Tapestry of Justice and Hope seen through the Eyes of Outcasts.”

S. Norberta focused her thesis on Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico,
Our Lady Aparecida in Brazil and appearances of Mary to
Indigenous men in El Cobre, Cuba.

If you would like to read her thesis, please email S. Norberta at:

norberta2@juno.com



THE RECYCLING SYMBOL

The three arrows of recycling came into being in 1970, the same year as the first Earth Day. “The Container Corporation of America”, a paper-board company, noted a growing environmental movement. This company had an existing track record and was aware that recycling was an effective way of conserving natural resources.

Thus, the Container Corporation planned to promote awareness and spread the word. The company put together a distinguished panel of judges at the International Design Conference held in Aspen, Colorado. The art design contest was to create a design identifying the company’s products that were made using a content that was recyclable.

The contest attracted more than 500 young students. A panel of judges selected one by a 23-year-old from USC (University of Southern California) named Gary Dean Anderson. He had just graduated from USC’s 5-year architectural program. Gary took home the first-place prize of a \$2500 tuition scholarship.

Visit **RecycleSpot.org** for recycling information, where you can enter items to be recycled (such as motor oil, electronics, newspapers, etc.) to locate the places where they can be taken for recycling.

Contributed by S. Janet Corcoran, the “Green” Franciscan