



Sisters of Providence
of St. Vincent de Paul
www.providence.ca

PROVIDENCE PAGES

Spring 2019



Sister Gayle Desarmia (right) and Providence Associate Mary Olenick (middle) joined Sister Rose-Marie Bokenfohr visiting landmarks in Peru.

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Passing seeds to next generation



Come, Journey to Transformation



Providence Village is online



Sisters of Providence
of St. Vincent de Paul

Vision Statement

A world where the vulnerable experience compassion, justice and peace.

Mission Statement

The Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul are a congregation of vowed women religious called to be channels of God's Providence.

Rooted in the mission of Jesus, we empower the vulnerable through compassionate service, advocacy and networking. Sharing our spiritual, human and financial resources, we promote justice and peace for all creation.

Please contact me with your e-mail address if you prefer to receive an electronic version of Providence Pages and discontinue receiving it by mail.

Thank you!

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Providence Pages is a regular publication of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul

You Are Making a Difference in Peru

Your generosity through the Marillac Mission Fund continues to significantly and positively impact the people of Carabayllo where our Sisters and Associates live and are engaged in ministry. Your financial donations provide support in these areas: **education, health, construction projects, disaster relief, poverty relief and rural pastoral care.**

Thank you for your ongoing support of our work in Peru.

Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul

Marillac
Mission Fund
Supporting our Peruvian Missions



A Memorable Visit

November 21, 2018 Sister Gayle Desarmia and Providence Associate Mary Olenick left Kingston for Peru. They spent two weeks visiting the Sisters of Providence and the Providence Associates in Carabayllo, Peru. This trip was memorable because Mary was the first Canadian Associate to visit the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul mission in Peru. Each day unfolded with its own variety of experiences as recounted below.

Twice Mary and I visited the Thursday program at the mental health clinic that Sister Rose-Marie Bokenfohr operates. We had opportunity to meet the volunteers and interact with the clients. As well Sister Rose-Marie introduced us to several of the women who, because of family violence, are living in difficult circumstances and are being helped to better their lives through the Marillac Mission Fund. One afternoon we were invited to the local Medical Clinic for its 49th anniversary celebration. Mary and I were privileged to witness Sister Rose-Marie being honoured for her 50 years of healthcare service in El Progreso,

which is the area of Carabayllo where the Sisters live.

One Saturday we visited Fray Martín in the countryside where Sister Sara Jiménez Angulo ministers. That day there were five baptisms during Mass in the small chapel. The priest was very good with the children, ranging from 3-10 years of age, being baptized. He was not disturbed by the 6 dogs who wandered in and out during the service. Another day we went with Sister Sara to visit Las Lomas de Torre Blanca Alta and see

the foundations for the chapel which will in time be constructed. The women who came to meet with us were very proud and excited about the prospect of a chapel in their area. Currently it is very difficult for them to attend Mass because of the distance and the lack of public transportation.

Mary and I had several opportunities to meet and interact with the Peruvian Associates. Carmen Alomía Guía, Peruvian Associates Coordinator, met with us at the house and

other Associates came individually to visit. As well a number of Associates and Candidates came to the house for a “meet and greet evening”. The maple cookies we brought from Canada proved to be a special treat that evening. One Sunday afternoon the Associates held a fund-raising lunch to purchase a statue of St. Vincent de Paul for *Christ Light of the World Church* in El Progreso. At that event we met many of the Associates, Candidates and their families and had the opportunity to sample typical Peruvian food. Because it was Mary’s



Sister Sara Jiménez and 3 children.



birthday, the meal ended with a birthday cake and the singing of *Happy Birthday* in Spanish.

The students who are being assisted through the Marillac Mission Fund meet monthly at the Sisters' house to discuss current events and to share what it means to live Gospel values. Mary and I met with two groups of students. They are attending high school, college, university and technical institutes. It is very touching to hear these students reflecting on their lives and expressing their hopes for their future and the future of their local community.

We had a number of other interesting experiences during our two weeks in Peru. We

experienced the devotion to "El Señor Cautivo de Ayabaca" at an outdoor Mass in El Progreso. Mass was followed by a procession of the life-size statue of Christ through the streets. It is a devotion from the north and new to the Christ Light of the World parish and there were pilgrims from near and far in attendance. Mary and I spent one day in metropolitan Lima as tourists. Sister Rose-Marie was our tour guide. The highlight of the day was our opportunity to visit the Labyrinth with "The Eye that Cries" (see "*Visiting Peru — A Gift*" on the next page). Because it was December, North American influence was visible in the prolific Christmas decorations. Another day we toured the "far side" of the Chillón River

which does not have any extensive urban development. Here we toured a church and a fort dating back to the Spanish era in the 1500s. Next, and in contrast, we passed a large modern nuclear facility. Finally we drove past plantation fields with cash crops where we saw very poor campesinos at work in the fields. Another day we took a "moto" to the top of the hill where the Sisters live and then we walked down through the streets in our neighbourhood to gain a better perspective of living conditions in El Progreso. We were fortunate to speak with a number of people as we passed by their homes.

Although communication can be a challenge because of the two languages — English and Spanish — it is becoming easier now that some Peruvian Associates and Candidates can speak English. It was indeed wonderful to have a Canadian Associate visit the mission, meet the Peruvian Associates and see some of the works made possible through the Marillac Mission Fund. I was personally very pleased to re-connect with friends from previous visits and to make some new friends.

■ *Sister Gayle Desarmia*



Birthday celebration for Mary Olenick (right).



Visiting Peru – A Gift

The sights, sounds and smells of Carabayllo and other areas were very familiar to me. If I closed my eyes, it was as if I was back in mission in Malawi. There are a lot of similarities but there are also a lot of differences.

The congestion with people, cooking on the sidewalks, locals selling their wares everywhere, the very active markets, dogs running loose and the poverty were all very familiar. What wasn't familiar was the congestion with vehicles, especially the motos, and everyone (both men and women and sometimes children) greeting us with a hug and a kiss. They made me feel very welcome. I found people in Peru very open, with high levels of hope and resilience.

I was touched by many things I encountered in Peru, the poor, the celebrations, their up-beat music, the housing on the hillsides and how the hills lit up at night like stars shining in the sky as well as being able to witness the work that Sister Rose-Marie and Sister Sara have been and are involved in.

I think the highlight of my trip was visiting the Labyrinth, a Memorial, "The Eye that Cries", located in Campo de Marte, a park in Jesus Maria, a district of Lima.

I found it overwhelming, to think of roughly 70,000 people (men, women and children) that were victims to violence committed by both the Peruvian military government and radical guerrilla groups.

Lika Mutal, a Dutch artist was hired to construct a place of memorial to the victims. A Labyrinth was executed by her. At the center of the Labyrinth is a black stone which Mutal

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How to Pass Heirloom Seeds to the

In 2017 I wrote an article for this publication that quoted Father Thomas Berry and stated: “For this reason, the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary seeds are not a collection of objects that can be packaged up neatly in bubble wrap and put in the corner of the basement to be unpacked again when we get around to it. They are living beings who must be grown out on a regular basis and given the opportunity to realize their potential.” And here we are in 2019, in the 20th year of the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary ministry: Sisters and volunteers are packing seeds into crates in the hope that they will indeed be lovingly grown out and given the opportunity to realize their potential on new land. The two groups chosen to steward

the seeds are KASSI (Kingston Area Seed System Initiative) and Ratinenhayen:thos (We the Seed Planters) of Tyendinaga.

This task of dividing up the seeds between the two organizations chosen to steward them is a big one, but it is far from the only task necessary to complete. There has been some discernment on the part of the partner organizations as to what they can reasonably accomplish, which has led in part to a Seed Division Protocol to guide us in this task.

Ratinanhayen:thos and KASSI are also meeting with Sisters and staff to develop a proper ceremony to honour the work that has been done and the transition to future stewards.

But the most time-consuming task by far has been amassing information to go with the seeds, so that the stories and needs of the seeds themselves and how they grow are not lost and can be understood and embraced by the new growers. Over the years we have kept notebooks and paper calendars, paper and digital crop record sheets, electronic spreadsheets, a database complete with seed packet labels and photos—many, many photos! All of this disparate information needed to be brought together in a usable format, a binder that can be taken out to the field and a computer database for easier lookup and tracking of information. The binder contains information on all the varieties so the new stewards know what



1. Taking a variety from the collection.



2. Dividing seeds for their new homes using the Seed Division Protocol.



3. Weighing and recording the newly divided amounts.



Next Generation

to look for and how each variety typically behaves. The database is an updated version of what was built for the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary and includes variety information, research notes, seed saving notes, seed harvest information and photos of ideal plant growth for most varieties. A 46 page document has been created with text descriptions of all varieties currently in the collection. Along with our collected photos it would make a beautiful coffee-table book!

Over the years many seeds have been shared with the community in various ways—from donations to Loving Spoonful and the Community Gardens Network to free seed

packets on the swap table and “How-to” workshops at Kingston Seedy Saturday—so hopefully the people of this area are carrying on in their own ways and gardens as well. And of course Sisters Alda, Avita and Pat have received

the seeds they requested for planting their food gardens.

This has been a wonderful learning opportunity and I wish the Sisters and Seeds all the best!

■ *Cate Henderson*



4. Packing seeds into crates for traveling to their new homes.

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discovered near a pre-Columbian cemetery. She felt inspired to call the stone “The Eye that Cries”. In the center of the sculpture, a small stone that takes the form of an eye continuously trickles water. The Labyrinth itself is composed of tens of thousands of oval shaped white stones, each bearing the name, age and year of death of a victim. I felt very honoured and humbled to have been able to visit this Memorial.

All in all, the two weeks in Peru was a very

enlightening experience for me. The only regret I had was not being able to converse with the people in Spanish. I felt I missed out on a lot of opportunities to understand what was being said, to share and to ask questions. However, I am grateful for the translating that Sister Gayle and Sister Rose-Marie did for me and I am grateful for what I did get out of meeting the numerous people in Peru during the two wonderful weeks experiencing their culture.

■ *Mary Olenick, Providence Associate*



Come, Journey to Transformation

Each year, the Seasonal Planning Committee, a sub-committee of the Congregational Liturgy Committee, gathers for an afternoon of reflection and faith sharing on the scripture readings of the Paschal Cycle. This period includes the Lenten Season, Holy Week, the Paschal Triduum and the Easter Season culminating in the celebration of Pentecost. Based on the shared reflection, this year's focus is Come, Journey to Transformation. This theme is reflected in the music, homilies, general intercessions and décor throughout the season. At Evening Prayer on the Saturday before the 1st Sunday of Lent, this theme was introduced in a reflection by Providence Associate Eleanor Casey. The following is an excerpt from her message.

“Luke’s gospel, for the first Sunday in Lent, describes the time when, following his baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Weak from hunger and very vulnerable, Jesus was confronted by all the temptations of the world and came face to face with the darkness we all experience.

This inner journey was both intensely painful and profoundly transformative for Jesus. He emerged fully aware of who he was in God, fully conscious that love was the source of his being. He had pushed away the lies and self-deceptions that blind us to the awareness of God’s innate presence and could not contain the love that poured out from him. That love, the Word spoken in the beginning, sought and saw its own in all creation. Jesus was filled with compassion for all he met and could not remain silent in the face of injustice. He could not return to a quiet life. He was impelled to share what he experienced, to challenge the laws and practices that served only to divide and oppress. Jesus knew that his ministry would bring hope and healing, especially to those on the margins of society. He was equally aware that his message would



threaten and frighten those in positions of power. It would have been easier and safer to remain compliant with the laws and practices of his own culture but his message was so important that he risked everything to speak the truth. He chose the righteous path.

The Paschal Season invites us all to journey inward, to confront the layers of false self that hide love hidden



Sister Elaine Jacob

Elizabeth Mary Jacob was born on January 29, 1927 in Nyiracsad, Hungary. She was the third of four children of John Jacob and Florence Bodogany. She arrived in Montreal as a young girl with her family and attended English schools. She worked as a private secretary until she entered the postulancy of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul on August 15, 1947. After completing her novitiate, she entered St. Mary's School of Nursing in Montreal where she obtained her R.N. in 1953. Her nursing career began as a general duty nurse at St. Mary's Hospital in Montreal. She also took part-time courses at McGill University at this time. Throughout her career she held the positions of Head Nurse, Supervisor, and Director of Nursing at St. Mary's Hospital in Montreal and St. Mary's of the Lake Hospital in Kingston and finally, Associate Executive Director of St. Mary's Hospital in Camrose, Alberta. From 1982 – 1990 she served as a surveyor with the Canadian Accreditation Council of Hospitals. From 1991 – 2003 Sister Elaine served on the St. Mary's Governing Board in Camrose and on the St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital Board in Edmonton until 2002.



She obtained a B.Sc.N. from the University of Ottawa and a Masters of Nursing Services in Administration from the Catholic University in Washington, DC.

In 2009 she retired to the Motherhouse in Kingston. She died peacefully in the infirmary on February 11, 2019.

Sister Elaine had a passion for health care. She truly cared for the dignity and wellbeing of patients and those suffering from food and alcohol addictions. Her outgoing personality and sense of humour endeared her to many. She loved to talk to people and listen to their stories.

The Mass of Christian Burial, held in the Chapel of Mary, Mother of Compassion, Providence Motherhouse on February 19, 2019 was presided over by Most Rev. Brendan M. O'Brien, Archbishop of Kingston. Friar Ed Debono, OFM Conv., was the homilist.

■ *Sister Barbara Thiffault, General Secretary*

More online at www.providence.ca/obituaries

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deep within our hearts, to face that which prevents us from recognizing that we too are the beloved of God. Such journeys, always challenging, can be precipitated by significant life changing events that crack our defensive shell wide open or by small personal experiences that sneak up on us quite unexpectedly and leave only a hairline fracture in that shell.

... Only when we can face our own truth, can the false self fade away and the power of God's love be revealed. Nothing is hidden in that all-encompassing light. The truth could transform our government. The truth could transform our Church. The truth could transform our world. Come. Let's journey!"

■ *Albert Dunn, Coordinator of Pastoral Liturgy*



Sister Mary Benilda

Elisabeth Fedorowych was born on October 27, 1918 in Gilbert Plains, Manitoba. She was the second oldest of nine children born to Mary Filipchuk and Nicholas Fedorowych.

She met the Sisters of Providence in Winnipeg at the Providence Shelter and worked with the Sisters at St. Joseph's Vocational School. She entered the postulancy of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul on March 5, 1940.

Following her First Profession of Vows at which time she took the name, Sister Mary Benilda, she was assigned to the House of Providence in Kingston to help in the kitchen. From there she was assigned to Rosary Hall in Toronto, and subsequently to Providence Hospital in Daysland, St. Joseph's Vocational School, Winnipeg and finally to St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital, Edmonton. While she was in Winnipeg and Edmonton, she took correspondence courses in purchasing through the University of Toronto Extension Department and Hospital Purchasing through the Catholic Hospital

Association of St. Louis University. Sister did the purchasing for St. Joseph's Hospital in Edmonton for 27 years. In 1990 when she retired from purchasing, she completed a Pastoral Care course at the Grey Nuns Hospital in Edmonton and became involved with pastoral care at St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital in Edmonton until she took up residence at the Motherhouse in Kingston in July 2009.

Sister Mary Benilda died peacefully at Providence Motherhouse on November 28, 2018.

Sister was a compassionate, caring and deeply spiritual person and an effective member of the team at St. Joseph's. Her quiet gentle manner endeared her to the staff and patients alike.

The Mass of Christian Burial, held in the Chapel of Mary, Mother of Compassion, Providence Motherhouse on December 4, 2018 was presided over by Friar Edward Debono, OFM Conv., who also delivered the homily. Burial was at St. Mary's Cemetery, Kingston.



Sister Yvonne Patry

Sister Yvonne Patry was born in Athabasca, Alberta on August 31, 1933 the first of three children of Blanche Dion and Joseph Henry Patry. She received her education at the Athabasca Public School and High School.

She entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul on September 12, 1953. Following her First Profession of Vows, she attended Toronto Teachers' College followed by 32 years of teaching in the Catholic Elementary Schools of Ontario in Kingston, Batawa, Trenton, Prescott, Smiths Falls and Gananoque. She was also involved with the Legion of Mary for about 25 years. Following her retirement from teaching she worked as a Red Cross homemaker in Smiths Falls for four years and another six years in Picton before being transferred to Belleville in October 2001 where she became Pastoral Assistant at St. Michael the Archangel Parish. As Pastoral Assistant she visited the schools teaching the children to make and pray the rosary. She established Junior Legion of Mary

groups with the primary students from St. Michael and Our Lady of Fatima Schools. She also had a role in preparing students for Reconciliation and First Communion. Her other duties included preparing students to be altar servers and coordinated pastoral visits to nursing homes and retirement residences. She also coordinated parish education programs which included Bible studies for adults.

She had a deep devotion to the Eucharist, to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to the recitation of the rosary. With her outgoing personality she reached out to support those in need.

Sister died peacefully on January 18, 2019 at Providence Motherhouse.

The Mass of Christian Burial, held in the Chapel of Mary, Mother of Compassion, Providence Motherhouse, Kingston, on Thursday, January 24 was presided over by Most Rev. Brendan M. O'Brien, Archbishop of Kingston, assisted by members of the clergy. Rev. Richard Whalen was the homilist.



Spring offerings at the Spirituality Centre

SPRING SENIORS CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY SERIES

Canticles in Scripture: Opening Our Hearts to Transforming Grace

Thursdays May 2 + May 16

9:30am – 1:15pm

Helen Russell, csj

Register 2 weeks in advance for meal count.

Cost: \$20/session (includes lunch)

These two mornings will allow us time for contemplative sitting. We will use the Canticles of Hannah, Mary and Zechariah to ponder God's invitations in our world today. We will be assured of God's presence in the downtrodden, neglected and lonely; we will also be invited to become dwelling places of the God who cares for the lowly. A time of reflecting and pondering ...

Senior or not – if you'd like to come you're welcome!

WORKSHOP: Caring for our common home: Cultivating awe and wonder through images of Air, Earth and Water

Fri May 3, 7pm – Sun May 5, 1pm

Sr. Eileen Power CND & Kathy Murtha

Register by Friday April 19

Cost: \$165

"Rather than a problem to be

solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise." Laudato Si #87 Air, Earth, Water and Fire are integrally woven into the revelatory power of Christianity. As containers of sacred wisdom, the elements lead us into the heart of Christianity and at the same time unite us with our brothers and sisters across time and religious traditions. Most astonishingly, as we begin to fully realize that the elements are not just outside of us, but intimately flow through us, we find ourselves being called home to our bodies, our place in the global family and the web of life. Contemplating the Elements is a powerful way of instilling the awe and wonder that Pope Francis insists is necessary to overcome our attitudes of masters and consumers and bring us into unity with all that exists. Only in this way will we have the energy and vision "to honor and respect our common home and promote life in all its forms." Caring for Our Common Home is an interactive Retreat entailing scripture, symbols, media, poetry, reflection, prayer, ritual, input and contemplative silence.

Sr. Eileen Power CND, a member of the Congregation of Notre Dame, is a Spiritual Director and Retreat Facilitator with many years of experience accompanying people on their spiritual journey. She has a Master of Divinity from St

Michael's College. *Kathy Murtha*, is an associate of the Congregation of Notre Dame and has an MA in Theology from St. Michael's College, University of Toronto. Kathy was the Co-ordinator of Scarboro Missions Retreat Centre for 12 years. Presently she is a Retreat Co-ordinator at the Mary Ward Centre in Toronto.

DIRECTED RETREAT

May 29 – June 5, 1:30pm

PSC Team

Register by May 13

Cost: \$495 or \$75/per day

Deposit: \$35

WEEKEND GUIDED RETREAT

Walking as Guests on Planet Earth

Fri May 31, 7pm – Sun June 2, 1pm

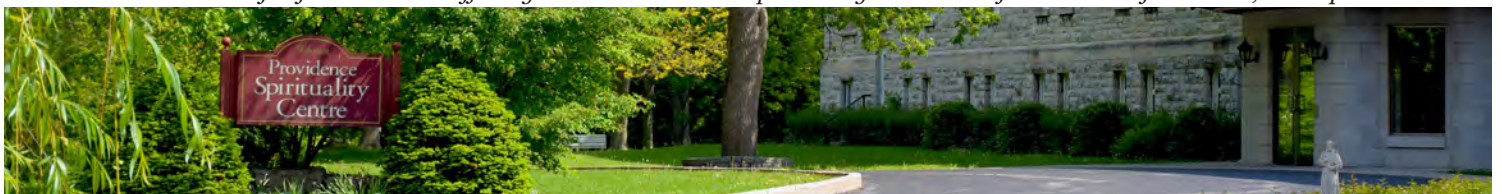
Helen Russell, csj

Register by Fri May 17

Cost: \$165

A guest is a person invited to visit someone's home. Walking as a guest implies an attitude of gratitude and reverence for God's Earth as well as an invitation to co-create beauty and sustainability for all other guests on Earth. This weekend will be lived in contemplative awareness and we will explore ways of praying that evoke wonder and gratitude.

Please visit our website for full details on offerings at the Providence Spirituality Centre and for contact information, www.providence.ca



Providence Village launches website

A new logo, website, e-newsletter to share the unfolding story of Providence Village

A village is more than its buildings and grounds. Much more. People, their relationships, and how they care for one another is what makes for community life. Our stories shape and connect us. Our stories make sense of the life we share.

Providence Village is in the early stages of coming to life. As the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul bring their ministry to completion while at once fostering the birth of Providence Village, the stories of what was, what is, and what is becoming are weaving together in rich ways.

With this in mind, Providence Village is stepping into a groundbreaking approach to sharing and discovering its story on a regular basis.

Partnering with Axiom News, Providence Village has launched *ProvidenceVillage.ca* and will publish regularly. Stories will be shared through social media and an e-mail newsletter.

As story lines develop, writers will connect with community partners to understand and offer to story their connection with the village. *ProvidenceVillage.ca* will also post stories about important local issues related to Providence Village intentions. Themes like supportive and affordable housing, hospice, mental health and addictions will be cultivated.

In this way the spirit of community will be fostered online as Providence Village takes physical form. Anyone interested and involved can easily stay up to date as things evolve.

The approach is a new one for Providence Village and its board, as its members are more familiar with newspapers, media releases and other traditional, printed forms of communication.

Ruth Gruer, administrator and director of human resources for the Sisters of Providence and executive director of Providence Village Inc., feels it is a next generation communications style.



The nimbleness that comes with publishing stories on an ongoing basis, along with rich social media engagement, is liberating and exciting. Ruth expects the approach will better represent the whole story.

Ruth says the Axiom News approach to authentic story development resonated with her, the Sisters, and the Providence Village board of directors.

Ruth says Axiom understood both the vision of the Sisters and the objectives for Providence Village. From there, a trust was formed.

“They listened very well and offered exactly what we were looking for,” she says.

■ *Peter Pula, Axiom News*

