



Sisters of Providence
of St. Vincent de Paul
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PROVIDENCE PAGES

Summer 2020



Easter décor for Triduum liturgies at the Mary, Mother of Compassion chapel. The décor plays an integral part of bringing the Good Friday and Easter Sunday digital liturgies to the Sisters during this new time of social and physical distancing.

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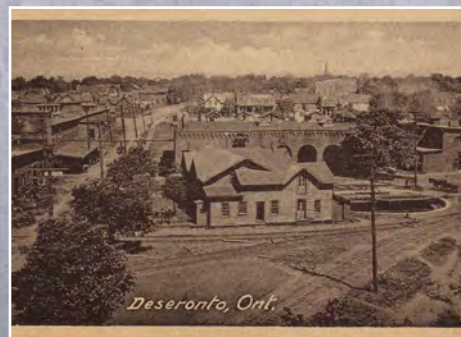
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Smallpox epidemic of 1879



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



Provident Easter planning during pandemic

Planning the Triduum liturgies is always a creative process, but this year required more innovation than usual as we adapted to the ever-changing challenges of COVID-19.

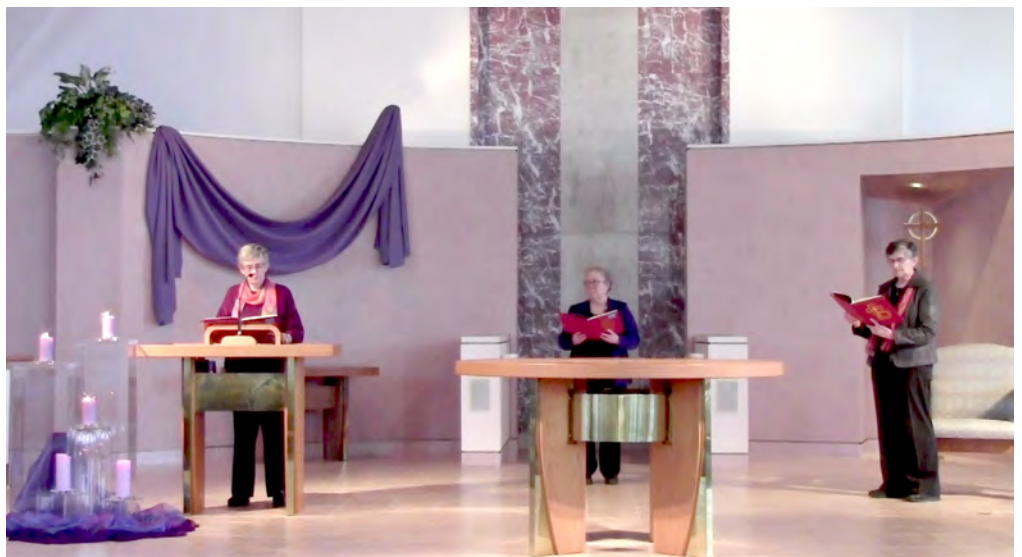
Providence Motherhouse in Kingston, Ontario is a residence for three communities of Sisters - the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, the Congregation of Notre Dame and the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph. The Chapel of Mary, Mother of Compassion is a worship space for those residents as well as for other Sisters, Associates, and members of the broader community. And the celebration of the Sacred Triduum is a highlight of the liturgical year. This year members of the Congregational Liturgy Committee found ourselves repeatedly modifying and revising the liturgies and rituals in response to ever tightening restrictions.

March 13 - Plan 1: Entry to the chapel would be limited to residents and staff, and gatherings restricted to no more than fifty people. This might work. The priest/chaplain, director of liturgical music, and staff in the Associates office would still be able to help plan liturgies and fulfill ministries. Seating was taped off so that appropriate social distancing could be maintained in the chapel. Only the presider would receive communion and venerate the cross, group processions would be omitted, and the ritual of foot-washing would be replaced with a video. We got to work adapting our original plans, selecting new

ministers and preparing revised programs.

March 30 - Plan 2: A directive from the province of Ontario had now restricted gatherings to no more than five people. Since a camera in the chapel has regularly broadcast liturgies to Sisters' room via closed circuit tv, Liturgy of the Word could be provided during the week by two Sisters. But could we honour the richness of the Triduum liturgies with only 5 people? And how might we provide spiritual support to the community outside of the Motherhouse? With the help of Mike Hammond, Communications Officer, we decided to pre-record liturgies for Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

A timeline of elements was created for each liturgy, and then a recording schedule which would limit the number of people in the chapel at a given time. On the Monday of Holy Week, with Mike as our videographer, three members of the Congregational Liturgy Committee gathered to begin recording scenes



Good Friday reading of "The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ" according to John. From left: Barbara Baker, Providence Associate, and Sisters of Providence Frances O'Brien and Jeannette Filthaut.



for the video to be played on Good Friday. Individual Sisters were called down one at a time to fulfill a particular ministry: proclaiming the Word, canting the psalm, incensing the cross or participating in a procession. Familiar hymns were sung by the small assembly of four.

On Wednesday morning we returned to decorate the chapel for Easter. Once again Mike recorded individual elements to be reassembled in order later for the Easter Sunday video. Although we were few, we sang joyful Easter hymns, ringing bells to highlight our Alleluias!

For each liturgy, a DVD was prepared to be broadcast to the Sisters in their rooms, and a YouTube link was emailed to Sisters, Associates and members of the Sunday Faith Community. Friar Ed Debono, our chaplain, prepared written homilies for each day



Easter Sunday Gospel Acclamations and décor in the chapel at Providence Motherhouse.

which were sent along with the text of the intercessions.

As this was our first-time recording liturgies, many lessons were learned that might improve any future recordings; however, we know from the many responses received that these resources were greatly appreciated by the community. Providence Associate Carol Groten commented, "I have been mourning the lack of our rich liturgies. However, seeing the décor, the women I know and familiar surroundings did lift my spirits. I had a feeling of connectedness with my community by being able to 'participate' in the ... liturgies celebrated in the Chapel."

■ *Ann Boniferro Providence Associate, Director of Liturgical Music, and Assistant to the Liturgy Office*



Good Friday décor, the Font and Cross at the entrance in the Chapel of Mary Mother of Compassion at Providence Motherhouse.

To learn more about our Liturgy ministry and to watch the Easter videos visit our website: www.providence.ca/liturgy

JPIC Committee goes Virtual

“The Gospel, our Church’s social justice teachings, the spirit of Vatican II, the congregational constitutions, charism and Mission Statements repeatedly urge us to respond to the needs of the times.”

This is how the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Office’s Committee mandate begins.

We are called to respond to the needs of the times.

JPIC office staff, are now working from home utilizing current technology more than we ever have before. With physical distancing in place we, like many others, have turned to Zoom to hold our meetings. It is a great way to connect.



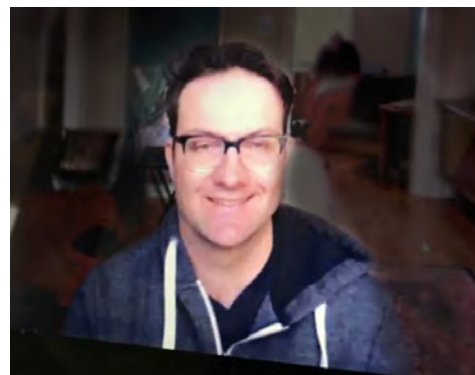
The JPIC Committee meeting held using Zoom video conferencing.

When using newer technologies for the first time there are often bumps in the road. Initially Jeremy Milloy, our newest JPIC staff member, had a camera issue, but he eventually got it resolved.

Jeremy started in the JPIC office the first week of January, and over three months later he finds himself working from home with an incredible work load. Advocacy groups had to jump into high gear to ensure the most vulnerable in our community could survive the pandemic that is sweeping across the globe. Everyone needs the ability to self-isolate, but how does one do that if homeless or living in a crowded shelter?

Outreach was required on all levels of government to ensure everyone has access to food, shelter and counseling services.

We spent our first evening at home on a video conference call with Mutual Aid Katarowki. They are a dedicated volunteer group supporting



Jeremy Milloy after sorting out webcam issues for the Zoom meeting.

people in our community, such as the homeless, the elderly, and people with substance use disorder, who are at a higher risk of negative effects if they contract COVID-19.

One of our tasks was preparing a letter campaign encouraging MP Gerretsen to support universal basic income so that everyone can afford to keep physical distancing. The basic income would support tenants, workers, small businesses, and small landlords and would boost our economy while helping to save our climate.

Utilizing the technology of the day, we will continue to respond to the “needs of the times”. Stay safe, stay healthy!

■ *Bridget Doherty, Director of JPIC Office*



Spotlight on Peruvian Associates

From November 27 to December 13, 2019 Associate Wen Bogues and I travelled to Peru to visit the Sisters and Associates in Carabayllo. A highlight of the time in Peru was the opportunity to visit several Peruvian Associates in their places of work and witness their ministry to those in need.

Education

Our experience in the field of education began with a pre-school operated by Associate Aurora Ángeles in El Progreso. The 3-5 year old children were delighted with our visit and we were delighted when they sang for us. The 5-year old children in particular were keen to have their photographs taken.

Our next experience was of a new and very poor high school in Torre Blanca. Each class had its own dilapidated wooden portable classroom. The school's location saves the students a daily trek to another high school further away. The people are hopeful that they will soon be able to access public funds to make the much needed improvements. Associate Marcela Esperanza teaches there in the morning and in another high school in El Progreso in the afternoon. We were privileged to visit and greet each class of students.

Our final school visit was to an elementary and high school in Collique, Comas where Associate Hector Reyes is the principal. This school was very large and well established but some of the wooden classrooms need to be replaced. Hector is hoping that they will



The school where Providence Associate Hector Reyes is the Principal. Hector is standing at the back of the classroom next to the teacher.

soon be able to access the necessary funds for this work to proceed. Here we visited both an elementary and a high school classroom. At each of these two high schools classrooms are laid out around a central cement pad where the students play sports.

The Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul through the Marillac Mission Fund sponsor a number of students in their educational endeavours. These students because of financial constraints would not

be able to pursue higher education. These students meet monthly to discuss and share Christian values and other items of interest.

Wen and I were privileged to be present for two such gatherings of these students and it was truly inspiring to hear these future leaders sharing and discussing their hopes for their country.

Peru has 145 universities. Of those able to give licentiates, 42 are private and 41 are public. The others are in the process of gaining accreditation.



Healthcare

In the field of healthcare, medical doctor and Associate Jaime Sosa invited us to visit the Health Centre in Raul Porras Barrenchea where he works. We were able to tour the facility, meet the staff and interact with some of the clients.

In particular we were able to visit a seniors' program offered by the staff. Another day physiotherapist and Associate Maritza

Oblitas invited us to be present during a physiotherapy session to assist a woman with cerebral palsy to walk. *(Story by Wen Bogues on page 8)*

One very special highlight of our visit was the invitation to be present at the 50th Anniversary celebration of the Health Centre in El Progreso. Sister Rose-Marie Bokenfohr who was instrumental in its establishment was honoured at this event. *(Story on back cover)*



Medical doctor and Providence Associate Jaime Sosa.

Sightseeing

On another day we visited a small shop in Los Olivos where local artisans sell their handiwork at a fair price. Associate Petit Fernández is involved with the operation of this tiny shop. The quality of the workmanship was indicative of the pride that these artisans take in their craft.

Two special outings rounded out our time in Peru. The first was a drive in the countryside north of El Progreso through small villages and large plantation fields where many campesinos work from dawn each day. The second was the opportunity to spend a day in Metropolitan Lima as tourists. We visited the historic Plaza de Armas and toured the museums at the Cathedral and the Dominican Convent which features the Peruvian Saints Rose of Lima and Martin de Porres. The day was completed in the tourist district with a delicious meal at Café de la Paz and time to shop for gifts in the Indian marketplace.

Tucked into these very full two weeks was our participation at a meeting of the Peruvian Associates. The gathering included prayer and sharing of stories, mail from Canada and refreshments. We left the meeting with a better understanding of our Peruvian Associates.

■ Sister Gayle Desarmia



Sister Rose-Marie making a purchase at the Artisan Shop.



Campesinos (farmers) working in the plantation fields.

Canadian Peruvian Encounter

What a privilege it was to be the Associate who would accompany Sister Gayle Desarmia to Peru. I came to believe it was my most spiritually satisfying journey to date. When I arrived in the wee hours of the morning, the taxi ride from the airport to the Sisters' home in El Progreso went through a very rundown section of the city. My first impression of Lima was one of "desolation". I wondered silently, what had I gotten myself into and was I up for this?

Well, let me tell you. Sisters Sara and Rose-Marie arranged several outings where Sister Gayle and I were to see a selection of our Peruvian Associates in their workplaces or homes. From clinics to schools and in between – daycare, artisan workshops and mental health support groups – we visited the people of Peru.

As a health care provider myself, our visit to a Centro de Salud - a public Health Centre amazed me. Our host Associate was the physician for the clinic, Dr. Jaime Sosa Aquino. The security guard at the front gate was expecting us and took us to a small clinic



Carmen Alomía Guía, Coordinator of Providence Associations in Peru with Canadian Providence Associate Wen Bogues.

office where Jaime met us and gave us a quick tour of the health centre, including the medical records area. Everyone welcomed us.

In the paediatric unit we were privileged to observe nurses doing "well child" visits back to back with the child's mother in the room. The "well child" program helps promote the health and well-being of children and youth. The assessment and documentation procedures were very similar to those I have done as a Nurse Practitioner in many settings from southeastern Ontario to Nunavut. Then Jaime collected us and we were

allowed to observe him seeing some of his clients. Generally clients are asked to call and are given approximate appointment times for when they will be seen. Sound familiar? But many arrive early and all are prepared to wait for as long as it takes, without complaint. Not familiar, right?

This was a public clinic in a country without paid health care. Its clientele recognize how lucky they are to receive free care. A large part of Jaime's clinic time is spent completing paperwork to justify that his clients are deserving of and qualify for free care. What this means



is his clients can have tests, prescriptions and referrals to specialists. These are things we take for granted in Canada. Jaime's clients are more often than not suffering from poverty-driven health care issues.

Some clients have gone to a non-licensed medical or health practitioner who is easier to see without the required personal documentation. Many are given incorrect diagnosis and/or incorrect treatments. We saw a young teen with a severe ingrown toenail that was treated inadequately with salves and poultices and needed a referral to a day surgery. As well, a baby diagnosed incorrectly with anemia was taken off breast milk and treated with expensive formula. Vital bloodwork, finally done, proved there was no anemia. Jaime also saw a child with a typical case of what was "most likely strep throat" that he treated with a prescription of antibiotics. The mother was able to fill the prescription for free because Jaime completed forms to qualify the family for antibiotics. Untreated or undertreated this infection can result in rheumatic heart disease.

Lastly we spent some time with a Seniors Group who were at the health centre for a special program geared to provide education and social time to reduce isolation. They were using adult colouring books with healthy lifestyle messages, pictures, puzzles and games to test for dementia or to simply stimulate these seniors. A snack of sweet camomile tea and a corn-based sweet treat was provided at the end of the gathering. Their gathering and our visit concluded at the same time so we had a group photo taken at the front of the Centro de Salud. Interestingly, in Canada almost all Community Health

Centres have supportive senior programs too. We are a global community in our priority groups.

Somewhere between my concerns of "desolation" and "what had I gotten myself into" came the realization that our Peruvian Associates, their families, friends and clients are among the most resilient people I have met. And we Canadian Associates have some amazing Peruvian Companions on the Journey as we travel "together-apart". May we find a way to remain connected!

■ *Wen Bogues, Providence Associate*



Sister Gayle and Wen with a Seniors Group at the health centre.



Looking Back to the Smallpox Epidemic of 1879

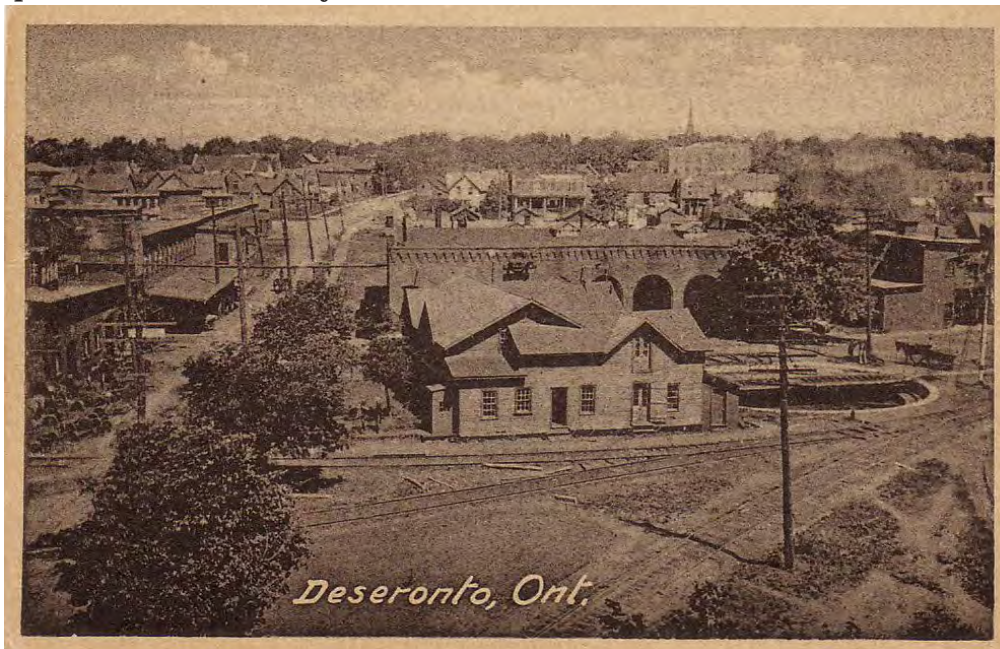
The COVID-19 crisis has been likened to the 1918 Flu epidemic; yet, if we look in the Archives there are also many similarities with smaller localized epidemics of the past. In September 1879, the Sisters of Providence were asked to nurse smallpox patients in Mill Point (later renamed Deseronto). Here is an abridged extract from the Congregational Annals:

1879 - The Superior hastened to respond to an urgent cry of distress coming from Mill Point. The Small Pox had broken out there and the application for Sisters to care for patients came from a couple of Protestant gentlemen, Dr. Saunders of Kingston and Mr. Rathbun of Mill Point.

Volunteers were asked for the work. The superior selected Sister Mary Mount Carmel and Sister Mary of the Cross and they left on the first of September. [There was only one] fatal case after the Sisters took charge of the temporary Hospital in which they were quartered. When they were about two weeks

there, Rev. Mother allowed Sister Mary of the Seven Dolours to go up. The addition to their number was gladly welcomed as the labor of caring for the patients was very fatiguing as well as loathsome.

About the 1st of October the Small Pox patients were so far recovered as to permit the closing of the Hospital and return of the Sisters. Mary of the Seven Dolours was very ill. In a day or two after their return the "Rash" or external sign of Small Pox was fully out. The situation was truly a critical one, for should the disease gain an headway in our crowded Institution [the House of Providence Kingston] the Contagion would quickly infect the City. Dr. Saunders was summoned and ordered her immediate removal to the Small Pox Hospital. The Rev. Mother Superior pleaded very earnestly to have her left but the medical gentleman warned her that all hazards must be removed within twenty four hours if the Institution was to be saved.



Postcard of Mill Street, Deseronto, ca.1900. Courtesy of the Deseronto Archives.

[Sister Mary of the Seven Dolours] was accordingly conveyed [to the Small Pox Hospital] towards morning and Sister Mary of the Cross consented to accompany the patient and care for her. Rev. Mother [recalled] Sister Mary Andrew that she might aid Sister Mary of the Cross, she having had the disease might fearlessly approach it. As the fourteenth day approached the anxiety was intense but though to the very gates of death, [Sister Mary of the



Spirituality Centre Response to COVID-19

Please be advised that Providence Spirituality Centre will remain closed until further notice.

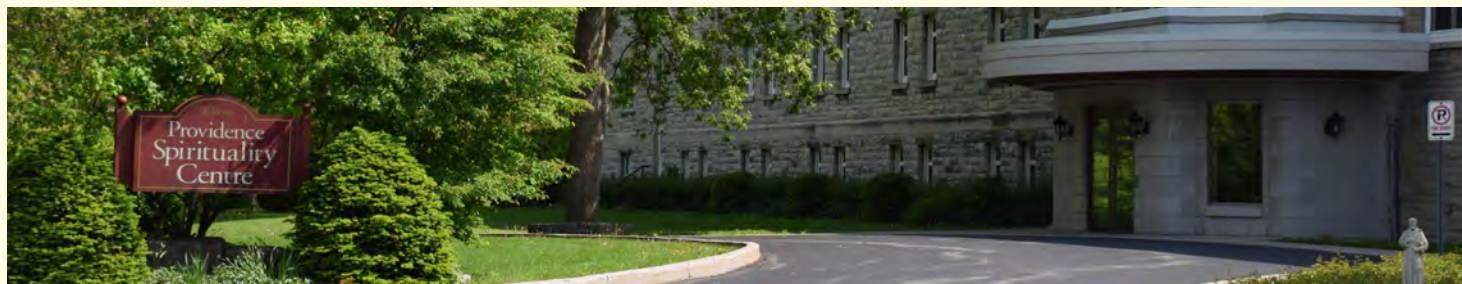
As we celebrate the arrival of summer we remain acutely aware that many people in our own country and all around the world continue the battle against the COVID – 19 pandemic.

As our hearts experience deep sadness for all the pain and loss, may we continue to take comfort and be strengthened in the words of Pope Francis:

“[W]e are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion. As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which God has linked us to all beings.” (Laudato Si - #220)

Our prayers and blessings go out to all!

Please check our website www.spiritualitycentre.ca for updates. We look forward to welcoming you to Providence Spirituality Centre soon.



continued from previous page

Seven Dolors'] vigorous constitution gained the victory. The Doctor said she would recover.

The doctor advised that everyone [at the House of Providence] be vaccinated and the clothing in the least exposed to the contagion thoroughly disinfected. A great deal of bedding, etc were destroyed. Some of the

Sisters were very ill while the vaccine was working through their system.

On the 6th November the physician allowed Sister Mary of the Seven Dolors to leave the hospital but she as well as those who were attending her were quarantined in the upper part of the house.

■ *Veronica Stienburg, Archivist*



A Special Anniversary

Friday, November 29, 2019 marked the 50th Anniversary of the Health Centre in El Progreso, Carabayllo. The Director of the Centre, Doctor Valverde, had invited Sisters Rose-Marie Bokenfohr, Sara Jiménez, Gayle Desarmia and Associate Wen Bogues to attend the anniversary celebration. It began at noon with a Mass. Both Sisters Rose-Marie and Sara were invited to sit at the head table for the speeches that followed.

The highlight of the celebration was the naming of the Health Centre's auditorium.

It is now called the **Rose-Marie Bokenfohr Auditorium** to honour Sister Rose-Marie for her initial and ongoing work to have the centre established. Following the naming ceremony there were more speeches, including those given by Sisters Rose-Marie and Sara.



Sister Rose-Marie Bokenfohr

The celebration was rounded out by food, dancing, photos and cutting of the anniversary cake. The card on the bouquet of roses presented to Sister Rose-Marie very nicely sums up the appreciation of the people for the impact of her 50 years of ministry in healthcare in El Progreso.

■ *Sister Gayle Desarmia*



From left: Sister Rose-Marie Bokenfohr, Doctor Valverde, and Sister Sara Jiménez. Sister Rose-Marie is holding flowers with a note which translates to:

***May your light and your vocation
always accompany us in this beautiful
task that you began 50 years ago.***

Many thanks.

The Staff at the Health Centre in El Progreso

