

Sisters of the Good Shepherd



Fall 2005

One Congregation ~ Two Lifestyles

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Dear Good Shepherd Friends,

In this issue we will take a look at the main principle that guides our mission as Good Shepherd Sisters, "One person is of more value than a world."

There are many stories in this issue that illustrate this value that is at the heart of our Good Shepherd vocation.

How glorious is this mission, how necessary is our prayer ... to help each person know God's saving love and friendship.

In the heart of our Shepherd God,

Sr. Rose Behrend, RGS, Contemplative Community: Harwichport, MA



One Person is of More Value than a Whole World

"One person is of more value than the whole world."

What is the meaning of "individual worth" for Good Shepherd Sisters, Associates and Collaborators? God created us to become more than who we are... God asks us only to honor our created nature, which means our limits as well as potential. This is the God who, when asked by Moses for a name, responded, "I Am Who I Am." (*Ex 3:14*) The human person is more than what he or she possesses or does. St. Mary Euphrasia tells us that we are not human beings on a spiritual journey, but rather spiritual beings on a human journey.

What matters most to God is the heart of the human being. YES! This is the depth of Good Shepherd spirituality.

People go where they get fed. People want to find meaning, feel a sense of belonging, a connection to the world around them. In fact, all religions have some expression of human value and dignity in their histories and their stories. For Good Shepherd people, individual worth and value are at the heart of our Good Shepherd mission. "One person is of more value than the whole world."

There are many stories and examples of heroism as well as despair and tragedy in our current day. One man's gratitude for the help he received during the evacuation from Hurricane Katrina highlights this concept of the preciousness of the human person, and the lengths that some will go to honor the dignity and worth of another.

One man, Harry Wilson, seventy-eight

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UPCOMING EVENTS

GS Discernment Retreat
Harwichport, MA

March 3-5, 2006



One Week A Shepherd
Wickatunk, NJ

May 28-June 3

Profession of Vows: One Sister's Story

A day was coming, the day I had been waiting for and when it actually came, I was so nervous! The day of my first profession of Vows was here, July, 30, 2005. It wasn't that I was confused about my vocation to Good Shepherd, but that I knew this is the day that would open a new chapter in my life. I wanted to say "YES" and live it *completely*.

I chose the saying of our Foundress, St. Mary Euphrasia, "I only loved", as the theme for my Vow Celebration and you may be wondering why...The day I began my journey with Good Shepherd, I knew that this life would take a lot of courage, strength and a faithful

prayer life; but I also found out that the key for this life is LOVE. If I really loved this call, I would be happy.



Sister Barbara Beasley, Provincial (left) with Sister Annatram Nguyen (right) as she makes her first profession.

Saturday morning, July 30, was not like other mornings. Everybody was

happy! My family members were with me and I knew they couldn't wait either for the moment I made my Vows in the Good Shepherd Congregation. I could see a happy face on each of my sisters gathered in the Province Center Chapel. I was so happy too, but nervous!

About 9:30 a.m. I sat in Sister Barbara's office to write my Vows in the Congregational Vow Book. I had to pause several times to ask myself, "Do I really want to say yes to God?" "Can I live these Vows with all my heart?" A lot of questions were inside me; but the answer I found was LOVE! Love

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years old and paralyzed from a stroke was at the front of a bus that had become engulfed in flames. He saw smoke, then flames coming from the driver's side, and remembers the screams and the hysteria from the other helpless patients on the bus. He remembers two firefighters coming on board the bus and getting him out through the front door and safely onto the side of the road. "They threw me off that bus like I was a newborn baby." They went onto that bus at the risk of their own lives. At the hospital with tears welled up in his eyes Harry offered these words of gratitude, "I want to thank everybody from the hospital for how nice they treated me. The nurses have been more than nice, and they are also beautiful."

When we look at people like Harry and the other stories of victims and their families, these suffering people teach us an important lesson. The poor, the refugees, the evacuees learned through this difficult experience that, what is most important in life is one another, not what we do, what we have, what we look like – but who we are as human beings. One by one we reach out to save lives.

St. Mary Euphrasia teaches us who this human person is. She saw God's tender mercy in the person of Jesus the Good Shepherd and in a profound respect for each person. In living out this spirituality we try to witness to the inherent worth of each person. Our relationship with each person in our families, communities, places of work and

especially with the people we serve, should be for them a means of encounter with the compassionate and loving Shepherd. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who sought out the lost, healed the suffering, brought liberty to captives and proclaimed the Good News to the poor. It is this story of the Good Shepherd, the story of love that challenged me to say "YES" to becoming a Good Shepherd Sister.

We do not do great things, we do only small things with Great Love. Maybe the most sacred things are the hardest to see, because they are so obvious. The Good Shepherd does not want even one person to be lost in the chaos of the times.

*~Sr. Jean Marie Fernandez, RGS,
Apostolic Community: St. Louis*

“One Week A Shepherd” Retreat

A woman’s reflection on her experience

Words cannot begin to describe my experience at the One-Week-A-Shepherd Retreat this past June. What is most memorable is the extraordinary sense of closeness and accessibility of God's love and an enduring sense of mission.

Amid a transcendental environment of nature and serenity, the Good Shepherd Sisters live active lives of service, prayer, community, and faith. Most salient to me was the faith-imbued laughter and pure joy that is evident as the Sisters carry out their daily tasks. These were not cloistered women, but strong, independent individuals who may very well have been successful in the secular sector, had they chosen that path. Instead, they had a noble calling and one that was very close to their hearts, a calling that was impossible to deny. For some, it's the sensation of "falling in love with God," while others spoke of emotional struggle, of running from God and finally making peace through acceptance. Some had even pursued romantic relationships before discovering that they had strayed from their true destiny. These stories resonated with me, as I came to understand that these

women understood their vocations in their own time, and through their own journeys. Often in my own discernment, I struggle with timing, as I am impatient to know where God is ultimately calling me. What I have learned is to give myself permission, that God will reveal to me my vocation in His own time. What's more, worrying is futile as it is never too late for God and there is never a bad time.



The other aspect which impressed me deeply was the myriad variety of ways a Good Shepherd Sister can serve God. True to the charism of "One person is worth more than the world," the Sisters' ministries range from teaching and counseling psychologically neglected children, leading a multi-million dollar organization to house underprivileged young adults, presenting to the United Nations issues of global trafficking, and lobbying politicians on behalf of the marginalized. I actually could envision roles for myself, a modern business woman, to serve in so

many ways! Marketing, PR, research, IT, skills so valued in Corporate America and on which my generation has worked so hard to perfect, would not be wasted. On the contrary, God calls us to utilize our natural and acquired talents to serve Him by serving others. Discerning one's vocation is like the inevitable discovery of what one is to do with one's life, a greater realization of oneself through faith and through community.

However, the most poignant element in this retreat experience is a heightened sensitivity to the magnitude of suffering in this world. Whether a misunderstood teenager, a victim forced to prostitution, or voiceless families whose basic needs are ignored, people are suffering and they are dying. When we turn a deaf ear, we allow them to die. The mission of the Good Shepherd is to alleviate that pain and to bring hope in the image of Jesus. That is all each of us can aspire to, particularly those blessed enough to be ignorant of injustice, human atrocities, and bondage.

~Cathy Magia, participant



Creative Experience of Charism of Good Shepherd for Young Adults from Ireland

This summer Sr. Margaret Lynch, RGS, and a group of twelve young people spent a month as volunteers in Thailand. They taught English, Montessori, and computers to different groups. They spent time with orphans, street children and stateless elderly people among others. Much time was spent reflecting on and discussing the reality of prostitution and sex tourism, which is so evident in Pattaya.



Left, Volunteers in Thailand and right, Sister Margaret Lynch

Ireland has a long tradition of mission *ad gentes* and that tradition continues into the 21st century in a variety of forms. One such development is seen in groups of young adults (who in former times might have spent their summer working in England or America) now opting to spend their

summer volunteering in various projects in the developing world.

Aware of this phenomenon and conscious of its value, both for the development of the young people and for the receiving projects, the Good Shepherd Sisters in Ireland entered into collaboration with the Redemptorist Fathers' SERVE project. SERVE has provided young Irish adults with volunteering opportunities in the Philippines for the past two years and this year extended the project to 5 countries in Asia and South America. Thailand was chosen for our collaborative venture this year.

SERVE gives the participating young people an introduction to development education prior to their overseas experience. There are frequent meetings for reflection on their experience in the light of the Gospel and the spirituality of the two congregations while they are away. They are encouraged to follow up the experience through awareness raising and advocacy campaigns when they return home.

The welcome and support received



Sr. Margaret and the Volunteers

from the sisters and staff was overwhelming and when the time came for the group to leave there were tears all round. Some plan to return for a longer period in the future. Others will volunteer in the Good Shepherd project for women involved in prostitution in Dublin. Many are interested in promoting Sharing Fair and selling the goods that they saw being produced in Pattaya, Bangkok and Nong Kai.

In an era when our global citizenship is all the more evident, a new generation of young people find themselves resonating with the words of Saint Mary Euphrasia "I belong to every country where there are souls to be saved."

~Sr. Margaret Lynch, RGS,
Apostolic Community: Ireland

My Experience at World Youth Day '05

Living WYD at 66 years old was a real challenge for me, but I lived this experience joyfully in faith.

An event of this nature has to be lived in faith because the youth search for true values and find meaning to their lives by meeting Jesus. I also lived

this time with a lot of hope. Hope to see those young people passing on to their friends and relatives what the Lord revealed to them in the secret of their hearts.

"We came to worship Him" was our common belief during this pilgrimage. Living this experience

was very revitalizing in spite of tiredness and the unknown.

During these two weeks I was with



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Good Shepherd Journey Filled With Love



From left to right, the sisters are:
Sr. Patricia Mary Prendergast,
Sr. Roberta Kienstra,
Sr. Ignatius Mason and
Sr. Jeanette Bromschwig.

Immaculate Heart Convent of the Religious of the Good Shepherd in St. Louis can boast of having four nonagenarians in its retirement community who have served a total of over 250 years in religious life. Although initially attracted to religious life by the inspiring example of different nuns with whom they had associated, they chose to join the Good Shepherd Sisters, the decisive factor being “the desire to follow Jesus the Good Shepherd as my model and to share His work of saving lost sheep.”

Sister Patricia Mary Prendergast, MSW, served in most of the Good Shepherd houses throughout the Midwest as a social worker doing group and individual therapy. Sister Roberta Kienstra, with her studies in Nursing Administration, worked in eight houses in the Midwest. Sister Ignatius Mason’s culinary expertise found fulfillment as cook for 20 years in St. Louis while concurrently serving as group mother to the girls. She also served as group mother in Chicago and resident counselor in San Francisco and New Orleans.

Sister Jeanette Bromschwig, M.Ed. served as a bookkeeper in St. Louis and Las Vegas and as superior in St. Louis.

Each Sister declares that she was

happy to be sent wherever she was needed. Sister Ignatius elaborates: “One of our vows is zeal for souls. In all the places I was assigned to, my prayers, joys, and sufferings were for the salvation of these precious souls.”

“This is my Body” is my favorite Scriptural quotation. The Eucharist is the power which animates my every action.’

Although nominally retired, 92-year old Sister Roberta still has a charge as sacristan and she takes her turn at the front door as switchboard-receptionist. So does Sister Ignatius who, when not otherwise occupied, can be found working on her plastic craft, creating artistic products to sell at the front door. Ninety-three year old Sister Patricia Mary keeps abreast of current events by reading various periodicals to stay informed on peace and justice issues for her prayer apostolate.

Asked what has helped them persevere, all mentioned the Eucharist as very important to their religious life. “Jesus in the Eucharist is my Lord and my God my God and my all,” said Sister Ignatius, summing up the sentiments of the group. “This is my Body” is my favorite Scriptural

quotation, added Sister Patricia Mary. “The Eucharist is the power which animates my every action.”

The four nonagenarians also acknowledged that community life helped them persevere. All felt that they would not have been able to live a religious life without the support and encouragement of community.

Now after so many years in religious life, how do they feel about it? “Very grateful to God,” they all echo. “I have never been unhappy over my decision to answer the call to religious life.” states Sister Jeanette. Sister Ignatius testifies in writing: “How grateful I am to the merciful Heart of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, for my holy vocation. My journey with Jesus has been a journey with many young people along the way, filled with love, peace, great joy, and a few sorrows.”

Sister Roberta asserts: “While I am awaiting the call to go to my eternal home, I continue to try to grow daily in the love of God and neighbor. I am encouraged by the Scriptural quotation: ‘Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it entered the mind of all the things God has in store for those who love God.’”

~Sr. Nora Ng, RGS, Contemplative Community: St. Louis

Cont'd from Pg. 2... "Profession of Vows: One Sister's Story"

has given me strength and courage these last three years to follow the call of the Shepherd, and now it will give me courage to say strongly "YES" once again. Like St. Mary Euphrasia, I don't have anything special either. I do know and am sure that I do love. It was love that filled my heart and gave me such peace as Father Peter De Vo began the Mass.

I sang with all my heart and professed my Vows with all my love. I know I have to grow in this

May God's spirit never depart from you, and may you remain constantly faithful to God's call.
~ St. Mary Euphrasia

call, but I also know, if I go deeper in this love, I will be able to say with St. Mary Euphrasia, "I only loved, but I loved with all the strength of my soul" or like St. Paul, who said, "...it is not I who

live, but Christ who lives in me."

I take this opportunity to say "Thank You", to each Sister in the Province for all your prayers on my behalf. I especially want to express my gratitude to those who in any way, loved and supported me with their patience and guidance.

In humble gratitude,

~Sr. Annatram Nguyen, RGS,
Apostolic Community: Chicago

Cont'd from Pg. 4... "World Youth Day"

one Good Shepherd novice of Italian origin, one Haitian candidate and two young adults; one of Columbian and the other of Lebanese origin. We lived the internationality with this small community and also in the large community of the WYD pilgrims. I lived in the midst of a world of cultures, languages and various mentalities. All those differences disappeared when Pope Benedict the 16th talked to all the people present and prayed with them. I give thanks to God for the opportunity He gave me to live this event, and I ask Jesus Good Shepherd to accompany those young people with His Light and His

Presence. As I give thanks to God for this event I also ask God that the WYD experience may bear fruit in abundance by the living testimony of the young people of the WYD. Many thanks to John Paul II for his prophetic initiative.

~Sr. Josette Tremblay, RGS,
Apostolic Community: Canada

OUR MISSION

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd approach each person with the same care of Jesus the Good Shepherd. We are guided by the principle that "One person is of more value than a world."

Through Contemplation and Action our mission of reconciliation impels us to promote justice and peace. Our vow of zeal, the heart of the Good Shepherd vocation, leads us to search out the wounded, those left behind by the world. We minister in all areas of human service, with a particular focus on the needs of women and children.

There are two ways that a Sister of the Good Shepherd can express her zeal for God's people – apostolic and contemplative.

Is God calling YOU to love with the heart of a shepherd?

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