



# Sisters of the Good Shepherd

Winter 2004

[www.goodshepherdsisters.org](http://www.goodshepherdsisters.org)

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## Upcoming Events

**"One Week A Shepherd" Retreat**  
Wickatunk, NJ  
May 30-June 6, 2004  
see page 4 for details



**"Good Shepherd Discipleship Retreat"**  
St. Louis, MO  
June 11-13, 2004  
see page 3 for details

Dear Good Shepherd Friend,

*"A Person is of more value than a World."  
St. Mary Euphrasia.*



Hopefully you will experience this profound belief and challenge of St. Mary Euphrasia's as you read this edition of our Newsletter. This truly is the reason that the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and our lay collaborators exist - "it is to go out of ourselves and to enter into God and a holy love of our neighbor - all are our neighbor."

So whether you are reading about the Good Shepherd Volunteers who share in the charism and mission of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; our pro-active involvement in speaking out against violence and war through demonstrations and protests; or the experiences of two women who participated in our Good Shepherd Discipleship Retreat and One Week A Shepherd program; all should speak of the inestimable value and dignity of each person. We are all the beloved of God!

In the heart of our Shepherd, God  
Sr. Debbie Drago

## Good Shepherd Volunteers share the Mission with Good Shepherd Sisters

On August 23, 2003 the Sisters of the Good Shepherd welcomed 19 Good Shepherd Volunteers into the fold. The Good Shepherd Volunteers is a one or two-year program for lay Christian adults who desire to share in the mission of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. These women and men commit to a year of service, living in community with other Good Shepherd volunteers, spirituality and a simple life-style. Below is the reflection that was delivered at the Commissioning Mass for the volunteers.

Good morning! My name is Sr. Debbie Drago. I am a Good Shepherd Sister from Wickatunk, New Jersey. I have had the wonderful privilege of being with the new Good Shepherd Volunteers this past week for their orientation program. And, I am delighted to be with all of

you today to share some thoughts with you and especially with the volunteers before they depart for their various countries, cities, communities and ministries. I especially want to extend a warm welcome to our guests and in particular to the families and friends of the Good Shepherd Volunteers.

"One person is of more value than a world!" This is the motto, the mantra, the

deep belief, and the very heartbeat by which St. Mary Euphrasia; the Foundress of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd lived. "One person is of more value than a world." When you really stop to think about these nine simple words, the implication of these words takes on radical significance. To live this mandate calls for a radical courage, a radical generosity and a radical love, which



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# Committed to Reconciliation ~ Promoting Justice and Peace

"Jesus had a special liking for the title of 'shepherd' because a shepherd's concern for the flock represents God's loving care for all people." St. Mary Euphrasia

*In November, 2003, Good Shepherd Volunteers participated in a demonstration attended by 10,000 people demanding the closing of the School of the Americas. Here is Meredith Gnerre's reflection on her experience.*

I feel incredibly privileged to have been given the opportunity to participate in the vigil and demonstration at the School of the Americas (SOA). There was so much to see, to do, and to learn through the course of the weekend that it's difficult to know where to begin describing the experience. While journaling and talking with my fellow volunteers, it seemed like a lot of what stood out for me had to do with an Oscar Romero statement that I read on the back of someone's shirt at the protest; "We who have a voice, we should speak for the voiceless." By going to the SOA demonstration, we had the honor and the responsibility to raise our voices, both for ourselves and for those who are voiceless.

On Saturday evening, the Good Shepherd Volunteer group attended the Ignatian Family Mass, together with hundreds of others who gathered on the riverbank to worship before going to Fort Benning the next day. I was deeply moved to join so many voices in reciting the Lord's Prayer; I was filled with joy to sing with those voices, lifted in songs about being one body in Christ, and being called to act with justice, love tenderly, and walk humbly with God. In addition, I felt enormous blessing in being able to raise our voices in protest without putting ourselves in danger, because while we were at Mass, sitting outdoors and protected only by a tent, we could hear military helicopters flying overhead. The sound of their propellers reminded me that if I were living under different circumstances, I would be risking my life in this action of protest. I felt safe as I sat at Mass, but the helicopter's roar chilled me because of what it would mean for people in Latin America who stood up for what they believed in. It filled me with awe and respect for their enormous courage and great love, for the fact that they stood up anyway.

The funeral procession at the gates of Fort Benning was solemn and beautiful, beautiful in a totally different way than the puppet parade that later filled the same space with music, color, and dancing. For the better part of three hours, names of victims were read aloud as the crowd responded, "Presente," and I was struck by how important the act of remembering and honoring each of these persons is, aside from the act of demanding that the SOA be closed. Not only were these victims deprived of their voices in the most extreme way possible, but chances are their loved ones were deprived of the chance to mourn them with a ceremony of dignity and love. Our ceremony was no replacement and probably no comfort, but I think that it was a much-deserved



gesture of remembrance and respect.

The procession moved slowly, and it was a long time before our group, lined up ten across, reached the fence marking the boundary of Fort Benning. It was already covered with posters, flowers, and wooden crosses bearing the names of victims when we knelt before it. The moment overwhelmed me. Lives converged at this point that would otherwise never connect. My arms were joined with our volunteer community, and, holding the Good Shepherd banner, the sisters were undoubtedly with us as well. Ten thousand other participants in the vigil surrounded us, and countless victims of the School were present as their names were read aloud and on the crosses we all carried. Meanwhile, just on the other side of the fence were the military officers guarding the fort. So many very different lives and stories were all layered together in this place. A prayer for the Nicaraguan woman commemorated on my cross filled my heart, but it was joined by another, less articulate prayer. In this second prayer I was trying to tell Jesus that if everyone felt the grief that filled me at that moment, everything would change. Ordinary people would have no choice but to speak out, and leaders would not be able to let the violence and injustice of the School of the Americas continue. Silence simply wouldn't be possible any longer.

And so, that is one of my greatest lessons from the SOA weekend. I know that I can't let silence be an option for me anymore, regarding the SOA, and anything else that matters. We who have voices, we should speak for the voiceless. *Meredith Gnerre is a Good Shepherd Volunteer stationed in Wickatunk, NJ*

**The School of the Americas** The School of the Americas (SOA), in 2001 renamed the "Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation," is a combat training school for Latin American soldiers, located at Fort Benning, Georgia.

The SOA has left a trail of blood and suffering in every country where its graduates have returned.

Photo at left taken in 2001 by Linda Panetta in Columbia. For more info on the School of the Americas visit [www.SOAwatch.org](http://www.SOAwatch.org)



## Sisters of the Good Shepherd

### Sister Story continued from page 6

And then, everywhere in the world I have gone in the service of the congregation during these past years in leadership, it is always in the midst of the poor that I continued to feel most powerfully this God of Compassion – whether in the slums of Bogota, the sweltering streets of Caracas, among the women in the alleys of Manila, the children of Sudan or Senegal, the hidden miseries of Lebanon, the ragpickers of Egypt, or the children sold in Pattaya.

My greatest wish is that the Sisters of the Good Shepherd come ever closer to the poor and not to be afraid to live among them, to experience the infinite tenderness of God. This experience will give them the desire to take up the struggle for justice and solidarity, to fight for the dignity of the person so that the rights of every human being would be respected. Today, more than ever, my heart is haunted by the suffering I see and I cry out to God that one day there will no longer be any injustice, nor war, tears, nor hate.

*Sr. Magdalena is from France. She just finished her term of office in General Leadership for the Good Shepherd Congregation.*



Sr. Magdalena, 3<sup>rd</sup> from right, with the General Leadership Council

## Good Shepherd Discipleship Retreat St. Louis, Missouri, June 11-13, 2004

### A Poem by: Anne Egwele

I go, I go puffed up, thinking Yeah, what is new;  
I listen, and listen and know something is amiss;  
I discover a whole new aspect to the Good news;  
I find truth in its simplest form;  
I see my puffed up tank of knowledge dissolve like ice on fire;  
I am nervous and reduced to tatters;  
I yearn for more and more, it comes and it comes;  
I learn to never think I have God in my pocket;  
In humiliation I receive love and encouragement;  
Oh what a wonder;  
Life is a mystery.

Upcoming Event

This actually sums up my experience at the retreat. I arrive feeling I will do the teaching and not the listening. I ended up not wanting the presenters to stop talking for I needed more and more. The genuineness of the talks given and the manner of presentation were indications of God's handiwork. I saw and felt true love and warmth. I left full of awe and admiration and believe the other guests felt the same. All glory be to God the Most High.

Anne was a participant on the Good Shepherd Discipleship retreat in St. Louis, MO last February 2003.

This retreat is a weekend experience for women who wish to spend some quality time in prayer and discernment. The focus is on the call of Jesus the Good Shepherd and the program includes the following: Presentations, Listening, Sharing, Praying, Celebrating.

For more information contact, Sr. Jean Marie at the Vocation Office - 7654 Natural Bridge Road, St. Louis, MO 63121 (314-381-3400) or email [JMFernandez@goodshepherdsisters.org](mailto:JMFernandez@goodshepherdsisters.org).  
Registration Deadline is April 30, 2004.



## Discipleship Retreat June 11-13, 2004 St. Louis, MO

- Presentations
- Listening
- Sharing
- Praying
- Celebrating

[JMFernandez@goodshepherdsisters.org](mailto:JMFernandez@goodshepherdsisters.org)

**"I Only Loved" St. Mary Euphrasia**



## Theresa Gaffney, writes of her great experience

The One Week a Shepherd Retreat...started with an Internet search. I was looking for the filling in my life. I came across the Good Shepherd Sister's website. I was being asked if I had the heart of a Shepherd. What I read sounded like me. So, even though it was past the deadline I wrote and asked if I could go along. Thankfully, yes was what Sr. Debbie got back to me with.

The next thing I knew I was on a commuter train with the hustle and bustle crowd of corporate ladder climbers. I identified myself as one of them, but also recognized that I know there is something different about me. One of the sisters greeted me at the train station. At first I wondered how will I ever know her in the crowd? They don't wear habits anymore. I laughed to myself, because you just know these things...you can tell a nun from a mile away...and I did! Driving towards the house I could see that I would have some time to reflect in a beautiful natural setting. Then I thought, "What am I doing?" In any event, "let's get this over with," I have to know. I was excited and frightful at the same time. The door opened and the hospitality flowed. I was happy to see a dozen women who had my same confusion and desire.

Getting to know these women and the sisters was a blessing. The sisters told stories and integrated us into their lives...they are still praying for us...this is priceless. We shared daily Eucharist and

prayer. We spent our days familiarizing ourselves with the mission of the Good Shepherd Sisters. We joined Sr. Clare to see what her workday at the United Nations is like. The Good Shepherd Volunteers spoke to us about their mission. Rebecca gave us a presentation on the Global Women's Exchange and her visit to Thailand and Peru. We drove to Brooklyn to see the works and the needs of the Center there. We toured and met students from Collier High School to see the great contribution to life they and the staff make. The week was energizing. And none of it hurt one bit!

We acquainted our hearts with our need to attune them to the needs of others. My friend Pat once gave me some valuable words she had read: "Kindness in another's trouble, courage in your own." That's about where I am right now. I thought I would come away from the retreat with a definitive answer. Amelia Earhart is quoted, "Courage is the

price that life exacts for granting peace." This is my answer. Courage. I realize it isn't over. And that's a good thing!

~Theresa Gaffney

### "One Week a Shepherd" A Mission Experience

May 30-June 6  
2004

Wickatunk, NJ

email or call

Sr. Debbie Drago  
for an application

srdebbie@optonline.net  
(732) 946-0515



## Upcoming Event

Do you have the  of a shepherd?



# Sisters of the Good Shepherd

## Good Shepherd Volunteers continued from pg 1

unfortunately in today's society and world is quite countercultural.

In today's Gospel, (Mt 18:12-14) Jesus tells us a story about the ministry and life of a good shepherd who cannot abide the thought, or the possibility, of even one of his sheep being lost. "To leave the 99 in favor of the 'one' is to understand our universal kinship with all human beings. What we hear in this parable is the preferential delight that our Shepherd-God takes in this one lost sheep being found and safely being brought home."<sup>1</sup> This is what radical, extravagant, boundless love looks like. Jesus tells us quite plainly, "it is not the will of your heavenly father that one of these little ones should be lost." These 'little ones' include: those who are different from us, those who have been deeply wounded by broken relationships and difficult life circumstances, those we feel threatened by, and even those we view as our enemy. "The poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized, the disinherited, the powerless and those left behind without hope are the Beloved of God."<sup>2</sup> In one of the Eucharistic Canons for Reconciliation the Shepherd's love for his people is expressed, "When you were lost and could not find the way – I loved you more than ever." In God's plan there is no room for exclusion. In God's kingdom all have a place at the table. And we are all called to participate in the bringing about of God's kingdom here and now.

Each of you, Good Shepherd Volunteers, has been called by God this year to enter into the Good Shepherd Mission of reconciliation and hope for all of God's people but especially for those who are in some way lost. You will have the special privilege, and sometimes difficult, human task, of participating in the gospel command to love with the heart of a good shepherd and shepherdess. As so many good shepherds and shepherdesses, you must imitate the example, the spirit of love, the courage, boldness and zeal of Jesus himself. Like Jesus, you will go in search of the wandering sheep bringing them back to the fold. You must learn to walk with those you will serve, accommodating your pace to theirs, taking part in their life stories and their often bumpy and winding journeys. This is a profound honor. The families and children in your care will trust you with their lives. They will grow close to you, as you will grow close to them. As they grow and change

– you will grow and change. Gospel service is always a mutually transforming enterprise. Seek to approach each person in your care as Jesus the Good Shepherd would. "Each person is present to him in human uniqueness, and Jesus calls each one friend. Your love for the families, children and young people you serve should awaken in them a sense of their worth and dignity as children of God."<sup>3</sup>

Good Shepherd Sisters are located in 67 countries throughout the world. Today we are delighted to be commissioning three of our volunteers to Paraguay and Peru where they will serve with Good Shepherd Sisters for the next two years.

I encourage each of you to enter into this volunteer year fully. The greater you invest and involve yourself in all of the facets of this year: service, community, spirituality and simplicity, the more you will receive. The choice is yours. Know that there is a force of roughly 5,000 Good Shepherd Sisters world-wide who will be supporting you daily in our prayer.

I'd like to close with a poem by Charles Peguy entitled, The Heart of the Matter.

*And the Lord God said:  
I myself will dream a dream within you  
Good dreams come from Me you know*

*My dreams seem impossible,  
Not too practical,  
Not for the cautious –  
A little risky, sometimes,  
A trifle brash perhaps ...*

*Some of My friends prefer  
To rest more comfortably,  
In sounder sleep,  
With visionless eyes –*

*But, for those who share My dreams  
I ask a little patience,  
A little humor,  
Some small courage,  
And a listening heart –  
I will do the rest ...*

*Then they will risk,  
And wonder at their daring ...  
Run – and marvel at their speed ...  
Build – and stand in awe at the beauty  
Of their building.*

*You will meet Me often as you work –*

*In your sisters, who share your risk ...  
In your friends, who believe in you  
enough  
To lend their own dreams  
Their own hands  
Their own hearts  
To your building ...*

*In the children who will find your  
doorway, Stay a while,  
And walk away knowing they too can  
dream.*

*There will be sun-filled days,  
And sometimes it will rain –  
A little variety!  
Both come from Me ...*

*So come now –  
Be content –*

*It is My dream you dream ...  
My house you build ...  
My caring you witness ...  
My love you share –  
And this is the heart of the matter.*

"What do you think? If a shepherd has one hundred sheep, and one of them gets lost will the shepherd not leave the 99 grazing on the hillside and go in search of the lost one? When it is found, how happy the shepherd feels over this one lost sheep." **Matthew 18:12-14**

For more information about the Good Shepherd Volunteers, log onto [www.goodshepherdvolunteers.org](http://www.goodshepherdvolunteers.org) or phone 888-668-6GSV x 780.

<sup>1</sup> Reflection delivered by Good Shepherd Sister, Sr. Helene Hayes, August 1999

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Sisters of the Good Shepherd Constitutions – Art. 5



## Sisters of the Good Shepherd

# Sister Stories

### An Experience of God's Mercy and Compassion by Sr. Magdalena Franciscus

To say something about one's personal journey is always to touch on one's privacy somehow, but I agreed to take the risk.

When I was a child, I was very shy and I dreamed of becoming a dancer. But this dream was never fulfilled even though I took dancing lessons. I grew up in a family where Christian values were lived, but no so involved in the church. My parents were much more involved in their own professions.

Personally, I believe I discovered God around the age of 16 when I was searching for the meaning of my life. The witness of a friend who was committed to the Scouting movement enabled me to discover the

Gospel, the face of Christ and I let myself be attracted to Him more and more. I never thought of the religious life and I had many other plans. The attraction for the person of Christ led me to commit myself as "den mother" of the cub scouts in a disadvantaged neighborhood. It also played a role in my choice of profession, leading me to social service with a predilection for the poorest, the most wounded by life. All these new involvements helped me get over my shyness and opened my eyes to another world much less protected than that in which I had lived.

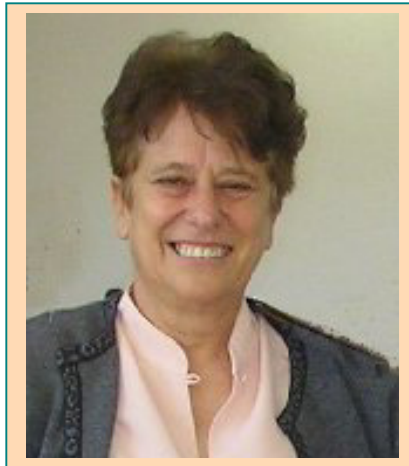
In my investiture, the priest had forgotten to ask me the usual question: "How long will this commitment last?" and the answer would have been, "if it please God, always." In the depths of my heart I heard that day that the response would be later but I wanted to forget the moment. I had worked with young people in difficulties, with women in prostitution ... I had many friends. I struggled interiorly against this call of Christ I felt within and which always

asked me for more. I did not want to hear anything about a total self-giving to God ... till one day, the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, I surrendered and I said YES. All that remained was how and where. My family was fiercely opposed to such a choice. I was the only girl and had only one brother. I felt attracted to the contemplative life, I could see no reason to enter a congregation where I would do the

same "job" I was already doing. And yet, I entered the Good Shepherd ... it's a long story to tell ...

The experience of God's Mercy and Compassion had always spoken to my heart and I desired to live among those whom life had handled roughly. I can say that my experience in Pigalle had been one of the most powerful I have ever lived. To live in the midst of prostitution, drugs, among those living on the fringe of society, simply *being there*, a friendly presence to persons discredited and rejected by society. To be there to listen with empathy, without judging, willing to enter into another scale of values, to intercede silently and have a wide-open heart.

I can say that in Pigalle, France I have truly felt the experience of dignity restored, of solidarity, of friendship, of the presence of Christ in all the faces, (in all aspects) the tenderness of God, which is constantly renewed with us without ever growing weary.



### 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?

### WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS:

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