



On The Edge

Editorial

I'll never go to God without You¹

Danielle Julien, mfic, Editor²

Long before Hubert Reeves wrote “Star dust”, Francis of Assisi had understood that all creatures, living and inanimate, have family ties, that they all proceed from the same God, Creator and Father, and that they all return to Him. All creatures are issued from atoms forged in the stars, some millions of years ago. The stars would have been born from the “Big Bang”, a gigantic explosion, initial source of a universe in expansion until it reaches an ultimate limit and then contracts and comes back to its starting point. How did the “Big Bang” happen, if not by the action of God? To me science does not seem to be a stranger to our faith. All comes from God and returns to God, “fountain of plenitude”. (Bonaventure)

In the Middle Ages, Francis had already experienced that all creatures were his brothers and sisters. Since only God is Father Creator, all his creatures are sons and daughters, brothers and sisters of each other. Jesus Son of God is therefore a brother, like all the other creatures. Francis, son of the Father, is brother to all creatures and of Jesus. “All things have been created through him and for him” (Col 1, 15-20). He is the origin: “God made all things through him and without him not one thing came into being” (Jn 1: 3), he is the One in whom all things have their existence and their being: “he sustains all things by his powerful word” (He 1: 3), and he is the end: “God’s plan is to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth under the one leader, Christ” (Eph 1: 10). Each creature: the star, the microbe, the grain of sand, the animal, the plant, the human being carries in itself a trace of God and is maintained into existence by his love. How could one thing be excluded?

Because of God’s love, we are called to venerate and reverence each brother, each sister, from the smallest to the greatest, the most gentle to the most violent. All are infinitely loved by God who wants to gather them forever in his bosom. Do we want to come to him in prayer, in justice for eternal life? We can never go to him without one of his creatures.

From the most infinite
of the bacterium
to the most immense
of the galaxies:
I’ll never go to God
without You!

Kaddafi, Mubarak.
Barack O.,
Elisea Ortiz,
Nora Brick:
I’ll never go to God
without You!

Whatever you may be,
Whoever you may be,
Wherever you may be,
I believe it:
I’ll never go to God
without You!

¹ Expression borrowed to Michel De Certeau sj

² This is the last edition of “On the Edge” before the General Chapter 2011, after which a new decision about its coordination or its continuance will be made.

A voice and hands for those in need

Sister Rose Bill, mfc



St. Cecilia's Parish in Solvay, NY wanted to respond to the social needs of the Solvay area so Sr. Bridget Lennon, mfc was asked to start an outreach program. As Director of Human Development, Sr. Bridget, runs the Food Pantry and Clothing Center, provides Advocacy for her clients and trains volunteers. In addition to this service, Sister coordinates the Bereavement Luncheons. Before a funeral you will see her shopping for food for the Luncheon or making calls to team members to help in serving the luncheon.

All the Sisters in the Syracuse area are in some way involved with ministry to the marginalized. This area is teeming with immigrants. Children attend schools where they can learn our language but there are waiting lists for adults to learn English. Sr. Bridget also works as a Literacy Volunteer. For the past sixteen months she has tutored a 35 year old man from Burma. Now he is able to express himself in English and he talks about his culture and his two years in the camps. As Sister says: "Welcoming the stranger is an integral part of our ministry. As we reexamine our responsibilities as Missionary Franciscan Sisters to the needy adults who hunger for the dignity of labor, we can make a difference in their lives. These people show exceptional faith in these trying economic times. Someone once said: When God is all you have; you find that God is all you need."

Have a blessed day and be safe

Sister Lucy Flaherty, mfc, Syracuse NY

Dorothy Day was one of the founders of the Catholic Worker Movement in the United States. She was a true peace activist. Her greatest concern was social justice for all. On March 16, 2000, the Vatican agreed to a request from Cardinal John O'Connor of New York to begin the process of considering whether Dorothy Day should be canonized a saint. The process continues today. As I read Dorothy Day's autobiography this past summer and fall, I discovered that her spirituality was based on the spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi.



Last summer, July, 2010; I applied for a position with Catholic Charities here in Syracuse. I was interested in working at Dorothy Day House which is a shelter for women and children. The shelter is located in the University area here in Syracuse. Right now we have a full house; nineteen women and one beautiful two year old boy. The women come to us through the Department of Social Services. The longest they are supposed to remain with us is 45 days. Of course, some stay longer.

We provide the "guests" with shelter, food, clothing and transportation when necessary. Many of the women come to us with mental illnesses, drug and alcohol addictions. Some have been abused emotionally, physically and sexually. We had two elderly women, not too long ago, who had been emotionally, verbally, and physically abused by their own children.

My ministry at DDH is very complex. I began as a simple shelter aide. But, my work has broadened a great deal. Right now I wear many hats. I work closely with the director who is a lay woman with a great deal of experience in the field of social issues. I work closely with the women in helping them to stay focused and not spend too much time feeling sorry for themselves. They get up every morning with a purpose. It might be to go downtown to their jobs program. It also might be to attend therapy

and group sessions of alcohol or narcotics anonymous. I meet with the women daily, one-on-one to help them find housing, doctors, behavioral therapists etc... I certainly have learned a great deal about what is available to these women if they just want to receive help. The one thing I have learned is that I can't do it for them. They need to have the desire.

Another aspect of my ministry that I have learned to love is the weekly 'house meetings'. I stay late on Wednesdays and hold a meeting with the guests. I have been trying to get them to deal with their emotions through writing. Debbie Driscoll has helped me with ideas for the journaling. Some of the women have difficulty reading and writing, so I have tried to make it as simple as possible. I believe the biggest problem the women have is "trust". They believe they are powerless and they don't have much trust in anyone. They also have difficulty with the concept of "truth". Some have been so untruthful all their lives that they do not know what "truth" really is in their lives.

The most difficult aspect of the ministry for me is the emotional, physical and most of all spiritual drain on my very being. The positive aspect of the ministry is the awareness of how fortunate we are, not only as Franciscans but as children of parents who were always there for us. I tell all the young people I know, especially my own nieces, "thank your parents every day for all their love, their support and the sacrifices they made to help us be better people."

One thing I am sure of is that my presence at DDH is making a difference. The staff always tell me the language among the clients is better, the respect for staff and one another is better since I have come to DDH. I hope that this is true and I hope to that with the help of God, I can help the women to center on their lives and move on to peaceful years ahead.

You have a blessed day, (comment made by most ladies when they leave for the day.)

And, when I leave for the evening, their comment is: "Be safe, Sister".

So, to all of you I say...

You have a blessed day and be safe!

Egypt's pro-democracy uprising

Sister Barbara Molloy – Saint Clare's, Heliopolis



As you may all be well aware there is a "winter of discontent" blowing across North Africa and the Middle East. So, when Tunisia's President Ben Ali stepped down after days of protests we asked ourselves - will Egypt be next?

We didn't have long to wait! We had just broken up for our annual mid-year holiday when the protests got underway. Little did we think then that we were in for eighteen days of turmoil mounting to near anarchy and chaos!

Even though we were a good distance from Tahrir Square, the centre of the protests, we still could feel how tense things were and there was a feeling of fear in the air. We were living in anxious anticipation during those days before President Mubarak stepped down. We were hoping against hope that the best thing would happen.

However as the protests continued we heard the frightening news that thousands of prisoners were on the run. With that came a wave of looting causing many people to set up an armed neighborhood watch to protect their homes. The latter came as a result of the streets being devoid of any form of police protection.



For safety and security reasons the two Salesian Sisters (the other two sisters were away in Syria) and myself sought refuge in their nearby convent. As we arrived at the convent I will never forget the sight of the medical staff from the neighboring hospital. From cooks to surgeons all were outside armed with iron bars and sticks ready to defend the place. The sisters welcomed us with open arms and made us feel as comfortable as possible. I dreaded the nights as when darkness fell the least sound or shout from the street could mean imminent danger.

The Irish embassy and the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin were in constant contact with the Sisters in Alexandria and myself. The thought of facing a very crowded airport in search of a flight was daunting indeed. It was easier to wait and ride out the crisis.

Eventually when President Mubarak stepped down after 18 days of relentless protests things very slowly began to return to some form of normality. One almost longed to see the familiar traffic jams!!! Some time later some schools opened including St. Clare's. The pupils were happy to be back but yet you could sense a lot of apprehension.



On behalf of Srs. Veronice and Margaret Mary in Alexandria, I would like to thank Sr. Elaine and all our sisters for your prayers and support. We really felt strengthened by your concern. The country has still a long bumpy road ahead as it embarks on a new era of democracy. Let's pray that the winds of change will blow favourably on this country, Egypt. "O Lord make us all instruments of your peace."

"A LIVING SAINT": Immigration reform vigil dedicated to Sister Nora

By JAMES A. JONES JR.
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MANATEE -- Since 2006, Sister Nora Brick attended each of Manatee County's annual prayer vigils calling for comprehensive and humane immigration reform. But because of injuries sustained in a beating at her home on Valentine's Day, the 81-year-old won't be able to attend this year's vigil set for 2 p.m. Saturday at Our Lady of the Angels Memorial Garden, 12905 State Road 70 E., Lakewood Ranch. Organizers decided to dedicate the vigil -- part of a nationwide event coordinated by the Interfaith Immigration Coalition -- to Brick for her ministry to farmworkers and other disadvantaged people in the community.



"It is important that we support a cause dear to her heart," said Luz Corcuera, program director for Healthy Start of Manatee County. "It is a cause for which she has worked so many years of her life. She will be there in spirit. She is a living saint, I think.

"It's going to be a beautiful afternoon. She will be more present than ever. "Everyone is invited, because she embraces everyone," Corcuera said.

Barbara Mills, co-chair of the peace and justice ministry for the Our Lady of Angels Catholic Community, said parishioners from her church have helped out at Sister Nora's Stillpoint House of Prayer for years.

"Sister Nora is such a wonderful person. For this to happen to her is so tragic. She has done so much good, providing not only spiritual health but material health," Mills said.

Although Sister Nora's 30-year ministry is ended because of her injuries as she recuperates in New Jersey, she has requested prayers for 51-year-old Eliseo Ortiz, the suspect in the attack.

"She has already forgiven him, which is incredible. This will be a place we will pray for her," Corcuera said.

A warrant charging him with aggravated battery has been issued for Ortiz.

Also helping with the vigil are the Sarasota-Manatee Farmworker Supporters, UnidosNow.org, Social Justice Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Church, Florida Immigrant Coalition and Students Working for Equal Rights.

Scheduled speakers include Bill Camastro, a longtime friend of Stillpoint House of Prayer; Marvin Mills, chair of the Sarasota Manatee Farmworker Supporters; C.J. Czaia, chair of UnidosNow.org; Mark Flanagan, former state representative; community activist Jim Delgado; and more.

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Youth with a Mission Ireland

Sister Anna Mary Hannon, mfic



Greetings from Rostrevor, County Down - known locally as Little Switzerland!

A few years ago I was delighted to respond to a need in Australia for help with the elderly sisters. After being refused a visa three times, I decided I had better ask the Lord what it was all about. On going to Australia, I had hoped it would be my place of retirement!

The result of my inquiry led me to what was then the Christian Renewal Centre where I had worked in the year 2000. The folks here were preparing to move on and needed help. Since I knew the place and the people very well it was a very easy re-entry.

In mid-June the group who had been gifted the property moved in and also needed a hand to adjust to such a big place. This group is Youth With A Mission about whom I knew very little. After being here a couple of months, the leader asked me if I would consider staying on so here I am.

They are an amazing group having been founded 50 years ago in the United States by a man from the Assemblies of God congregation who had a dream about waves of young people travelling the world

bringing the Gospel. Their motto could be summed up in “being Jesus with skin on” or, as they are heard to quote from St. Francis, “Preach the word and if necessary use words”.

I have had the privilege of meeting young people from all over the world even in this short space of time. Most of them were returning from mission outreaches from places like South Africa, West Bank, Haiti, Paraguay, etc. Others were en route to places like Turkey, Japan, Amsterdam and many more. On the 11th of March we are beginning what they call a Discipleship Training School. It will last three months and then the participants go on outreach to places of need wherever that may be. As you know the needs are many so they choose according to the skills of the students.

One of the desires of the leader is that, at some point, we may be able to collaborate with them. Since they have a Protestant founder, naturally there are more Protestants than Catholics in the organization but they are very ecumenical. I believe that World Youth Day in Australia was prepared for the most part by Y-wammers as they are called. I am the only Catholic here on the base but some Catholic students have come with the various groups.

My role here at present is adviser and general helper as well as bridge to the local Christian community. When the school starts, I will be at the sessions and hopefully be able to help mentor students as necessary. It is a daunting task in many ways but I am trusting in the Spirit to be present to help all concerned. The enthusiasm of the young people is so encouraging to see and to be part of their preparation for mission is truly a privilege. You may bump into some of them in your various ministries. They are in most of the countries of the world. You can view their website according to the country. Ours is www.ywamireland.org.

We would appreciate your prayers for all our needs. It is a huge building to care for and takes lots of time and finances. Also we need prayer for all the ministry needs involved.

I need a listening ear

Sister Anna Gallant mfc, Montreal

In our big modern cities, we find incalculable cases of persons who go unnoticed. How much hidden suffering! How much pain unable to be shared!

For one reason or another, it happens that some people cut themselves off from family, social or friendship links. Could we only imagine what such solitude is like? A pain expressed, a joy shared, a hand stretched in friendship! For certain people such a privilege does not exist, and so we drag our misfortune as best we can from one day to the next.

Here in Montreal, such situations are frequent. We have a large number of people living in anonymity – sometimes chosen voluntarily, sometimes because of circumstances beyond their control. It doesn't matter, these persons always remain worthy in their own right, loved by God and worthy of respect and love. Unfortunately, we cannot reach out to all of them and in spite of all our efforts and good will, there remain hundreds who continue to live forgotten, in destitution and solitude.

Fortunately, we see more and more hospitality shelters, listening and accommodation centers whose goal is to reach out to these people, to show them the love, and the respect they deserve. I have come to know such a center, called The Haven (Le Havre); its mission is to be an oasis of peace, of

hospitality such numerous people. They can reach us by phone or come to meet us for a personal encounter. The Haven opens its door from 9h00 to 17h00 from Monday to Friday. We have two phone lines and two reception rooms. I assure a presence every Tuesday from 9h00 to 13h00. How much pain and sufferings do we come across during these listening sessions! Some will admit that they really have no one to share with, we are their sole listening ear and who take the time to listen to their stories. Others need to share their experience of being rejected, misunderstood and alone. One woman was telling me about her household drama and she felt that she was alone to carry such a burden as all her family members were in another country. She has no one to speak to and this feeling of solitude as nearly as heavy to carry as the drama itself.

There people are truly living on the edge, and yet when we take the time to listen to their stories, they discover in themselves riches that they were not aware of and often they are able to find a way to give new meaning to their lives.

How encouraging it is at the end of a phone call or a personal encounter to hear someone say: “Your listening has deeply touched me, I feel now in myself a strength that will enable me to live my life more fully.”

Two Success Stories - Shekina

By Lidia Cristano

(Friend of Francis, Clare and Elizabeth Hayes, The Franclareli Group)

The story of Nelly Ruiz

Nelly is a woman with great faith in God, convinced of her own power. She's married but doesn't have any children. She has a good marriage and she and her husband have a business and live close to Piura. A month ago, she arrived from a medical trip to Lima. The doctors diagnosed her with breast cancer and said she urgently needed to have chemotherapy, which she refused. Nelly didn't share this news with anyone in her family except her husband, who was her confidante.

When she returned to Piura she went to our Center, Shekinah. In her first session we evaluated her, using a pendulum. Her energy field, energy centers and her whole body were positive to the joy of Nelly and all of us. At each session she felt better, thanks to God and to alternative medicine. Today she is enjoying good health. She continues with her daily work and enjoys the life God has given her.

The Story of Roger Polo Varas

Mr. Roger Polo Varas came to our Center, Shekinah, with severe depression. In the Regional Hospital, where Roger was working as the head of maintenance, there was a robbery, and because he was in charge, he was blamed for the robbery and lost his job. He stayed in his house and didn't want to leave to look for another job. His wife, Ana, had to support the home and care for the two children.

Ana spoke with Sr. Maureen and after this conversation, they convinced him to attend a session of reflexology. Through this treatment, he recovered, went to Lima to study reflexology, and today he is a healer and a prosperous businessman.

Everything is bought and sold in this world

Human Trafficking

Sister Gustina Renterá Chinguel

In Peru and with other countries there is a great deal of communication and consumerism, which I believe is the result of globalization. Communication, the positive as well as the negative, that we have in the world is very fast and easy, and can be seen in the methods of communication, clothing, cuisine, culture, and in human trafficking and prostitution. Today everything can be bought and sold. Consumerism has convinced us that the most important thing is to satisfy pleasure and receive money. It's sad because in the business of human trafficking human beings are taken advantage of who need a means to survive. They are the weak, the voiceless, those who desire to improve their lives.

Women especially, leave their country and come to our countries brought by people who cheat them and promise them decent work. But when they arrive in this country by sea, air, or land, people are waiting for them and do not allow them to communicate with anyone. They are brought to places, locked up, and their documents taken away. They are told that they need to work in prostitution and in very hard labor and that they cannot escape because they threatened death to their family, or they offer to pay them more.

A few days ago this year a boat was found with people coming from China in the port of Paita, Piura. They were undocumented. There are many who cannot be rescued or found, because it is a well-organized, quiet and very dangerous network.

The men and women religious in the Latin America countries have seen the need to organize themselves in order to help these people who are being traded in this inhuman, unworthy business. They have formed a network in different Latino countries of congregations in order to communicate among themselves and help in this new Ministry.

Trafficking is common in tourist areas. In Peru surveys indicate that there is prostitution and trafficking in women in the Department of Cuzco, some departments of the Peruvian jungle in the city of Arequipa and Piura. I believe it may be in other departments also, but it must very well hidden is difficult to locate.

This Latin-American web is recently being formed, and is named "kausay", a Quechan Word, meaning "full life". The group needs clearer direction and goals in order to be effective. On April 2 of this year there was a workshop for those who will work in this ministry. The presenters were OIM (International Migration Organization) and The Well Movement, who work in this ministry.

The workshop that these two organizations gave informed us that in our country, we have a law and a regulation; there is a telephone line to call seeking advice in these cases. Also, we learned how to recognize when there is trafficking or prostitution, and to know that there are organizations of Lay people who are working in this ministry. Now we religious will be part of this work. We religious will be a big help, especially accompanying the victims and for the reception of some who are en route.

This is a ministry that needs a lot of care and prudence because there is danger of death to those who try to investigate these cases.