



# St. Margaret's Quarterly

St. Margaret's Convent

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## IMAGING THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTMAS

By Adele Marie, SSM

At the Boston Convent, the liturgy of Christmas begins with the Dedication of the Crèche. Our nativity scene is placed in the vestibule just outside the chapel entrance. After the prayers, the Gospel according to St. Luke is proclaimed. It is Luke's Gospel which provides the inspiration for nativity scenes the world over.

Three dimensional nativity scenes were first set up in churches in 10th century Rome. As the custom grew in popularity, the addition of gold, silver, jewels, and precious stones made these displays quite ornate. Such opulence was a far cry from the original setting of Christ's birth. St. Francis of Assisi revised these gaudy

displays. In 1224 he created the first crèche that was true to the Biblical account of Christ's birth. The scene that St. Francis fashioned for the people of the village of Greccio, Italy, was a dramatic witness to the humble origins of our Savior. The manger scene was

side the chapel. It has been featured on Christmas cards, on bulletin covers and in the Quarterly. This beautiful crèche was hand crafted by the Community of St. Mary the Virgin in Wantage, England, in 1929. It was brought to Boston by Mother Mary Agnes and has

been a part of the Christmas tradition at the convent for over sixty years. Like many beautiful, delicate things, it had recently begun to show its age. Several of the animals had been slightly damaged, and other pieces had become chipped and needed attention. We asked artist Tammy Packard and her assistant Brian to repair



*The Sisters wish you all the blessings of this Christmas season.*

so beloved by the villagers that it was repeated year after year. Gradually the practice was adopted by other towns and the custom of the Christmas crèche spread throughout the world.

it for us, and they did a beautiful job! We hope that you will take the time to look closely at the crèche and to appreciate, with us, the joy of this beautiful reminder of the Nativity of our Lord.

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## RESTORATION OF CRÈCHE FIGURES

By Kristina Frances, SSM

Many of our guests at services during the Christmas season have commented on the crèche displayed in the large window alcove out-

## THANK YOU

The Sisters would like to thank all of our Associates and friends who contributed to our St. Margaret's Day offering. The new furnace was installed in St. Marina's late in August and is functioning beautifully. Thanks also to Rosemary Sullivan, Treasurer of the Offering, for all of her hard work.

## WE ALL MAKE THE MASS!

By Kristina Frances, SSM

On October 13 and 14, Sr. Ann and I attended a workshop at the Cathedral of St. Paul called "Participemos en la Misa! / We All Make the Mass!" This was a bi-lingual festival and worship experience which featured a group of clergy and worship leaders from St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco, and members of several Spanish speaking churches in our own diocese. We prayed in Spanish, ate wonderful Brazilian food, and talked about being part of a church whose members speak many languages and come from many cultures. It was invigorating to be immersed in Spanish, and we all made a glorious sound as we sang together accompanied by guitar and mandolins.

## NIGHT PRAYER

By Kristina Frances, SSM

Sr. Kristina Frances joined in singing Night Prayer at the Episcopal Church of the Messiah in Newton on October 1, 2006. Night Prayer is sung by the Schola Nocturna, a twenty-four voice ensemble, on the first Sunday of each month, and is an expanded version of the ancient monastic Compline service. This year Night Prayer featured a newly composed setting of Compline written by Daryl Bichel, the director of music at Church of the Messiah. Daryl is a very talented composer and organist, and he comes to play the organ for us when Sr. Carolyn is away from the convent.

## FIT AT ANY AGE

By Grace, SSM

As you can see by the accompanying photo, Sr. Lucy Mary is enjoying her workout! Sister sent us this picture to show us just how fit and active you can be at any age. She is approaching her ninetieth birthday in January, and is very

happily living at The Martin Luther Home in Clinton, New York.

All of our sisters try to stay both mentally and physically active for as long as possible. As women are living longer these days, it is all the more important to keep up the daily habits of good nutrition, mental and social activity, and physical exercise.

Sr. Catherine Louise, herself over ninety, walks nearly everywhere here in Boston, provided the weather is good. Sr. Marion attends the Rogerson Communities program in Roslindale three days per week, where she can often be found in the exercise room, working on the treadmill or other heavier equipment. Sr. Mary Michael keeps mentally sharp by writing meditations for Forward Day by Day and the Bible Reading Fellowship. Sr. Brigid also attends a Rogerson Communities program in Jamaica Plain, and participates in yoga classes, current events discussions, and other activities. Sr. Ann swims several times a week at the Roxbury YMCA. The "younger" sisters get plenty of exercise going up and down our hill on the way to the subway.

There is an exercise room at the Boston Convent with several different types of equipment for the sisters to use, and we maintain a library of exercise videos. So, with a commitment to maintain good health habits and active lifestyles, the sisters hope to be able to serve God for many years to come!



## EVENTS FOR ADVENT, CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEARS

**Advent Day of Prayer, Saturday, December 9, from 9:30 am - 3:00 pm.**

"The Three Comings of Christ," led by Sr. Carolyn, SSM. Join the Sisters at the Boston Convent for a Day of Prayer as we anticipate the coming of Christ into the world. Luncheon is included. The suggested donation for the day is \$25 which should be mailed to the Registration Desk prior to the day itself, ensuring your registration.

**Personal Prayer Weekend December 15-17.**

This is an opportunity to savor Advent's final days and to prepare for Christmas in the setting of a private retreat, supported by an atmosphere of prayerful silence, the Eucharist and the Daily Office. Please call the Reservation Desk for more information and to register.

**Welcoming the New Year Dec. 31.**

We welcome you to join us at the Boston Convent for this service of Lessons, Carols and Other Music which begins at 7:30 pm. Sr. Grace will give the reflection. Reception and refreshments follow the service. Please let us know if you are coming so that we may make adequate preparations. Overnight accommodations are available. Contact the Reservations Desk to reserve a room. Early bookings are advisable.

**Feast of the Holy Name, January 1, 2007.**

Choral Eucharist at 11:30 am. The Rev. Canon Charles Lafond will preach. Festive dinner will follow. Please let us know if you are coming so that we may make adequate preparations.

## NEWS FROM HAITI

By Marie Margaret, SSM

We give thanks to God that our postulant Kethia was able to get a visa to come to Boston for six months. She will return to Haiti in December. She seems to be very much at home here. She has a good knowledge of English in writing, but she needs to practice understanding conversation.

We are still in the process of drafting contracts for the well at the Foyer Notre Dame. The people trying to help us need to agree first with the contract that the contractor offers and the cost. It would be such a blessing if we do not have to be running to the convent to get water.

I mailed our scholarship supporters the information about their protégés. The parents are anxiously waiting for me. Without your help there is no school for these children this year; this is a cry for help! They need your help more than ever. The economic situation of Haiti is not improving; it is very hard on everyone, more so on people with little means to survive. By helping these children today, you are helping them for a better tomorrow, which is also a help to the church and the Haiti of tomorrow. I hope someday they will be able to help some others as responsible Christians, and citizens. The children, their parents, and we Sisters are very grateful to you for what you have done for them and will continue to do for them.

There is no word that can express our gratitude to all our supporters, Associates and friends. You make it possible for us to survive the high cost of living in Haiti. As the Foyer Notre Dame's residents get older, caring for them requires more people and costs more. As you know, the residents cannot afford to contribute for the upkeep of the Foyer. It is entirely your donations which keep the Foyer going.

We try to keep the residents as active as they are able to be. Bernard, the only man we have at the Foyer, went to camp with the men's group. Merilia was supposed to go with the women of the church. The camp was cancelled. I do not know why. We also had planned to celebrate St. Margaret's Day before we came to Boston this summer. We had to cancel because they had a demonstration in Port-au-Prince on Saturday, July 15. We did not know how it would end. Fortunately, all went well except it would have been scary for us that day if we were eating in the convent yard and heard that commotion outside our wall. We had our celebration with the residents quietly on Thursday before St. Margaret's Day. Bishop Duracin celebrated the Mass for us using the St. Margaret's Day propers. On Saturday, Kethia's sister brought us a big cake that we had for dessert at dinnertime. Between the residents and us, we had two beautiful days that we enjoyed very much.

Your prayers keep us going on. Thank you for being with us in that journey through your prayers and contribution. Please continue to pray for us.

By Marjorie Raphael, SSM

In October, nine seminarians from the Episcopal Seminary in Haiti used our chapel and conference center in Port-au-Prince for a day of retreat. Of the nine seminarians, two new ones are young women. We have been asked to take them in a spirituality class of two hours once a week, as we did for last year's entering students.

The convent is now ready for us to move back, if politics and gang crime will change to peace in the streets. We are hopeful. We have not lived there for about two years. It is there that we do our laundry (to ease the shortage of water at the Foyer) and to catch up on email several times a week. Some extensive repairs have been completed,

with new tiles on the lower wall and furniture moved to accommodate painters.

On Monday, October 16, there was the second in a series of meetings to prepare background material for the proposing of the inclusion of Haiti's first bishop, James Theodore Holly, in the calendar of *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*. Holly was an African American priest from the United States seeking in 1861 with other émigrés a homeland where the gifts of black people were fully honored. He was a pioneer in the midst of all kinds of difficulties. At his death, he had completed fifty years of missionary work in Haiti, and thirty-six years as the first black bishop in the American church.

"He believed that the potential for greatness was present in Haiti, and that his national church, led by him and based on the Anglican religion, would help to speed the Black Republic toward her promise." (David M. Dean, *Defender of the Race*, pp. 107-108) Despite the meagerness of funds from the United States for church work in Haiti, and the unstable conditions, he set a landmark.

I have taken some mental nourishment in reading the book *So Spoke the Uncle (Ainsi Parle l'Oncle)* by that great Haitian doctor, teacher, statesman, and ethnologist Dr. Price-Mars (published in English by Three Continents Press, Washington D.C., 1983) written more than seventy-five years ago. He writes of the people of Haiti and their nation at a time of crisis similar in many ways to the situation we are in now. In the intervening years, the population has tripled, the erosion is much worse, and the Internet has come. His careful study of the Haitian people, their origin, their triumphs, their failures, their hopes, their integrity and sense of who they are, is prophetic and well worth reading today.

## FOYER NOTRE DAME

By Marjorie Raphael, SSM

Some think that it is more interesting to work with children than with the elderly and the sick elderly because, with children, they say, "there is a future." We Sisters find joy in our scholarship children, but also in our terminal care persons. This work has been in continuous service since 1962.

Hear what a wise man (Dr. Pusey) has written:

"For our hope is not the glory of Heaven, nor joy, nor peace, nor rest from labour, nor fullness of our wishes, nor sweet contentment of the whole soul, nor understanding of all mysteries and all knowledge, nor only a torrent of delight; it is 'Christ our God', 'the hope of glory; nothing which God could create is what we hope for, nothing which God could give us out of Himself, no created glory, or bliss, or beauty, or majesty, or riches. What we hope for is our Redeeming God Himself, His love, His bliss, the joy of the Lord Himself, who hath so loved us, to be our joy, and our portion forever."

Daily life at Foyer Notre Dame, a home for the indigent elderly in the heart of Port-au-Prince, has its own pace. The residents rise slowly. There is coffee, baths one by one, and breakfast laid out to take whenever one is ready. The helpers wash clothes, bed linens, floors, etc., for cleanliness is of the essence. It is the Sisters (we are three) who worry about the reservoir becoming empty, and when it is empty, arrange to transport water to the Foyer from the convent by drum and bucket in our car, a sturdy Montero. It is the Sisters who are negotiating to see if there is a vein of water under the Foyer and if a well can be dug. This will be "heavenly" for this household if we find water. Two of the Foyer neighbors have been successful. The Sisters attend to providing food; they share prayer, and recreation.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP THE SISTERS IN HAITI

By Grace, SSM

Each year in the Fall issue of the St. Margaret's Quarterly we include an envelope for donations to be sent for our sisters in Haiti. The Sisters are in need of funds for travel expenses, living expenses, medical expenses and supplies. Any contribution you could make to the Haitian appeal would be used directly by the Sisters in Haiti, and is tax-deductible. There is a place on the envelope to include your confidential requests for prayers by the Sisters.

The Haitian Gift Shop, located at the Boston Convent, is another way of supporting the sisters and the people of Haiti. The craft items are all unique and handmade in Haiti of local materials. Their sale provides funds for the craftspeople who make them, and any profit is used for scholarships, books and uniforms for children attending Holy Trinity School at the Cathedral. Visit the shop in time to do your Christmas shopping to get some terrific, one-of-a-kind gifts!

The Haiti Linen Project is one more way you can show your support for Haiti. The Sisters train and employ local women to embroider altar linens, which gives them a marketable skill to help support their families. Your parish Altar Guild can order an altar linen catalog from Sr. Claire Marie by calling her here in Boston.

Finally, at Kenscoff, 4,500 feet above sea level and one hour by car from Port-au-Prince, the Sisters are rebuilding their Conference Center to better serve our volunteers, young people, old people, parishes, and all who hear Jesus' words, "Come unto me...and I will give you rest." Small and large gifts are welcome toward the \$50,000 building estimate. Personal checks in U.S. funds can be sent directly to Sr. Marie Margaret at the address listed below.

There are many things that are scarce or very expensive in Haiti. Items needed include, but are not limited to:

- Low fat milk, powdered milk
- Cereals
- Cans of tuna, chicken breast
- Cocoa
- Detergents
- Matches
- Batteries (all sizes)
- Sewing materials
- Toilet articles
- Shampoo
- First aid items
- Office supplies
- Toilet paper
- Blankets, bedding (twin beds)
- Calcium (500 mg.)
- Vitamins (Multi, Iron, Folic Acid)
- Aspirin (81 mg.)
- School supplies
- Children and Adult clothing (appropriate to the climate)

Please note that the address for Agape Flights has changed. The new address for sending letters and parcels to us in Port-au-Prince is:

St. Margaret's Convent  
c/o Agape Flights  
100 Airport Avenue  
Venice, FL 34285-3901

Agape charges us \$1.00 per pound to bring the packages to Port-au-Prince. We would appreciate it if you could send a check along with your donation to cover these costs.

Sr. Marie Margaret's email address is: mariemargaretssm@yahoo.com. Feel free to contact her for any additional information or to let her know you are sending a donation. Communicating by phone is very difficult so email is the best way to reach her. Allow time for her to respond, as she must go back to the Convent to read and reply to her emails. The Sisters are still living at the Foyer Notre Dame as of the end of November, 2006.

## NEWS FROM NEW HARTFORD

By **Mary Gabriel, SSM**

St. Barnabas House on the hill (re-named Transfiguration House) sat empty most of the past few years. Occasionally the beds were needed for overflow retreat groups, workshop programs for small groups, or housing for the Covenant Players who stay with us a few times a year when they are performing in the area. However, the St. Margaret's Corporation felt it would be better used as rental property. Our new tenants are the Rev. Dick and the Rev. Sarah Lewis. Dick recently retired and is busier than ever, especially with the Episcopal Relief and Development in our diocese. Sarah, our Associate, has been ordained and has reached out in many ways in nursing homes, area hospitals, acting Pastor at the Lutheran Homes until a Pastor was called, and going throughout the diocese with our Associate Deacon Jean Skinner presenting the Safe Church workshop. Sarah and Dick also celebrate in our Chapel each week.

Wedding bells were heard in St. Margaret's Chapel on Saturday, October 7, 2006. Erika Cooper and Alle Tomasi were married in our Chapel. Alle is the son of Corinne Tomasi, the cook at St. Margaret's House. When they announced their engagement, they asked if they could be married in the Chapel, and they asked Sr. Mary Eleanor if she would officiate. The rehearsal was Friday night, with the rehearsal dinner following in the refectory. After the wedding ceremony on Saturday, the reception was held at the Stueben Town Hall.

The ministry of our pets is an important part of St. Margaret's House. Sadly, we have lost our aged Holly, our beloved black and tan Irish \*Cannardly who came from Philadelphia with the Sisters. Holly's close companion and

"brother" Bro Kitty died while we were in Boston in August. Jordan, our local-grown yellow, smooth-coated \*Cannardly missed her companions and for a short time was elevated to "top dog." New to the fold and exploring all corners of a very big house is Willy, a very big, growing boy of a black adolescent kitten/cat. He had been at the SPCA and was rarin' to go on very long, tall legs. We thought it best to keep his name Willy. Sister said that if he was vocal we would call him Willy Nelson. He yowled all the way home in the car and quite a bit at night at first. He is a delight and loves people.

\*Cannardly = "can hardly" tell what she is

St. Margaret's House offers a haven of prayer and spiritual refreshment with quiet days, retreats, workshops and seminars throughout the year. Contact us for a schedule of services and calendar of events. We are always delighted when visitors join us.

And finally, to our Associates, at Noon-day Office, we pray for all of our Associates throughout the world and we pray for you by name one day a week. Please continue your prayers for our Community.

By **Jane Margaret, SSM**

Another season has begun and we have returned from Boston and our annual Gathering. It was good to see our Sisters once again and share with them.

Here in New Hartford, when possible, I take care of the Grotto which Sr. Esther opened up long ago. The "Chipmunk Crossing" had seven foot weeds to be "harvested." I opened up "the Woods" (a stand of young maples). All are marvelous sanctuaries where guests may go to read or just relax and enjoy God's beauty. Soon I hope to get back to the House of the Good Shepherd twice a week to help students with their studies. This will be our fifth year of doing

stamp collecting. I go from classroom to classroom. We had our second exhibit in May. Janet Collmer and I will soon have our monthly stamp club here at St. Margaret's House.

By **Julian, SSM**

Spiritual growth, events, and outreach ministries filled the summer past. A long retreat in Duxbury with some of my Sisters was much needed. The last week of June, Sr. Gloria from New York City joined me at the annual Fingerlakes Conference in Geneva, New York. Three well known authors and leaders in our church were there. The Rev. Margaret Guenther was the main leader for the week. The Rev. Suzanne Guthrie taught a course featuring Mary Magdalene. The Rev. Barbara Crafton had a good little book store set up for us. In July, artist/neighbor Christine Tisa and I taught a week long art course for the gifted young elementary children she had taught in school. Many were newly arrived refugee kids in Utica.

In August, Sr. Promise from the convent in Boston helped me teach the Bible study for the Utica City Churches' Vacation Bible School at the Tabernacle Baptist Church. Many of the children were Burmese who came to Utica as part of the mission outreach of Tabernacle Church.

I continue to prepare a wish list for area ministries, sites, and programs, printed in the Utica-Observer Dispatch two or three times a month. Individuals and groups have been generous in responding to the many needs of area programs.

The prayer bead project is ongoing. I have given some workshops where people can make their own sets of prayer beads, or they can buy them in our little gift shop. I am always grateful to receive old costume jewelry of glass or stone beads that can be unstrung and used to make prayer sets.

**PLAN AHEAD****Lenten Day of Prayer, March 3, 2007 from 9:30 am - 3:00 pm**

Join the Sisters for a Day of Prayer during this time of preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Luncheon is included. The suggested donation for the day is \$25, which should be mailed prior to the day itself ensuring your registration.

**A weekend retreat at St. Margaret's, Duxbury, MA., June 8-10, 2007** - This silent retreat offers time

and space for prayer and contemplation in a beautiful seaside setting on Duxbury Bay. For details and further information contact the Boston Convent Reservations Desk. Cost: \$130. Half the amount is due when registering as a deposit.

**St. Margaret's Day - July 21, 2007**

We gather at the Boston Convent to celebrate the Feast of St. Margaret with a Holy Eucharist at 10:00 am followed by a festive luncheon.

**An Invitation to Explore Vocations Weekend, October 5-7, 2007**

Are you between the ages of 21 and 45, and interested in learning more about the religious life? We welcome single women of faith, lay or ordained, who are searching for a life in community with prayer at its center. This vocations weekend is offered at no cost and includes room and board. Participants are responsible for transportation to and from the convent. Space is limited. Apply now by downloading an application from our website [www.ssmbos.com](http://www.ssmbos.com).

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