PRESENTATION DOORWAYS

offering hospitality to the world
Nano’s Spirit Lives On
Sister Benjamin Duschner is unwavering in delivering Nano Nagle’s mission and message. Her great desire to bring God’s message to each person she meets is uppermost in her mind. Nano’s spirit and story live on in Sister.

Music from the Heart
As a Presentation associate, Becky Searcy is drawn to share in the life works of Nano Nagle. Through this call she shares the gifts of music, teaching and faith with children.

Witness to History
From election to celebration, from inauguration to action, Sister Richelle Friedman shares her experiences of presidential history.

Disciples in Rural Nebraska
Sisters Mary Brigid Stanley and Jane Conrad are a reminder of the Presentation presence that began in Emerson, Nebraska, many decades ago, as they take hospitality, peace and more to the people in Nebraska.

The Rewards of Service
At age 89, Sister Damian O’Brien continues to be of service wherever there is a need. This is the “driving” force behind all of her actions, her relationships and her beliefs.

Furthering the Legacy of Nano Nagle
Learn about how the Dubuque Lantern Lights associate group continues to bring others the light that burned in Nano Nagle’s heart.

Mount Loretto and Beyond
Featured here we share with you special times in the lives of Dubuque Presentation sisters, near and far.
I grew up when it was relatively easy to prioritize since we weren’t dealing with a lot of “stuff.” Our home was a former cheese factory with no central heating and no indoor plumbing (think Iowa winters). But we had what was important – strong family values, deep faith commitment, good citizenship expectations and a generous will to help anyone in need.

When I was about 10, a family with 10 children was burned out. After the fire my mom volunteered to take in one of the girls who was my age so that I could share my clothes with her. Though I didn’t volunteer for it, I did it willingly because that’s what I was taught to do: share with my neighbor.

In this time of economic difficulty, it is good to remember that same value: share with your neighbor. It fits beautifully with our directional statement, “Conscious of our identity as Presentation women, we listen deeply to the cry of Earth heard most loudly in the cry of those made poor, and we are moved to attend with urgency to the woundedness of our global community.”

Although the economic problems we face are global and complex with no easy answers, it appears that some of the basic causes have been greed, lack of ethics and lack of consideration for our neighbor. When we know some of the causes, then we can also start to deal with at least a part of the solution for ourselves.

As we, and those around us, deal with job losses, home foreclosures, rising food prices and/or heavy medical expenses, perhaps we are once again called to sort out: What can I share with my neighbor?

The answer to this question will vary with each of us since we have many and varied gifts. Have I thought about sharing my time? my talents? my treasures? my personal monetary riches? that which I have and think I need but could live nicely without?

As each of us struggles to answer these questions we will inevitably find an answer to another significant question: how do I care for myself? For it is in taking care of our neighbor that we will end up taking good care of ourselves.

When I entered the Presentation community, I understood I would be taking a vow of poverty. One of the clearest lessons of poverty came on my first visiting day. As Dad was ready to leave that day, he asked me, “Do you need anything?” Wanting to assure him that all was well, I replied, “No, Dad, I have everything I need.” He quickly responded, “I wish I could say that!” It struck me at the time and has not left me – he was willing to share from what he did not have. Am I willing to do the same?
Sister Benjamin Duschner is not unlike a mail carrier – through wind, heat, rain or snow the messages must be delivered. Despite her bout with cancer and a serious ankle injury, Sister Benjamin is unwavering in delivering Nano Nagle’s mission and message. Her great desire to bring God’s message to each person she meets is uppermost in her mind. Nano’s spirit and story live on in Sister.

Presently Sister Benjamin is a reading specialist at Resurrection School in Dubuque where she helps children in kindergarten through third grade. Sister has 16 years experience of teaching in the primary grades and over 30 years serving as principal, most recently at Sacred Heart School in Osceola, Iowa, for the past 12 years. In all these years, Sister Benjamin has made it a point to assure children and parents that they are loved by God. Children’s excitement to learn energizes Sister, pushing her to find new ways that meet their needs and introduce them to fun ways of learning.

“Sister Benjamin is Resurrection’s newest gift,” states Sister Joan Lickteig, currently Sister Benjamin’s tutor and mentor. “In the 1960s, Sister came to Resurrection as a student teacher; now 40 years later we are working together in the same building. Many things have changed over the years but not Sister’s eagerness to learn and serve. Gifted with many talents and skills, enthusiasm and personality, there’s something else that sets her apart. You guessed it, her good-natured laughter. Author Anne Lamott suggests that laughter is carbonated holiness; and that’s an apt description of Sister Benjamin. In a few months she has won the hearts of students, parents and the school community.”

Joe Hancock, director of religious education at Resurrection, states, “Sister’s service to the religious education program reflects her commitment to spreading the good news of the Gospel to both young and old alike. She teaches her seventh-grade students with an energy level that demonstrates her commitment to Gospel values. She is a trusted advisor to me, and willingly offers her insight and compassion to other catechists.”

Being a loving and positive person, Sister Benjamin creates a circle of people who are just that, loving and positive. Sister’s outlook on life is contagious. One cannot help catch her free spirit and laughter.

Sister smiles, “Freedom, joy, laughter and inner happiness are the fuel for my life. Joy is the laughter of my soul. Hugs are always welcomed and given.” Sister adds, “Jesus is my anchor and my compass. God has blessed me abundantly and I am especially grateful for the goodness and love of the Lord in my life over the years.”

Sister takes delight in being a part of the Presentation family. She appreciates the simple life and the many opportunities for being of service to others. Coming from a family in Farley, Iowa, Sister Benjamin was formed in her faith through family prayer, attending Mass and witnessing her parents’ willingness to be of help to others. Family gatherings were a joyous time for the Duschner family. Chores on the farm introduced Sister to a good work ethic. She has learned how to face her challenges, meet these challenges and move on. Today Sister Benjamin is challenged to meet the needs of children by utilizing a variety of new teaching techniques. She continues to learn and improve her teaching skills, seek new strategies and model the importance of life-long learning for her students.

Freedom, joy, laughter and inner happiness are the fuel for my life. Joy is the laughter of my soul. Hugs are always welcomed and given.

Sister Benjamin Duschner

In various ways, Sister shares her love for God with her family, extended family of Presentation sisters, associates, co-workers, young adults, children and their parents. It is truly a blessing to have this follower of Nano spreading light to others, one who teaches little ones and helps them realize they are special and that God loves and cares for them.

Currently Sister Benjamin lives with Sisters Beth Driscoll and Leanne Welch. Sister Beth shares, “I feel that Sister Benjamin lives the words of our mission documents by offering hope and love to those who bear heavy burdens and are in need of a listening ear. Her presence visiting the sick and the elderly, as well as attending wakes and funerals are a testament of her genuine compassion.”

Sister Leanne adds, “Sister’s dedication and welcoming approach to both teaching and community are an inspiring daily witness. She truly lives our mission of ‘incarnating the hospitality of God’.”

In addition to her love for teaching and community, Sister Benjamin enjoys being with family and friends, taking walks, listening to music and having a good time. Since Sister Benjamin entered the convent 50 years ago, beautiful changes have transformed her into the person she is today. Her unique way of making people feel special is truly one of her many attributes. Sister continues to seek God among those to whom and with whom she ministers. Sister Benjamin feels that God is at home when we are truly ourselves.

Have you known anyone who is more at home than Sister? Her wonderful hospitality, a trait of her own mother and father, makes you feel at home as soon as you meet her.
As a Presentation associate, Becky Searcy is drawn to share in the life works of Nano Nagle. Through this call she shares the gifts of music, teaching and faith with children. “I remember as a child being taught that a gift isn’t a gift until it’s given away,” she says.

Becky’s connection with the Presentation community began at age 15 in Lawler, Iowa, where Sister Joellen Price taught her piano lessons. Eventually Becky taught elementary music at St. Patrick School in Waunakee, Iowa, where Presentation sisters taught. In the early 1990s, Becky participated in the diocesan Lay Formation Program directed by Sister Carla Popen. Today, her life continues to be touched by the presence of Presentations.

Becky appreciates the gift of community. “As a single parent, I experienced a hands-on hospitality and prayerful support that was extended to us by the Presentation sisters. These connections offered me enough light and love for the next step as I juggled studying for a graduate degree at Loras College in Dubuque, teaching school and raising my family.”

Community and hospitality inspired Becky’s desire to become an associate with the Presentation sisters. “I am part of the ‘Living Lanterns’ associate group and have been deeply enriched by the service and bond we share. I have been engaged in several service projects and enjoy the music ministry shared with the sisters.”

Initially, Becky learned the value of hospitality from her parents, Jack and Norma Adams. “Each time I drive down the road toward home my heart dances with wonderful memories of the abundance of hospitality that has been shared there with so many over the years. The gift of deep faith and a love for one another and their God have blessed my parents all these years.”

“I have always wanted to be a teacher, and more than that, a music teacher,” says Becky Searcy. “I believe that God has led me to look after the children, sometimes, the children of the poor. Through music God speaks to their souls; God brings hope to their lives. Through music God has brought hope and joy to my life and fire to my soul!”

The inspiration and gift of music began many years ago when Becky heard her father singing, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” as he left the house to begin a new day of providing for a large family. “Looking back now, I am so grateful and marveled at the way my parents cherished the arts and encouraged us to use our gifts. Both mom and dad played musical instruments in high school and mom still sings in the choir. Music continues to be woven into the very fabric of our everyday lives,” Becky adds.

Becky is the mother of three sons, Adam, Scott and Michael, who have all graduated from college and are gainfully employed. She was recently blessed with Scott and Kelly’s new baby, Vivian. “I love being a grandmother,” smiles Becky. “I can’t wait to teach my granddaughter to sing.”

For the past 15 years Becky has been K-8 vocal teacher, band director, children’s choir director and pianist at St. Benedict Church and School in Decorah. “Ministering to the young people as a teacher is a blessing. I love watching my students grow in self-confidence and in their faith,” comments Becky.

Recently the Decorah Community School District was honored with a distinguished award for having the best music program in the state of Iowa. The Iowa Exemplary Music Program Award was presented to all music educators in St. Benedict, North Winneshiek and Decorah Community Schools during the 2008 All-State Music Festival in November. The award recognized excellence in music education within this school district over a period of several years and across the entire department.

“I believe that I am doing Nano’s work in teaching the children and working with their families. I encourage them to always do their best and to have fun. Before every concert we stop to pray, to thank our gracious God who is the Giver of all gifts, to ask for their best and to have fun. Before every concert we stop to pray, to thank our gracious God who is the Giver of all gifts, to ask for guidance of the Spirit and to remember that we are not here to be perfect, but to do our best. In doing this, we just might brighten someone else’s day and to God be the glory!”

Hope is like a road in the country; there never was a road but when many people walk on it, the road comes into existence. Lin Yutang

NANO Nagle’s commission from her deathbed, April 26, 1784.

“Look after the children, the children of the poor.”

Nano Nagle’s commission from her deathbed, April 26, 1784.

As a teacher is a blessing. I love watching my students grow in self-confidence and in their faith,” comments Becky.

Recently the Decorah Community School District was honored with a distinguished award for having the best music program in the state of Iowa. The Iowa Exemplary Music Program Award was presented to all music educators in St. Benedict, North Winneshiek and Decorah Community Schools during the 2008 All-State Music Festival in November. The award recognized excellence in music education within this school district over a period of several years and across the entire department.

“I believe that I am doing Nano’s work in teaching the children and working with their families. I encourage them to always do their best and to have fun. Before every concert we stop to pray, to thank our gracious God who is the Giver of all gifts, to ask for guidance of the Spirit and to remember that we are not here to be perfect, but to do our best. In doing this, we just might brighten someone else’s day and to God be the glory!”

Hope is like a road in the country; there never was a road but when many people walk on it, the road comes into existence. Lin Yutang

NANO Nagle’s commission from her deathbed, April 26, 1784.

As a teacher is a blessing. I love watching my students grow in self-confidence and in their faith,” comments Becky.

Recently the Decorah Community School District was honored with a distinguished award for having the best music program in the state of Iowa. The Iowa Exemplary Music Program Award was presented to all music educators in St. Benedict, North Winneshiek and Decorah Community Schools during the 2008 All-State Music Festival in November. The award recognized excellence in music education within this school district over a period of several years and across the entire department.

“I believe that I am doing Nano’s work in teaching the children and working with their families. I encourage them to always do their best and to have fun. Before every concert we stop to pray, to thank our gracious God who is the Giver of all gifts, to ask for guidance of the Spirit and to remember that we are not here to be perfect, but to do our best. In doing this, we just might brighten someone else’s day and to God be the glory!”

Hope is like a road in the country; there never was a road but when many people walk on it, the road comes into existence. Lin Yutang

NANO Nagle’s commission from her deathbed, April 26, 1784.
Witness to History

From Election, to Celebration, to Inauguration, to Action...

reflection by RICHELLE FRIEDMAN, PBVM

In our predominately African-American neighborhood there was an evident sense of pride as people walked a little taller and made easy eye contact, greeting us with new confidence. On what is normally a very quiet metro ride, I sat next to a woman who exuded joy as we conversed. The date was November 5, the day after the presidential election.

January ushered in a celebrative spirit. The weekend before the inauguration, Sister Rita Waters, RSM, and I hosted a “Martin Luther King Day and Pre-Inaugural” open house. On Sunday we hosted a prayer experience attended by people from four states. One guest spoke of our gathering as the expression of our hearts longing for peace and human maturity and our commitments to make those longings manifest in light of the new reality in our country. On the Martin Luther King holiday, we joined in the Obamas’ and Bidens’ call to service by participating in a neighborhood clean-up project.

Then came the long anticipated day – Inauguration Day! When we arrived in the Capitol area in the early morning, throngs of people were flooding to the National Mall. We had secured highly sought-after “purple section” tickets from Representative Tom Braley and Senator Tom Harkin which permitted us to stand on the lawn of the Capitol during the swearing in. Pleased, we joined a line that wound four blocks and extended far into an underground highway tunnel. Thousands came after us until the line stretched more than a mile in what later came to be known as the “Purple Tunnel of Doom.” As the hours passed, we realized that the area designated for the “privileged few” had been promised to thousands more ticket holders than the space could hold.

So we emerged from the tunnel and were swept into a river of people surging toward the Capitol. Given the sheer size of the crowd, the excitement for the historic swearing in, the bone-chilling temperatures and the lack of police presence, it was a miracle that a riot or stampede did not break out. Truly, it was a
testimony to the “we are one” spirit of the day. The crowd exercised civility, cooperation and good spirit despite the overwhelming disappointment of discovering that our “promised” Capitol lawn section was already filled, the gates were closed and locked and we were facing the possibility that we wouldn’t see the ceremony at all.

With 20 minutes to implement Plan B, we hustled over to a Senate building and found a hearing room opened by Senator Chris Dodd for his Connecticut constituents. They welcomed us into the crowded room just as President-elect Obama was being introduced. The room was alive with excitement, shouts of joy, laughter and tears, and a sense of pride and awe. Though we missed the experience of being on the Capitol lawn with the two million who had gathered, it was amazing to share this moment with other citizens, most of whom were African-Americans. I couldn’t imagine what this day must be like for them to witness an African-American being sworn in as President. On this day, though, what mattered most was not race, creed, gender or class – on this day what mattered was that we were remembering and celebrating what it feels like to be proud citizens of the United States and to be witnesses to this historical moment in our time.

The President has inherited unparalleled, domestic and international challenges. I feel the promise and possibility that we, as a nation, can rise to the challenges of our time with the spirit articulated in this reflection by Nan Fischer:

From Election-to Celebration-to Inauguration-to Action...

It’s time to shift from “Yes, we can!” and “Yes, we did!” to “Yes, we are.”

Yes, we are all in this together.

Yes, we are hearing all voices and including all people.

Yes, we are finding solutions to our many challenges by cooperating and collaborating.

Yes, we are using our resources more wisely.

Yes, we are making decisions with the next seven generations in mind.

Yes, we are leading by example of service, sacrifice and stewardship.

Yes, we are doing all the good that we can, for all that we can.

Yes, we are answering the call to become even more the people God created us to be.

Sister Richelle Friedman is the director of public policy for the Coalition on Human Needs. Sister has over eighteen years of working with federal legislators.
Hartington, with a population of 1,652, is the county seat of Cedar County and is a county-wide hub for retail, industrial and professional business services. Coleridge is a community of 841 people located in the southern heart of Cedar County, a farming area serving the basic economic and agricultural needs of area farmers and residents.

There have been three groups of women religious at Holy Trinity School in Hartington. St. Louis Ursulines opened the school over 100 years ago and returned to St. Louis, Missouri, about 20 years later. Benedictine Sisters from Yankton, South Dakota, staffed the elementary and high schools for nearly 75 years after that.

“The last Benedictine sister was a junior high science teacher. She retired, suffering a stroke about eight years before I arrived,” states Sister Brigid who arrived in Nebraska in 2004.

Sister Brigid is originally from Drexon, Nebraska. “I grew up in a small town with the Catholic church on the other side of town. Because it was so close, we attended evening services during the Lenten and Advent seasons,” states Sister Brigid who reflects on her own faith formation in the Stanley family. “Mom made sure we received Reconciliation every month, whether we wanted to or not! All of this means mass and other liturgies fed our spiritual lives, and we were responsible for helping build our relationship with the Lord.” Sister Brigid entered the Sisters of the Presentation in 1976 and professed final vows in 1984.

After serving as a teacher and principal in Iowa Catholic schools for 20 years, Sister Brigid is now a science and religion teacher at Cedar Catholic Jr./Sr. High School in Hartington.

“The students are my avenue to Heaven,” declares Sister Brigid. “It is through them that I learn patience, joy, satisfaction in others’ accomplishments and the value of living a life that reflects the love of Jesus.”

Small town, rural faith is the mainstay in Coleridge and Hartington. Sister Brigid finds great satisfaction in sharing that faith. “I enjoy living, loving and teaching in the Coleridge and Hartington area. The people here love by faith, struggle with all the temptations that are prevalent today and truly raise their children in the faith,” she remarks. “My challenge is to be a part of their faith development and be one to help show them the way to Heaven.”

And, for Sister Brigid, it’s easy to live and share her Presentation charism. “Living in the former rectory in Coleridge, I experience the hospitality of St. Michael Parish, so in return, I have an open door to anyone who knocks, anyone who wants to use the equipment in the house and anyone who just needs a willing heart to talk to. Participating in the life of the parish brings the delight Nano had in helping others. At school I am so conscious to look after those children who struggle with academics, harsh family situations, relational problems among their peers and teachers who struggle with the nitty-gritty of daily routines.”

Sister Jane also teaches in Hartington. Living in rural Nebraska is a great place to be,” endorses Sister, who grew up in rural Zearing, Iowa. “People here are so appreciative to have women religious ministering in the schools and parishes. I pray that I can continue to share our Presentation story with the farming communities of America.”

Sister Jane’s faith formation in the Conrad family contributed greatly to her entering a religious community and serving in schools and parishes.

“When I was growing up in Zearing, my family always had time to do things for others. He showed me the importance of helping out wherever needed. His brother, Father Anthony Conrad, was a major influence in my life as well. My uncle was always a great listener and helped me keep things in perspective. He was always at the other end of the phone when I needed advice. He fostered my vocation and encouraged me to ‘take care of the little ones because they need a good foundation in their faith.’ He was so wise,” says Sister Jane entered the Presentation community in 1976 and professed final vows in 1984.

As an elementary teacher of grades K-6, Sister Jane’s current ministry is at Holy Trinity Elementary School where she works with students who need extra help. She also works with students who need to be challenged in their academics and designs liturgical seasonal activities for the school.

Sister Jane also serves as the director of religious education for grades K-12 in Hartington and Coleridge. The Hartington elementary program has 63 students, every Wednesday afternoon with seven wonderful catechists to educate the young people of the parish. The high school program has 61 students with three teams of teachers. In Coleridge, the elementary has five students and the high school has 12. Sister Brigid is catechist for the students in third, fourth and sixth grade and Sister Jane works with the first- and second-graders.

“The most enjoyable part of my ministry at Holy Trinity is the people I get to be with every day. I truly appreciate all the hard work they do to make sure the children get a quality education,” comments Sister Jane. “Catholic teachings are so evident in the attitudes and actions of the students. When there is a need for prayers, I let the students know and they will remember the intention each day in their morning prayers. The students make angel prayer posters for those who have lost a loved one. These posters have prayers written on them that the students pray. I am very privileged to be a part of this wonderful community of educators.”

Continuing Nano’s charism is important to Sister Jane. “I share what others do at Presentation sisters are doing around the world. I share the newsletter from New Orleans and talk to the students about what the sisters are doing to help those who were affected by the hurricane. I also have shared our congregation’s DVD, Nano Nagle: A Story of Faith and Courage,” says Sister Jane who notes that the students and teachers had great questions about who Nano was and why did she do what she did for the people in Ireland. “Sister Brigid and I have also renewed our vows at an all-school Mass on Presentation Day. This gave us the opportunity to share why this day is so special to our community and to teach the students about Presentation Heritage.”

Sisters Brigid and Jane, two classmates, friends and disciples, experience the hospitality of northeast Nebraska as they immerse themselves in the educational and spiritual journeys of the folk of Coleridge and Hartington, Nebraska.
SISTER DAMIAN O’BRIEN

The Rewards of Service

written by JANE BUSE

At age 89, Sister Damian O’Brien continues to be of service wherever there is a need. This is the “driving” force behind all of her actions, her relationships and her beliefs.

“Because I feel I am a ‘serving woman,’ being of service will keep me happy as long as I am able to do so,” says Sister Damian. “My joy is being with people. I feel I can make a difference by just being present to others and assisting them with their needs, praying with and for them, all while enjoying the freedom of retirement.”

Having earned a B.A. from Loras College in Dubuque and an M.A. from the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago, Illinois, Sister served as a music teacher, assumed community leadership and formation responsibilities, served as an administrator and, most recently, as a pastoral associate. In each of these positions, Sister has kept the love of God alive by serving others. Today, she is always ready to serve. “Nanow saw a need and pursued it. The older I get the more I realize how God directed me in my ministry.”

Sister Damian continues to serve both inside and outside the motherhouse. On a daily basis, Sister coordinates the transportation needs of the sisters. She keeps track of the Mount Loretto fleet, arranges drop-offs and pick-ups and everything in between. After Sister prepares the driving schedule for the following day, she calls the community’s driver to give him her driving assignments. When needed, Sister often ends her day doing the last drives herself.

Sister Damian has met incredible people over the years who have enriched her life. She states, “I feel I was part of the Presentation were my teachers for 12 years and I always regarded them as my companions. The many friendships I have developed throughout my years of ministry are all very special. Meeting people, working with them and becoming friends with them is my joy.”

“My joy is the driving force behind all of Sister Damian O’Brien’s service. (Left: Sister Joan Lickteig)"
For the second year, the group is sponsoring a child through the Presentation mission of serving the poor. The proceeds from the sale will assist the following Presentation ministries/charities:

- Catholic School Endowment Fund in Waukon, Iowa
- Needs of the Postville Immigrants
- Needs of the Dubuque Food Pantry
- Needs of the Cedar Rapids flood victims
- Eight missions in the United States
- Shipping costs of clothing that is collected, sorted and shipped to eight missions in the United States

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The gym behind the Sisters of the Presentation will be open for drop-offs of usable items from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily EXCEPT Sundays beginning Monday, April 13 until Wednesday, April 22. Wrapped baked goods can be brought to the gym on April 23 and/or April 30—May 1. For more information, contact the Associate Office at 563.588.2008 or associates@dubuquepresentations.org. Thank you.

PRESENTATION DOORWAYS | spring 2009

PRESENTATION DOORWAYS | spring 2009
The presentation between St. Mary Parish in Spirit Lake, Iowa, and the Sisters of the Presentation began several years ago when Sister Joy Peterson was invited by Father Al Grendler to be pastoral minister to St. Mary Parish. During these years when Father Grendler and Sister Joy were animating Christian community, the parish community decided to sponsor a missionary as a parish outreach.

For the Sisters of the Presentation, the missionary as a parish outreach.

Sister Rita was a missionary for 10 years in Guatemala among the Quiché speaking people of St. Mary. “Through the sharing, the people of the parish learned more about the people they financially and spiritually supported in Guatemala. I also learned names and faces of the people who supported me on the mission. I was greatly blessed to be a bridge between two parts of the world with the help of the generous people of St. Mary.”

Sister Rita recalls, “My relationship with the parish of St. Mary Spirit Lake was a great blessing when I lived in Guatemala. In July 1991, I remember Sister Joy telling me that the parish was interested in supporting a missionary to broaden their awareness of the world. The parish’s support of my presence in Chupol started shortly after.” Sister Rita adds, “Each month I would receive the loose change from one Sunday collection. The donation covered my living expenses, travel and part of the health insurance and social security costs that needed to be covered as well.”

To remind the parishioners of their support for Chapel, Sister Joy had special Guatemalan weavings displayed in the church. Each year when Sister Rita came home, she would make a special effort to visit St. Mary parishioners and speak at the weekend Masses. Sister says, “Through the sharing, the people of the parish learned more about the people they financially and spiritually supported in Guatemala. I also learned names and faces of the people who supported me on the mission. I was greatly blessed to be a bridge between two parts of the world with the help of the generous people of St. Mary.”

St. Mary Parish Parish

Giving the Gifts of Shelter, Education and Hope

written by MAURA MCCARTHY, PBVM

As one who has walked the halls of St. Columbikille School from kindergarden to 12th grade, it is my privilege to muse upon its beginnings and early history.

In October 1874, Mother Vincent Hennessey, Alice Howley (great aunt of Sister Anna Howley), Ellen Ahearn and Kate Reide left Ireland arriving in Dubuque to find that no place had been prepared for them to live. Thus four women stayed with the Visitation Sisters at their convent located on West Third Street near the Cathedral Parish of St. Raphael.

In January 1875, the sisters traveled by sleigh to Key West to move into the house the pastor had planned as a rectory. By February of 1875, clasps of the first permanent parlor. In 1876, some of the sisters began teaching in a new educational foundation at Western Dubuque, now St. Anthony School and Parish. In 1878, Archbishop John Hennessey announced that a convent would be built for the sisters in a quiet suburban section of Dubuque known as “West Hill” and that a school for the children of the null workers and miners who resided there would be operated by the sisters.

In September of the following year the convent/school on West Hill, presently known as Rush Street, was not completed, so classes were temporarily held in a vacant house on 244 South Dodge, what is now Bryant Street. A double house, still standing today, is the original site of the Presentation sisters’ school. On December 9, 1879, the sisters moved from Dodge Street to the West Hill location. The next day Mother Hennessey and the sisters from Key West arrived with a farm wagon load of furniture and moved into the new building which served as novitiate, motherhouse, school and convent. The school was divided, the lower floor for boys and the upper four floors for girls. Classes officially began in the new facility on December 15, 1879. Archbishop Hennessey came for the dedication on July 19, 1880, and announced the school be called St. Vincent in honor of Mother Vincent Hennessey who had died earlier that year. The enrollment in 1880 was 120 students who paid 25 cents per month which formed the basis of the sisters’ monthly income. Since there was no parish support, all expenses of the school and upkeep of the building was taken care of by the sisters.

From 1879 to 1909, St. Vincent School served as a day school for local Catholics. With the construction and dedication of the new motherhouse for the sisters located at 1229 Mt. Loretta Avenue in 1909, St. Vincent became St. Vincent Academy for girls, as well as a boarding school serving students from much farther away, even some from out of state.

In 1914, the number of resident students had outgrown all available space. An addition to the building was planned that consisted of private rooms, a chapel, an infirmary, a music room, and a dining room. The enjoyment of the new building was short lived, however, as it was destroyed by fire on February 14, 1919. Fortunately, though, it was soon rebuilt and remodeled with the finances of the sisters.

In 1930, Mother Mary Aquin sold the school building to St. Columbikille Parish. The pastor, Right Reverend James J. O’Brien, changed the name of St. Vincent to St. Columbikille School and Archbishop Francis J. L. Beckman granted permission for boys to attend the school. The sisters’ salaries were then paid by the parish.

Sixty-seven women have entered the Presentation community from St. Columbikille Parish. Sister Mary Bernard Boddy was the first vocation to the Presentation sisters on West Hill. Sister Mary Genevieve Burke was considered the first vocation from St. Vincent Academy. I feel honored to have walked the halls of St. Columbikille and am grateful to be one of the 67 women.
WOMAN OF GOD

Sister Mary Clement Bird

written by Joan Lickteig, PBVM and Annette Skyles, PBVM

Life for Sister Clement began on February 19, 1914, in Sexton, Iowa. Her eternal life began 94 years later on January 22, 2009, after 73 years as a Presentation sister. Hers was a legacy of love and holiness.

Sister Clement graduated from Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, and began her life of ministry in Iowa’s Mason City and Algona classrooms. Community food service made up her second ministry. Prayer and community service, officially her third ministry, accentuated all her years.

Sister Clement’s former students remember, even today, the kindness she showed toward her students, particularly those who found learning difficult. Even after she concluded her teaching career she continually delighted in hearing stories of children and their classroom antics. Her sense of humor shone in the sparkle of her bright brown eyes. Those same brown eyes welled with heavy tears whenever anyone shared a moving story or an account of suffering.

A gentle, sensitive, prayerful woman, Sister Clement loved life, enjoyed reading and played a good hand of Euchre or 500. She excelled at crocheting, having made hundreds of delicate, pastel-colored baby blankets, booties and matching caps and hundreds more pairs of mittens and afghans.

Ted Kooser, poet laureate in 2005, sees kindness in this hand work… “to make a cap, a sock or mitten – to take a ball of dime store yarn and knit or crochet it into some useful thing – is an act of generosity. Someone is all the warmer for its presence in the world.”

Whatever Sister Clement did, she did well. Some said she made the best-ever rhubarb pie and others swore that lemon pie was her specialty, or was it the homemade bread she turned out on a regular basis? All were unequaled.

No doubt most people associate shyness with Sister Clement and understandably so. Father Nouwen writes about shyness in his book, Bread for the Journey. His insights speak of Sister Clement. “There is something beautiful about shyness, even though in our culture shyness is not considered a virtue. Shy people have long shadows, where they keep much of their beauty hidden from intruder’s eyes. Shy people remind us of the mystery of life that cannot be simply explained or expressed.”

Thank you, Sister Clement, for sharing the work of your hands and the love of your heart in your teaching, praying and crocheting, in the vegetables you peeled, the dishes you washed and the pies you made. No doubt your rhubarb or lemon pie would be well received at dessert time in the heavenly kingdom.

A local pastor once commented, “Do you know the treasure you have in Sister Clement?” Yes, we did. Father Doug Wathier, chaplain at Mount Loretto Convent, articulated our community sentiments at the funeral liturgy, “Sister Clement’s gentleness, her patience, her good humor has made a deep impression on the heart of this community.” And we are grateful.

Keeping the Name of Your Loved One Alive

One way to honor loved ones is to remember important values and hopes that were dear to them. When you make a gift in memory of a loved one or a loved one of someone you know to the Sisters of the Presentation, you are keeping their values and hopes alive through the sisters’ works of charity, education and service. A card will be sent to the family of the deceased stating that a donation has been made in his/her memory. Memorials can be sent to Sisters of the Presentation, 2360 Carter Road, Dubuque, Iowa 52001.

For more information, contact the Development Office at 563.588.2008 or email us at development@dubuquepresentations.org.

written by Joan Lickteig, PBVM and Annette Skyles, PBVM

One way to honor loved ones is to remember important values and hopes that were dear to them. When you make a gift in memory of a loved one or a loved one of someone you know to the Sisters of the Presentation, you are keeping their values and hopes alive through the sisters’ works of charity, education and service. A card will be sent to the family of the deceased stating that a donation has been made in his/her memory. Memorials can be sent to Sisters of the Presentation, 2360 Carter Road, Dubuque, Iowa 52001.

For more information, contact the Development Office at 563.588.2008 or email us at development@dubuquepresentations.org.
**VALLEYS OF THE SOUL**

**Featuring below are special times in the lives of Dubuque Presentation Sisters, near and far.**

**April 5 | May 3, 2009**

*Taize Prayer*

*7:00 p.m.*

*Sisters of the Presentation*

*Sacred Heart Chapel*

*2360 Carter Road*

*Dubuque, Iowa*

**April 12, 2009**

*Easter Liturgy*

*9:00 a.m.*

*Sisters of the Presentation*

*2360 Carter Road*

*Dubuque, Iowa*

**April 23-25, 2009**

**April 30-May 2, 2009**

*Garage/Gym Sale*

*Sisters of the Presentation*

*2360 Carter Road*

*Dubuque, Iowa*

**May 9-16, 2009**

*QUEST Service Opportunity*

*New Orleans, Louisiana*

**21st of each month**

*Pray for Vocations*

**25th of each month**

*Mass for Benefactors*

---

**Valentines for the Veterans**

Throughout January, several sisters gathered to create valentines for the veterans at the VA Hospital in Marshalltown, Iowa. Before the sisters realized, they had created 738 for the 700 patients.

**The Joy of Ministry**

Sister Janet Stelken, pastoral care coordinator, and Muna, resident assistant, share a light moment while working together at St. Therese Southwest in Hopkins, Minnesota.

---

**Service and Immersion Experiences**

“...Service has made me a better person. I am more willing to see other sides of a story, more aware of the great diversity in the world and more willing to do more for people outside of my immediate community of friends and family.”

-Luz Silverio, a Washington University student

---

We have heard the cries of the poor and the desire of many others to help. As Sisters of the Presentation and associates, we are committed to educating ourselves and others about the root causes of poverty, as well as, educating ourselves and others regarding earth sustainability for the purpose of empowering us toward action.

It is with this passion that we offer experiences of service and immersion. Various opportunities will be offered throughout the year to engage college students, sisters, associates, friends and relatives to explore a deeper understanding of God and God’s people. In this QUEST, opportunities of varying commitments of service and degrees of immersion will be provided.

For a calendar of events, go to [www.dubuquepresentations.org](http://www.dubuquepresentations.org).

For more information on how you can participate in our Presentation service and immersion experiences, QUEST, contact Sister Julie Marsh at 563.588.2008 or [service@dubuquepresentations.org](mailto:service@dubuquepresentations.org). She will be happy to direct you to a QUEST that fits best for you.
Congratulations to Sister Martha Donnelly upon her December graduation from Viterbo University in La Crosse, Wisconsin, with a M.A. degree in Servant Leadership. Sister Martha is currently ministering as a chaplain at Gunderson Lutheran Hospital in La Crosse.

Sister Karen Jasper has retired from her 22 years of pastoral care to sisters in Nagle Center. She was honored at a special brunch on February 8. Many thanks for her ministry and congratulations to her as she begins an new chapter in her life.

Sister Margaret Anne Kramer will assume the position of coordinator of pastoral care at Mount Loretto. She will continue as part-time pastoral associate at St. Anthony Parish in Dubuque. Blessings to her as she graces the halls of Mount Loretto with her presence.

Go East, Dear Women, Go East
Convergence 2006, a meeting of 400 North American Presentation sisters in St. Paul, Minnesota, enabled sisters from far and wide to meet, pray and dream together. That collaborative experience has inspired another gathering. Eight sisters from Aberdeen, South Dakota, will make the 11-hour journey to again meet, pray and dream with their Dubuque “cousins.” May 12-15 will find the group “heading east” to the bluffs of the Mississippi River and discovering the sites of Dubuque, visiting various sisters’ ministries in the area and enjoying “sister-chats.”

Coming together is, in itself, a time of blessing. With their common Presentation heritage, these two groups will have opportunities to be enriched by shared life-time wisdom and experiences. The result of this migration to the east can only be a deepening of relationships and an increase in gratitude for the various expressions of our common foundress’ spirit and mission. Through this gathering may Nano Nagle offer inspiration to her daughters in Aberdeen and Dubuque.