



A publication of the Sisters of Providence

Providence Missive

*Realities
that call us as
Sisters of Providence*



Providence Missive is the bulletin of the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence published by the General Administration three times a year. It presents news, activities, articles for reflection, and personal testimonies of the life and mission of the Sisters of Providence throughout the world.

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COVER:

Sister Merci-Christ Sylméon
receives the first schoolchil-
dren of the new Émilie-
Gamelin school in Torbeck,
Haiti. September 2017

Dear Sisters,

Realities that call us as Sisters of Providence

In the last *Providence Missive*, we experienced the General Chapter through the eyes and ears of Chapter participants. How timely that in this December *Missive* we focus on the realities that call us as Sisters of Providence. Two realities are that December 2017 marks the end of the 400th anniversary year of the Vincentian charism and that January 2018 begins the 175th anniversary year of our Sisters of Providence charism given to us by Blessed Emilie Tavernier Gamelin.

I was very moved by a recent article¹ by Father Guillermo Campuzano that explored how the Vincentian charism is in a state of permanent reinterpretation. The same may be said of our Providence charism. He spoke about the Rome Vincentian Symposium and stated that, though there was sporadic mention of certain realities of the world today, "the interpretation of our charism continues to be centered on actions of charity and a spirituality that has not yet embraced the challenges of the pastoral, ecological and relational conversions to which Pope Francis has been calling us from the beginning of his papacy." Father Campuzano asked: "Can we be a prophetic and countercultural voice in the face of a secularized, technologically advanced world that progresses at the expense of the most vulnerable, the ones to whom we want to dedicate our lives? Can we work to change not just the structures of injustice, but the structures of thinking that support and justify the injustice?"



Marie-France Gendron (left), employee at the Providence International Centre for more than 22 years, ended earthly life on November 17, 2017. You see her in the company of Sister Karin Dufault at the 2015 Christmas celebration.

He suggests that we need "to renew our tradition and keep alive, in new ways, the evangelical synthesis Vincent [and for us, Emilie] found in the service of the poor and in addressing the crises of their times. We need to do this with our eyes on our founders' hearts and what God did in them." He challenges further: "We must articulate the intellectual/experiential inheritance in language understandable to men, women and youth of today by updating it into new forms of life, thought, action and communication, or we will lose it – and with it, ourselves."

How timely to read and reflect on these words in the light of our General Chapter Orientations and our updated Constitutions and Rules! The year 2018, our anniversary year, provides us with the perfect time to take a long, loving look at the stark realities in our lives, our society, and our world, and to discern our responses consistent with God's dream and our heritage.

In this edition of *Providence Missive*, you will gain insights into how some of our sisters have reflected on realities of our day that have touched their hearts and souls and how they have responded in the spirit of Emilie and Vincent. These realities that disproportionately impact those who are poor demand action and include contaminated water, homelessness, refugee and immigrant issues, human trafficking and the death penalty.



Attendance at the Religious Formation Conference 2017 Congress, with its theme "Grace in the Now: The Gospel of Encounter," further reinforced for me the importance of paying attention and responding to the realities before us. When we are really aware of suffering, God is tapping us on the shoulder and giving us a chance to act as daughters of God, daughters of Vincent and daughters of Emilie. I had just such an opportunity recently.

I enjoyed a lovely meal at a restaurant in Yakima, Washington, with our sisters there following the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday. As we left the restaurant, a young bearded man and his pregnant companion asked for help. They were cold and wet from the rain and had been sleeping outside as they traveled from the east to Portland, Oregon. They asked if we could help with paying for a motel for the night. They did not have money since his wallet, with whatever money he had, had been stolen. I indicated that I would go with them to the motel across the street. The young man said there might be a cheaper one down the street; however we agreed to cross the street, where the gracious receptionist registered them.

After I paid for the motel, he expressed gratitude, spotted my cross and asked if I was a sister. I explained that yes, I am a sister of Providence, and that I would be praying that they would reach their destination safely. We exchanged names. He asked that I pray for his brother, who had been in a bad accident and was disabled. He wanted to know if I had a business card because he would repay me when he could. I explained that I didn't have a card, but asked that his way of repaying would be to "pay it forward" to someone who would need his

help someday. And I asked him to let that person know that God loves him or her. I reminded both of them how much God loves them, always. We parted with hugs.

You might ask: Was he really telling the truth? I don't know the answer, but it doesn't matter. This couple provided me the opportunity for a blessed encounter with homeless strangers whose faces I will not forget. They represented for me people everywhere who lack shelter. The encounter was a precursor to the Christmas story. I hope this couple and the receptionist recognized God's love for them and that they pass on that love.

As you read the articles in this *Missive*, I invite you to name a reality in our world that has captured your attention and to reflect on what you, in collaboration with others, can do to respond, consistent with our charism as Sisters of Providence. Share your insights with your local community. Share your ideas about how new forms of life, thought, action and communication can reinterpret our precious charism. What a great way to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Vincentian charism and the 175th anniversary of the founding of our Providence community by Blessed Emilie.


Congregational Leader

1. Campuzano, Guillermo. The Charism at 400: in a State of Permanent Reinterpretation. www.famvin.org/en/2017/10/19/the-charism-at-400-in-a-state-of-permanent-reinterpretation/

Night Sky Christ in the Wilderness

Dear Sisters and Providence Associates and Companions,

The Response to Christmas Begins.

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The response to Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers and sisters and all nations,
To make music in the heart
To welcome and proclaim God's dream.*

—adapted from words of Dr. Howard Washington Thurman

Our 2017-22 General Leadership Team sends our warmest greetings to you for a blessed Advent leading to a joyful Christmas as we welcome our Brother Jesus among us in special ways. This year we chose the Christmas card by artist, Mary Southard, CSJ, titled "Night Sky Christ in the Wilderness". The night sky speaks of the beauty and wisdom of Creation. It reminds us of our place in the universe and beckons us to be quiet and listen to God speaking in the silence. The night also unites us to the dark places in our world and invites us to be in solidarity with those who live in the darkness of pain and suffering, of war and violence, of hopelessness and despair. Christ came to be among such suffering and bring light, love and hope.

The greeting in our card states: "May we reverence the beauty of Creation and be surprised by God's Presence this Christmas. Wishing you a Joy-filled Christmas!" We believe that each of us WILL be surprised by God's Presence in unexpected places

and people this Christmas if we but open ourselves to recognizing it! We also pray that you experience JOY, the joy about which Pope Francis speaks so often, that should be present in every Christian even amid the most difficult circumstances because we know our God-Providence is with us always.

In this turbulent time in our world, we turn our thoughts this Christmas to those most in need. Perhaps the poem adapted from words of Dr. Howard Thurman (African-American author, theologian, educator) best expresses our hope that we all engage in the call of Christmas.

You are in our thoughts and prayers.

Affectionately in
Providence,

Kevin sp *Racelle, sp.*
Nancy A, sp. *Hortense, s.p.*
Jessie L, sp *Linda J, sp*

General Leadership Team



Realities that call us as Sisters of Providence

“Through the practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, in keeping with our heritage, and in solidarity with the poor, we, daughters of Mother Emilie Gamelin, manifest in the society of our times the Providence of God and the compassion of our Mother of Sorrows.” *Constitutions and Rules of the Sisters of Providence, no 2*

Some Sisters of Providence have agreed to help us deepen this reflection with their own experiences.

Ministry against the Death Penalty

Charlene Hudon, SP, was born in Ellensburg, Washington, U.S.A. She entered the Sisters of Providence in 1958. After studying and working in education, she became physiotherapist while still working on other tasks. She is presently known and recognized as the JPIC Coordinator for Mother Joseph Province.



Kay Van Stralen, Charlotte Van Dyke, SP, Charlene Hudon, SP in Olympia, Washington State.

Pope Francis declared on October 11, 2017 that the death penalty is “contrary to the Gospel.” He said that “however grave the crime that may be committed, the death penalty is inadmissible because it attacks the inviolability and the

dignity of the person.”¹

“It must be clearly stated that the death penalty is an inhumane measure that, regardless of how it is carried out, abases human dignity.”¹

Amnesty International says, “all people have the right to life, and we all have the right to be free from cruel, inhuman, and degrading

punishment. These are human rights that people have, regardless of whether they have been convicted of crimes. The death penalty is the ultimate denial of human rights.”²

In the United States, capital punishment is a legal penalty. There are 31 states that have the death penalty, 19 states without the death penalty and 4 states with gubernatorial moratoria.³

There are many groups who are advocating against the death penalty. But one in particular



Lenora Donovan, SP, Charlotte Van Dyke, SP, Geri Johnson, PA, Charlene Hudon, SP, and other supporters with a gentleman who was exonerated after years on death row .



is Catholic Mobilizing Network (CMN). It is a national organization working in close collaboration with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and living the mission of the Congregation of St. Joseph. CMN proclaims the Church's pro-life teaching and prepares Catholics for informed involvement in the public debate to end the death penalty and promote restorative justice. CMN educates the lay community through programs and materials on the Church's teachings on the death penalty, facilitates respectful and informed discourse within the Catholic community and the community at large and advocates local and national community leaders for life and human dignity.

It is this group, along with the American Civil Liberties Union, with whom the Sisters of Providence of Mother Joseph Province have worked closely. The Provincial Chapter on August 1, 2013, passed Resolution 2013-01 that adopted a Corporate Stance for the End of the Death Penalty.

Mother Joseph Province advocates the ending of the death penalty. As the sisters explain, we do this by advocating for safe and just sentences for capital offenders; as well as informing our province on events and attending legislative days to testify before the Law and Justice Committee in Olympia, Washington. Sisters Joan

Campbell and Charlotte Van Dyke have testified before this committee regarding the flaws inherent in the sentencing and the execution of death row inmates.

We, Sisters of Providence are Catholic women of faith who respond to the needs of the poor and vulnerable through education, parish ministry, health care, community service and support housing, prison ministry, pastoral care, spiritual direction, retreats and foreign missions.



Sister Joan Campbell advocates against the death penalty with an information table at an event. Sister Joan has taken the lead on this issue for many years. A small committee continues to reach out to the larger community and networks with those working to end the death penalty.

¹ "Address of his Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Meeting Promoted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization", Synod Hall, 11 October 2017, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/october/documents/papa-francesco_20171011_convegno-nuova-evangelizzazione.pdf

² <https://www.amnestyusa.org/issues/death-penalty/>

³ <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/>



Ministry in Vermont, USA

Patricia Mckitrick, SP, was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, U.S.A. In 1972, while already a licensed nurse, she entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Providence in Montreal. Then, she learned French and Spanish and now takes care of the poor while still practicing her profession.



Sister Pat (4th from left) with the member of the Collaborative Anti Human Trafficking

Frequently, Sisters ask me, "What do you do?" I have been employed by the hospital as an outreach nurse for over 23 years.

Health Ministries and Faith in Action programs work with people of different faiths to promote health and wellness. Each community is different, so the responses are unique. Winooski is a diverse community where over 28 languages are spoken. Programs provide: visits to clients to reduce loneliness, meals, accompanying people to appointments, providing opportunities to attend religious services, and referrals as needed. The programs also offer educational opportunities: self-management workshops on diabetes, chronic pain, etc.

My role has evolved over the years and provided me with great flexibility to respond to unmet needs. Many people living in

Vermont did not believe that Human Trafficking was an issue here. We know that 50-85% of people who were victims of trafficking saw a healthcare provider during the time they were trafficked and were unidentified as victims. We started a "Collaborative Anti Human Trafficking." The Collaborative's vision is to empower healthcare providers to recognize and respond to victims of human trafficking, exploitation and slavery. To accomplish the vision, we created and deliver evidenced based anti-human trafficking curricula and programming. The work is guided by human rights and informed trauma care frameworks. We also work to educate community members, medical and nursing students and clergy. Education has taken different formats: blogs, panels, discussions, classes, and conferences.



Sister Pat (4th from right) in a community celebration on Halloween



International community dinner

With the simulation lab we have developed six scenarios about both sex and labor trafficking to be used as tools to help recognize victims and make appropriate referrals.

Another unmet need in society is elder abuse. We established another Collaborative that includes: a geriatrician, an emergency room doctor, nurses, a therapist, social workers, representatives from Adult Protective Services, other state agencies, researchers, and representatives from community organizations.

Unfortunately, elder abuse is seriously unrecognized and therefore neglected. We are working to identify the various forms of abuse and contributing factors. We cannot prevent abuse if we refuse to identify it. We have a moral and legal responsibility to work to eliminate all forms of violence, including elder abuse.

The Winooski Peace Initiative works to build strong, united communities to reduce all forms of violence. We use different approaches to bring the community together: International meals, panel discussions, movies, etc. Students are preparing community discussions on the book *Brown Girl Dreaming*.

I never know what my day will bring, but I do know that Providence rises before the sun!



Community meetings and conversations



¹ By Jacqueline Woodson, this book intended for teenagers tells the story of the author's childhood in the 1960's-70's in South Carolina and New York.



Sacred Water

Sister Isabel Cid, SP and Rezebeth Noceja, Novice of the Sisters of Providence - Holy Angels Province, attended a conference entitled: "Sacred Water." Below is an article written by Rezebeth after the conference they attended in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, June 6-8, 2017 .



The conference entitled "Sacred Water" was the very first conference I have attended that focused on indigenous spirituality, social justice, and ecological issues in connection with water. Water is the string that connects all areas of our society. When we talk about the spiritual aspect of respecting water we also find ourselves discussing the social need to utilize water. During the conference, it was mentioned numerous times that water is exploited politically. For someone like me who is very new to this scenario, the amount and kind of information were very enlightening. I was used to buying bottled water even before coming to Canada, not knowing its damaging effect ecologically; I was completely unaware of the social injustice being committed by large companies that commercialize the natural supply of water. Thankfully, there are

people who are committed to educating on the real situations surrounding the exploitation of water, such as dumping waste into bodies of water, privatization of water supply, and technological processes that affect nature. Practices such as extraction of oil and gas through fracking and mining disturb the earth, and contribute to the globally rapidly changing climate. All of these are happening in Canada and all around the world. Water is being sold as a commodity rather than its being viewed as a gift from God freely given to all. The role of women, particularly indigenous women, in the protection of water, is rooted in the fact that when women conceive life, this life sheltered for nine months is cradled in water inside a woman's womb. Water is synonymous with life.

One of the speakers of the conference was Elder Josephine Mandamin, an Ojibwe grandmother and Water Walker. Her simple, gentle presence was a strong image of advocacy for our sacred water. She sees water



as a relative, a person, someone who can hear and talk, who has emotions just like a human being. She speaks of Mother Earth and Sister Water in the same way that she would speak of a woman. She said, "Mother Earth's body is being prostituted by those who are after money." She continued that our DNAs are all formed in water, we are all born from water and that makes us all related no matter what our skin colour is. Elder Josephine She witnesses how we, as stewards of Creation, should respond with gratitude and respect to the wonderful gift of nature that God has given to us. Water is an indispensable part of Creation that was entrusted to us humans so we can be stewards of it. We must relate to nature with as much respect as we would with human beings. We need to realize that all parts of Creation have value simply because God is the source of Creation and the author of everything. This echoes the teaching of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si...the Gospel of Creation*. The goods of the Earth are there to sustain us but, as good stewards, we must take only what we need, nothing more and nothing less. However, the problem with our society now is that we are driven to consume more than what we need. In this day and age, marketing strategies succeed at creating the "want" in people to have more and better products than what is really "needed." "More" requires more materials and energy that are ultimately coming from natural resources. Taking only what is needed also ensures sufficient if not equal distribution of the goods of the Earth to humankind.

I began to examine my own use of water. When people take a shower for more than 40 minutes with constantly running water, or when

someone keeps the water running while brushing his/her teeth, is it NEEDED? Is it RESPECTFUL to Mother Nature? And most of all, is it FAIR to use that much when other people don't even have enough? With the current ecological situation, we need to protect more than ever our natural resources. I believe Mother Earth is now speaking loudly to us beginning with last year's massive forest fire in Fort McMurray dubbed as "The Beast". Other past wildfires we know were in Slave Lake of Canada, Chile, Portugal and Italy where casualties were recorded. There was extreme heat in Arizona some months ago, and more recently forest fires around British Columbia, and also in California, USA. If we don't start protecting Mother Earth, we will be uprooted from our homes. Therefore, we better start listening.

For me, Elder Josephine is an image of hope for the future of Mother Earth. Her faith in the Creator, her heartfelt prayer for her children and her children's children to have clean life-giving water, and her reverent appreciation each time she drinks water enkindles in me and other conference participants a passion to protect our water, as well as, personal appreciation and examination on the use of water. I believe that to advocate for a cause is to start the change in one's own self. We need to collaborate in responding to the challenge of Pope Francis: "access to safe drinking water is a basic and human right. When asked how she sees hope in the future of Mother Earth and of water, Elder Josephine said, "Ask our Creator in a good way, always in a good way." This is a confession of how water and the rest of Creation are from God, and how God is the ultimate healer of a planet that is hurting.



“My last five years in JPIC world”

by Mary Kaye Nealen, SP



Solidarity in a Suffering Universe Destined for Resurrection

Because we are an international community, we have many windows onto the world and the universe. Therefore, when we hear the news of serious flooding or devastating fires or disastrous earthquakes, we often know these places firsthand. Likewise, when we meet refugees driven from their home countries, persons afflicted with grave illnesses, homeless people on our city streets, or children and adults in detention centers, we can identify with their suffering. Sisters and brothers in Christ: these are not just “facts” of our Christian faith but also **“faces” of Jesus Christ living, suffering, and dying today.** Our responses seem insignificant for the situations,

but our hope is that the risen Christ in some way makes his presence known through us to those desperate for peace and justice.

Pope Francis’s example and teaching emphasize the many ways that we are connected with one another as persons, as communities, and as dwellers on the planet. I would very much have liked to give more explicit attention to “caring for our common home” (*Laudato Si*), but thanks to our committed and creative administration



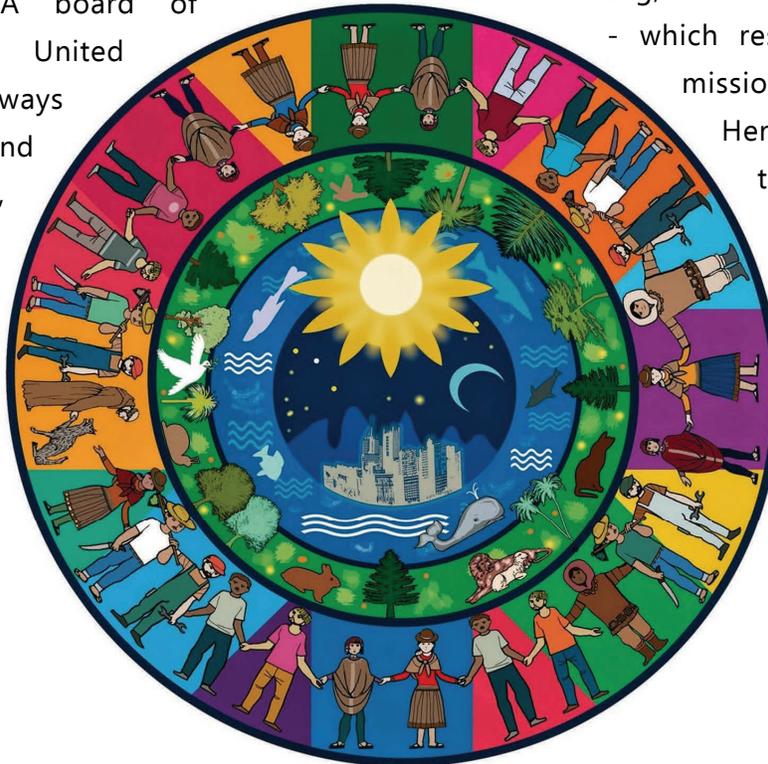
LAUDATO SI'

personnel, this dimension has grown among us like seeds and bulbs that continually put forth fresh blossoms and fruit. While it has not been possible to gather the JPIC (Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation) liaisons from the provinces for an international meeting as desired, the sisters in the congregation have persistently **taken up the needs that they see in the spirit of the gospel works of mercy.**

I have greatly appreciated the JPIC challenge to serve as the Sisters of Providence member of the UNANIMA board of directors. The United Nations has always seemed to me, and perhaps to you, very "high up" and "distant from my ordinary life,"

even working for justice. But I now know better the board members of the other twenty women's religious congregations who come from around the world. Gradually, I am learning the art of working in a non-governmental organization (NGO) with United Nations bodies such as forums and commissions. Our sisters have taken part in various inquiries and projects that help to improve their own and other countries. The **primary emphases of UNANIMA** are women and children, climate change, human trafficking, and migrants and refugees - which resonate with our SP mission and orientations.

Here is one more way that we collaborate with others to address the serious needs of vulnerable people and planet.



You can now read the story told by Marcelle Deschênes, SP, about her years of mission in Argentina and the colossal work the sisters accomplished to offer quality healthcare for the most humble patients in Comodoro Rivadavia. To read about this epic and see the pictures:

www.providenceintl.org



El Salvador, Land of Hope Going beyond, where Providence calls me as a Sister of Providence

Vilma Franco, SP



Sister Vilma (4th from left) ministering in Salvador, her birth country

The motto of the Congregation, «The Charity of Christ urges us», made me go towards the poor of Arcatao, Chalatenango. It is a small town located northeast of the city of Chalatenango, 112 km (70 miles) from San Salvador, and it is bordered to the north and to the east by the Republic of Honduras. I arrived there after driving for hours from Usulután, not knowing what I could expect, only trusting in Providence. I had lunch with Father Miguel Ángel Vásquez and then we took a stroll around the community and went to the place where he was to live, which was a very small room where only

a bed fit. The next day in my prayer I said: “Providence of God, I hope you are going to help me get a place where I feel safer”. And Providence answered; I went to the shop next door, where the lady happened to know my family. She was happy to see me and I shared that I was looking for a place. She called a neighbor who had a house he did not want to rent, but when he learned that I was a religious, he did not hesitate to rent it to me.

The people of Arcatao received me with great joy because many of them knew me from when I was little. They told me: “We remember your mother



the needs of the parish, forming children's missionary groups, looking for catechists, leading retreats and planning meetings, participating in rosaries and visiting homes, especially those where there are elderly and sick persons. The most important thing is to accompany and listen to people. I also participated in activities about the martyrs, since Arcatao is a town that suffered



very well; she sacrificed much to bring you up. We are happy to know that a daughter of Mrs. Marta Calles is a religious and that you have come to work here with us. God always

very strongly the armed conflict and counts many martyrs. I can say that the people are evangelizing me through their experiences of faith; they have nothing, but they still offer me everything they have. They are simple people but they have mastered generosity.



hears the prayers of God's people, a people who suffered profoundly from a war in which many innocent people died. We are a small village but full of great faith. We

Challenge: My challenge in this ministry is to reconnect with my own story of pain, especially when I visit families and hear everything they experienced during the war; then I feel my solidarity with them, accompanying them as Mary at the foot of the Cross. I suffer when I see the poverty of the people and the pain that families keep experiencing because of violence.

are happy to receive you because you also suffered much and lost loved ones in this place, and today you have come to join us and be with us."

But in spite of this, I want to give myself

I started being Providence in all



wholeheartedly to God's love in my suffering town and I recognize God's and Mary Mother of Sorrows' presence in my life. I live alone, but I'm not alone because I have the strength and the prayers of the community of the Sisters of Providence, and because of this I say: "Providence of God, I thank you for all".

Providence International Centre



Montreal, Canada

Experiences of welcoming religious from abroad: success, difficulties and challenges

by Hortense Demia-Mbailaou, SP



4 panelists : Ercilia Janet Ferrera Erazo, CND, Yvon Laroche, RSV, Sandrine Tsélikémé, SP, and Louis- Paul Lavallée, F.É.C.

The Association of Major Superiors of the Diocese of Montreal organized a “coffee club” on November 1, 2017, on “Experiences of welcoming religious from abroad: success, difficulties and challenges.”

The gathering began with a beautiful prayer: “Give us your inspiration! May it help us move towards tomorrow! ”

The theme was topical and it aroused a great deal of interest among the participants. There were four panelists including two sisters: Ercilia Janet Ferrera Erazo, CND, and Sandrine Tsélikémé, SP. The two other panelists were Yvon Laroche, RSV (Religieux de St-Vincent de Paul) and Louis-Paul Lavallée, FSC. (Brothers of the Christian Schools). They shared their

rich intercultural experience of integration in Quebec society, which requires a lot of adaptation.

Sister Ercilia presented her one-year experience in Quebec, for her like a baptism of immersion in the local culture, which is quite different from her own Latin American one. She had to face up to the change of clothing, food and climate (especially the winter cold). For her, the Quebec culture values time a lot, because everyone is very busy. She has also been struggling with the language, which remains a deep inner challenge for her.

In Sister Sandrine’s turn, she shared about how her first culture shock had been the hurry. She found that, generally, everyone is in a rush in comparison



communities and for the communities who welcome them. It is essential to promote intercultural congregations, in which each person brings her or his strengths, limitations and challenges, because differences are a mutual wealth that each acquires by getting in contact with others.

Some Sisters of Providence, including members of the General Leadership Team, Sisters Josie Lerios, Hortense Demia-Mbailaou and Nancy Arévalo, attended the gathering

to her Cameroonian culture where people are not in a hurry, where they take their time to listen to each other. Her culture is a one of welcoming hospitality. The cold remains her grand challenge. However, she says that her experience is a successful one, thanks to the unwavering support of her congregation, which has been her real providence. At the end of her presentation, she expressed her wish that there be preparation for new people who arrive in the

The priest and the brother also expressed their experiences of hosting colleagues who come from abroad to help them with their mission. They really have appreciated their experiences that revitalize and galvanize their aging communities and charisms on Quebec soil.

After the presentations, the attendees shared their reactions at the tables and in the large group. It was an enriching "coffee club", thanks to the presentations and the discussions that followed.

The meeting ended at about 4 p.m. with a few word of gratitude to the panelists and the participants.

Mother Joseph Province



United States, El Salvador, Philippines

Introduction to a new parent organization:

Providence St. Joseph Health

by Barbara Schamber, SP



Since the partnership of the sponsors of Providence Ministries and St. Joseph Health Ministry formally came together on July 6, 2016, a great deal of information has been shared about our

religious community legacies, as well as our ministries. Mother Joseph from Montreal, foundress of the western missions in Vancouver, Washington Territory, and Mother Bernard, CSJ, who came to Eureka, California, from LaGrange, Illinois, were both dedicated women religious called to begin new





foundations in the American West. Accompanied by sisters who were not sure what work they would be called to establish, they forged ahead with trust in Providence and St. Joseph. They opened schools, hospitals, and orphanages, and they expanded their original works to all in need.

These sisters invited laity to help in these works, just as the laity lead the ministries today. Both the Providence and St. Joseph sponsors learned about one another's cultures after many days of retreat and meetings over three years. The sponsors shared how each was founded and questioned how we are to carry out the ministry together now. Paramount is the reality that the mission of Providence St. Joseph Health would continue to be strengthened by this coming together. Both heritage stories indicate that the times were not easy for our foundresses. Today's environment challenges us in

new ways to assure that the "dear neighbor" or "poor and vulnerable" will continue to be served with compassion. Of particular importance in these years of uniting was visiting with the bishops in each diocese in which we are called to serve.

Bishop Thomas Daly of Spokane is very familiar with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange since he served in many positions in the Archdiocese of San Francisco. When he was appointed bishop of the Spokane diocese, the sponsors of Providence Ministries and St. Joseph Health Ministry met with him. His opening remark was, "I can see the connection of your health systems coming together since you both are French." Yes, the CSJ's heritage is from France, but the Sisters of Providence heritage is French Canadian. Two beautiful cultures united in faith for a future full of hope.

Display highlights the founding histories of Providence St. Joseph Health

by Rosalie Locati, SP



The founding histories of the Sisters of Providence and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange reflect similar charisms to reach out to and address the needs of the poor and vulnerable serving the sick, widows, orphans, elderly and homeless. Responding to the signs of the times, both congregations courageously and passionately answered requests from bishops and local communities to serve the unmet needs of the people as they established ministries of education, health care and social services. The early sisters embraced "being called and sent" as pioneers. As each congregation came West to



establish their good works, they invited others to share in their ministries, relying on the gifts and talents, the generosity and dedication of lay women and men. The sisters -- visionary and faith-filled women -- trusted in Divine Providence to sustain them in serving the needs of the "dear neighbor". As each invitation came, they expanded, enhanced, initiated and established their ministries. They engaged and inspired a diversity of people in establishing new structures, organizations and collaborative works to carry out the mission of Jesus.

Having been born from this rich heritage, and reading the new signs of the times, in recent decades both congregations of sisters have entrusted the administrative and operational leadership responsibilities of their contemporary health-care, education and social-service ministries to the lay people.

In July 2016, the ministries and legacy of the Sisters of Providence and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange were brought together when

Providence Health & Services and St. Joseph Health formed a new parent organization: Providence St. Joseph Health. Since that time, our ministries have begun a journey of formation and education to learn about the roots of our two legacy stories, the history and heritage of both congregations of sisters, and the development of their ministries. By understanding our legacy stories, Providence St. Joseph Health leaders will continue to be grounded in our mission and values, seek to inspire caregivers, record sacred encounter stories, and chronicle the developing history of our ministries of creating healthier communities together.

To assist Providence caregivers and visitors in learning, telling and blending of the stories, Sister Rosalie Locati prepared a display at Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center which included pictures of the foundresses and early pioneer sisters of both congregations. Also on display were "sister dolls" wearing traditional religious habits, books, mission statements and stories of the sisters.

Sister Susanne Hartung visits sisters in Holyoke, Massachusetts

by Jennifer Roseman, Communication Director

Walking into Providence Place at Holyoke, Massachusetts, felt very familiar. I was welcomed with Providence hospitality by Sister Mary Caritas, who is a living legend at 94. Her life of leadership includes being administrator of hospitals, provincial superior and chair of the board of Catholic Health Association (CHA). And in the last ten years she built Mary's Meadow, a skilled-

nursing facility for her sisters and others in need. To this day she walks with the speed of a 20 year old and has the wisdom we all wish for.



Sister Susanne Hartung visits with Sister Mary Caritas at Providence Place in Holyoke, Massachusetts.





The visit with the sisters at Holyoke was suggested by Robert Hellrigel, chief executive of Providence Senior and Community Services. He had worked for them for many years and loved their mission. As a close friend of Caritas, as she likes to be called, he put me, the mission integration officer for Providence St. Joseph Health, in contact with her.

It was a very special encounter to stay with the sisters and have them share their stories. When I drove up to 5 Gamelin Drive, Providence Place, I knew I was home.

Bernarda Morin Province



Chile, Argentina

2017 Provincial Chapter kept the spirit of the General Chapter of the Congregation

by Juan Francisco Tapia, Communications Officer

Last October 19-21, Bernard Morin Province experienced its 108th Provincial Chapter with the same spirit as the 2017 General Chapter. Through various rituals and presentations, we were able to connect with Providence spirituality, but we also converted this atmosphere of union into concrete results that will guide our actions hereafter.

One of those results was the reflection that occurred around the Constitutions. Sister Ana Teresa Araya and Sister Rebeca Malhue shared the amendments to the Constitutions and Rules with all the sisters of the Chapter. As you know, the Constitution changes must be approved by the Vatican.



Also, the 2017-2022 General Chapter Orientations were worked on in-depth, and concrete actions were suggested to live them in the Province. This work was divided by tables with specific orientations and later discerned with the group. The process generated proposals, which were unanimously approved at the end.



«Something noteworthy is that there was much harmony; therefore, the reflections by table developed naturally. It did not take us too much time to reach consensus», said Sister María Antonieta Trimpay, Provincial Superior.

United States and Canada were there

Experiences from chapters of other provinces also became part of our own Provincial Chapter, through the testimonies of our Sisters Mónica Campillay and Marta Alvear.

Sister Mónica shared about her experience of having participated in the Provincial Chapter of

Mother Joseph Province. She did it through a playful presentation, with makeup and gestures in the style of a mime artist.

Our Sister Marta Alvear also shared with us about her participation in the Provincial Chapter of Holy Angels Province in Edmonton, Canada.

We thank all the sisters for their presence and openness to the Spirit during this recent chapter of Bernarda Morin Province.

Bernarda Morin Province Held First Seminar for Providence Schools and Kindergartens in Chile

by Juan Francisco Tapia, Communications Officer



The main objective of the seminar was to induce reflection on the present and future challenges in education. It also aimed to strengthen a common

vision of the charism that unites all of the educational institutions of our Congregation in Chile. With international presenters and more than a hundred and fifty participants, the first seminar of the Red Educativa de Colegios y Jardines Infantiles (Schools and Kindergartens Teaching Network) of Bernard Morin Province, entitled "New Challenges for Evangelizing Teaching", was held on November 2-3. It was held at the Colegio Providencia of Concepción, a city located 500 km south of Santiago, the capital of the country.

It was the first activity to be geared towards the members of educational institutional management and administration teams from the various foundations of the Bernarda Morin Province. It was organized by the Equipo de Gestión Providencia (EGP - Providence Management Team), a group



that has been operating since the beginning of 2017. Our Provincial Council handed to the EGP the mandate of acting as consultant to our schools, kindergartens and works, on management and administration issues. The EGP also needs to lead all of them to reach common guidelines.

Renowned speakers were present at the Seminar: Juan Carlos Palafox, from the Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación (National Institute for the Assessment of Education) of Mexico; Monsignor Fernando Chomalí, Archbishop of Concepción; Juan Carlos Bussenius, of the Center of Spirituality of our Province; José Alberto Nieva, CIMA B&C (Consulting firm) of Mexico; and Ruby Vizcarra, Professor of the Faculty of Education of the

Pontificia Universidad Católica of Chile. A message from our Sister María Antonieta Trimpay, Provincial Superior, was also featured. The program included a Eucharist at which Bishop Chomalí presided.

During the two days that the gathering lasted, the guests had many opportunities to share and get to know each other. For example, there was a sociable dinner to strengthen the ties between teachers and principals, which was also among the objectives of the EGP for its first year of operation.

We give thanks to our Provident God for this grand experience of joining together and learning. The invitation for next year's second Education Seminar was launched; it is already programmed to be held at our Provincial House in Santiago.

Mother Bernarda Morin Cup United Following the Example of Mother Bernarda The host institution was the Colegio Providencia in Ovalle



This competition, organized by the Committee of Laypeople for the Beatification of Mother Bernarda Morin, sought to unite the female teams from schools of the various foundations of the Sisters of Providence around sports. It also highlighted the figure of the foundress of the Congregation in Chile,

so that her example may become better known, not only among students, but also in the entire society.

Juanita Tapia, Coordinator of the Committee for the Beatification, extended her warm thanks to the educational communities that sent teams to the Cup:



"I'm grateful for the participation of all the schools that came and I hope that this become an even more massive event; that we join all the schools of Providence in Chile in a competition like this, because it has been really exciting and very nice".

In the name of the Congregation, we also would like to thank the participating teams and schools, and congratulate the Committee for organizing this championship. «Humility and goodwill led by obedience produce wonders» taught our Mother Bernarda, and this sporting event was a clear example of it.

All the athletes received a medal for their participation and for implementing Mother Bernarda's values. The winning teams received a beautiful cup from the hands of our Sister María

Eugenia Arancibia, SP Provincial Councillor and Director of Colegio La Providencia of Ovalle.

Sebastián Sierra, volleyball coach for the Colegio Sagrados Corazones of la Serena, said: "I think it is fantastic that all schools of the Sisters of Providence in Chile meet together." He added that, regarding the realization of this championship, "being able to share with our sister schools generated an atmosphere of communion."

Let us emphasize that the Colegio Santa Rosa in Santiago won the first place in both volleyball and basketball. Congratulations to all participants!

*Adapted from a text by Juan Francisco Tapia,
Communications Officer
For Bernarda Morin Province newsletter*

Émilie-Gamelin Province



Eastern Canada and Eastern United States,
Haiti, Cameroon, Egypt

Collaborators' Annual Meeting

by Hortense Demia-Mbaïlaou, SP and Nadia Bertoluci, PA



Every year the Province Émilie-Gamelin offers an opportunity for collaborators who work in the different institutions directed by the Province, to meet and share on selected themes that all have a deep meaning linked to the Providence Mission.

On November 22, 2017, at the Providence Hall of the Motherhouse, the Provincial Leadership Team invited Mr. René Villemure, ethicist and lecturer, to talk to us about "Ethics and Global Vision". Mr. Villemure graduated in philosophy and is a specialist in the analysis of language and





interpretation of the world. As a first step, the conference focused on the clash of values, diversity and the complexity of language, some societal choices, perceptions, corruption, etc.

“Contrary to popular belief, ethics is not a matter of structure, it's a matter of culture. This is what gives sense and direction, without which we would lose our way. Ethics responds to irregular situations, for which there are no laws, no rules, no standards. It helps us make decisions when we have to address uncertainty or when we cross grey areas...” Then Mr. Villemure added that “in everyday

life, we must give meaning to the sound of the words”. Finally, when looking for an ethical solution to a given problem, he recommended to “always question ourselves, seeking what is right”.

Secondly, there was some time open for questions; themes such as the unrestricted sale of marijuana and physician-assisted dying were brought up.

A meal prepared by La Corbeille was offered to the guests. La Corbeille is an organization supported by the Sisters of Providence that offers food security and socio-professional insertion to the Bordeaux-Cartierville community.

Providence of God, I thank you for all.

Opening of the Émilie-Gamelin school in Torbeck

by Merci-Christ Sylm on, SP



The Motto of Émilie-Gamelin School:

“Together for quality education!”

The Émilie-Gamelin School opened its doors to the children on September 11, 2017, with a Mass to the Holy Spirit. The Reverend Father Michel Borgella, parish priest of Sainte-V ronique, came to celebrate

the Eucharist. The prenovices Marie Carmide Louis, Manise Augustine, Milineda Brice and Renette Laloi formed the great Providence choir to liven up the Mass. Four Sisters of Providence including Estelle Boisclair, Academic Advisor and Local Superior, Valiette Messeroux, Financial Administrator, Nagua Gameel, Classroom Assistant, and Merci-Christ Sylm on, Educational Director, were present to welcome the children and their parents. Mr. Etienne Alfred and Louis, Engineer from INNODEV,  ric Dorvelus, Architect, and Germain,



Engineer, both from Firme GB Design, attended the Eucharist. At the end of the celebration, Sister Valiette in the company of the prenovices proceeded with the distribution of schoolbags and writing paper. The real classes started on September 12. Sister Merci-Christ had interviewed teachers and four met the selection criteria. The educational community was completed when the school hired four other persons to take care of cooking and maintenance.

Sister Merci-Christ has adopted the program of *Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Formation professionnelle* (Ministry of National Education and Professional Formation of Haiti) for the first grade. For the preschool classes, the inspiration comes from a program designed by the same ministry. The presence of Sister Nagwa and the four prenovices is much appreciated academically. They help the teachers and participate in the children's activities.

On Friday, September 22, the



day before the feast of Blessed Emilie Gamelin, Sisters Estelle Boisclair, Valiette Messeroux, Eugena Nogaüs and Merci-Christ Syliméon, with the prenovices, organized and hosted at school a grand celebration with the children. The school playground was decorated with red and white balloons and flags of Quebec and Canada. The picture of Mother Gamelin was installed on a small decorated table. Sister Merci-Christ presided at the prayer singing "Providence of God, I believe in you." After this song, she told the children about the life of Emilie Gamelin. Children's presentations, games and the final prayer were followed by lunch.

During its first week of operation, the school provided only one meal a day to children because of the rain and the unfinished kitchen. In spite of all these difficulties, the school started serving two meals per day on the second week: a breakfast and a warm meal. The children have many options on the menu for both breakfast and lunch. Even if the construction is not quite complete, the school has started to avoid missing too many days of class. The construction continues in the afternoon, after class hours. The builders work at night to make progress on the site.





In this section, we wish to highlight the various ministries of some of our elder sisters, who remain active and always ready to be the “Providence of the Poor.” Some ministries belong to the past, while others are still going on.

PROVIDENCE Our elder sisters TREASURES

Claire Dumont, s.p., the “specialist of bazaars”

Sister Claire Dumont lives in the Providence Pavilion at the Motherhouse. Smiling and discreet, she is an angel for several causes. At ninety-four, she still paces the hallways of the Motherhouse to help wherever she can be useful. Nicknamed the “specialist of bazaars” she accepted without hesitation to serve as guide, counselor and saleswoman at the annual bazaars at the Motherhouse. Having a generous nature, Sister Claire accompanies and guides families of former Vietnamese refugees, now Canadian citizens who promptly respond to her calls to participate in the various fundraising activities. Sister Claire has the gift of awe and sharing; her heart is full of

goodness and discernment. In addition, young people feel attracted by her gentle gaze and her words of wisdom, becoming immediately loyal allies for her causes!



In 2016, Sister Claire (right) offered all of her plants to the novitiate’s new location

Fleurette Beaudoin, SP, and her love for young Haitians

Sister Fleurette Beaudoin lives in the Providence Pavilion at the Motherhouse. She is a keen person, always ready to serve; we can pair her manual skills with her love for young Haitians. An early collaborator of fundraising activities for various works to the benefit of the Haitian people, she does not hesitate a second when someone asks for her opinion or help. Sister Fleurette excels in making clothes for dolls (sold for the benefit of the Providence Associate work in Haiti), in the creation of clothes for girls and boys (donations to Haitian children) and in several other handicrafts. Skilled in

sales, she gladly helps at the big annual bazaars at the Motherhouse or during the sale of our elder sisters’ handicrafts during the holiday season, always with the goal of helping the less fortunate.



This baby Jesus dressed by Sister Fleurette was given to a work in Haiti



INITIAL Entrances, vows *FORMATION*

About how I experience entering the Sisters of Providence

by Juedie Elismat, SP



The day I received my letter of admission for the profession of my vows, I started panicking that very evening. I guess it was the stress of realizing that in less than three months I would be facing a crowd, in front of which I would have to commit by vows in a solemn and public manner that I would join the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence. The reason is that, apparently and unfortunately, engaging in religious life is not the most popular way in the world today. However, it remains that this small group of committed men and women give their lives to the service of the poor of all kinds. I asked the Lord Jesus, my Beloved, to give me the grace to accomplish through my vocation the task of a Sister of Providence: to be the human face of Providence for others. Every day when I wake up, I ask the Lord for the strength to make people happy during the day, so that in everyday life, I become a Sister of Providence such as Mother Gamelin and many other sisters that I met at the Providence Pavilion.

Sister Annette Noël, Provincial Superior at the time, told me when handing me the pectoral cross: "Wear it with pride." This sentence struck me, in the sense that I want to wear it myself being a

young woman who gives her life to God to serve and love others, especially disadvantaged ones, respecting their dignity as daughters and sons of God the Father.

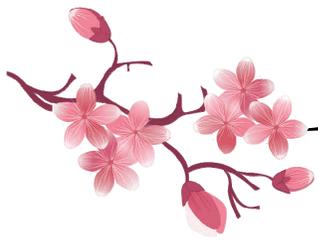
After pronouncing my vows at the Motherhouse, I went to Haiti, my native country. When seeing it again, I had the feeling that everything had to be rebuilt, and God knows how much these people need us. I am also sure that we are where we have to be, where Providence awaits.

Here at Port-au-Prince, in my new local community, we spend a lot of time at the table. We are happy to be together, and we talk about everything that happens in the country and elsewhere in the world. We pray for the challenges of today's world as well as all the projects of the community of the Sisters of Providence.

I laugh a lot, I'm happy to have been chosen and my joy is my testimony at the moment! I think it's the joy of giving myself that makes me feel heartened, at home, in my small country. Life is full of color in the community and we follow Christ with enthusiasm. I enjoy every second, every minute passing by, telling myself: "I have given two months of my life following Christ and someday I'll have given fifty years!"

I joyfully greet you and unite in prayer.





INITIAL *SP* FORMATION

Entrances, vows

Love Leads Us to an Exciting Adventure

by Marie Émeline Ézami Atangana, SP



Bearing witness is to proclaim the immense love God shows us, but it is also about following in Jesus' footsteps; it is really an exciting adventure.

A very important moment in my life was the unforgettable day of September 23, 2017, the day I committed myself

to the evangelical counsels to live the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Since this commitment, my sense of belonging to the Congregation has become increasingly strong.

When everything shifts, and I don't understand what is going on, I always tell myself that God knows better than I do what is good for me.

As I discover religious life, I realize I am a Sister of

Providence to live in community, especially where the charity of Christ urges us.

Based on this conviction, I feel God is calling me to something so big:

The call to give myself to God and to commit myself to follow God;

To bear witness to the mysteries of our Mother of Sorrows through a life of compassion at the service of the poor.

My reason to live is to remain in the love of God, in order to love God, and also help people love God where I happen to be. At the moment, it is in Haiti.

I am very pleased to be allowed to participate with the teaching staff in the mission of the Sisters of Providence in the new Émilie Gamelin School.

I count on the grace of Providence to continue being a woman of compassion and tenderness.

Entrance to the Novitiate



Rezebeth Noceja
Edmonton, Canada
November 17, 2017



Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo
Seattle, USA
December 12, 2017