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COVER : The angel of Advent, bearer of hope

Dear Sisters,

“The future has a name, and the name of the future is hope.”¹

Pope Francis

*W*ords matter! In the last Missive I shared a word that kept showing up for me – COMMUNICATION. Another word also has been appearing before me --HOPE. Actually, hope is the topic I chose for my doctoral dissertation years ago. The fact that “HOPE” has shown up so often in recent months tells me that Providence is reminding me to probe deeper into the importance of hope in today’s world, in our church, in our beloved community, and in my own personal life journey.

This time of Advent and the coming of Christmas is a perfect time to remember the source of our hope and to pray for growth in hope for ourselves and others! In fact, the 2019 French language Advent booklet in Canada is titled, “Grandir dans l’Esperance” (To Grow in Hope). In the chapel of the Mother House, our eyes gaze on an Advent “Arbre de Esperance” (an



evergreen tree of hope) in the sanctuary and all are invited to write a hope on a colorful paper flame to hang on the tree. What a creative idea initiated by Sister Pierrette Drapeau! Advent is truly a time to contemplate and grow in the virtue of hope (theological and human) and to express hopes for the hurting world, our earth, our community and ourselves. Let me explain.

Prophetic Hope

Hope called strongly at the 2019 International Union of Superiors General (UISG) Plenary Session in May with its theme, “Sowers of Prophetic Hope,” and the UISG Campaign of Sowing Hope for the Planet. Teresa Maya, CCVI, reminded us that “hope is the gift of communion ... Hope is the result of the encounter of community.”² She →

called us to be women of vision and seers of hope, to use our memory and trust our prophetic call and to sow, water and tend seeds of prophetic hope in our way of being with and for others. She challenged us to respond to our call to prophetic hope by leaning into our contemplative identity with new asceticism, noticing everything with a long loving look at God's spirit "stirring new insights and hope around us."³

Teresa's words were further reinforced for me by Sr. Adriana Carla Milmanda in her presentation on "Intercultural Life as a Sign of Prophetic Hope":

"Can intercultural life become one of the seeds of the prophetic hope that we, as consecrated women, want to sow in today's world? I am convinced that the answer to this question is positive and that it is urgent for each of our Congregations and the entire Church to consider it. Yet, the most pressing issue, about which most Congregations are concerned, is how to live it and how to do it."⁴

Everything within me said a resounding "Amen". She emphasized that interculturality "is a new paradigm that wants to respond to the reality that surrounds us and imposes itself on us; it is a key from which to re-read our life and mission as consecrated persons in today's world."⁵ We can be a sign of

prophetic hope for humanity in our contemporary world by our intercultural life and mission, valuing, being transformed, enriched and challenged by persons with different cultures.

Our Providence spirituality, assures us that Providence is WITH us on our intercultural living and ministry journey and supports us as we meet the immigrant, refugee, marginalized, victimized, imprisoned and each culturally different person. God's dream, so clear in the messages of Jesus, is inclusive.

Courageous Hope

Another reminder of the necessity of hope was the 2019 Religious Formation Conference Congress in Louisville, Kentucky, which had as its theme, "**Being Signs of Courageous Hope**". Father Bryan Massingale's keynote address on "Courage for an Interim Time that Doesn't Yet Know Its Name" plunged us into the reality that we are living not in an era of change but in a change of era and uncertainty. This era is marked by climate disruption, the rise of white nationalism and a radical shift in the understanding of gender and human sexuality. He stated that women and men religious are called to be at the forefront to help individuals navigate the uncertainty. This demands courageous hope and initial and continuing formation programs that help

us “to live on the cusp of something that marks an exponentially different way of being, living, praying and doing.”⁶ Catholic faith strengthens hope by the “ability to reason well in the face of the unknowable” and the knowledge that God is present even in the “upheaval of an age which is coming to be.”⁷

Sister Norma Pimentel, MJ, inspired us with her courageous hope ministering to migrant families and refugees at the humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas. Through faith grounded in prayer, Sister Norma not only brings hope to families by her presence but also speaks truth to power, advocating tirelessly for changes in immigration laws. She challenges us to search for what God is asking of each of us.

Radical Hope

Women of Providence in Collaboration will celebrate its 40th anniversary at the upcoming June 2020 Providence Event which has as its theme, **Where Justice and Radical Hope meet!** The conference announcement states: “We are a planetary community whose call is to imagine a world where Providence People find the courage to speak out for justice and live into our emerging future with radical hope.”⁸ Sister Nancy Sylvester, IHM, will help participants use a

Providence lens to look at the justice issue of our times and to collaborate with radical hope to engender hope amid those suffering.

The Present Hope

The Canadian Religious Conference has chosen the theme, A Present Hope: Reading the Signs of the Times (**L’espérance au présent : des signes à reconnaître !**) as the theme of the 2020 General Assembly with Fr. Ron Rohlheiser, OMI, as the speaker. Father Ron will help us identify our realities and hopes as well as develop the attitudes necessary to recognize the signs of the times.

Each of these themes: prophetic hope, courageous hope, radical hope, present hope are dimensions of hope that our world needs and are what our mission demands. Our Constitution #8 states:

“This Mission calls each of us
To discover Jesus Christ,
Especially in those who are suffering;
To serve him through works of mercy,
And to be a sign of hope and
resurrection
In today’s world.”⁹

Providence is providing us with opportunities for growth in hope and to be signs of hope, so let us take advantage of them. →

Light of Hope Extinguished

Perhaps in your ministry you have come face to face with persons in dire circumstances who have nearly given up hope. The darkest times can be the occasion for hope to flourish or the occasion for the light of hope to be extinguished.

Recently, the light was extinguished for a loving mother incarcerated at Leclerc prison. With duo-citizenship, she fled from the United States with her children to escape abuse. Accused of kidnapping her children, she was imprisoned and ordered to return to the United States. After multiple court appeals, she was to be extradited to the United States. With her hope for being with her children ended, she hung herself. The grief that filled the prison was palpable to us during the memorial Mass. The prison chapel was filled to overflowing with mourning women seeking comfort and hope. It touched me deeply calling forth advocacy for prison reform and changes in the justice system.

Her story is one of tens of thousands of adults and young people who have attempted or committed suicide, desperate for a flicker of hope in troubled times. We can be attentive to these silent cries and give hope a chance by deep listening to their stories, by caring.

Conclusion

Let us give thanks to God-Providence for this dynamic life force we know as hope that allows us to see light in darkness or to expect it over the horizon. Let us also give thanks for the faith that assures us that God is with us as we wait. Advent and Christmas liturgies are filled with reminders that we have reason to hope and reason to share hope. Let us especially remember in prayer our sisters and the people of Haiti, Chile, and Egypt, where so much unrest and uncertainty are present and where hope may be threatened for many.

Blessings of peace and hope,


Karin Dufault SP
Congregational Leader

1. Pope Francis. "Why the only future worth building includes everyone", 2017, https://www.ted.com/talks/pope_francois_why_the_only_future_worth_building_includes_everyone/transcript?language=en
2. Maya, Teresa. "A Vision for the Future of Religious Life". UISG Plenary, May 2019. Pg 1. <http://www.internationalunionsuperiorsgeneral.org/uisgplenary2019/>
3. Maya, Teresa. pg 7
4. Milmanda, Adriana Carla. "Intercultural Life as a Sign of Prophetic Hope," UISG Plenary, May, 2019, pg 2
5. Milmanda, pg 6
6. Massingale, Bryan. "Courage for an Interim Time that Doesn't Yet know its Name." Religious Formation Conference, October 25, 2019.
7. Ibid.
8. Women of Providence in Collaboration, <https://www.wpcweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2020-event-brochure.pdf>
9. Sisters of Providence. Constitutions and Rules, 2018, pg 8.



By Mary Southard, CSJ
« Ministry of the Arts »
Congregation of St-Joseph

*L*ove came in the world to uplift humanity to the very
Heart of Love, Peace and Joy for all nations.
May this be your gift at Christmas and the New Year.

Karin, sp

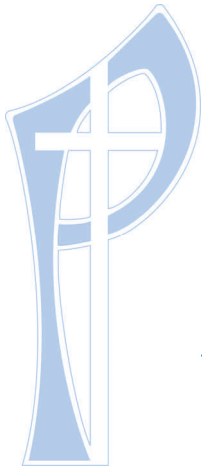
Rachel, sp.

Josie L., sp

Hortense, s.p

Nancy A, sp.

Annette, s.p.



SPECIAL Experiences, reflections *REPORT*



To be bearer of hope

Filled with hope, the Providence Family not only carries the projects and dreams of the Congregation, but also those of all the persons who seek justice and peace, hand in hand with the humblest and calling on strengths beyond our own: strengths of Life with a capital L.

BEARERS OF HOPE FOR OUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS - CLAIMS OF THE HAITIAN PEOPLE



Thousands of Catholics participating in a peacefully protest in Port-au-Prince on October 22nd.

For several months, some of the Haitian people have been taking to the streets to claim their rights. Their claim is perfectly legitimate because the people are lacking of the basic necessities of life. We must also recognize that while the majority of the people are deprived of the essentials, another part lives in abundance because the wealth of the country is very poorly distributed. In a poor country like ours, we have people who make a fortune by exploiting the impoverished population.

As a result, many people are calling for the resignation of the current president. In the opinion of some, he is doing nothing to improve the situation in the country, while others are asking for a radical change because they realize that the problem in the country is not that of a single man but rather a larger public awareness issue. While the demands of the Haitian people are legitimate, the way to obtain them needs to be reconsidered. In 1803, we gained independence through violence





because it was the only way to make ourselves understood and to stop the colonial powers. But today, in the heart of the 21st century, we do not need to make ourselves heard through violence.

Moreover, violence against the population is deplorable. It is also deplorable to see how some Haitians are killing each other. We have such a beautiful history, but we are destroying everything we have built after so many years of struggle because we allow ourselves to be blinded and fall into the trap of wickedness. The struggle for power seems to be stronger than that which could change the fate of an entire people. The thirst for absolute power encroaches on the fair share of the common good. In seeking the earthly pleasure of excessive consumption, many buy properties at

exorbitant prices or place excessive amounts of money in foreign banks while a part of the population is dying of hunger. Despite all of this, most Haitians remain confident and they continue to believe in a better tomorrow because faith in God gives them the courage to stand up against the odds.

We are the chosen people of God, and this entire episode will not lead us to death but to Life. There is a Creole proverb that says, "*Lèl fè pral fè jou, se lè saa li pi nwa*". It means: Something good will come out of this catastrophic situation.

Long live *Haïti chérie!* (dear Haiti)

Providence of God I thank you for all!

Eugena Nogaüs, SP

MISSION IN EGYPT, BEARER OF HOPE !



Since 1977, we can say that Divine Providence has been truly present in Egypt and has shown us a great deal of benevolence to this day.

The mission began with three Sisters of Providence and two more sisters joined them later. We also used to receive missionaries

who remained 4 to 5 years before returning to Canada. Since 2003, we are two religious: Sisters Hélène Fakher and Colette Lord.

Currently we continue to accommodate 14 students, aged 5 and 15 years, mostly from Upper Egypt (south). They come from poor families and most of them attend a school near our house. We pay for their expenses: schooling, food, books, clothing, etc. Also a teacher comes every 5 days to give them private lessons, less expensive than those offered by local schools.



There are also other poor children living in Agami; we welcome them for meals and lessons given by the teacher. This group consists of five very young boys.

Sister Hélène is never idle. When the boys return from school they always ask for something and then it is lunch time and bedtime.

In addition to caring for children, Sister Hélène occasionally visits the sick in their homes which is much appreciated. She also visits poor families who ask for help.

On the land where our residence is located, a small two-story house was purchased by the Provincial Council. We use it to accommodate a minister who comes with a group of people to sing and pray once a week. It also happens rather frequently that people who wish to take some resting time ask to occupy the house for a few days. Others come in the summer for short vacations as we are near the sea. It is understood that all pay rent.

At Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day and the Feast of Mother Gamelin, we welcome mothers and give them food, clothes, money and a gift. They

never fail to knock on our door at 6:00 a.m. First Sister Hélène has them pray and then she gives them what she has prepared for them.

Since there is no Latin parish, every Friday the children in our care go to the Mass for Coptic Catholics. On Sunday we have Mass at home but when we do not find a priest, we go to the Jesuits' residence which is one hour and a half distance from our home.

This summer a few days after our return from Canada, we went to Upper Egypt to attend the wedding of the brother of Sister Maria Nagui, SP. We made this trip by car during the night since our driver said that in the nighttime there is no traffic. Also, we brought clothes and gifts for the people. During our stay, we visited several families in small villages. All were happy to meet religious and the welcome was very warm. We also visited the parents of children who live with us in Agami.

The other SP ministry in Egypt is that of Sister Colette Lord as secretary of the Apostolic Vicariate of Alexandria, in response to the request of the bishop who wanted a secretary who knows English. Sister Colette needs to





communicate with countries such as France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Australia, etc. Consequently, in these countries, people know her name and work and they send her many gifts knowing that she hosts poor children in her house.

In Agami there are also some very generous people who donate money to us seeing that we have children with us. It is Providence that shows goodness to us because these donations allow us to serve our dear little ones and help their families.

Besides working in the Vicariate, Sister Colette keeps the chronicles, does the finances and correspondence. Every year she goes to Canada with Sister Hélène. However, this year, 2019, will never be forgotten because three weeks after her arrival in Quebec she was informed that her bishop, Adel Zaki, had died. This news was

difficult to accept. Back in Agami from Canada, she continued to work at the Vicariate where a priest was appointed as diocesan administrator pending the appointment of the new bishop by the Holy Father, which could take quite a long time. As the priest administrator speaks only Italian and Arabic, Sister Colette does her best to serve him in these languages.

On November 15, we had the joy of praying before the tomb containing the relics of St. Therese of Lisieux. For a week, the tomb was carried to various churches and we went with our children to the sanctuary of St. Rita where the tomb was that day.

We end this letter by thanking the members of the General and Provincial Leadership Teams who help us to maintain this mission which, we believe, responds to the will of God.

Sisters Hélène Fakher, SP and Colette Lord, SP

CHILI: MY PEOPLE, *mi gente*

Our looters are young people who have suffered marginalization, poverty, overcrowding and lack of quality education. They are embedded in a shaky health system, without effective and efficient care, with ill-equipped rooms unable to provide decent care and lack of specialists. Long and inhumane hours of waiting time, often resulting the death of a family member occurring without receiving timely care.

Elderly adults, who dedicated their lives and work to the building up and progress of our people, finish the last stage of their lives lonely





and helpless, unable to meet their basic needs. The pension they receive is not enough to spend the final years of their existence in peace, happiness and dignity.

The country has been subjected to a neoliberal model which revolves around consumption, competition and accumulation of material goods. This model has created a segregated and discriminatory caste society in which a few benefit from the work of the many who are left without any benefits, thus deepening the poverty gap. This has resulted in the wounded people being left along side the road, those whom the Pope Francis calls "the discarded".

This economic model has encouraged and enabled the collusion of big business and franchises that artificially increase the prices of medicines, food, basic consumption products and engage in tax evasion, influence peddling to obtain privileges, economic and political favors and many other corrupt practices. This is a sin that cries out to Heaven.

In my opinion, the situation that our people are living goes beyond the economic or political. It has a much deeper root. It is a matter of social and moral justice, since the answer to the popular cry of the dispossessed who have suffered marginalization and exclusion for decades, has not been heard. Or it has been answered wrongly, with an economic model of a ruthless free-market which, in addition to exacerbating competition and personal selfishness, has also left too many injured along the way.

Only through relationships based on equality, decent and equal treatment, social justice, dialogue and a search for the common good, can we bring an end to the distances and the gaps that separate and segregate us. Only with the restoration of dignity for the person can we have peace in abundance because the basis of peace is justice.

Respect and dialogue are urgent TODAY. We must have dialogue without exclusions which is comprehensive, participatory and diverse in order to bring us together: the political world, the labor unions and the labor movement, the social movements, all working together to build the common good and following the way of institutions.

Chile can wait no longer. We have spent over thirty years of waiting and of promises unfulfilled.

In this so complex hour of our history, why do I go out to be with my people?

Because I feel that God is calling me to do this, because I am suffering at seeing so much pain and the needs of my people. **My people**, because I am part of them and they are part of me. Their pain is my pain, their joys are my joy.

Our history teaches us how much damage is done when institutional infrastructure are broken down. I do not desire this nor do I wish to go into the streets to break institutional infrastructures. I go to accompany those who are suffering and shouting so they may be heard. The people are not in the streets begging for riches but they are there to claim what is rightfully theirs.

With this pain accumulated for so many years, I was not able to remain passive while watching on TV what is going on all around me. Carrying in my prayer the grievances of my people, I accompanied them in order that their cries may be heard and that they would receive what has been denied to them. Internalizing the life that is going on around me, praying and accompanying the people, these are gestures that must be intimately linked.

I dream that someday I will go out into the street, not to beg with the people and plead for justice, equity and participation; but to share laughter and songs of joy because finally the poor and the marginalized,



whom Saint Vincent called "Our lords and masters," will no longer be cold on winter nights, will not suffer ailments without timely care, but will receive a fair wage so they may live decently and our grandparents will live their last years with dignity and joy seeing their children and grandchildren grow up in a country of justice and fraternity.

I deeply respect others who act according to how God inspires them, which may be more valuable than what I do (being informed, praying and accompanying), but for everyone, **God has a plan and a call. This is mine.**

Sister Ana Georgina Rozas G., SP

BEARERS OF HOPE, HOPE FOR CHILE - VOLUNTEERS OF COMEDOR (DINING ROOM) EMILIA GAMELIN TALK ABOUT THEIR CURRENT SITUATION



As we know, the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence was born out of a call from God to meet the needs of the poorest of the time. Ever since, the Congregation has made real the action of God's Providence, which is manifested by a compassionate charity towards persons most in need.

In Santiago, Chile, in the late 80s, the Comedor (dining room) Emilie Gamelin opened its doors to street people, serving lunch to an average 100 people per day, Monday through Friday.

Today not only food is distributed but clothing as well. The Comedor also includes a bathroom and hot shower. Sometimes other services are also provided, such as podiatry, social assistance through the civil municipality of Providencia and spiritual assistance.

During these days of violence and anarchy that our beloved Chile is currently living, the Comedor Emilia Gamelin has been an oasis of peace and tranquility, for our sisters and brothers and for the volunteers who serve there. *Maria Elvira Schmidt*

Here are some excerpts of the testimonies of three men from the Comedor who by their spirit of love and gratitude have become volunteers and serve other people in the same situation. These three have become essential to keeping the doors open and continuing to serve hot meals to those whose need is great. They accepted to share with us their views on the importance of being bearers of hope today.

Nicolas Silva: "My name is Nicolas Silva, I am 50 years old and, like my companions here, I find the





Comedor to be a welcoming place. Unfortunately, we are currently living through a fairly complex social crisis that worsens the living conditions for most of the people who live on the streets. There are evenings when it is a struggle to get a plate of food, but thank God, we have the Comedor Gamelin and similar organizations that are open



Monday through Friday, in spite of everything that is happening that makes it difficult for our volunteer personnel to get here. The Comedor is a great help to us; I feel good in this place because for me the Comedor is part of my life. This work brings me a lot, and lots of love. I meet scores of people and it is helping me to change my character and learn to love my brothers. I like what I do. I love being a volunteer. I love to serve my brother and I do it whole heartedly. We all make mistakes and sometimes we have our differences, but even with that, the Comedor brings me a lot. It really helps me. After all, it is part of my life now; it is like a home for me. "

Moisés Aguirre: "I'm 37 years old. For all of us, persons of the street, as for any human being anywhere in the world, food is essential because it gives us the energy to continue living. Whether for breakfast, lunch or dinner, we need it even in this time of crisis. I sleep near the Santiago central hospital, a place where traditionally the street people end up and where many volunteers bring us food, clothing, etc. But this aid has decreased tremendously due to the situation in the country; but despite everything, the Comedor Emilia is playing a crucial role and continues to open its doors and provide us at least one hot meal a day.

The Comedor, as my companions have said, is our home. Here I shower every day and gradually, I

have become involved in the group. I feel the desire to serve, to cooperate, to try to earn my bowl and stop being just one of the bunch who eats, says thank you, goodbye and leaves. A desire to collaborate entered my heart because I am part of the spinning Wheel. I thought it was the right thing to do to follow the example of my two brothers and reach out to others. When I came here, the first one I met was Nicolas; he always had a welcome gesture, like holding the door for us. Yes, I can say that it's nice to earn a dish of food, eat next to our companions and then take care of the others as well. Yes, that's good. "

Ian Graessler: "I'm 45, and just like my companions, I am very grateful to have a place to go for lunch. Yes, this is my home and I take care of it. In these times of crisis it is difficult to get here, but we are happy to clean the chairs and tables, to cook and serve with affection, and especially to bring hope and life, not only through food but also through prayer and listening. With Sister Ana María's welcome and with all the volunteers we are doing our part so that the lives of every brother of the street who comes to this place can feel a little more dignified, and especially that they can receive love. This is something we all need. So we are ready to serve in our particular duties for the good of all! "



THE LOVE OF PROVIDENCE AND HIS MERCIFUL HOPE

There was a chapter in Holy Angels Province, about 2 years ago that surely made an unexpected impact on me. I realized that my presence, and the presence of other newer Sisters in formation, is a sign of hope to our other Sisters. When the



Sisters were asked what gives them life in the community, quite a few of them answered that when they see the new members, it gives them life and hope. I can remember in particular Sr. Elizabeth Kass telling me that it made her happy to see me, and especially to see me participating in that chapter. It is wonderful to see how the presence of a person alone can uplift the spirits of others. This is not to be misunderstood as a conceited realization of self-importance but rather a manifestation of an essential component of community life. That is the underlying importance of being in communion with each other, a facet of interdependence if I may say so. It is the selfless and welcoming acceptance of other people into the community to be together as one, all in the

hopes of perpetuating the legacy of Mother Emilie and all Sisters who have gone before us.

There is a certain energy that is derived from our communion with each other that overflows to our own ministries and is felt by those we serve

and those with whom we serve. My local community decided to volunteer in one of the prison facilities in the city of Edmonton, where one of our own Sisters work as a chaplain. Together, we bring the love of Providence and his merciful hope to the inmates who scarcely receive it from the people who have very little knowledge of their unfavourable plight. The way that the community has opened my eyes to the different faces of poverty while striving for impartiality have moved me to be a bearer of hope to others as the Gospel requires. Dealing with the people from the margins of society causes internal turmoil at times, but through the support of the community, I trust that there will always be light at the end of a tunnel.

Rezebeth Noceja, SP

COMMISSARY OF HOPE

My role of commissary or congregational leader of the Sisters of St. Dominic of Tacoma (Washington State, USA) was an appointment by the Vatican office: Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

To be appointed is an honor, a privilege and a responsibility. It is also a learning experience to

know and recognize the spirit of the Dominican saints and foundresses that is alive and well within these sisters. There are 41 Tacoma Dominican sisters with an average age of 87 years young.

The Tacoma Dominicans have been in mission and ministry for over 135 years in Washington State.





So, it requires much patience as people in the area and the local Church struggle to understand how a Sister of Providence became the congregational leader for a Dominican order of Sisters. Given enough time and opportunity, it will happen. In the meantime, I get to accompany a wonderful, visionary, courageous

group of women as they live into their own legacy.

Jo Ann Showalter, SP

“HOPE IS A STORY OF UNCERTAINTY”

In the 1880’s, our foundresses, Mother Thomasina, Mother de Chantal and Sister Aloysia, left the Eastern United States and traveled west. After a short stay in Lima, Ohio, they traveled on to the Northwest Territory. There they experienced the warm hospitality of the Sisters of Providence in Vancouver and Walla Walla, Washington, and then traveled to Pomeroy, Washington, arriving on October 24, 1888.

These three young women, Dominican Sisters of Caldwell, New Jersey, risked the security, comfort and familiarity of all they knew. Rebecca Solnit, *In Hope in the Dark*, writes not of certainty; rather, she says, “Hope is a story of uncertainty – a coming to terms with the risk involved in not knowing what comes next....” Once the sisters were in Pomeroy, they risked again not sure what their future was going to be. But they knew for certain that God had a plan for them and with great faith, trust and hope, they began to found a new community.

Today, the Dominican Sisters of Tacoma articulate “risk for the sake of mission,” as one of our core values. In the early 2000’s, we were aware that we were a small, aging community with a shrinking leadership pool. In 2011, we seriously addressed our future with the assistance of the National Religious Retirement Organization (NRRO).

After prayer, study and discernment and with a generous grant from NRRO, and with help from Canon Lawyers and Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) Consultants, we voted in Chapter that a Covenant Relationship was the best fit for us.



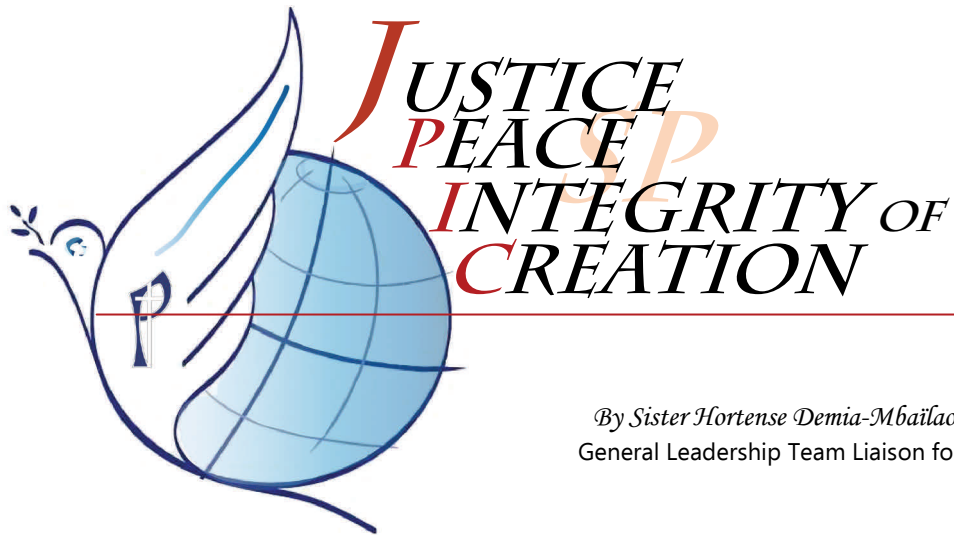
Providence Care Center receiving sacred vessels gifted from the Tacoma Dominicans.

During the next two years we explored various Dominican Congregations and other Congregations located in the Northwest. In 2014, we discerned again and voted to ask the Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province, to covenant with us. Their values, though similar to ours were expressed differently through our two charisms. Our commitment to mission, however, was the same.

Thus, began the process of meeting together and identifying what this covenant relationship would look like. Our sisters needing skilled and supportive care have been at St. Joseph Residence since 1991; our financial management was moved to the Sisters of Providence, MJP in 2017; and in 2019 Sister Jo Ann Showalter accepted her appointment as our Commissary (Congregation Leader) from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life and was formally installed as the Major Superior for the Dominican Sisters of Tacoma.

The image that has sustained us through this process is that of crossing a threshold – *Walking into the Future with HOPE*. As we move into something new, unsure of what it will look like, we continue to have great hope, that as we move toward fulfillment of our mission, God’s plan for the Tacoma Dominicans will be fulfilled.

Sister Sharon Casey, OP



By Sister Hortense Demia-Mbailaou, SP
General Leadership Team Liaison for JPIC



Hope for the Planet: Amazonian Synod Action

The future of the Amazonian Rainforest, the future of us all: Listen to the cry of the poor and to the cry of the Earth: Everything is connected!

*"The destruction of the Amazonian Rainforest is not only the problem of indigenous peoples; it is that of all humanity. If that Rainforest disappears, the whole of humanity is at risk of disappearing as well". **

Recognizing the importance of the Amazon for all humanity, Pope Francis called a Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Panamazonian region. The bishops reflected on how the church can respond to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor people of this territory.

Located in South America, the Amazonian Rainforest is the largest in the world. It covers nine

countries. It is nicknamed "the lung of the planet" because it absorbs carbon gas while producing 20% of the oxygen we breathe. It significantly contributes to stabilize the climate of Earth, our common home. This area hosts half the plants and animals of the world, one fifth of its fresh water and a third of the world's forests. It is also home to more than 30 million people. These include 3 million indigenous people who have a sustainable lifestyle as they live by hunting, fishing and gathering wild fruits and other foods. They take from nature only what they need for their livelihoods. Their use of nature is kind, protecting



the forest and rivers for future generations.

However, profit-hungry companies are destroying the resources of the Amazon forest. They intimidate and chase the indigenous peoples from their lands, silencing those who protect their territory by evil tactics such as kidnapping, setting fires and murdering people. Several indigenous forest guards, mostly women, have been killed. These companies seize the timber, oil and minerals and carry out industrial agriculture which destroys the forest. Profit-driven exploitation impoverishes the indigenous peoples and violates their basic rights.

Because of deforestation, the Amazonian area now emits more carbon than it absorbs, thus warming the planet instead of cooling it. Deforestation also undermines the recharging capacity of the groundwater reserves, increasing the risks of drought and famine.

In the final document of the Synod, the Church commits itself to being an ally of the Amazon Rainforest. The document urges us to "*a true full conversion*" to a simple and sober lifestyle following in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, and committed to come into harmonious relationship with the "*our common home*", the creative work of God.

The Synod calls us all to be accountable because we all must care for God's work. "*Living well*" and "*Doing good*" is the lifestyle of the Amazonian peoples and this is a call for us too: we must live in harmony with ourselves, with other people and with the Supreme Being. We need to feel that we are part of the climate change process so to influence positive changes, our wisdom, our experience, our lifestyle will lead us to defend the Earth, because, defending the Earth has no



Aerial photograph showing a fire burning in the Amazonian Rainforest about 65 km from Porto Velho, in the northern Brazilian State of Rondônia, August 23, 2019 - PICTURE : GETTY IMAGES / CARL DE SOUZA

other purpose than defending life and is grounded in the evangelical principle of defending human dignity. To protect the Earth means to encourage reusing, recycling, and reducing the use of fossil fuels and plastics, changing our food habits such as excessive consumption of meat and fish, adopting sober lifestyles and planting trees; taken together, all these actions can have a significant impact.

In summary, what touched me deeply in this Synod was the emphasis that the final document puts on women's presence and time. As suggested by the wisdom of aboriginal peoples, Mother Earth has a feminine face and in the aboriginal world, women are "*a living and responsible presence in human promotion*". The Synod asked that women's voices be heard, that they be consulted, that they participate more inclusively in decision making, that they contribute to the synodality of the church, and that they assume more forcefully their leadership in the Church, in pastoral counsels and "*even in government institutions*."

The invitation is to reconnect with nature. Living in harmony with nature means to relate with the living

world and learn to enjoy it, to see the beauty of nature as a source of contemplative prayer and a place for contemplation*². So, I invite you to make your own the Pope Francis prayer below:

* Message from Yesica Patiachi Tayori (a member of the Harakbut indigenous community of the Madre de Dios region in Peru) for humanity <https://www.devp.org/fr/campaign/our-common-home/communities/yesica>

*2. This text is inspired by the Amazon Synod final document: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2019-10/amazon-synod-final-document.html>

A prayer for our Earth

All-powerful God, you are present
in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of
this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and des-
truction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.



Pope Francis

*Mother Gamelin Joins the Foundresses and Founders
of the Quebec Church in the Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré Sanctuary*

Madeleine Coutu, SP



One day long ago, maybe 20 years ago, during a guided tour of the Sainte-Anne de Beaupré Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, a Sister of Providence exclaimed: "But, Mother Gamelin is not here among the Founders of the Church of Quebec!" and the guide replied: "Well, it is up to you to submit a request."

This is how, more than five years ago, a sister asked her provincial superior to have Mother Gamelin added to the Sainte-Anne de Beaupré Chapel display.

Then, on April 3, 2018, the provincial superior and council gave me the mandate to begin the process of requesting that Mother Gamelin be given her due place in the Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré Chapel.

Several steps had to be taken before everything was completed: choosing the right spot for the painting in the





Left: Sisters of Providence and guests present at the official opening of the fresco.

Bottom photo (1st): Sister Karin Dufault, Congregational Leader

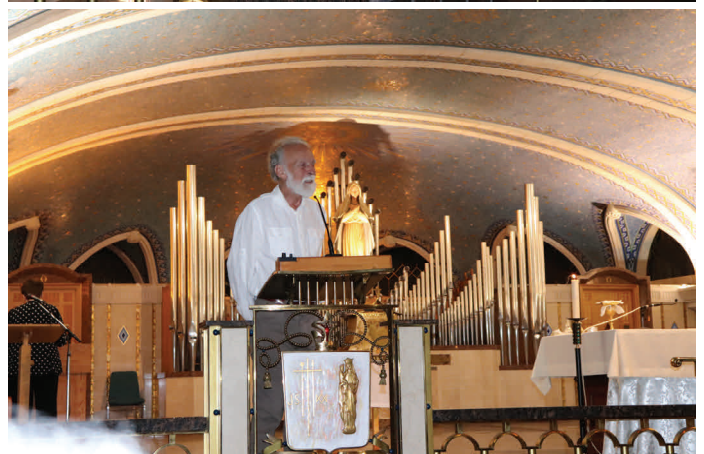
Bottom photo (2nd): Pierre Lussier, painter and author of the work.

Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, contacting an artist, etc.

Pierre Lussier, an artist from the Quebec City region, was chosen to carry out this work.

After immersing himself in the life, works and spirituality of our foundress, he began working on the sketches, the characters, the colors, and the patterns. All things kept progressing until the day of the official inauguration under the episcopacy of Gérald Cardinal Lacroix, Archbishop of Quebec City, on June 28, 2019, in the presence of the members of the General and Provincial Leadership of the Sisters of Providence and the employees of the Emilie Gamelin provincial administration and of Pavillon Providence.

The artist's painting depicts Mother Gamelin attending a homeless person, with Dodais and a student on her right. To the left we can see an elderly person, a Sister of Providence and a boy who represents both the orphans whom our sisters welcomed in large numbers in Montreal during the typhus epidemics and the young boys educated in



our kindergartens. The backdrop reminds us of the Asile of Providence on the left and period congregational houses on the right.

May Blessed Émilie Tavernier-Gamelin bless us and all the pilgrims who will honor her in this great and noble sanctuary!



SHORT NEWS

Across the Community

Holy Angels Province



Western Canada

Sister Rezebeth Noceja, SP of Holy Angels Province



by Rezebeth Noceja, SP



November 9th of 2019 has imprinted a significant mark in my life as it is the day that I made my first profession of vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a Sister of Providence. The weeks of preparation leading to the day of my first profession were characteristic of a roller coaster of emotions, from fear to courage, confusion to

surety, lows to highs, and chaos to peace. The fear of not living up to the vows and of living a life that is somewhat counter-cultural would grip me from time to time, but then the gentle yet assuring presence of a loving community sets an example of fidelity to the "call" from which I can draw courage. The awareness of the imminent day of profession brought me to question myself over and over again as to whether I am truly following the vocation to which God had called me. This caused a little bit of confusion sometimes. When I took my walks or sat in silence to take the time to listen to what my heart says...the heart where God planted His own desires for me, which in a way are also my own desires, I found surety in the vocation I am pursuing. The "yes, but..." that can be a NO, is actually a "yes, and in spite of...it is a YES". The experience of having to think of the practical details, minute or significant, and having to face stumbling blocks and trying to find alternative solutions gave me the emotional highs and lows of the previous months. Fortunately, I was blessed to have a lot of people from within and outside the community who were so generous in giving



their time and effort in making things go smoothly. All of these factors brought a sense of chaos somehow to the point where I felt like succumbing to the pressure of the preparation, but most especially to the fear of surrendering myself completely to the community, to God, and to his people. In the words of Father Stephen Hero, the celebrant on November 9th, in vows I am intentionally divesting myself of all that I have, body, mind, and soul. I am like a stone perched on top of other stones and immersed in the water, helpless. And yet the stone is immersed in "living

water". God is the living water. Again, Father Stephen said, when I place myself in Providence... chaste, poor and obedient, I am like that stone held by God. As helpless as the stone is, I am giving away all that I have in order to receive all that God is. In that receiving, I receive the peace that the world cannot give. Indeed, during my weeklong retreat prior to the vows, despite all the chaos, I was immensely at peace with my decision to continue and make my vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience... living a life entirely dependent on Providence.



Bernarda Morin Province



Chile, Argentina

Sisters of Bernarda Morin Province March for Social Justice

Communication Office of the Province

Responding to an invitation of the leadership team of Bernarda Morin Province in connection with the current situation of widespread social unrest in Chile, many sisters from across the country have expressed their willingness to "collaborate and support initiatives aiming at the common good" as mentioned in the published document: <https://hermanasdelaprovidencia.cl/declaracion-publica-frente-a-los-acontecimientos-que-se-viven-en-chile/>. One of these





initiatives, launched in the civil society, was to organize marches in several cities, to ask the government and legislators to focus on social justice, and to target primarily the poorest and the middle class. This is why several sisters were present at these public demonstrations.

Sister Monica Campillay and Sister Cristina Urbina participated in a march organized in La Serena, while Sisters Maria Antonieta Trimpay, Bessy Pizarro and Jaqueline Juarez were involved in the so-called "largest March of Chile", on October 25. The Santiago Sisters were accompanied by Rodolfo Enriquez, a member of the Providencia Campus staff and Ivan Quevedo PA.

Sister Herna Astorga also took part in a march in the north. A photo of her was published in the Tocopilla newspaper, "La Estrella", with this comment: "Age, sex or religion do not matter when fighting for the same cause". "The newspaper pointed out that the inhabitants of the city came out "as families, with friends and colleagues in a peaceful and committed manner."

Given the social context and the needs of those who collaborate in the mission of the



Congregation in Chile, the provincial leadership is currently working on increasing the minimum wages policy enforced in the province. The country's sisters continue to pray and hope for peaceful and practical solutions at the national level and the end of violence. We pray for the adoption of measures promoting healthy co-existence, dignity of persons, equal opportunities and quality of life accessible to everyone.

Meeting of the Provincial Linking Services Office (OVS): Formation in spirituality and religiosity

Communication Office of the Province

"What we've done so far was good in a particular context, but it is useless today. (...) We need to change," said Mr. Luis Zúñiga Caro, the Director of Religious Education within the Vicariate of Education, at the October 10th gathering of Pastoral Work Coordinators and Teachers of Religion in works of the Province, organized by our Linking

Services Office (OVS). His words are related to the proposed curriculum change in the subject of Religion at the national level which was the main topic of the gathering. Juan Carlos Avendaño and Sister Ana Georgina Rozas were invited to attend since they are responsible for Providence Charism and Mission Animation of the OVS.





This curriculum change meets with revised and modified government policies in the school curricula nationwide. In this sense, the Vicariate sought to present to the Chilean Ministry of Education a new program focused on developing skills rather than delivering content.

Mr. Zúñiga stated: "Today content is on the computer networks, on the Internet. (...) The religion courses must make this change: Moving from a dogmatic program that assumes the student's faith to developing skills that shape spirituality and religiosity, " This is seen as a first step, to begin being formed in the Catholic faith. It is a question of a paradigm shift : to provide human formation before delivering catechetical content.

The intervention by Luis Zúñiga responded to "a concern of the Province that the teachers of Religion and Pastoral Coordinators be involved in the curriculum changes being developed at the national level," said Juan Carlos Avendaño. He also pointed out that the gathering "recovered

methodological and pedagogical elements in classroom practice".

Moving Towards a Shared Pastoral Plan

During the meeting, in which Juan Emilio Araya, OVS coordinator, and Francisco Morales, OVS secretary, also participated, the process of developing the Providence Pastoral Plan, which is expected to be applied to all our education works, was continued.

In this regard, the OVS' Charism and Mission Animation team indicated that the challenge of "co-construction" is maintained specifying that the advances and joint revisions of the drafts of the Pastoral Plan lead to " a community in search of a common purpose, establishing conversational spaces and are on the same wavelength".

We appreciate the participation of the religion teachers and the pastoral coordinators from the province's education institutions who attended and actively collaborated during this day of formation, work and communion.



Émilie Gamelin Province



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

Sisters of Providence Partners' Night

by Cristina Raksi – Communication Office of the Province

On October 8, 2019, a celebration took place for partners, collaborators, employees and Providence Associates and Friends in connection with the Mission of the Sisters of Providence of Émilie Gamelin Province.

The speaker, Dr. Robert Béliveau, MD, gave a presentation entitled "Stress Without Distress; Living in Awareness, Confidence, Competence and Consistency."

The purpose of the gathering was to honor our foundress, Émilie Tavernier-Gamelin, and to understand better how to transmit her spirit, values and inspiration to the society of today in which we are living.

Several persons expressed verbally or in writing their appreciation for the speaker and the evening. Exchanges between different groups and individuals fostered mutual engagement and sharing.



Sacred Heart Hospital, Montreal - 28th Emilie's Gala at the Sheraton Hotel in Laval (Quebec)

by Cristina Raksi – Communication Office of the Province



On October 24, 2019, some six hundred (600) people from the business and medical communities gathered at Laval's Sheraton Hotel in Laval for the 28th Emilie's Gala. The evening was co-chaired by Penelope McQuade and Philippe Fehmiu.

Pride, emotion and recognition could be felt as tributes were paid to five awardees who, by their commitment and outstanding work, contributed



to the growth of Sacred Heart Hospital of Montreal and to the Foundation of Sacred Heart Hospital of Montreal. Among the awardees was Sister Claire Houde, provincial superior of the Sisters of Providence. She was honored as the "Favorite of the Foundation."

Bernard Pitre, President of the Foundation, presented an artistic glass piece representing Émilie

Tavernier-Gachelin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence, who built Sacred Heart Hospital of Montreal.

Congratulations to Sister Claire for this recognition after several years of involvement in the health care environment.

We are proud of you dear Sister Claire!

Inauguration of new rooms at Providence Saint-Joseph CHSLD

By Cristina Raksi – Communication Office of the Province



November 14, 2019, marked the official opening of the new facilities and the arrival of sixty new residents in the renovated facilities of the Providence St. Joseph CHSLD. The event was co-chaired by Mrs. Marguerite Blais, Minister of Seniors and Caregivers and MP (Member of Parliament) for the Prevoist Riding and by Sister Claire Houde, President of the Board of Directors and Provincial Superior of Émilie Gachelin Province.

Emphasis was placed on the great cooperation of the new residents and their families as well as all staff members, managers, doctors, members of the resident committee and union representatives. The

collaboration of the Ministry of Health and Social Services, through Guylaine Lajoie, CPA, Deputy General Director of financial management and funding policies and the networking of the CIUSSS of l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, was also noteworthy.

The exceptional results from the visit of Accreditation Canada and the honors granted to the institution for the renovation and construction of the new rooms were shared with joy.

These renovated facilities for the residents of this new high quality living and working environment prefigure a bright future.



Mother Joseph Province



United States, El Salvador, Philippines

Sister Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo professes first vows as a Sister of Providence

by Anita Wilkins, Communication Director



Sister Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo of Cameroon made first profession of vows as a Sister of Providence in a multicultural liturgy on Nov. 23, in the chapel at St. Joseph Residence (SJR), Seattle.

“Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo, SP, is a woman of faith, called by Providence to journey to a new land, to offer her life in service to others as a religious sister,” said Provincial Leader Judith Desmarais, SP. “She is concerned with and has a heart for those who are most vulnerable and in greatest need. She established a nonprofit organization, *African Solidarity in Action*, to help children in Cameroon, in the area where she grew up. Her love of God and love of people is evident in all she does, generously and competently.”

Mass was presided by Rev. Fr. Peter Ely, S.J., concelebrated by Rev. Fr. Jack Walmesley, Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Mbock Mbock from Cameroon, and Rev. Fr. Colleen Nsame, S.J. from the Seattle-area Cameroonian community.

The ceremony was attended by Sisters of Providence from Washington, Oregon, California, El Salvador, the Philippines, Chile, Alberta and Quebec, Canada. Others in attendance included Sister Marie-Thérèse’s relatives from France and Cameroon, the choir from her home parish, Our Lady of Guadalupe in West Seattle, and three Ugandan sisters from the Daughters of Mary who accompanied the choir on the drums. The liturgy incorporated prayers and songs in Sister Marie-



Thérèse’s native language, as well as French, Spanish, Vietnamese and Tagalog in honor of the international sisters and guests.

Incorporating both a traditional and contemporary approach to the ceremony, Sister Marie-Thérèse’s brother, sisters, nieces and nephews celebrated with her virtually. They attended Mass and a party in Cameroon, while viewing the Seattle festivities real-time via livestreaming on WhatsApp.

The first vows liturgy was followed by a simple afternoon reception at SJR. In keeping with the tradition of Sister Marie-Thérèse’s culture, a festive evening event hosted at nearby Caritas Court (a Sisters of Providence residence), brought together sisters, family and friends to enjoy a lively celebration featuring African music and international food prepared by the religious community.

“First vows are really important because they are my ‘yes’ to God,” said Marie-Thérèse. “Taking my vows is a continuation of my life as a sister. I will live those vows and continue to learn and serve the poor as Blessed Emilie Gamelin did.”

Originally from the rural village of Lomié in eastern Cameroon, Marie-Thérèse is one of eight children born into a poor but faith-filled family. Her father died when she was nine and her mother worked multiple jobs to provide for her children. Sister Marie-Thérèse described her mother as a model of hard work and generosity. Her mother died in 2017, shortly after she became a novice.

Marie-Thérèse first felt called to religious life at age 14. While she was exploring her calling, she was encouraged first to finish high school and college. After completing her education at Gregorian Pontifical University in Rome, she embarked on a period of discernment through discussions with a pastor and conversations with Sisters of Providence. She relocated to Seattle for a *Come & See* experience 2008-10.

Because she was not yet certain of her call to religious life, Marie-Thérèse chose to become a Providence Associate and to return to her hometown in Cameroon, inspired by the spirit of foundress Blessed Emilie Gamelin and the community’s charism to serve those who are poor and vulnerable. In the ensuing seven years, she





made a significant impact in villages around Lomié, Abong-Mbang, through a nonprofit which she founded called *African Solidarity in Action*. Through this organization, she raised funds to construct wells that provide clean water for residents. *African Solidarity in Action* has since expanded its mission and now offers tuition support for more than 30 youth and support for training to become a nurse or a teacher. A small clinic and residence has also been built.

Despite this, Marie-Thérèse felt “God was asking me to do more.” She wrote a letter to the Sisters of Providence asking if she could return and was welcomed back in 2017. She spent her canonical year as a novice in Holy Angels Province, Edmonton, Alberta, working with Sister Celia Chappell, novitiate director, while attending university, in ministry to

elderly sisters and at a food bank. She returned to Seattle for her apostolic novitiate year with a focus on English language classes and ministry with immigrants.

Sister Marie-Thérèse is an active member of the Immigrant and Refugee Committee of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish and previously volunteered with immigrants and refugees in Rome. Her empathy and compassion for this population is rooted in her own experiences as an immigrant, learning to navigate the language and customs of the various countries where she has lived for study and work, including Gabon, France, Switzerland and Italy. She is also involved in the St. Vincent de Paul Committee at the parish, which serves people experiencing poverty in West Seattle.

Sisters of Providence and Sisters of Saint Dominic of Tacoma Endorse Statement on U.S. Withdrawal from Paris Climate Agreement

by Anita Wilkins, Communication Director



Catholic sisters nationwide express disappointment and pledge action

The Puget Sound-based leadership teams of the Sisters of Providence and Sisters of Saint Dominic of Tacoma stand with the national Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in endorsing the following statement about President Donald Trump’s decision to withdraw the United

States from the Paris Climate Agreement:

“The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) was deeply disappointed by President Trump’s 2017 pledge to pull the United States out of the Paris Climate Agreement, and we are profoundly troubled by the decision to formally request U.S. withdrawal from this critically important international agreement. Catholic teaching is clear — climate change is a grave moral issue that threatens our commitment to protect human life and dignity, exercise a preferential option for the most vulnerable, promote the

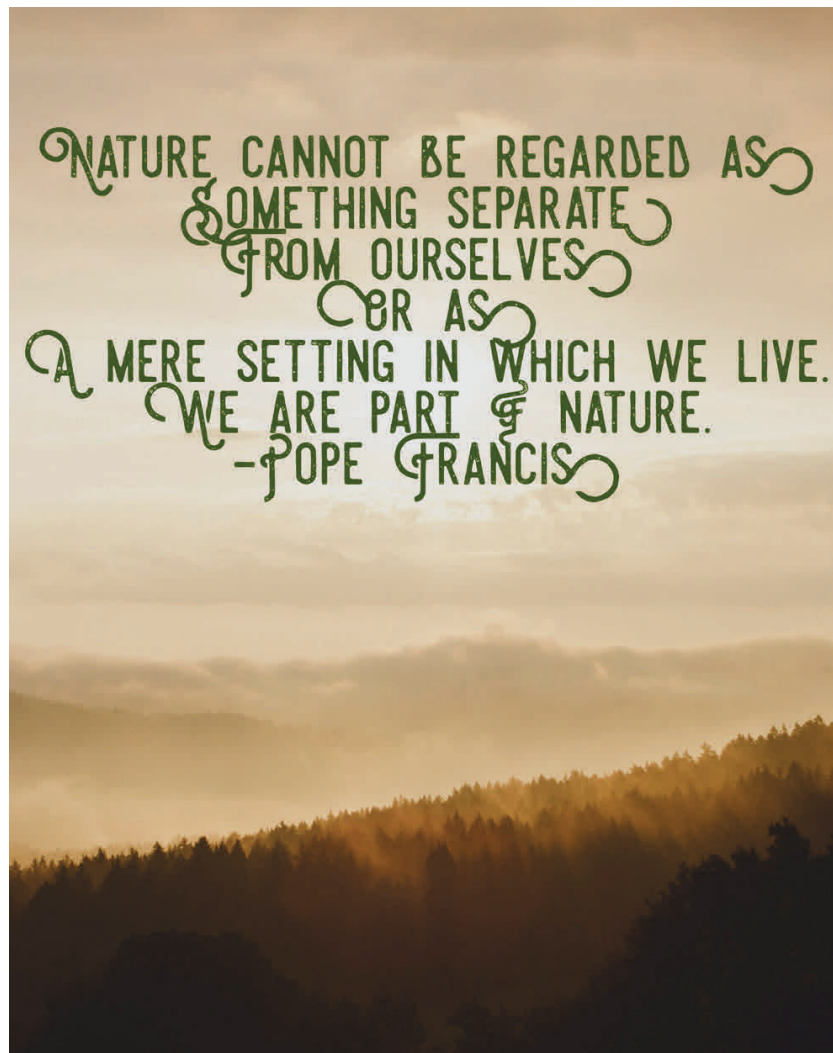


common good, and care for God’s creation. The failure of the U.S. to fulfill its 2015 commitment dishonors our nation and threatens our common home. We will continue to raise our voices against climate policies that harm Earth and its people and to advocate for climate justice.”

Pope Francis’ “Laudato Si” encyclical on the environment released in 2015 explained the concept of integral ecology — the complex ways in which social and environmental crises are interrelated. “Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere

setting in which we live,” wrote the pope. “We are part of nature.”

“We must consider the ripple effect of the impact of the withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement,” said Sister Jo Ann Showalter, SP, congregation leader for the Tacoma Dominicans and provincial councilor for the Sisters of Providence. “It is an injustice that begins with the degradation of the environment and continues with the degradation of communities — for those on the margins first and foremost. It is unconscionable.”





INITIAL *FORMATION*

Entrances, vows

Temporary Vows



Rezebeth Noceja
Edmonton, Canada
November 9, 2019



Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo
Seattle, U.S.A.
November 23, 2019

