

## Pilgrimage a life-changing experience

Visiting the Holy Land had always been on the mind of Sr. Rita Musante. But as years went by, there were other projects, other obligations in her ministry as a Victory Noll Sister. She never gave up on the thought of making the trip, but she realistically figured the window had closed on the idea.



"I had dreamed of it my whole life, certainly my whole life here at Victory Noll. But I dreamed it gently. The opportunity was there one other time, but it wasn't the right time. I just couldn't do it," she said. "But then I was talking with my spiritual director who had just come home from making the same trip. She ended the conversation by saying that I should think about doing it. I knew it was the right time and place.

I had earlier thought it cost too much money and that I really didn't need this. But in talking to God about it, I heard in my heart Jesus saying to me, 'Rita, don't you want to see my homeland?' That came back to me many times during the trip."

Joining with 41 other pilgrims from across the United States, Sr. Rita spent 10 days in Israel in January with the retreat titled "Mothers, Metaphors and Models: A Retreat in the Holy Land Remembering Women in the Bible."

Sr. Rita had few preconceived ideas of what to expect on her pilgrimage.



Sr. Rita Musante, OLVM, (photo left) joined with 41 other pilgrims for a January retreat in Israel. Above, the group is pictured with the city of Jerusalem in the background.

"I would be walking on the Bible lands that I had read about all my life or had seen in pictures. But to actually walk the land felt like the land got inside me. We were told at the beginning that's the difference between a tourist and a pilgrim. A tourist walks through the land, but for a pilgrim, the land walks through them," she says. "I had maybe a 10 percent of a notion of what it would be, but it has blossomed more than I ever could have dreamed, both in terms of the Biblical stories and the meaning of Jesus' life. I think the humanness of Jesus makes the Gospels much more real. I always have appreciated Jesus in his humanity. However, (Continued on Page 5)

### Peregrinación – un desafío, un cambio de vida

Visita a la Tierra Santa siempre había estado en los pensamientos de la Hermana Rita Musante. Pero al paso de los años hubo otros proyectos, otras obligaciones en su ministerio como Hermana de Victory Noll. Nunca dejo de pensar en hacer esta jornada pero realmente figuro que la ventana se

había cerrado a esta idea.

"Ya había soñado con esta idea durante toda mi vida en Victory Noll. La oportunidad se presentó en otra pero no era el tiempo oportuno, pero hablando con mi director espiritual, quien recientemente había llegado de tal jornada, ella me dijo que pen-

sara en hacerlo. Me di cuenta que si era el tiempo oportuno."

Unida con otras 41 peregrinos, la Hermana Rita paso 10 días en Israel en enero viviendo un Retiro titulado: "Mothers, Metaphors and Models." Un Retiro en la Tierra Santa recordando mujeres en la Biblia"

# Sisters serving in many different roles

The ministries of Victory Noll Sisters take many varied forms and they continue to serve people of all ages, genders and ethnicities.

Here is a look at a some of the Sisters and their recent work:

## **Sr. Mary Louise Rowney** **Chicago, Ill.**

In her position as Director of Religious Education, Sr. Mary Louise Rowney, OLVM, has been working with the youth of St. Sylvester Parish in Chicago since 1994.

This year, she is leading the religious education of 400 elementary and middle school students and 55 high school students who are preparing for various sacraments.

"One of the most recent things we had in January was the baptism of school-age students. Now we have students, around 170, who are preparing for and receiving reconciliation, and we have another 84 students preparing for confirmation," says Sr. Mary Louise.

In addition to teaching the students, Sr. Mary Louise also meets with parents of students preparing for sacraments and oversees the catechists and their continuing education.

"Each year, we try to encourage our catechists to continue their updating. Most of our catechists are certified, which means they have completed a 48-hour course required by the archdiocese," she says.

Each February, St. Sylvester hosts a spirit day retreat for students going through confirmation.

"Over the years we have hosted that joint venture for six parishes, including our own," says Sr. Mary Louise. "We expect close to 300 students, and they come with a lot of enthusiasm. It includes a speaker and a music group. Some of our student leaders who are now in college will be helping to emcee



Sr. Mary Louise Rowney (above, center) works with students at St. Sylvester Parish in Chicago. Right, Sr. Helen Rodriguez-Marin talks with Fr. Pavol Sochulak at Our Lady of the Rosary in San Bernardino, Calif.

that day. We end with a liturgy in the afternoon."

## **Sr. Helen Rodriguez-Marin** **San Bernardino, Calif.**

The ministry of Sr. Helen Rodriguez-Marin, OLVM, in the San Bernardino Diocese includes working with a number of foreign-born priests and seminarians, who are learning to speak English. In particular, she assists them with their pastoral English.

"I have about eight priests and two seminarians whom I'm helping with their pronunciation for when they address people in church, at Mass or in public," she says.

Not all of the people Sr. Helen works



with are Spanish-speaking. She works with priests and seminarians from around the world, including South America, Asia and Europe.

"We have a couple of priests from Peru who are just a joy to work with, and I've been working with a Vietnamese seminarian," she says. "It's a lot of fun. They're eager to learn and I'm eager to help them. There is a spirituality involved in it. I work with the homilies they are going to present, and I help

them ‘tweak’ so they can express themselves in the way that people will understand them.”

Even though Sr. Helen assists in teaching English, she also wants the priests to retain and incorporate aspects of their individual cultures.

“I’m multicultural myself, so I have an affinity and an easy relationship with the different cultures,” says Sr. Helen. “So I acknowledge and respect them and try to meet them at their level. I try to celebrate whatever their native celebrations are, so that it becomes part of the community even though I’m helping them directly with their English.”

### **Sr. Mary Doran Bermuda Dunes, Calif.**

For the past 15 years, Sr. Mary Doran, OLVM, has been helping senior citizens in Riverside and San Bernardino counties in California to navigate the sometimes-overwhelming legal wrangling that comes with financial and health-care issues.

Sr. Mary works as a paralegal for Inland Counties Legal Services in the two counties of southern California, an area with a population of more than four million people. Citizens age 60 or older can receive free civil legal assistance in a number of different areas.

“They come in and I give them advice and financial help. Some have credit card problems. I do a lot of wills and health-care directives,” says Sr. Mary.

Working two days a week



Sr. Mary Doran looks over financial paperwork as part of her ministry as a paralegal helping senior citizens in Riverside and San Bernardino counties in California.

in Indio, Calif., one of five branches of ICLS, Sr. Mary often can assist seniors get out of financial difficulties and also with financial planning.

“We talk with them about insurance policies. Some people take out insurance policies for maybe \$5,000, but it is a policy they continually pay on. Maybe they’ve paid \$10,000 into the policy, but it’s only worth \$5,000. We have them cash those in and put that money in a savings account,” she says. “Twice a month, I go to Desert Hot Springs and serve people at the senior center. We get a lot of people there. I think I’ve done a will for everybody living in that city.”

A growing problem, especially with seniors, is identity theft and fraud. In those situations, Sr. Mary helps seniors navigate getting credit cards canceled and filling out paperwork to get clear identities that have been stolen.

Many times, however, those types of situations go unreported, especially when the fraud and identity theft are perpetrated by a family member. Seniors do not want to follow through and prosecute.

“They take so much advantage of these people,” says Sr. Mary. “There’s so much abuse of the elderly, either financial abuse or physical abuse, and we get so few cases on that. They just don’t want to talk about it.”

### **Sr. Paula Wellnitz Orangeville, Utah**

Sr. Paula Wellnitz, OLVM, is retired in name only, as she continues to offer her services as needed in the wide-open spaces of Utah.

“I volunteer so I’m not getting paid, and I guess that is technically considered retired,” she says. “I keep trying to get other retirees to volunteer to serve their community.”

She lives in Orangeville,

Utah, where she is an active member of Mission San Rafael. The main parish is in Price, Utah, some 35 miles away, so Mission San Rafael only has Mass twice a month. Sr. Paula helps in church outreach programs.

“Everybody in our little mission is a volunteer. I volunteered because I knew nobody else would be able to do outreach, which can be a number of different things,” says Sr. Paula. “As a parishioner and knowing the need of the mission, there are many ways I can respond to those needs.”

She helps keep track of the Catholic population in the area, noting families that move away and ones that move into the area, trying to maintain communication with them and build the community.

Sr. Paula also volunteers in the community with programs like Care-A-Van, which transports people to medical appointments as far away as Salt Lake City, which is 150 miles away.

Another organization to which Sr. Paula contributes her time is the local Coalition Against Domestic Violence. She also attends local meetings and contributes her voice for the betterment of the community.

In the summer, Sr. Paula volunteers time at the nearby national forest, working in the visitor center.

Sr. Paula continues to maintain “Home Place,” a retreat center in her own home. She has welcomed retreatants from across the country and hosts single-day retreats for groups.



Students in Oruro, Bolivia (above) stand in front of the study center that was founded by Sr. Carolyn Ortega more than 30 years ago. Left, letters of appreciation from students were recently sent to Sisters at Victory Noll.

## Students express appreciation for center

When Victory Noll Sister Carolyn Ortega arrived in Oruro, Bolivia in 1968, she quickly realized that education was a primary need for the people in a poor country that lacked resources for students. As part of her mission, Sr. Carolyn made a priority of creating those resources and the opportunities for the youth of Oruro to get a quality education.

An empty parish building next door to the convent was turned into a library and study center. For more than 30 years it has been a place where students can gather to supplement their learning experience and to join in fellowship and celebration.

Sister Guadalupe Aguilar-Huanca, who is from Oruro and professed her final vows last July, returned to Bolivia in December. When she returned, she brought with her a report from the center that included a photo essay of activities that have taken place there, as well as letters of appreciation to the Victory Noll Sisters from many of the students who use the facility.

The photos and letters have been on display at Victory Noll for Sisters to view and enjoy.

Through the efforts of Sr. Carolyn, the center for high school and university students (Centro de Estudiantes



Students at the CESU study center in Oruro (left) take advantage of some of the center's educational resources. Right, the center also serves as an activities center. This event was a dinner honoring a school soccer team.



Secundarios Universitarios or CESU) has provided a place for students to study in addition to serving as a community center for student activities. Thousands of students who might not have had access to educational resources have been able to go to the center for books, computer access, a study area and other opportunities.

Sr. Carolyn was administrator of the center until she returned to Victory Noll. Sr. Adela Amoroso-Medrano, a native Bolivian who professed her final vows in 1994, took over as administrator. Sr. Adela eventually was missioned to California and now the center is run by Victor Luis Apaza-Huarita, a Victory Noll covenant associate, with the continued support of the Victory Noll congregation.

### Los estudiantes expresan apreciación por el centro

Quando Hna. Carolina Ortega llegó en Oruro, Bolivia en 1968, ella realizo que la educación era una necesidad esencial en un país pobre y sin recursos para estudiantes en la escuela secundaria y universitaria.

Como parte de su misión, Hna. Carolina hizo su prioridad crear recursos y oportunidades para los jóvenes de Bolivia para que ellos llegaran a tener una buena educación.

EN ESPAÑOL

## Edwina Gateley program highlights spring season

The programs at Victory Noll Center continue to bring more and more people to a wide variety of events.



The highlight of this spring's offerings is a visit by internationally-known speaker, writer, advocate and poet, Edwina Gateley. She will be in Huntington on Friday, April 23 for an evening gathering and to sign her books. On Saturday, April 24, Edwina will lead a day-long retreat based on her book "In God's Womb: Your Soul Journey with God."

The retreat will be a contemplative day, thinking into God through poetry, music, visuals, reflection and prayer. Those attending will reconnect with the relationship with God



Edwina Gateley

they had as children, through adulthood and moving into the wisdom years.

Those interested in attending should contact Victory Noll Center Director Sue Wilhelm at (260) 356-0628, ext. 128. The cost for the retreat on April 24 is \$40. Registration is required by April 1. Space is limited.

Victory Noll Center will also take part in the Bread for the World Letter of Offerings March 24. The event calls on Congress to help working families who struggle to put food on the table. The Center will provide information and materials for people to write to legislators to ask them to protect and strengthen key tax credits.

## Continued: Pilgrimage a life-changing experience

Paul says He let that be hidden in the time He was here. But I've been in His hometown, in His birthplace, where He died. I just have a whole better comprehension of who He was then and what he was trying to say than I ever did before."

There were the immediate adaptations that come with any international trip, including dealing with differences in money, food and cultures. She also knew she was heading into a volatile area that is home to three major religions — Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The region is well-known for the clash of those three religions, and Sr. Rita says the tensions were obvious.

"There were armed guards guarding schoolchildren, because children are prime targets. Along the roadside there were signs that said 'Caution: Mines.' I've read about how children can be playing in a yard and are blown up by a mine. What a different childhood they have from mine. It's as if I grew up on a different planet," she says. "It's a great sorrow. Some of my prayers were tears. It's like being in the middle of two lovely people who don't understand each other, and wishing they could hear each other's stories."

She says she found herself at the intersection of three "circles of learning" including the culture, the biblical

sites, and the current politics. There were signs of hope, however. Sr. Rita made a visit to Bethlehem University, home to Palestinian students of both Christian and Muslim faiths. She also learned about the Interfaith Encounter Association, which works to find common ground among the three religions and hopes for a future of a more unified Israel.

"I hadn't anticipated the whole cultural experience, learning about the current conflict and the peoples involved in that, and some of the sadness and sorrow of people there, and the efforts that are being made to build peace that we don't hear a lot about here in the States," says Sr. Rita. "They told us how people like us who came to listen to them gave them hope. They felt very isolated and alone in the world, struggling for existence."

Sr. Rita was able to walk in the path of Christ during her pilgrimage with visits to Caesarea Phillipi, Bethlehem, the Mount of the Beatitudes on the Sea of Galilee, Jericho and Jerusalem. On the final day of her trip in Jerusalem, Sr. Rita says she received some clarity that summed up the entire experience.

"The last morning we actually covered all three major religions," she says. "We went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and prayed there for quite some

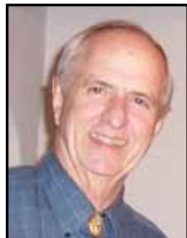
time. We went to the Western Wall and prayed. Just as we were finishing our prayer and getting ready to leave, from the other side of the Wall where the Dome of the Rock mosque is, the Muslim call to prayer sounded over the PA system. That's when it came together for me, that I had prayed with all three religions in the same morning. I came home with the desire to observe Fridays with Muslims — I have a Qur'an, and I have Muslim prayers — Saturday with the Jews, and Sunday, of course, with the Christians."

She says she has already felt the impact of her experience in her life and ministry.

"I find just reading it brings back the memories, and evokes the feelings and even the scene. I find that I'm seeing even deeper. I find that I'm praying with those feelings. I think it's enlarging my prayer, and also the way I listen to the news. I feel like I have a bigger context in which to understand the news now," says Sr. Rita. "I feel as if I know a little bit more of the planet, and feel more like a planetary citizen now. I feel I have a broader perspective on certain things. In my own personal spirituality and in ministry, I'm sure I will be able to use so much of what I've learned. It's stretched my mind and my heart."

# Ministry reaches immigrant detainees

For more than 40 years, Steve Hay has served Spanish-speaking communities in Texas, New Mexico and South America. The past two years, Hay's mission includes working in a detention facility in downtown Santa Fe, N.M., where he ministers to undocumented Spanish-speaking immigrants. Most are from Mexico and are being held for various illegal entries into the United States.



Steve Hay

Hay and his wife, Palmira, are Victory Noll Associates who worked for Catholic Charities in Lubbock, Tex. for 18 years, and then with the Archdiocese of Santa Fe for 10 years in the Pastoral Outreach Program. Now retired, they have continued in service as volunteers.

"I decided to minister/volunteer in a downtown detention facility which holds undocumented immigrants until their appearance before an U.S. Department of Justice immigration judge," says Hay. "I had the opportunity to learn Spanish while serving the Church in South America and carrying out migrant ministry in the U.S."

He joins with a Jesuit priest to go into the jail for up to two hours each Monday evening. Each week, they minister in a different area of the facility.

"While the priest is hearing confessions on one side of the large recreation area, I am with 10-25 detainees reading scripture and applying the teachings to our lives," says Hay. "All is carried out in Spanish. A high percentage of the detainees have been baptized and many made their First Communion. We take Spanish Catholic Bibles from which we read, reflect and share practical ideas for living the scriptural messages. The bibles are left with the detainees and many are using their hours in detention to read and learn the Word of God. These faith-sharing sessions have lifted me up as much as my brother detainees. Father Rafael and I often comment that we feel better after spending time on Monday nights with the people in jail than before we went in."

There are approximately 500 detainees in the facility at any one time, with each residential area holding 75-100 people. Of the 500, there are around 40-50 who are women in one cell area.

Hay says he has gotten a positive response from the detainees to whom he ministers.

"The men look forward to going to confession and studying the Word of God which many had not done before being detained," he says. "They take turn reading selections of the New Testament after which we talk about how the teaching can be lived now as detainees and later when they return to their homes in Mexico."

One episode particularly sticks in Hay's mind as to how the program has been able to reach the people in the facility.



Immigrant detainees attend a service at a detention facility in Santa Fe, N.M. Victory Noll Associate Steve Hay is part of a program that ministers to those held in the facility.

EN ESPAÑOL

## Servicio a los inmigrantes detenidos

Por más de 40 años Steve Hay ha servido a la comunidad hispana en Texas, New México y Sur América. En los últimos dos años, su misión incluye trabajar para prestar su atención y servicio en una facilidad de detención en Santa Fe, NM donde los inmigrantes sin papales legales particularmente los de México son detenidos

"One night Fr. Rafael and I walked into the residential area and looked around for the 20-30 men who usually come to greet us. They weren't there," he says. "We asked where some of the 'regulars' were and a man told us, 'You mean the church. They are still meeting in that room over there!' The door opened and around 20 men came to meet us. All had their bibles and prayer books and told us that they meet every night from 6 to 7 p.m. for prayer and study of scripture. Fr. Rafael and I are moved that they 'get it.' It's not about a building but a 'Body/Community' of Christ."

Hay says that his work with the detainees fills his spirit and that he has learned as much from the people he ministers to as he hopes they have taken away from what he has tried to provide.

"I continue to learn and be inspired by my brothers who are using this 'wasted time' in jail to study, know and grow closer to the Lord," he says. "They challenge me to do the same."

# Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters



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**Visions** is published three times a year by Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters. The staff welcomes articles about vowed members, associate members, or volunteers who are committed to the Victory Noll mission. Letters to the editor are also welcome but must be signed. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit all written contributions.

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## We're asking for input to better serve our Visions readers

Since 1984, Visions has served as a conduit of communication between Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters and thousands of people across the country and the world, providing information and stories about the work of the Sisters, Associates and volunteers who are committed to the Victory Noll mission.

The way we all communicate is changing rapidly in the Internet Age, where information can be relayed in an instant. Victory Noll has its own web site at [www.olvm.org](http://www.olvm.org) and the Sisters have entered the world of online social media with a page on Facebook.

In light of all these changes, we are asking our Visions readers to assist us by filling out the survey on Page 7 of this issue. Let us know what you think about our publication, and how you would like to receive information, preferring either traditional mail or if you would like us to send Visions by e-mail. Please return the survey page in the enclosed, prepaid envelope. We appreciate your input and look forward to continuing to bring you information on the ministries of Our Lady Of Victory Missionary Sisters.

— Paul Siegfried, Editor