

NEWSLETTER OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY MISSIONARY SISTERS

Visions

November 2023

www.olvm.org

Sharing a Sacred Land

Recognizing all those who have
called God's Creation their home





Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters is a community of women religious founded in 1922 by Father John Joseph Sigstein. The Victory Noll Motherhouse is located in Huntington, Indiana.

Victory Noll Sisters:

- Proclaim the Word of God
- Stand in solidarity with those living in poverty and oppression
- Foster justice
- Promote the development of leaders

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ON THE COVER

The Victory Noll campus sits on a hill overlooking the Forks of the Wabash, which was the historical home of the Native American Miami Tribe.

Photo by Paul Siegfried

Dave Carnes was a man of faith who had a heart for service and a love for his community, its people, and its history. A local physician for 40 years in his hometown of Huntington, Indiana, Dr. Carnes was compassionate in his profession and his life.

PERSPECTIVES ALONG THE JOURNEY

He was personal physician to many, including me, my wife, and a number of the Victory Noll Sisters. You quickly knew that Dave was not only concerned with your health, but cared about you as a person.

His connection with the Sisters would eventually lead to Dr. Carnes and his wife, Jan, meeting Pope John Paul II in 2001.

Dave grew up in Huntington, and after attending the University of Notre Dame and the Indiana University School of Medicine, returned to his hometown to begin his practice.

In 2014, a few of us, including Dave, created Huntington County Honors to recognize people whose achievements had made a lasting impact on the community. With his tremendous knowledge and heart for the town and its history, Dave was perfect to be a founding member of the organization.

In March of 2023, Dr. Carnes passed away after a long battle with cancer. The board of directors of Huntington County Honors wanted to recognize his life and created the Dr. John David Carnes Humanitarian Service Award to honor selfless effort and achievement that exemplify the compassionate and caring life of Dr. Carnes.

The inaugural recipient of this award is Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters.

I was honored to be the presenter in an October ceremony. Dr. Carnes was my friend, and while working at Victory Noll I have developed a deep connection with the Sisters. I find this a fitting way to honor both of them. ❖

— Paul Siegfried

CONGREGATION LEADER

Sr. Jenny Howard, SP

Visions is published multiple times a year by Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters.

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Importance of having ‘visions’

Names of publications are chosen to try and tell readers what they are about. Some, such as “Time,” “Good Housekeeping,” “Sports Illustrated,” and “National Geographic” are pretty straight forward. This publication is called “Visions,” which can be interpreted in many ways, which is fitting for what Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters have been about over their history.

There has always been a focus on what more can be done, requiring visions of the future and its possibilities. The Victory Noll Sisters have set the mission bar high at times. When OLVN Founder Father John Joseph Sigstein decided to send the first catechists into the remote areas of New Mexico, it took a great deal of faith and courage to enter into the unknown. Those first catechists — Julia Doyle and Marie Benes — formed the model of those who would follow. They had visions of what they wanted to achieve, then problem-solved methods to reach out to those in need by living and working among them.



Sr. Jenny Howard, SP
Congregation Leader

Today, more than 100 years later, Victory Noll Sisters continue to look to the future. The visions have come from the call of the Gospel, and from those of Fr. Sigstein. The Sisters continue to evolve and innovate as they impact the lives of those in need and carry the OLVN Mission into its second century.

The number of Sisters in the community is getting smaller, and fewer are in active ministry. And during this time of transition, OLVN Sisters are committed to sharing their abundant resources, including land, buildings, and financial assets. Just as important is the sharing of the OLVN Mission and charism.

The Sisters have been committed to mission integration, imparting the OLVN charism to lay staff, boards, associates and others to whom they will entrust mission efforts. The Sisters have formed partnerships, including ACRES Land Trust to maintain natural areas of the Victory Noll campus, and Huntington County, which purchased campus buildings and are repurposing them for Community Corrections to provide support programs to those experiencing addiction.

OLVN continues to provide legacy gifts, as well as supporting organizations through annual Victory Noll Empowerment Grants.

Visions, in real time, means the Sisters keep eyes open to current world situations. As missionaries, they have always responded to the needs of the time. Sr. Beaty Haines, in her role as Social Justice Promoter for Victory Noll, directs the efforts of the Sisters as they address pressing issues of the day. Called forth by Pope Francis and his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, on caring for the Earth, OLVN Sisters have developed an action plan that includes ecological education, followed by action and advocacy. Sisters have volunteered at the U.S.-Mexico border assisting immigrants. They have lobbied elected officials voicing opposition to the death penalty. They have advocated for resolution of conflict through diplomatic and peaceful negotiations.

Here at Victory Noll, a weekly “Prayer for the World” service is held each Wednesday. Sisters who are no longer in active ministry are still able to take part in a ministry of prayer and presence, and continue to be “in the moment.” Every service has a particular focus, with readings, reflections, and time for prayer and individual meditation. Each week’s prayer service is available on the OLVN website at: www.olvm.org/prayer-for-the-world

The Sisters also find it important to retain visions of the past to see from where they have come and the legacy they are leaving. The footprint is large. Generations from California and New Mexico, to Indiana, Ohio, Illinois and many places in between have felt the impact of the ministries of Victory Noll Sisters. The diocese of San Bernardino, California, honored Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters for their work. In Chicago, Julia Center recently held a celebration to recognize the Victory Noll Sisters who established the outreach center. In Huntington, where the Victory Noll Motherhouse is located, the Sisters were honored by the local Huntington County Honors organization with the Dr. John David Carnes Humanitarian Service Award for the work they have done.

During the OLVN centennial celebration year that ended in August 2022, many stories were recounted, and many people who were impacted by the Sisters shared their individual experiences.

All these events have contributed to the visions of what has been accomplished, and also a reminder that the Mission never ends.

All these aspects of visions from the past, of the present, and for the future have been beautifully told in the centennial video “To the Poorest First: The Journey of the Victory Noll Sisters.” The video is available for viewing on the website at: www.olvm.org. ❖



Photo by Paul Siegfried

The Victory Noll campus sits on a hill that overlooks the Historic Forks of the Wabash in Huntington, Indiana. The area was the historic home to the Native American Miami tribe. In 1840, Chief Jean Baptiste Richardville (below left) and Chief Francis LaFontaine (below right) of the Miamis signed the Treaty of the Wabash, which ceded the land to the U.S. government and removed the majority of the Miami people to what is now Kansas.

Reverence for all Creation

Respecting life includes honoring both land and people

By Sr. Beaty Haines
OLVM Social Justice Coordinator

October is Respect Life Month, respect for ALL life created out of love by God. This love of God confers dignity, which means that all life is worthy of respect and care: plants, animals, human beings and all of creation. Respect is a way of treating or thinking about something or someone which you value. We recall that this kind of reverence for all Creation is found most beautifully in Native Americans and Indigenous Peoples all over the world as we celebrate Indigenous People's Day on October 9th each year. In addition, November has been recognized as National American Indian Heritage Month since 1990.

Those of us who live at Victory Noll remember and acknowledge that the land we live on was the historic homeland of the Miami tribe. Sadly, the Treaty of the Wabash was signed November 28, 1840, at the Forks of the Wabash forcing the Miamis to move out of this area. Only about 150 remained along the Wabash and Mississinewa rivers. At a Mass marking the 175th anniversary of this tragic removal, Bishop Rhoades



reminded all who were present to never forget the Native Americans who called the land of our diocese their home.

We know from our Victory Noll history that Our Sunday Visitor bought the land we have lived on and called home for more than 100 years, from descendents of the Miamis. Bishop Noll in turn sold it to Victory Noll and now Huntington County, Saint Anne's at Victory Noll and Acres Land Trust own this land. This concept of buying and selling Land as a commodity is foreign to Indigenous People. Rather they have a relationship with the Land which is evidenced by referring to the Land as Mother Earth. Sr. Lorraine Masters, OLVM in her book, "Blessings of the Four Winds" says: *"Native Americans as well as many Asian People can teach us much, for most of them had a spirituality of the Land."*

Blessings of the spirituality are reflected in Pope Francis letter, "Laudato Si'. There he speaks of Planet Earth as our "Common Home" and that "... St. Francis reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us." (Laudato Si', #1) Repeatedly in this letter, Pope Francis, points out how we who share this common home as brothers and sisters, need to care for each other especially the most vulnerable among us.

And yet life and people's sense of home and safety is so often threatened. In our divided and violent world, Pope Francis calls us to dream, which is to envision the possibility of something better.

"Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all." Pope Francis' Encyclical, (Fratelli Tutti," #8)

The Miami Peace Pole, carved by OLVM Sister Mary Joan Ginsterblum to honor the native Miami people, stood for many years in the Victory Noll Peace Garden. It eventually had to be removed when the base began to deteriorate.



A Prayer to the Creator

Lord, Father of our human family, you created all human beings equal in dignity: pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter, dialogue, justice and peace. Move us to create healthier societies and a more dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war.

May our hearts be open to all the peoples and nations of the earth. May we recognize the goodness and beauty that you have sown in us, and forge bonds of unity, common projects, and shared dreams. Amen. (Fratelli Tutti) ❖



Saving Africa through Africa

Comboni Sisters help community to free best potential

The Comboni Missionary Sisters are a Catholic International Congregation founded by Saint Daniel Comboni in Verona, Italy, in the year 1872.

We work in the spirit of our Founder and Patron Saint Daniel Comboni, who devised a “Plan for the Regeneration of Africa” not just to bring the Gospel to people who never heard it, but also to prepare Africans to evangelize their own people — a revolutionary idea for his time. His motto, “Save Africa through Africa”, captures the essence of the trust he had in the African people, preparing them with values and capacities.

This is the core of our Congregation’s methodology, and we try to

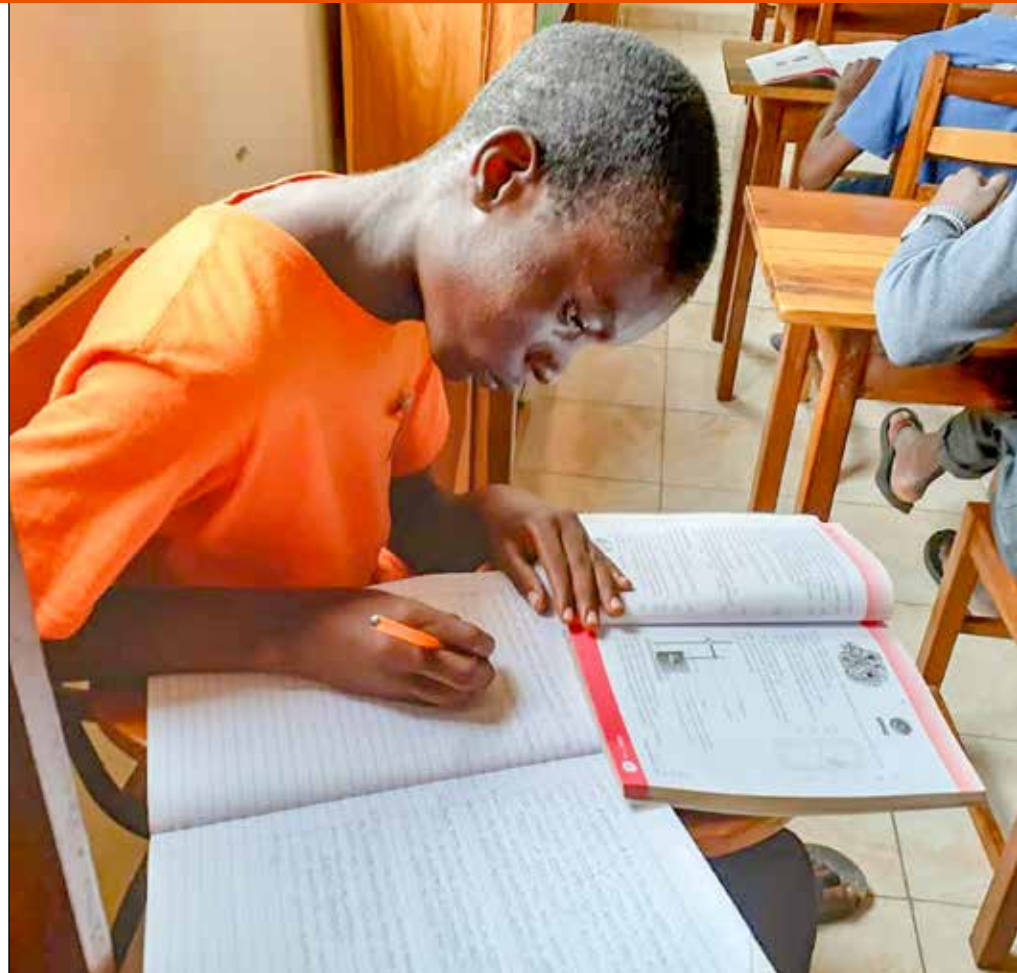


Photo provided

A student works on a lesson in a classroom at the Saint Daniel Comboni Social Development Centre in Zambia. The center, established by the Comboni Sisters, provides numerous educational and social service opportunities.

apply it in all the missions where we are present, mostly in remote or marginalized areas of Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, through programs that bring us close to people in order to free their best potential.

We are about 990 sisters from 36 different countries spread in four continents and 34 countries. We

have a community in Richmond, Virginia, that is part of the network of our Mission Development Office based in Rome with the scope of overseeing the strategic development of our projects fostering sustainable and integral human development.

Our presence in Africa in Make-ni Ville (Lusaka), Zambia, dates



The Comboni Sisters are consecrated women called by the Spirit of God to continue the mission of Jesus Christ according to the charism of their Founder, St. Daniel Comboni. They are committed to: pastoral ministry, health ministry, the formation of leaders, justice and peace, and education ministry.



New schoolrooms provide modern education and other services to the community. Below, the St. Daniel Comboni Social Development Centre is named for the Comboni Sisters' founder.

Photos provided

back to 1994, whereas the Saint Daniel Comboni Social Development Centre (SDCSDC) has been established there about seven years ago. Since then, SDCSDC has provided social services for the local community which promote holistic development of children, youth and women.

SDCSDC is located right in the middle of South Kanyama compound in Lusaka. The idea behind the project is that children, women and youth, who are the most vulnerable social groups and are facing hard life conditions, be provided with developmental, cultural, educational and recreational activities. All those meaningful and attractive activities take place in a trustworthy, caring and constructive environment, which helps improve their physical health and develop positive social behavior and new skills.

In South Kanyama and in the surrounding compounds, most at risk are young people, especially girls. In these compounds there is no room for recreation and sports, there are no green areas or public



open spaces. The area is overpopulated, with about 91,000 children below 18 years according to the last census conducted in 2022.

SDCSDC offers the following programs:

1. For children: a literacy program to reinforce reading and writing skills (Sound-Write). Variety of workshops and seminars on arts, music, drama, health, environment and sport (football, basketball, volleyball, netball and judo).
2. For women: adult literacy lessons, seminars and workshops

on life matters, income-generating self-help groups, recreational activities and sports.

3. For youth: life skills programs, sports, video forums and computer courses.

This year we would like to start the “Lubuto Library Project,” which offers children the opportunity to attend a library equipped with suitable books and with computers, so that they can start learning how to use them.

The library will be organized in such a way as to encourage chil-



Photo provided

In addition to provide literacy and skill development, the Comboni Center offers meaningful and culturally-significant activities in a trustworthy, caring and constructive environment, which helps develop positive social behavior among the region’s most vulnerable groups.

children to develop different skills. The space is well furnished to make it a welcoming place for learning, studying and leisure. The project is being carried out in partnership with the association Lubuto Library Partners that has provided the facility and all the necessary equipment. The library consists of three separate structures, with associated outdoor spaces that support activities:

- The Reading Room housing the book collection.
- The Tech Hub for computer use and arts programs.
- Early Literacy Stations to support a range of educational activities that facilitate reading readiness in children under six years of age.

Every year, around 5,000 people, including children, youth and women attend the Center’s activi-

ties. Indirect beneficiaries include the parents of the children and the families of the women enrolled in the adult literacy program. The community becomes an indirect beneficiary as women and children contribute to community life, sharing the acquired leadership skills.

For 150 years we have been living and working alongside the locals, respecting their specific history and culture, entering in constant dialogue with the people and encouraging them to acquire skills and abilities in order to create conditions that allow them to improve their own lives as well as the wellbeing of their communities.

We believe in the potential of people, and we strive to ensure that everyone can have equal opportunities to lead a dignified life, lived to the full both in Africa and in the rest of the world, with particular

attention to women, children, young people, and refugees who are the most vulnerable group in society, regularly exposed to abuse, violence and exploitation.

In addition, as a female missionary congregation present in the area for several decades we have obtained a privileged role through our dialogue with the local population and have gained the confidence of the families and communities who entrust us with their daughters, so that we support and accompany them in becoming active citizens endowed with Christian values and professionally serving the common good. ❖

Comboni Sisters website:
combonimissionarysistersusa.org

NOTE: *The Comboni Sisters are one of the recipients of the Victory Noll Empowerment Grants.*

Jubilarians 2023



This year's Jubilarians honored in August with a special Mass at Archbishop Noll Memorial Chapel and celebration were, from left — Sr. Christopher Rudell, Sr. Helen Rodriguez-Marin, and Sr. Kathleen Cummings. Sr. Mary Alice Murphy (below) was unable to attend in Huntington, but joined the Mass by livestream from her home in Fort Collins, Colorado.



Sister Mary Alice Murphy, a native of New Brunswick, Canada, celebrated her 75th year as a Victory Noll Sister. She entered OLVN on October 27, 1948. Her ministry work has taken her to California, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Texas and Colorado. She has ministered in Religious Education, Social Work, Community Organizing and Community Leadership. For more than 40 years she has worked to assist the homeless in Fort Collins, Colorado, culminating with the opening of the Sister Mary Alice Murphy Center for Hope in 2009. ❖

Sister Helen Rodriguez-Marin, raised in San Bernardino, California, celebrated 60 years as a Victory Noll Sister. She entered OLVN on September 9, 1963. Her missionary work has taken her to California, Colorado, Arizona, Texas, Illinois and Indiana. She has primarily ministered in Religious Education, Adult Education, English as a Second Language and U.S. Citizenship.

Sister Kathleen Cummings, was born in Jackson, Michigan, and celebrated 70 years as a Victory Noll Sister. She entered OLVN on January 6, 1954. She has been missioned as a Catechist and served in Leadership as General Treasurer. She has served in California, Utah and Indiana.

Sister Christopher Rudell, from Baltimore, Maryland, celebrated 70 years as a Victory Noll Sister. She entered OLVN on September 6, 1953. Her work has taken her to Massachusetts, California, Michigan, Oklahoma, Indiana, Arizona, Texas and Florida. She has been missioned in Religious Education, Social Service and Nursing.



OLVM Archives

The Sacred Heart Building on the Victory Noll campus (lower left) began as a barracks at Baer Field in Fort Wayne during World War II. Following the war in 1948, Bishop Noll purchased one of the barracks and had it moved to Huntington to become a residence for Victory Noll Sisters.

A building with a special tale to tell

By Jeff Hoffman
OLVM Archivist

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Sacred Heart Building on the Victory Noll campus. It is a building with a rich history that almost wasn't due to a fire.

In the 1940s, a growing number of women were wanting to enter the Society of Missionary Catechists (later renamed Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters). But without the space to house them, there was little room to expand.

Bishop John F. Noll, benefactor to the Sisters, found a solution in the years following World War II.

With the United States downsizing all branches of the military after World War II, there was an excess of equipment that was being offered to whoever was interested in it. Bishop Noll took advantage of this opportunity. In 1948, he acquired a barracks that was no longer needed at the Army Air Base at Baer Field in Fort Wayne.

The barracks building was disassembled and relocated to the Victory Noll campus. The first pieces of it arrived at Victory Noll on May 28, and the groundbreaking was on August 31 in what was known as the "sunken gardens."

OLVM Founder Father John Sigstein wished to landscape the area, but could never find the funds to do so. The first load of concrete was poured for the first floor on October 15, and the barracks was reassembled on this base during the rest of the fall.

On Tuesday, December 14, the doorbell rang at 6:15 p.m. at the main building while the Sisters were having dinner.

A young man passing by on the highway below the hill where the campus is located told the Sisters one of the buildings was on fire. The fire department was immediately contacted, and the Sisters rushed to find flames threatening their new residence. Sr. Effie McConnell and Sr. Cecilia Schmitt led the charge with fire extinguishers taken from the corridors. Others followed their example and were able to quickly

EDITOR'S NOTE: Following the completion of OLVM's year-long Centennial Celebration in 2022, Victory Noll Archivist Jeff Hoffman continues his historical look at significant events and individuals from the congregation's first 100 years.

OLVM HISTORY

bring the blaze under control. By the time the Huntington Fire Department arrived, the fire was mostly extinguished and little damage had occurred.

By the end of the week the contractors finished the roof of the new structure, and work continued on the digging of the tunnel to connect it to the main building.

The pipework from the furnace in the main building was connected on January 26, 1949.

Sr. Effie took charge of the supervision of the interior work and laid the asphalt tiles on all of the floors. This totaled 12,000 square feet. Sr. Cecilia painted the walls and ceilings throughout the building. Other Sisters helped with the varnishing of the doors, window frames, cupboards, and trim, as well as helping with other tasks as needed.

Originally a wooden structure, the Sacred Heart Building was a wooden building that was faced with brick upon its relocation to Victory Noll. A breezeway was built to connect it to the main building. The lower floor contained the dining room, kitchen, and storage area with a tunnel that ran under the breezeway to provide interior access to the main building. On June 3, 1949, the postulants finally occupied the second floor, while the novices took over the upper floor. Moving those Sisters in formation to the new residence helped to ease the crowding in the main building.

Although the building was occupied, it was not completely finished. The kitchen would not be ready to be used until August, and the clay tiles for the roof were not in place until December. Through the years the building



OLVM Archives

The Victory Noll Sisters prepare to move into the new Sacred Heart Building in 1949. Below, right, Sr. Margaret Ann Altmiller prays in front of the Crucifix outside of the stairwell in the new residence. Bottom, Sisters prepare tables for a meal on the first floor, which contained the dining room and kitchen.

would undergo a number of changes. The lower level would eventually house the library, and later became the Victory Noll Center.

A remodeling of the upper floors added individual bathrooms to the bedrooms.

Eventually, Sacred Heart was part of the sale of all three campus buildings to Huntington County to be used by Community Corrections for restorative and treatment programs.

This next evolution of of the facilities continues Fr. Sigstein's vision and carries the Victory Noll charism into the future. ❖





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Visions FROM THE VICTORY NOLL ARCHIVES



This group of Victory Noll novices get their first look at the new Sacred Heart Building in 1949 (see story inside, Page 10). Pictured, from bottom left to top, are Mary Alice Murphy, Romana Goodell, Charlene Talbot, Joan Arnold, Bernadine Mabrey, Marie Celine Ernst, Marie Schene, and Anita Gutierrez. Sr. Mary Alice Murphy is the only Sister from this group still living, celebrating her 75th Jubilee in 2023 (see Page 9). ❖