

NEWSLETTER OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY MISSIONARY SISTERS

Visions

July 2023

www.olvm.org

Bolivia Legacy

Spirit of Victory Noll Sisters remains a presence with the people and culture





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 statue of Virgen de Socabon overlooks the city of Oruro, Bolivia, where Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters were missioned from 1968-2008.

Main photo by David Katz - stock.adobe.com
Additional photos from OLVM Archives

When I drive to work each day, I come into the Victory Noll campus via the “back road,” a narrow street that winds through the undeveloped part of the property. There’s a 15 miles-per-hour speed limit, and for good reason. Nearly every day, some kind of woodland creature crosses my path, from squirrels and rabbits to the occasional coyote. Most visible are the many deer that inhabit the area.

PERSPECTIVES ALONG THE JOURNEY

Some days, I’ll see upwards of a dozen deer not far away from the road. On the days when a bit of fog hangs over the open fields and the sun is just coming up, I’ll stop to just take in the view. I never take those brief moments for granted. Mostly, it’s a reminder of the beauty all around us, and puts me in a positive mental place to face my day — even on those sub-zero mornings when I know I have a chilly walk in from the parking lot.

For sure, things have slowed for the Sisters as they age and their numbers get smaller. But from my office window, the Victory Noll campus is as active as ever. I see people coming and going into the old OLV Building, now owned by Huntington County, which operates its Emergency Management offices and County Corrections program. Many Sisters live in Saint Anne Communities at Victory Noll, the campus care facility operated by the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese. I go over there occasionally and visit with the Sisters, who are kept busy with a number of planned activities. Often I see Sisters or others walking the grounds, sometimes over to the OLVM Cemetery, a solemn place of remembrance.

The point is, this place still buzzes with activity, all reflective of the Sisters and their work. People in need are being helped and uplifted. Nature is being cared for and preserved. And I am fortunate enough to watch it all happen. ❖

— Paul Siegfried

CONGREGATION LEADER

Sr. Jenny Howard, SP

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We live and minister with and among the people, mutually enriching and supporting one another. We assist in the development of vibrant faith communities and the formation of Christian leaders. We collaborate with them in proclaiming and promoting the reign of God. We are sent forth by our president in the name of Christ and his Church to fulfill that ministry faithfully in the spirit of our charism.

OLVM Constitutions, No. 24

Ripples of mission still evident

When I traveled to Bolivia in February to accept an award from the mayor of Oruro recognizing the work of the OLVM Sisters in the person of Sr. Carolyn Ortega, I went with a sense of honor, humility, curiosity, a little bit of trepidation and a great deal of gratitude. It was a wonderful tribute to the 40 years Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters were present in Bolivia from 1968 to 2008.



Sr. Jenny Howard, SP
Congregation Leader

Knowing I would be representing the Victory Noll Community, I needed to learn more about their involvement in the country. I read a lot of their history in Bolivia, spoke with Sisters who had served there and, of course, reached out to our three native Bolivian Sisters.

Reading the above passage from the OLVM Constitutions also gave me the opportunity to think more about the mission of the Victory Noll Sisters.

We know it's not truly the OLVM Mission, but God's mission. And we can think of that mission as a stone dropped into the still water of a lake. We see the ripples expand in all directions, with each ripple creating the next as the circles continue to grow larger and reach farther. The work of the Victory Noll Sisters is just one of those ripples. But the people they reach out to and serve create and expand the next circle, and in turn those people make more ripples over an ever-widening area of positive and meaningful impact.

That "ripple effect" of the OLVM Mission was certainly evident on my journey to Oruro, Bolivia.

I traveled with two of our Bolivian Sisters, Sr. Adela Amoroso-Medrano and Sr. Lupe Flores-Ocaña. When word got out that we had arrived, a number of people who had received their religious education from Sr. Adela turned out to welcome her back. There were friends and family of Sr. Lupe and our other Bolivian Sister, Sr. Lupita Aguilar-Huanca. And there were other local residents who had felt the presence and positive impact of the Victory Noll Sisters over multiple generations.

While we were there, we stayed in the same house where the Sisters who had been missioned in Oruro had lived. We visited what is now a home, but had been the Center for University and Secondary Students (CESU), a library and gathering space founded by Sr. Carolyn, and a place that has provided vital resources and opportunities for the local community.

Those experiences made me mindful of all the Victory Noll Sisters who lived and served there, and the presence of their spirit that remains in the people who carry on the mission, just like those ripples expanding across the lake.

Throughout their history, Victory Noll Sisters have answered calls to go where there was a need. They immersed themselves in the community, working to meet that need through the four pillars of the OLVM Mission — proclaiming the Word of God, fostering justice, standing in solidarity with those living in poverty and oppression, and promoting the development of leaders. When the time came, they would move on to the next call. Such is the life of a missionary Sister, and so it was for the Victory Noll Sisters in Bolivia.

While the physical presence of the OLVM Sisters has narrowed, the OLVM Mission — God's mission — still ripples out in an ever-widening expanse. They have ministered for more than 100 years, in numerous places like Oruro, with countless people such as Associates and volunteers, and even the readers of this Visions newsletter. Through them, God's mission continues to reach those in need. ❖

Presence of the Sisters endures

Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters opened a mission in Oruro, Bolivia, in 1968, and for the next 40 years, a total of 22 Victory Noll Sisters served the people of the area, leaving a lasting presence of their spirit.

But it was the ministry of Sr. Carolyn Ortega that made the most enduring impact. She was there for nearly the entire time of the mission’s existence, and along the way she became so immersed in the history, culture and people of her adopted country that she considered herself a Bolivian. On February 9, 2023, Sr. Carolyn was honored posthumously by the city’s mayor as a Distinguished Citizen of Oruro. The highest civilian honor is normally awarded only to natives of the country, but for her 40-year legacy serving the people of Oruro, an exception was made for Sr. Carolyn.

The passion of her ministry was for the young people of Oruro and surrounding area. She was involved in religious education with the university students, understanding that education was the way forward for those who had been born into poverty. Perhaps her greatest legacy is the Center for University and Secondary Students (CESU) in Oruro, a library that provided space and resources for students to study and learn.

Drawing on the pillars of the OLVM mission, Sr. Carolyn was also a strong advocate for justice, particularly for the campesinos, the rural laborers who made up Bolivia’s poorest social class. She joined in marches, and even was arrested as she advocated for better wages and basic human rights for miners, teachers, prisoners and others who were being marginalized and maltreated.

Among her friends was Evo Morales, who would go on to serve as president of Bolivia from 2006-2019



Photo provided

OLVM Congregation Leader Sr. Jenny Howard (second from left) accepts the Distinguished Citizen award on behalf of Victory Noll Sister Carolyn Ortega during a February ceremony in Oruro, Bolivia. Also pictured are OLVM Sisters and Oruro natives Sr. Lupe Flores-Ocaña (left) and Sr. Adela Amoroso-Medrano, and Oruro Municipal Councilor Jesús Cruz Paco.

with a platform based on improving the legal rights and socioeconomic conditions of the country’s poor and indigenous communities.

Sr. Carolyn returned to Victory Noll in 2006 and reflected on her Bolivian ministry.

“It has been my privilege to work with leaders, especially the indigenous Aymaras and Qhechuas,” she said. “They plan and analyze. I am sometimes present for these sessions, but the action is theirs. I think that mine is more a ‘presence of solidarity,’ hopefully a sign of hope, of life in the midst of so many signs of death.”

OLVM closed its Bolivian mission center in 2008, and Sr. Carolyn died in 2013, but their influence on the Oruro community continues. Three young women from Oruro became Victory Noll Sisters. Other young people used the educational resources to end generations of poverty in their families. ❖



More on OLVM’s Bolivian connection

On the following pages are additional information, photos and reflections of OLVM’s legacy in Bolivia. Among these are reflections from Victory Noll’s three Bolivian Sisters, shown at left in their early years in the community — Sr. Adela Amoroso-Medrano (left), Sr. Guadalupe Aguilar-Huanca (center) and Sr. Guadalupe Flores-Ocaña.

How it began

OLVM Sisters answered call to reach out into Latin America



Sr. Carolyn Ortega (back, center) was one of the founders of OLVM's Bolivian mission in 1968, and spent nearly 40 years there. She immersed herself in the country and the culture, and became a social justice advocate for the people.

At a conference in the summer of 1961 of the Major Superiors of Men and Women Religious at Notre Dame, a request was made of its membership to have 10 percent of each member's congregation to serve in Latin America in the upcoming years. Mother Cecilia Schmitt brought this request to the 1962 General Chapter of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters. With its approval, Mother Florentine Lohr was tasked to see this through with her election as Superior General.

In order to figure out what area they would minister to, the Victory Noll Sisters asked the Maryknoll Sisters for assistance due to their work as missionaries in Latin America. Sr. Muriel Balch and Sr. Carolyn Ortega were charged with searching for a suitable location in the summer of 1966. They visited Panama, Chile, Columbia, Bolivia, and Central America. After much deliberation, Bolivia was chosen to be the site of the first Victory Noll mission outside of the United States.

Time was needed to make the necessary arrangements to open a new mission in a foreign country, but in 1968 the Bolivian mission was opened. Part of the delay was due to the election of Sr. Muriel and Sr. Carolyn as delegates to the 1968 General Chapter that was dealing with changes brought on due to the Second Vatican Council. Because Sr.

Muriel was chosen for a leadership position, she would not be able to make the trip to Bolivia. Sr. Carolyn was joined by Sr. Ruth Banet, Sr. Mamie Garcia, and Sr. Rose Anita Salas. The founding of the Bolivian mission was December 8, 1968.

Shortly after their arrival in Oruro, Sr. Carolyn was asked to be a member of a diocesan team concerned with the local Quechua, Aymara, and Spanish cultures. This team worked to form the social consciences of leaders and make the people aware of their human dignity. The team reached out to labor unions, pastoral agents and others. Working with a Canadian priest, who was fluent in Quechua and Aymara, Sr. Carolyn worked on a Quechua grammar designed to be used by agents of change who worked among the Quechua-speaking campesinos. Other Sisters worked in the usual Victory Noll capacities of catechetics, social work, nursing and more. The Victory Noll presence in Bolivia has been referred to as a witness of presence. They are *la voz de los sin voz* (the voice of those without a voice).

Sr. Carolyn said at the time that "Bolivia is God's gift to us. A sign that we are missionary and a constant reminder that Victory Noll Sisters are sealed with a special vocation: to live, to suffer, to work with the oppressed so that they themselves may become creators of their own destiny." ❖

On January 17, before the Angelus prayer, Pope Francis said, “Every calling from God is a love initiative.” This calling can appear in your life at any time and circumstance; we just need to know how to describe the calling. This calling has appeared in different moments of my life growing up in Bolivia. The first time was when I was a child, and the second when I was a teenager. At these two times, I felt I was not yet ready to give an answer to God. There were only desires.

Then I met the ministry of the Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, especially the work of Sister Carolyn Ortega. My attention was called to her work with the youth of the library (CESU) she created in Oruro, and the work for social justice she did in Bolivia. Personally, I liked to help her in all her works. One day she asked me, “Have you ever considered religious life?” This question was surprising, and all I said was “I don’t know.” It was after this direct question I began to observe more. I asked her what she did. She explained her ministry to me and invited me to learn more about the other Sisters. All of them had different ministries. Sister Mary Edna Butler had the jail ministry. She prepared the prisoners for their sacraments and was a public school teacher. Sister Adela Amoroso-Medrano was the coordinator for family catechism at a parish. They had varied ministries. What called my attention the most in that moment was the social work they were doing, especially with the relocated miners and their wives.

The services they provided helped me make the decision to join the OLVM congregation in 1997, and to live my vocation as a Sister of Victory Noll in Oruro, Bolivia. Even before joining

the congregation, I had already been involved in the ministries they did. In addition to becoming a part of the congregation, I continued to do my ministry as a catechist member of the youth group at CESU, spiritual director, providing school support for kids, and group assessor of the Kolping

youth. I was also a coordinator of confirmation, civil rights worker, and penitentiary pastor among so many other ministries. All these ministries I did and worked in with joy and happiness alongside my Sisters in the community.

After 25 years of living my vocation and my dedication to the service of God in different countries and realities, I have come to realize what is most important is not what I do but what I am called to do, to be a way for many people to come to know and experience the love of God in their lives.

In my time in ministry in the United States, I have been a part of many different communities and learned much about different cultures, particularly the Mexican-American culture during my time in Texas and California.

They taught me to love the Virgin of Guadalupe. They have such great faith and devotion to the virgin. All this has given me much happiness and by putting my trust in God, I can say I had the joy of completing varied ministries within this country.

All of this makes me understand what it is to give our lives to God and trust him. He is guiding our walk. Even as our daily religious lives are filled with challenges, only God can continue to give you strength and courage to continue serving to His people. As OLVM Founder Father John Joesph Sigstein said, “I must be happy wherever God places me. I shall never lose trust in God, even if all things seem dark.” ❖

REFLECTION



Sr. Guadalupe Flores-Ocaña was born in the small Bolivian mining town of Colquiri, and grew up in Oruro, where she came into contact with the Victory Noll Sisters. She entered OLVM in 1997 and currently serves as Hispanic Faith Formation Coordinator in the Diocese of Charleston, S.C.

The first time I met Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters was at St. Pius X Parish in Bolivia. There were three Victory Noll Sisters there at that time — Sisters Carolyn Ortega, Mary Edna Butler, and Adela Amoroso. This was the parish where my brother's son received his first communion and where my nephew and I ministered as Catechists for three years. The religious education program was under the leadership of Sister Adela. During this time, Guadalupe Flores-Ocaña was a live-in candidate with the Sisters. Guadalupe invited me to a retreat in Cochabamba directed by Sister Adela.

While we were on retreat, I met two other Victory Noll Sisters who were visiting in Oruro and they came to join us for one day during the retreat. They were Sisters Mary Ellen Descourouez and Francesca McGarry. I was also invited by Guadalupe to join the youth group that met at the Sisters' house every Sunday to share about religious life and about the Victory Noll Congregation.

After participating in the youth group, Sister Adela invited me to be a live-in candidate with the Sisters for three months. After this experience, I continued to discern my call to religious life and felt that God was calling me to join the Victory Noll Sisters. What I most admired about the Sisters was their involvement in parish ministry, being among the people, and their ministry in catechesis. I thank God for inviting me to become a vowed woman religious and a member of the Victory Noll Sisters. ❖

REFLECTION



Sr. Guadalupe Aguilar-Huanca is from the small Bolivian mining town of Colquiri, and first met the Victory Noll Sisters in Oruro. She entered OLVN in 1999. Today, she serves as a Certified Nursing Assistant with Saint Anne's Communities in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

REFLECTION



Sr. Adela Amoroso-Medrano is a native of Oruro, Bolivia, where she was providing religious education when she met the Victory Noll Sisters. She joined OLVN in 1990, and continued to serve with the Sisters in Bolivia until 2007, when she began ministries in California.

I entered the Our Lady of Missionary Sisters congregation in 1990 in Oruro, Bolivia. I chose this congregation because of their charism to serve the poor and marginalized in a personal and non-institutional way, forming leaders for religious education and, above all, fighting for social justice, and identifying with workers and students.

The purpose of the Sisters was to change the situation of injustice in which many lived. They established a library for low-income students, providing them with the necessary books for their training and professionalization. In the 40 years of service in Oruro, Victory Noll Sisters brought about many changes. That is why on February 9 of this year Sister Carolyn Ortega was recognized as an illustrious citizen for all the work she did.

This is the highest award in Bolivia, and normally is only given to Bolivian citizens. In this case, an exception was made for Sr. Carolyn.

What we do as Victory Noll Sisters is not for personal achievement, but for the community, because it supports us, protects us, and gives us the means to achieve our objectives. Thank God and the community. I was an active part in achieving these changes because I was one of the Sisters who continued the works that had been started by Sr. Carolyn and others back in 1968. Along the way we were able to build on what they began with other ministries and responding to the changing needs.

All the OLVN Sisters who have served in Bolivia have given everything of themselves and have left deep marks that Bolivians will never forget. ❖

You did not choose Me, but I CHOSE YOU, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in my name, He may give you.

John 15:16

Around 1985, I was one of five OLVN Sisters who was encouraged to consider vocation/formation ministry in Bolivia. The Leadership Team would later let us know whom they decided on. I was not called to go to Bolivia at that time, but the desire to minister in Bolivia remained. In 2000, the call for a Victory Noll Sister to provide formation ministry in Bolivia came up again. I asked my family how they felt about my going to Bolivia, and they supported my decision if I was chosen. To my surprise, I received my call and was missioned to Oruro, Bolivia.

Besides formation ministry, the pastor of St. Pius X Parish asked me to work with the youth group at Mission San Pedro and also with the Parish Council. I walked or took the bus up to the Mission for Sunday Mass, and during the week I met with the youth and the Parish Council.

What is impressed in my mind is how much the youth wanted to do for their parish and community. I found the youth to be very creative in the arts, music, dance, poetry, storytelling, jokes, prayer and worship. They loved to be together to play, plan activities, sing and enjoy the treats someone provided. One year they planned a Mother's Day event, which had a good response. The plan was to have contests between the mothers to which the mothers responded with smiles and energy. There was plenty of singing and dancing, and cakes for refreshments. The joy and energy was so energizing that none of us wanted to leave.

Toward the summer, a youth committee planned a youth retreat. We went away from Oruro to a retreat center. Again, the youth leaders presented the theme, with talks, games, music, group sharing and prayers. The meals were a joyful time as the youth leaders served what our two cooks had prepared and then the youth would help clean up! For Sunday Mass, we walked to the church, which was on the other side of town. On one occasion, the priest asked the retreat group to help serve the Mass as ushers and readers, and they collected the alms and led the singing. It was a great honor for all of us to do this service.

The tremendous realization for me was how the youth, given the chance and the calling, responded willingly to share their ideas and their gifts. This was evident during the major feasts of the Church, the high school bands would come marching in. The youth of the parish were always involved in some way and all Parish celebrations were family-oriented. These were very joyful and creative occasions. Once, a youth studying dentistry returned to San Pedro mission to give a presentation on dental hygiene to the children. A group of about 25 children and a few mothers showed up. The youth placed chairs in a circle, which allowed all to hear and see the presentation. The presenter brought toothbrushes, toothpaste and a big tooth, pictures and other materials. It was a success for everyone, and all went home with their own toothbrush and paste.

The parish had about five missions and several youth groups. The young adult groups planned and hosted activities for the younger groups. They did the planning and we Sisters were there to give encouragement and support. Sisters Adela, Lupe and Lupita took part in some of these groups, helping as needed to make sure all went as planned. It was a joy for me to see us working together and having such a good time. ❖

REFLECTION



Sr. Lucy Regalado is from Upland, California, where Victory Noll Sisters prepared children and adults for the Sacraments. She joined OLVN in 1965, and has served in ministry in a number of roles, including religious education, counseling, formation and leadership. She was missioned for six years in Oruro, Bolivia, as director of a family counseling center, returning to the United States in 2007.

MISSION MEMORIES



OLVM maintained a mission in Oruro, Bolivia from 1968-2008, impacting multiple generations of residents. The spiritual presence of the Victory Noll Sisters remains with the people to this day.





OLVM Sr. Beaty Haines (above) gives a reading during the weekly Prayer for the World in the Archbishop Noll Memorial Chapel at Saint Anne Communities at Victory Noll as Sisters and others gather for the prayer service.

The Power of Prayer

Weekly gathering focuses on needs of the Church and the world

**By Sr. Beaty Haines
OLVM Social Justice Coordinator**

As I think and pray about Religious Life in the United States, I believe we are called today to listen more deeply to God’s call. How are we to listen and respond to the needs of our Earth and the needs of the poor, the challenge of Pope Francis to the Church? To listen more deeply, we must first do so with our feet firmly planted in reality, which is obviously different from that of 10, 20, 30 or more years ago. The world is different and we, of course, are different. What doesn’t change is God’s love and our desire to give all for the sake of God’s mission in this world. This desire hopefully grows more trusting, generous and joyful every day. I am reminded of the widow in the Gospel, who gave “... all that she had.”



We, the Victory Noll Sisters, are much fewer in number and most of us are in our later years. Though not as active as we were, we still have hearts for the poor and suffering. We are also convinced of the power of prayer, especially when we unite in prayer for a common concern or issue. For this reason, we have gathered weekly for several years for an hour of contemplative

prayer, focused on a specific concern or issue in our Church or World. We especially direct our prayer toward those topics about which we have taken a corporate stance as a congregation: opposition to the death penalty, care of the Earth, justice for women and children in Church and Society, elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and just and humane immigration policies.

A group of Sisters and others continue to gather weekly at Victory Noll for “Contemplative Prayer for the World,” however, this year we also invited Sisters who live beyond Victory Noll, associates, friends and former members to join us in this prayer. This fall, we hope to extend this invitation to members of Victory Noll Boards and Committees to join this praying community. We are all united in our commitment to further God’s mission of love and justice, especially to those who live in poverty or are marginalized and/or treated unjustly by Society. ❖

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER AS AN EXTENSION OF MISSION



As the OLVN Sisters age and the congregation grows smaller, their main ministry has become one of prayer and presence, with a focus on and support for those places, issues and concerns that have always been at the heart of our mission. They continue to follow the words of Father Sigstein, who said, “Always go to the poor first.”

An important way that many of the Victory Noll Sisters do “mission” today is by expanding their sense of compassion through contemplative prayer. Franciscan author Ilia Delio expresses it this way: “Compassion is the ability to ‘get inside the skin of another’ in order to respond with loving concern and care. It is a deep connectedness to another; one breathes in the pain of the other and breathes out compassion.” Their prayer for the world, Church, and community, is not to heal the suffering or remove their pain but to be with their brothers and sisters in solidarity as they breathe out compassion.

Jason Kissel gives talk on God and the natural world

As part of the 2023 Victory Noll Laudato Si’ Action Plan, and as a way of celebrating Earth Day, Jason Kissel, Executive Director of ACRES Land Trust, was invited to give a presentation by Zoom on the topic of Spirituality and Nature. Sisters and guests were invited to his presentation on April 24, at Saint Anne Communities at Victory Noll. Jason’s talk focused on how he experiences God in nature and our call to deepen our experience of ecological spirituality.

In 2022, ACRES Land Trust purchased much of the undeveloped land at Victory Noll. The area will be preserved in accordance with the OLVN Land Ethic.

His presentation can be viewed online at:
<https://youtu.be/3LSvjcw11UE>



Empowering family futures

Life-changing opportunities for moms and babies

"I don't know where I'd be today if it wasn't for A Mother's Hope. I don't think I'd be alive and my baby wouldn't be either."

– Resident of A Mother's Hope

NOTE: Resident names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

By Stasia Roth
Executive Director
A Mother's Hope

A Mother's Hope is a maternity home that provides housing, all basic needs, and a continuum of supportive services for pregnant women experiencing homelessness in Northeast Indiana. Our program offers a strategic and holistic approach to wellness that embraces and celebrates women's health and growth.

A Mother's Hope serves pregnant women by providing housing and intensive daily/weekly services that include structured therapeutic sessions, case man-



Photo provided

Every month at A Mother's Hope a celebration luncheon is held to celebrate achievements over the previous month, including sobriety, personal goals and exceeding program requirements.

agement, educational opportunities, employment coaching, community connections, and close attention to individualized action plans. We have found that focusing on these areas of the residents' lives provides the most opportunities to gain confidence,

knowledge, and hope; ultimately supporting them in creating stability that lasts for themselves and their families.

One beautiful summer day in July, Ashley walked through the doors of A Mother's Hope for the very first time.



Based in Fort Wayne, Indiana, A Mother's Hope shelters pregnant women who are experiencing homelessness and provides life-changing opportunities for growth. They are devoted to being a refuge for homeless, pregnant mothers, and strengthening futures for moms and babies.

When Ashley entered the program, she was looking to put the pieces of her life back together after experiencing an incredible loss. Her baby's father had passed away in a devastating car accident. Dealing with overwhelming grief, Ashley relapsed in her recovery. Life had hit a new low and then Ashley discovered she was pregnant.

Ashley was already fighting the possibility of losing her seven-year-old daughter who was placed with family due to Ashley's ongoing struggle with alcohol. When reflecting on that time in her life, Ashley shared, "I didn't care about anything. I didn't care whether I lived or whether I died. Now when I look back, I realize it wasn't fair to my daughter." That's when she realized that she needed help, which was amplified when she learned of her pregnancy.

When Ashley entered AMH's program, she was determined to pull her life together and create a new path for herself and her children. Ashley thrived at AMH. She got a job where she was able to work throughout her pregnancy and after her son was born. Although Ashley worked often, she made sure that she fully participated in every aspect of the program. When life got hard, she asked for help and allowed others to step in to support her.

"It's definitely humbling coming to a place like this, not letting your pride get in your way... admitting that I do have a problem and I do need help" she said.

Often her positivity would uplift other women in the program, cheering them on and letting them know that if she could do it, so can they.



Photo provided

Residents at A Mother's Hope receive one-on-one support during parenting sessions. House Manager Jackie Smiley (right) shows a resident the proper way to hold a baby using the Shaken Baby simulator to understand the effects of shaking on an infant's brain and how to safely soothe a crying infant.

Ashley spent much time reading devotionals and spending time with God while at AMH. We saw Ashley's shame begin to decrease as her reliance on God and His plan for her life began to take root. After completing our program, she now lives in her own apartment and works full time. Ashley told us, "A Mother's Hope has changed my life for the better, for myself and for this baby." We hear from Ashley often as she loves to stop in to say hi. She is always welcomed with big smiles and lots of hugs!

See more of Ashley's story here: go.amhfw.org/stories

Some women come to A Mother's Hope because they have no place to go; others because they are ready for a change. The reasons for coming to A Mother's Hope are as varied as the women we serve. No matter why they come to us, we are here to support and guide them through the program.



Photo provided

Financial literacy is key to supporting residents toward self-sufficiency. A Mother's Hope helps develop budget plans, steps for financial recovery, and assist with opening savings accounts.



Photo provided

As part of the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation HEAL grant, residents get hands on experience in the kitchen. They get to use kitchen gadgets, learn food nutrition, try new recipes and enjoy the delicious meals they made themselves.

Often our greatest challenge is helping the residents see that they are worthy of living a healthier, better life. Why would they put in the work if they do not believe they are worth the effort? Our program is designed to support and guide each resident in determining her own goals and her own future.

Our approach focuses on each resident's individual strengths. Helping her to see her strengths is key when inspiring her to choose goals that lead to living a healthier, better life. One of the most beautiful and unique differences of our program, when compared to others, is the amount of time women participate in program activities on a daily basis. This increased amount of time directly increases the potential for impact and transformation, as women are immersed in a new environment that is safe, stable, and nurturing for themselves and their babies. Women are uplifted and empowered as they are surrounded by staff and volunteers who are pres-

Meeting a community's need

A Mother's Hope dates back to 2013 when Founder/Executive Director Stasia Roth found herself overwhelmed by pain and suffering in the world. She heard a call to create a home for pregnant women who were homeless. The need was there: 2016 United Way data showed 81 pregnant homeless women were seeking shelter in Allen County, Indiana.

In 2015, a board of directors was created and the name A Mother's Hope chosen. The new organization obtained 501(c)3 status, and in 2016 received its first grant from the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation. The Mary Cross Tippmann Foundation donated a four-bedroom house, and donations from local businesses contributed to renovations through 2017.

The shelter welcomed its first resident in October 2018. A Mother's Hope currently has five full-time and 12 part-time staff members, and can serve up to eight residents at any one time.

ent to guide, coach, and champion them every step of the program.

A Mother's Hope is not just a shelter, but a home. It's a home filled with the love of Christ and hope-filled joy; one where women come to know that their lives matter, they are worth the effort, and they are truly adored by our loving Heavenly Father. ❖

A Mother's Hope website:
amothershopefw.org

NOTE: *A Mother's Hope is one of the agencies receiving support from the Victory Noll Empowerment Grants.*

First-hand experience fuels work

Volunteering at border brings migrant crisis into full focus

By Sr. Lucille Martinez, OLVM

During the season of Lent, 2023, I was able to spend some time doing volunteer work at the Kino Border Initiative, a binational, inclusive Roman Catholic organization rooted in the two cities of Nogales on the Mexico-US border. KBI provides direct humanitarian assistance and holistic accompaniment of migrants, facilitates encounters between migrants and others to transform people towards solidarity with migrants and advocates for more just migration policies.

I was surprised to discover that most of the people arriving at Kino were from Mexico, a large percent from the state of Guerrero. There were other relatively-smaller number of families and individuals from Haiti and Venezuela. Another surprise for me was discovering from the intake survey or encuesta conducted with every individual who receives services at Kino, that the people arriving at Kino reported violence or persecution as their primary reason for migrating.

There are no words to describe the experience of being face-to-face with a person who is so vulnerable yet so willing and anxious to share their story. After listening to many stories, they all become one huge narrative detailing the violence, extortion, kid-



Photo provided

OLVM Sr. Lucille Martinez (second from right) joined with other women religious from across the world to volunteer at the U.S.-Mexico border with Kino Border Initiative, an organization offering humanitarian aid and advocacy for migrants.

napping and in many situations, the murder of family members. It is heartwarming after being at Kino and seeing those same individuals who have shared their story, now transformed into confident and normal individuals. When they first arrive, most migrants look dejected, afraid, and apprehensive. But once they have experienced the hospitality at Kino, they are transformed. As I passed them in the corridor, we mutually acknowledged each other with a smile. That created

a connection between us. They had shared their story and I had listened respectfully without judgement.

There is much truth to the reality that once we encounter a “migrant,” a “stranger,” or someone we don’t know who at times have been characterized in broad terms as invaders, criminals and rapists—it brings us closer to the reality that those who are crossing the border are human beings, members of families – mothers, fathers, children. Once we have

met a “migrant,” this false narrative is overcome when there is an opportunity for a respectful encounter.

I will share a few stories that I was privileged to honor. The names have been changed to protect the privacy of the individual.

Alberto, from Guerrero, came with his wife and two young sons. Organized crime threatened him with death after he refused to join the organization. When he would not join, they threatened to kidnap his sons. Fearful his sons would be kidnapped and he would be killed, Alberto and his family were forced to flee to Nogales.

Hector came with his wife and son after his father had been killed by members of organized crime after he refused to give in to their extortion demands. Hector was threatened and assaulted by organized crime members. The assault injured his vertebra and now he is in a wheelchair. Unable to work and in need of medical attention, Hector decided to flee. While he was at Kino, his wife received a call from her father informing her the criminals are now threatening him to tell them where Hector can be found.

Maria and her sister fled from Chiapas. Maria’s husband was killed by organized crime members when they assaulted him and took away his land and house. After the husband’s death the organized crime members tried to kidnap her 14-year-old sister, Eliza, to force both of them into prostitution. Fearful for both of



About Kino Border Initiative



The Kino Border Initiative (KBI) is a binational, inclusive Roman Catholic organization, inspired by the spirituality of the Jesuits and Missionaries of the Eucharist. It is rooted locally in Ambos Nogales on the Mexico-US border and also has a regional presence throughout Central America and North America.

VISION

Migration with Dignity

MISSION

Promote humane, just and workable migration through:

- Direct humanitarian assistance and holistic accompaniment of migrants
- Education and encounter between migrants and others that transforms people and communities towards solidarity with migrants;
- Policy advocacy in Mexico and the US.

their lives, they fled and arrived at Kino.

We know that Pope Francis has put the issue of migration at the center of his Petrine ministry. In *Let Us Dream*, Pope Francis quotes the poet Holderin: “Where the danger is, there grows the saving power,” and says that the phrase has been with him often in his life. It is the key to his discernment on the migrant crisis. God acts in this crisis, as in every

crisis, through his mercy, which is future-changing insofar as we have the capacity to receive it. It is up to us to discern and be alert to the obstacles and temptations that block God’s mercy.

I will be forever grateful for this opportunity to encounter so many hopeful, faith-filled people who have the courage and hope to place their future in the hands of strangers who are open and willing to welcome them. ❖

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IN GRATITUDE TO OUR BENEFACTORS

Contributions from September 1, 2021 to August 31, 2022

Through your generous contributions, you support Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters in their mission to proclaim the Word of God, to stand in solidarity with those living in poverty and oppression, to foster justice and to promote the development of leaders. The Victory Noll Sisters thank you and continue to keep all of you in our prayers.

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OLVM Archives

In the right photo, OLVM Founder Father John Joseph Sigstein poses in front of the OLV Building, with a barn and silos visible in the background. Left, the OLVM dairy barn stands approximately where the Archbishop Noll Memorial Chapel currently stands. The barn was destroyed by fire in December, 1930.

Huntington dairy began with Sisters

By Jeff Hoffman
OLVM Archivist

Throughout their history, religious communities have strived to be self-sufficient in their needs. Some were even able to go further, such as running their own coal mine or operating a dairy. The Society of Missionary Catechists (which later became Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters) were one of the communities running its own dairy. In the 1920s and 30s the Victory Noll dairy in Huntington operated with mixed results.

It required a large amount of lay assistance to make it work, even with the growing size of the com-

munity. The dairy did not make the Society a lot of money before the start of the Great Depression. Tragedy struck a short time later. On the morning of December 23, 1930, a fire of undetermined origin broke out in the dairy barn. Strong winds carried sparks towards the Victory Noll Training Center.

Catechist Perl recorded in the daily Chronicles:

“...wind blowing flames. Father opened the Tabernacle door. The Catechists all recited the Rosary and other prayers. Very soon wind changed direction, freeing our building from danger.”

After serving coffee to the firemen in a show of appreciation for their efforts to save their Motherhouse, the Catechists returned at the Chapel at noon to recite the Magnificat in thanksgiving.

Founder Fr. John Joseph Sigstein began to seek a way of removing management of the dairy operations from the Catechists, due to its inability to be economically sustainable for this recently-founded religious community during the ongoing economic crisis that gripped the nation. Although the dairy barn was a total loss, they still had a sizeable herd of registered dairy cattle and related equipment that survived.

Rather than rebuild the barn on its original site, (which is where the Holy Family Building and Archbishop Noll Memorial Chapel currently stand) the decision

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

was made to relocate it on the far north end of the farm along Flaxmill Road to better separate its operations from Victory Noll Training Institute. This is now part of Kemp's Dairy, but was originally part of the Our Sunday Visitor Farm acquired from Bishop Noll and Our Sunday Visitor.

Fr. Sigstein recruited a knowledgeable dairy farmer to take over the operations of the farm. With the money he inherited from his mother, Fr. Sigstein was able to renovate and move the house to the new location of the dairy operations on Flaxmill Road. He was also able to use some of the money to rebuild the barn. In 1932 Bernard and Mildred Rethlake were able to take up residence at the new location as the new caretakers of the dairy farm.

The dairy products helped Victory Noll as expenses grew during those trying times. However, it was not enough to prevent a continued drain on their overall finances. An outside firm conducted a review of the finances of the dairy farm and found that expenses were about three times higher than the money being generated by the farms. The Catechists owned a farm about six miles outside of town that was utilized primarily for grain production for the dairy cattle. It was considered low ground and it was consistently wet. It was recommended the community look at a complete separation from the money-losing operation.

With Bishop Noll's assistance the decision was made to liquidate the dairy operations at Victory Noll. An auction was held on January 11, 1940, to sell the registered Guernsey cattle and Belgian horses. A registered cow or horse could trace its lineage to at least their grandparents, which increased their value. The horses were used on the farm to supplement the work of a couple of older tractors.

An attempt for an auction sale of the dairy farm proved unsuccessful in the spring, but negotiations with several prospective buyers resulted in the eventual purchase of 50 acres and the dairy buildings later that year by Alvin and Clara Schenkel, who continued to build the dairy operation. Schenkel's Dairy grew and thrived through four generations until the family sold the operation in 2000. ❖



OLVM Archives

The Victory Noll Sisters operated a dairy farm on campus through the 1920s and 30s. They raised Guernsey cattle and Belgian draft horses were used to supplement the work of tractors. Below, Fr. Sigstein is shown with a young draft horse.





OUR LADY OF VICTORY
MISSIONARY SISTERS
1900 W. PARK DRIVE
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Visions FROM THE VICTORY NOLL ARCHIVES



Through much of the first 60 years of their existence, the Victory Noll Sisters were as self-sufficient as possible. They handled nearly every task themselves. That included tending to campus grounds, which this group of novices is heading out to do in this photo from the 1940s. ❖