

Visions

FALL 2013

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Doing God's Mission

**Sister Lupita Aguilar
finds her path serving
an aging community**



**Resource Sharing
Leaving a Legacy**



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 the poor
- Foster justice
- Promote the development of leaders

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At its root, mission is a way of being and living the gospel of Jesus wherever we are or whatever we do. As Victory Noll Sisters we are in a process of exploring together what mission means for our time and for us at this time of our communal life. As circumstances change, our participation in the mission of Jesus will also

PERSPECTIVES ALONG THE JOURNEY

be experienced differently as we move into the future. This will continue to include partnering with associates, co-workers and other lay persons, expanding our experience of mission beyond our own membership as Victory Noll Sisters.

We rejoice and are grateful for the many ways we are presently living the mission of Jesus and we look forward to new possibilities for living this mission in the future. ❖

OLVM LEADERSHIP TEAM

Sister Beatrice Haines *Sister Judith Ann Turnock*
Sr. Leora Linnenkugel *Sister Ginger Downey*

Visions is published two 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 welcomed but must be signed. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit all written contributions.

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Sr. Maria Luisa Valdez, OLVM, (left) receives a bouquet of flowers as she was honored by national Latina organization MANA for her service in Imperial County (Calif.)

EL CENTRO, CALIF.

MANA honors Sr. Maria Luisa

Sister Maria Luisa Valdez, OLVM, was honored October 18 for her service to the Imperial County (Calif.) community by the national Latina organization MANA, which is dedicated to empowering Latinas.

Sister Maria Luisa was one of three women recognized as a 2013 Las Primeras honoree for her work serving the needs of the poor, the voiceless, the abused women and children and the elderly in the Imperial Valley for 35 years, especially with the Sister Evelyn Mourey Center in El Centro, Calif.

“I was surprised because I work together with outstanding women,” said Sr. Maria Luisa. While she has retired as program coordinator, she still serves as a member of the board and with the program for seniors.

This is the 17th year that MANA has honored women for their service to the community.

“This is our way of being able to recognize individuals in the community who may have been overseen or overlooked,” said MANA President Rebecca Terrazas-Baxter. “It’s our way to thank them, honor them and celebrate them.”

VICTORY NOLL, HUNTINGTON, IND.

Dellaca-Hedrick heading social justice program

Tena Dellaca-Hedrick has joined the staff of Victory Noll Center as Social Justice Program Coordinator.

“Tena brings a wealth of knowledge and experience around issues of human trafficking, immigration and victim advocacy,” says Victory Noll Center Director Sue Wilhelm. “Her presence will allow us to expand our collaborative efforts to assist those without a voice and educate our community in how we can respond to these critical needs.”



Tena Dellaca-Hedrick

Dellaca-Hedrick is a nationally-accredited victim advocate, human service-board certified practitioner, Indiana-certified family development specialist, sexual assault advocate, and mediator. She brings 13 years of experience as a victim advocate, in which she worked more than 9,000 primary cases of victimization and has advocated on over 300 criminal jury trials, on crimes such as homicide, domestic violence, child and adult sexual violence, elder abuse, human trafficking and stranger violence and has advocated for in excess of 150 families who have been impacted by the devastating experience of a suicide.

A native of Australia, Dellaca-Hedrick has a Bachelor’s degree in Human Services from IPFW and is completing her Masters degree from Capella University. She continues as co-facilitator of the Pathways Home: NE Indiana Task Force Against Human Trafficking. She is also adjunct faculty at Indiana Tech, where she teaches several social justice subjects and is on the faculty for the Indiana Statewide Victim Assistance Academy where she teaches Cultural and Spiritual Competency. ❖



In Memoriam

*Sr. Mary Frances Bartsch, OLVM
June 29, 2013*

*Sr. Mechtilde Gogel, OLVM
July 1, 2013*

*Sr. Mary Josephine Miller, OLVM
July 28, 2013*

*Sr. Irene DeMeulenaere, OLVM
August 17, 2013*

*Sr. Martha Wordeman, OLVM
September 4, 2013*



Photo courtesy of Archdiocese of Chicago Office for Immigrant Affairs and Education

New lay leaders in the Pastoral Migratoria program in Chicago receive a blessing during a special service. The program is one of hundreds that have been supported over the 40 years of OLVM Resource Sharing.

Resource Sharing leaves a legacy

By Paul Siegfried
OLVM Communications Coordinator

Forty years ago, Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters had just celebrated the golden anniversary of their founding by Father John Joseph Sigstein in 1922. Over those years, the mission of the Catechists and Sisters had taken them into the biggest cities and the smallest villages to reach out to those in need, especially those who had been marginalized.

The Victory Noll Sisters had also been faithful stewards of their own resources over the first 50 years of their existence, and the time had come to put those resources to use. As General Chapter approached in 1974, it was decided to create a group that would review requests and issue grants of financial assistance to organizations and programs that serve those in need.

“There were so many needs we saw out there, and we, ourselves, could not individually respond to those needs. But we could enable others to do so. That was the idea of the Resource Sharing Program. We could make funds available to groups who were doing what we do, and want to do, but could not longer do,” says OLVM Sister Francesca McGarry. “We had always been about having ‘boots on the ground,’ and we had to extend ourselves through other’s boots. We saw that as a wonderful way for them to carry on our charism, to express our concern for those suffering from poverty and oppression.”

The work of OLVM’s Resource Sharing Board is in its final year. It is being replaced with the John Joseph Sigstein Foundation, which in many ways will continue the work that Resource Sharing has done since 1974.

“The vision actually came from Sr. Jeanette (Halbach),” says Sr. Francesca. “She had the idea of what we could do. She felt strongly about sharing our resources with those who suffer from poverty and oppression. It truly is our basic charism, and she thought that we

Sigstein Foundation to continue sharing ways

There may be a few changes, but the basic goal of the newly-formed John Joseph Sigstein Foundation will be the same as it has been with the OLVM Resource Sharing program.

Programs need to be something that the Sisters have been, or would have been involved with, and they stay true to the charism of the Victory Noll Sisters. They must reach out to the needs of the marginalized through programs that empower them and that develop leadership skills so that programs can become self-sustaining.

There will be a few changes in structure and framework in the creation of the foundation, which will expand on the sharing of the resources of OLVM.

There will still be a board that includes OLVM Sisters Jeanette Halbach, Guadalupe Aguilar and Rose Ann Kaiser. There are also Victory Noll Associates on the board. The board reports to the OLVM Leadership Team through liaison Sr. Leora Linnenkugel.

The foundation is expected to be ready to distribute grants by the 2014-15 fiscal year. ❖

should be able — in some practical way — to assist their needs.”

Sr. Jeanette, along former Victory Noll Sister Rosemary Hart, put together the original proposal that was presented at that 1974 Chapter.

“They did this beautiful proposal and submitted it the general Chapter, and it received wide acclamation. It was strongly supported from the very beginning, and it has continued to be strongly sup-

ported,” says Sr. Francesca, who was also involved in the early work of putting the Resource Sharing Program together.

For much of their existence, assistance from the Sisters meant direct involvement — well-worn shoe leather, knocks on doors, or gathering children in a run-down building to teach the Word of God.

But one tenet of the OLV M mission is to promote the development of leaders, and through Resource Sharing, the Sisters were able to find organizations that matched their own charism in many ways, and support those groups. They looked for programs that benefitted the poor, offered self-help and educational opportunities, and helped to develop leaders and empower individuals.

Resource Sharing wasn't just about giving people a check. Financial support could be used for operating expenses, but they could also be used to support human resources, such as paying the salary of a program director. Requests for resources had to be made by a Sister who had direct connection with the organization or program, and in many cases Sisters would have some level of involvement with the work done by the program.

“A Victory Noll Sister would see the need, and then would work with a group in that community that could respond to the need. The Sister would serve as a contact person as they developed a plan to respond to that specific need,” says Sr. Francesca. “She helped them get the proposal written and made sure all the requirements were met. We always go and have an on-site visit with the people to see the program and give support and encouragement.”

The idea was to provide funding and support to programs with the goal that they would become self-sufficient.

“If we saw a program that couldn't carry on beyond our funding, I don't think we would fund it. Most times it is to help a program get started, or to maintain itself once it gets started,” says Sr. Francesca. “As new needs emerge, we've tried to respond to those. But they've also been those that address the needs of the poor and those suffering from poverty and oppression. That stays at the heart of the program.”

The Sisters have averaged around 20 programs funded each year since the start of Resource Sharing, equalling hundreds of programs supported and thousands of individuals impacted.

The support has even reached beyond the borders of the United States into places like Bolivia and Haiti. The program in Haiti is one that particularly sticks with Sr. Francesca.

“It helps the poor mountain farmers in the country to increase their own leadership roles in the production and sale of their coffee, and the replanting of coffee and shade trees to re-forest the mountainside. It is funded through the parish, and they are doing marvelous things for the empowerment of the farmers,” she says.

While the Sisters remain humble about the work they do, Sr. Francesca says they can't deny the difference that Resource Sharing has made in many lives.

“The fact that so many people have been empowered, trained to be leaders and take charge of their own lives, that is a thrilling part of Resource Sharing. We see so many of these programs continuing to flourish, and they got started with a little funding from our Resource Sharing. It's a thrill to see that,” she says. “The greatest thing is that our charism continues to live through these programs and has touched the lives of the thousands and thousands of people who have gone through them. That's part of the legacy.” ❖

Immigrant-to-Immigrant Ministry in Chicago creating national model

One of the most successful programs supported by OLV M Resource Sharing is one of the more recent.

In Chicago, the Pastoral Migratoria program is reaching out to the large number of Hispanic parishes in the city with a lay leadership ministry which train leaders in the parish communities for them to connect their faith and their life and allows them to respond with their gifts and their time.

The program, which translates to “Immigrant-to-Immigrant Ministry,” meshes with the mission of OLV M, says Elena Segura, Director of the Office for Immigrant Affairs and Immigrant Education for the Archdiocese of Chicago.



Elena Segura

“The Victory Noll Sisters are champions of lay leadership,” she says. “When I told Sr. Beaty (Haines) about this, her eyes were shining.”

OLV M Sisters first moved to Chicago in 1986 and have been involved with the archdiocese since then, including the creation of Julia Center, a neighborhood outreach center in the West Town neighborhood of Chicago. Planning of the Pastoral Migratoria started in 2008, and the program came before the OLV M Resource Sharing board. The first year it was supported by the Sisters was 2010.

Those in the program are trained for six weeks. They receive Catholic Social Teaching training and connect each principle of that with very specific civic topics.

“After the formation training they are introduced in their parish community as leaders, as ministers, and their ministries begin to give information on immigrant issues, not just immigration,” says Segura. “It could be on labor, domestic violence, housing, substance abuse, and so on. They also bring in resources to the community and also accompany immigrants in different situations as they need that help.”

Segura says the ministry is unique in the Catholic Church in the United States as far as working with immigrants.

“We have 350 parishes in the archdiocese, and 140 of them are Hispanic congregations. In one Sunday, I can reach out to from 10 to 15 thousand people. In the last three weeks, we handed out 15,000 manuals for them to be prepared to get their driver's licenses,” she says. “The beautiful thing, and the Sisters know this, is that we are connecting faith and action. The action is to respond to immediate needs with information and resources, but at the same time working for justice through advocacy, being involved with labor rights issues. Right now, immigration reform is the highest priority.”

With the success of the program in Chicago, Segura is developing a national model and has traveled around the country to talk about the program.

“That's how the Victory Noll Sisters are making history with us,” says Segura. “Because we have institutionalized this ministry, it will continue to sustain itself. The lay leaders will train the next group of leaders. The idea is that we are just doing what the Gospel has called us to do, to give of ourselves, to respond to the needs of our parish community, to be engaged in transforming society while we are transforming ourselves.” ❖

Leap of Faith

Bolivian Sister leaves her native country to find her mission path

By Paul Siegfried

OLVM Communications Coordinator

During her discernment process in deciding whether she would become a member of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, Lupita Aguilar-Huanca read and studied the stories of the first members of the community from the 1920s.

Back in her home in Bolivia, Lupita felt a connection to those early Sisters. Joining OLVM would mean her own step into the unknown, her own leap of faith.

“They were very courageous women,” says Lupita. “They went to places they never thought about and just had to trust in God. Sometimes I picture myself coming here. I had to leave my family, my friends and my country to follow Jesus’ call in my community.”

Victory Noll Sisters had been in Bolivia since 1968, and Sister Lupita got to know them through the parish in Oruro. She bonded with Sr. Adela Amoroso-Medrano, who was also a native of Oruro.

Lupita helped out the catechists with confirmations, first Communion and marriages, among other activities. She lived with Sr. Adela, Sr. Carolyn Ortega and Sr. Mary Edna Butler for three months before she decided to join the community on February 13, 1999. She made first vows in 2002 and in 2003 it was decided she should head to Huntington, Ind., to meet the Sisters at Victory Noll.

“They said the Sisters here wanted to get to know us in person, not just from a picture,” says Sr. Lupita. “Going to the United States wasn’t really in my mind. We wanted to stay here (in Bo-



Sr. Lupita (left) consults with supervising nurse Amy Yoakum at The Heritage in Huntington where Sr. Lupita works as a certified nursing assistant.

livia). It was my first experience in a plane. It was very different. The people were very different, the culture was very different.”

After making her final vows in 2009, the time came for Sr. Lupita to find her own vocation path, another discernment process to see where her individual mission would take her.

She had been helping Sisters on the third floor of the Holy Family Building at Victory Noll, assisting nurses in the full-time care unit.

“Sr. Lucy Marie (Vega) asked me once if I considered going into nursing,” says Sr. Lupita. “I told her I wasn’t thinking about that, but she said I had a good way of working with the older people. I asked the nurses what I needed to do to become a CNA (certified nursing assistant) and they told me the classes I needed to take.”

Despite struggling with the English language, she passed her



tests, earned her certification as a CNA and began work at The Heritage, a retirement/rehabilitation facility in Huntington.

“I am very happy to do this job. It’s not a job; it’s a vocation for me,” says Sr. Lupita. “When I was working with the Sisters in Bolivia, I saw how they worked with the people on a personal level and that made an impact on me. I think I do that in the work I am doing now. I’m very fortunate. This community has given me a lot, with all the prayers and support of the Sisters here.”

Some residents at The Heritage know she is a Victory Noll Sister; some don’t. But Sr. Lupita finds time every day to live out her OLVM mission.

“One way or another, we are still teaching how God loves us and in that way our mission continues,” she says. “A lady the other day was upset and afraid before going to the heart doctor, and I told her that she

just has to trust in God and put everything in His hands that He would work through the doctors.”

Kim Davis, director of nursing at The Heritage, says Sr. Lupita brings a different perspective to her position.

“She has that genuine, caring attitude. She has that extra loving touch that is hard to find in a CNA,” says Davis. “We see a lot of end of life here, and people with a faith background have a different understanding about what happens after death. It’s a more peaceful process.”

Sr. Lupita says her work and mission have also provided her an opportunity to grow.

“I get as much from them as I give to them. I am always learning,” she says. “I’m learning to be patient. You have to have a lot of patience and love with them. It can be difficult at times, but you still love them and care for them.” ❖

Programs empower Hispanic community

By Paul Siegfried
OLVM Communications
Coordinator

When Andrea Rodriguez retired in 2010 after 30 years as a public school teacher and administrator, she had a plan to leave her home in Michigan for warmer weather, do some traveling and maybe write a children's book.

The plan lasted for a month, when Rodriguez realized she still had more to offer.

A 30-year Covenant Associate with Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, Rodriguez talked with Sisters Rita Musante and Rose Ann Kaiser, and she decided to submit a pair of grant requests to the OLVM Resource Sharing Board for programs that would help in her Lansing, Mich., community.



Andrea Rodriguez

Her grants were accepted and the result was the creation of the Hispanic Women in the Network (WIN), and TECH en la Casa (Technology in the Home).

WIN is a re-boot of a program that first came about in the 1980s, designed to promote and support Latina leadership. Started in 2010, they help to further the progress of Hispanic women through communication, cooperation, education and leadership development.

Rodriguez launched TECH en la Casa in 2011 to provide the local Hispanic parents and adults with access to computers and training to help families develop skills and empower them to further pursue their education, to effectively communicate with their children's schools or pursue better-paying jobs.

"One of the many things I have learned from my interaction with the Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters is that if you see a problem, you just don't sit around waiting for someone else to come up with a solution," says Rodriguez. "As a Covenant Associate, I support the mission, spirit and charisma of OLVM. Being involved with



Photos courtesy of Andrea Rodriguez

Above, Members of Hispanic Women in the Network (WIN) discuss topics at the WIN Latina Summit 2013. **Right,** a woman is helped with her computer skills as part of a class by TECH en la Casa. The two Lansing, Mich., programs are supported by OLVM Resource Sharing.



Victory Noll Sisters as a Covenant Associate and participating in Mission Groups, Community Days and other leadership meetings, has served in shaping the model of collaborative leadership development for WIN and TECH en la Casa."

Working with Michigan State University and the Cristo Rey Community, WIN has expanded statewide in Michigan, empowering Latinas and developing actions to change the situations which affect families in poverty situations, says Rodriguez. Members meet for the WIN Latina Summit each year to map out a course of action to effect social change in the coming year.

"The program has definitely provided indirect services to the poor through outreach, leadership training opportunities at no cost, and involvement in decision-making forums which directly have an impact on the condition of their lives," she says. "Currently, the strongest services have been the validation of one's voice, the emotional support system and the access to current information."

TECH en la Casa used its grant from

OLVM to create two bilingual basic computer courses. It has allowed a way for Spanish-speaking parents and adults to overcome fear or anxiety to learn to use technology.

Rodriguez says the program draws from the words of OLVM founder Fr. John Joseph Sigstein who promoted meeting modern needs with modern means.

"They are provided with a tool to access many community resources, to be informed and to have a voice," she says. "Leadership is being developed through enriching and educating adults and students with the capacity to utilize technology for their own betterment. Parents are learning how to operate computers and make use of the software programs which empowers the people to penetrate a multitude of academic, employment, health and financial resources." ❖



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Visions FROM THE VICTORY NOLL ARCHIVES



Sharing of resources by the OLVM Sisters goes all the way back to their founding. Those early Sisters didn't have very many resources during those days, but they shared what they had with the local community. This picture from the area around Anton Chico, N.M. shows a Victory Noll Sister sharing some food with two young girls in the village. ❖