

NEWSLETTER OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY MISSIONARY SISTERS

Visions

March 2018

www.olvm.org

IMMIGRATION

**Standing with
our brothers
and sisters**





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

A banner welcoming all visitors hangs on the Saint Joseph Building on the Victory Noll campus in Huntington.

PHOTO BY PAUL SIEGFRIED

Standing with our brothers and sisters of all races and nationalities has been a part of our charism from the very beginning, although we never really thought much about the color of anyone's skin, where they came from, or what language they spoke.

However, with our country increasingly divided, it has become even more important to stand with immigrants, refugees and the young "Dreamers" who know no other country but the U.S. as their home.

PERSPECTIVES ALONG THE JOURNEY

This issue of *Visions* focuses on the ways we continue to work with and minister to those who come to this country. The first is a reflection by Sister Lucille Martinez on our stance for Congress to draft just and responsible immigration legislation that respects the dignity of the human person. We also highlight Casa San Jose, a community resource center in Pittsburgh, PA, which works to meet the needs of an immigrant population in new and creative ways, and with some traditional programs as well. Casa San Jose is a grant recipient of the John J. Sigstein Foundation. We recognize two of our sisters for the work they are doing in the area of immigration. Finally, we have a few milestones to celebrate. ❖

OLVM LEADERSHIP TEAM

Sister Mary Jo Nelson,
Sister Lucille Martinez, *Sister Ginger Downey*

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Welcoming all to the table

VN Sisters call for immigration policy that respects dignity

By Sister Lucille Martinez, OLVM Vice President

Throughout our missionary life as Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, we have been blessed to work with and among God's People. In the 90-plus years of existence, the Victory Noll Sisters have been blessed and evangelized by the poor with whom they ministered.



Sr. Lucille Martinez,
OLVM Vice President

Throughout the United States, from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean, from the north and south, we stood side by side with our migrant brothers and sisters as they worshiped in our churches, ministered in our parishes, served as catechists in our religious education programs, and were a significant part of our local communities.

It never occurred to us to question their legality or their presence in our neighborhoods. Our stance was one of trying to live out the Gospel values of inclusion, hospitality, and unity among all God's people.

The Church's entire teaching rests on ancient foundations. The Old Testament is clear:

"You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you, you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt" (Lev 19:34)

Jesus himself was a refugee on the flight into Egypt (cf MT 2:13-23). We know God stands on the side of migrants, and *"is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them"* (Heb 11:16)

Every human being is made to the image of God and confers a dignity that cannot be given by a passport or immigration status. Bishop Mark J. Seitz, Bishop of El Paso, says "On account of this dignity, the Church has long recognized the first right of persons not to migrate, but to stay in their community of origin. But when that has become impossible, the Church also recognized the right to migrate."

This past year we have been subjected to negative narratives that paint a derogatory picture of migrants as terrorists, as creating an environment of chaos and violence and unsafety. The contributions of migrants has been belittled or completely ignored. Our Catholic bishops have wholeheartedly expressed their support in any effort

that will further develop our nation's laws concerning the migration of people to our country. We all agree that presently our current laws and immigration policies are inadequate to protect the rights and dignity of immigrants and their families. We are fully aware and agree that building walls, deploying a mass deportation force and militarizing our border are not long term solutions to the challenges of migration. Only comprehensive immigration reform will bring lasting solutions. Comprehensive immigration reform is long overdue.

There is no doubt many Victory Noll Sisters who have worked in the West and Southwest can recall the horror stories shared by men and women, many with children, about their experience of crossing the border. We have listened to countless Dreamers, asylum seekers, and migrants share their stories of migration. We often ask, why would anyone endanger their life or the life of their child to come to America? The answer is always the same, they come with hopes for a better future for their children and their families. They risk crossing the border because they find themselves escaping the violence, poverty and persecution of their own countries and look to us in the United States as a place of safety, refuge and a land of opportunity.

As Victory Noll Sisters we continue to support, encourage, and assist our migrant brothers and sisters in many ways: we write letters to our congresspersons, we pray for the needs of all and we sponsor Centers where the newly arrived or those who have been in the USA for many years, come to learn English, receive citizenship classes, receive food and clothing from the pantries and are sometimes provided transportation to medical appointments. Know your rights trainings are offered and new citizens register to vote. Our Centers provide a safe place where the migrants can gather to socialize, where they are respected and acknowledged as persons made in the image of God. We are grateful for the many staff and volunteers who make it possible for the Centers to remain viable.

As I write this reflection our elected officials continue to debate the issue of immigration reform. We hope and pray our elected officials will listen to the cry of the poor and decide on a comprehensive immigration policy that will bring people out of the shadows and provide hope for the next generation of Americans who will help to make America great again, a place where there is room for everyone at the table. ❖



Photo provided

Representative from Casa San Jose in Pittsburgh attend a march in Washington, D.C., in support of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) immigration policy.

Finding a home and a voice

Outreach center helps meet needs of immigrant population

By Anne Caffee
Casa San Jose

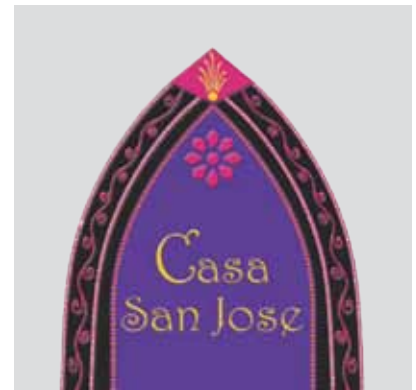
Caterina walked a dark, deserted beach with her mother to cross the U.S.-Mexican border at age 11. Cristina’s family home was threatened by a gang brandishing machetes. Ramon came to the U.S. from Guatemala on a farmworker’s visa and discovered that his employer had drastically lowered the promised wages of his job, threatening deportation if they questioned him.

These people and thousands like them come to the U.S. to flee crushing poverty and unemployment,

and almost-daily threats of violence to home and family.

For those who emigrate to Pittsburgh to make a new life, and find the “House of St. Joseph” – Casa San Jose - find a friendly voice in their native language, and a community of support. One immigrant from Mexico expressed his gratitude in simple terms: “If it wasn’t for the help of Sister Janice and the people at Casa San Jose, we probably wouldn’t be alive today.”

Casa San Jose was started in response to the growing needs of the Latino population in Pittsburgh. Its director, Sister Janice Vanderneck, CSJ, a Sister of St. Joseph, is a



Casa San Jose, a community resource center which advocates for Latinos and promotes their self-sufficient integration, serves more than 1,500 clients in 31 southwestern Pennsylvania ZIP codes.

OUTREACH MINISTRIES



Photos provided

Above and below, Casa San Jose offers several afterschool programs for students in grades from kindergarten through high school.

former educator, fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, who has served as a missionary in Brazil. In 2003, she started at the Latino Catholic Social Ministry Office at a city church, and the cases came pouring in. “I sure didn’t know a lot about immigration law,” she recalls. “One of the first cases I worked on was a mother who told me she was denied medical assistance for her child, who was born here in this country. That set me on a crash course on learning what undocumented immigrants’ life is like. That started me on advocating.”

It soon became clear to the Sisters of St. Joseph that Sister Janice’s greater service to the community would be to start a program to assist this special — and growing — subset of Pittsburgh’s immigrant community.

With the support of the Sisters and members of the Hispanic community, Casa San Jose finally opened its doors in the basement of St. Mark’s Lutheran Church (who allowed them to use it for free) in August 2013.

In late 2016, Casa staff located a larger office in Pittsburgh’s Beechview neighborhood, home to many Latino families.

Casa began its initial community outreach with an after-school program for Latino children in grades K and 1, and at public library sites for older students. They have since expanded to robust afterschool academic, social, cultural, and ESL support programs



Photo provided

Director of Youth Programs Katie Campagna (right), takes girls from the “Bridges to the Future” program to meet Rapunzel at a local event.

for growing numbers of Latino youth in several cross cultural programs: Jóvenes Con Propósito (“Youth with a Purpose”) for high school students, Puentes hacia del Futuro (“Bridges to the Future”), a Saturday program for youth ages 8 through 14, held in a nearby neighborhood, and two other afterschool programs for middle schoolers and K through 2 students. Significant domestic abuse also exists in the community, says Sister Janice. Casa San Jose assists children and adults in need of legal protection.

In a time of stepped-up deportation in many U. S. cities, Casa has sponsored numerous “Know Your Rights” sessions for immigrants to provide clear answers on immigrant rights under U.S. law, including how to file a Power of Attorney document to become a child’s legal guardian should a parent face deportation. In addition, Community Organizers Monica Ruiz and Jeimy Ibarra helm an emergency ‘rapid response’ team which links those in imminent danger of deportation with legal assistance and support - on the spot.

Most of their work as community organizers, says Ms. Ruiz, focuses on leadership building among high school youth, teaching the “Dreamers” - those brought to the U.S. illegally by their parents as young children - how to organize for change. “Many students are in mixed immigration status families,” she explains. “Helping them understand what that means has inspired them to take the lead on many organizing efforts.”

The six-person Casa staff



Photo provided

Casa San Jose has sponsored several leadership sessions to provide immigrants with an understanding of their rights under United States laws.

includes Sister Janice, along with community organizers Ms. Ruiz and Ms. Ibarra, two service coordinators, Pilar Garman and Veronica Jenkins, funded through a Department of Human Services grant, Sister Valerie Zottola, CSJ, Casa’s volunteer coordinator, and Katie Campagna, director of youth education, provided through the Change A Heart Franciscan Volunteer Program, a 12-month service experience for young adults to live simply in community while serving a vulnerable population.

An active cadre of 150 volunteers including 15 bilingual advocates have donated upwards of 600 hours since last summer alone, assist with scheduling, answering phones, organizing files and accompanying clients to medical, school, legal and

other social service appointments.

Ms. Ruiz, a Latina and a U.S. citizen, is clear on her commitment to the mission. “I cannot allow things to continue the way they are,” she says. “I want my kids to grow up in an environment where they are not being harassed by law enforcement, where they can go to college and be anything they want to be. I find hope in my children’s future.” ❖

Casa San Jose website:
casasanjose.org

On Facebook:
facebook.com/casasanjoseph/

NOTE: Casa San Jose is one of the agencies receiving grants from OLVN’s John Joseph Sigstein Foundation.

Sr. Francisca honored for her volunteer service



OLVM Sister Francisca Olvera was recognized by the State Bar of California for providing pro bono legal services.

Sr. Francisca volunteered her time to the poor and disadvantaged in the San Diego area, and was honored with the Wiley W. Manuel Certificate for her work. It is the second time she has received the honor.

She is shown at left wearing the vest she wears as a volunteer with the Veterans' Administration in San Diego. ❖

FROM DEATH TO NEW LIFE



Sister Martin Ksycki
December 10, 2017
Saint Anne Communities
at Victory Noll
Huntington, IN



Sister Rosanne Palmer
February 20, 2018
Saint Anne Communities
at Victory Noll
Huntington, IN



Sister John Francis Radler
February 24, 2018
Saint Anne Communities
at Victory Noll
Huntington, IN

One-woman show highlights Chittister's impact

Joan Chittister is a woman for all seasons. With 60 books, 12 honorary degrees, leadership positions too numerous to count, and a global following, this revered author and speaker has had a lot to say about peace, justice, women's issues and the role of religious life in the modern world.

She certainly has created a presence. And Teri Bays, her disciple, "becomes" her to demonstrate through Chittister's words—and her own—the profound connection between them. She intensifies Chittister's impact and makes it at once personal and universal. The performance is deeply affecting.

As Bays moves from left to right on the stage, we hear each woman in various times and places, and wit-

Joan Chittister: The Play

7 p.m. July 20, 2018
OLVM Chapel
Huntington, IN

ness the strands of experience that connect them.

Bays' performance is delivered with a heavy hand—Chittister's compelling words—but also with a light touch—expressing the great good humor of both of these talented, courageous and resilient women.

Prophets and poets both, they are leading the new way, using public settings, churches, lecture halls and stages to have their voices heard, urging people, as Chittister says, "to live faithfully and to love radically," to be public thinkers so as to inspire



openness to possibility, resisting retreat to past ways.

Billed as "a one woman play for all women," Joan Chittister: Her Story, is so much more.

It is a play for men too, and especially for those who wear clerical collars; it is for all those who work for change in the church and more, for those who share faith in humanity, peace, spirituality and common purpose. ❖

Neighborhood empowerment

Casa de las Comunidades offers skills, education

Casa de las Comunidades

Casa de las Comunidades, a Catholic Worker Community in Albuquerque, N.M., is a supported ministry of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters. They accompany persons and families who are oppressed, marginalized and alienated by a competitive and individualistic society. Inspired by the efforts of social activist Dorothy Day, they embrace all differences of race, culture or religion as a wealth of humanity that is to be shared. They are especially called to be of assistance to immigrant families, to women and to youth. OLVN Sister Teresa Aparicio writes about work at the center.



“We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.”
Dorothy Day



Photos provided

Neighborhood women construct piñatas (above) and make jewelry that later will be sold at a local arts fair in Albuquerque. The projects help the women learn about self-employment and promotion.



We have a group of women who learn crafts, such as jewelry, piñatas, paper flowers and art; I personally love this group, because in addition to learning new things, women forget about the stress of their daily lives and get skills that can help them improve their incomes. Leadership and a self-employment mindset is what the group seeks to introduce. Last December we took women to sell their piñatas and jewelry to an arts and crafts fair in a local elementary school. They can also promote and sell their products with family and friends through electronic media such as Facebook.

SUPPORTED MINISTRIES



Antonio Rocha was born in Durango, Mexico. He came to the US looking for a better life and quickly found a job as a construction worker. While working on a second floor, he fell and hit his back against the ground and against the hammer he was carrying on his waist. This caused severe damage to his spinal column and now he is in a wheelchair as he is unable to move his legs.

Antonio joined our community in May 2017. He started attending our English Second Language sessions and as soon as he found out about our computer classes, he joined the group and has gone from knowing nothing to being an expert in computer programs such as Microsoft's Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Antonio is, by far, the most advanced student in our computer classes, and this is mostly due to the enthusiasm he brings to every session. He would like to learn more design programs like AutoCAD y and Rhino.

Casa de las Comunidades is served by volunteers dedicated to share their skills and are facilitators of the Casa programs. These programs are intended to promote the well-being of the families of Casa. The regularly scheduled programs are food distribution, spirituality/evangelization, ESL Classes and a variety of other activities. We are very thankful to our volunteer community for their superior support that they provide us. On February 10th, we celebrated the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. ❖



Photos provided

Volunteers at Casa de las Comunidades enjoy an appreciation dinner in February. Volunteers give their time and talents to assist in programs and classes at the neighborhood center.



Jubilees 2018

Eight members of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters are celebrating Jubilees in 2018.



**Sister Mary Joan
Ginsterblum**

Sister Mary Joan Ginsterblum, a native of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, celebrates 80 years as a Victory Noll Sister. She joined OLVM on January 25, 1939. Her ministry work has taken her to California, Colorado, Utah, Oregon, Arizona, Florida and Indiana. She has served as a catechist, a physical therapist and worked in hair care. She also worked as the caretaker of the natural areas on the Victory Noll campus and she carved the wooden peace pole that now stands in the Miami Memorial Peace Garden. In addition, she has carved several smaller items such as birds that she has given away to friends, family and visitors. Many items are still found throughout the campus.



Sister Joan Arnold

Sister Joan Arnold is celebrating 70 years with OLVM, having joined on October 27, 1948. The native of Lebanon, Pennsylvania, has been missioned in Texas, Indiana, Michigan, California, Ohio, Wisconsin, Utah, New Mexico, Illinois and West Virginia. She has been a catechist and served on the Leadership Team. She spent nine years as the General Treasurer. She served on the Resource Sharing Board, and has spent many years as the Peace and Justice Coordinator for OLVM.



Sister Monica Haines

Sr. Monica Haines, a native of Goshen, Indiana, joined OLVM on October 27, 1948, and celebrates her 70th jubilee in 2018. She has served in California, Michigan, Indiana, New Mexico, Texas and Illinois. She has worked as a catechist, a director of religious education, pastoral minister, adult educator and personal needs assistant.

Sr. Mary Alice Murphy, from Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, celebrates 70 years after she joined on October 27, 1948. Her ministry work has taken her to California, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Texas, Colorado. She has served as a catechist, a vocation director, and served on the Leadership Team. She has spent nearly 50 years in Colorado as a social worker, including Catholic Community Services and director of Care Housing. In 2009, the Sister Mary Alice Murphy Center for Hope opened in Fort Collins to serve the homeless and near-homeless.

“The saying I like to use is ‘God is Faithful.’ I have loved being a missionary and it has brought so many different people into my life and stretched me to grow. Only God could accomplish what has been done and like St. Mother Theresa, I have only been a pencil in God’s hand.”



**Sister Mary Alice
Murphy**



Sister Paula Wellnitz

Sr. Paula Wellnitz is celebrating her 70th jubilee, joining OLVN on October 27, 1948. A native of Elgin, Illinois, Sr. Paula has been missioned in California, Colorado, Tennessee, Washington, South Dakota and Utah. She has been a catechist and a mental health counselor. She worked in family enrichment, social work, pastoral work and with Catholic Charities.

“It was God’s choice, not mine, to become a Sister. Although, as I lived it and could participate in the life and work of the OLVN Sisters, it was the sort of group I think fits me.”

Sr. Clarita Trujillo, a native of El Rito, N.M., celebrates her 60th jubilee in 2018. She joined OLVN on September 6, 1958. Her mission history has included work in California, Texas, Colorado, Indiana, New Mexico and in Bolivia. She has served as a catechist and worked in campus ministry and pastoral ministry. She has been involved in social work with the Mexican-American Social Justice Movement, and annually traveled with a delegation to Nicaragua to assist with an eye clinic bringing services to the poor population in that country.



Sister Clarita Trujillo

“My life as a Victory Noll Sister has been an adventure in the company of so many people who have enriched, fulfilled, and perhaps even directed me as I lived and worked among God’s people. I tried to be accepting of all who crossed my path. I learned much as I interacted with the young adults, the old and with children. I thank my sisters, my family and friends for the support and love that I always receive. I trust in God’s generosity and boundless blessings.”



Sister Teri Nederhiser

Sr. Teri Nederhiser, from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, joined OLVN September 5, 1958, celebrating 60 years as a Victory Noll Sister. She was been missioned in Indiana, Arizona, California, Texas and Iowa. She has worked as a catechist, medical technologist, caregiver, director of religious education and worked with clothing and food banks. She also served on the Leadership Team.

Sr. Teresa Aparicio-Cervantes, a native of Zacapu Michoacan, Mexico, will celebrate her 50th jubilee in 2018. She has been missioned in Mexico, Texas and New Mexico. She has worked as a pastoral assistant, and has worked in community development as director of Casa de las Comunidades in Albuquerque.



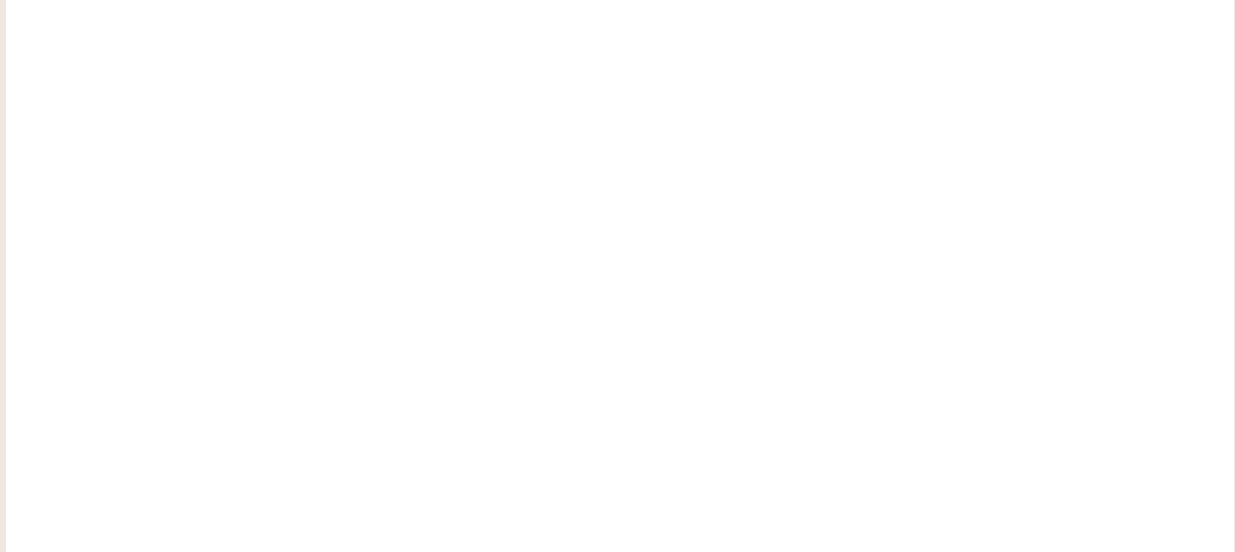
Sister Teresa Aparicio-Cervantes

“My immigrant roots have helped me to understand my Christian vocation, and to pass on God’s mission to all. This vocational call inspires me to be the ecclesial voice and to walk with solidarity among the suffering of all the immigrants in the world.” ❖



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Visions FROM THE VICTORY NOLL ARCHIVES



When migrant workers made their annual trek into Indiana for the farm harvest season, Victory Noll Sisters were there to provide religious education and offer social services. The problem was that the only free time the workers had was at night after the day's work was done. In this photo, Sr. Blanche Marie Richardson gives an evening lesson to a group of the migrant workers in Pierceton, Indiana. ❖