

NEWSLETTER OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY MISSIONARY SISTERS

Visions

SPRING 2013

www.olvm.org

New Mexico

**The OLVM mission
began here and
continues today**

**Victory Noll
Sister Elena Carney
in Villanueva**



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:

- Promote the Word of God
- Stand in solidarity with the poor
- Foster Justice
- Promote the development of leaders

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Eight OLVM Sisters celebrating milestones

Recently Paul Siegfried, Editor of "Visions," visited our Sisters and Associates ministering in New Mexico. So this edition of "Visions" reminds us of our founding and history, since our first sisters, Julia Doyle and Marie Benes, and lay associate, Will Fry, initiated the congregation's missionary journey in New Mexico. Also featured are stories of Sisters and Associates who are presently living in New Mexico and witnessing to the Gospel, by responding to unmet needs in a variety of places and situations.

PERSPECTIVES ALONG THE JOURNEY

Among the eight Sisters celebrating Jubilees in 2013 is Sr. Carlota Baca who was born in Peña Blanca, N.M. At 104 years of age, she is celebrating her 85th anniversary as a Victory Noll Sister.

Under "OLVM News and Notes" we are happy to share a new Victory Noll ministry by one of our Sisters at Casa Cornelia Law Center in San Diego. It is a wonderful example of networking and collaboration to provide quality legal services to victims of human and civil rights violations and is an expression of our commitment to foster justice as an integral part of mission.

May springtime, with its signs of new life and the celebration of the Easter Season, be a source of renewed hope for all of Creation. ♦

OLVM LEADERSHIP TEAM

*Sister Beatrice Haines Sister Judith Ann Turnock
Sr. Leora Linnenkugel Sister George Dowdy*

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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SAN DIEGO, CALIF.

Olvera working with immigrant children

Sister Francisca Olvera has started a new ministry as a volunteer with Casa Cornelia Law Center (CCLC) in San Diego.

CCLC is a pro-bono law center founded by the Infant Jesus Society to serve the immigrant community in San Diego and Imperial Valley counties. Sr. Francisca assists in the Unaccompanied Children Department. These are children detained by United States Border Patrol and taken to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement Department (ICE) Center in San Diego. There are two such centers in the city.

Sr. Francisca calls the Immigration Federal Court to check if CCLC clients have their court hearing appointments. She calls the clients at the detention center or at their home if they have been reunited with their sponsors, to let them know date, time, and place of their appointments. She also assists in other office work like mailing of documents and putting data in the clients files.

"In our OLVM Mission Statement we say that we are committed to foster justice and to stand in solidarity with the poor," says Sr. Francisca. "My service at CCLC promotes justice and serves the poor. The undocumented immigrant children are the most vulnerable because they are literally abandoned by all systems, especially their own families. Many of them come to this country looking for a mother that left them behind



OLVM Sister Francisca Olvera (right) discusses a child immigrant case with supervisor Bianca Smoker.

with grandparents or abusive fathers or other relatives that no longer can take care of them in their countries."

In her previous ministries, Sr. Francisca worked as a chaplain at an ICE detention center in El Centro, Calif. Also in El Centro, she was involved with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) working with abused and neglected children the state had removed from their homes.

Last year she was preparing to serve as a hospital chaplain at the San Diego Children's Hospital. However, when that program closed last summer, Sr. Francisca began looking for a new ministry and found her way to CCLC.

"I believe God is guiding me to serve these children," says Sr. Francisca. "I am happy to be part of the organizations that provide these services to the most vulnerable in our world."

HUNTINGTON, IND.

Jubilarians to be honored at Victory Noll

Eight Victory Noll Sisters will celebrate Jubilees this year. There will be a special Mass May 24 at Archbishop Noll Memorial Chapel to honor the Jubilarians on the anniversary of their entrance to OLVM.

Sr. Carlota Baca, at the age of 104, celebrates her 85th year at Victory Noll, entering October 28 1928. Sr. Mary Joan Ginsterblum and Sr. Justine Kiefer will have their 75th Jubilee and Sr. Mary Frances Bartsch her 70th.

Three Sisters will celebrate 60 years, including Sr. Kathleen Cummings, Sr. Regina Marie Morrissey and Sr. Christopher Rudell.

Sr. Helen Rodriguez-Marin will celebrate her 50th Jubilee on August 3 at Victory Noll.

For details on all the Jubilarians' mission work and mission history, turn to Page 15 in this issue. ♦

In Memoriam

*Sr. Gertrude Sullivan, OLVM
November 6, 2012*

*Sr. Mary Karl, OLVM
January 28, 2013*

*Sr. Mary Edna Butler, OLVM
January 30, 2013*

*Sr. Carolyn Ortega, OLVM
March 18, 2013*

*Sr. Barbara McCord, OLVM
March 20, 2013*

*Sr. Delores McGinley, OLVM
April 1, 2013*

*Sr. Carmela Farley, OLVM
April 11, 2013*



Enchanted

Sr. Elena Carney falls in love with the land and its people

Victory Noll Sister Elena Carney has spent the past 50 years in New Mexico, including her most recent ministry as parish life coordinator for Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Villanueva, where she has been since 2000.

**By Paul Siegfried
OLVM Communications Coordinator**

Her mission assignment was sending her to New Mexico, but upon arriving in the state Victory Noll Sister Elena Carney was wondering what she had gotten herself into. She had grown up in rural Iowa and wasn't quite prepared for this kind of wide-open emptiness.

"I was like 'Oh my, what's happening here?'" she says. "Sister Martin (Ksycki) and I came at the same time, and we were assigned to do teacher training in Chama, which is up north. We were on our way there and went right through the village and didn't even recognize it as a town. I can still remember saying 'Where are the people?'"

Almost 50 years later, Carney couldn't imagine being anywhere else.

She has served all across the state of New Mexico from the city of Santa Fe to the Native American pueblos. She has been parish life coordinator in the remote village of Villanueva since 2000, following Victory Noll Sisters Elaine Sullivan, Clarita Trujillo and Mary Adele Massaro in the parish.

Carney works in the same area where the first two mem-

bers of the Society of Missionary Catechists of Our Blessed Lady of Victory were sent by founder Father John Joseph Sigstein in 1922.

"When I came here, I did know about the history of our Sisters in New Mexico and it fascinated me. They worked so very hard," says Carney. "They went to Watrous, and in Sr. Elizabeth Ann Clifford's book 'The Story of Victory Noll,' there are several chapters detailing those early days and the tough things the Sisters and people of that time dealt with. The Sisters did a lot of social work at that time, feeding them, helping to get them medicine, as well as their catechetical work."

Carney says she has a better understanding of what those trailblazing Sisters endured.

"I feel a real connection to them. You feel so grounded in this land of life and energy, but there are great challenges as well. There are challenges of the dust and the wind and drought, but humankind and animalkind, everybody works their way through it day by day. But we are so blessed to wake up every morning and see the sun, and each night to see the stars. It's a wonderful cosmic experience in my spirituality."

Inside the main sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Villanueva

is a tapestry that lines the walls of the church. The tapestry was created in 1976 by parishioners and depicts religious life and the history and life of the people in the area.



The area is remote, but there are more than 250 parishioners at the small Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Villanueva. The historic church was built in 1830 and there has been a Catholic presence in the area since the late 1700s. Parishioners travel long distances to attend Mass or other events.

"For me, that's a nurturing thing in my faith. It's the grace of God telling me I'm in the right place at the right time," says Carney. "We have people who come to visit our church from everywhere. As one group was leaving, one of the men said to me, 'I hope you realize you live in a little part of Eden.' That's true — Eden both before and after the fall, a little bit of each."

The church also receives many visitors who come to see the famous Villanueva Tapestry. Finished in 1976 as part of the United States bicentennial celebration, the tapestry is 265 feet in length and consists of 41 embroidered panels that wrap around the inside of the church. Panels depict religious life as well as the history and life of the people of the area. There were 36 stitchers who worked on the project, many of whom are still living.

"It's a jewel," says Carney. "Our people here often are unaware of the magnificent piece this tapestry is, so every two or three years we have the catechetical leaders tell the story to our kids and our youth so they can touch base with what it is we are surrounded — the energy by the grace of God and the spirit of faith that propelled the people to tell their life story."

The parish does not have a full-time priest, which leaves most of the pastoral work to Carney. And by working in such a remote place, she also is an integral part of the community as a whole.

"You can't just run into the store. The closest town, Las Vegas, is 36 miles away from here," she says. "I learned that in 1982 when I left Santa Fe and went up to Mora. You become more enterprising and you realize you have gifts with-



A small chapel sits off the main sanctuary at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish. The church was originally built in 1830, and there has been a Catholic presence in the area since the 1700s.

in you that you never unpack. I still pray every day 'Dear God, help me unpack another gift today.' You rely on one another. If you don't have something, someone else helps you out. Or you help them if they need something. There's a lot of sharing."

Parishioner Sandy Madrid says that Carney has helped pull the community together.

"We were counting the other day how many priests have come and gone through here since we've been here, and we came up with, like, ten," says Madrid. "So Sister has been a very stable personality and presence in the community."



Left, Sr. Elena Carney (right) stands in front of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Villanueva with parishioners Edward and Sandy Madrid, catechetical leader Lana Gallegos and office manager Mellie Gonzales. Above left, Carney and Gallegos review a religious education program handbook. above right, Carney and Gonzales check on parish correspondence.

She gets to know everybody in the community, even if they aren't Catholic. She's open to everybody's needs, and talks to everybody. I'm sure it's why we still have a church here instead of having to go down the road or into Las Vegas."

Carney's pastoral work covers a wide spectrum. She prepares the church for regular weekly Masses as well as special events. There are religious education programs and community projects. Then there are the personal connections she makes.

"One of our biggest challenges is drug and alcohol abuse, and dysfunctional situations within families," she says. "We're always dealing with families who have members whose lives have been taken away because of drugs and alcohol. I counsel a lot of families in my pastoral work. To just walk with people and be present with people is such a gift."

Carney gets help from office manager, Mellie Gonzales, and catechetical leader, Lana Gallegos.

Gallegos says her family has personally felt Carney's special work.

"I remember the first day we met her," says Gallegos. "My husband and I were helping out at another parish and there was so much stuff. We came to her to ask a question, and just started talking with her. On our way home, my husband said 'We're going to start attending church there. That's the kind of leadership we need. That's the shepherd we need.'

"Sister has personally been with us through births, deaths, so much that I know I could not have made it through without her. She brings out the best in people. She sees things in us that we don't necessarily see in ourselves. She points

out those gifts that you have and who you are in God's plan. And it's not just the people in the church, but it's everybody in the community."

Carney knows her work builds on the history of the Victory Noll Sisters who came before her and served across New Mexico.

"In places like Las Vegas and Mora and Pecos, there are generations of people who were taught directly by the Sisters. But now, ministries are flourishing. Lay people are marvelous leaders, like youth leaders, and these kind of things not only keep the faith alive, but allow the faith to grow, which is powerful," she says. "There is a legacy of what Father Sigstein started. As we move through the years, we see his mission of evangelization and now the new evangelization with its cultural challenges in the 21st century. Father Sigstein used to say 'Meet modern needs with modern means,' and so the impact of the Sisters continues."

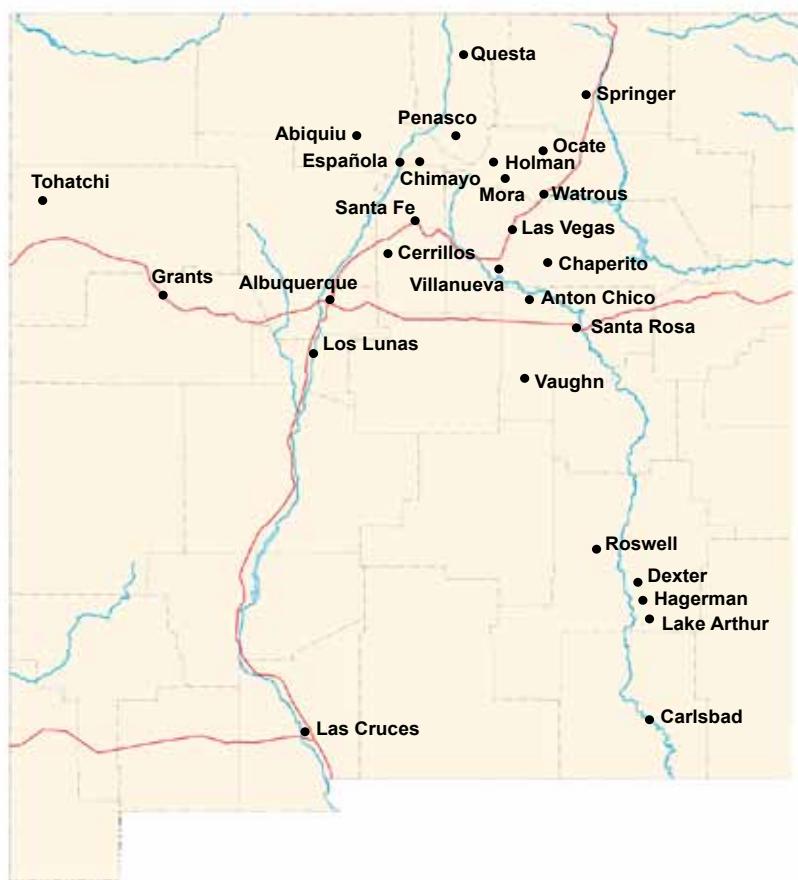
She is sure the legacy of the Sisters will live on.

"People have within themselves the spirit of mission, the spirit of commitment in mission, and the spirit of evangelization," says Carney. "So whether we are here physically or not, the work of God will continue on in the hands and the hearts and faith and love and hope of the people of the valley."

Gonzales says she wants the Victory Noll presence to continue.

"I think we need to talk to Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters to see if they could produce more like her for us," she says. ♦

New Mexico towns served by Victory Noll Sisters



Victory Noll Sisters from New Mexico

SISTER	TOWN OF ENTRANCE
Sr. Margarita Aragon.....	Dilia
Sr. Carlota Baca	Peña Blanca
Sr. Georgianna Baca.....	Albuquerque
Sr. Diega Cabrera.....	Grants
Sr. Bertina Espinoza.....	Ocate
Sr. Leonilla Esquibel.....	Tierra Amarilla
Sr. Kateri Francisco.....	Tohatchi
Sr. Maria Anita Gutierrez.....	Dilia
Sr. Mercedes Gutierrez.....	Dilia
Sr. Racquel Jacquez	Aztec
Sr. Agapita Lopez.....	Las Vegas
Sr. Trinidad Luna	Tierra Amarilla
Sr. Mary Josephine Maes	Santa Fe
Sr. Martina Martinez.....	Holman
Sr. Lucille Martinez	Chimayo
Sr. Celine Montoya	Santa Fe
Sr. Juanita Montoya	Santa Fe
Sr. Anna Rita Montoya.....	Santa Fe
Sr. Marie Murphy.....	Miera
Sr. Carolyn Ortega	Pastura
Sr. Maria Carmen Perea	Albuquerque
Sr. Palmira Perea	Albuquerque
Sr. Rose Anita Salas de Soria.....	Santa Rosa
Sr. Clarita Trujillo	El Rito
Sr. Monica Ulibarri	Dilia

90 years of OLVM presence is celebrated in Santa Fe

Celebration of the 90th anniversary of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters was held September 8 at St. John the Baptist Parish in Santa Fe, N.M.

The first members of the then-Society of Missionary Catechists of Our Blessed Lady of Victory were sent to New Mexico by founder Father John Joseph Sigstein in 1922. Since then, approximately 170 Sisters have been missioned in New Mexico, and around 30 native

New Mexicans entered Victory Noll over the years.

The celebration began with a special Mass by St. John pastor Fr. Nathan Libaire, followed by a reception put on by the parishioners of St. John parish.

Victory Noll Sisters and Associates celebrated along with some 100 parishioners and area residents, many of whom came from the towns and parishes where Sisters had been missioned. ♦

The 90th anniversary of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters was celebrated in Santa Fe, N.M. last fall at St. John the Baptist Parish. Victory Noll Sisters and Associates were joined by parishioners and area residents for a special Mass and meal. Victory Noll has had a long-lasting presence in New Mexico since its founding in 1922.



CREATING Community out of Chaos



Women gather to pray the Rosary during a morning gathering at Casa de las Comunidades. Women from the neighborhood get together several times a week for fellowship, events and meals.

By Paul Siegfried
OLVM Communications Coordinator

Another typical day begins at Casa de las Comunidades in Albuquerque. The small former apartment building is serving a variety of needs this day. In one cramped unit, nearly 30 neighborhood women have gathered to pray the Rosary with Casa director Sr. Teresa Aparicio-Cervantes, filling nearly every square inch of floor space. There are not enough chairs, so some stand. Small children quietly stand by or sit on laps as the women recite the prayers.

Next door, Rene Ronquillo, development coordinator for Casa, sits in an unheated room, surrounded by boxes of canned food. She has to step over and around the boxes to get to her laptop computer. Families arrive, and Ronquillo shows them to another small room where piles of donated coats are available for those needing them.

Outside, Sr. Angeline Walczyk and a pair of volunteers are helping unload a delivery of fresh food and then get it all organized into individual bags for distribution.

Another woman stops by with a shopping cart to pick



Sister Teresa Aparicio-Cervantes (left) talks with a neighborhood woman and her daughter as they prepare a meal for a women's group. Right, Sister Angeline Walczyk (right) and volunteer Mary Quinalty receive donations of fresh fruit and vegetable to be sorted and distributed to families in the area.



up an old microwave that had been dropped off at Casa. A couple new to the area wanders in because they heard that the people at Casa might be able to assist them with some basic needs.

The Rosary has concluded, and the women go into action to prepare a simple meal for everyone in the room and whoever stops by. There is a strong sense of community as the women make sure all get plenty to eat. They stay around to talk and laugh. As the room empties, many head over to pick up a bag of fresh fruit, vegetables, milk and juice that Sr. Angeline has set out for them.

All this happens before 10:30 in the morning.

"A lot of times, we cannot put our experiences into words. It's sad on one hand, but we receive more than we give. That's what I've found here," says Sr. Teresa. "Our goal is not just to provide food and clothes and shelter. Rather it's to provide that person with human contact. We open ourselves. A lot of times we don't solve the problem but they feel better being able to share their stories."

Sr. Teresa started Casa 13 years ago on Albuquerque's east side, venturing into the area of the city that was known as "The War Zone." Sr. Teresa and Sr. Angeline live in one of the small apartments.

"It was very scary. When I first moved in, people would knock at my door asking for drugs. Most of the area was people selling drugs, and it was violent. I've been exposed to shootings, and you see people carrying knives and guns," says Sr. Teresa. "I'm not scared anymore, and the community is changing. Being here, you discover that we are all human beings. And when you treat others as human beings, all of us respond in a very positive way. People not only come to pick up food, but they come to eat and pray with us, and we share our stories. I've found the lack of love, the lack of family environment is really leading them to end up in drugs."

She based her ministry on the work of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement to provide direct aid to the poor and homeless, and doing it through hospitality and the goal of creating community.

"It really struck me that this is what I see in my (Victory Noll) community. There was that connection. That's why I decided to continue with this ministry and learn about the Catholic Worker," she says. "That's also helping me understand our charism and what our founder had in mind — our mission in a more holistic way, not just the catechism, but the whole person. That's what is happening here. It's not just the material means we provide, but the spiritual and the emotional."

Victory Noll Associate Alan Bronder has known Sr. Teresa through her ministries in Chicago and San Antonio, and was with her when Casa started in Albuquerque.

He has seen the change in the neighborhood.

"Definitely there's more involvement" says Bronder. "It was considered the 'war zone' here because of the drugs and other things going on. The population was very transient, so the cartels were able to feed on that. People were always afraid to cross this block and they would go around. But since we've been here, they are much more confident, and come and get involved in the community activities we're doing."

Ronquillo was brought on board to lend a bit more organization to Casa. She makes the calls to gather resources needed, coordinates with the "mobile team" of volunteers, and works to get information out through newsletters, flyers, and online sources.



Pictured in front of the Casa facility are (from left) volunteer Mary Quinalty, development director Rene Ronquillo, Sisters Angeline Walczyk and Teresa Aparicio-Cervantes, and Victory Noll Associate Alan Bronder. Right, Ronquillo works amid boxes of donated canned food.





A women's group poses for a photo outside Casa del las Comunidades following a morning gathering with Sister Teresa Aparicio-Cervantes (kneeling, front).



Youth programs are a focus of Casa de las Comunidades. Young volunteers help paint a mural on the building's wall. Above, Sr. Teresa works with children in a community garden project (top).

In addition, Casa provides free classes of English as a Second Language (ESL) and they have tried to get a community garden started. Sr. Angeline is a registered massage therapist and offers her services to area residents.

A main focus is the empowerment of women, which connects directly with the OLVM Mission Statement which calls for the development of leaders. Sr. Teresa has seen that focus pay off in the revival of the community, led by the women.

"It's wonderful to see how they are changing within their families and in their lives," she says. "That's our reward, just to see them. We used to have to give women rides; now they drive, they get their driver's licenses. It's freeing for them. I encourage them to take courses in the archdiocese. In turn, they help other women. They do the same thing in the neighborhoods. We had catechism here; now they have it in their apartments."

Ronquillo sees the future of Casa tied to the work with women and children, and expanding leadership programs for women, youth programs and scholarship funds for children who want to go to college.

"We want to make sure they know they have a voice and that their voice matters, in all aspects of their lives — the church, in politics, at home, drawing on that divine purpose within them. If someone is suppressed and not able to do that, then we all suffer," says Ronquillo. "All of those things require not necessarily just money, but people who are willing to say they have a passion for this and are willing to help. The goals are to find people and resources to get some of these things off the ground."

While Casa helps meet basic needs, the bigger goal is to build something that becomes self-sustaining.

"The ministry goes beyond feeding or clothing. The people and their families come here and meet one another, and they can form community," says Bronder. "Our success, starting with the work of the Sisters, is responding to God's call. They didn't come with any money or resources or plan, but coming with the compassion of Sr. Teresa and Sr. Angeline, and following the charism of the Sisters, they've built this."

Sr. Teresa knows there is still work to do.

"We are not really solving the problems. The problems continue," she says. "But we are here and developing the community element. We are very community-oriented. We are friends here, and we accompany them along with their struggles. We are trying to develop support groups to help one another." ♦

Fr. Mendez: OLVM Sisters models of dedication

During his 40 years as a priest in New Mexico, Father Juan Mendez has partnered with several Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters as they served in some of the poorest areas of the state.

Fr. Mendez came to the United States as a Cuban refugee at the age of 13 in 1962. His brother had been jailed by the Cuban government, and his parents told young Juan he needed to leave the country or he could face a similar fate. He was sent alone to Miami, where he was put into a refugee camp with other children without parents. Eventually, he was sent to Albuquerque and went to school there. He felt a calling to the priesthood, and went to the seminary. He was ordained in 1973 and is now the pastor at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Albuquerque.

He met Victory Noll Sisters at his second assignment at Our Lady of Guadalupe parish in Santa Fe, and many Sisters lived in the convent in the city. Several others also worked at St. John the Baptist parish in Albuquerque. Fr. Mendez was immediately struck by the dedication of the Sisters.

"They took their vocation very seriously," he says. "I think they did marvelous work, especially in parishes that did not have parochial schools anymore. When I went to Guadalupe, the school had closed and the Dominican Sisters had moved out, so Sr. Elena Carney was assigned there as the director of religious education. Not only did she work with the religious education office, but she did all kinds of things in the parish and was willing to do whatever she could."

He recalls serving in some very poor areas, having to minister to the Catholic population over a large area in New Mexico's vast



Father Juan Mendez has worked with a number of Victory Noll Sisters over the years throughout New Mexico.

expanses.

"I was thinking about all the Victory Noll Sisters I had the privilege of working with. I worked with Sr. Mary Adele Massaro in Abiquiu," he says. "She was wonderful. I have thought about her a million times. She was so dedicated. When I went to Abiquiu, she had been working there for a while. We were poor. My first Sunday there, the collection was \$125, and we had to support nine churches. Our salaries were menial, and hers was less than

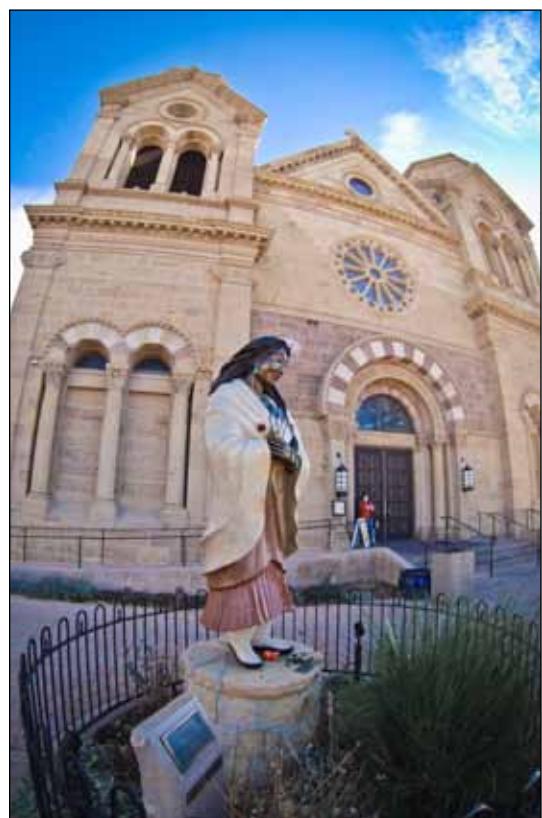
(Continued on Page 14)

Santa Fe: First view of New Mexico

Santa Fe was the arrival point for many Victory Noll Sisters as they began mission assignments in New Mexico. A first stop for Sisters often was the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assissi (left).

There is still a presence of the Sisters in the city. New Mexico native Sister Clarita Trujillo (top right) stands in the OLVM cemetery plot at Rosario Chapel where Sisters Celine Montoya and Mary Clare Leutenegger are buried, along with Will Frey, the first Victory Noll Associate (right).

Sisters remain a fixture at St. John the Baptist Parish, where several have been missioned over the years. ♦





Victory Noll Covenant
Associate Palmira Perea-Hay (right) talks with Lettie at her home in Albuquerque. Lettie and her family have lived undocumented in the United States, and Palmira has been a friend and advocate for the family.

Surviving with Faith and Friends

Associate Palmira Perea-Hay assists family through turbulent waters

**By Paul Siegfried
OLVM Communications Coordinator**

Lettie's story is not much different from others who are living undocumented in the United States. In the 18 years since she came to this country from Mexico, she has struggled to make a life for herself and her family.

In the past three years, she faced the lowest point in her life, but it was followed by the best, with the help of her faith, the church and Victory Noll Covenant Associate Palmira Perea-Hay, who Lettie calls her "guardian angel."

After living for 11 years in New York, Lettie and her family moved to Phoenix. They tried to buy a house, putting down \$26,000 and making five years of house payments on what they thought was a legal transaction. Late in 2009, they found out the house purchase was not legal, and they would soon lose the home.

Around the same time, Lettie was diagnosed with cancer. She had surgery on Dec. 29, 2009, but because of her undocumented status, she said doctors in Arizona would not give her any more treatment.

"The doctors were not very kind. They told me to go back to my country and die in my country," says Lettie.

Just a week later, the family's house was foreclosed, and they were locked out of their home. Their car was also repossessed at the same time. Only with the help of a neighbor were they able to recover some of their belongings. Lettie's oldest daughter, Isabel, then 18, had looked online and found there was a cancer treatment center in Albuquerque, N.M. that would treat undocumented people. So Lettie, her husband Fernando, Isabel, 11-year-old son Fernando Jr. and 1-year-old daughter Juliana headed to Albuquerque.

"We lived for three days on the street because I didn't know where to go. It was very cold," says Lettie. "I didn't know anybody here, and with cancer, no employment, no house, nothing."

For information on becoming a Victory Noll Associate, contact:

**Sister Rose Ann Kaiser
Coordinator of Associates
Email: rakaiser@juno.com**

The family got a referral for an apartment and moved in not realizing they had signed a contract for a year's occupancy with a rent of \$1,000 a month. They were desperate to get into a home due to Lettie's medical condition and winter weather. Lettie looked for a Catholic Church in the area, and the parish she found was St. Joseph on the Rio Grande. One Sunday morning after Mass she stopped a parishioner and briefly told her story. The parishioner referred the situation to St. Vincent de Paul Conference of the parish.

Palmira was assigned the case, and Palmira and her husband, Steve, made the first visit to the family.

"When Palmira and Steve came to my house, they were angels coming to help us," says Lettie.

For several months St. Vincent de Paul Conference assisted the family with contributions toward the rent and utilities which were more than they would ever afford. Palmira also advocated with the rental company for a reduction of \$200 a month.

Lettie's husband got a job with a restaurant franchise where he had worked in Phoenix and was opening a restaurant in Albuquerque. That job has been a source of income, but also a source of concern as the business has been slow in taking off. When Lettie is well enough to assist at the restaurant, she helps out as does her daughter to avoid having to pay another person's salary.

"We all work at the restaurant, day and night. That's how we've been able to make it," says Lettie.

In Albuquerque, Lettie was able to get the chemotherapy treatment she needed from a cancer center connected with the University of New Mexico. She was accepted as an undocumented patient and makes small co-payments. Palmira has been her constant companion along the way, helping her get to her doctor's appointments and all the follow-up treatments.

"Palmira has been like a guardian angel. The last two years that Palmira has been around, she has been my protector and helped me with what I need," says Lettie. "She's been a friend, like a sister. She's been such a moral support. With everything, she's been so helpful."

The family now rents a house owned by one of the deacons at St. Joseph parish at a reduced rate.

"The help that I've gotten through Palmira and the church has been the most important to get through all this. Blessed be to God because of the help I've gotten from the church," says Lettie. "If the church had not been there for me at first, I probably wouldn't be here. There are no words to describe what it's meant to be connected."

Lettie's faith has not wavered through all her ordeals.

"I have never doubted my faith. I always trusted in God. I think that God gives us ways to prove our faith. There will be more tests," she says. "I felt abandoned by the doctors, but I never felt that God had abandoned me. I had faith that God would present somebody to help me."



Palmira makes a visit
to the home of Lettie and
her 3-year-old daughter
Juliana (above). Right,
Lettie lights a candle at
her shrine to late Pope
John Paul II. Lettie credits
her faith, the intercession
of John Paul and the help
of Palmira for getting her
through difficult times.



She is a devotee of Pope John Paul II, and she maintains shrines in her kitchen and her bedroom to the former pontiff.

"I always have a holy card of him, and I've almost put my life in his hands. God is first, and John Paul is second helping me get through this," she says. "Everybody who has the same challenges of health, I encourage them to be under the protection of John Paul. I feel that John Paul has made God present in the world and that has sustained me."

The family is working on getting documented in the United States under a special "U Visa" program that gives temporary legal status to individuals who have been victims of violent crimes in the U.S.

Lettie's husband was injured at a restaurant while he tried to break up a domestic abuse attack where a woman was attacking her husband with a screwdriver. Fernando got between them and was struck with the screwdriver.

Isabel was working at another restaurant where she was twice the victim of robbery attempts. In one case, a gun was held to her head while money was stolen. In the second holdup, a gun was held to her stomach.

Working with the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center in Albuquerque, lawyers are using those incidents to get the family temporary legal status.

"We've had several things happen that have been hard, but I think they will be of benefit to us," says Lettie. "My goal is to have continued good health and to make a good and safe home for my family. I work very hard, and I want to get my Social Security number."

Palmira says Lettie's strength through adversity has also strengthened her.

"I am amazed how one woman has had so many challenges and seems to be able to live through them with the help of her faith in God and a little help from people like us," says Palmira. "The mutuality in this ministry is that she teaches me to accept challenges in the way she has accepted the ones that have come her way, looking to God for true help." ♦

Law center takes proactive approach

Fostering justice and promoting the development of leaders are two parts of the mission of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, and the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center in Albuquerque has built on those same ideals in creating an organization to provide help to at-risk individuals and families.

"We represent low-income immigrants with emphasis on individuals who have been separated from families due to deportation, domestic violence, victims of other crimes, children who are abandoned or abused or neglected, people seeking asylum because of persecution in their own countries," says Jennifer Landau, who founded NMILC in 2010 and serves as its director.

Her staff is small, with two other full-time staff attorneys, one part-time attorney, a Jesuit volunteer, one staffer from AmeriCorps and one law intern. The NMILC gets funding from local, state and federal sources, other organizations and faith groups. They charge nominal fees to some of their clients.

Landau particularly appreciates support of religious organizations such as OLVM.

"I want to say thank you to the Victory Noll Sisters, because the support of the faith communities enabled us to start this organi-



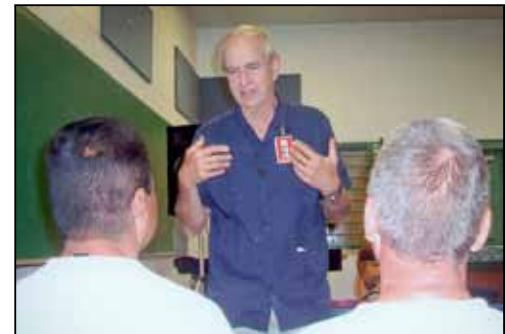
Victory Noll Associate Steve Hay (above, left), works with NMILC lawyers Jessica Martin, Megan Jordi and Jennifer Landau. Right, Hay talks with undocumented immigrants at a New Mexico detention center.

zation in the first place. Their support has made an enormous difference," she says.

Immigration law is complex, and many undocumented immigrants struggle to understand their rights. After being flooded with calls when the office opened, Landau says they decided to be more proactive.

"We're trying to empower folks in the community to be armed with information about their legal rights. Part of that is putting together training on different areas of immigration law and immigrant rights," she says. "We're not exactly training them in immigration law, but on some of the critical education points."

That includes working with those already serving in communities.



"We're definitely moving in the direction of being a community partner-based organization instead of just being a legal aid organization," says Landau. "We've found our advocacy is more effective when we're working in partnership with social workers, teachers, doctors and faith communities who our clients already know and trust."

Victory Noll Covenant Associates Steve Hay and Palmira Perea-Hay collaborate with NMILC, referring clients to the organization. Steve also helped the organization in the Meadow Lake community, and he partners with NMILC supporter Father Rafael Garcia to regularly visit a local detention center where undocumented immigrants are held. ♦

Fr. Juan Mendez *continued*

mine. She was always willing to do whatever. She led a true spirit of religious life, practicing great poverty and great humility. She was a very humble lady. People in Abiquiu loved her, and also in Espanola, where she used to work part time."

Fr. Mendez says he has a deep personal connection with Sr. Carlota Baca.

"I worked with Sr. Carlota, who should be about 102 or 103 (Sr. Carlota turned 104 in January, 2013), at St. John's in Santa Fe," he says. "She was also the epitome of dedication. She was marvelous. She was a such a great source of support that first year at St. John's. It was so difficult for me. She worked until her late 80s before she went back to the motherhouse."

Sr. Carlota also helped care for Fr. Mendez's mother in her final years.

"My mother was living in one of the apartments that we had at

the church compound, and Sr. Carlota cooked many, many meals for my mother, and treated her like she was her own mother," he says. "She was so good to her. It was incredible. At my mother's funeral, I said that my mother had three angels that took care of her in the last year of her life. One was the nurse from hospice, there was a lady who used to clean the house and was so good to her, and Sr. Carlota. I will be eternally grateful to Sr. Carlota, not just for the work she did at St. John's, but also for the care she gave my mother. My mother loved her."

Although the number of Victory Noll Sisters has diminished over the years, Fr. Mendez says they have left a legacy.

"The Sisters certainly have touched many people's lives, in all the parishes where they were stationed," he says. "You mention the Sisters' names, and people remember them very well and they can tell you anecdotes about them." ♦

2013 OLVM JUBILARIANS

85 years



Sister Carlota Baca

BIRTHPLACE: Peña Blanca, N.M.

ENTERED OLVM: October 28, 1928

MISSION HISTORY: New Mexico (Santa Fe), California (Coachella, Willows, Brawley, Los Angeles), Texas (El Paso), Arizona (Nogales).

MISSION WORK: Catechetical, pastoral ministry.

75 years



Sister Mary Joan Ginsterblum

BIRTHPLACE: Meyer, Iowa

ENTERED OLVM: January 25, 1939

MISSION HISTORY: California (San Pedro, Los Angeles), Colorado (Greeley, Brighton, Colorado Springs), Utah (Salt Lake City, Ogden), Arizona (Nogales), Indiana (Victory Noll).

MISSION WORK: Catechetical, physical therapy, wood carving, hair care.

70 years



Sister Justine Kiefer

BIRTHPLACE: Chicago, Ill.

ENTERED OLVM: August 31, 1938

MISSION HISTORY: Michigan (Ida), California (Redlands, Azusa), Indiana (Gary, East Chicago, Victory Noll), Colorado (Denver, Brighton, Greeley, Fort Collins), Texas (San Antonio).

MISSION WORK: Catechetical, Leadership Team, formation director, tutor, secretarial.

60 years



Sister Mary Frances Bartsch

BIRTHPLACE: Subiaco, Ark.

ENTERED OLVM: October 28, 1943

MISSION HISTORY: California (Coachella, Azusa), Texas (El Paso, Luling), Arizona (Flagstaff, Holbrook), Colorado (Colorado Springs), Wyoming (Green River).

MISSION WORK: Catechetical, group work.



Sister Kathleen Cummings

BIRTHPLACE: Jackson, Mich.

ENTERED OLVM: January 6, 1954

MISSION HISTORY: California (Redlands, Los Angeles, Coachella), Utah (Ogden, Brigham City), Indiana (Victory Noll).

MISSION WORK: Catechetical, Leadership Team General Treasurer, Executive Trustee of Community Support Trust, computer technology.

Sister Regina Marie Morrissey

BIRTHPLACE: Jackson, Mich.

ENTERED OLVM: September 6, 1953

MISSION HISTORY: Missouri (Flat River), Ohio (Washington Court House, Lima, Toledo), Texas (San Antonio, Lubbock), Indiana (East Chicago, Kendallville), New Jersey (South Bound Brook).

MISSION WORK: Catechetical, liturgy, pastoral associate, director of religious education.



Sister Christopher Rudell

BIRTHPLACE: Baltimore, Md.

ENTERED OLVM: September 6, 1953

MISSION HISTORY: Massachusetts (West Harwich), California (Monterey, Tulare, Solvang, Calexico), Michigan (Imlay City), Oklahoma (Durant), Indiana (Victory Noll), Arizona (Phoenix), Texas (San Angelo), Florida (North Miami).

MISSION WORK: Catechetical, teacher formation, maintenance and laundry, nursing (RN), secretarial, sacristan.

50 years



Sister Helen Rodriguez-Marin

BIRTHPLACE: Needles, Calif.

ENTERED OLVM: September 9, 1963

MISSION HISTORY: California (San Bernardino, Colton, Monterey, Azusa, Indio), Colorado (Denver), Texas (San Antonio), Arizona (Tucson), Illinois (Chicago).

MISSION WORK: Catechetical, social action and social service referrals, adult education, ESL instructor, director of religious education



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Visions

FROM THE VICTORY NOLL ARCHIVES



Father John Joseph Sigstein founded the Society of Missionary Catechists in 1922 and sent his first two catechists to New Mexico to begin their work. In this photo from August 5, 1922, catechists Marie Benes and Julia Doyle were met at the Santa Fe train station by Archbishop Albert Daeger, beginning a long association between Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters and the people of New Mexico that continues today. ♦