

Bylines

Ursulines of the Eastern Province Summer 2005

In This Issue

Because the last Bylines was devoted exclusively to the topic of the relocation of our elderly and infirm nuns from the Marian Residence in New Rochelle to Andrus on Hudson in Hastings, we have a great deal to tell you now. In News and Notes, you will find brief accounts of what has been going on in the province since the end of October: anniversary celebrations of Ursuline presence and ministry, 150 years in the Archdiocese of New York, 100 in Alaska; awards received for educational and artistic endeavors; lectures, publications, and performances by Ursulines; an international Roman Union meeting on peace and justice, and our participation in a Roman Union Exchange program; services rendered to the poor, the homeless, and those in need of basic education in Wilmington, the Bronx, and New Rochelle; jubilees celebrated, losses mourned.

In greater detail, we feature the decades-long dedication of one Ursuline, Sr. Teresa Weed, to the teaching of "little ones" – for the last fourteen years, very little ones, homeless children, three-and-a-half years old and younger. I don't know which is more moving, the stories of the children or Teresa's fidelity to her special calling. No, I do know what moves me. It is the providential coming together of these children, so in need, and this Ursuline, so gifted and giving of herself in their service. Read the article and see if you don't agree.

Nancy M. Malone, OSU, Editor

THE GIVER IS THE GIFT

by Marge McCullen Rice

The ten boys and girls seemed just like any other group of toddlers. Some fidgeted and had a hard time settling down. Others wanted to follow their own routines instead of directions from their teacher, Ms. Yvette, or one of her two assistants, Sister Teresa Weed, OSU. At age eighty-three, Sister Teresa has been teaching and ministering to young children for over half-a-century, so she was not surprised.



In the Head Start program at St. Bernard's Center for Learning in White Plains, NY, she works with the youngest of the groups – children from two years and nine months old to three-and-a-half. Unlike other children she has taught, however, those at St. Bernard's are bound together not just by age or by their first experience in a classroom, but by a life of struggle and uncertainty. At the end of



Pay Attention! Ms. Yvette Alleyne, teacher, and assistants Ms. Dione Daza and Sr. Teresa Weed.

the school day, they leave the world of structured play and make-believe and return to the reality of homelessness. In former motels transformed into county-run shelters, they share a single crowded room with their mothers and siblings. Outside, drugs and violence loiter in the hallways, and fire alarms randomly pierce the night.

As a result, Sister Teresa notes, when the school buses arrive in the morning from the shelters in White Plains, Greenburgh, and Elmsford, some children run from their seats, their smiling faces communicating an eagerness to start the day. Others lag behind, reluctant and anxious. Still others have fallen asleep and must be carried off the bus, victims of whatever disruption might have occurred in the shelter the night before. "We give them what is in our power to give them," Sister Teresa says, "meaning lots of love, reassurance, and hugs."

The center's goals are simple, straightforward, and, in light of the

children's home lives, ambitious as well. Sister Teresa explains more specifically: "We want to prepare them academically for kindergarten. We also try to teach them to share among themselves, to use words instead of fists to express their feelings, and to be kind and gentle." For those whose lives have little structure, the pattern of the classroom introduces

"This is 'K'."



the concepts of both regularity and responsibility.

"Circle time" is always at 8:55, with the group's "good morning song" and "name recognition" exercise, in which they learn to identify their own written names. At 9:15, it's time for the teacher and her staff to explain the special project for the day before the children follow the routine of washing their hands and eating breakfast. Half an hour later, the curricular part of the day begins, with

arts and crafts, sand-and-water play, and activities with music, dance, puzzles, and blocks. Later,

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She's not so sure . . .

the children also have responsibilities, chosen by them. One is a line leader in the trip downstairs to the gym. Another helps lay out cots at naptime. And occasionally, the lessons learned in their other lives intrude without warning.

"Sister Teresa, do you have a mother?" a child asked one day.

"Yes, Tashandra, I do, but she died."

"Oh," she asked quickly, "who shot her?"

But there are other memories, other conversations, as well. Sister Teresa's most touching experiences have involved the small, daily glimpses of one young person being kind to another. She recalls a little girl patting a boy's shoulder,

A big pitcher for a little girl.



the focus will be on developing gross-motor skills, riding toys in the gym, or time spent in the playground or a walk around the neighborhood. Within each exercise,

urging him "not to cry," and the time a two-year-old told his friend, "I like your work." And then there was the child who comforted a classmate by lightly touching his face and saying, "Calm down. Calm down."

This remarkable nun's love for teaching young children began over five decades ago. Having taken her vows as an Ursuline and completed her studies at the College of New Rochelle, she received her first teaching assignment: early one September morning she met fifty (!) first-graders at Blessed Sacrament Elementary School in New Rochelle. "It was hard, challenging, exhausting," she recalls, "but for me it was love at first sight."

After teaching first grade at The Ursuline School, she moved to the pre-kindergarten level, where she was introduced to the modified Montessori method. It made an indelible impression on her. So convinced is she that the first five years of a child's life are the most formative, that throughout the years, no matter what the obstacles, she has persevered in her mission. And there have been obstacles.

Sister Teresa has served at St. Bernard's since 1991, working five days a week, from 8:45 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., for ten months every year. Most mornings, she rides to the center with a colleague. Going home, she normally relies on local bus service to bring her back to her Ursuline community in New Rochelle, an arrangement complicated by the Bee Line bus strike in Westchester last spring.

But that inconvenience pales in comparison to 1994, when she fell and broke her hip, an event that would normally shatter the career of a 73-year-old preschool teacher. In spite of it, Sister Teresa was determined to resume her duties. Finally, her beleaguered physician told her, "If you're crazy enough to go back to those kids, you need to do 500 leg lifts a day." That's all she needed to know.

Many thousands of leg lifts later, Sister Teresa was back in the Blue Classroom on Prospect Street, teaching and nurturing the toddlers in her care. What keeps her going in the demanding



"Hey look at me!"

during a break from her duties, while the toddlers are napping. "The salaries here are low – today you can get \$10.10 an hour for cleaning a house. No, it's not the money that brings staff members to St. Bernard's. It's their devotion to children in need. The spirit here is one of caring, concern, compassion, and acceptance." Beyond the staff, others in the community also reach into the



Ms. Dione reads a story.

children's lives in a positive way. Members of the Junior League contribute to a birthday party for each child. Students at The Ursuline School in New Rochelle buy and distribute presents at Christmas time. A neighbor visits the classes with different pets to help the children lose their fear of animals.

Midway through the school morning, at 10:45, Sister Teresa takes her signal from Ms. Yvette and begins to coax the children away from the blocks or puzzles or other activities they are pursuing. One by one, they are gently corralled into a large circle for story time. Above them are life-sized, named silhouettes of each of them that Sister Teresa has helped trace on brown wrapping paper, then carefully cut and hung around the classroom's walls to form another circle. The images enable the children to recognize not just their names but also their separate and distinct identities.

With her hair tied high above her head and a shy smile deepening her dimples, Trinity is sitting on the carpet next to Ty Shawn. Justin is next to Milagros, who just joined the class and speaks no English. Clustered together are Kristian, Viclenio, Leahanni, Taequan and Sincere. Little by little, this group of tiny friends turns its attention to Sister Teresa and the story she starts to read to them –

a story about a mother bear and her young son Sam. Snuggled around her are two small boys, Aaryn and Brandon.

"It's night-time," Sister Teresa reads, "and everyone is in their house" – "or," as she quickly ad-libs, "in their room."

And she begins to read:

"OK, Sam, are you ready?" says Mother Bear."

"No," Sam says. "I'm still waiting."

One by one, Sister Teresa recounts all the rituals Sam is waiting for before he can fall asleep: a glass of warm milk, a stuffed animal to hug and, finally, "a kiss good night." Outside, the wind is howling, but inside Sam is safe and warm, loved and protected.

And in that moment these children are as well.

Marge McCullen Rice is a graduate of the Academy of Mount St. Ursula in the Bronx (1963). She is the Director of Media Relations and Publications at Lehman College in the Bronx, a senior college of The City University of New York.



Twenty years ago the Peace and Justice group at St. Bernard's parish in White Plains, NY, joined with others to organize, furnish, and staff a drop-in program for the homeless preschool children living with their families in the nearby Coachman Hotel. Their efforts grew into a formal Head Start program in 1988. Since then, the program has grown to encompass a variety of preschool groups, providing the children with two hot meals each day plus a bag lunch to bring home, the services of a social worker, speech therapist, nurse, psychologist and mental health worker, as well as music and dance enrichment. In the spring of 2005, while this issue of *Bylines* was being prepared, St. Bernard's Center for Learning moved from White Plains to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center at 95 Lincoln Ave. in New Rochelle, NY. Thanks to *Bylines* photographer Terry Epbridge, the photos were taken both at St. Bernard's and the newly named Children's Center for Learning Head Start in New Rochelle.

News and Notes

Ursulines were at their very best as they sang gorgeous polyphony and Gregorian chant at a November 14 concert sponsored by the Bedford Park community in honor of 150 years of Ursuline service in the Archdiocese of New York. And Mount St Ursula's year-long celebration of its 150th continued in high spirits as more than 400 people – students, faculty, alumnae, nuns, all bedecked in commemorative scarves – marched together down Fifth Avenue in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. With greater solemnity, the anniversary was blessed in a Eucharistic liturgy in St. Patrick's Cathedral on May 15, presided over by His Eminence, Edward Cardinal Egan and followed by a gala reception at the Waldorf.



Sr. Mary Beth Read, principal, and six former principals: Sisters Barbara Calamari, Eileen Finnerty, Regina Kehoe, Ann Duggan, St. Pierre Drury, and Gloria Marie Sullivan at the cathedral.

Also in November, **Sr. Bridget Puzon**, after twelve years at the Association of American Colleges and Universities in Washington, D.C., left her position as director of editorial services and editor of *Liberal Education* to join the provincialate staff as director of advancement.

Sr. Mary Sullivan, province coordinator of social justice, spent December 13 -19 at the generalate in Rome with the four other members of the Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation commission (JPICOSU) who represent provinces in Thailand, England, Slovenia, Brazil/Chile/Peru. The commission was established in 2003 to heighten Ursuline awareness of these issues and to unify our efforts in addressing them.

During the weekend of January 14-16, **Sr. Jeannie Humphries** attended an encouraging meeting of

women religious in their twenties and thirties in Jacksonville, Fl. The group, "Giving Voice," will hold another gathering this summer to bring together younger and older religious from all over the country.

On February 27, the Ursuline Institute at the College of New Rochelle sponsored a lecture by **Sisters Pascal Conforti and Maureen McCarthy**, both of whom have ministered to persons affected by HIV/AIDS. In a PowerPoint® presentation they reported on a trip they made to Botswana in 2003 at the invitation of Dr. Daniel Baxter, who practices medicine there; he is a specialist in HIV/AIDS care and a former colleague of Pascal's at St. Clare's Hospital in Manhattan. Pascal, after eighteen years in pastoral ministry at St. Clare's (now St. Vincent's Midtown Hospital), is at present one of the coordinators of Ursuline life at Andrus. In August, Maureen will leave the U.S. to spend a year in AIDS-ridden Swaziland, bringing her skills as a midwife/nurse practitioner to the people there.



Sr. Maureen McCarthy

A few days after her seventy-ninth birthday on March 19, **Sr. Alice Bouchard**, as a participant in the Roman Union Exchange program, set off for a year's service in Thailand. ("I may as well do it while I still can," she said.) Having spent twenty years of her religious life in that country, she was welcomed back to Thailand by many devoted alumnae and friends.

As part of the same program, **Sr. Elizabeth McAdams**, who teaches theology and social studies at Ursuline Academy in Wilmington, volunteered her services in Southern Africa, June-August. And **Sr. Mary Virginia Orna** will spend October-January at the local Italian (not generalate) Ursuline community in Rome. "Colorful Chemistry," an article on Mary Virginia's fascinating odyssey from researching compositions of medieval pigments to a focus on educational programs in the history of chemistry, appeared in the February issue of *Analytic Chemistry*.

Sr. Jeanne Cashman's piece in the spring issue of *The Catholic Philanthropist*, titled "Angela Merici: Pilgrim and Prophet, Dreamer, Darer, Doer," was appropriately illustrated by a photograph of Sr. Mary Jane Robertshaw's statue of Angela of Desenzano as a young woman. (An article by an Irish Ursuline in the January/February issue of the journal *Spirituality* was also accompanied by a photograph of Mary Jane's statue. See p. 7) The Annual Dinner in support

work of caring for these children? She urges visitors not to admire of Sojourners' Place, a shelter for the homeless in Wilmington, founded and directed by "darer and doer"



Sojourners' Place Wilmington, DE

of Sojourners' Place for the homeless in Wilmington, founded and directed by "darer and doer" Jeanne, was held on April 14 at The Dupont Country Club.

Meanwhile, up north, the season of donor dinners and events was going into full swing. At the Annual Ursuline Benefit Concert, April 24 at Fordham Prep, our provincial **Sr. Dorothy Ann Kelly** stole the show in a spot as guest conductor. On May 12, Dorothy



Sr. Dorothy Ann Kelly and The Concert Pops.

herself was honored for her "remarkable commitment to education" at St. Aloysius School's Thirteenth Annual Scholarship Benefit at the Hilton New York.

Many patrons and volunteers also enjoyed the April 28 Benefit Dinner for Ursuline Social Outreach, sponsor of The Adult Learning Center in New Rochelle. Founded by **Sr. Eileen Fane** in 1996 to teach basic English and/or literacy to adults – most of them immigrants -- the center typically registers about 200 students per semester, providing as well childcare for parents attending classes.



Ursuline Social Outreach, New Rochelle, NY.

On May 1, the Ursuline Donors Mass and Brunch was held for the first time at Andrus on Hudson, giving our benefactors the opportunity to greet many of the residents and to get a sense of Andrus. They also were able to view an exhibit there, "Art with Intent," in which Bylines photographer and graphic artist **Sr. Terry Eppridge** showed a painting, "Ohio Barn." Just a few weeks earlier, in the Iona College Arts Center's juried exhibit "Water Works: The Best of Watermedia in Westchester," another Ursuline artist, **Sr. Anne Therese Dillen**, had been awarded third prize for her painting "Rain and Steam."

On the weekend of April 29-30, over two hundred people, alumnae/i of St. Mary's mission and Ursulines



Photo by Sr. Kristen Wenzel, OSU

Ursuline Alumnae perform a native dance at the celebration.

from the four U.S. provinces, gathered in Anchorage, Alaska, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of our ministry in that region. Until 1987, in conjunction with the Jesuits, Ursulines, including members of our province, staffed St. Mary's boarding school/orphanage for native children, located first in Akulurak and then on the banks of the Andreafsky River. At present, there are four Ursulines serving in various places in Alaska.

Sisters Kristen Wenzel and Martha Counihan, lucky winners of an in-house raffle for the honor of representing the Eastern province, attended the celebration. **Sr. Irene Mahoney**, who has done so much work on the history of our missions in the U.S., also attended as a guest of the Western province.

On May 7, members of **Sr. Beth Dowd's** Composers of the Future program performed with the Westchester Chamber Orchestra at Iona College, and on May 22 Songcatchers gave its Spring Concert in the CNR chapel.

Sr. Jeanne Hamilton, a canon lawyer who works as a judge in the tribunal of the diocese of Wilmington, also writes a regular column on

the Sunday readings in the Wilmington Catholic newspaper, *The Dialog*. Brief meditations by **Sr. Nancy Malone** appeared in several issues of *Living Faith: Daily Catholic Devotions*, and articles by her were published in the December *Sojourners*, the spring issue of the Jesuit quarterly *Human Development*, and in the January/February and June/July issues of *The American Catholic*, a national newspaper published in Connecticut.

To return to an event from last fall, on October 26, the Angela House Award Dinner was held at Fordham University, honoring the Rev. Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J., president of Regis High School and president



Angela House in the Bronx, NY.

emeritus of Fordham University. Angela House, founded by **Sr. Winifred Danwitz** in 1997, provides a transitional residence for homeless women and their young children, as well as support, training, and assistance in achieving self-sufficiency. After years of teaching speech at CNR, and then establishing the Mount St. Ursula Speech Center, Winnie asked herself – again – “What would Angela do to ‘respond to the needs of the times?’” And she did it.

JUBILARIANS

In quiet celebrations during January, February, and April, nineteen Ursulines marked the anniversaries of their religious profession – totaling 1,170 years of dedicated religious life! With you we offer them our admiration, thanks, and prayers.

	First Profession	Name	Community
75 years	01/20/1930	Jean Marie Casey	Andrus
	01/20/1930	Marie Elizabeth Dugan (RIP)	Andrus
70 years	01/26/1935	Regina Gagnier	Wilmington
	01/26/1935	Florence Marie Kretz	Bedford Park
	01/26/1935	Veronica Marie Maloney	Andrus
	01/26/1935	Elizabeth Monaghan	Andrus
	08/26/1935	Annunciata Bethell	Bedford Park
	08/26/1935	Kathryn Fitz-Gerald	St. Teresa's
60 years	02/12/1945	Priscilla Maloney	Andrus
	04/27/1945	Anne Curry	Bedford Park
	04/27/1945	Mary Patrick Levis	Bedford Park
	04/27/1945	Irene Mahoney	St. Teresa's
	07/06/1945	Ursula Baumann	Andrus
50 years	01/16/1955	Vera Marie deWolff	Salzburg, Austria
	01/16/1955	Marcia Kimball	St. Teresa's
	01/16/1955	Jane Mennis	St. Teresa's
	01/16/1955	Kathleen O'Connell	St. Teresa's
	01/16/1955	Marjorie Stumpf	St. Teresa's
	07/16/1955	Regina Therese Carroll (RIP)	Bedford Park

REQUIESCANT IN PACE

We also ask your prayers
for the repose of the souls of our Sisters:

Teresita McCardle (January 21, 1910 - October 9, 2004)
Stasia Holohan (September 15, 1920 - December 15, 2004)
Mary Martin Dyer (December 19, 1908 - February 12, 2005)
Barbara Glendon (April 4, 1940 - March 11, 2005)
Regina Therese Carroll (June 16, 1923 - March 27, 2005)
Marie Elizabeth Dugan (April 24, 1908 - April 1, 2005)
Rita Beach (November 30, 1920 - April 3, 2005)
Jennie Seabrook (August 19, 1928 - May 6, 2005)

While it seems that spring was long in coming this year, we know that each of our sisters has heard the voice of the Lord:

“Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and come!
For see, the winter is past, the rains are over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth,
The time of singing has come, and the voice of the dove
is heard in our land.” (Song of Songs. 10.12)

We mourn their loss. We rejoice in their lives here and hereafter.



*Angela of
Desenzano by
Sr. Mary Jane
Robertshaw, OSU*

Bylines

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THE TEACHER IS TAUGHT

Even during her tenure as principal of The Ursuline School in New Rochelle, Sr. Jean Baptiste Nicholson taught before-school classes in Latin and Greek. For the first time this year, however, she taught Advanced Placement Vergil. She writes for Bylines:

"Deciding that I needed some information on the format and character of the exam, I signed up for the nearest workshop, which turned out to be at American University in Washington, D.C. So one October morning I boarded the 6 a.m. shuttle and headed off to Washington. After registering, I was given a program, only to discover when I looked up "Latin-Vergil" that the person leading the workshop was a former student of mine, Mary English, TUS, 1990. Since Mary had a list of the participants ahead of time, the surprise was all mine. As was the fulfillment of every teacher's dream: that of being taught by your own student."

PROVINCE MISSION STATEMENT

We, Ursulines of the Eastern Province of the United States, are women religious in an international community, united by the vision and spirit of our foundress, St. Angela Merici.

Impelled by deep personal love for Jesus Christ, Angela sought in a life of prayer and action to bring people from all segments of society to a deeper love of God and one another.

We follow Angela in the service of this twofold love. While we continue to proclaim the Gospel in our traditional work of education, we welcome the call of the Spirit to new ministries.

In response to the needs of our times, we commit ourselves, in both our life and our work, to solidarity with the poor; to the pursuit of justice for all, especially women; and to collaboration with the laity.

As a community that values both tradition and progress, we move into the future with courage and with trust in God.

Should you wish to write to the sisters at Andrus, the address is:

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Andrus on Hudson
185 Old Broadway
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706

