



Rejoice!

Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Newsletter

Winter 2009

Dear Friends of IHM,

May the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus be everywhere praised and glorified!

Greetings to you during this joyful and blessed Christmas Season. As we again remember with grateful hearts the humble and unpretentious coming of the Word Made Flesh, of Love Incarnate, we also remember the many gifts He has bestowed upon us. You, our families and friends, are highlighted on that list.

Among the other blessings of the year we must mention among the most noteworthy the Apostolic Visitation of the religious institutes in the United States. Though we most likely will not be chosen for an on-site visitation of the Apostolic Visitor, Mother Mary Clare Millea, we would welcome such a visit.



The concept of a visitation is not foreign to religious life. The Code of Canon Law requires General Superiors of religious institutes to conduct a visitation of all the houses (local communities) of their religious family on a regular basis; our Constitutions specify that it is to be annually. The reasons for this are many and all are positive. A visitation is a time of grace; it provides the opportunity for the community to take a good look at itself and assess its strengths and weaknesses, to note where we are and where we would like to be in the living of our charism, our fraternal life, the governance of our institute, our formation program, our apostolic works, and our vocation promotion.

In preparing the documents requested of me for this apostolic visitation, I was able to bring the community together in groups to discuss the issues on which we were asked to report. Having thus gathered the wisdom and insight of my Sisters, I spent the next three weeks praying, writing and re-wording. We now have a document that records and expresses what has until this point been passed on in a way similar to that of early Christian tradition.

As the General Superior of a religious institute whose members desire only to be faithful daughters of the Church, we are thankful for this Apostolic Visitation. The Church has authenticated our life and has approved and thus mandated our apostolic works; we want to live religious life according to the mind and heart of the Church. Without the Church we wouldn't be who we are; our identity is bound to Her. In truth, this Visitation can only be seen as a God-send.

Even if we are not chosen for an actual "visit," this Visitation has already borne fruit in our community. Bringing us all together to discuss these fundamental issues has been good for us; it is edifying to hear the Sisters express in a heart-felt way such love for the Church, her teachings and our community. Please join us in praying for the holy success of this Visitation.

Let us entrust this intention, as well as all that you hold dear in your hearts, to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary; may she obtain for us an increase of love for the Blessed Sacrament.

Sincerely in Christ,

Mother Marie Bernadette, IHM

Mother Marie Bernadette, IHM
General Superior

SR. MARIE THERESE “HITS THE ROAD” FOR VOCATIONS

Sr. Marie Therese did not return to the classroom this year; instead, she “hit the road” as our full time vocation directress. In the past, one of the Sisters filled this role along with her teaching assignment. Now Sr. Marie Therese is available to visit and serve college students in addition to our elementary and high school students. She has experienced for herself what Pope Benedict proclaimed, “The Church is young!” Sr. Marie Therese said, “I am so inspired by the faith and joy and generosity of these young people.”

A large part of her new apostolate includes monthly visits at various universities. She participates or presents at their regularly scheduled activities, such as their Catholic youth meetings, Bible studies and women discussion groups. In addition, she provides spiritual direction for some students. Sr. Mary Ann has teamed up with Sr. Marie Therese at the Wichita State University Newman Center leading a Marian scripture study. Also the Sisters periodically join the students at the Newman Center for their once-a-week dollar lunch. There is a lot do and much joy in the performance of these duties.

In September, Sr. Cecilia Marie accompanied Sr. Marie Therese to Benedictine College in Atchinson, KS. They were invited to attend the opening Mass with the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Sambí. He is the Pope’s representative to the United States government and to the Church in the U.S. so it was a real treat for the Sisters. Afterwards, they had lunch with their former students and then others joined the table as well.

Taking advantage of other travels to continue our vocation work, we were able to visit Christendom College when we were in Washington, D.C., for the Eucharistic Congress. Mother Marie Bernadette gave a short presentation to about 20 young women on the making proper choices to live a holy life.

Please pray for the spiritual success of this new endeavor.

“GO OUT AND TEACH....”

Teaching the young about Our Lord is a great blessing and a great responsibility. This school year finds our Sisters in many schools. In case you were wondering where we are teaching this year...



Left: Sr. Mary Margaret (middle school religion and social studies) and Sr. John Marie (first grade) are inspiring the love of Jesus’ Sacred Heart at St. Margaret Mary Catholic School in Wichita.

Right: Sr. Mary Clare (middle school religion) and Sr. Mary Grace (first grade) are working at spreading a rock-solid faith at St. Peter’s Catholic School in Schulte.



Left: Sr. Joseph Mary (middle school religion and social studies) watches over her family of students at St. Joseph Catholic School in Wichita.

Right: Sr. Mary Magdalene (religion) and Sr. Mary Agnes (religion) sing the praises of the Lord at Bishop Carroll Catholic High School in Wichita.



Right: Sr. Mary Ann (religion) and Sr. Veronica Marie (religion) work in the trenches spreading the faith at Kapaun-Mt. Carmel Catholic High School in Wichita.



Left: Sr. Mary Dolores (middle school religion and social studies), Sr. Maria Jacinta (religion) and Sr. Mary Elizabeth (religion) strive to bring their students to a love of the Triune God at Trinity Catholic High School in Hutchinson.

Right: Sr. Mary Faustina and Sr. Mary Catherine, along with Sr. Mary Magdalene and Sr. Mary Agnes, nurture the understanding of the faith of their students at St. Anne’s Parish School of Religion program.



A SUMMER SABBATICAL IN ROME



Sr. Marie Therese, Sr. Veronica Marie, Sr. Mary Elizabeth, Sr. Mary Margaret and Sr. Cecilia Marie overlooking St. Peters from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith

The Eternal City – Rome! Five of our IHM Sisters had the opportunity to spend three weeks in Rome this summer as a part of a sabbatical program offered by the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR). Eighteen sisters from five Communities came together to explore the city of Rome and all it had to offer. The program offered classes on the Faith and the Church in the morning, and then afternoons and evenings were available for visiting various sites in and around Rome.

On the feast of St. Maria Goretti, the Sisters were blessed to travel to Nettuno to the home of this saint. For Sr. Mary Margaret, this was truly a highlight: “Knowing we were to visit her home where she was martyred, I purposely waited to pray the Office of Readings until the time of our visit. What a grace-filled moment to re-read the Holy Father’s homily given at Maria’s canonization on the very spot where her martyrdom took place. While kneeling at the exact spot where she, facing death, defended her purity, I prayed very hard for an increase of the virtue and practice of chastity among young people in our country, and in particular, all of our students.”

The three weeks afforded the Sisters many grace-filled opportunities. The Sisters, wearing their walking shoes and armed with bus tickets and maps, made their ways to multiple Churches throughout Rome, including all four major basilicas. They were able to attend a General Audience of Pope Benedict XVI and hear his address. Sr. Veronica Marie especially appreciated the many guided tours packed full of information: the Vatican Museum and Sistine Chapel, the Scavi (excavations under St. Peter’s Basilica), the catacombs of St. Sebastian, the Roman Forum and the Colosseum.

The weekends found the Sisters out in the countryside. They walked the ground made holy by Sts. Francis and Clare in Assisi. Orvieto gave them the chance to visit the Cathedral that houses the corporal from the Eucharistic Miracle. In Siena the Dominican Sisters lead the Sisters to the many places visited by St. Catherine. “In Florence”, said Sr. Veronica Marie, “we not only saw the famous works of Michelangelo, including the impressive David, but also had an opportunity to visit San Marco and the monastery rooms painted by Fra Angelico. Seeing his paintings in person helped me better appreciate his beautiful work”.

Sr. Mary Elizabeth found a way to group many of

these events into one: the experience of the Communion of Saints. “Not only were we surrounded by Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, Sisters, and lay people who were in love with the Church but, in a special way, we came into contact with the Saints. On the individual feast days of St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria, St. Maria Goretti, St. Camillus de Lellis, St. Mary Magdalene, and St. Bridget of Sweden we were able to venerate their relics housed throughout Rome. Sts. Peter and Paul became real as we drew near to their places of burial. Each day seemed to give us one more vision into that cloud of witnesses mentioned in the Letter to the Hebrews.”

Two highlights marked Sr. Cecilia Marie’s time in Rome. The first was the opportunity to pray in the crypt of the Basilica of St. Cecilia. Here where St. Cecilia died, a chapel has been erected and her body is kept. “It was a grace-filled time to be able to pray in the presence of the body of my patron.” The second highlight was the two classes the Sisters had in the Vatican itself. “During one class we were privileged to be admitted to the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) and heard from three of the priests about their work. Two weeks later we were privileged to meet with Msgr. Peter Wells, a priest from the Diocese of Tulsa (and relative to our Sr. Joseph Mary), who is currently the Assessore of General Affairs for the Secretary of State for the Vatican. He told us about his experiences and the new position he had received just a few days earlier. These visits to the Curia are ones that not everyone who goes to Rome can experience. We truly were able to see some of the inner-workings of our Church.”

For Sr. Marie Therese, her highlight is truly a unique one. “We attended a Sunday Mass at San Andrea della Fratte. In 1842 our Blessed Mother appeared in this church to Alphonse Ratisbonne, an atheistic Jew who despised Catholicism. He was converted and later became a Catholic priest and missionary to the Jewish people. Upon reflection it became clear that the greater miracle is the fact that Jesus comes down to us everyday in the Blessed Sacrament and I have access to this miracle right in Wichita, Kansas! When it was time for Holy Communion, the priest made eye contact with me and motioned for me to come forward while he called ‘Suora’ (Italian word meaning nun). I was taken totally off guard and though I was having a minor panic attack, my feet carried me straight to the priest in the sanctuary. He then raised his hand over me and said something in Italian, lightly slapped my face, and indicated I should take the ciborium on the altar. Interiorly I was assuring myself that I was capable of doing this (I have administered Holy Communion before in the United States) and in my mind I was reviewing the words ‘The Body of Christ’ when I suddenly and loudly heard the words of the priest, ‘Corpo di Christo.’ Whew! Just in the nick of time I ‘switched’ languages. At first I was timid but quickly became more comfortable in my privileged service. It was a most sweet and holy moment to be remembered as well as a most salutary lesson to be pondered: Jesus, who comes to us in the Sacred Host, is the greatest miracle of all.”

A Summer Sabbatical in Rome



1: Sr. Cecilia Marie and other sisters enjoy the fairly roomy bus ride -- we weren't always so lucky to have so much open space.

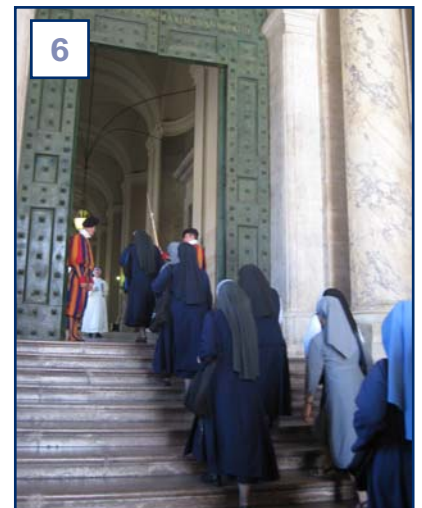
2: Sr. Mary Elizabeth, Sr. Cecilia Marie, Msgr. Peter Wells, Sr. Mary Margaret, Sr. Marie Therese and Sr. Veronica Marie in front of St. Peter's Basilica

3: Sr. Cecilia Marie kneeling before the marble statue of St. Cecilia in the basilica of St. Cecilia

4: Sr. Mary Margaret kneeling at the place of St. Maria Goretti's martyrdom

5: Sr. Mary Margaret, Sr. Mary Elizabeth and Sr. Marie Therese by the Mediterranean Sea

6: The Sisters walking past the Swiss Guard into the Secretary of State Office for the Vatican



A Summer Sabbatical in Rome



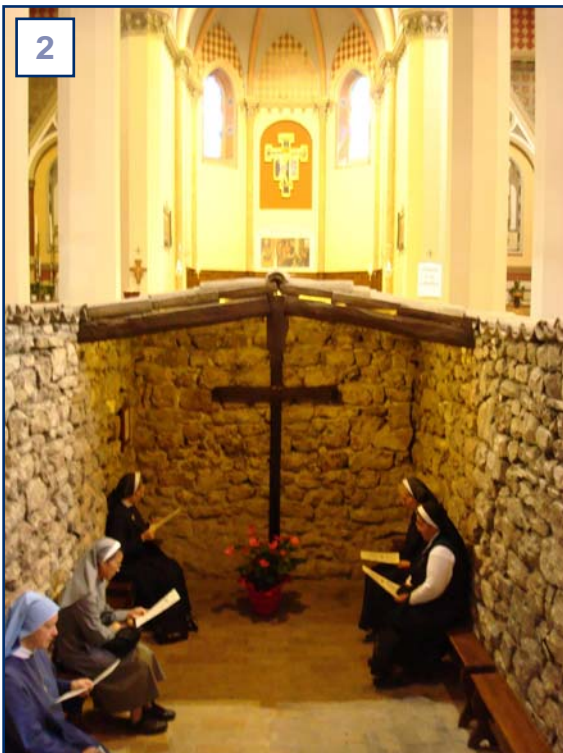
1: Sr. Marie Therese touching her rosary to the stone that St. Francis used as a pillow -- Sr. Marie Therese was our primary "toucher" of Rosaries to sacred objects and places

2: The Sisters praying in Rivortorto, the hut that St. Francis and his first followers used at the beginning of the Franciscan order. The hut sits in a large beautiful church -- a common occurrence in Italy.

3: The Sisters attending Mass at the Basilica of St. Clare in Assisi. It is in this chapel that the Crucifix that spoke to St. Francis is housed.

4: Sr. Mary Elizabeth overlooking Assisi

5: The Sisters learning about the tapestries in the Vatican Museums.



IHM SISTERS OPEN A NEW LOCAL CONVENT IN WICHITA

After refining their home improvement skills four years ago with the opening of the St. Joseph convent, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary dusted off their paint brushes and hammers again this summer. The renovations were not as drastic, however, as the Sisters opened a new house, the Immaculate Conception Convent, in the Wichita parish of St. Anne's. Four Sisters, Sr. Mary Magdalene, Sr. Mary Catherine, Sr. Mary Agnes, and Sr. Mary Faustina moved into the beautiful tri-level home on July 26, the feast of Sts. Joachim and Anne.

The house had formerly been used as a convent by the Sisters of St. Joseph until the recent retirement of Sr. Margaret Nugent, longtime principal of St. Anne's school. The house, owned by the parish, was then left vacant. The IHM Sisters were happy and thankful for the opportunity to expand, leaving more room in the Motherhouse and St. Joseph Convent for postulants and visitors.

The house was in top condition requiring a minimal amount of work to prepare it for four Sisters. Once

again Mother Marie Bernadette spearheaded the renovation, which was completed in about two weeks. Her brother and long time community friend, Greg Mertens, did most of the heavy labor, putting up a wall and setting the altar for the chapel among other various things. The Sisters did some painting and got the home ready for the four new inhabitants.

The Sisters were introduced at the weekend Masses of Aug. 1 and 2. The parishioners received the Sisters with open arms. "Everybody is just so nice" said Sr. Mary Catherine. The Sisters had the opportunity to employ their knowledge of Spanish after the 12:30pm Spanish Mass.

The four Sisters, while not teaching in the parish school, will be involved in the PSR program. The IHM Sisters would like to thank Mr. Mertens and his nephew Ben English for all of their hard work which they put into the new convent and to Corbin Poh for his continued support and general helpfulness. They would also like to thank the people of St. Anne's for their gracious welcome.

Pray for Your Priests!

"The Blessed Virgin opened heaven only once, but the priest does so at every Mass."
- St. Vincent Ferrer

"When we look at the priest we should see Christ."

"The priest possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the Person of Christ Himself."
- Pope Pius XII

"No one claims this office for himself; he is called to it by God."
CCC1478



"No one but a priest can change bread and wine into the living Christ. None but a priest can absolve sinners and restore them to friendship with the Creator whom they have offended."

"If we really understood the priest on earth, we would die not of fright but of love."
- St. John Vianney

"He is ordained to serve."

"The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus."
- St. John Vianney

"The priest continues the work of redemption on earth."
- St. John Vianney

“THE WORDS OF MARY’S HEART: THE FRUIT OF HER PONDERING”

In June, the IHM Sisters offered their Annual Novena to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, celebrating a whole decade of doing so. The novena’s theme was “The Words of Our Lady: The Fruit of Her Pondering.” Each evening began with a talk featuring some words from Mary’s Immaculate Heart, followed by a drawing for a door prize -- an image of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Novena participants were invited to spend a holy hour with our Eucharistic Lord, asking for Mary’s intercession, and then pondering the words of Our Lady and praying with their own.

Our Lady’s recorded words are few. On the first evening of the novena Mother Marie Bernadette recalled for us that when a person speaks seldom, the words spoken are more attended to; people listen more closely and assign them greater importance. It was our hope that by providing reflection on Mary’s words we might help our friends be more Mary-like and grow as disciples of Christ.

Following are the topics and brief highlights. (The entire talks are available on the IHM website.)

“Out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth Speaks” – In her Immaculate Heart, Mary pondered all that was said to her, all that happened to her. When she spoke her words were vibrant and conveyed profound depth. Her treasure was the Lord, and where your treasure is, there is your heart.

“The Immaculate Heart of Mary and her Fiat” – “Fiat” is the word that defines Mary’s Immaculate Heart; it is her vocation. Everything is God’s, to do with as He wills: intellect, will, body—all belongs to Him.

“Magnificat” – Let the Lord be magnified within oneself; that is, be configured to Christ. Humility is not thinking less about self, but thinking about self less.

“Son, Why Have You Done This to Us?” – When we do not perceive Jesus’ presence, He is inviting us to seek Him with greater desire. He is always in his Father’s house; we can find Him in the tabernacle.

“Do Whatever He Tells You” – The servants did what Jesus told them, even though they may not have understood; like them, we are called not to understand, but to obey. Through their obedience, Jesus revealed his glory; He can do likewise in and through us.

“Am I not your Mother?” – These warm, emotion laden words spoke by Our Lady of Guadalupe to St. Juan Diego convince us of Mary’s maternal role in our lives. She is our mother; on the Cross Jesus said, “Behold your mother.” This was not a suggestion or advice; it was a command, a stating of reality. As our Mother she intercedes for us, watches over us, leading us to her Son.

“Penance! Penance! Penance!” – Part of the message of Our Lady of Lourdes was penance; penance contributes to our ongoing conversion—conversion of the whole self, every moment of every day—and can reform our whole being to desire God.

“Pray for Sinners” – At Fatima Our Lady sadly conveyed to us that sinners go to hell because there is no one to pray for them. We should remember that prayer is powerful and by praying for our brothers and sisters we can assist them in choosing God and not selfish pursuits.

“In the End, My Immaculate Heart Will Triumph” – Another aspect of the message from our Lady of Fatima was both hope-filled and reassuring: because she only does the will of God, she will be triumphant! Mary, victorious over evil in her life, assists us while we are still on earth. She will not rest until all of her children are in heaven. Amidst all the trials and struggles of this life, we need to keep in mind that, in the end, her Immaculate Heart will triumph!



Mr. Bergkamp, Sr. Mary Dolores, Sr. Mary Margaret and Sr. Mary Guadalupe gather around one of the horses on the Bergkamp farm on Labor Day. A delicious meal, horseback riding, delightful conversation and playing with the many farm kittens filled the day. Many thanks to the Bergkamps for a wonderful day!

SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY OF WICHITA

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Merry Christmas!



**IN THANKSGIVING FOR
YOU AND ALL YOUR
GIFTS, WE HAVE
REMEMBERED YOU
IN A NOVENA OF
MASSES, TRUSTING
THE CHRIST-CHILD TO
REWARD YOU AS ONLY
HE CAN.**

**MAY YOUR NEW YEAR
BE BLESSED!**