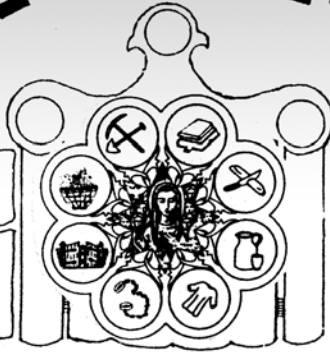


January  
Edition

# THE GATEWAY

Volume VI  
Issue I

TO JESUS



THROUGH MARY

*SISTERS OF CHARITY OF OUR LADY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH*

## A Great Honor and A Special Privilege



Throughout our newsletters, we have shared happenings and events related to our prayer life, our apostolates, and our community life. One such happening occurred on September 30, 2005, when Mother Marie Julie, Superior and Administrator of St.

Elizabeth Home for the Aged in Janesville, Wisconsin, was invited to become a member of the Board and the Executive Committee of the Institute on Religious life. We congratulate Mother and rejoice with her as she becomes an integral part of a group which is so faithful to the Gospel Message and to the Magisterium of the Church.

Those who attend the annual meeting of the Institute on Religious Life recognize that the mission of the Institute is to promote and support the growth, development, and renewal of the consecrated life, particularly vowed religious life, as a gift to the Church and an evangelical witness to the world.

The Institute on Religious Life focuses on the following five areas:

- To educate Catholic youth and Catholic families about religious life in the United

States today.

- To educate Catholic diocesan clergy to become more knowledgeable about religious life and its place in the Church.
- To foster the "Spirituality of Communion" according to the mind of the Church among existing religious orders in the USA.
- To support emerging religious communities and those seeking renewal.
- To support and promote cloistered communities.

The Institute on Religious Life meeting for 2006 will be held at the Conference Center of the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, Illinois, from April 21-23.

The program for this weekend will include such speakers as:

- Most Reverend Thomas G. Doran
- Most Reverend Joseph Perry
- Reverend Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R.
- Sister Carolyn Cossack, S.M.M.I.
- Reverend Edward Oakes, S.J.
- Reverend Timothy Gallagher, O.M.V.

The 2006 meeting will explore Pope Benedict XVI's theology and pontificate. Reflecting his Episcopal motto, *Co-workers of the Truth*, these events will highlight the need for all the baptized, especially religious and consecrated persons, to become "Heralds of Holiness" by putting this truth into practice.

## The Question that Changed My Life

Do you want to know a secret? I don't think my parents even know this, but on February 14, 2001, the most perfect Man in the universe proposed to me... Many people, when hearing this news might ask me, "So, when are you getting married?" "Where's your ring?" and, "Where are you going to live once you are married?". The interesting answers to these questions are, "We haven't set a date yet", "God willing, I will receive the ring in August of 2007", and "We don't know yet; wherever I am sent is where I want to live." Are you confused yet? Let me tell you my story and everything will become crystal clear.

My name is Sister M. Guadalupe Maria. I entered the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady, Mother of the Church on September 8, 2004, and was received into Holy Family Novitiate on August 14, 2005. Ever since I visited the Motherhouse in Baltic, Connecticut, I've known that this is the place for me. The past year has been the happiest and best of my entire life. Last school year, I helped teach first grade and Spanish to first and second graders, and I taught fifth grade CCD. I have been working in our bakery now since June of 2004. This school year, I am taking time off from teaching and studying to dedicate myself to learning about and living my life as a religious woman--as a Bride of Christ.

So, how did I get here? Well, it all started a long time ago. I met Jesus as an infant, as I was raised Catholic. From a young age, I loved to be at Mass, to be serving Jesus in others, and to pray. I attended public school until I started college. Throughout high

school, I was involved in our parish youth group and in our school's service club and classes. Then I went to college at St. Catherine's in St. Paul. That's when it happened. I was a freshman in college, and I was excited to finally be starting my *own* life. One night, Valentine's Day 2001, I was praying and realized how much I was doing my *own* will and running away from God's desires for me. So I prayed one simple sentence: "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening". I never imagined these seven words could change my life forever. The question He asked and my answer did change my life. A still small voice within the depths of my soul spoke, "Will you marry me?" What would you think, if you were 19 years old and the most perfect Man in the universe- Jesus



**"From a young age, I loved to be at Mass, to be serving Jesus in others, and to pray."**

Christ Himself- had asked you if you would be His for all eternity? To be honest, I thought, "I am too young! Who me? I am so imperfect; are you serious?" Suddenly, Love captured my heart and nothing came from my mouth but an enthusiastic, heartfelt, "YES!"

The following year on February 2, 2002, I consecrated my life to Jesus through Mary. That's when Our Lady stepped in and took me by the hand to her Son. The last three years in col-

lege were a time of intense longing and of looking for my future home where I could live my life as a bride of Christ.

That year, I met our Sisters and knew in my heart that there was something about them that I could not live without. They radiated the love and joy of Jesus, and I wanted what they obviously possessed. Three weeks after I graduated from college, I visited the Motherhouse in Baltic, Connecticut. I arrived on a beautiful summer day in June, a Wednesday, and by Thursday night I knew this was home. At the end of my week-long visit, I announced to my new family that I was coming

back in September. We rejoiced together and hugged and jumped up and down. It was an exciting feeling that gave me courage to go back to Minnesota to get ready to leave my family and friends. I knew I was leaving my parents home to come to MY home.

So now you know how I got here. My parent's obviously know how happy I am here, and I suspect they would have figured out without reading this (which I know they will) that Jesus asked me to be His spouse. After all, in several years they will hear my final vows, "From all eternity, You have called me to be your bride..."



## The Concern of Our Loving Mother

One morning, in 1531, on a hill called Tepeyac outside of Mexico City, a poor Indian, Juan Diego, was on his way to Mass when suddenly he heard music so beautiful that it seemed heavenly. And heavenly it was indeed, as it signaled the presence of the Queen of Heaven, who had come to earth with a message of peace for the deeply troubled Mexican nation, and for all mankind. The lovely lady called herself the Virgin of Guadalupe. The apparitions began on December 9 of that year and concluded on December 12, with the proof that the Bishop required of Juan Diego, that he had indeed seen the Mother of God, and that she had requested that a temple be built on that spot where all people could come to worship the one true God. When Juan Diego told the lady that the Bishop requested a proof, she sent him to gather roses from the nearby hill. There he found a type of roses that bloomed only in Spain, and, besides, would not be found in the cold of winter. She herself arranged the roses in the fold of his tunic, called a tilma, and directed him to take them to the bishop as proof. On arriving at the bishop's palace, he opened his tilma to present the roses to the bishop. Miraculously revealed on the tilma was a portrait of a lovely lady, the lady we have since come to know as Our Lady

of Guadalupe. Through these apparitions hope was enkindled in the hearts of a people who had lost hope, their human dignity restored and the message of a loving God revealed to them.

The Holy Mother of God came to earth in defense of the little ones: the poor, the oppressed, the suffering. And she spoke to them, through Juan Diego, in the tender words of a loving mother: "Do not let anything worry you; do not fear sickness, accident or pain. Am I not here, she who is your Mother? Are you not under my protection? Is there anything else you would need?" These words have resounded in the heart of every Mexican since 1531, which is why every year they come with profusions of roses and splendid processions, with words of love and devotion, to greet her in the very first moments of her day, December 12.

Here, in the Diocese of Norwich, the day begins at midnight with the singing of the Mananitas (morning greetings) and finishes in the evening with Holy Mass. The image of our Lady of Guadalupe is decorated in splendid fashion and, beginning at 10:30 p.m., carried in procession across town to one of the churches where Spanish-speaking Catholics worship, Iglesia Sagrado Corazon, arriving there at midnight. There the pilgrims are greeted outside the church door by the pastor and Bishop, and then led in to the church with Mariachi music to sing the Mananitas. The Mananitas consists of songs of love to Our Lady of Guadalupe, a recounting or dramatization of the story, Scripture readings and reflections and an Act of Consecration to Our Lady. Afterwards, everyone meets in the Church hall for typical foods and more mariachi music until about 2:00 a.m. The celebration continues in the evening at the Cathedral with the solemn Mass,

followed by more fiesta.

Our Lady of Guadalupe came to Mexico and changed the history of that country, to be sure, but the beauty, grandeur, and grace of this Marian apparition more than any other is that Our Lady of Guadalupe belongs to all of us, Mexican or not. In these apparitions she asked that a temple be built where all could be welcome, all would be one regardless of differences of race, language or culture, calling us all to remember our dignity as brothers and sisters of the same Father. By these apparitions she did more to evangelize the Americas than all previous missionary efforts combined. That is why our late Holy Father, John Paul II, called the Virgin of Guadalupe "The Star of the New Evangelization" under the title of Patroness of America.

The celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe reminds us of the Gospel message to build temples in our hearts, temples of love, for all people, especially the poor, the sick, the marginalized, the oppressed, the unborn. Like Juan Diego, let us answer Our Lady's call to evangelize by working to transform this culture of death in which we live into a culture of life and love.

## Come, See and Follow



On October 1, 2000, Pope John Paul II canonized a black nun, Sister Josephine Bahkita who had been enslaved in her native Sudan as a small child. Her experiences as a slave, her conversion to Catholicism, and her saintly life as a nun reveal a fascinating story.

Five years later the Holy Spirit has invited another young woman to give her life to the Church by entering the Sisters of Charity of our Lady Mother of the Church. Sister M. Josephine Managura, a native of Burundi, Africa, met our Sisters who are serving on mission at St. Agnes Schools in St. Paul, Minnesota. Sister felt an almost immediately a deepening desire to respond to the grace of her Vocation. Please join us in praying for and welcoming Sister M. Josephine as she begins her journey to be-

come a *Sponsa Christi*. God's gifts are many and Sister's gentleness and interior beauty will be a great blessing to the Church and to our Congregation.

## Cast Out Into the Deep



## College Students

You are invited to a weekend of  
Prayer, Reflection  
Work and Recreation  
With the Sisters of Charity  
of  
Our Lady Mother of the Church

Discover what it means to be a  
Bride of Christ

March 10-13, 2006

Arrival: Friday, March 10, 2006  
4:00 p.m.

Departure: Monday, March 13, 2006  
4:00 p.m.

Holy Family Motherhouse  
Baltic, CT 06330

Contact:  
Mother Mary Luke, SCMC  
Directress of Vocations

(860) 822-8241

E-mail:

Tjtmvocscmc@juno.com

## Saint Joseph Home And Shelter



In February of 1989 the first homeless family entered Holy Family Home and Shelter. Since then more than 1,000 families have been received. Historically we have accepted any composition of a family, single mothers, and two parent households. The majority of residents have been children. The children range in age from infants to teens.

The length of stay varies according to need. There is in place a grievance policy for residents. We have not experienced a high return rate, even though our families are not always able to find affordable housing (in recent years we have seen the return of adult children.) Several families have become involved with the transitional housing program in Windham, which works to ensure housing stability. Recently Holy Family was given a grant through the Department of Housing and Urban Development to create a Supportive Housing Program.

The Shelter offers three meals a day, on-site free laundry privileges, and a free phone for local calls, and on-site workshops for parents--in housing, employment, health, etc.; also the proximity of the Windham Adult Education program located adjacent to the Shelter offers an opportunity for our parents to attend ESL classes or pursue their GED. The Shelter is close to the University of Connecticut, Eastern Connecticut University and Quinnebaug Vocational Community College. Since August of 1993 there has been an on-site education program. This program fosters ongoing educational opportunities for the children of the Shelter.

From the beginning, volunteers have been the backbone of the shelter. Volunteers assist with educational needs, cooking, child-care, cleaning, transportation, etc. Along with the student volunteers the shelter is privileged to have interns who are working at the shelter as part of a program of study and there are students who have work/study money that allows them to work at the shelter during the academic year (and in some cases over the summer), and are paid by their university. A core of eight adult volunteers provide support with coordinating special activities, writing thank you notes, helping with mailings and coordinating the annual Christmas Shopping Extravaganza for residents and former residents alike.

There is a staff of 6 full time employees that includes one Sister of Charity and 6 part time personnel. Key positions in the shelter are: the Executive Director; administrative assistant who tracks statistics and does the books; service coordinator who oversees to all of the residents' needs; an education coordinator that sees to the education needs of the children; a public relations person who maintains Shelter visibility in the area and who also serves as the volunteer director overseeing all the work to be done by the volunteers; three night security persons who ensure the safety and well being of all the occupants of the shelter during the night; and a cook, who sees to the nutritional and dietary needs of the residents.



Sister M. Peter, SCMC  
Public Relations and Volunteer Coordinator

The Shelter is a member of the Community Assistance Network (CAN), the Windham County Homeless Coalition/Continuum of Care, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, the Community Reinvestment Act of Liberty Bank (CRA), and works closely with Windham Family Living, Community Food Collaborative, and Ending a transitional housing program, the Northeast ComHunger CT.



### *We'll Be Home for Christmas!*

The Sisters in Janesville, Wisconsin, and St. Paul, Minnesota, have had the great pleasure of coming home to the Motherhouse for Christmas. The Sisters from St. Agnes (Sister M. Maria, Sister Mary Kathleen, and Sister Catarina) in St. Paul traveled to the Motherhouse on December 19<sup>th</sup>. They almost missed the second plane and experienced the "flying nun" scenario in more ways than one! Thankfully, they made it to the plane at the last minute!



The Sisters have been having a very blessed and enjoyable time praying, working, and recreating with our Motherhouse Sisters. They worked in the Christmas bow and wrapping department, and Sister Catarina is in seventh heaven doing dishes again in the kitchen! They also had fun



cooking omelets for the Mothers and Sisters--now what did that Sister order again? Sister Marie Andre invited the Sisters to decorate doors. This is always a treat- a chance to share Christmas joy through spiritually decorated Christmas scenes.

The most beautiful moments have been praying together especially at the midnight Mass. What great joy we experienced when Mother Anthony laid Baby Jesus in the Manger in Chapel. The liturgy and music were beautiful. We are so blessed to have the Friars of the Immaculate say Holy Mass for us.

The Sisters also were thrilled to see Sister

Josephine Bahkita, our new postulant from St. Agnes Parish. She just radiates!! We also had the pleasant surprise of seeing another St. Agnes newly made friend visiting our Novitiate.

Our Sisters from St. Elizabeth Home arrived at the Motherhouse on December 26<sup>th</sup>. More joy added to the ever-present Christmas spirit. Our ministry to others continues even outside the apostolates of teaching and healthcare. As Sister Ann waited for the plane at O'Hare airport, a gentleman came up to her and asked her if she had a rosary to give him. Sister had just one, which was actually blessed by Pope John Paul II. Sister's little treasure is now leading another soul to the True Treasure, Our Lord Jesus Christ.



Sister Marie Lucette bravely battled a bad cold and is now back on her feet serving others as usual. Her joyful presence lights up the room and her laughter is contagious (hopefully, her cold isn't!)

The Sisters are looking forward to Knutzel Day (Community Day). We have a few songs and skits planned. The Sisters also prepared Holy Hours for our Forty Hours Devotion on December 30-31<sup>st</sup>.

The Sisters will be returning soon to their convents in Janesville and St. Paul. Coming home to the Motherhouse has filled the Sisters with the Christmas Peace. The time here has been so rejuvenating. Monsignor Zwysen stated in his counsel to the Sisters that they should always have a great love for the Motherhouse. Being home for Christmas has been so rewarding. The Sisters are strengthened to serve the Lord and one another in their respective apostolates. They already look forward to their return in the summer!



On December 2, 2005, at 7:15 p.m., the Sisters of Charity at Holy Family Motherhouse were expecting some very special guests. It had been decided by several members of the town, to initiate a first Annual Old-fashioned Village Christmas caroling and torchlight parade. Everyone was invited to go back in time, when friends and neighbors came together to celebrate the Christmas Season walking around the village, singing carols and bringing Christmas Greetings to everyone. One of their designated stops was our Motherhouse. The Sisters both young and old were ready to greet the carolers as they approached the front door. Their visit to the convent was delightful. The Sisters joined in singing favorite Christmas songs and hymns. Meanwhile, the Novitiate Sisters had prepared hot chocolate and cookies for our chilly visitors and enjoyed mingling among the group distributing the treat. For many Sisters it was a time to greet and exchange brief conversations with friends old and new. Since we were not the last stop for our carolers, they expressed their gratitude for such a warm and gracious welcome. They promised to return each year and hoped that many others would join their group. As they were leaving, we all joined in singing to one another "We wish you a Merry Christmas."



### Gem Journal



May Christ give to you, His peace in your soul, His presence in your heart, His power in your life.



The ultimate miracle of love is this-that love is given to us to give to one another.



He who is filled with love- is filled with God himself.



Some gifts are big, others are small. Gifts from the heart are the best gifts of all.