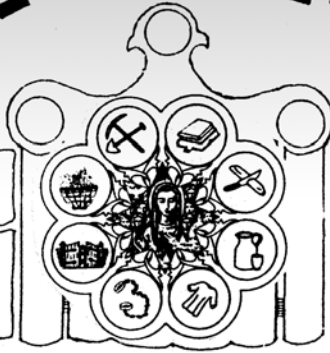


Spring Edition

# THE GATEWAY

Volume V  
Issue III

TO JESUS



THROUGH MARY

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

“There is a Time For Every  
Matter Under the Heavens...”

Several groups in the Diocese of Norwich had made plans to be in Rome in April of this year. Providentially, it was at this time that our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, went back to the Lord.

Jackie Keller, the Diocesan Communications Director was one of these travelers whose trip to Italy turned into a pilgrimage. She and her twin sister had been planning the trip for a year to see the Holy Father whom she had photographed in Boston in 1979.

During Holy Week and Easter, Pope John Paul's health deteriorated. He died on April 2. Jackie's trip had been scheduled for April 4.

After their arrival in Rome, Jackie and her sister journeyed to St. Peter's Basilica, at 4:00 a.m. to join the thousands of pilgrims waiting to pay their last respects to Pope John Paul II.

It wasn't until 4:00 p.m. that they made their way into St. Peter's. There, so very small, was the body of Pope John Paul II, dressed in the chasuble of a priest and the miter of a Bishop. His silver crozier with the crucified Christ was tucked under his left arm.

During the twelve hours of waiting, they had walked in peace with our sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus from around the world.

Hoping to see the Holy Father were also Parishioners from Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Quaker Hill, CT. Monsignor Thomas Bride, Pastor of this parish had made arrangements for his group to visit Rome and other shrines throughout Italy. Having heard about the death of Pope John Paul II their plans quickly

changed. “We had a great desire to see and honor the Holy Father.” Monsignor Bride commented “We were very moved by his death ... The death of the Holy Father-this now became our focal point.” They too waited in line twelve hours to pay their respects to the Holy Father. Although they could pause in front of the Pope's body for only a few seconds before being herded along by security guards, Monsignor Bride said it was worth the journey.

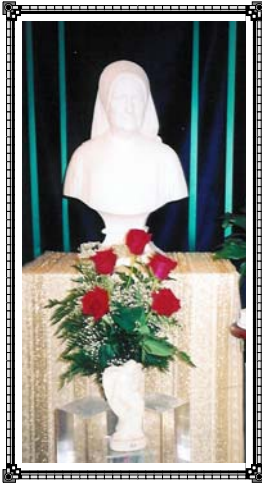
Occasionally a group from our diocesan high school located in Montville CT, plans a trip abroad. This year the students from St. Bernards planned to tour Rome just at the time of the Conclave. “Little did they know that right there in the Sistine Chapel, the Cardinals were concluding the voting and election of the new Pope.”

Unaware that a new Pope had been elected, the students walked on to Trevi Fountain. It was then they heard the bells and the shouts of “Papa” or Pope in Italian. Three students and a chaperone ran to St. Peter's Square. It was perfect timing as they got there just as the newly elected Pope walked out onto the balcony.

Here, at our Motherhouse in Baltic, the Sisters gathered to watch these historic events on television. An instantaneous applause filled the room at the announcement of our new Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI.



## Remember Your Leaders...



Saturday, June 4, 2005, has come and gone leaving behind an event long to be remembered by the Sisters of Charity of our Lady Mother of the Church. This day had been set aside to honor the Foundress of our Congregation--Mother Marie Alma Lafond. We would like to share with you some of the ways in which the Sisters chose to

pay tribute to such an extraordinary Religious.

The program for the day began with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at 9:00 a.m. in our Motherhouse chapel. All of our Sisters who could be with us were present. The sung Mass included those special hymns to Jesus so loved by our Foundress. The remainder of the program for the day was held in our novitiate.

Many years ago, two busts of our Founder, Monsignor Zwysen had been sculptured. One was placed in a prominent spot in the Motherhouse proper while the other is now in our Novitiate. As part of our tribute to our Foundress, a similar sculpture of Mother was designed and presented on this special day. The background used for the display testified to Mother Marie Alma's love for angels. This was an unexpected and wonderful surprise for the Sisters.

As in most Communities, there are Sisters who are very gifted writers. The words composed and dedicated to Mother Marie Alma were sung to the melody of "You Raise Me Up." It truly expressed the admiration and love we have for our Foundress.

"Launch out, O dare, to sail for deeper waters.  
Do not look back to older failing dreams.  
In your strength we follow through the breakers.  
You raised us up to where we long to be."

The Senior Sisters thought that they would like to sing one of Mother Marie Alma's favorite French songs "'L'ange et L'ame". They were so enjoyable as they gathered together, some with canes, others with walkers and still others in wheelchairs. It was one of the highlights of the day.

It was also very moving to hear the historical accounts of events leading up to and transpiring after becoming a new Congregation--Sisters of Charity of Our Lady Mother of the Church. These accounts included a video, oral tributes, and a power point presentation. The theme for the day was one of gratitude and unity.

Other unique projects consisted in such treasures as:

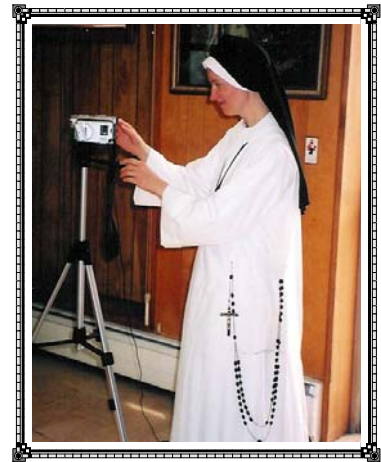
- a daily point book arranged according to topics with sayings of both Monsignor Zwijnsen and Mother Marie Alma
- a story book about the life of Mother Marie Alma written and illustrated for young children
- a variety of other tributes such as prayers, collages, poetry, a personal letter to Mother Marie Alma

One other interesting gift in progress is to put our Holy Rule on a CD and a cassette tape to use when traveling. The readers chosen to participate in this endeavor began with a Bishop, a Monsignor, a Mother General, and many different Sisters of our Congregation. We are looking forward to its completion.



At about 8:30 in the evening, after a wonderful and enlightening day together, we joined one another in song. The first selection was written on the occasion of the founding of our new Congregation on June 4, 1970. The second, often sung at Community gatherings, is entitled "Are Ye Able?" And we seldom forget to sing the hymn "Hail Holy Queen" to Our Lady before leaving the Motherhouse.

Now, in June, 2005, after 35 years as a Congregation, we were privileged to step back in time and remember a woman--a leader who spoke the Word of God to us. "See how her life ended and imitate her faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings."



## A New Endeavor

For a few years, we have been asked by the Administration at St. Agnes Schools in St. Paul, Minnesota to send Sisters to teach in their combination high school-elementary school complex. We have been advised to seriously consider the opportunity to reach out to other areas of the country.

After a visit to St. Paul, and much prayer and consultation, we have accepted this invitation to become a part of the beautiful family found at St. Agnes Parish and schools.

The following, written by a ninth grader at St. Agnes, provides information about the new home of three of our Sisters:

The St. Agnes Schools, located two miles from downtown St. Paul, Minnesota, have been serving students in the Archdiocese of St. Paul, Minnesota for over 115 years. The combination of the Lower Middle, and Upper Schools provides a Christ centered education for more than 500 students in grades K-12.

The St. Agnes Schools enjoy a rich history, which is full of faith and tradition. The schools opened their doors for the first time on September 5, 1888, to 160 students under the direction of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Within the next few years after opening, the schools more than tripled their enrollment and set to build new facilities to encompass the growing student body. In addition to the school buildings the campus was also built to include a rectory and parish office, a convent and the Church of St. Agnes founded in 1887 and internationally known for its excellence in sacred and liturgical music.

Today, the St. Agnes Schools are alive with activity

from the first bell of the day until the students are dismissed and beyond. Students receive the finest education in the core curriculum subjects of Religion, English, Mathematics, Sciences, and Social Studies. Additional opportunities are available in the strong fine arts program offered at St Agnes, which includes theatre, art, and the award-winning choir that has received distinction throughout the Twin Cities.

Students also participate in further activities such as athletics, Respect for Life Club, Campus Ministry, Student Council, Yearbook/Newspaper, and the renowned Spring Musical. The teachers and students at St. Agnes are proud of their active school community.

Since 1888, The St. Agnes Schools have existed to proclaim the Gospel message of Jesus Christ to the students they serve. The philosophy of the schools is based on and centered around the teachings of Jesus Christ, as given by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, providing a strong foundation for each student to be successful and grow in love for God and neighbor. In 2005, the schools are continuing to flourish with increasing enrollment and eagerly welcome the Sisters of Charity, of Our Lady Mother of the Church to the teaching faculty.

More information about the schools and church can be found on the internet: [www.stagnesschools.org](http://www.stagnesschools.org) or [www.stagnes.net](http://www.stagnes.net)

(right to left)

Mother M. Anthony  
SCMC

Mother Mary Luke  
SCMC

Mr. Jeffrey  
Bregman

Headmaster of K-12  
St. Agnes Schools



## God is Love



Sister Christina Van Beck

As in the lives of most Sisters, the path to the discovery of my religious vocation was not a straight one.

As a child I had some exposure to religious life. I was educated by Benedictine Sisters in Minnesota and have some distant relatives who are religious. One particular religious, my great-uncle Brother Wallace, a Trappist monk, intrigued me. He would come on a home visit every few years and would always spend time with my family. His kindness and quiet manner presented religious life as holy and mysterious, although at the time I wouldn't have been able to put this impression into words. One day I remember asking Mom, "When Brother Wallace dies, he's going to go straight to heaven isn't he?" My impression of his holiness gave me the idea that being a religious gave me a one-way ticket to heaven.

While growing up, however, I never considered becoming a Sister. In fact, I thought it would be a very boring life. I grew up in a family of seven children and our house was always busy with activity. I couldn't imagine my life as an adult to be any different than that.

The possibility of a religious vocation came to me when I was in High School on a retreat. I had been involved in T.E.C. (Teens Encounter Christ) for about two years and had gradually opened myself up to God, desiring more and more to live a true

Christian life. At the end of one retreat, a priest gave a talk and invited all the young people there to be open to a religious vocation. The openness I had in my heart to the priest's words surprised me. It was the first time that I considered this a personal invitation and not just a standard invitation of recruitment.

During Spring break of my freshman year of college, I traveled with a group of young people from the Newman center on campus to Appalachia to work with the poor there. This was a totally new experience for me and opened my eyes to the needy. During this trip I felt a desire growing in myself to listen to God to ask Him what He wanted me to do with my life. Up until then I had my own dreams of becoming an elementary school teacher, getting married, having a family, settling in Minnesota, etc. I realized then that there was a whole world out there waiting for me and that God had a plan for my life. It was my job to find out what that was.

So I began my search! The fall of my sophomore year of college I wrote to the Poor Clares in Sauk Rapids, MN and explained my feelings to them. It was a "safe" step for me at the time because I didn't

Only through following  
God wherever He leads  
will true love, joy and  
peace be found.

want any one to know that I was looking into religious life. The Poor Clares kindly wrote me back and suggested that I contact the Vocation director of the diocese at the time. They also gave me some names of religious communities I could write to. I explored both avenues and began to write to Sister Katherine, my cousin who lived in one of the communities mentioned, the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady Mother of the Church. Sister Katherine wrote me a joyful letter back and that was the beginning of our four year letter exchange. When I look back, I can see the importance of her letters in my life. They kept the flame of my vocation alive as I waited (often impatiently) for God to show me where to go.

Between my junior and senior years of college I had the unique and life-changing experience of traveling with N.E.T. (National Evangelization Teams). Through N.E.T., I spent ten months traveling around different areas of the United States with other young people, giving retreats to youth. During that year I

grew very close to God. I developed friendships with other Catholics my age who expressed a desire to grow in holiness. During our travels we often met religious and many times we stayed in convents overnight. I continued to feel I had a religious vocation and continued to write to Sister Katherine.

At the end of N.E.T. I returned to college to complete my final year of school, planning to look for a teaching job after graduation. I was still open to religious life, but God still hadn't shown me where to go. It was that summer that I was invited to go to Sister Katherine's Perpetual Profession in Baltic, CT. After some prayer, I decided to travel with her family to Baltic. My intention was to finish college but I figured it wouldn't hurt to at least "check out" this religious congregation.

Sister Katherine's Profession Mass touched me very much. She was radiant. I'll never forget what she said to her father when her family congratulated her after the Mass. She said, "Dad you have a new Son-in-law!" Mother Marie Alma, our Mother Foundress and Superior General at the time, spent some time with me. Her invitation to come and be a Bride of Christ affected me very much. Still I felt I needed to go back to Minnesota and finish college.

My last year of college was a busy, yet lonely one as I tried to live a solid Christian life. I could see as time went on that some of the worldly things I once valued no longer had meaning. Still, I didn't know where I should go to fulfill God's Will for my life.

The summer after I graduated from college I moved to St. Paul, MN, to live with some acquaintances I had met during my involvement with

N.E.T. I decided to pray a novena to St. Therese early that summer with the intention of asking for some sign as to where God wanted me to be. When I completed the nine day novena, I had a deep longing for religious life. One day when I was praying I sensed God was saying to me that whatever He wanted me to do would require taking a risk. I had an image in my mind of walking in the shallow waters of a lake with God asking me to go deeper, to trust him totally. That evening I decided to look again at the vocation brochures I had sent for. The pamphlet on top had Mother Marie Alma standing on a dock with other Sisters with the words, "Come. Launch into deep waters with us" underneath the picture. That confirmed in me the religious congregation I was being called to enter. I called Mother Marie Alma the next day and entered the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady Mother of the Church two months later.

When I was a little girl growing up in Minnesota, one of our family vacations consisted of going to Itasca State Park in northern Minnesota. It is there that I had the opportunity to walk over the stepping stone which cross the beginnings of the Mississippi river that ends its 2,552 mile winding journey to the Gulf of Mexico. I like to compare the path to the discovery of my religious vocation to those stepping stones. As a little girl I was amazed that the start of such a mighty river could begin so simply, I am now amazed that the start of such a beautiful life as a Bride of Christ could begin with so many and unique interesting steps. Looking back, I can see that God planned each stepping stone for me and I am grateful for each one of them because they led me to Him!

My prayer is that all young people will be open to the gift of a religious vocation and have the courage to follow the path God has planned for them. Only through following God wherever He leads will true love, joy and peace be found.



## Those Little Joys of Life St. Elizabeth Nursing Home Janesville, Wisconsin



Sister Christopher  
Food Service Director is involved in  
new programs

Our latest seasonal mini-newsletter, we wrote about a newly organized group of the “Red Hat Society” recently begun at St. Elizabeth Nursing Home. Monthly socials are planned to encourage fellowship among the women residents.

Many new and creative programs have been initiated since Mother Marie Julie has become the Administrator of St. Elizabeth. In addition to the “Red Hat Society,” there is program known to many as the “Eden Project.” The original program, which began in England, was called the “Eden Alternative.” It was a scientific proposal that the elderly should not live in an institution but rather in a “garden” exposing the residents of nursing homes to children, plants, animals, and birds as part of their day to day environment.” Small children love visiting the residents.

At St. Elizabeth, this program has been part of the joy of each new day. The residents spend hours watching the “several bunnies” running, hopping and skipping throughout their inner courtyard. In the corner of the same courtyard there is a beautiful fish pond with flowing water, rocks, goldfish and sometimes even Canada geese who roam around acting as if they “owned the place.”

Along the hallways of St. Elizabeth, one may find fish tanks, bird cages, and plants. Occasionally, the activities Director will add to the excitement of the

day by having other animals visit including llamas and miniature horses. This project helps to enliven the Residents’ environment making their last years full of happiness and joy filled moments.

Congratulations to  
Susan Cunningham

for her knowledge of our Faith and  
her perseverance in answering  
**100** Three Q’s correctly

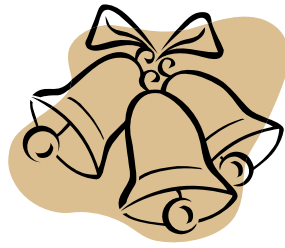
## *I Am the Bread of Life*

Each year, on the feast of Corpus Christi, we adore Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament while in procession to and at several different altars prepared in advance by groups of Sisters at the Motherhouse and from local branch houses. The procession begins in our Motherhouse chapel and continues on to our solarium for our senior Sisters, followed by a stop in our generalate, our novitiate, and the high school side of our building. One additional altar is prepared near a statue of Our Lady on the Motherhouse grounds.

We have great devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and daily set aside time, when most of the Community can be present, for an hour of adoration. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is a treasured part of our prayer life on Friday and Sunday evenings.

O Sacrament  
Most Holy,  
O Sacrament  
Divine, All  
praise and  
all thanks-  
giving be  
every mo-  
ment thine.





## Celebrating 25 Years of Joy Filled Consecration



The Sisters of Charity of Our Lady Mother of the Church rejoiced with three Silver Jubilarians:

Sister M. John Baptist Donovan from Reading, Massachusetts

Sister M. Marie Andre Wilson from St. Louis Missouri

Sister M. Cabrini Ulaskiewicz from Harrington, New Hampshire

This event was held on June 12th at Holy Family Motherhouse in Baltic, Connecticut. A spirit of peace and gratitude permeated the celebration which began with a beautifully sung 11:00 a.m. Mass in the Sisters' chapel. This was followed by a banquet attended by the Sisters of the Community. During this meal, in song, the Sisters expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the Jubilarians for their fidelity exemplified by the witness of their consecrated lives of love and service.

Later on in the day, each Jubilarian presented a reflection on how God touched her life of love and service during these past twenty-five years. Their themes included God's faithfulness and mercy, service, and the love and support shown to them by members of the Congregation.

The Sisters also presented to the three "silver brides" a whimsical tribute--a tradition retained on these delightful days of Community rejoicing.

The Jubilarians were joined by their families for a day of celebration on Sunday, June 19th, as they continue their anniversary year. How appropriate that this is the Year of the Eucharist, which means "Thanksgiving."



## Gem Journal



One evening an old fellow told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, my son, the battle is between 2 "wolves" inside us. One is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego.

The other is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: "Which wolf wins?"

The old fellow simply replied, "The one you feed"