

Mount Grace Newsletter

May to October 2005

Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters

1438 East Warne Ave.
St. Louis, Missouri 63107
www.mountgraceconvent.org

*O Christ Child dear, O Christ Child sweet,
A thousand times thee do I greet.
How shall I render thanks to thee
For coming graciously to me?
I offer you a crib—my heart.
Oh, enter in and ne'er depart.*

—Mother Mary Michael
our Co-foundress



You and your loved ones will be gratefully remembered in our Advent and Christmas Liturgies December 16 to 24 and December 26 to January 3 and in our Eucharistic Celebrations on Christmas Day.

**In the Love of the Holy Infant,
Sister Mary Gemma and all the Sisters**

Our 2005 Corpus Christi Procession



“Christ is truly present among us in the Eucharist. It is

a dynamic presence that grasps us, to make us his own, to make us assimilate him. Christ draws us to himself: he makes us come out of ourselves to make us all one with him.”

—Pope Benedict XVI

The Year of the Eucharist has come to a close, but we continue to honor the Real Presence as the focal point of our community life in our cloister and in the Church as a whole. As it says in our Constitutions, at the celebration of the Eucharist we find strength for selfless, humble service. Receiving his Body and Blood during Holy Mass and contemplating his love during Adoration, we are fortified to go forth as witnesses to the transforming power of Christ. Differences in age, culture, temperament, and outlook take second place to the love of God which binds us together, and we know that we serve Christ himself when we serve each other. Unity in the midst of diversity is sustained through the Eucharist, as St. Paul told the Corinthians almost 2000 years ago: although we are many we are one body because we all share in the one bread.

Praise and Thanksgiving to the Holy Triune God for My Vocation!

After **Sister Mary Cordula** first stepped across the cloister boundary at our convent in Bad Driburg, Germany on June 5, 1952 she almost succumbed to a case of homesickness. However, she was able to ride out the rough times and now she has occasion to rejoice in the Lord for the grace of being able to celebrate the golden jubilee of her religious profession. The Lord who is faithful helped her not only to overcome her homesickness but gave her the strength to say “yes” to the call to be a missionary. One week after making her first profession of vows in May of 1955, Sister Mary Cordula received her assignment to come to the United States.

She has served in our convents in Philadelphia, Austin (now closed), and here in St. Louis where she is currently in charge of the dining room. As the day of her Jubilee approached, Sister expressed the wish for a quiet remembrance of her commitment to her Spouse and a Mass offered by our chaplain Fr. Felix. However, it is hard to keep too quiet about the beautiful witness of fifty years of loving service to the Lord, and when our employees found out about our Jubilarian, they contributed to Sister’s celebration with some lovely gifts, including a cake and a golden hibiscus plant that now graces our garden. Her sisters and sister-in-law in Germany were able to share in her joy when Sister Mary Cordula sent some photos of her happy day. Grateful for the gift of fifty-and-counting years in her contemplative-missionary vocation, Sister continues to sing the song of Mary: “The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name!”



Sister Mary Cordula (top) and Sister Mary Martina (bottom)

The birthday of **Sister Mary Martina** on August 10 was another reason for celebrating the fidelity of the Lord to his handmaids. The oldest member of our Congregation, Sister turned 99 and began the 100th year of her life with quiet trust in God’s loving providence. Sister entered our Motherhouse in Steyl, Holland in 1924 at the age of 18. In 1928 she was named one of the pioneers to start a new foundation in St. Louis. She traveled to the United States with our co-foundress Mother Mary Michael, but ended up at our convent in Philadelphia for the next sixteen years before receiving another appointment to Mount Grace. Since 1944 she has been a pillar of our community, always ready to lend a helping hand and delighting to keep the nocturnal adoration. Gifted with a sharp mind, she was the one everyone turned to when they needed to know someone’s birthday, feast day, or date of entrance. Sister is bedridden now, but up to past her 98th

birthday she was still moving about with the help of her walker.

It was a big sacrifice for her to no

longer be able to attend the Divine Office or come to the community recreation, but she cheerfully accepts her sufferings as the will of God and offers them up for the salvation of souls. Sister Mary Martina enjoys receiving visits from her Sisters and can still recognize individual Sisters coming down the hall even before they reach her room. She was able to come to the dining room on her birthday to enjoy a piece of the beautiful cake given by loving friends of the convent.

When the Sisters offered her their congratulations, her reply was to deflect the praise to its proper place: “Thanks be to God!”



Knowledge of Scripture is Knowledge of Christ; Knowledge of Christ Leads Us to Serve Others

As young people from the Archdiocese of St. Louis were traveling to the diocese of Roermond in the Netherlands to participate in the Days in the Diocese activities prior to World Youth Day, the diocese of Roermond came to us in the person of **Father Jan Liesen**. Father Liesen, a scripture scholar and teacher at the seminary in Roermond, helped us to discover a new richness and depth in the Holy Bible. By taking the Gospel of Mark verse-by-verse, he taught us ways to apply historical context and Old Testament prophecies in order to gain new insight into the Word of God and life of Jesus. We enjoyed his seminar immensely and hope he will be able to return in the future in order to share more of his love and knowledge of Scripture with us. In early September, we were delighted when **Father Melvin James, SVD** came to give a sharing on his missionary labors for the Church. Father James is preparing for a new mission in Tijuana, Mexico where he will oversee efforts to begin a new halfway house for former prison inmates. He will be working with Mother Antonia, a dynamic woman who began a prison ministry helping these people to turn their lives around. Mother Antonia has founded a religious congregation, the Sister Servants of the Eleventh Hour, for women who later in life also feel the call to give themselves completely to Christ and his poor. Hearing Father James speak gave us new impetus to redouble our prayers for the Missions and for those who dedicate their lives to bringing Jesus to others.



*Fr. Melvin James, SVD (left)
and Fr. Jan Liesen (right)*



How Great is the Goodness of the Lord—Blessings Abound!

Everyone was curious when what looked like a large pole appeared in our garden near the statue of St. Joseph. Soon the “pole” sprouted huge leaves and we discovered what it really was—a banana tree given us by our devoted workmen. We watched with interest as flowers and then small bananas formed. For our Sisters from the Philippines and Brazil, it brought a touch of nostalgia to see this tropical plant again, and for the Sisters from more northern climes, it was their first time to see how bananas grow. We all marveled at God’s wonderful creation! ✠✠✠ We are now able to “sing a new song unto the Lord” thanks to a generous benefactor who gave us a beautiful Yamaha piano that she is no longer able to use. Music can be heard coming from the Marian Hall as Sisters practice for the Divine Office or enjoy playing a tune. The budding pianists in the community can now use their skills to give glory to God! ✠✠✠ When a summer storm once again knocked out our electricity as we were praying Vespers, we calmly finished the psalm we were singing and then waited while the organist moved her music to the battery-

operated keyboard. Lanterns were brought so she could read the music. Our chaplain Fr. Felix was also prepared, and mounted the steps to the Eucharistic Throne carrying a flashlight in order to give the Benediction blessing. Even without power, we tried to carry out our schedule as well as possible. We enjoyed a candlelight dinner and then worked assembly-line style to carry water heated on the gas stove in the basement kitchen up the stairs so that we could wash the dishes. Rejoicing when the power was restored during Father’s homily the next day at Mass, we blew out the emergency candles and put away our penlights. As our hymn of praise to our Creator continues rain or snow, light or darkness, we greatly appreciate another thoughtful benefactor who has provided us with a small but powerful flashlight for each Sister. The next time we lose our electricity, we will be like the wise virgins in Jesus’ parable, ready with lamps alight!





Building Community: We are One in the Lord!

“The fraternal life is the privileged place in which to discern and accept God’s will, and to walk together with one mind and heart. . . . Life in community is thus the particular sign, before the Church and society, of the bond which comes from the same call and the common desire—not withstanding differences of race and origin, language and culture—to be obedient to that call.”

(from the Papal Document on Religious Life, *Vita Consecrata*)

One of the traditions left us by our Founder St. Arnold Janssen is our annual Family Feast. St. Arnold wanted every Sister to know that she is appreciated. With a special day of games, fun, and conversation we celebrate the unique gift that each Sister is to the community. The role of each one is valuable, and we rejoice in how our individual gifts contribute to the building up of the one Body of Christ. This year we chose for our theme “Joyful Adorers” as a reminder that our time before the Eucharist in prayer and contemplation of the Triune God is the foundation of our community life. We began the day with Morning Prayer and Mass offered for the Sisters and then enjoyed breakfast with a festive fare and a poem written by one of the Sisters. Entertainment throughout the day included games and an “Adoration and Praise” dance performed by two Sisters. A display area in the corridor showcased the crocheting talents we have at Mount Grace. Many laughs were had when the Sisters discovered that the twenty-four adoring angels decorating a poster board had familiar faces. It was a guessing game: everyone tried to find her own face and see how many of her Sisters she could recognize with wings and a halo! At the close of the day when we returned to the chapel for Night Prayer, we gave thanks to God for so many blessings and a beautiful day. The last words to ring out on this night as every night were also given us by our Founder: “Mary, with your loving Son, bless us each and every one!”

***From our family to yours:
Wishing you LOVE, JOY, and PEACE during
this holy season
and blessings for the New Year!***

