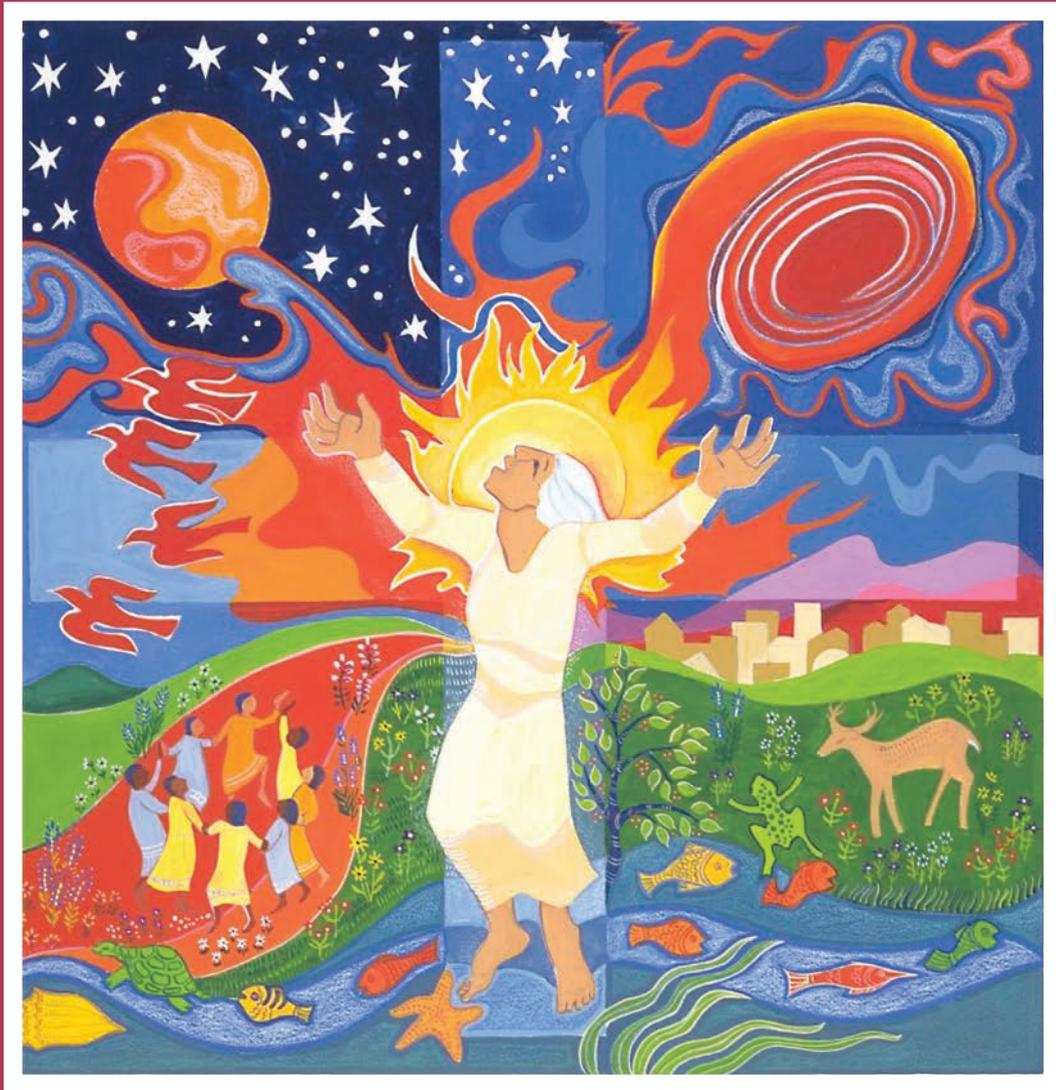


# SCARBORO MISSIONS

May-June 2012 \$1.00

SPECIAL ISSUE

## *Our Lady's Missionaries*



*Called to live in communion*

# Dear friend of Scarboro Missions...

Thank you for your faithful prayers and generosity to us. We will continue to be good stewards of all your gifts as we put ourselves at the service of others. Please note our envelope inside this issue for your convenience.

We welcome enquiries about Scarboro's priest and lay missionary programs.

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Scarboro Missions magazine publishes four editions each year, plus the calendar. The articles published represent the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Society.

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COVER: God's Ecstasy. Permission given by Ansgar Holmberg, CSJ.

## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Communion

By Sr. Suzanne Marshall, O.L.M.



*“This is what God asks of you, only this, to act with justice, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God”*  
(Micah 6:8)

At first glance this message from the prophet Micah may sound rather simple, but it is really a tall order. And if we were to live our lives according to this prophetic stance what a different place our world would be. Can we do it? I don't think we have a choice if we want to sustain life on this planet, if we want to leave a world for all the children who come after us and who have the right to a life of blessings.

What exactly is the prophet Micah talking about when he speaks of justice? Biblical justice demands right relationships among all God's creatures. This includes us but goes well beyond us to all that God has made, “and God saw that it was good.” All life is interconnected. We are all in relationship. We are all one family. We are all God's dearly beloved.

If we could uncover all that we hope for, all that we think we need to be happy, if we could get past our fears and prejudices, we would find at the core of our being a deep thirst for communion with God and with each other. That is our peace. That is who we are.

And if we really tried to live this justice, we would find that our love for each other would be quite tender, and that only through God's grace and not our own efforts can we even try to live as we should. So love and humility fall into their place. Does that make sense? Let's go for it.∞

### THANK YOU!

Our Lady's Missionaries are grateful to Kathy Gillis, editor of *Scarboro Missions* magazine, to Patricia Kay, OLM, who worked with Kathy to prepare this issue, and to all at Scarboro Missions for this and the countless other ways they offer us friendship and support.



CANADIAN CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION FOR  
**Development and Peace**

The General Council of Scarboro Missions sent the following letter on April 3, 2012, in response to the funding cuts to Development and Peace. For actions you can take to protest these cuts, please visit: [www.devpo.org/en/more-than-ever](http://www.devpo.org/en/more-than-ever)

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

We were deeply disappointed to learn recently that the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) drastically cut two thirds of its contribution towards the work of Development and Peace over the next five years.

Development and Peace is the official international development organization of the Catholic Church in Canada. Since its founding in 1967 Development and Peace has supported some 16,000 development and emergency relief projects in nearly 80 countries of the Global South—made possible because of a partnership established in 1968 between Development and Peace and CIDA.

Scarboro Missions is a Canadian society of Catholic priests and laity dedicated to global mission. We have long appreciated the important contribution of Development and Peace towards addressing the root causes of poverty, supporting community-based sustainable development and raising Canadian public awareness of global poverty issues.

This recent CIDA funding decision means that its annual support for the regular program of Development and Peace drops by more than five million dollars and is designated for only seven countries out of twenty proposed. Sudden and drastic reductions in CIDA funding as well as long delays in funding announcements seriously disrupt effective development work. We are gravely concerned that this decision by CIDA will have a devastating impact on Development and Peace partners in the Global South. It will diminish the capacity of Development and Peace to carry out its vital work which is also supported by Catholics from across Canada.

We noted that only one of the designated seven countries is in Africa where there is a greater need for international cooperation assistance and where Development and Peace has always been very actively involved in supporting development efforts.

We are very concerned that this decision, along with others at CIDA, appears to represent a shift in direction for Canada's international assistance, including a move away from poverty reduction efforts where the need is greatest. We urge a review of this matter.

As well as International Cooperation Minister Bev Oda, we request your personal intervention in a review and reversal of this CIDA funding cut to Development and Peace. Your urgent attention would be most appreciated and we look forward to your response.

Fr. Jack Lynch, SFM, Superior General

Fr. Mike Traher, SFM, Vicar General

Fr. John Carten, SFM, Councillor

# The bond of unity

*Muslims and Christians on the island of Mindanao, Philippines, join together to build peace*

By Sr. Lorie Nuñez, O.L.M.

St. Paul wrote to the Colossians to encourage and guide them as new Christians. After calling them saints, he explained to them about true Christian behavior as in 3:13-15: “whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.”

My interfaith dialogue ministry in the Philippines is a realization of Paul’s letter about love being the bond of unity. The work we do is a simple act of breaking and sharing bread with Muslim friends.

The roots of conflict between Christians and Muslims in the Philippines can be traced back to the advent of colonization when the Spaniards used religion as an instrument for conquest. Long before the Spanish arrived, the Muslims of the archipelago had already established a stable and prosperous society. The Spaniards used Christian converts to fight against the Muslims in the name of the cross and portrayed this conquest as a crusade of good (the Christians) against evil (the Muslims).

Many years ago a group of Muslims and Christians developed a forum for Muslim-Christian Solidarity in Cagayan de Oro City on the island of Mindanao. They were convinced that their respective faiths should not be a hindrance but a motivation for solidarity and peacemaking in the face of the conflict in Mindanao that affected the lives of so many Muslims, Christians and Lumads (indigenous peoples).

Out of this conviction came the creation of an organization called the Interfaith Forum for Peace, Harmony and Solidarity made up of Muslim and



**Mindanao Week of Peace 2011, (L-R): Fr. Vic Arellano, Bebs Talaroc, Leah Mehila, and Lorie Nuñez, OLM, Philippines.**  
**Below: Muslim and Christian community leaders in Cagayan de Oro meet once a month to share friendship and a meal. Standing L-R: Lorie; Monsignor Rey Monsanto, Vicar General of Cagayan de Oro; Amina Mambuay; Fr. Noel Ponsavan. Seated: Leah Mehila and Antonio Ledesma SJ, Archbishop of Cagayan de Oro.**  
**Facing page: Salvacion Toca MSC, Lorie, and Lorelei Madrona-Panacawan.**



Christian community leaders in the city who meet once a month. And every year during Ramadan (the Islamic month of fasting), Muslims invite their Christian brothers and sisters to the breaking of the fast at sundown.

Building a bond of unity between us is difficult, but we remember the words of the Muslim leaders who spoke during the interfaith gathering at the Ramadan celebration saying: “There are two reasons why we Muslims are happy when we break the fast; first, we share and eat the food; second, we share the food with friends.” Thus they proclaim a sacred space of peace.

The Interfaith Forum also highlights the growing desire for peace during its annual celebration of the Mindanao Week of Peace. The celebration presents an important challenge and creates a space for Muslim-Christian dialogue.

Last year’s Week of Peace spoke about the common values between Muslims and Christians in the Philippines with its theme, “Love of God and Love of Neighbour.” These values highlight a deeper understanding and a positive appreciation of Islam, and increase awareness that Muslims are not our enemies, but our neighbours and friends. Together we look to Abraham as our ancestor in faith. This spiritual connection can become a solid basis for our dialogue of life, faith and love—a great bond of unity.∞

*Recently Lorie has been re-appointed to the OLM mission in Brazil.*



R-L: Gwen Legault, OLM, Angela Downey, and Betty Craig (seated) at Liberty Place, Toronto.



## Friendship in mission

By Sr. Gwen Legault, O.L.M.

Fr. Gustavo Guitierrez, a Peruvian theologian, recently stated that “there is no commitment to the poor without friendship.” If friendship is the foundation for mission today, I’ve experienced it abundantly in my current ministries.

After many happy years in Nigeria, I returned to Toronto in 2007 searching for new commitments. I received a warm and friendly welcome to St. John’s Parish prayer group, which began in 1998 when the pastor, Monsignor Jim Stephenson, was diagnosed with cancer. Angela Downey gathered some people to pray for him and for all the sick. Angela had already been attending the prayer group at St. Brigid’s parish and the members there joined with her to help form the new group. Among them were Alma Hickey, Monica Donovan and the late Clara Calabrese.

With that same spirit of friendship and sharing, we continue to gather each Friday. We pray for the sick and suffering, but we also celebrate the gift of life with gratitude and hope. Friends and acquaintances who have been diagnosed with serious illnesses are constantly being included in our prayers. And the spirits of the saints who have gone ahead of us permeate our gatherings.

We are grateful for the bonds we have forged in the prayer group and the graces we have received. We feel encouraged to share these blessings with all those we meet each day. Group members visit the elderly and volunteer at a used clothing and household items store in Toronto run by VICS (Volunteer International Christian Service).

My involvement with the prayer group strengthens me in my volunteer work at Providence Healthcare and in my work with a refugee family as part of the Becoming Neighbours initiative. Community enables ministry and real community fosters friendship, and to me, friendship has become an essential part of each ministry.∞



The Tabor family visit Our Lady's Missionaries. Back row (L-R): Elizabeth with baby Alex, Elmer, Christiana, Rosa, Raul, Joel. Front row L-R: Stephen (friend), Sr. Mona, Sr. Susan, Mary Elizabeth with nephew Christian.

## A joyous reunion

By Sr. Susan Moran, O.L.M.

In February 1987 Rose and Raul Tabor and their children, William then three years of age; Mary Elizabeth, two; Elmer, one; and Joel, six months, came to live with the OLM Sisters. The Tabor family had come to Canada from El Salvador with legal refugee status and it was Mona Kelly, OLM, congregational leader at the time, who welcomed them at our Motherhouse in Toronto until they could get settled. Nancy Pocock, then a prominent worker for refugees, had asked if we could assist the family. They had left their sanctuary in Buffalo, crossed over the bridge at Fort Erie and arrived in Toronto in need of a place to stay.

Mona helped them with their legal affairs and with finding their first apartment. She took a great interest in the children and together we helped them with their schooling and music lessons, and at play times. It was a joy to be with them.

Last year I decided to contact the family and invite them to visit Mona and the Sisters again. Mona had returned to

Canada from Brazil and I thought of how much Rose, Raul and their family would love to see her. They arrived one day in July laden with gifts of flowers, candy and special foods prepared for all of us. It was a true celebration.

The children of course are all grown now. Mary Elizabeth is a chemical engineer. Elmer is married to a woman also named Elizabeth and they have two children, Christian who is three and Alex, six months. Elmer works with his father who is a licensed roofer. Joel, who was the baby when we first met them, is now a social worker and Christiana, born later, is a warm and loving girl still in high school. Unfortunately William was unable to come to the party.

Our reunion with the Tabor family after all those years was a great joy to all of us. Their stay with us in the beginning had been a graced time and brought many blessings to the family and to the Sisters and was truly worth celebrating.

### A letter from Daniel

By Sr. Mary Deighan, OLM



Recently I received a letter and poem from Daniel Beba, a young man who lived with our Sisters on our compound in Vandeikya, Nigeria. At that time Daniel

was attending secondary school in our village. Later he joined the St. Patrick's Missionary Society at their Nigerian seminary and is now studying in South Africa.

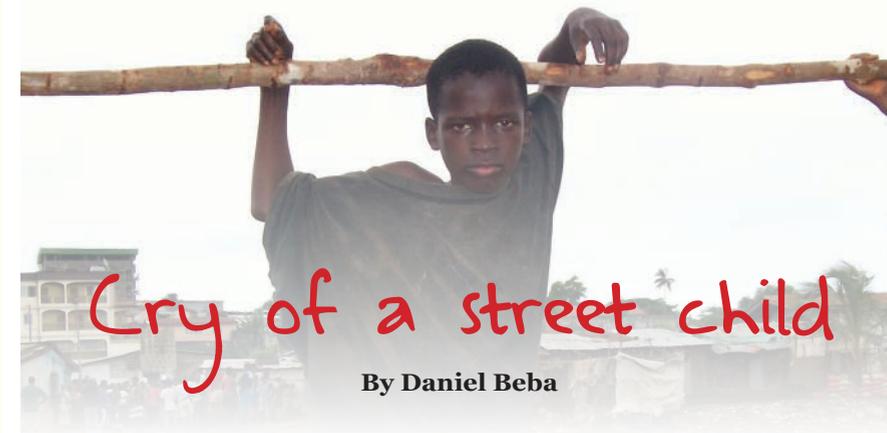
Here is his letter:

### Dear Sister Mary,

*I hope you like this poem I have composed for you. During my Christmas break, I did my pastoral work for three weeks in St. Mary's Hospital here in South Africa. I found it very moving to see people die daily of HIV and TB. South Africa has a lot of street children and whenever I go out I see them asking for money and food. The poem I'm sending you is a result of my encounter with one street child. I wrote it down on paper and just decided to email it to you. I hope you don't mind.*

Daniel Beba

Photo of child by Noah Suluku.



## Cry of a street child

By Daniel Beba

I am alone, lost and hopeless  
 Bins are where I obtain my daily food  
 The streets are cold everyday as I saunter around  
 searching for a companion  
 Corners of the shops are my bedroom  
 and boxes are my bed and mattress  
 Where is my family?  
 North to south and east to west I have travelled  
 with no one to be a friend to me  
 The rising sun means wandering around in cold weather,  
 but I have only my torn shirt to protect me  
 Does anyone really care?  
 Bathing now is rare.  
 My profession is counting the streets  
 as if the next day there might be one missing  
 I have no one to talk to  
 for no ear is attentive enough to listen  
 What did I do to deserve all this?  
 Must I pay the price for what my parents did?  
 Pigs are better off for they have sties and food,  
 but I have none  
 Misery has become a part of me  
 The future is bleak and I long to have rest  
 in the unknown  
 All my skill, tenderness and love have been wasted  
 like a sweet smelling flower losing its scent  
 to the desert air.



Sr. Marie Clarkson, O.L.M.

Today...  
 Simply wait with God,  
 who holds you, enfolds you  
 who claims you,  
 who does not blame you  
 who calms you  
 is balm to you  
 who unbinds you  
 rewinds you  
 accepts you and  
 protects you  
 Simply wait with God  
 Today...  
 Sister Marie Clarkson, O.L.M.

Artwork and calligraphy by Caroline Martinelli of St. Catharines, Ontario.



Anie with Lucia Lee, OLM, who also accompanies the people of Northeastern Brazil.

## The gift of friendship

By Sr. Anie Montejo, O.L.M.

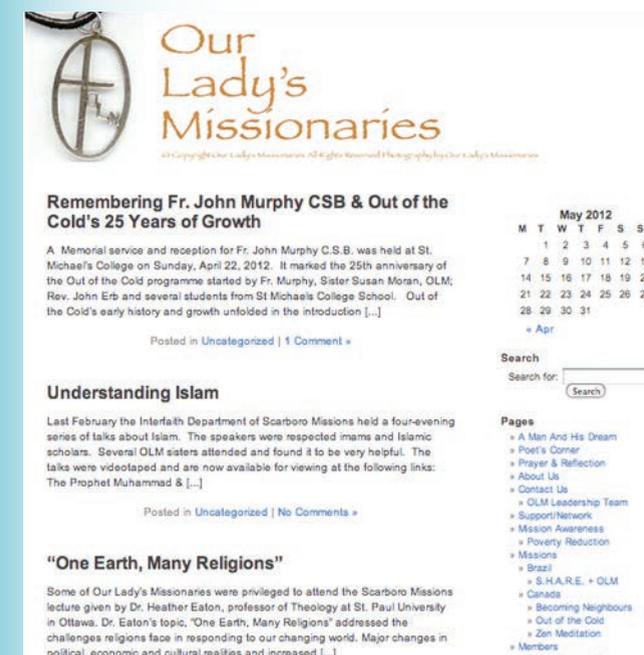
The town of Aparecida in the Brazilian province of Sao Paulo has the most prominent Marian shrine in the country. Pilgrims come from far and near to honor the black Madonna, Our Lady of Aparecida, and to seek her intercession.

When I first came to Brazil, a woman named Maria Martins gave me a silver ring engraved with the image of Our Lady of Aparecida to keep as a remembrance of Brazil and a sign of our friendship. I was delighted to have this gift as a memento of my journey here. It gave me inspiration and courage to begin my struggle to learn the Portuguese language and to become more acquainted with the culture. After wearing the ring for some time, I stored it with my belongings. One day I happened to come across the ring again. Putting it on my finger once more, I felt drawn to

reflect on its symbolism.

Remembering Maria's words when she gave me the ring, I thought of the friends I had already made here in spite of the language barrier. Brazilians, especially the children, love to make friends. Rings are often used as a sign of being united in friendship, but for me this ring is also a sign of God's love and an invitation to make friends wherever I go.

Our Lady of Aparecida will continue to inspire me in my life's journey as God leads me. Looking at Maria's ring, I am reminded to welcome the children who come to my door each day and those I visit at the Pequeno Nazareno school-farm. I recognize the unique gift of their friendship. I know, too, that wearing the ring will help me to nurture and value friendship no matter where I happen to be and remind me always that I am loved by God.∞



### Have you visited the OLM website?

To keep up with ongoing news of Our Lady's Missionaries and learn more about our missions and ministries, please visit our website.

"A Man And His Dream" ([top right link, under "Pages"](#)) is a 40-minute video about our founder, Msgr. D.R. Macdonald, produced by Patricia Kay, OLM, with the help of many of our friends. In "Poet's Corner" you will find poems by Marie Clarkson, OLM. And before you leave the site, we invite you to leave a comment; our website editor, Noreen Kearns, OLM, is looking forward to hearing from you!

[www.ourladysmissionaries.ca](http://www.ourladysmissionaries.ca)



## A time of healing

Accompanying incarcerated Aboriginal women in Canada

By Mary Sanderson

Mary Sanderson

I came to art therapy relatively late in life. After working in administrative roles for many years, I enrolled at the Toronto Art Therapy Institute as a mature student and chose to do my internship at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, working with refugees. My thesis, "Beyond Torture: Art as Healing," was the first attempt to chronicle the use of art to enable victims of state torture to heal.

Fifteen years later I had an opportunity to use this training and experience with First Nations people. For the last three years I have had the privilege of working with incarcerated Aboriginal women at the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge in Southwest Saskatchewan. Our Lady's Missionaries, who have given me so much support, introduced me to the Donner Foundation of Canada and the Basilian Fathers whose grants enable me to do this work.

The Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge is a minimum/medium security federal penitentiary built in 1995 on the Nekaneet First Nation in the Cypress Hills. The facility houses 44 women who are serving time for crimes such as murder, manslaughter, armed robbery, aggravated assault, arson and, the most common, drug trafficking. Native women make up three percent of the Canadian population but 33 percent of the female prison population—



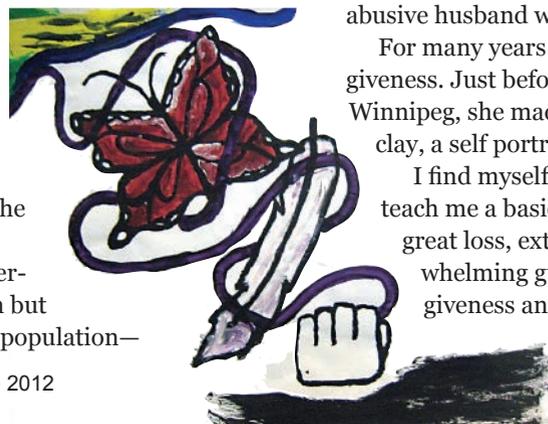
an increase of 151 percent in the last decade.

In the heart of the Healing Lodge is the Spiritual Lodge, built in the form of a teepee. A fire burns in the centre, surrounded by benches covered with bison robes. Every weekday morning the community gathers there. A smudge of sage is passed around and each woman shares how she is feeling. Many return during the day for prayer and meditation. At night some of the women gather with me around the fire. They bring their pillows and lie on the bison robes as I read Aboriginal short stories to them.

As an art therapist I encourage the women to paint, draw, or work in clay. Their art depicts lives of unspeakable suffering that has often been the result of alcohol and drug abuse. One woman painted herself as a butterfly, prevented from flying by a black cord held by a hand that she admitted was her own (see image below). From the age of 10 she took care of her six siblings because her parents were addicted to alcohol. At 13 and 22 she was raped. She later killed her abusive husband who had twice knocked her unconscious.

For many years her heart yearned for healing and forgiveness. Just before she was released to a halfway house in Winnipeg, she made a beautiful Monarch butterfly out of clay, a self portrait. She had at last forgiven herself.

I find myself deeply moved by these women. They teach me a basic Christian value—grace. In the face of great loss, extreme grief and, in many cases, overwhelming guilt, they live their lives in search of forgiveness and with an irrepressible love of life. These women are an inspiration to me.∞



## Light in a dark place

Bringing hope and healing to prisoners

By Sr. Elaine MacInnes, O.L.M.

The work of our little charity, **Freeing the Human Spirit**, is to bring hope and healing to prisoners. We do this principally through setting up meditation and yoga classes in prisons, and supplementing that teaching by providing companionship and guidance through letter contact with those inmates who wish to have this. At the moment we are in 22 institutions in Ontario. Recently, Ontario Correctional Institution (OCI) in Brampton held an appreciation evening for volunteers who go into that prison and about 300 turned up.

Cheryl and I were among the invitees, and while driving for two hours through an unbelievable rainstorm to get to OCI, we had sufficient time to talk about our work. All our meditation and yoga teachers find this work to be very satisfying. I am amazed yet again to realize how grateful we find ourselves to be. Prisons are not happy places. They are usually dark in one way or other. But we certainly find light in the work that we do. In fact, throughout the whole stormy evening there were many shafts of light that penetrated, as has so often been our experience on the inside. And the new orange shirts that many of the 700 men at OCI were wearing seemed like beacons of good will.

After Cheryl and I chose a table and slid into our seats, a few familiar faces from previous dinners sat with us. To my knowledge, there were no special arrangements made for seating and some of the inmates asked if they, too, could sit with us. We were delighted.



Certificate presented by the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to Elaine in October 2011 for her "valued contributions made while serving as a volunteer."

The conversation was not dull or dark, but full of human interest as we all spoke of our daily lives and life itself. Soft music accompanied the hearty courses followed by an interesting and entertaining program. The whole evening was an expression of gratitude, and certificates and gifts were distributed in recognition. I could not help but reflect that both sides were grateful for the opportunity to remember and thank each other. One man who has been visiting prisons for 20 years was especially singled out and honored. He responded with humility and gratitude.

For me, the theme running through the evening was light. Certainly the light of the candle on the tables (the candle holders had been made in the

prison workshop) ...light filtering through the stained glass windows ...light refracted from a bright plaid scarf ...light from the certificates of gratitude and recognition.

I am happy to say that I returned home that evening grateful and more conscious of that light. Later, upon reflection, I came to see that this awareness of light came from the prisoners themselves, as they endeavored to thank us for the help we bring to them each week of the year.

Moments such as these help me to realize that gratitude can be so satisfactorily reciprocated and, indeed, has a boomerang effect. Kudos to all our incarcerated friends.∞



## Awakening the Dreamer...

*A symposium designed to awaken and inspire people to take action for a just and sustainable world*

By Sr. Christine Gebel, O.L.M.

“Let the rivers clap their hands and the mountains ring out their joy...” After reading Psalm 98 together, one of the members of our prayer group identified these words as her favourite scriptural text. They do form a beautiful image. However, reality can be very different. Last December my heart ached as I watched video clips of the damage and suffering wrought by flash floods in the city of Cagayan de Oro, Philippines, where OLM Sisters, including myself, lived and worked for many years. Illegal logging has stripped the mountains around the city of their trees, leaving the rivers muddied and overwhelmed during heavy rains.

One need not look far in scripture to find descriptions of the *kin-dom* of

God, which include justice, equality, abundance, fullness of life and so much more. This too is very different from the lived reality of the vast majority of people around the world.

Whether one reads scripture or the signs of the times, it is evident that there are many challenges and they are huge in scope, giving us all the more reason to face them together, joining forces with all people of good will. This is why I decided to join *Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream*, a symposium designed to awaken and inspire people to take action in pursuit of a fair, peaceful and sustainable world. I took their facilitator training and am now able to give the symposium that forms the backbone of this movement. The goal of the symposium is to help participants

come to see that “an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, and socially just human presence on this planet is an achievable dream for our future.” This is a tall order, but when committed people gather together as one, it becomes clear that the total energy available for action and change is much greater than the sum of each one’s part. And, as humanity learns to work in harmony with the rest of creation rather than seeing creation as a thing to be conquered, the resulting synergy could lead to incredible change... Now, that’s something for which the rivers could clap their hands and the mountains ring out their joy.∞

*To learn more about Awakening the Dreamer, log on to [www.awakeningthedreamer.org](http://www.awakeningthedreamer.org)*



## Communion with the Earth

*How can we show more reverence for Creation and be better stewards of the resources of our precious planet?*

By Sr. Patricia Kay, O.L.M.

Recently I saw for the first time the award winning documentary, “The Cove”. Those who have seen the film know what a horrific story it tells of the plight of thousands and thousands of dolphins waylaid on their migratory journey in the waters off Northeastern Japan. They are corralled into a cove for capture and slaughter in a lucrative venture. And dolphins are the very creatures called to praise God by the three young men in the fiery furnace written about in the Book of Daniel.

The sight of the bloody cove in which the captured dolphins are being mercilessly bludgeoned to death was for me a powerful example of the ongoing destruction of so much of our Earth and its inhabitants. As citizens we need to ask ourselves how we can show more reverence for Creation and be better stewards of the resources of our precious planet. Can we develop a simpler lifestyle using less water, less energy and less electricity? Can we be more responsible in our own way for the care of our home, the Earth? Can we be more conscious of our suffering planet and deeply regret our wasteful and destructive habits? Nan Merrill gives a prayer, a rendition of Psalm 79, that we all may use: “*Forgive us for the misuse and abuse of your Creation; humble us with your steadfast Love, before the world becomes a barren waste. Help us, O compassionate One, to renew the face of the earth; deliver us, and forgive our sins, that we might know the joy of co-creation!*”

The new cosmology, the result of



“Give praise you seas and rivers, dolphins and all water creatures” *Daniel 3:79*

so much investigation into the origin of the universe, tells us that every part of it, including all life on our planet, is mysteriously in communion. We are all deeply connected. Our origins are common from the beginning of Creation. How important it is then for humans to meditate on these things and act accordingly! Again Nan Merrill can help us to pray: “*O children of Light, radiate blessings to the universe! Surrender yourselves to love!*” (Psalms for Praying, p. 285)

Science and religion both call us to respond to these realities, but let us give science the last word. Howard Smith, an astrophysicist at the Smithsonian Center in Massachusetts,

in his article “Alone in the Universe” (*American Scientist, July-August 2011*), reflects on how unlikely it is for intelligent life to form, thrive and survive easily. He calls for “a renewed appreciation of our good fortune and (acknowledgement) that life on Earth is precious and deserves supreme respect. Even if we are not unique in the universe—though we may not know one way or the other for eons—we are fortunate. An awareness of our rare capabilities can spur deeper humility and acknowledgement of a responsibility to act with compassion toward people and our fragile environment.”∞



Christine (top left) facilitates an Awakening the Dreamer symposium. March 2011, Toronto.



## Companion on my journey

By Sr. Mary Gauthier, O.L.M.

Since the closing of our mission in the Philippines last year, I have continued to carry with gratitude my memories of people and events. With my return to Canada, I thought my time of being a missionary overseas was over, yet I kept hearing the words of the song by Kathy Sherman, CSJ, "I am with you."

"Where can I go at my age?" I wondered. "Am I hearing the words that Mary heard about her kinswoman Elizabeth, 'Nothing is impossible with God' (Luke 1:37)?" And I thought of our founder, Fr. Dan Macdonald, who travelled all over Canada in his old age selling Christmas cards and visiting different CWL groups asking for their support for this new community of Our Lady's Missionaries. Thank you Fr. Dan because today the Catholic Women's League still hears the cry of the poor.

As I pondered my journey, the light of the Spirit finally shone a little brighter with the help of Anne, my spiritual companion. Why not investigate the possibility of going overseas with Scarborough Missions? I did have many years of interesting experiences with Scarborough missionaries when I was in the Philippines. Since Scarborough no longer has a presence in the Philippines, I thought about Guyana where Scarborough has three women missionaries living and working.

I approached our OLM leadership team with my idea and they were extremely affirming, suggesting that I keep discerning and remain open to the Spirit, as they too would do. I then spoke to Fr. Jack Lynch, the

"I am with you on the journey and I will never leave you;  
I am with you on the journey; always with you."

*Kathy Sherman, CSJ*

superior of Scarborough Missions, who was also encouraging. When I emailed the Scarborough women in Guyana about the possibility of joining them, they replied with great openness and welcome. My OLM Sisters and other friends expressed healthy concerns and reminded me that there is a lot of mission work to do right here in Toronto. My reply to them was that there are a lot of people in Toronto to carry out this mission.

Soon the grey clouds of my journey appeared on the horizon. How would I tell my sister Frances who is 85 years of age and has many illnesses and health issues? I should not have been surprised when Frances simply replied, "Mary do you feel called?" My sister is very much cared for by her own family, especially her daugh-

ters, Heather and Kathy, and her two sons, Robert and Eric. Her niece and nephew, Mary and D.J. McDonald, are also very involved in her care. As for me, in spite of my concerns, I do believe that I am affirmed and I have hope in my heart as I journey to Guyana to make my final decision.

Guyana is an Amerindian word meaning Land of Many Waters. In the Philippines, God refreshed me with the gift of the ocean in its beauty. Now God reminds me that "I will be with you" in the land of many waters.∞

*While Mary was in Guyana discerning the possibility of service there, her sister Frances's health failed. Mary was able to return in time to be with her sister and family before Frances died.*



Scarboro missionary Sylvia Wilvert travels by river to visit an isolated community in the interior of Guyana. Sylvia, Kate O'Donnell and Bev Trach make up the Scarborough mission team presently serving in this "land of many waters."

## Drinking from the cup of suffering

*Accompanying the elderly as they face the task of simply living*

By Sr. Norma Samar, O.L.M.

More than a year has passed since I finished a Personal Support Worker course at George Brown College in Toronto. My work now is an expression of my missionary call to people who are enduring suffering. Since completing the course, I have been a companion to elderly people in need as they face the tasks of simply living. Going to their homes, I also meet their families who are relieved that they are not alone in caring for their loved ones, and I try to reach out to them as well.

I help my clients to bathe themselves, ensuring their safety while respecting their privacy. I prepare food and just be present, chatting with them and encouraging them to once again open their eyes and minds to the beauty of nature and of life.

In school, the members of my class came from different backgrounds. There were a few men, but the group was made up mostly of women. They came from Asia, Europe, Africa and Jamaica. The course was very interesting and each of the students had a different experience to share, according to their culture and life circumstances.

As a Personal Support Worker I have learned to be not just a helper, but a companion to each client. I tend to their physical needs, but also sometimes to their private, personal, even spiritual needs. I have also learned the importance of respecting their dignity and their independence. My primary concern is to show respect and compassion towards each person. I think that is the most fulfilling part of my work.



In her ministry as a Personal Support Worker, Norma is a companion to elderly people in Toronto.

Patience is a must in dealing with the elderly. It is important to have a positive attitude and to try to understand each person's situation, especially those with Alzheimers. Their suffering is so deep that they easily get angry, particularly when they cannot express what they want to say.

I see now that much of my work is a manifestation of my commitment as a missionary Sister to serve the poor and needy. I can relate my work to the overseas missions, accompanying those who are suffering in the community. Most of my clients are not considered to be materially poor; in fact, most of them have enough for their basic needs, but their families are unable to take care of them for many different reasons.

This new ministry has enriched my life in many ways. Spiritually, this is a time for me to ponder on the pain of each individual. Using whatever name they may have for the Creator, I try to help them reflect on how God is really present with them in their suffering.

My clients are teaching me to be silent in my being and to be more compassionate as I share my time and energy with them. I see the importance of my having a good relationship with the family members so that they themselves can enjoy the time they all have together. Thus I come into communion with the people God sends my way every day, sharing the cup of their suffering and the cup of their joy.∞



# Life in Hebron

*Building partnerships to transform violence and oppression*

By Sr. Rosemary Williamson, O.L.M.

For some time, even before leaving Nigeria, I had been keenly interested in the work of the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT). The mission of CPT is to build partnerships in order to transform violence and oppression. So it was with great anticipation that I joined the CPT in Hebron, the largest city in the West Bank, in November 2011.

I was inspired by the hospitality of the Palestinian people, their love of the land—especially their olive trees, some of which are hundreds of years old—and their deep faith witnessed by their fidelity to times of prayer. I found a people with a profound sense of their relationship with other persons, the Earth and God (Allah).

I want to tell you about two families whose lives touched me deeply.

Jawdi Jaber's family had lived on their land tilling the soil for generations before most of the land was taken over by the settlement of Kiryat Arba leaving them with only a small remnant. On the night of January 9, 2012, settlers living in Kiryat Arba firebombed the car belonging to the Jaber family and stoned their house. This is part of the fabric of daily violence suffered by Palestinians of all ages. Jawdi's brother Atta who lives on the hill opposite has had his home destroyed three times. Since 1967, 26,000 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the Occupied Territories because Israel refuses to grant Palestinians building permits and regards any home they build as an illegal structure.

In the second family, Leila and her



Rosemary with schoolchildren in Hebron.

sister Nawal opened a cooperative shop to sell handicrafts made by Palestinian women in the surrounding area. One day Leila deliberately kept her son Akram at the shop all day because she knew that youth were throwing stones at Israeli soldiers. In spite of this, when Akram was on his way to buy bread at the end of the day, he was arrested for allegedly taking part in the stone throwing. He was imprisoned for some months with older Palestinian men who eventually convinced him to tell the authorities that he had thrown stones. They believed an admission of guilt would help to reduce his sentencing. Akram did as he was advised and was released, but now his name is on record and he faces a more severe sen-

tence if he is ever accused again in the future. Akram's older brother was later imprisoned for being caught without a pass for the area where he was working. The Israeli military held him in detention for some months while the family struggled desperately to find the 3,000 shekels (CDN\$790) to pay the fine. Finally Akram took his brother's place at the work site despite the risks involved. Since then his brother has been released.

There are two levels in the judicial system; one for the Palestinians and another for the Israelis. The Israeli military courts govern Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. In this system, Palestinian youth from 12-16 years of age can be held for eight days



Above: Nawal and Leila, sisters who opened a cooperative shop selling handicrafts made by Palestinian women in the area.

Left: Atta Jaber whose home has been destroyed by the military three times.

before a court appearance. During this time no family visits are possible. Youth over 16 are considered adults. On the other hand, Israeli youth are considered minors until the age of 18 and can only be held for 12 hours before an appearance in a civil court, families are allowed to visit and a child social worker is engaged.

My hope for change was strengthened when I met Israelis who recognize the injustice and are resisting non-violently. Members of *Ta'ayush*, a group comprised of both Palestinians and Israelis, come weekly to the south Hebron hills to support the local communities in their struggle for recognition of their human rights. They pay a price for this kind of support. On one

occasion when I was present two of their members were arrested. This was not the first time.

*Breaking the Silence* is another group of Israelis who support the Palestine struggle. Their members are former soldiers most of whom served in Hebron.

We too are asked to break the silence by becoming more informed about the Occupation which is so unnecessary in this holy land whose people all desire peace and the hope of a better life.∞

*To learn more about the Christian Peacemaker Teams, log on to [cpt.org](http://cpt.org)*



## A gathering of partners

By Maria Teresa M. Velasco

As we gathered to talk about the subject of water, it was clear that we were talking not only about the physical substance that is water—so vital to life and so ubiquitous in human activities—but also the spiritual water that is Jesus, the “living water” that the Samaritan woman experienced at the well.

Our gathering, hosted by the OLM Sisters, took place on a bright Sunday afternoon in January this year. This new initiative will occur four times a year bringing together friends of the Sisters to inspire awareness and prayer on a variety of topics.

At our first gathering, we talked about and saw presentations on water, the sustainer of life: magnificent, powerful, gentle, roaring, silent, forceful, beautiful, vital, appreciated, welcomed, needed, dreaded. We also talked about the threats to water security worldwide, the incursions of pollution and the contamination of aquifers. But mostly it was a time for the Sisters and their partners to celebrate this precious resource. And to celebrate each other. Even the house cat, Casey, joined in the celebration by entering the room in the middle of the discussion and taking centre stage under the table to the amusement of all.

As we contemplated the subject of water, we all became the woman at the well, called to communion with each other and called to witness the source of the real water of life.∞

*Maria (Mina) Velasco is an OLM partner (associate).*

# I remember

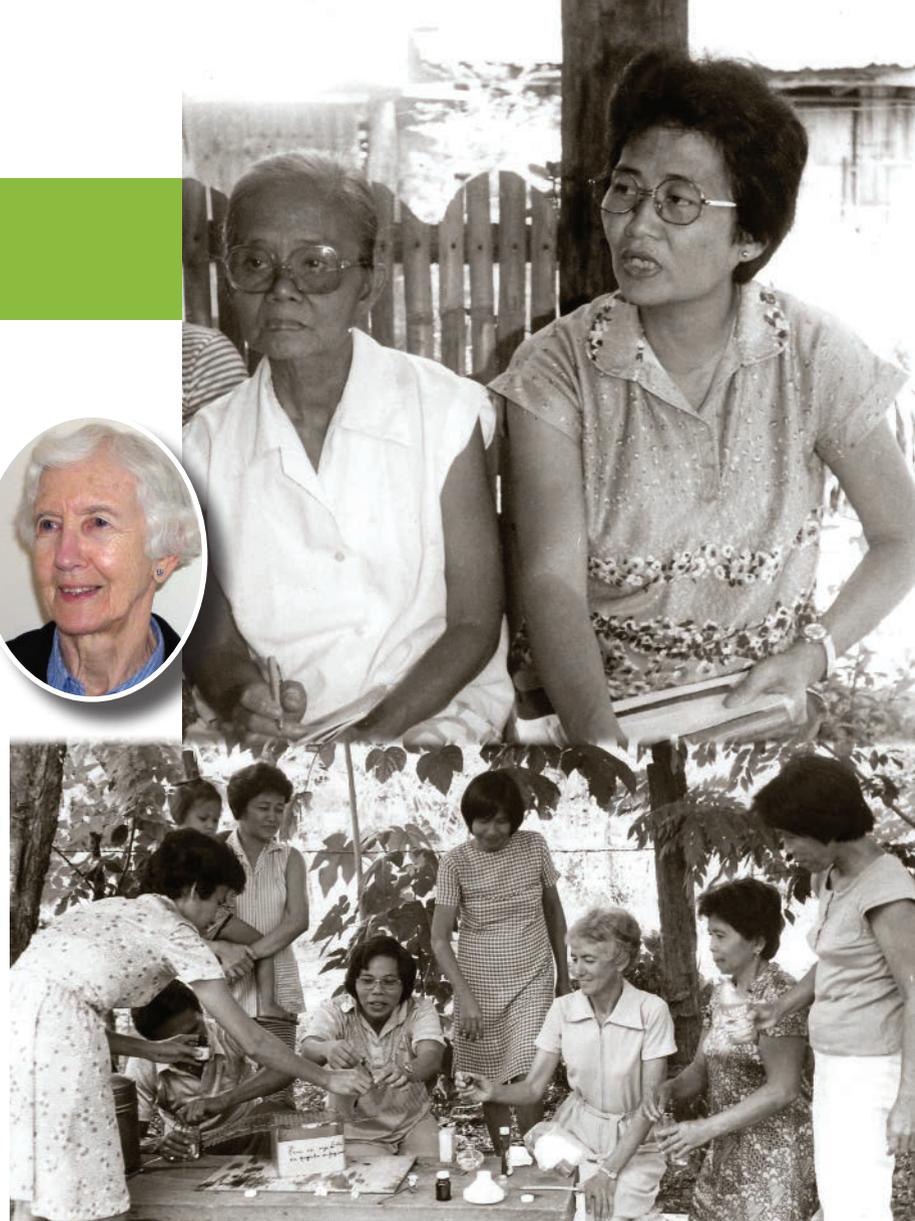
By Sr. Myra Trainor, O.L.M.

One of the highlights of my mission life in Southern Leyte, Philippines, was our community-based health program, which we began in the 1980s. The lack of health care was a crucial problem in rural areas as there was no insurance for the majority of people. I joined the Rural Missionaries group, attending seminars and learning how to organize and facilitate a health program. Recruiting volunteers to become health workers was easy. People recognized the great need and were eager to learn how to alleviate some of the suffering in their villages. Frances Brady, OLM, had already started a program for people with tuberculosis, which was a good base. However, a herbal component was needed as drugs were too expensive for the people to buy.

Our good fortune was to have a young Scarborough missionary, Gary Saulnier, join us in the program. Gary soon became acquainted with local people who had innate knowledge of native remedies but had been reluctant to share this knowledge. Seeing Gary's great respect for their wisdom, these native medicine practitioners soon felt free to openly and proudly share their closely guarded knowledge. Gary studied and did a lot of research, which he published in a small but comprehensive book picturing 138 local plants with their uses for various ailments and describing the preparation for each. With the input of the native people, along with Gary's scientific research and our experience working with the health workers to make and use the herbal medicine, our program became greatly enriched.

Today, 25 years later, I continue to hear from health worker Andrea Beltran and her group who are still appreciative and active in the program we started, and who continue to use the same herbal medicine booklets.

I am grateful to have been part of this collaborative endeavor that left behind a very useful tool and a great memento for such dedicated people.∞



**Myra Trainer, OLM (inset, and above, third from right), at a meeting of volunteer health workers, part of the community-based health program in Southern Leyte, Philippines. Circa 1980s. Top: Health worker Andrea Beltran (right) who is still active in the program today.**



By Sr. Frances Brady, O.L.M.

# Ecologos

*Transformative experiences for a sustainable future*

Where does one find a community of people from different cultures, religions, educational backgrounds, ages and occupations united in a common purpose?

One such place for me is a meeting of the Ecologos Institute where people are brought together by their awe and respect for the environment and a personal commitment to protect it. The volunteer members gather at monthly meetings and in small working committees, bringing their skills and experience from such fields as science, technology, media, arts, education, health care and business.

The goal of Ecologos is to inspire a significant number of people to become aware of their fundamental relationship with nature, leading to a major shift in society from our present destructive path to one that is environmentally sustainable.

Through educational, hands on experiences, Ecologos helps us to be conscious of our deep connection with the rest of the natural world, leading us to radical transformation. Change comes not from fear or guilt, but from a deeper sense of how our relationship with nature is part of who we are.

The current focus of these transformative experiences echoes a recent statement from the United Nations: "The water crisis will be the most critical issue we face in the next century." Throughout 2012 Ecologos will pilot five programs that will give the people of Ontario ways to reflect on our relationship with water:

1. A *Water Alive* interactive campaign, available through Facebook,



**L-R: Frances Brady OLM; Ian Gilmour, Chair of the Board of Directors for Ecologos; Stan Gibson, Executive Director; Jennifer Rallis, Design Team Volunteer.**

Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and other social media, will be piloted from World Water Day, March 22, 2012, through September 2012.

2. *Water Alive* celebrations will be planned in local communities throughout Ontario and will be introduced on September 21 and 22, 2012.

3. A selection of water themed films and documentaries will be presented in Ontario communities from World Water Day, March 22, 2012 to Earth Day, April 22, 2012.

4. The Water Journey, a half-day group process for face-to-face gatherings, will be piloted on March 22, 2012, and evaluated before being made available for other groups.

5. Community Action Teams formed by youth and adults will develop initiatives related to water sustainability and introduce them in their communities.

The goal of Ecologos is an ambitious one. The desired transformation will require time, effort and the

involvement of many people. As with most worthwhile endeavours the work in progress itself is fruitful. As Ecologos members work towards their vision, many of the desired results are happening. More and more people are helped to greater awareness of their relationship with the environment. Connections are made among people with similar concerns. Mutual support and encouragement inspire hope, enthusiasm and greater commitment to action.

Thomas Berry, a founding mentor of Ecologos, often said that it is essential for the humans on this planet to have a mutually enhancing relationship with the rest of the Earth community. I'm grateful to all the people I have met at Ecologos for each one's effort to bring that mutually enhancing relationship to reality.∞

*To learn more about future activities please visit the Ecologos website: [www.ecologos.ca](http://www.ecologos.ca)*



## Out of the Cold

*Reaching out to people in the city who suffer from homelessness, hunger and loneliness*

By Sr. Joan Missiaen, O.L.M.

“Do you hear what I hear?” This familiar Christmas carol invites us to see our reality in a new way. In 1987, Susan Moran, OLM, along with John Murphy, CSB, and a group of students at St. Michael’s High School in Toronto had their eyes and hearts opened to the reality of our streets when the body of a homeless man, someone they had come to know, was discovered on the school property. From this disturbing event came the beginning of the Out of the Cold program as a way of reaching out to people in the city who suffer from homelessness, hunger, and loneliness, especially during the winter months. The program began with lunches being served at St. Michael’s High School and All Angels Anglican Church, and evolved to include other churches as well as mosques and synagogues in Toronto and throughout Canada opening their doors to welcome guests for supper, overnight shelter and breakfast before they venture back out into the cold.

The guests are in need of food and shelter, but even more, they need to know they are respected and can share their stories or “just be” in a safe environment.

Every Monday from November to April, OLM Sisters Mary Hughes, Cecile Turner, Susan Moran and myself look forward to joining the many generous and faithful volunteers at St. Brigid’s parish Out of the Cold. We wash dishes, serve food and greet the many guests.

One of the guests in his late teens expressed that the meals are delicious, but even more important than the food is the love and respect he feels from the volunteers. I was deeply moved. “Yes, there is love and respect for all who share a meal and presence with us,” I told him. “Thank you for coming.”∞



L-R: Mary Hughes OLM, Julia Aitken, and Cecile Turner OLM, volunteers at St. Brigid’s parish Out of the Cold. Toronto.



Monica Donovan (above) has been a parishioner of St. Brigid’s parish in Toronto all her life and a partner (associate) of Our Lady’s Missionaries for many years. She has also volunteered in the parish’s Out of the Cold program for more than 15 years. As the clothing coordinator, a post she has held since the beginning, she matches clothes and footwear to the needs of those who come weekly during the coldest months of the year.

## SUSAN MORAN, O.L.M. RECIPIENT OF THE ORDER OF MARY WARD

By Sr. Patricia Kay, O.L.M.

The highest honour bestowed by the Loretto Alumnae Association is the Order of Mary Ward. Among the three recipients for this award in 2011 was Susan Moran of Our Lady’s Missionaries. Susan had attended Loretto Abbey in Toronto and was taught by the Loretto Sisters; thus the spirit of Mary Ward, foundress of the Loretto congregation, had an influence on her from an early age. A woman of courage, Mary Ward had a vision that “women in time would do great things.” Her ideal of a congregation of religious women serving the community through teaching and pastoral care was too advanced for her time and her young community was even suppressed for a short period in 1639. It was slowly revived and finally received complete canonical approval in 1877.

The Loretto Alumnae Association gives this prestigious award to women who display those qualities most admired in Mary Ward herself. These include joy, freedom, love of the poor and a desire for justice. Those chosen have become positive role models who continue to inspire young women today.

In selecting Susan, the award committee recognized her work with **Out of the Cold** and her constant concern for the homeless and the marginalized in Toronto. One of her greatest gifts is the ability to encourage others to respond as well to the needs of those in distress. “We have to take better care of our vulnerable,” Susan often says. “There has to be better affordable housing.”



Susan at the Order of Mary award ceremony, November 4, 2011, at Loretto Abbey Catholic Secondary School, Toronto.

The Order of Mary Ward award ceremony took place on November 4, 2011, at Loretto Abbey in Toronto. Among the many friends who came to share this recognition of Susan’s work and the joy of the occasion were members of her religious community, Our Lady’s Missionaries, as well as her brother Danny and his wife Karen. Over the years Susan has received

many awards, yet she was particularly honored to receive the Order of Mary Ward because of her association with the Loretto Sisters and because of the special reasons for which this award is granted each year.∞

# Called to live in community

*Mission has been a journey of fellowship and sharing*

By Sr. Therese MacDonald, O.L.M.

According to the dictionary, communion signifies “an instance of sharing, especially thoughts, feelings and fellowship.” From the time I was a child, I felt an attraction to living in a missionary community. However, until I experienced life in Our Lady’s Missionaries, I had no idea what living in community really meant. I began my experience of community life as a student at Panmure Island School, a one-room schoolhouse in Prince Edward Island. Later on I lived in a student nurses’ community during my nursing training. We shared much in those days and many of those women are still my friends.

In 1953 I vowed to live my life according to the Constitutions of Our Lady’s Missionaries, which advise us to keep our community structures open and be ready at all times to respond to new needs arising among God’s people. Looking back over the years, a question arises in my mind: In my 60 years as an OLM have I followed this precept? I believe I have.

On completing my novitiate in Alexandria, Ontario, I was sent to work as a nurse in a nearby hospital. Father Dan Macdonald, our founder, and Sister Odelia, CSJ, our co-foundress, were happy to have my monthly earnings coming in as money was quite scarce in those days. Later

I was missioned to Brazil and posted to a maternity hospital in the city of Fortelaza in the northeastern state of Ceará. The hospital had started a program to train nannies and I got the job in spite of the fact that I knew nothing about what was expected of these childcare providers.

In the early 1980s, the OLM community in Fortaleza moved to the rural parish of Aratuba where they needed a secretary and I accepted this posting. When I returned to Toronto in 1995 to recover from a broken ankle, I was asked to be accountable for the finances of the community. I loved that assignment for the opportunity it gave me to interact and share with my community. Through the years there were several other examples of community sharing that came my way.

The valuable lesson of my childhood in the Panmure Island School served me well in all my postings to Canada, Nigeria and Brazil. In each of them, sharing played an important part. Today, I share with other OLM Sisters by contributing at meals, meetings, community prayers and everyday living. We are all in this together.∞



Therese (centre) with Joan Missiaen OLM (left) and Monica Donovan, a partner (associate) of Our Lady’s Missionaries, celebrating a feast day at the OLM house at Rosalind Crescent, Toronto.



By Sr. Clarice Garvey, O.L.M.

# Witness to a dream come true

*After years of struggle, a community of small-scale organic farmers in Northeastern Brazil have gained title to land*

In 1976 a small group of generous farmers from Peel, Ontario, developed an Agriculture Foundation named SHARE (Sending Help And Resources Everywhere). Over the years they have supported a large number of projects in Central and South America including rural communities in the northeastern region of Brazil where I have been working for many years.

During the past month, I had the pleasure of visiting several of these rural communities as part of an annual trip made by the Brazilian Bishops’ Land Pastoral team. We were accompanied by our visitors, Bob Thomas, the project manager of SHARE, and Otilia Puiggros, a representative of CIDA (the Canadian government’s international development agency), who wanted to visit communities helped by SHARE in the past years. Bob and Otilia also hoped to go on to a meeting place where representatives from each of these rural communities were to gather and share their experiences of organic production and marketing.

For years, the people of these communities have struggled to gain title to land and have been subjected to intimidation and eviction by large landowners. They dreamed of a place to build a home, of land on which to plant and produce food with the security of never being expelled again. Because of their strong faith and courageous efforts throughout many years, these friends and neighbours are now seeing their dream become a reality.

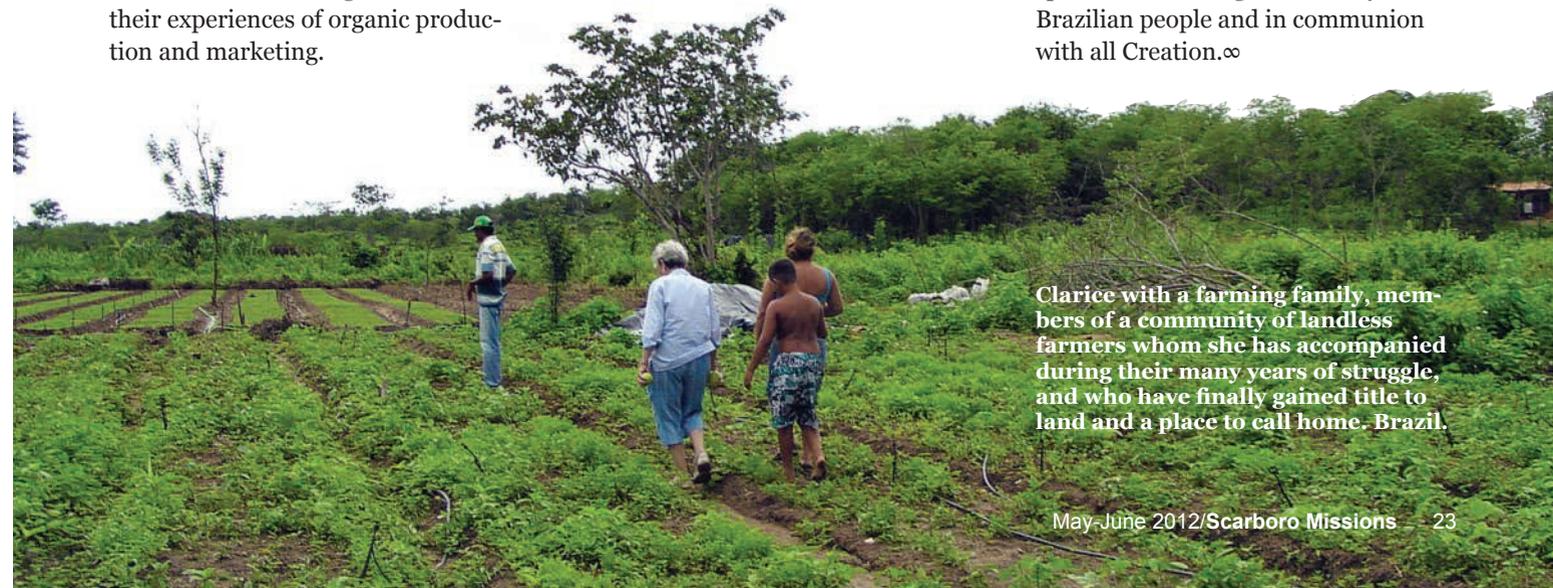
Our journey through these northeastern towns and villages ended at an amazingly lush green hillside. There at the top was the Education Centre where the yearly meeting of Organic Growers was taking place. The theme of the meeting was the importance of the production and safety of food. At the first meeting in 1999, 12 participants from the state of Ceará had attended. This year, 103 people from five northeastern states were present including representatives from Rio Grande do Sul who even offered to

host next year’s meeting.

As we moved through the back roads of Ceará, I couldn’t help but feel the presence of Antonio Conselheiro and Ze Lourenco and many other *Biotos* (Blessed Ones) who walked these roads or travelled them on horseback almost 200 years ago. They were itinerant missionaries who chose an unstructured lifestyle. Wherever they went they stayed as long as the people needed them. They helped to build water cisterns, schools and chapels. They welcomed slaves fleeing from their owners, taught the people how to read and helped them to understand the Scriptures.

From time to time, the Church considered proclaiming the Blessed Ones to be saints, but the people have never shown much interest in this proposal. They speak of these ancestors as part of their religious heritage and have no need of further acclamation.

This trip, like so many others, has been a gift for me from a God who speaks to us through the beauty of the Brazilian people and in communion with all Creation.∞



Clarice with a farming family, members of a community of landless farmers whom she has accompanied during their many years of struggle, and who have finally gained title to land and a place to call home. Brazil.

# Our Lady's Missionaries

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Mary Olenick

## Our thanks

Our Lady's Missionaries depend on the support of family, friends and other benefactors. Once again we wish to express our gratitude for your thoughts and prayers and for the monetary donations we receive from estates, donations in lieu of flowers at the time of death, parish collections, the Catholic Women's League, the Ladies' Guild annual donation as well as personal contributions. All donations are tax deductible. Please note that government regulations do not permit us to receive donations for ministries in countries where we no longer have Sisters present, namely Guyana, Nigeria and the Philippines.