ANA gathers in Chicago

BY MARGARET MARY LAVONIS, CSC

It was like old home week when the sisters of the Area of North America (ANA) gathered at the Wyndham Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, for their annual area assembly November 6–9, 2009. The theme of the meeting, “Journeying Together: Shaping our Future,” was apropos, as the primary purpose was to reflect on the four calls of the 2009 General Chapter and how the sisters in ANA hope to respond as an area. It also was a time to celebrate the past five years and extend gratitude to the area leadership team.

On the first morning of business, the group considered the present world and ANA realities, and the challenges they present. The area leadership team gave their accountability report. Each sister then reflected on her own accountability as an individual member of the area. Sisters Mary Ann Pajakowski and Kathleen Moroney showed a short film on immigration, an issue on which the area has focused during the past five years.

Sister Luciana de Paula Soares and her cohorts take part in a skit about the first five years of the Area of North America. They are picketing for justice and reform in areas supported by the ANA sisters.
Dear Sisters,

In the week following the celebration of Christmas, I took time for my annual retreat. On one of many snowy afternoons as I was reflecting, I discovered the following quotation from Sister Marie Beha, OSC: “To live a contemplative life is to be open enough to see, free enough to hear, and real enough to respond.” Those words seemed to be calling me to ponder what they might mean in my own life and in the life we share together.

There is a unity and a wholeness about our lives that becomes more and more clear as we contemplate the presence of God and the movement of the Spirit around us, through us and in us. Nothing in our lives happens outside the circle of God’s love and care for us and for all creation. It seems to me that in order to recognize this we need to be attentive in moments of solitude, prayer, ministry and life in community—in all the experiences that form the fabric of our lives. In this way we can “deepen the contemplative dimension of our vowed life and ministry as prophetic witnesses, bearers of hope in a fragmented world.”

As the new year unfolds may we find and make the time, as Jesus did, to contemplate the boundless and compassionate love of God … a love that challenges us to engage lovingly toward all those whose lives are interwoven with ours … a love that calls us to actively respond to the signs of the times with courage, faith, and eyes, ears and hearts wide open to the transformative possibilities that are revealed through God’s love for us.

In Holy Cross,

Joan Thane Steadman, C.S.C.
They also gave input about immigration reform as a key government issue and how the membership can continue to be involved. The morning concluded with a beautiful prayer of remembrance and gratitude for the ANA sisters who have died over the past five years.

In the afternoon, Sister Suzanne Brennan and company recreated the dramatic presentation given at the General Chapter by the Area of North America. “Mother Augusta,” portrayed by Sister Joan Mader, made another guest appearance. Afterward, the focus moved to the work of the Chapter. Four sisters shared how they were involved: Sisters Amy Lynn Cavender as an observer, Mary Louise Gude as a first-time delegate, M. Joseph Cecile (Voelker) as one who attended many chapters, and M. Jane Chantal (Method), who spoke of her Chapter experience as one not present at Saint Mary’s. Following the sharing of experiences, each member then gave her reaction to the Chapter Direction Statement, including what caught her attention and why.

The first day of business concluded with a beautiful celebration of the Eucharist, with Father Don McNeill, CSC, presiding, and a reflection shared by Sister Margaret Ann Shield. The novices and the members of the new Leadership Team also were present and participated.

On Sunday the members entered into a process to discover what special gift or gifts ANA can bring to help the congregation live out the Chapter Calls, as well as the opportunities and challenges the Calls present. The sisters were encouraged to think big and stretch their imaginations and come up with lofty ideas. After much brainstorming and opportunities for table discussion, the ideas from the membership were collected. The business of Sunday concluded with the praying of vespers. Sister Eva Mary (Hooker) gave a reflection.

That evening a small group collated the common ideas to implement the Chapter calls. On the following day, these were shared with the membership. Some of the suggestions were:

- keep developing the theological reflection process;
- increase the use and knowledge of technology;
- investigate various types of area gatherings; create ways to enter into intentional common prayer and establish area spiritual resources;
- strive to make our homes ecologically sound;
- continue the emphasis on the issue of immigration;
- network with other groups whose work converges with the Chapter Calls.

Next, Sister Judith Hallock introduced the newly elected area leadership and Sister Ruth Marie Nickerson spoke, thanking the sisters for their support. Then it was time to express the area’s gratitude to the outgoing team for their leadership and faithfulness over the past five years. The team was presented with a proclamation that declared November 9 as “ANA Leadership Day.” Each team member and Cathy Williams, Area of North America services administrator, were given a gift followed by a sung blessing.

Sister Judith Hallock expressed her thanks to those who made the assembly a success. The meeting concluded with a ritual to mission the members and distribute a card designed by Sister Alma Mary (Anderson). Afterward the sisters said their goodbyes and began their journeys home, renewed in mind and spirit to shape the future together.
Medical center moves to Mishawaka

At 7 a.m., Monday, December 14, Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center (SJRMC), founded by the Sisters of the Holy Cross in 1882, opened its new hospital in Mishawaka, Indiana, and began the transfer of patients from the original site in South Bend.

A few weeks before, the hospital, now a ministry of Trinity Health in Novi, Michigan, held a prayer service of transition, “thanking God for our past, asking blessings on our future.” The Choir of the Church of Our Lady of Loretto and the Saint Mary’s College Liturgical Choir led those gathered in the old hospital lobby in song. As part of the November 24 ceremony, Sister M. Michaeeleen (Frieders) reflected on her experience as a hospital administrator at Saint Joseph’s and Sister Mary Ellen Vaughan guided a ritual about Earth. The elements of water, fire and wind also were incorporated into the prayer service, which concluded with a “hug” of the building and the singing of hymns. Each participant received a bottle of water and a bag of earth from the old hospital site and was asked to deposit them on the grounds of the new location.

Several Sisters of the Holy Cross in the area attended the ceremony, sharing warm memories of their many years of providing health services to the community. The caring and compassion of the Sisters of the Holy Cross and their health ministry were publicly recognized and applauded throughout the prayer service.

SJRMC plans to remove all salvageable materials from the old facility and clear the site. A historical marker, commemorating the service of the Sisters of the Holy Cross as military nurses during the U.S. Civil War, remains. SJRMC has donated the property to the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend (Indiana). If funding is secured, a new Saint Joseph’s High School will be built on the site.

“Education and health care are top priorities of the founders of Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center, the Sisters of the Holy Cross,” said Nancy R. Hellyer, SJRMC’s president and chief executive officer. “Donating our property for the new Saint Joseph’s High School is a perfect and fitting way for us to fulfill the mission of the Sisters of the Holy Cross that has guided us for over 125 years in the community.”

The new 658,000-square-foot hospital is designed with a focus on maximizing patient safety and operational efficiencies. SJRMC utilized the Green Guidelines for Healthcare, a national certification program for healthcare construction, using recycled and other environmentally friendly materials for greater sustainability. Set on 90 acres, the new hospital—located less than 10 miles from the former site—includes a park area with a series of ponds and walkways for the use and enjoyment of patients, visitors, physicians, staff and neighbors.
Tribal celebrations of Christ the King

BY CATHERINE KONICA SARKAR, CSC

Thirteen tribes, mostly indigenous, live in the Srimangal region of Bangladesh, an area known for its tea gardens. The two main tribal peoples are Garo or Mandi, and Khasia.

Christ the King is a big feast day for both the Garo and Khasia tribes, each celebrating in its own traditional way. And, although there are different historical backgrounds, rituals and intentions, the celebrations are helping these tribal peoples to grow their faith and develop mutual relationships and fraternal love.

Wangala, the Garo/Mandi tradition

On November 14 and 15, the Garo people of Fulchere tea estate, which belongs to Srimangal parish, celebrated the feast of Christ the King. They call it Wangala, meaning "to give" or "to offer." In the past, when the indigenous Garo people worshiped nature, they celebrated Wangala, a harvesting festival. They worshiped many gods: Susumi (the redeemer god), Wrishi (the god of prosperity), Tatra (the god of temptation), Mishi Saljong (the sun god, god of harvest), etc.

There are many myths about Wangala, including the following. Once upon a time, a farmer planted some vegetable seeds. When the plants started to grow, some came up nicely but others were dying. The next morning, after the sun rose, the farmer noticed that all his dying plants were now thriving. Surprised and scared, he called the villagers together and preached that the sun god, Saljong, the most powerful god of all gods, is the source of life so everyone should please him. The people began to offer the harvest of their land as a sign of thanksgiving to Saljong or Mishi Saljong, which means the god of harvest. Later, when the Garo people converted to Christianity, they continued to celebrate their Wangala but it centered on the feast of Christ the King.

This past year, the feast day celebration began with a short prayer. There was a Holy Hour and the sacrament of reconciliation in preparation for the next day. That night some of the villagers, both young and old, danced their traditional dances.

The following morning the villagers welcomed the Khamal, who was the main celebrant for the Mass, by washing his feet during a Mandi song and dance. Historically, the Khamal was the leader of the whole Mandi society. Presently, one of the priests becomes the Khamal for a year. This year, Father Frank Quinlivan, CSC, provincial superior of the Bangladesh Province, acts as the Khamal.

After welcoming Father Frank, the villagers placed a khutup on his head and a mangoth in his hand. The khutup, a turban or head cloth, is a sign of respect and love. A mangoth, or staff, is a sign of responsibility as a leader of the people. Both signify power. Next, a procession began with song and dance, and all gathered in the churchyard where a cross was erected. People then offered their harvest at the foot of the cross and the Khamal placed a khutup on it. It meant the people accept the power of the cross of Jesus Christ, and offer their love and respect to him.

Thirteen oil lamps surrounded the cross. Garo tribes are divided into 13 groups according to the family name. The lamps symbolized these groups:
The Khasia people of the Sylhet region begin the Jingasing with a procession in Longlia Punjee in Srimangal parish, November 22.

Abeng, Brack, Chibok, Dowal, Momin, Shira, Migam, Attong, Chisik, Areng, Rogga, Ghagra and Attiagra. All the lamps were lit and then a thokka, a traditional sign of blessing, was given on the foreheads of all present. The eucharistic celebration followed. During the homily, Father Frank shared about the simplicity and humility of Christ Jesus as a king of kings and how Jesus is calling us to live in his humility, love and simplicity.

**Khasia people celebrate Jingasing**

The Khasia people survive by cultivating primarily the betel nut and betel leaf, grown mainly on hillsides called joom. Most Khasia work in their own joom. There is a headman in every punjee (small village), called minister, and a religion leader known as a Rangba-ballang, who always leads prayers and other religious activities.

On November 21 and 22, the Khasia people of the Sylhet region met in Longlia Punjee in Srimangal parish to celebrate the feast of Christ the King or Jingasing, which roughly means “gather together.” In the past, when the Khasia worshiped nature, the people would gather annually in one area in order to get to know one another and grow in relationship. This meeting, called Jingasing, was celebrated with songs and prayers and the joyful sharing of life. When the people became Roman Catholic, they still rejoiced but focused the celebration on the feast of Christ the King.

On the afternoon of November 21, the celebration began with reverencing the holy Bible and the sacrament of reconciliation. Two deacons—Bikash Rebeiro, CSC, and Pius Podueng, OMI, who is a Khasia—led the prayer. Deacon Pius shared, in his own language, the significance of the feast day and the importance of the word of God in our life. Priests, deacons and laypeople walked in procession. They carried incense, a picture of Christ the King, and a garland made of betel leaves and betel nuts.
The picture was placed on the garland-draped altar and the Mass began. Father Shuhud, SX, an Indonesian priest ministering in the Khulna Diocese, was the principal celebrant.

The next morning began with prayers in the Khasia language. Archbishop Paulinus Costa of Dhaka celebrated the Mass. Fifteen priests from different parishes were concelebrants. The Mass was followed by a eucharistic procession. Three altars were prepared and each had a special theme. Father James Cruze, CSC, at the first altar, shared on the theme "I am the vine, you are the branches." Father Joseph Gomes, OMI, at the second altar, spoke to "I am the bread of life." Then the procession came to the last and main altar, where the Mass was offered. Father Liton Gomes, CSC, shared his reflection on "Jesus is the high priest." The benediction and a special blessing by the archbishop followed.

After the procession, a cultural program of traditional songs and dances was held. Later, following evening prayer, the people rejoiced the whole night, praising God by singing spiritual songs.

The Khasia people of the Sylhet region eagerly await this celebration, and each year different punjees take the initiative for the arrangements. This time nearly 1,500 people gathered to celebrate the Jingasing.

Celebrating Wangala and Jingasing with the Garo and Khasia peoples not only helped me to know them better but also will help me to do a fruitful ministry for them and with them.

A rewarding experience

BY JENNIFER DESSA

My name is Jennifer Dessa and I began my discernment in Holy Cross on January 16, 2009. On that day I went to Srimangal with Sister Shilpi Rozario. Although I was upset to leave my parents and younger sister, I also was very excited to go to Srimangal for the first time.

After a five-hour journey by bus, we reached the sisters’ house in Srimangal. The natural beauty of Srimangal fascinated me. It is very lovely with its green tea, rubber, pineapple and lemon gardens and its hills.

Sister Jamuna Magdeline Gomes and Sister Catherine Konica Sarkar welcomed me very cordially. In the mission compound, there is the church, graveyard, the sisters’ and fathers’ houses, the school, and the boys’ and girls’ hostels. About 160 boys and girls stay in these two hostels. Gradually, I was introduced to all the students. They are very cheerful, helpful and friendly. I worked in Notre Dame School as a teacher and helped the hostel girls with their studies.

Sometimes I went to tea gardens or small tribal villages called punjees. Thirteen tribal peoples live in Srimangal. Their language, culture and lifestyle are different from one another. We were welcomed in all the punjees and tea gardens we visited. The people are very poor and lead a humble but happy life. They shared everything they had with us. I took part in prayer services, liturgical work and eucharistic celebrations. I also joined in the celebration of Jingasing and Wangala, which are their great festivals. I enjoyed these festivals very much.

I had lots of wonderful experiences in the Srimangal mission. I learned so many things through these experiences that will be very helpful in my future life. I thank God for this opportunity, which will help me to realize my true vocation. I also give thanks to all the sisters with whom I lived and worked. I am very grateful to them.
Putting safety first

BY DAVE SINGER
ADMINISTRATOR, SAINT CATHERINE BY THE SEA

Saint Catherine by the Sea in Ventura, California, just completed another year of safety training. Each year the Safety Committee picks a list of topics that will be covered. The list includes a Facility Safety Walk, where the sisters and staff are shown the location of a large checklist of items such as water and gas shut-offs, emergency phones that work if power is lost, eyewash and first-aid stations, blood-born pathogen cleanup kits, and how to open garage doors if power is lost, etc.

Another training is the proper use of the Hoyer lift, in which the sisters and staff simulate the lifting of a sister who has fallen and cannot get up. They are instructed on how to check the sister to make certain that nothing is broken or injured. Next is a demonstration of how to position the injured sister in the harness, maneuver the lift, pick up the sister and place her in a chair.

Earthquake training begins with a safety film that teaches the sisters and staff how to drop, cover and hold until the quake stops. There is always a review of the earthquake safety policy as well as the items that should be in the sisters’ evacuation kits next to their beds. The sisters are given fresh water bottles for their kits along with new flashlight batteries, if needed.

Other topics such as Right to Know and Material Safety Data Sheets are geared for staff, but sisters are always welcome to attend these sessions.

Annual fire extinguisher training was held in November. The County Fire Protection Company, a service used for the facility’s fire extinguishers and kitchen hood fire suppression system, conducts the class. The instructor explains the PASS acronym: Pull, Aim, Squeeze and Sweep, and discusses the various types of fires and the proper extinguisher to use. The sisters and staff then practice by putting out a contained fire.

Fire drills, held quarterly, include the evacuation of the building to one of four designated outside areas. Walkie-talkies are used to account for all the sisters, staff and guests.

Saint Catherine’s has been very fortunate. There have been no serious accidents at the convent. It is hoped that with both safety training and safety awareness the sisters and staff will continue to stay safe in days to come.

Dan Swim from County Fire Protection Company supervises as Sister Maureen Cahill uses a fire extinguisher during a safety training class for staff and sisters at Saint Catherine by the Sea in Ventura, California.
\textbf{Fruit crop helps feed poor}

"\textit{I give you all the trees with seed-bearing fruit; this shall be your food.}"

—\textsc{Genesis 1:30}

The orchard of Saint Catherine by the Sea, Ventura, California, produced an abundance of fruit last year. Not wanting any of the harvest to go to waste, Sister Dolores Jean Bray, who ministers at Catholic Charities, made a suggestion to donate the excess crop to Ventura County Family to Family, Inc., an organization that helps feed the poor.

The fruit trees—which were tended the past year by Sisters Ann Keating and Maureen Cahill; Father John Fahey, chaplain; David Singer, administrator; and Tony Artmont, facilities and grounds manager—yielded tangerines, lemons and avocados which were given to the Family to Family program. Family to Family is an ecumenical outreach of several faith denominations whose members volunteer to cook and serve meals to the less fortunate in the Ventura area.

\textsc{Above:} Sister M. Jacinta (Millan) picks avocados from the orchard at Saint Catherine by the Sea to help feed the poor in Ventura. 
\textsc{Inset:} Sisters trim leaves from freshly picked tangerines as they ready the fruit for donation to the Ventura County Family to Family food program. L to r: Sister Elizabeth Panero, Tony Artmont, and Sisters M. Alberta (Zimmer) and M. Agatha Ann (Farrell)
Team effort benefits Uganda

Sister Lillian Nyakaisiki, who works at the health clinic in Kirinda, comforts a patient during an outreach visit.

Saint Mary's College students Megan McClowry and Patty Duffy spent the past summer in Kyarusozi, Uganda, living with the sisters and working in the health unit of the Holy Cross Family Centre in Kirinda. The two young women, along with four classmates, were part of the college’s Uganda Summer Practicum for senior education and nursing majors. This six-week experience inspired the two and fueled their desire to help the sisters and the people they serve in Kirinda.

Upon their return, Megan, a cross-country co-captain, and Patty, a soccer player, enlisted the aid of their teams, coaches and other athletes in a project to support the work of the sisters. With the sponsorship of SAAC (Student-Athlete Advisory Committee), they organized a sale of “Belles for Africa” T-shirts, designed by Patty. Students also skipped meals in the dining hall and instead donated the money to the cause.

On Friday, December 11, Megan, Patty and some 60 members of the college’s athletic teams presented a $5,431 check from SAAC and its “Belles for Africa” initiative to the Sisters of the Holy Cross serving in Uganda. Sister M. Madeline Therese (Wilhoit), who heads the congregation’s International Services Office, gratefully accepted the donation.
“I am very excited to present this check to Sister Madeline because I know that the money we raised will help purchase medications and save lives for those at the clinic,” said Megan.

“In the name of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Uganda, I accept with sincere gratitude this very generous donation,” said Sister Madeline Therese. “This represents your enthusiastic response to the needs of the people of Kirinda. It also represents the hard work and impressive creativity which you, together with your colleagues, friends and family, showed in achieving this large contribution.”

Patty added, “It is a beautiful thing to see people helping out their neighbors, even if their neighbors are half a world away.”

“For me, it is even more,” said Sister Madeline Therese. “It is a witness to the vision of our founder, Blessed Basil Moreau, that Holy Cross priests, brothers, sisters and lay collaborators go to wherever in the world there is a need, giving testimony to Gospel living by their lives and ministry to the poor. You six women did this and you will always be remembered for this witness.

“May the spirit that animated you during your experience in Uganda, and the efforts you made together with all those who collaborated with you to make possible this presentation today, continue to be a motivating force in your lives in the years to come.”

Sister M. Madeline Therese (Wilhoit) and Megan McClowry display T-shirts sold by the Belles, the athletic teams of Saint Mary’s College, to raise funds for the sisters’ projects in Uganda.

Christmas card weds brush and pen

The congregation’s 2009 Christmas card is the wonderful marriage of Holy Cross artistic talent and inspirational poetry.

Once again Sister M. Edna (Orzechowska)’s artwork is featured with the print of her picture, “Humility of Mary.” The original, which hangs in the hallway of All Saints Convent, is a 34” by 18” white enamel painting. Sister Edna always maintained a studio where her creativity knew no bounds and garnered her many awards both locally and nationally. Her hands-on approach to teaching art won her the love and devotion of her many students during her 50-plus years on the faculty of Saint Mary’s College.

The richness of Sister M. Madeleva (Wolff)’s poetry long has been nationally recognized. Her mastery of word and phrase so evident in her writing flowed from an inner need to write. She confesses in her autobiographical book, My First Seventy Years, that “For years, even my closest friends did not dream that I wrote or cared to write anything more important than my letters home. Meanwhile, I lived with the mental restlessness of wanting to write…. I wrote at least one poem a month over a period of fifteen or twenty years, every one of which I sent out at once to earn its living by publication in some magazine. They were good children. They all sold themselves.” And so today, Sister Madeleva’s beautiful words and phrases continue to delight lovers of exquisite poetry and provide the esthetic experience which graced the Christmas card in her poem, “Swaddling Clothes.”
First held in 1893 at the World's Columbian Exposition (World's Fair) in Chicago, the Parliament of the World's Religions was the first major gathering of leaders from Eastern and Western spiritual traditions, and it gave birth to formal worldwide interreligious dialogue. Swami Vivekananda spoke eloquently about the need to promote religious understanding. His words also speak to today's reality:

"Sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful Earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often with human blood, destroyed civilization, and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now."

Since 1993 a Parliament of the World's Religions has convened every five years in a major international city (Chicago, Cape Town, Barcelona) bringing together the world's religious and spiritual communities, their leaders and their followers to a gathering where peace, diversity and sustainability are discussed and explored in the context of interreligious understanding and cooperation.
The 2009 parliament took place in Melbourne, Australia, December 3–9. The meeting’s theme, “Making a World of Difference: Hearing Each Other, Healing the Earth,” emphasized the need for religions, civic groups, and scientific, economic and political thinkers to form partnerships capable of addressing the critical needs raised in these international meetings.

More than 6,000 people—including three of my students from the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, and me—attended the 2009 parliament. Our hosts were the Aboriginal leaders of the Wurundjeri tribe, original owners of the land on which Melbourne sits. Participants came from 213 countries and represented 225 religions. We focused on ways to transform thought and action so that faith communities can “make a difference in the world and make a world out of differences.”

The daily routine was a concrete model of how religious communities can address topics of the themes and issues emerging from the program clusters (see list on page 14). Participants moved through four types of sessions: faith, deepening interfaith/intra-faith, models for engaging faith(s), and further reflection.

The evening plenary gatherings brought the day’s theme into focus through keynote addresses and creative presentations, such as music, poetry, dance, art. These sessions helped us reflect on the day’s events through a left brain/right brain “dialogue.” The closing plenary featured the Dali Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet, who sent the parliament’s attendees forth to “Go, Go, and Do, Do” what we had learned.

As delegates to the parliament, my students and I engaged in the consultations about the need for “training religious leaders for a multi-religious world.” We met each day of the parliament and focused on five questions:

- Why is multi-religious education needed in seminaries and divinity schools (theologically, pastorally, politically, civically, etc.)?
- What are some of the resources for multi-faith education in your tradition and school? And what are some of the obstacles to multi-faith education in your tradition and school?
- What are the virtues and skills one needs to be an effective multi-faith leader (broadly conceived)? What are the practices by which these virtues and skills can be developed (inside and outside the classroom)?
- What kinds of multi-religious initiatives do you hope to engage in together with the communities you will serve (with children, youth and adults)? Why?
- What are some key insights you have learned from these sessions and from your participation in the parliament? How might we carry this work forward together as a group and in each of our schools?

The sessions began with various schools addressing one of these questions; small group discussions followed. The planners of the daily gathering asked the Dominican School to prepare the third question regarding the virtues and skills needed for multi-faith ministry. We stated that multi-faith leadership requires the theological virtue of caritas, love of God and love of one another in God. Love of God calls us to greater solidarity with all people. We need to see another person or religion as a neighbor and partner. Connected to caritas and solidarity are virtues of sincerity, humility (which includes the ability to critique oneself), and reciprocity, which requires openness, forgiveness and reconciliation within and among faith communities.

In addressing the skills needed for multi-faith education, we spoke about the need for good communication skills, which includes training in compassionate listening and developing linguistic tools to “speak” a common language. We also noted that we need skills to develop a pastoral vision for multi-faith ministry that, informed by the historical and cultural realities of religious traditions, will dynamically engage faith communities. The specific content of our response sparked a lively conversation, recognizing that developing virtues and skills for multi-faith leadership is critical because it calls for the formation of the character, i.e., concentrating on ways of friendship within and among faiths.

In the general discussions of the following
days, we also heard how various theological schools and religious training institutes in other countries have focused on the need to study other faith traditions as a part of their academic and pastoral ministry training. Some of these findings were included in our discussions.

This consultation, begun in Melbourne, continues via the Internet (PeaceNext Network). We hope to produce a document by April 2010 that will be sent to major theological centers and seminaries throughout the United States. One of the major hurdles to implementing programs for multi-faith leadership is securing administration support for interfaith training and networking. We hope that this document gives impetus for theological schools and seminaries to review their programs in light of this critical focus.

During the final plenary of the gathering, I found myself reflecting on the entire week through the lens of the indigenous people, the first custodians of Earth. Their respect for creation and their openness to discover the truths Earth teaches is a model and foundation for the type of holistic networking central to the parliament’s gathering and our special multi-faith leadership consultation. The indigenous communities teach us ways to protect the bond we share with all creation and to acknowledge and share the gift of Earth. It is this bond, acknowledgement and sharing that is critical to a “diapraxis” (dialogue and working together on an equal basis) among faith communities. Pope Benedict XVI’s recent encyclical, Caritas in veritate, and his 2010 peace message highlight this important aspect, stating that “The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa” (CV #51).

As the theme of the 2009 parliament illustrates, “Hearing Each Other and Healing Earth” are not two separate projects. And as the consultation in Melbourne revealed, perhaps the next generation of religious leaders will be versed in ways to “counsel” with all creation and all world religions.

2009 Parliament
Sub-themes:
- Healing the Earth with Care and Concern
- Indigenous People
- Overcoming Poverty in an Unequal World
- Securing Food and Water for All People
- Building Peace in the Pursuit of Justice
- Creating Social Cohesion in Village and City
- Sharing Wisdom in the Search for Inner Peace

Program Clusters:
- Local to Global Interreligious Movements
- Partner Cities Network
- Islam in the Global Context
- Women in Leadership
- Youth
- Family
- Media and Religion
- Interreligious Education
- Human Rights
- Peace Building
- Nuclear Nonproliferation
- Disaster Relief

SEE HTTP://WWW.PARLIAMENTOFRELIGIONS.ORG FOR MORE INFORMATION.
Sister Kathleen Weber was inducted into the Holy Cross Hospital Legacy Society on November 19, 2009. Sister Kathleen was recognized for her pioneering work in creating the Caregiver Resource Center as a part of the Medical Adult Day Care Center at Holy Cross Hospital, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Today, the need for support of family and loved ones caring for persons coping with the diminishments of aging, especially dementia, is well recognized; but Sister Kathleen started this service with the support of a modest grant from the Holy Cross Health System long before the concept was popular. She was acknowledged for her wisdom and tireless service in this area.

For the 14th consecutive year, San Joaquin Valley residents have chosen Saint Agnes Medical Center in Fresno, California, as their National Consumer Choice Award winner. Saint Agnes is among an elite group of hospitals nationwide to receive the 2009–10 award for overall quality and image, and is one of only 42 hospitals to receive this distinction 14 years in a row. Saint Agnes shares this Consumer Choice distinction with some of the nation’s finest healthcare facilities, including Johns Hopkins Hospital, Mayo Clinic and Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. Results are based on National Research Corporation’s nationally syndicated Healthcare Market Guide study of more than 250,000 households representing 450,000 people.

In addition, a recent study by HealthGrades®, the nation’s leading healthcare ratings company, named Saint Agnes a five-star rated hospital for the treatment of heart attack. Saint Agnes is the only hospital to achieve this distinction in the Fresno area. HealthGrades also ranked the medical center among the top 5 percent in the nation for maternity care for the second year in a row and awarded Saint Agnes, for the third straight year, its Maternity Care Excellence Award.
Reconnecting with the past

The gifts of the Sisters of the Holy Cross continue to give through memories, life lessons learned and values instilled. Many wonderful stories of sisters reconnecting with former students are yet to be told. The following is an example of one such story.

Sister M. Edward Ann (Wetzel), a longtime missionary in Uganda, returned to the United States in 2007 and took up residence at Saint Angela Hall in Kensington, Maryland. One of her former students found her address through the Notre Dame Alumnae Office and began to communicate with her.

Jim Keyser first knew Sister Edward Ann as his piano teacher when he was a second-grader attending St. Mary’s Grade School in Batavia, New York. The congregation helped to open the Diocesan Notre Dame High School and St. Mary’s Grade School in 1952. Jim has many fond memories of his years under the tutelage of the Sisters of the Holy Cross.

On October 6, 2009, Jim and his mother drove from Geneva, New York, to Kensington to visit with Sister Edward Ann and renew a 50-year-old friendship. He and his mother spent a delightful day with the sisters. When Jim returned home he wrote a letter of gratitude to Sister Edward Ann, thanking her for the visit and the hospitality they had received.
"Ask a Sister" leads to grateful communication

The following message was received via our Web site’s "Ask a Sister" feature. Sister Margaret Mary Lavonis, who responds to all "Ask a Sister" inquiries, forwarded the email to Sister M. Edward Ann (Wetzel). It is another illustration of how deeply Holy Cross sisters have touched lives around the world.

"I am from Uganda, but currently in Austria completing my master's degree in peace and conflict studies. I met Sister Edward Ann while a little girl, and I must say I have always felt indebted to her because she rescued me when I was totally stranded and lost all hope of continuing with my education.

"She supported me financially, morally and above all spiritually, and at the end of the day I was able to join Makerere University on a government scholarship. I previously had so much interest in joining the Sisters of the Holy Cross, but my career path changed everything and today I am a journalist working in Uganda. I also do some freelance writing for the Voice of America.

"But I really miss Sister Edward Ann and would really love to communicate with her, just to tell her how grateful I am for what I am today because of her... just to say thank you, Sister Edward Ann. You made me."

Machrine Birungi Kamara
Stadtschlaining, Austria
Sharing heartfelt sentiments

Dear Sisters,

Advent greetings and sharing, probably to be read in Ordinary Time.

If this had been written a few weeks or even a few months after coming to Tabasco, Sister Barbara Korem and I excitedly would have told you about so many things in this new misión of the congregation here in Mexico.

For example: our welcoming reception; our first steps or rather jumps in and out of kayucus, a kind of rustic kayak, to visit the river communities; the beauty of this river, cradled by lush tropical growth; the valiant fishermen and women who live there; the two mini-clinics already attending them; the plans for a center for integrated well-being, including health and other projects; our jail ministry; and our house-to-house visits in many places.

We could have filled pages with all kinds of stories for LifeSigns. However, things have changed. Barbara went on her home visit for two weeks and was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. She is receiving radiation and chemo treatment. I continue to minister in Tabasco, missing my companion greatly as do the persons to whom she has ministered.

The two of us are living, breathing and praying our trust—that trust we profess in our core values, "trusting in God ever more radically." We also have assumed with greater intensity our call to try to be bearers of hope in a fragmented world.

In our journey of the past three months, we have seen and received many sensitive and wonderful expressions of concern that "energize and sustain us," such as telephone calls, visits, e-mails, notes and prayers, of course, especially from our other two CSC Mexican communities.

We also have received much prayerful support from our families and friends. Even in Matamoras, where we had ministered, Barbara is prayed for in a weekly community Mass. A lady called from 05 de mayo, where Barbara served for more than 25 years, and said, "Why don't you come back here? We will take care of you." Many people here are praying for her, too.

At this Advent time of waiting, of trusting, of longing, of walking the road, we are keeping our hearts and eyes fixed on life and the light of Christ, which is always coming. We are so grateful for all the encouraging lights and life that you bring into our lives, especially at this time. Please continue to join us in our prayers of radical trust and hope that Barbara will indeed be nurtured back to health, by God's healing touch, through the hands of all those who are caring for her.

Your appreciative sisters in Holy Cross,

Barbara and Eleanor
Greetings from friends and neighbors

BY LESLIE CHOITZ, ASSISTANT DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Traditionally, the Development Office shares some of the many greetings and tributes to sisters, some living and some deceased, that arrive with donations and responses to our Christmas appeal. Here are a few. Enjoy—and know that you are loved and remembered by many people. As always, our benefactors are counting on your prayers for the many intentions they send.

"Love and thanks to all you sisters who so generously work to improve the lives of others."
—Linda Geddes Sutton
Oak Island, North Carolina
Dunbarton College ’68

"Thanks for all you represent to our communities at Notre Dame."
—Montel and Al Menting
Holy Cross Village, Notre Dame, Indiana

"A prayer of thanksgiving for the efforts of all our retired sisters and for their health and peace."
—Erin Burgoyne
Darien, Connecticut

"Thank you for your tradition of service and love."
—Karen C. Vitale, Provo, Utah
Holy Cross School of Nursing (Salt Lake City, Utah) ’60

"Thank you for letting us be a part of your worshipping community. We are so grateful to be able to pray with you. Have a wonderful peace-filled and joyous holiday!"
—Connie and Keith Egan
South Bend, Indiana

"This small offering for the sisters retirement fund is in grateful appreciation of the many graces of your ministries—gratitude for memories such as Sister Bettina’s gentle, humble spirit; for presence such as Sister Patricia’s wisdom and vision; for care for the needs of the poor, immigrants, and for women—honoring women such as Sister Mary Margaret Weber and A Place for Women to Gather. Many blessings to the community in the new year."
—Marion Danforth
Raleigh, North Carolina
Meet and greet

Sister Nancy Pewterbaugh

The oldest of three girls, Sister Nancy Pewterbaugh, formerly Sister M. Alverna, was born in Endicott, New York, but eventually came to the Washington, D.C., area where she went to St. Cecilia’s Academy.

“Although I went to Catholic school all of my life and met different groups of sisters, it was the Sisters of the Holy Cross who caught my attention,” says Sister Nancy. “They were friendly, fun loving and very good teachers. They made the young women feel very welcome.” It also impressed her that they really liked what they were doing.

A desire to share her love in service motivated her to choose religious life. She originally wanted to be a nurse, but God, and the community, had other plans.

“I became a teacher for 20 years before beginning my work in pastoral ministry, which has been my service for 30 years,” she explains.

Currently, Sister Nancy lives and works in Austin, Texas, in the southern part of the United States. She is a pastoral associate for marriage in a large Hispanic parish called San José, where she ministers to about 5,000 families. In addition, she prepares the parish payroll and does some organizational work for the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults), a program for those desiring to become Catholic.

Sister Nancy celebrated her golden jubilee last summer. She hopes to continue to minister as long as she is able.