

ACDP PERSPECTIVES

Associate Community of the Congregation of Divine Providence
Melbourne, Kentucky

December Issue 2020

From Our Director, Donna Esposito, ACDP

The Beautiful Season of Advent: Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord!

As we enter more deeply into the season of Advent, the words “Emmanuel, God with us” resonate throughout the scripture readings bringing a healing balm to our frightened spirits. Truly the Covid-19 Pandemic has touched each one of us in some way or other: restricting our mobility, social gatherings, education, employment, etc. However, this is Advent, a sacred time to wait in joyful expectation for the coming of our God; there is a Light in the Darkness. It may not be very visible but we need to take time to perceive it. The constant flurry of TV and radio commercials are relentless in drawing our attention to material needs. What about our spiritual needs? There was a time when Advent was far less commercial and much more spiritual. This Advent provides us a perfect time to renew our commitment to make this holy season a special time of prayer and reflection.

During these days when our world is facing many tragedies, grieving families, increasing unemployment, and peace is so fragile, it is difficult to see Light in the darkness. However, we are Women and Men of Providence; we trust in the Providence of God. We believe in faith that through prayer and reflection, God will provide us with the graces to survive the trials and tribulations life brings. No matter what may happen, the love and presence of “Emmanuel, God with us” is the one Light that can pierce the darkness.

What can we do that will bring us to experience the true spirit of Advent at this moment in our lives for a more meaningful Christmas? We begin by asking God to be with us this Advent as we prepare for Christmas Day and to help us to remember what this season is really about. It is about love, mercy, understanding, concern for others and giving a simple smile or greeting that far surpasses any material gift!

May the Love, Peace, and Joy of Jesus Christ be with you and your family during this wonderful season. And may the spirit of Christmas remain in your heart forever!

You are always in my prayers. Blessings in God’s Providence!



Providence Team P-Team

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From Our Liasion: Sr. Lucy Zientek, CDP

As you already know, this pandemic year has been an extraordinarily busy one for the ACDPs! In January, the Steering Committee embraced the hard work of developing a process to reach out and engage every member in the group's renewal and reorganization.

The beginning of this months-long "labor of love" was signaled by a "red envelope" that arrived in your mail around Valentine's Day. Inside was a letter from the newly-named "P-Team" (the former Steering Committee) sharing an overview of the journey ahead and an outline of the first steps to be made on this historic journey together. At that time the Associates and all the Sisters also received a prayer card with a relic of Blessed Jean Martin Moye. The prayer implored God Providence to move every Associate "to a deeper love for You as we discern our future and open ourselves even more to a life filled with Your presence."

The red envelope was followed by a number of "yellow envelopes" as spring turned into summer and fall. Mailings went out and your responses and feedback came in. For some it appeared that a phone call would work better than an email or snail-mail exchange—and so the members of the P-Team reached out again and again by phone, engaging in friendly conversation and prayer, and gleaning any thoughts, comments, and insights Associates wished to contribute. Many have since observed that the process as a whole has provided a wonderful opportunity to get to know each other much better, laying a foundation for deeper community and communication among all Associates, regardless of where they might live in the United States.

By the end of October, a writing committee (comprised of Associates living in Maryland, Missouri, and the Northern Kentucky area) had been elected. They are now meeting via Zoom and working on the first draft of a new Associates' mission statement that is based on your responses to each step of the process, a copy of which every Associate has received. Soon you will be receiving the initial results of the writing committee's efforts and will be asked for your feedback and suggestions so that the draft can be revised as needed. We hope that a new mission statement—which all Associates have contributed to and can enthusiastically adopt as their own—will soon be ready!

With this in hand, conversation will begin around how the group can best reorganize itself to fulfill its stated mission. This concluding part of the process that began at the start of 2020 will engage every Associate during the first half of 2021. We all fervently pray that the good—and *exciting*—work that Providence began in the ACDPs all those months ago will be brought to a blessed conclusion in the coming year!



***“Advent”*: Submitted by Anna Miller, ACDP**

“The starkness of the trees reminds me to enter into the nakedness of my own spirit, humbly and patiently. The colors of Advent; deep blue, purple and pink, the colors of the winter skies invite me to quiet and peacefulness.”

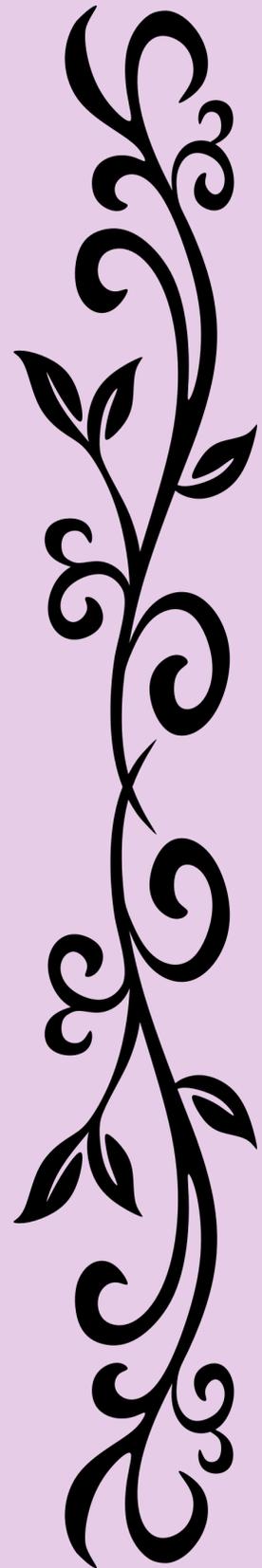
The world does not run according to the Church Liturgical calendar, but on chronological time. Our secular world runs according to the clock. Quiet time is seen as wasteful, non productive. The Church’s season of Advent calls us to quiet introspective time. A time of expectation, like that of a pregnant woman as she awaits the birth of her child.

Advent is a time of contemplation of God’s faithfulness, of His promise to redeem us. The Church calls us to spend time thinking and pondering about God’s great Gift. The Gift of His Son, which we celebrate at Christmas.

This year my church is open from 7 am to 6 pm. (a blessing from the Corona Virus). Besides my usual prayer time at home, I plan to spend time in church using the beautiful stained glass windows to meditate on the Joyful Mysteries one window each week of Advent.

“There is a priority to Advent that I find missing at other times of the year. It is a season of the heart’s movement toward God, and of God’s movement toward the human heart. And all our waiting is to increase our capacity to be pregnant with the presence of the Christ Child.” “Come Lord Jesus”.

“Pilgrims at Heart” Elizabeth Anne Vanek



News from Solomons, MD: Submitted by Anne Etzel, ACDP

Christmas Blessings to all from Solomons, MD Associates of Sisters of Divine Providence.

We can all agree this past year 2020 has been like no other. When Sr. Paula, Sr. Ruth, Sr. Grace and Sr. Peggy left here in June and did not return as usual in August, we felt bereft. While we have accepted this fact, we still miss their joyful presence perhaps even more so as Christmas approaches. We have continued to meet monthly though it has been a challenge. At first we tried to get together at the convent that has become Providence Center now. We had difficulty seeing and hearing those members who were on Zoom so that wasn't working for us. Since then we have been meeting on Zoom, but staying in our homes rather than a few of us trying to meet in person. This, though not ideal, worked much better for us and that is what we have continued to do. We thank Joe Suarez-Murias for his contribution of time and talent in making these Zoom meetings possible.

We have continued our study of *Laudato Si* and will complete the last chapter this month. Pope Francis' encyclical on our care of the earth tells us in no uncertain terms all of us have a responsibility toward keeping our world a healthy place to live in. This includes our need to simplify our lives, to rethink our use of technology, to stand in solidarity with those working for a cleaner world and certainly recycle and reuse. As this year comes to a close our prayer is for an end to this pandemic, peace and consolation for those who have lost family and friends, and trust in God's loving presence within us. Anne Etzel ACDP

A Pledge for Justice: Submitted by Anne Etzel, ACDP

A PLEDGE FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

I SUPPORT JUSTICE, EQUITY, AND COMPASSION IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS.

I AFFIRM THAT WHITE PRIVILEGE IS UNFAIR AND HARMFUL TO THOSE WHO HAVE IT AND TO THOSE WHO DO NOT.

I AFFIRM THAT WHITE PRIVILEGE AND THE CULTURE OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN WHICH OUR NATION AND OUR CHURCH WERE FOUNDED AND DEVELOPED MUST BE DISMANTLED.

I SUPPORT RACIAL EQUALITY, JUSTICE AND LIBERATION FOR EVERY PERSON.

I AFFIRM THE INHERENT WORTH AND DIGNITY OF EVERY PERSON.

THEREFORE, FROM THIS DAY FORWARD.....

I WILL STRIVE DAILY TO UNDERSTAND WHITE PRIVILEGE AND WHITE SUPREMACY AND HOW THEIR EXISTENCE BENEEFITS ME.

I WILL MAKE A GREATER EFFORT TO TREAT ALL PEOPLE WITH THE SAME RESPECT I EXPECT TO RECEIVE.

I COMMIT TO DEVELOPING THE COURAGE TO LIVE MY BELIEFS AND VALUES OF RACIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY.

I WILL STRIVE DAILY TO ELIMINATE RACIAL PREJUDICE FROM MY THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS SO THAT I CAN BETTER PROMOTE THE RACIAL JUSTICE EFFORTS OF OUR CHURCH.

I WILL RENEW AND HONOR THIS PLEDGE DAILY, KNOWING THAT OUR CHURCH, OUR COMMUNITY, OUR NATION AND OUR WORLD WILL BE BETTER PLACES BECAUSE OF MY EFFORTS.

Pledged by Church of Saint Francis and all people of faith and of no faith throughout the world in committing itself to racial justice. From First Unitarian Church of Dallas, Texas



Four New Associates: Submitted by Marilyn Schleyer, ACDP

An Interior Journey in Providence of Four New Associates!

On Monday evening December 14, 2020, four ACDP candidates expressed their commitment to a life filled with abandonment, charity, simplicity and poverty and became members of the ACDP community. The candidates made history as the ACDP and CDP communities and community-at-large witnessed the sacred commitment ceremony on Zoom! The ceremony took place within a lovely virtual Advent prayer service sponsored by the CDPs and ACDPs and was opened to all.

Jackie Hansen, Terri Muennich, Mary Anne Neuroth and Laura Schafer began their ACDP mentoring program on a brisk, beautiful Saturday in October, 2019. Each candidate shared their connections with the Sisters of Divine Providence and their deep desire to enter more fully into a life of abandonment to Providence. From the start, the group's hallmark has been one of enthusiastic commitment to the mentoring process. They took their studies seriously; discussion and writings were introspective and reflective based on a true desire for interior growth.

On Saturdays from October 2019 to March, 2020, the group “studied hard and played hard”, laughing and enjoying each other's company. Each week was filled with rich discussion on the life and charism of John Martin Moye, the history of the Sisters of Divine Providence, the meaning of abandonment to God's call, and how each of the candidates could continue this legacy in their own lives.

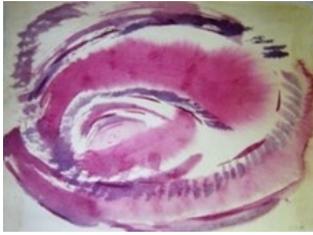
Following classes on Saturdays, the group shared lunch at Holy Family Home and mingled with the sisters, regaling in the stories that each CDP told about the history of the Congregation and their ministries. The candidates said that the sisters' stories really brought to life the CDP charism and virtues.

Then, Covid-19 hit Kentucky, and all face-to-face classes ended. What a loss! But not for long! Mary Helen Bertolini and Marilyn Schleyer, their mentors, canvassed the group as to their desire to try out classes on Zoom. The group was open to a new experience. Success! By helping each other, we figured out how to use Zoom, and some unique experiences and lively discussions ensued. Our family animals and grandkids have made cameo appearances, cats and dogs walking across the screen and our adorable one-year-old Julian, Jackie's grandson, “supervising” from a highchair next to her.

As we prepared to celebrate the commitment of four new associates, we remembered our history. As each left for their missions in isolated hamlets, did not Marguerite Lecomte and her three companions show us what it means to live our lives depending on Providence alone? Did Moye not say and live, “I place my destiny in Your hands.....peaceful and contented in all, I will allow your Providence to govern my life without worry or over eagerness”? And, so, the new associates began their ACDP life, at this most fragile time in the current history of our country, in Providence, on December 14, 2020.



Eye of Providence: Submitted by Sr. Alice Schmersal, CDP



<<When I painted this picture, someone commented, "Oh, that is your "Eye of Providence". Being a Sister of Divine Providence, it is a reminder of Providence -God's compassionate care of all of us.

Turn it this way >>Could it be Mary's FIAT? When the angel addressed Mary, "Hail, Full of Grace" Can you see Mary nodding her consent to be the Mother of God? When praying The Angelus, we pray, "
V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
R. Be it done unto me according to your Word."



<<Can you see here the Madonna and Child enfolded in the warmth of God's marvelous love?
In the Angelus, we pray,
V. And the Word was made flesh.
R. And dwelt among us.
It is a reminder that the Incarnate Word dwells with us now. I grow into a deeper awareness of God's ever-faithful love when others share what they see.

How about you? Are you willing to share what you see?

Pondering 'Women of Providence in Collaboration Advent Prayer and Reflection', for me this painting is a visual expression of "The Hebrew word for Compassion, rachamin, has its roots in rechem, meaning "womb." Compassion is the act of cradling another in love and tenderness as a mother cradles the infant from her womb. Compassion is at the very heart of God." - M Pastro, SP



“Sharon’s Christmas Prayer” Submitted by Anne Etzel, ACDP

SHARON'S CHRISTMAS PRAYER

SHE WAS FIVE, SURE OF THE FACTS,
AND RECITED THEM WITH SLOW SOLEMNITY
CONVINCED EVERY WORD WAS REVELATION.
SHE SAID, THEY WERE SO POOR THEY HAD ONLY PEANUT BUTTER
AND JELLY SANDWICHES TO EAT.
AND THEY WENT A LONG WAY FROM HOME WITHOUT GETTING LOST.
THE LADY RODE A DONKEY, THE MAN WALKED
AND THE BABY WAS INSIDE THE LADY.
THEY HAD TO STAY IN A STABLE WITH AN OX AND AN ASS (hee hee)
BUT THE THREE RICH MEN FOUND THEM BECAUSE A STAR LIGHTED THE ROOF.
SHEPHERDS CAME, AND YOU COULD PET THE SHEEP BUT NOT FEED THEM.
THEN THE BABY WAS BORNED.
AND DO YOU KNOW WHO HE WAS?
THE BABY WAS GOD.
AND SHE JUMPED IN THE AIR, WHIRLED AROUND, DOVE INTO THE SOFA
AND BURIED HER HEAD UNDER THE CUSHION.
WHICH IS THE ONLY PROPER RESPONSE
TO THE GOOD NEWS OF THE INCARNATION.

John Shea

