

ripples

MARCH 2023

THE POOR HANDMAIDS OF
JESUS CHRIST NEWSLETTER



Greenhouse coworker Polly Miller transplant spinach plants that were started from seeds.

While shortages of nearly everything dominated the headlines last year and are continuing this year, produce, especially at The Center at Donaldson, was bountiful. Sam Tepes, Greenhouse Specialist, began his ministry here eight years ago. The abundance and variety of fresh veggies, eggs, and honey are supplied to Dietary Services, who use them to create nutritious, colorful meals that Sisters, residents, coworkers, and guests feast on.

Problem solving is a big component of the greenhouse's operation. In looking for new solutions to issues, Sam noted,

"I like to find good ideas, research them, and adapt them to how it's going to work here." The tools the pros use is often too expensive and need to be scaled down to size, so Sam has taken to making them. Examples include a rock crusher he made for adding minerals to the soil, a biochar burner, and a seed roller to make large-scale planting go more quickly. During greenhouse tours, Sam loves eating a piece of biochar and watching visitors from other departments or the public, mouth agape, as he explains that the black, desiccated char is organic, non-toxic, and enriching to the soil.

Sam and his team have a full agenda for 2023 including something Sam calls Grocery Gardening. "You can plant without the need for a seed company," he said. "If you buy a bag of beans at the grocery store, you can eat part of them and plant the rest." Seeds from tomatoes and peppers can also be saved and planted, and the roots from green onions can be planted to grow more green onions. New produce items The Center at Donaldson enjoyed this year included the green onions, endive, and mizuna, a Japanese green best described as having the flavors of arugula and mustard greens. "They're things I always wanted to grow but didn't have the capacity, or the team to before," Sam said.

Thank you to the Greenhouse team for the abundance you provide to The Center at Donaldson all year and thank you to our generous donors who helps support the greenhouse ministry through giving to the greatest needs of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ.





Sister Germaine Hustedde

A LOOK AT MY LIFE

I think I could say that GRATITUDE is the “hallmark” of my life. I can never sufficiently thank God for the blessings and gifts I have received through His benevolence.

I grew up in a faith-filled, loving family. Both of my parents were very influential in my life. From my Mother I learned cheerfulness, creativity, and simplicity. Mother could use the simplest things to delight us all as well as to surprise us with handwork that we never could have imagined. In those days, “feed sacks” were colorful sturdy material meant to be recycled. Mother would often use these to fashion a new dress for one of us.

From my Dad, I learned to love the poor and needy. As beggars used to mark houses where they would be welcomed, it was not uncommon to come to the family meal to find a stranger already seated there. Dad not only fed the hungry but added to their dignity by welcoming them to sit at our table. Our farmhouse was not terribly distant from the railroad tracks and easily found.

As I graduated from eighth grade, I was eager to go to Donaldson for high school. Neither of my parents objected, but as I approached the subject a second time, my Dad just gently replied, “You are so young, why don’t you just go to high school here?” For some days I mulled the situation over in my mind. World War II was raging, and my three brothers were all in the military leaving Dad alone on the farm. Eventually, I went back to Dad and said, “Why don’t I just stay home and help you on the farm?” Dad did not object. So instead of heading off to high school I began higher education with my Dad as instructor.

The next year Dad sold the farm and he and Mother moved to town along with my two younger sisters. Then I moved on to high school in Donaldson, IN.

Besides my parents, I was influenced by the Poor Handmaid Sisters who taught us in school. Without words they sowed the seeds of a religious vocation in me. I not only wanted to be a Sister but I wanted to be a missionary. This desire

grew because of a book I read repeatedly from our little library entitled *Grey Dawns and Red* by Mary Alma Ehard. This was a fascinating story of Saint Theophane Vernard who devoted his life to missionary work in what today is Vietnam.

The in between years were an assortment of various assignments such as childcare in various Institutions which the Congregation managed. I completed my B.A. at Alverno College. Milwaukee and a Master's Degree at Loyola University, Chicago – primarily through summer school.

The first opportunity to realize my desire to go to the Missions came just after I celebrated my silver Jubilee. A new mission had been established in India and our German General Superior was looking for help. I immediately volunteered. I did not however fly directly to India. Mother Waldeburga decided that I should spend some time in Germany – long enough to apply for a visa there. The first attempt failed. With God's design, very shortly thereafter, Father Jonas, who worked in India with the World Health Organization (WHO) came by requesting a donation for his work. Mother bargained with him saying, "We can help you IF you can help us!" Father agreed and in no time, I had a visa for India. My work there was with the young women who were joining the Congregation and helping to establish our leprosy control program, which proved to be a very successful venture.

I remained in India until our American Provincial made the decision that I was needed in the states. I was then assigned as teacher at Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Then other assignments followed. Again, as a primary teacher, with classes in both the lower and upper primary, attaining a second M.A. from Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, then teaching Philosophy at Ancilla College and later, directing a Retreat House in Burlington, Iowa.

During my time in Iowa, I was elected to our Provincial Leadership Team. Shortly thereafter, this was followed by election to our General Leadership Team in Germany. During my twelve

years there, we started a mission in Kenya, East Africa. When I completed my term of office, I was asked to go to Kenya. My first responsibility there was as Principal of St. Francis School in the little village of Mitunguu. Purchasing supplies for the Food Program I initiated at the school, put me in touch with a lot of street children – boys living on the street and surviving on the meager scraps of "food" they could salvage from the rubbish. We became friends and they too wanted to go to school. But first, I had to get them off the street. Funds were not available to build, and the local folks were reluctant to "rent to those dirty, undisciplined kids." They feared that their own children would be contaminated. Two men workers in school eventually helped me to find a place "where no one would bother us." It turned out to be an abandoned slaughterhouse. In my opinion it was a disaster, but Mr. Mwaiki assured me that they would clean it up and make it ready for the boys. THIS THEY DID! Shoveling out cart loads of trash, painting the red walls a soothing color and installing solar panels because there was no electricity. Just before I was ready to open, a warning came: "WE HAVE NO WATER." It moved me to go directly to the Water Corp. and ask for a connection. The gentleman I spoke with was very polite and promised to oblige. However, we ended up with one tap, but I bought about 40 plastic buckets that would serve the boys in the bathing cubicles and for the washing of their clothes, and for myriad other purposes.

We could only accommodate 24 boys in this make-shift place and the night we opened, there were floods of tears by both myself and the boys I could not accommodate.



(Sister Germaine Hustedde cont.)

My gratitude reached a peak when eight months later we were able to build a decent residence for the boys. Today, St. Joseph Home – Caring Place is home to about forty resident boys and another fifty or more that have pursued college or university degrees with our help. Some are still studying. Even yet they call Caring Place home.

For Director of Liturgy and Music Andrew Jennings, it's been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shepherd the new pipe organ project from inception to fruition, something many music directors never experience. "Part of the vocation of being an organist and music director is providing music that brings people closer to God," Andrew said thoughtfully. "It's such an incredible responsibility when you're part of creating a sacred object that will live many lifetimes beyond what you will live. It's an indescribable feeling."

Opus 83, the visual and auditory masterpiece created over that last two years by Taylor & Boody Organbuilders of Staunton, Virginia, has been installed at the Ancilla Domini Chapel.

The project encompassed over 23,000 hours of work. In terms of visuals, Opus 83 is one of the most opulent pieces ever crafted by Taylor and Boody. Its decorative elements rival Taylor and Boody's early works in Saint Thomas Church on 5th Avenue in New York City and Holy Cross Church in Worcester, Massachusetts. Our Opus 83 was created to serve the congregation and it fills the space with a presence and sound that's meant for congregational singing and to accompany a cantor in worship music. Its auditory simplicity and its humbleness align perfectly with the PHJC core values.

So I could forever sing –

*"Glory and praise to our God
Who alone give light (wisdom) to our days.
Many are the blessings He bears,
To those who trust in His ways."*



PIPE DREAM NO MORE
THE OPUS 83 PIPE ORGAN IS HERE

From left, Taylor and Boody team members Aaron Reichert, Joel VanderZee, Sean Dye, and PHJC liturgy and music director Andrew Jennings stand before Opus 83.

This new organ would not be possible without our generous donors. Our gratitude is immense, and your joyful generosity will be heard around the Motherhouse for decades to come.