

# IN Formation - Vocation SCN9

E-NEWSLETTER OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT ELIZABETH  
SPRING 2014



## Growth in the Charity Charism

The charism of charity continues to grow and be nurtured through our Transfer Candidate, Sister Genevieve Nwaizu. Genevieve, pictured on right, is very much involved in her ministry as second grade teacher at Saint Augustine Elementary School, Union City, NJ. She loves the ministry of education and is very much part of all that goes on at St. Augustine.

After teaching Pre-K for a year, Genevieve assumed the position of second grade teacher. This was a special year for her as she had the opportunity and privilege of preparing about 30 young boys and girls for First Holy Communion. She radiates excitement and joy when she shares her experience of working with these beautiful young children who have caught her love for God and Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Genevieve was very instrumental in helping to prepare the school and students for the recent visit from Middle States. The school, and especially her classroom, was decorated from ceiling to floor with many creative works that were done by her students.

Genevieve shares community with the sisters at Assumption/All Saints Convent in Jersey City. The sisters have welcomed her and because they exude the charism of charity, Genevieve has wonderful role models to learn from. She is very comfortable there where she has lived for almost three years.

Recently Genevieve has had the opportunity to share community life with the sisters at Saint Anthony



Convent in Elizabeth. The six weeks spent with this community have given her the chance to meet more of our sisters and be enriched by the sharing of their stories and they in turn by hers.

Genevieve and Sister Maryanne Tracey, the Director of Formation, were recently invited to Mother Seton Convent in Clark for dinner. This was a great opportunity for Genevieve to meet yet another local community. A good time was had by all as each shared her ministry experiences over dinner.

As summer approaches Genevieve will have more experiences and opportunities to grow in her love for God and the charism of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth.

~ Maryanne Tracey, SC

## Inauguration of First National Catholic Sisters' Week Saint Catherine University, Saint Paul, Minnesota

The weekend of March 7-9, I had the opportunity to attend the launching of the first National Catholic Sisters' Week. I represented the Congregation, and Shannon Hoffman, a sophomore at the College of Saint Elizabeth attended as a representative of the college. Over one hundred sisters from congregations throughout the country, and over one hundred young women from colleges sponsored by their congregations attended. The weekend was funded by a grant from the Conrad Hilton Foundation which envisions a campaign of national scope to inspire women to consider religious life. The initiative was formally launched at a banquet the evening of March 8th, Women's History Day.

Shannon and I participated in workshops that included a track for the sisters and a track for the young college

women. These included Women Religious and US Popular Culture, Social Media 101: Tips and Tools to Boost Your Reach; Oral History 101, Uncovering the Sister Story; and a session moderated by Soledad O'Brien, a former CNN anchor and correspondent for CNN News. Soledad hosted four sisters representing various ages and experiences in ministry who each told her vocation story. The setting for the content of the workshops, and of the Story Session, was marked by beautiful prayer, ritual, liturgy, meals, table sharing, and entertainment. We found the weekend to be informative and life-giving and were grateful for the opportunity to participate.

~ Carol Williams, SC



*Pictured l to r ~ Shannon Hoffman, Sister Carol Ann Lockwood, Nichole Ayala and Sister Ellen Dauwer*

## **WE ARE CHURCH!**

This past year Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth joined young adult women in three programs across the United States. A panel came together in mid-May to share their experiences in a program entitled, “What’s Happening.”

Nichole Ayala, an alumna of the College of Saint Elizabeth and the chair of the Vocation Advisory Board, is well accustomed to working in partnership with the Sisters of Charity. A teacher of art and religion in a Catholic elementary school, she instructs children from kindergarten to eighth grade. But when she and Sister Carol Ann Lockwood attended the National Catholic Youth Conference last November in Indianapolis, it was 25,000 fifteen- to eighteen-year-olds that they encountered. Nichole said that she “was amazed to see how faithful youth can be.” Although at times she finds the need of younger teens to project an image of coolness especially in regard to their faith disturbing, the enthusiasm of the older adolescents was inspiring. She recalls that when the question “Who are we?” was asked from the stage of the arena, the thundering response was, “We are Church!” Sister Carol Ann, a religion teacher and campus minister at Immaculate Heart Academy, was so energized by the experience that she hopes to chaperone a group of her students to the next Conference.

While semester exams prevented two CSE students, Iris Javier and Amanda Dupree, from participating in the panel, Sister Peggy Welch described their experiences at the House of Charity in New Orleans in early January. Those students joined a Sister of Charity from New York, two students from the College of Mount Saint Vincent, and a young woman from Halifax, Nova Scotia, in demolishing houses that had been damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Through the nonprofit Saint Bernard Project, begun by a teacher and a lawyer in 2006, 41,000 volunteers have rehabbed 445 houses following the storm that devastated parts of New Orleans. Sister Peggy noted that it was not all sweat and sledgehammers,



*(l to r) Sister Margaret Welch and Sister Carol Williams*

however. “In New Orleans Mardi Gras is even bigger than Christmas and the holiday season begins after New Year’s Day. We were there in time to observe the Joan of Arc parade that kicks off the celebrations.” She and the young women who accompanied her decorated a nearby nursing home for Mardi Gras, enabling them to speak with older people who had lived through Katrina.

Sister Carol Williams and Shannon Hoffman, a junior at the College of Saint Elizabeth, made history by participating in the first National Catholic Sisters Week in Saint Paul, MN, a gathering of over 100 sisters and 100 young women from colleges sponsored by congregations of women religious. Shannon, who is the vice-president of student government at the college, explained that the week was deliberately placed within Women’s History Month, since the program sought to promote awareness of the contributions of American women religious to the growth and development of the country. Students at St. Catherine’s University, the site of the weekend program, are being trained to interview sisters to record and make public their work as part of a project called Sister Story. Sister Carol pointed out that National Catholic Sisters Week is the first project of a larger three-year effort to increase the visibility of women religious and promote a clearer understanding of religious life, which is made possible by a \$3.3 million grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. Noting that she needs to acquire skills in social media, a key focus of the gathering, Sister Carol is hoping to work on them during her summer break from Saint Vincent Academy in Newark.

In reflecting on their experiences Shannon said that the best part of the time spent in Saint Paul was the ability to connect with other young women at the same level of spirituality. Nichole, who teaches in a school staffed by the Religious Sisters Filippini, tries to introduce her students to the spirit of Charity, as well, noting that she has a large statue of Mother Seton in her classroom. “It’s so important that children absorb spirituality, as well as learning about their faith.” And perhaps Sister Carol best summed up everyone’s experiences when she observed, “Many young adults are involved in service and ministry, but the National Catholic Sisters Week Conference confirmed for me that they also are hungering for spirituality and community.”

~ Noreen Neary, SC

## New Orleans Service Trip

From January 5-10, 2014, two College of Saint Elizabeth students (Iris Javier and Amanda Dupree) joined with Sister Margaret Welch to give a week of service at the House of Charity in New Orleans. Here are their reflections:

The House of Charity collaborates with the St. Bernard Project, among others, to provide service opportunities for the volunteers. Since 2006 the Project has rebuilt over 445 homes that were damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Iris and Amanda worked on one of the approximately 8000 that remain to be repaired. Beginning the first day they worked with students from Boston College gutting a house for rehabilitation. Other volunteers readied a house that would be turned over to its owner the following week. They painted, installed locks, doorknobs and baseboards, cleaned floors and windows, and did whatever else was suggested by the site supervisor. In the afternoons they were free for other experiences. The first night was the beginning of the Mardi Gras season which is an important celebration for the city of New Orleans. The students went to a nearby nursing home and took down the Christmas decorations, both inside and outside, and put up Mardi Gras decorations in their place. They also interacted with the seniors, learning of their experiences during the hurricane. One result of this was that the nursing home director came to the House of Charity to teach the volunteers how to make pralines for themselves and to give to their families and friends.

~ Sister Margaret Welch



The city of New Orleans is a vibrant city full of life. It maintains its traditional and historic features filled with art and religious diversity. The symbolic fleur-de-lis can be seen just about everywhere. The people are very friendly and nice. The House of Charity of New Orleans is located in the area called uptown. We visited other parts of the city such as The Lower Ninth Ward, which was the area most impacted by Hurricane Katrina. Visiting this area you can see many empty lots, where people used to have their homes. The area is slowly rebuilding, some houses are being raised as they are being rebuilt to prevent flooding. During our visit we also took a tour around the famous French Quarter. We stopped at the market where they sell many souvenirs; artists sell their works of art including original poetry. In the French quarter there are many places to eat and drink. A popular restaurant is the Café du Monde, which is known for its café au lait with beignets, a pastry well-known in New Orleans. Another restaurant we went to was the Oceana Grill, which serves the traditional food of the area. The famous dishes are the gumbo and jambalaya. They also serve various types of seafood and even fried alligator.

Throughout the city you can see horse drawn carriages, many beads on the balconies from numerous parades, many vendors selling various things, musicians playing instruments, singing, or performing. We also visited the Louisiana State Museum where we saw the exhibition, *Living with Hurricanes: Katrina and Beyond*. The exhibition is about the history, science and personal stories of the people affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Next to the museum is the St. Louis Cathedral; in front of the Cathedral is Jackson Square. Jackson Square is a park that has the statue named Battle of New Orleans. The statue is of US President Andrew Jackson.

~ Iris Javier

One of the most memorable parts of my experience at the House of Charity took place at the house. Each morning we started with breakfast. I sat down at the kitchen nook and talked about various things with the sisters which fostered a sense of camaraderie. Directly after there was morning prayer. Each morning it was led by a different sister and each morning a different perspective and aspect of God's work was illuminated. I grew close to the sisters as well as to my fellow volunteers in these sessions. At the end of the day, we had our reflection and nightly prayer. We went over as a group what we did with the St. Bernard project and brought these experiences to a spiritual level which each and every one of us could connect with in some way. Lastly, there were the special activities – the ones which didn't happen every night. The most memorable was the visit by Anne who taught all of us how to make Pralines, (pronounced "Praw-leens" if you're from New Orleans). She brought us a taste of the New Orleans culture and we had a truly unique and fun filled night with her! The Sisters of Charity made me, all of us, feel as if their home was our home.

~Amanda Dupree