



INFO-AFFILIATION

November 2015

It is finally here, the new issue of your newsletter. In this edition, you'll find news from affiliates in Southern Maine, USA. Moreover, you can read articles from three members, Lucy and Donna from Maine and Nancy from Quebec, who traveled to Lesotho to join the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Affiliation there.

News from Southern Maine Affiliates

The Leadership Team met at St. Joseph Convent on August 17th, for a discernment session in view of identifying the members' God-given gifts and to assign/select roles fitted to the talents and personality of each. Sister Madeleine D'Anjou, our Journeying Companion, planned and led the discernment process using as basic tool, 1 Corinthians 12, "One Body, Many Parts." After each one had publicly identified her primary gift, she had us delve into Jonas' Mission and Response, selected verses of chapters 1, 2, & 3, as well as Matthew 5, verses 14-16, "The Similes of Salt and Light."

How reassuring to realize that we had, among the six of us, a perfect body, with all its parts intact and ready to be of service at the command of the head. Unlike Jonas no one ran away from his/her calling, but, rather, all praised God for their unique aptitude and embraced their responsibilities with grateful hearts. For the 2nd year, our Affiliation leadership planned a couple of picnics, during the summer months. While we wish to relax from formal meetings, we feel the need to recreate together, as families do, and to meet and celebrate the friendship we share.

Our 1st picnic of the season, scheduled for July at St. Joseph Convent, had to be canceled because of the repairs going on there. The August one was held at the Cohens (Mrs. Cohen is one of our Affiliates), on the 22nd, and their spacious and unoccupied barn was well decorated and set up to accommodate our 23 attendees. Everyone brought their favorite family dish, the food was abundant and delicious, there was much laughter and periods of reminiscing. Even the weather smiled upon our gathering. Best of all, existing relationship bonds were reinforced and new ones were forged. We have already set the dates for our next summer gathering.

Anita Cote, Affiliate, September 29, 2015



Reflections on the 25th Anniversary of the Affiliation in Lesotho

God's creation is shouting for joy! Fair skies, beautiful mountains, rolling farmlands, sheep, donkeys, cattle, welcoming smiles of children, the village people and the religious sisters manifested God's love and goodness all around us in a gathering of the Affiliates that took place at St. Rodrigue Good Shepherd Mission, as of October 17, 2015. It was a weekend of meeting new friends, enjoying delicious food, beautiful rhythmic vocal music and dancing throughout the entire visit. If you are musically inclined you will enjoy the rhythm of swaying, singing and some dancing for the Lord during the Mass Celebration in the Sesotho language. No piano, no guitar, just voices; hands are the musical instruments. The Eucharistic Mass went on for over four hours. It felt like we were doing exercise during the Mass! Young Affiliates seated in back of us were great coaches for the Mass program. Choral groups like the Lesotho Catholic Youth Movement, The single mothers of the Good Shepherd Centre, Affiliations of: the Daughters of the Sacred Heart; the Sodality of Mary; Sisters of Charity; the Oblate Fathers and Brothers; the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and many more participated! The Church was packed. It is common to travel by foot from three to four hours! Attendance included Village Chiefs. The Celebration continued with lots of dancing exhibitions.



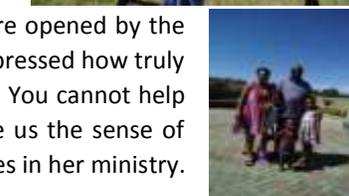
Interacting with the Affiliates, we learned that tuition is \$60 per student per year; most 14 year olds are in their 3rd or 4th grade primary school level. These schools were opened by the Good Shepherd Sisters. We were privileged to know Affiliates in their respective homes. They expressed how truly happy they were with our visit with them. The African hospitality is heartfelt, candid and warm. You cannot help but love them. . . Our hearts were at home with the African people that we met. They gave us the sense of **Belonging** – as a family in Christ. I asked a Sister in the capital city of Maseru about her challenges in her ministry.

She expressed that she is challenged by the love, devotion, goodness, and corporal works of Mercy of the Affiliates rendered to the Sisters, their fellow Affiliates and the community around them. Little did she know, it was the examples seeded by the Good Shepherd Sisters that brought forth the vision statement of the Affiliates of the Good Shepherd to promote Love and Goodness entwined with corporal works of Mercy.

We also learned in our workshops the distinction between being an Associate and an Affiliate.

In conclusion: To be an Affiliate is ultimately belonging to God. We are grateful for this enriching and fulfilling experience in Africa.

By God's Amazing Grace, **Lucy Cilley**, Affiliate



A Heartfelt “Thank You” Letter



Dear Good Shepherd Sisters of Lesotho...

My sincere thanks for showering me with your generous hospitality! Being here with you has been the highlight of experiences in my life so far, and I am pretty old. My heart has desired to be here with you for a long time. Now my dream has come true.

Before boarding South African Airways in NYC, I wrote these words: “I’m really going to Africa and I’m scared a little and excited a lot.” This was truth for me, as I was only scared once when I found that huge black spider in my sink the first morning here; after that it was excitement all the way.

My first journey was to the mountains to visit with the Sisters at St. Leonard Convent. They were all waiting to greet us with their love and hospitality. On our ride up the highway leading there, I have never experienced anything so spectacular in my life; the scenery was breathtaking and I wanted to take a mental picture so as to never forget its beauty. But even more beautiful than the land is the beauty of your people! Jesus said: *“Be perfect as the Father is perfect”* and He called me here to be with you so He could explain to my heart what He truly meant by that statement. I have never experienced perfect beauty and love before now, right here with you Sisters in your homeland.

And finding the shepherds in the fields along the way was an extra bonus. My heart was touched in a way that relates to the Blessed Mother’s experience after giving birth to Our Lord Jesus Christ, and they, the Shepherds of the Fields, were the first people on Earth to see their Savior : *“Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the World, have Mercy on us!”*



The next excursion was the road trip to St. Rodrigue. Poor Sr. Sophia, she had no idea who she was sitting beside. "Oh my; look at this," and "Oh my; look at that," plus all the questions asked along the way. And the way...the road to go there!! Unbelievable, but *"anything is possible with God."* Finally we arrived and what a commotion! I've not heard so many screaming girls in one place except at a Rock concert in the USA, only these girls were screaming for me!



To be able to share this 25th Anniversary Celebration with all your Affiliates couldn't have been more special. This was my 8th year to renew my vows as a Consecrated Affiliate, and to be in your presence along with my fellow affiliates was sacred to me. I was truly on Holy Ground.

Never will I be able to thank you enough for all the love I've received and for sharing your Convent, food, faith and the very essence of who you are with your kindness, generosity and good works, such as the Good Shepherd Center for Teen Mothers and their children. Also, the Emmanuel Hostel for young women attending school or work, feeling secure and safe in the shelter you provide for them.

You are truly living the Charism and Spirit of your Foundress, Venerable Marie-Josephite Fitzbach, and she is looking down at her beloved Sisters of the Good Shepherd with Love, Goodness and Mercy as God willed to you from the beginning and will continue to bestow upon you for generations to come.

Being here I realized that I belong to God and to you, my Good Shepherd Sisters, in every Province where the Good Shepherd is tending His Sheep! In closing I wish to quote from Pope Francis: *"God is Love, God is Beauty, God is Truth."* And you, my Dearly Beloved Sisters, you have all three gifts right here in your wonderful Lesotho.



Thank you for this Peace, Love and Joy which have been ingrained into my heart and soul, which I will take back to our USA Province with Love, Goodness and Mercy as God wills.

Your loving Consecrated Affiliate,

Donna Towle, USA

My Visit to the *Kingdom in the Sky*

At the end of August 2015, I was invited by the General Council and Sr. Lise Gagné to visit the sisters and affiliates in Lesotho to present the Affiliation and its tree-symbol. So here we were, Sr. Lise and I, on October 1, 2015, leaving for a long journey that would lead us to the *"Kingdom in the Sky,"* Lesotho!

We were expected and the welcome was very warm. Several sisters, including Sr. Constanca Mosakeng, Provincial Superior, made the trip to the airport in Maseru. There were also some affiliates who came to wish a warm welcome to these distant members of the Good Shepherd beautiful family. Our arrival at the Provincial House did not go unnoticed, for all the sisters came out to meet us. What a welcome!



After unpacking and a little rest, we joined the community for the evening meal. Again, a welcome worthy of the greatest awaited us; the warmth and thoughtfulness of these women really moved me. The dinner ended on a musical note, the young sisters of the community sang their joy for having us, and I was so moved that I wasn't able to hold back tears of happiness. The sisters have such beautiful harmonious voices! The evening ended in laughter and delight to be part of such a beautiful family.

The following days, we went to meet the sisters of the community in their respective environments, their missions. From the diocese of Mohale's Hoek to Breda in South Africa, going by the Good Shepherd Centre, St. John Tlali and St. Anne D'Auray, all these places left a lot of pleasure in my heart and beautiful images in my mind. Everywhere I went, I met inspiring women passionate about their mission of serving the poorest like their beloved Foundress, the Venerable Marie-Josephite Fitzbach.



I was particularly touched by the girls at the Good Shepherd Center and their children. This center helps young single mothers, providing them with a safe place for their delivery, then giving them basic training in sewing and cooking—an education that will prove to be very useful for a good start in life and to take good care of their children. The nurse who takes care of the clinic works day and night to deliver these tiny babies; she and her team also take care of the sick living nearby. During my visit, I had the chance to see a little girl only a few hours old, a small miracle of life. Children from the nursery saw us coming with a little fear, but they quickly regained their beautiful smiles. Again, my eyes were wet!



In all the places I visited, I made a presentation of the Affiliation to interested women who are involved with affiliates. The mandate given by the General Council was to show them that we are here to share the charism of Mother Foundress, and to live in unity as members of one family with the community of the Good Shepherd Sisters. My message was very well received; great openness to affiliates is present in all the houses in the community of Lesotho; the affiliates are really involved with the sisters and their communities. They deeply love Marie Fitzbach and aspire to follow in her footsteps in their everyday lives. The sisters admire the seriousness with which the affiliates meet their vocation.

Now I am back home and I am sure of one thing: the Good Shepherd will continue to bear fruit for a long time to come! For my part I am filled with the deepest respect for all those I met in the *"Kingdom in the Sky."*

Nancy Fournier, Affiliate, Quebec



In other news

All affiliates now know that I was elected during the last General Chapter as a member of the General Council. This has an effect on my work for the Affiliation since I cannot be there full time, even if I remain General Coordinator. This also explains why you will be receiving communications signed by Nancy Fournier. She now works in the Affiliation Office on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. She is my assistant, so to speak, because if we want our membership in the Affiliation to keep its dynamism, if we want your communications with the Resource Team to receive proper responses, if we want effort and time to gain new members, if we want the intercultural dimension to grow, I need regular help! And our community agreed to provide this support, because we believe in the importance of the Good Shepherd Affiliation.

Thank you in advance for the indispensable collaboration you will continue to give us.

Sister Lise Gagné, S.C.I.M., General Counselor

Remembering our dearly departed

All affiliates would like to offer their deepest and sincere condolences to the family and friends of Mrs. Anna Thobakae, who passed away on October 5, 2015. May she rest in peace!

May this Advent Season bring you

**Joy in the coming of our Savior,
and Hope that Peace will make its way
in the hearts of our leaders.**



Nancy Fournier
for the Resource Team