

Lurana's Star

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF ATONEMENT
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Our Philippine Mission



*Our three founding missionaries,
Sister Susan Boyle,
Sister Nancy Sargent,
and Sister Margaret Connolly
standing in front of
Our Lady of the Atonement
Cathedral
in Baguio City, Philippines.*

*From left to right: Sister Margaret
Connolly, Sister Nancy Sargent,
Sister Susan Boyle and
Sister Helen Hadcock
with our newest members in the
Philippines:
Sister Virginia Santiago,
Rosa Xiang Xue Quin,
Filipina Cuevas,
and Cynthia Carlos.*



**Franciscans...
Missionaries...
Lovers of Creation...
Lovers of the Lord!**



Sister Eilish Sweeney

Dear Friend,

Greetings and best wishes to you and your family and friends. I trust your summer was relaxing and enjoyable.

In this edition of *Lurana's Star* it is my great pleasure to bring you up-to-date on our congregation's newest mission. You may recall that it has been five years since three of our Sisters, Sister Susan Boyle, Sister Margaret Connolly and Sister Nancy Sargent committed themselves to opening a foundation among the people of the Philippines. That day, September 16, 2010 will always be an important date in our congregation's history. God has indeed blessed these three Sisters for their dedication and commitment to living and ministering among the families of one of the poorer areas of that country.

When I first shared the good news of our new foundation in the Philippines, back in 2011, I shared with you how absolutely extraordinary it was to discover how God works in our lives. As I related to you back then I had just discovered that as far back as the early 1920's, thanks to Father Paul, Mother Lurana and many good friends of Graymoor, monetary assistance was being sent to at least seven Parishes/Programs in the Philippines.

I also shared with you that, today, in the city of Baguio, a summer resort in the

mountain Province of Benquet, stands what is regarded as "the most beloved cathedral" in the nation and it is known as: Our Lady of the Atonement Cathedral. What a great tribute to the Society of the Atonement, Father Paul and Mother Lurana.

Over the summer months our upcoming General Chapter of 2016 was officially announced on June 5, 2015 one year prior to the opening of this important event. Please keep us in your prayers.

We are delighted to announce that on July 9th the Feast of our Lady of the Atonement, our new convent in Chigasaki, Japan was officially blessed by the Bishop of Yokohama. We wish our Sisters many good years of life and ministry. And, then on the 14th of July Sister Angela Marie Kumagai (see our Spring 2015 Edition of *Lurana's Star*) gathered with the Sisters and Friars of the Atonement at our new convent in Chigasaki to celebrate her 50th Jubilee. We wish her sincere best wishes and God's blessings.

Many of our Sisters, including myself, took time to go aside for retreats and vacation. I hope, you, our reader, were able to find time to relax and enjoy family, friends and the good weather.

On August 15th a Final Profession Ceremony was held in our convent chapel here at Graymoor. Sister Virginia Santiago, who is presently ministering in her native country, the Philippines returned to Graymoor for this very important event in her religious life. We wish Sister Virginia God's special blessings in her life and ministry as a Franciscan Sister of the Atonement.

God bless you and your family and thank you for your goodness to us, the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement.

Greetings,

Sister M. Eilish Sweeney

Our Philippines Mission

Sister Susan Boyle, one of our three founding missionaries of our newest mission shares the following with us: “Upon our arrival on September 16, 2010 at Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila, Philippines, Sister Margaret Connolly, Sister Nancy Sargent and myself were welcomed by Brother Francis Tanega and Brother Reh Vasquez both members of the Sons of Mary Health of the Sick. We spent a few days in Manila as guests of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Brother Francis then accompanied us to Barangay Paliparan 3 on the outskirts of Dasmariñas City in the Province of Cavite. We took up residence in a rented house



Enthusiastic missionary volunteers (including our own Sister Margaret Connolly, Sister Susan Boyle and Sister Nancy Sargent) begin their missionary journey in the Philippines with intense study of the people and the culture.

To understand the area one needs to know the origin of the Paliparan 3 Site. It is an area located in the Province of Cavite in the Diocese of Imus. Around twenty-five to thirty years ago an area of land on the outskirts of Manila was purchased by a wealthy Philippine business group to be used to build what was to be the then largest Mall in Asia. Unfortunately there were around 47,000 families, all informal settlers, living in this purchased area. These were a people without much education and/or employment eking out a living as best they could around Manila and its boroughs. Obviously it was impossible for these families to continue to live on the site where the Mall was being built. So, these 47,000 families were relocated by the Government to Paliparan Site 3 where the population was sparse and where opportunities for employment were few. Each family was given a small portion of land and a very small donation with which to build a dwelling, the ownership of which is now questionable. At this point the number of families has grown to around 80,000 as people continually move from the rural areas in search of a better life for their children.



Brother Francis, Sister Nancy, Sister Susan and Brother Reh visiting the Boy's Shelter in Manila back in 2010.

which had been prepared for our arrival by Brother Francis and the boys from the Shelter for street teenagers run by the Brothers. After a few days of settling in we began our volunteer ministry at the Pangarap Centre in Paliparan. The Pangarap Centre in Paliparan is a Community Development Centre operated by the Sons of Mary as a branch of their centre for street children in Manila. Because the Sisters' residence was quite a distance from our ministry it was necessary for us to rent a small building near the Centre which we named Lurana Place. This rental gave us the opportunity to move among the people whom we served. One of our first projects was to clean up, paint and renovate Lurana Place since it was rented “as is.”



Sister Margaret enjoys the company of young volunteers who go with her to visit families in need.

Our Philippines Mission

It was in this area in the Diocese of Imus that we, the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement were welcomed by Bisop Luis Antonio Tagle (now Cardinal Archbishop of Manila). Bishop Tagle assured us that he and the priests were happy to have us in the diocese where we would



Sister Nancy and Sister Susan with the present Cardinal of Manila when he was the local Bishop back in 2010.

volunteer our assistance at the Centre which is located in the Parish of Christ The King. We would at the same time research ministries that we could in the future initiate and operate in the Paliparan 3 area.

Every morning at 5:45 we were picked up at our residence by multi-cab, a jeepney like vehicle which can seat fourteen to sixteen passengers. At Lurana Place we said Morning Prayer together, and then walked to Mass at the nearby Christ the King Church. After Mass and a



Sister Margaret Connolly in the midst of an important activity at the Day Care Center.

simple breakfast we walked to the Centre and began our volunteer work for the day.

Sister Margaret Connolly volunteered to minister in the Day Care Centre and help care for the toddlers 0-4 years old. Sister continues to be a generous volunteer in this program and she also volunteers one day a week as a dental assistant. A dentist from Manila comes to the Centre each weekend and provides inexpensive treatment for the local people. Sister Margaret who is a registered nurse, also takes part in medical mission days which occasionally take place at the Centre.



Sister Nancy and parents meeting for Bible Study.

Sister Nancy Sargent volunteered her assistance in the local Faith Formation program. She formed groups to help with the Sacramental Programs and Scripture sharing sessions. A number of adults and children in Sister's classes were baptized, made First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Sister helped with summer camp programs for the children of Pangarap Centre. She also visited low-income families and provided them with food and other necessities of life. In time assistance of this kind, especially school supplies, began to arrive in large boxes, compliments of Jamie Brown, a local teenager from the Graymoor area. Jamie's mother, who helps with nursing at the Sisters' Residence Graymoor, assisted and continues to assist Jamie in finding materials, packing and sending these boxes.

Our Philippines Mission



Sister Virginia (right) with Sister Helen and Sister Susan at our convent.

Sister Virginia Santiago joined the Sisters as our fourth member in December 2012. Sister is a Filipina and so was and is most helpful in assisting with ministries, business dealings and required legal transactions involving the local and national government. Sister initiated the The Atonement Youth Club (TAYC). The Youth Club has been involved in various charitable endeavors such as Christmas gifting and feeding hungry children. Recently they have been involved in a local before school breakfast activity. Because of Sister Virginia's continued studies in Social Work and her necessary involvement in training for her degree Sister has benefited from many experiences in poverty stricken areas and ministries to and for neglected and abandoned children. All of this experience later will be beneficial to us as we research and initiate future programs. Recently together with a non-catholic Pastor, Sister ministered to a tribal group, the Ita Tribe, in a mountain area north of Manila. The three candidates who look forward to becoming Sisters of the Atonement accompanied Sister Virginia in this venture and found the experience both educational and rewarding. Also a three day camp experience for a combined Christian/Muslim group of teenagers arranged by Sister Virginia and a local Muslim lady was very successful.

Some financial assistance and access to their farm was given for this venture by a local Philippine family. Sister Nancy Sargent and two of the Sisters' candidates attended the camp and assisted with the activities.

On January 21, 2014 Sister Helen Hadcock arrived in Paliparan Site 3. Sister was a happy and helpful addition to the community. Sister Helen took over the English teaching and tutoring sessions. I myself had been responsible for this area and was now freed to take care of other areas, such as candidate formation and the meetings and paper work that became more and more necessary in connection with our plans for the building of a convent and ministry centre. Sister Helen also helped occasionally in the Day Care and continues to assist a couple of days a week in monitoring the Centre's feeding program. This latter program serves a nutritious meal daily to undernourished and hungry young children. Sister is also taking lessons in Tagalog, the language used by the local people.



Sister Helen (center) with Sister Margaret and Sister Nancy.

Looking toward the future as we continue our present volunteer ministries the challenge that presents itself to us, the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement, is that of researching, studying and putting into action programs that will benefit the people of Barangay Paliparan 3. Here we digress a little just to assure you that the people of the

Our Philippines Mission



Sister Susan, our English teacher with some of her enthusiastic students.

Philippines, and this includes the people of Paliparan, are a smiling and outwardly joyful people of whom it has been said that they rank, even internationally, among the highest in resiliency in times of storms, earthquakes, natural disasters and other unfortunate occurrences. It also can be truthfully said that in situations where Westerners might find it impossible to produce entertaining activities they can present musical, singing and dancing programs that could compete and win in any talent show.



Some of the teenagers from the Pangarap Centre in Paliparan, enjoying an afternoon of fun.

To return to the challenge of future ministries of the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement: Presently we have begun building a

convent and a ministry building in an area of Paliparan named Pintog Gubat which can be translated door to the forest. No longer is there a forest there but a forest-like number of opportunities for ministry to present themselves in that area.



Building grounds, preparations being made for the building of our Sisters' second Lurana Place.

So from our **second Lurana Place:** We HOPE and will make efforts to provide childcare for preschool children whose parents have been lucky enough to find employment.

We HOPE and will make efforts to augment education through various programs such as ALS (Alternative Learning System) and/or EAP (Educational Assistance Program). Two of the Sisters have already volunteered in these programs and have some knowledge and experience of their content.

We HOPE and will make efforts to help families through Social Work ministries. These ministries can be researched and initiated by our Sister who holds a degree in Social Work and has had actual experience in several private and government Social Work programs.

We HOPE and will make efforts to offer a Health and Wellness program as God is giving us promise of future members who can initiate and offer such assistance.

We HOPE and will make efforts to offer livelihood programs, such as sewing, arts and crafts, even simple cooking classes.

Our Philippines Mission

We HOPE and will make efforts to offer Faith Formation and Value Formation programs which will help strengthen the Faith and Values of the participants and give them an understanding of the meaning and practice of living according to Gospel teachings.

We HOPE and will make efforts to encourage young women to join our community to be trained and formed as future Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement. In this way the great missionary work of our beloved Founders, Lurana White and Paul Wattson, will continue to grow and their spirit will be rekindled for the Sake of the Mission ... the Mission whose vision and purpose is to bring to fruition the prayer of Jesus Christ at the Last Supper *“that all may be One; that the world will believe.”*

We also HOPE and PRAY that you, the reader of this article, will appreciate our efforts as we go among the little people of the world to offer them any assistance that we can. We ask you to PRAY for our Sisters in the Philippines and to ASSIST us to help in any way that you can. **Our Mission is your Mission too.** We are all ONE in Christ. Daily all our Sisters wherever we minister remember our benefactors prayerfully and gratefully. Know that when our building is finished in Paliparan and we pray in our **new Chapel** your intentions will be remembered in all our prayers including the monthly Novena to Our Lady of the Atonement.



Father Marinas Limbag, Pastor of Christ the King Parish celebrating Liturgy for local families.

As dedicated Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement all of us strive personally and communally to live lives that will mirror the commitment we made to God, the Church and all people on the day we answered the call to live a life of consecration. It is in the strength of this commitment that the three of us left Graymoor in September 2010 and began our days of service to the people of the Philippines in Paliparan's Barangay 3. In the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, Lurana Mary White and Paul James Wattson we continue to pray and minister to the people to whom God has led us.

Our first task in approaching
another people, another culture,
another religion
is to take off our shoes
for the ground we are approaching
is Holy...

(quote from a Columbian missionary to Asia).”

We are most grateful to Sister Susan Boyle for giving us such a wonderful overview of our mission and ministries in the Philippines. May God continue to bless each of our Sisters and all those with whom they live and minister.



Sister Susan Boyle meeting with Bishop Reynaldo G. Evangelista, D. D. to discuss our Sisters' present and future ministries within his Diocese.

Sister Nancy Sargent, another of the founding missionaries of our Philippine Mission recently spent time with her family in Colorado and has now returned here to Graymoor. Sister is presently ministering at Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House. May Sister Nancy find many graces and blessings in her new ministry. She is no doubt greatly missed among those good people whom she ministered to in the Philippines.

In Memoriam



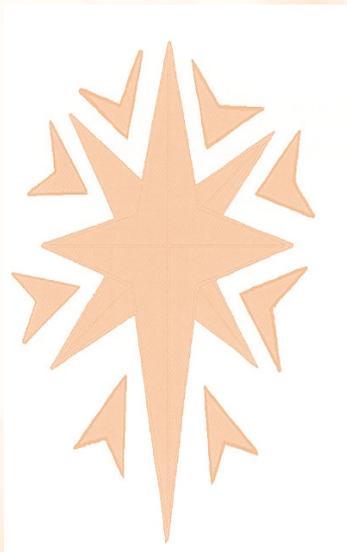
*Sister Barbara Ohl, S. A.
April 9, 1925 - April 26, 2015*

*"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul."
Psalm 23:1-3*



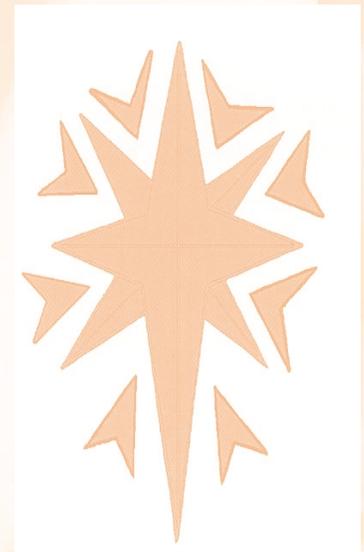
*Sister Margaret Mary O'Rourke, S. A.
December 20, 1928 - July 18, 2015*

*"See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we
may be called the children of God."
1 John 3: 1-2*



*Sister Mary Liam Barry, S. A.
April 13, 1931-September 2, 2015*

*"He said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.' "
Hebrews 13:5*



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