



## CHMs Move West Again, To Montana

by Sister Mary Rehmman, CHM

*[This is the fourth article about the 150-year history of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary in the United States.\*]*

Earlier articles in this series traced the Sisters of the Humility of Mary from their foundation in France in 1854 to their voyage to the United States, arriving in June 1864. The first American foundation was made that year in far western Pennsylvania. In 1870 several sisters were sent to Missouri where a separate foundation was made, with the motherhouse in Liberty, under the leadership of Mother Mary of the Angels Maujean, one of the original French sisters. In 1877, when conditions in Missouri were unfavorable for the young community, the sisters all went to Ottumwa, Iowa, where their second motherhouse existed for over 100 years.

At the onset of the 20th century a third motherhouse of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary was established in Great Falls, Montana. It continued until 1947 when it united with the Iowa community. But let's start at the beginning of the story.

The first "mission" outside of Ottumwa was founded in Marshalltown, Iowa, in 1878 by Sister Mary Francis Mangan. After serving 10 years in Ottumwa as Mother General of the community, Mother Francis returned to Marshalltown where Father Mathias Lenihan was now the pastor.

In 1904 Father Lenihan was appointed the first Bishop of the new Diocese of Great Falls in Montana. He was overwhelmed by the size of the diocese and its scattered population, including Native American reservations. He called on Mother Vincent, the current superior in Ottumwa, for help; there was a great need for schools and he asked her to send sisters to open them.

On December 7, 1906, Mother Francis, Sr. Annunciation and Sr. Evangelista arrived in Great Falls. They stayed at Columbus Hospital with the Sisters of Providence from Montreal, who had come to Great Falls in 1892. On December 28 the sisters moved into their new home, a large building to serve as their residence and school. Nine students came on the first

day of school, January 2, 1907. By the end of the year there were 109 students, making it necessary to use two rooms in the sisters' apartments for classrooms.

Two Iowa Mother Generals informed Bishop Lenihan that they could not continue to provide sisters for Montana as they were opening new schools in Iowa. Following many years of communications between Bishop Lenihan and bishops of the Davenport diocese, and consultation with the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, D.C., it was determined that all interests could best be served by a separation of the Iowa and Montana communities. The first two postulants to enter the Montana community received their habit on December 8, 1910, and Bishop Lenihan received their vows on December 30, 1912,

*-150th continued on page 3*

*Photos: L: 1922-1972 Sacred Heart Convent,  
Great Falls, Montana  
R: Mother Mary Francis Mangan*

# Fall 2014

## Volume 12 Issue 3

The Flame is published three times a year for the Congregation of the Humility of Mary and its friends.

Our Mission: We, the members of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary, call one another to live the Gospel with simplicity and joy following the example of Mary.

Like our founders, we strive to be attentive to the call of the Spirit in the signs of our times, especially the needs of the poor and the powerless.

We commit ourselves as individuals and as a congregation to work for justice within the human family and to care for the earth itself.

*Commit your works to the LORD  
and your plans will be established.*

*-Proverbs 16:3*

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*Sisters and Associates gather in Montana for CHM 150th Celebration: l-r in front: Sr. Johanna Rickl, Sr. Kathleen Tomlonovic, Associate Lissie Clark, Sr. Lynn Mousel, Sr. Johnelle Howanach, Associate Leslie Poletto and Sr. Claudellen Pentecost back: Sr. Kathleen Hanley, Associate Paula Evitts, Associate Mary Rickl, Sr. Mary Rehmman.*

Dear Friends,

With the beauty of fall leaves surrounding us, it is easy to lift our hearts in gratitude to God for the countless blessings we experience as individuals, families, and communities. This issue of *The Flame* highlights some reasons for the CHM community to give thanks.

My love of the “land of my birth” causes me to be enthusiastic about presenting Montana’s place in the cover article. This is the final installment of the CHM history series focusing on our journey from France to Pennsylvania to Missouri to Iowa and to Montana.

I recently visited my home state to participate in the 150th Anniversary celebrations in Great Falls and Lewistown featured in this issue. Beginning in 1906, our sisters served in many small Montana towns and staffed various schools in larger towns. I enjoyed reminding the St. Leo parish community in Lewistown of the many religious vocations fostered there, including my own and that of nine other women who became members of the congregation. Eleven sisters and associates still maintain a CHM presence and ministry in Montana.

CHM 150th Anniversary celebrations in Iowa are featured in photos throughout this issue. The closing event of our 150th celebration is a prayer service on November 23, a fitting way to begin Thanksgiving week. Having “celebrated the legacy,” CHMs now continue to “pursue the vision.” A special October gathering of CHM sisters provided an occasion to do just that, but that story will be told later.

Finally, I call your attention to articles about our partners in ministry. The dedicated work of Jane Grahlmann at Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat is an inspiration to those left behind by her unexpected death. John Prochaska, a Magnificat Society member, learned of CHMs through Sister Toni Geiger, one of three Montana sisters who joined the Congregation of the Humility of Mary. In closing, I give thanks for all of you, for you, too, are our partners in ministry. May you receive abundant blessings at Thanksgiving and always.

*With heartfelt gratitude,*

*Sister Johanna Rickl  
CHM President*

*-150th continued*

confirming the establishment of the motherhouse and novitiate of the west.

Sacred Heart Convent was built in Great Falls in 1922 and was the motherhouse of the community until 1947. It continued as the residence for sisters serving in Great Falls until 1972 when it was sold to the Cascade Council on Alcoholism for a treatment center.

In 1925 Bishop Lenihan invited Mother Francis to join a pilgrimage to Rome during the Holy Year of Jubilee. It was also the golden jubilee of her profession. On their return journey the group went through Ireland where Mother Francis met women interested in religious life. In later correspondence Bishop Lenihan directed his cousin, Sr. Mathias, and others, to consider membership in the Sisters of Humility. Altogether, 16 Irish sisters would join the community, the last arriving in 1928. They added wonderful qualities and diversity.

Until the late 1920s CHM sisters taught at St. Ann's Cathedral parish in Great



*Sister Cecelia Vandenberg, a native of Montana, traveled from Davenport to celebrate the CHM 150th Anniversary. She is escorted by Richard Bennett, the brother of Sr. Maggie Bennett, as they visit Mt. Olivet Cemetery.*

Falls where classes were held for the elementary grades through a four-year high school. With the addition of new members from Montana and Ireland, the sisters' geographical imprint broadened. They expanded their reach to Billings where they

taught Hispanic migrant workers, and to schools in Lewistown, Glendive and, for a short time, at a children's home in Torrington, Wyoming.

It is believed that the idea of "vacation schools" began in Montana. Two or three sisters would go to small remote towns where there were no Catholic schools. There sisters conducted religious education sessions for a week or two in the summer. CHM sisters taught in more than 40 Montana locations and in as many as 26 vacation schools in a single summer!

The idea of a reunion with the Iowa community was a priority when the Montana community had a General Chapter in 1944 for the purpose of revising its Constitution and Rules to conform to Canon Law. A canon lawyer advised the Montana sisters to consider adopting the rules of the Iowa community because Iowa had received final approval of their rules by Rome. After negotiations were concluded, all sisters of both communities voted on adoption with a majority approving the proposed reunion.

The Sacred Congregation of Religious in Rome issued a Decree of Union on May 8, 1947. From that time on, sisters were sent back and forth between the west and midwest. All new candidates had their novitiate preparation in Iowa and made their final vows there. Fifty sisters had entered the Montana community before the reunion; sixteen sisters from Montana have entered the community since then.

New schools were opened in Red Lodge, Sidney and Great Falls. Humility sisters joined Ursuline and Providence sisters and diocesan priests at Central Catholic High School which opened in Great Falls in 1950. The school was among the first in the country to have such a "mixed" faculty. It became known for its excellence in state speech and debate competitions.

The decree on religious life from Vatican II directed men and women religious to consider their ministry in view of 1) their founding charism, 2)

the example of Jesus in the Gospels, and 3) the "signs" of the times. The 1966 CHM Chapter expanded changes begun earlier. In particular, some sisters would move from institutional Catholic education to pastoral ministry in Missoula, Conrad, Great Falls, Dutton, Billings and Lewistown and school administration at Crow Agency.

In 1992, 44 sisters of the Humility of Mary took a 13-day pilgrimage to Montana sites. A second pilgrimage in 2006 coincided with the marking of the 100th anniversary of the Sisters of Humility in Montana.

The 150th anniversary of the Sisters of Humility in the United States was celebrated on October 11 in Great Falls this year. A prayer service was held in Mt. Olivet Cemetery where flowers were placed on each grave. On Sunday, October 12, the Eucharist was celebrated in St. Leo's Church in Lewistown, followed by a breakfast.

Five sisters continue to serve in Montana: Sisters Johnelle Howanach, Lynn Mousel and Claudellen Pentecost in Great Falls, Sr. Kathleen Hanley in Billings, and Sr. Connie Pailliotet in Hardin. They are joined by six associates in Great Falls, Lewistown, Libby and Missoula.

CHMs from Montana, and others who have served there, tell stories of the beauty of the mountains, forests, rivers and streams and visits to Glacier National Park. The Montana community, with its Irish sisters, made valuable contributions to the culture and horizons of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary and the many people they served.

\*Sources:

CHM Archives: Correspondence and other documents related to Iowa and Montana histories. Schmidt, Sr. Madeleine Marie CHM, "The Challenge of Montana, a Woman, a Mission, a Dream, a Community", the script for a video record of the pilgrimage of 44 Sisters of Humility from the Iowa and Pennsylvania communities in 1992. Sofranko, Sr. Maureen CHM, "Sisters of Humility of Mary in Montana 1906 - 1986," undated.

# The Spirit of the Congregation Lives on in the Heart of her Ministries

by Kathleen Storms, SSND, Director, Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat

As we come to the close of the 150th year celebrations it seems fitting to spend some time looking at who carries on the spirit of the congregation into the next generation. Since before the purchase of the Dierickx farm, the New Horizons of Faith Board had been a steady advisory and direction-setting foundation for The Prairie. With the corporation's dissolution in 2012, the Our Lady of the Prairie Advisory Committee has taken up these tasks. Board and Advisory Committee members have come and gone but they remain steady supporters of the ministry of The Prairie.

Recently Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat Advisory Committee and the CHM community was shocked by the sudden death of advisory committee member, Jane Grahlmann, from St. Pius X Parish in Rock Island, IL. Jane was serving her first term and totally immersed herself in the work of the committee. She brought an awareness of The Prairie to, as she put it, "the other side of the river." Her commitment, creativity and energy are missed.

Just a week after her funeral, the Plus 50 group from her church again visited The Prairie for a program Jane initiated. This was her contribution—she invited and brought groups to The Prairie to enjoy the beauty, the spirituality and the programs. She participated in many programs herself as an incentive for others to join her. We have gotten to know Jane's friends because of their support of her

dream at several of our fund-raisers. At our August 24th Spirit of the Prairie event Jane had a dear friend take her place volunteering in the kitchen—Jane was in Michigan awaiting heart surgery with her daughter by her side. To continue her legacy Jane's family designated Our Lady of the Prairie for memorials in her honor.

John O'Donohue in *To Bless the Space Between Us* (Doubleday, 2008) captures our sentiments in a poem entitled, "On the Death of a Beloved" as we remember Jane...

*May you continue to inspire us:  
To enter each day with a generous heart.  
To serve the call of courage and love  
Until we see your beautiful face again  
In that land where there is no more separation,  
Where all tears will be wiped from our mind,  
And where we will never lose you again.*

Bench mark characteristics of the Humility of Mary sisters are high energy and active participation. Again, the OLPR Advisory Committee puts life into these words. The enthusiasm, creativity, countless volunteer hours contributed by committee members and their friends and family attest to the wholehearted engagement they feel for the mission of The Prairie and therefore to the mission of the congregation. Consider your love of the ministry of The Prairie... How would you like to be engaged?

We have recently initiated a sub-committee to plan for the future of The Prairie through fund raising and marketing. It is our goal to assist the congregation in providing funds to maintain The Prairie long into the future. We are looking for new members with these skills to join us in our work. If you know of anyone who might be engaged with us, please call Brian Nauman, (563) 388-4767 chair of the committee or me at (563) 374-1092.



St. Pius X Catholic church Rock Island bible Study Group at Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat. Left to right - Evalyn Lower, Margaret Ohrstrom, Barbara Roedel, Janice Berry and Jane Grahlmann.

# A Long Distance Friendship

by Karen Brooke, CHM Development Director

John and Kathy Prochaska grew up and lived on the east coast of the United States, a long way from Montana. This makes their connection to Sister Toni Geiger even more remarkable.

In 1976 John was working for AT&T in New Jersey, attending a Lutheran church. A good friend who attended services with them, Jackie, had a daughter living in Great Falls, Montana. Jackie's daughter would send her mother beautiful greeting cards and banners from Great Falls. They were handmade and painted; the artist was Sr. Toni Geiger. Sr. Toni and her sister, Sr. Barbara Mary Geiger, had a small arts and crafts business in their home. John corresponded with Sr. Toni and a friendship was born. Whenever John had a decision to make or when life threw a curve, John and Kathy knew they could count on the prayers and support of the Geiger sisters. When John's mother lay dying, Srs. Toni, Barbara Mary and Louise, all three Geiger sisters, took turns praying around the clock with their family.

A career move to United Airlines allowed the Prochaskas to travel easily and inexpensively. They were anxious to meet their CHM friends in person, so they traveled to Davenport and later to Great Falls to visit Sr. Toni. *The Flame* was soon arriving in their mailbox, and

John began supporting the CHM mission and ministries that he read about.

Ministry is very familiar to John and Kathy. For 10 years they collected funds, Bibles and Sunday school materials written in Russian, to support oppressed Christian churches in the Eastern European country of Belarus. This was a ministry that sought them out.

They were leaving New Jersey in 1990 when someone at their church asked them for funds to help mail Bibles to the Soviet Union. Four months later they received a letter written in Russian. John was working for a government agency at the time, and asked for help to translate it. It was a thank you letter from Eastern Europe, a location two hours from Minsk, for the Bibles that had been sent. John and Kathy felt a calling to assist these oppressed churches.

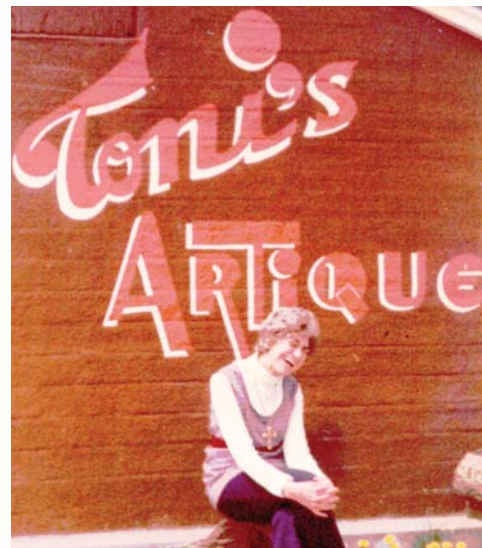
Religious educational materials were found, but the cost to ship was prohibitive. However, to fly over with the materials as luggage was reasonable. So on an "act of faith," they flew to Belarus. They didn't know who was meeting them, they didn't speak the language and it was an unfamiliar culture. The government of Belarus was independent of Moscow and they were the first Americans allowed in the area since WW II. They found a translator, and also found a

very grateful and hospitable people, despite the language and cultural differences. They made that trip five more times, the last one in 2000, when more support was coming into the small country.

John found his way back to AT&T seven years ago, and now the couple resides near Syracuse, New York. Because John and Kathy treasured their friendship with Sr. Toni and had come to value CHM ministries, they wanted to make a lasting gift to the CHM community by making a provision in their wills, thus becoming Magnificat Society members. When asked specifically about his commitment to the Sisters of Humility, he said simply, "the sisters work in the name of Jesus."



John and Kathy Prochaska



Photos:

1975--Sr. Toni Geiger outside her store in Great Falls, Montana.

An example of her art entitled: "Passion for Holiness"

# CHMs Continue 150th Celebration

The members of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary continued celebrating their 150th year of ministering in the United States by gathering in areas where sisters continue to serve outside of their home base of Davenport, Iowa.

An event was held at Indian Hills Community College (formerly Ottumwa Heights) in Ottumwa, Iowa, on May 24. CHM Sisters who live in Ottumwa--Donna Donovan, Kayleen Heffron and Irene Munoz---provided an awesome list of participants including the President of Indian Hills and her competent staff, the Mayor of Ottumwa, Mike Lemberger who created a photo documentary of the history in Ottumwa, and the Seton Catholic School choir. A prayer service, in front of the Magnificat fresco on the front of the former Ottumwa Heights Chapel, was a highlight as the participants stood in reverence.



© Michael W. Lemberger

*Priests, sisters and friends gathered outside the former entrance to the Ottumwa Heights Magnificat Chapel for a short prayer service following a program in the St. John Auditorium of Indian Hills community College. At right, Sister Irene Muñoz, CHM, spoke to the crowd and led prayers.*

On September 6 the sisters celebrated the CHM 150th Anniversary with friends and family in Johnston, Iowa, during a Mass at Bishop Drumm Retirement Center. It was followed by a brunch—a gift from Bishop Richard Pates who celebrated the Mass. More than 25 CHM sisters live in retirement at Bishop Drumm while 10 CHMs are in active ministry in the Des Moines vicinity.



*CHM sisters who reside at Bishop Drumm were joined by their CHM sisters, associates and friends for a celebratory Mass. At right, Sr. Marita Bartholome greets Bishop Richard Pates.*

CHM sisters who continue to minister in Montana—Lynn Mousel, Kathleen Hanley, Johnelle Howanach, Constance Pailliotet, and Claudellen Pentecost— were joined by friends, family and their Iowa sisters in celebrating the CHM 150th Anniversary. In Great Falls on October 11 at Mt. Olivet Cemetery a prayer service was held and flowers placed on the graves of departed CHMs. A reception was then held at St. Ann’s Cathedral Annex. The next day a celebratory Mass was held at St. Leo the Great Church in Lewistown followed by breakfast. A highlight of the celebrations was a large display map of Montana created by Sister Cecelia Vandenberg and CHM Associates Mary Martin Lane and Paula Evitts. The map identifies all Montana locations where CHMs lived, taught or served.



*A prayer service and the decorating of graves was held at Mt. Olivet Cemetery. At right, Sr. Kathleen Hanley plays flute for Mass.*

Welcome CHM Associate  
**Tyla Cole**



I became a CHM Associate because I want to feel connected to a group of women who live for Christ, who are extreme examples of women who have committed their lives for a cause. I feel this is my calling and want to be of service. I feel through the CHM Associate Program I can answer that call.



*We celebrate the anniversaries of dedicated CHM staff: front row: Sr. Catherine Linnenkamp, 5 years Finance Clerk; Shari Rife, 30 years Cook; Sr. Micheline Curtis, 15 years Asst. Archivist; Sr. Joan Sheil, 15 years Archivist. Back row: Sr. Bea Snyder, 10 years Sister Coordinator; Dennis Rife, 10 years Groundskeeper; Clare Gadiant, 10 years Nurse; Kathy Kendall, 5 years Housekeeper; Bill Gano, 5 years Finance Director; Janet White, 5 years Cook; along with President Johanna Rickl, Vice President Greta Fitzgerald and Humility Center Coordinator Inez Turnmeyer, OSF*

*Resting in  
Heavenly Peace*



Sister Ana María Orozco

October 26, 1926-  
September 8, 2014

*Loving tributes to our departed sisters can be found at [www.chmiowa.org](http://www.chmiowa.org) in the news section.*



*Bishop Martin Amos leads a group of Davenport Diocesan staff, along with the Sisters of Humility and their staff, during the Iowa Healthiest State Initiative Walk on October 8.*

## 6th Annual CHM Holiday Gift Swap and Movie

**Thursday, December 4**  
**6:00 pm-8:30 pm**  
**Humility of Mary Center**  
**820 West Central Park Ave.**  
**Davenport, Iowa**  
**Cost: FREE**

Why buy new stuff? As a way to reduce, reuse and recycle, everyone is invited to bring new or gently used items that are perfect for RE-GIFTING... then shop the swap for that perfect gift for one or more on your list. No money necessary.

at 6:15, prior to the swap, enjoy our movie:  
**The Wisdom to Survive:**  
**Climate Change, Capitalism & Community**

Deeply moving and profoundly engaging, this compelling and hopeful film explores how unlimited growth and greed are destroying the life support system of the planet, the social fabric of the society, and the lives of billions of people, and asks the question: "Will we have the wisdom to survive?"

Leftover gift swap items will be donated to Humility of Mary Housing and Humility of Mary Shelter programs.

*Presented by the CHM Care of Earth Committee*  
*Sponsored by The Radish Magazine*



*Guests bring like-new items for RE-GIFTING, watch the movie, shop the swap and enjoy homemade cookies. An enjoyable evening for all!*