

# Loretto Community Annual Report 2009

Dear Friends of Loretto,

In preparation for Jubilee 2012, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of Loretto, the Loretto Community has been focusing on a theme each year to help us prepare so we can fully celebrate. In 2009, we developed the theme of *Forgiveness into Reconciliation*, within ourselves, with one another in the community, and with the broader world.

For our Assembly, we chose the theme of *Facing the Current*, appropriate for a year with many external forces that challenged us. We were reminded of a message one of our sisters heard from her father when she was young: “When you cross the river, hold hands and face the current so it will not buckle our knees and sweep you away.”

You will see in this Annual Report the many ways we lived out the theme of forgiveness and reconciliation and also faced the current together – in many places in the US, in Pakistan, Ghana and Guatemala -- following our Loretto tradition as stated in our Constitutions, *I Am The Way*:

*As we stand with Mary at the foot of the cross, we strive to bring the healing Spirit of God into our world and we commit ourselves to improving the conditions of those who suffer from injustice, oppression, and deprivation of dignity. In this way, we participate in the church's mission of proclaiming the transforming love of God.*

Thank you for being part of this Journey to Jubilee.

Peace,



Cathy Mueller, SL  
President





## Executive Committee

This year the Executive Committee faced the current together, leading through the final year of the 2006-2009 term. Although the current can be strong, moving together through the many decisions, recommendations, and projects makes it possible to face the future knowing that what is done today has an impact on tomorrow.

The Executive Committee met in person five times and had numerous Skype conference calls and email communication throughout the year. Ongoing meeting topics include reports from the Finance Committee, updates from each of the

Loretto Centers, meetings with coordinators and directors of programs located at the meeting site, and consideration of various issues presented by the president. In 2009 additional agenda items included preparation for the 2009 Election Assembly held in St. Louis, working with the community concerning the future use of the Centers, discussions around the Apostolic Visitation, appointment of an administrator for the Loretto Motherhouse Infirmery, approval for a member to make final vows, decisions around accompaniment with our Pakistani sisters, revising the personnel policies for the 2010 LLBI Employee Handbook, the beginning process for a thorough review of the Articles and Bylaws of LLBI, and acceptance of recommendations from the Health Care Committee. The Executive Committee worked closely with the Finance Committee in establishing internal financial controls, helping the community prepare budgets for 2010 during these financially challenging times, selling a Loretto-owned house in Denver and educating the community about the financial realities of the Centers and Motherhouse.

Executive Committee members were also participants (including preparation and follow-up) on Loretto school and project Boards, on the Community Forum, in the CPC meetings, and at LCWR meetings.

## Community Forum



One way in which Loretto is facing the current is by moving toward our own 200th jubilee. During 2009 the Loretto Community focused on the theme of Forgiveness and Reconciliation as we move forward to Jubilee 2012. Maria Harris in her book *Proclaim Jubilee* reminds us that in order to create a Jubilee world we must learn mutual forgiveness in order to heal anger.

At their gatherings the Forum recommended the acceptance of new co-members. They also recommended the selection of new committee members when openings occurred. An important part of each meeting was the open session with the wider community to share information with them and to receive their reactions, insights, and ideas. Twice during 2009 the Forum participated in CPC meetings and reviewed outcomes at subsequent meetings

In preparation for Assembly 2009, the Forum discussed in detail the reports received from the Assembly Planning Committee. In response to the Assembly proposal requesting careful discernment by the Community regarding Loretto's future, the Forum had a day of reflection followed by extensive discussion on this topic at ensuing meetings.

During 2009 the Forum continued its focus on fostering Loretto mission, vision and values as Loretto moves together into the future.

## Coordinating Team

The Coordinating Team includes staff members and full-time Executive Committee/Community Forum members. The purpose of the team is to facilitate the wishes of the community and follow the flow of the currents that are needed. In 2009 the staff members were Martha Alderson, Marie Ego, Joy Gerity, Barbara Mecker, and Sue Rogers; the full-time Executive Committee/Community Forum members were Cathy Mueller, Donna Day, and Susan Swain.



The team members' areas of responsibility were membership, health care, volunteer services, peace and justice concerns, publications and technology, and relationships with working groups within the community.

The team met once in Denver and several times by conference call.

## Community Perspective Committee

Community Perspective Committee representatives — Kay Lane, PJ Manion, Kristin McNamara, Patty Calixto, Marie Joann Rekart, Marlene Spero, Michele Stimac, Pat Cullen, Mary Nelle Gage, Frances Ratermann, Eleanor Craig, Agnes Ann Schum, Barbara Nicholas, Janet Rabideau, Sharon Kassing, Mary Bundy, Betty Connor, Concha de la Cruz, Cabrini Bartolo, Rosemary Chinnici, and Angie Murphy — met in January and November to discuss topics of interest from Community Groups and topics of interest from the Community Forum.

Members of the CPC "faced the current" by discussing issues such as joining with Native Americans suffering from misuse of their sacred land, other environmental issues, immigration issues, and urging social actions. Internal topics included conversation about reorganizing community groups and committee structure, relationship to institutional church, non-canonical issues, writing a Loretto Community constitution, membership, faith sharing, and presenting a proposal for continuing the CPC for the next three years (which was passed at Assembly 2009).



## Facing the Current - Loretto Assembly 2009

"Many streams have brought us here; together we face the current, holding on to one another." Cathy Mueller, Loretto President, set the theme in motion as she opened the 2009 Loretto Assembly. Cathy welcomed approximately 172 members and guests to the Assembly. She reminded us all that we have gathered to, "listen and learn, to pray and enter into the hard topics that challenge us. Together we can accomplish what we never could do singly."

### Global Climate Change

Sharon Zayac OP of Jubilee Farm in Springfield, Illinois, was the first speaker. Sharon focused her presentation around the call given us by Thomas Barry regarding Global Climate change. Through text and PowerPoint, Sharon urged us to look at the global issues with eyes of faith.

### Moving Into the Future

Using the model of past conversations, we gathered in the ballroom in groups of three to discuss the questions about facing the current, moving into the future. These questions were similar to those in the yellow financial booklet: What are we walking out of and into? What is unfolding for us right now and into the future? What do we want to change or not change, and what skills we need to forge our future? We then moved into groups of six to discuss the questions around Community, Resources and Mission also found in the yellow financial booklet.

### Proposals

The following proposals were passed: Pakistan Committee, Land Use Committee, Size of the Executive Committee, Size and Term of Community Forum, Community Forum Election, Continuation of the Community Perspective Committee, Exploring a New Connection with Loretto, and Future Planning as well as Climate Change, Immigration, Right to Water, UN/ CEDAW, UN/ Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and Standing in Solidarity with the Iranian People. Establishing a Web-based SPEAK OUT was approved.

### Sister Community in Ghana

Emily Owusu-Ansah and Veronica Adomako-Manu, two Sisters from our FST Sister Community in Ghana, presented a slide show about the progress of the school in Ghana. Their enthusiasm about being with us was very evident as was their gratitude for Loretto's partnership in constructing the school.

### Mary Rhodes Awards

Mary Rhodes Awardees were Judy Ancel of Kansas City, Missouri; Catherine Billups of St. Louis, Missouri; and Dolores Huerta of Bakersfield, California.



## Facing the Current - Loretto Assembly 2009

### Jubilee!

On Thursday evening, June 24, a festive evening began with the Jubilee Mass at 6:00 p.m. celebrating the Jubilarians from 2007, 2008, and 2009. The choir from St. Louis and the Motherhouse, who had worked on the music Doris Pitman wrote for the 2009 Golden Jubilarians, led the sung parts of the Mass along with a song after communion titled "I Am the Way."

### Journeying Beyond Forgiveness to Reconciliation

"Facing the Current in Transformative Hope" was the topic of Maria Elena Martinez OSF's talk. Participants spent Saturday immersed in the Jubilee Theme topic of Journeying Beyond Forgiveness to Reconciliation. (See page 6 for a description of the day's activities.) Later that evening participants attended the Mass of the Holy Spirit in preparation for the Election of the Executive Committee. The day ended with 35 singers from the intercongregational singing group called "Uprising of Hope Chorus" performing music from the composer Carolyn McDade.

### Executive Committee Election

This was an election assembly; participants elected a new Executive Committee to take office on January 1, 2010. Donna Day was elected Vice President, followed by Vicki Schwartz, Pearl McGivney, Maria Visse, Buffy Boesen, and Elizabeth Croom.

### Facing the Current: Who is My Neighbor?

Each person placed a round sticker on a world map where she/he is in mission or will pray for mission this year, and signed a prayer flyer as a reminder of the "relationship to the neighbor, near and far."

Cathy Mueller, president, ended the Assembly, with a call to service: "According to the call of *I Am The Way*, I mission you to share in the corporate works of Loretto, working for peace and acting for justice as the Gospel urges us." All present responded: "We give you glory, thanks and praise. O bless our works and guide our ways."



## Jubilee Theme 2009 - Forgiveness/Reconciliation

The Jubilee theme for 2009 was "Journeying Beyond Forgiveness to Reconciliation." Loretto was called to look at the patterns of our relationships and remember once again what it means to be of "one heart, one soul, and one mind."



Loretto was challenged to respond to the question "How can we create a world, a neighborhood, a church, a community in which it is easier to love?"

Lenten reflection papers included readings from Thomas Merton and David Augsburger and the Power of Forgiveness interviews on *Interfaith Voices*.

Spring Community Groups included a reading and discussion of "Forgiveness" from *Transforming Fire* by Kathleen Fischer which provided participants with skills in learning why and how to forgive, let go, and heal.

Sister Maria Elena Martinez OSF opened the Day of Forgiveness at Assembly 2009. She called the community to reflection on the theme challenging all to be people of discernment, which leads to compassion. "Forgiveness is a work of justice," Maria Elena said. "It is time to be prophetic, to look at the relationships we have among us ... to do the soul work we need to heal both personally as well as communally."

Following Maria Elena's presentation, the Assembly viewed the film "The Garden of Forgiveness, New York" from the longer film *The Power of Forgiveness*. The afternoon program included four workshops that evolved from the day's theme. Attendees could choose one to attend— "Music-Movement" presented by Maria Visse and Lydia Peña, "Poetry" presented by Jean Kelley, "Art" presented by Sandy Ardoyno, "Prayer" presented by Mary Kay Widger and Mary Ellen McElroy.

At the closing directed by Maria Elena, participants shared their workshop experiences and stories of reconciliation in their life. The closing mantra prayerfully ended this very special day: Peace among us, peace around us, reach out, we are all one.

The September 15 prayer service was prepared by the Loretto Racial Justice Committee on the theme of Forgiveness. "We stand with you, Mary, at the foot of this cross."

The Doors of Advent was a collection of Advent reflections on forgiveness which closed the year's activities.



*The Doors  
of Advent  
2009*

## Vowed Membership

In the first decade of the new millennium, the Loretto Community has welcomed 12 women into vowed membership. The road to vowed membership is a long. Women enter into a multi-stage process of discernment with the community that begins with initial inquiry and culminates, some 6 to 12 years later with the profession of final vows.

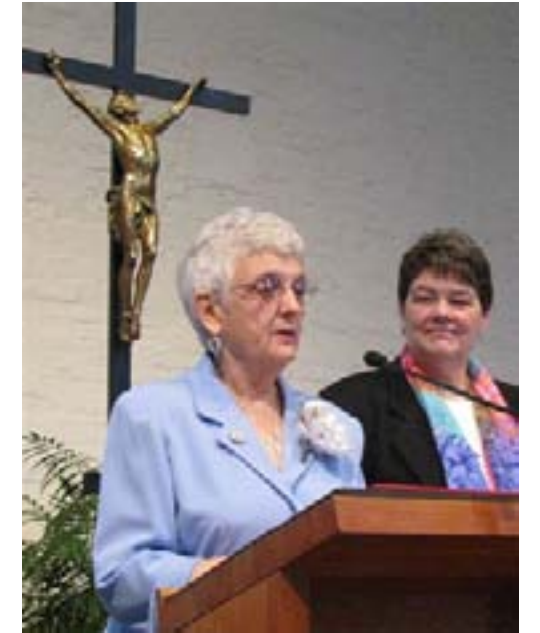
On March 19, 2009 Jean Johnson professed final vows as a Sister of Loretto in the Church of the Seven Dolors at the Loretto Motherhouse. Jean, a former member and co-member, joins a growing number of religious women across the country who have children—and grandchildren.

Other Loretto new members continue in the formation process as temporary professed Sisters of Loretto. Natalie Wing lives and works with Loretto's Sister Community, the Sisters of the Holy Family in Chiantla, Guatemala. Donna Mattingly lives with the Loretto Center Community in Denver, Colorado and works with Denise Ann Clifford in the Loretto Development Office. Liz Deines continues to live at Tierra Madre, a straw-bale *colonia* on the New Mexico desert across the fence from Juarez. Liz teaches theology at Loretto Academy in El Paso. Annie Stevens lives in community with Barbara Ann Barbato in St. Louis and teaches in the religious studies and English departments at Webster University and St. Louis Junior College.

Maria Daniel, Samina Iqbal and Iffat Peter have returned to Pakistan. After spending nine months with the Sparkhill Dominican Sisters in Bahawalpur they have moved this fall to Falsalabad where, with Nasreen Daniel, they will begin the Loretto Mission in Pakistan.

Sue Rogers continues to work as Loretto's Formation Director. In November Sue served as the co-chair for the Religious Formation Conference's bi-annual Congress that was held in Denver, Colorado. She continues to serve on the national RFC board representing Region X, which includes St. Louis. She serves as the co-chair of that region.

Mary Kay Brannan and Marie Joann Reckart focus their energies on outreach and direct vocation ministry. Loretto Outreach is mission focused. Outreach activities connect persons who are attracted



to Loretto's commitment to "work for justice and act for peace" with community members working in mission. Mary Kay has offered a series of workshops open to both Loretto members and interested persons from the wider community. These workshops, focused on social issues and spirituality, provide a forum for friend-making and an introduction to Loretto mission, community and spirituality.

The Loretto Community welcomes inquiries about membership from women from diverse backgrounds and locations around the country. Where contacts with women considering religious life once came through Loretto schools, they now more typically come from the Loretto web site or from one of the several vocation list serves with which we are associated. Marie Joann answers all requests for information and works with women on an individual basis as they begin a process of exploring the possibility of religious life. Women may make a single contact and receive initial information or remain in dialogue with Marie Joann for a period of months as they search and discern. Her contact supports their individual journeys, no matter where they lead.

## Co-membership

One strong current in modern life seems to be a desire for deepening of spiritual commitment. Loretto co-membership provides a way of accomplishing that in relationship with and as part of the whole Loretto Community.

### Events

#### *Loretto Experience 2009*

For the second year, the co-membership team joined with the volunteer program in September for a weekend experience at the Motherhouse. Five prospective co-members, four Loretto volunteers (one who is both a volunteer and a prospective co-member), the Co-membership Team, the Volunteer Coordinator, and three guests met, studied, prayed, and in other ways enjoyed the experience of being at the Motherhouse.

#### *Loretto Connections, St. Louis*

A day's gathering in April at the St. Louis Loretto Center focused on Living Loretto Values. In the morning session, members of networks and committees explained how their purposes and work exemplify Loretto values. In the afternoon session, speakers related living Loretto values through membership and service as the group heard from Loretto members, volunteers, and Loretto schools students.

### Members

As of the end of 2009, there were 219 co-members. That number included the three new co-members: Theresa Kinealy and Lisa Reynolds of Denver, Colorado, and Mary Nelson of Jemez Springs, New Mexico. Loretto is grateful for the commitment of these women.

During the year five co-members died and are greatly missed: Mary Boland of Denver; Ruth Burgett of Santa Rosa, California; Neysa Chouteau of St. Louis; Alice Cochran of St. Louis; and Betsy Wolf of Denver.



## Loretto Circle

The 2009 Loretto Assembly established Loretto Circle. This new idea provides many possibilities for friends and associates of Loretto to relate to the community through mailings, email, social networking, retreats, meetings, prayer, and other activities that are meaningful but do not involve membership.

A number of people have responded to an invitation to become involved in the Circle.

## Loretto Volunteers

Nine volunteers joined hands with the Loretto Community to face the currents of 2009, some for just a few months, some for the entire year. Mike Leard completed his year with Maureen Fiedler at Interfaith Voices in August 2009. Mike thanked the Loretto Community in an *Interchange* article, stating the he had been "privileged to see first-hand the pioneering spirit of Loretto from visits to the Motherhouse through the vital Loretto mission at the UN ... as well as their work as

environmentalists, peace activists, and interfaith leaders." In September Jane Flotte, a graduate of the University of Missouri and a Nerinx Hall alum, began her year with Maureen. Ashley Steimer also completed her year with Sally



Dunne at the UN in August 2009. In her farewell statement in the UN Newsletter, Ashley thanked the Community for giving her the "incredible opportunity to learn and grow ... and do things I never before would have had the courage to imagine myself doing." In September, Mary Jo Ryan, who has her MSW from the University of Missouri and is also a Nerinx alum, and Stephanie Wolfe, a graduate of Eckard College, arrived to assist Sally in her work as Loretto NGO representative at the UN.

During the summer five college students participated in the Loretto Volunteer Program. Molly Kammien and Liz Mueller, both Nerinx alums, interned with Sally and Ashley at the UN. Tia Carley assisted Helen Santamaria and Mary Margaret Murphy at Villa Maria in El Paso. Mary Renda volunteered part time at Interfaith Legal Services for Immigrants in St. Louis.

Katie Jones, who volunteered at Interfaith Voices in 2007-2008 and worked there part time during 2008-2009, arranged to volunteer at the Loretto Motherhouse with Maria Visse and Susan Classen during August 2009. When Barb Mecker, who has been the Loretto Volunteer Coordinator since 2001, announced she would be retiring at the end of the year, the Loretto Community quickly hired Katie as the new Volunteer Coordinator. Barb is grateful for the adventures she has experienced with the more than 60 volunteers who have served during this time; Katie is excited to have the opportunity to continue developing ways for young people to join with Loretto in facing the currents of the future.



## Health Care/Life Planning



The work of the Health Care Team is about wholeness—body, mind, and spirit—of Loretto members. Maria Elena Martinez OSF reminded us at our “Facing the Current” Assembly, “We belong to each other.” Health Care in Loretto is a visible, tangible, and holistic expression of our belonging to each other.

The Health Care Team supports Loretto in facing the currents of aging, skyrocketing health care costs, limited assets, and the scandal of health care nationally. Internally, Loretto health care faces the challenges of aging in place and of transitioning to increasing levels of care, the complexity of medical systems and the impact of serious illness on community members, the realities of dementia, the desire for sensitive end-of-life care, and the pain of loss, grief, and diminishment. We are called to face these currents together, in a spirit of courage and generosity.

Throughout 2009 Community Care persons in the major geographic areas have worked with the Health Care Team to provide support services to community members. A health and wellness interview process focused on members over 80 who continue to live independently. There were driving screenings with Sisters of Loretto over 80 as the first step in implementing the Loretto driving guidelines affirmed by the Executive Committee. These programs will expand to include other age groups in 2010.

The Health Care Team sponsored “Woman of Wisdom” workshops in Denver, St. Louis, El Paso, and at the Motherhouse. Presenter Marge Burkle OSF worked with the Health Care Team to adapt the workshops to

a Loretto audience. Over 200 community members participated in these reflective gatherings to look at the seasons of our lives, transitions, and the challenges of change.

The Health Care Team provided ongoing support to the center coordinators and infirmary administrators as community members moved to those places. A regular care plan process was initiated at the St. Louis Center and continued at the Denver Center. “Flex and Bend,” an exercise program at the Denver Center has been an ongoing project facilitated by Jane Kosters. A similar program is planned for the St. Louis Center in 2010.

The annual gathering of Loretto Health Care Providers, community nurses, administrators and coordinators, and Community Care persons was held in the spring at Loretto Motherhouse. Paulette Peterson addressed mental health issues including promoting practices to maintain mental health and recognizing and responding to mental health concerns in community settings.

The Health Care Team—Marie Ego, Jane Kosters, Sue Rogers, Donna Day and Joy Gerity consultant—invited Denver Center nurse Joyce Ackles to join the Health Care Team. Joyce brings nursing experiencing and expertise to the team. The team met regularly throughout the year, continuing its focus on identifying and responding to community needs, supporting community members aging in place, exploring care options for sisters needing care, supporting members in transition, promoting safe driving, promoting mental health and healthy spirituality for Loretto members at all ages.

## Loretto Disarmament/Economic Conversion Committee becomes Loretto for a Nuclear-Free World

The Loretto Disarmament/Economic Conversion Committee (D/ECC) “Faced the Current” of re-thinking its organization as well as continuing to negotiate the rough waters of war and weaponry. In May, Chelsea Collonge, PJ Manion, Penny McMullen, Betty Obal, and Sharon Palma met in Albuquerque to look at the Community Mission Involvement Survey letter and see how the committee might operate within a non-committee structure to support President Obama’s pledge to work toward a nuclear-weapons-free world. The group decided to try as a one-year experiment to operate as a “cell” without funding for meetings and travel. Trish Herron decided to join the cell, and other members of the D/ECC decided not continue. The six members each chose resource groups to watch for action alerts to pass on to the Loretto Community. The new name became Loretto for a Nuclear-Free World (LNFW).

At the June Assembly and through *Interchange* and community bulletin board announcements, LNFW invited Loretto members to sign up if they wished to take part in the action alerts about nuclear weapons and nuclear power, and these names became part of a new list serve.

Action alerts went to Congress and President Obama about the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation’s Nuclear-Free World petition, the Nuclear Posture Review, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, uranium mining, toxic waste management, alternatives to nuclear power in the stimulus package; energy bills and global warming legislation, and promoting the Think Outside the Bomb Conference in New Mexico.

We had a few successes: The New Mexico Environment Department was convinced to deny the permit for open burning of toxic waste at Kirkland AFB and the Los Alamos Lab. More and more Representatives in Congress showed refusal to allocate funds for new nuclear weapons. There is continued hope for leaders to face the currents of opposition and promote a nuclear-free world.

## Loretto Africa Project

One of the goals of Loretto Africa Project has been to encourage African women religious and other women to grow and develop through workshops and meetings of various women’s groups.

Pauline Albin worked in Ghana. She lived at and directed St. Joseph’s Retreat Center in Sunyani B/A Ghana. In 2009 four Loretto Community members joined her for various lengths of time. Pauline’s work consisted of the following functions that helped face the currents of needs in Ghana:

- Organized, supervised, hosted, and scheduled activities at St Joseph’s Retreat Centre and the Diocesan Catechetical office.
- Provided secretarial support to the Liturgical Commission, Bishop Owusu Foundation, and Synod.

- Attended monthly meetings of Blessed Trinity Leadership Academy in Akokoamong (a three- to four-hour trip each way).
- Hosted four Loretto Community members for varying lengths of time from a few days to seven weeks, providing and connections with many people in the Sunyani and Kumasi Diocese.
- Participated in and hosted ecumenical retreats for several different denominations including Anglican bishops and priests.
- Organized and presented catechist meetings and seminars in village parishes monthly in five deaneries.
- Served as vice chair of the Ghana National Catechetical Commission. Resigned in October so the commission could elect a replacement because Pauline will return to the U.S.A. in 2010.
- Gave ongoing financial assistance and emotional support to Ghanaian women from villages through the Albin Scholarship Fund.