

Sharing from FSPA to You

Who Knows What God May Ask You! Sister Laurette Sprosty's African Journey

It was 1982. After much prayer and after having just completed her term as an FSPA provincial leader, Sister Laurette felt a special call. She understood that God had gifted her with the desire, timing, talent and energy necessary to dedicate herself to serving the people of Zimbabwe. She began an exciting adventure that continues even today. This is Sister Laurette's African story.

Photo by Arlene Melder, FSPA



Laurette Sprosty, FSPA

Sister Laurette what led you to go to Africa?

Going to Africa was certainly not something I had planned or had even dreamed of. When a need in Zimbabwe was made known, I felt the call to ministry there and I responded with the blessing of the Community. This request was a call in 1982 for English-speaking teachers through the volunteer agency CATORUZI (Catholic Ancillary Teachers of Rural Zimbabwe). As you can see, the three years have stretched a little!

Share with us about your ministry.

Well, after Independence in 1980, Zimbabwe was desperately in need of trained teachers with facility in English. Because there are about 12 indigenous languages in this country of about 12 million people, English was chosen as the official 'unifying language' (and because the country, then Southern Rhodesia, had been colonized by the British). There were few trained secondary teachers because during pre-independence most black Africans

were sadly limited to an elementary education. In the beginning, I taught for three years in a rural secondary school with another religious sister who had also volunteered. We lived at a Franciscan mission three miles from Gumbonzvanda (Broken Leg) School. After about three years I was to return to the U.S.

when I was asked to teach at the country's only teaching training college. During this time I was happy to be joined by other FSPA Sisters who came to minister with me in Zimbabwe. Then in 1993 I was asked to be director of CATORUZI and gradually phase out the organization. Because of the government's high priority on education at that time, within ten years the supply of indigenous teachers was generally adequate.

More FSPA in Zimbabwe

Time passed quickly and from 1995-2001 I worked as a member of a mobile staff development team along with another FSPA, Sister Georgia Christensen, under the auspices of the Education Commission of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference. Besides giving workshops, etc., we developed a religious education program for the Catholic schools. Sister Millie Tigges, FSPA, also joined our little community for two years and worked with at-risk students in a high-density area and taught at the Jesuits' school of philosophy. There were needs everywhere!

Helping Orphans

From 2002 to 2005 I continued to work with the Education Commission of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference but, in addition a Maryknoll Sister and I began a much-needed program of education for double orphans, 8-12 years old, living with destitute grandparents and who had never been

Come and See!



Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

We invite you to

Make a discernment retreat with the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. The Come and See Weekends will offer:

- Opportunity for praying with the community
- Time for silent prayer, discernment and personal reflection
- Presentations on religious life
- Interaction with the sisters and the chance to ask questions
- Experience of FSPA life for a weekend

Join us for a retreat weekend
October 13-14, 2007
March 8-9, 2008

The retreat weekends are held at St. Rose Convent, our mother-house, in La Crosse, WI.

If you would like to make it to the retreat weekend but can't, just call us and we will schedule another time to visit that works for you.

Call toll free to
Dorothy Dunbar, FSPA
1-888-683-FSPA
or email membership@fspa.org



Photos by Laurette Sprosty, FSPA



Jakacha orphans who received school uniforms and shoes.

Who Knows What God May Ask You!

Sister Laurette Sprosty's African Journey (continued from page 1)

in school. It breaks your heart to see them! Our Mavambo Learning Centre provides these needy children with three years of 'fast track' basic education and then helps place them in formal schools. The center is located in a high-density area of Tafar-Mabvuku 23 kms east of Harare, the capital city. Besides this, I began and continue to work with the 29 untrained pre-school teachers in the same town. They meet monthly to share ideas and expertise and I conduct training workshops for them.

Challenges and Innovations

During this time we have encountered great difficulties in our ministry efforts. For example, the government passed a law prohibiting gatherings of more than four people without police permission, demanded registration of all organizations and insisted that only the government should distribute food. No one wants to get into political squabbles, so we as local churches banded together to select some of the most destitute "families" of orphans in order to keep them out of institutions. Imagine this: Zimbabwe is estimated to have a minimum of 700,000 double orphans. We call our group which helps these orphans Good Will Caregivers. In these orphan families there are destitute grandparents, child heads of households and/or children who are caring for terminally ill parents. I would like to share a few examples of the families we help.

One of our families is headed by a deaf grandmother who has 11 orphans living in one room. Another is a 14-year-old girl living with her three siblings in a plastic shelter because relatives, according to custom, claimed the little house where they were living when the mother and father died. These same relatives feel they cannot assume responsibility for the children in the hard times we are having. Our Good Will committee meets in churches and is doing "church work." So far the government has not interfered. The churches solicited 20 volunteers who act as companion parents to the orphan families, giving them psychosocial support and assisting where possible. Occasionally they give tired grandparents some time off.



A group of teachers to whom Sister Laurette gave a faith development program.



Sister Laurette enjoys corn on the cob with a group of high school student leaders to whom she gave a workshop on HIV/AIDS.

The families and companion parents meet monthly for self-help workshops. Monthly food is given to the orphan families according to size and need. If means allow and families cannot cope, school fees, uniforms and/or school supplies are also provided. As you can see, there is so much to do for these families!

In This Last Year

Finally, in 2006 I was asked to assist in the education of the postulants and work with the director of postulants of the Franciscan Friars Minor at Assisi Mission, about 160 kms from Harare. There I teach a variety of topics, mainly in spirituality and basic theology. The two young men that we now have are from the two major language groups or tribes—Shona and Ndebele (Zulu). But they seem to enjoy each other and appreciate their differences. I also have a "cooking

without meat" class with them once a week. They then prepare the evening meal for the rest of us—three priests and myself. The Zimbabweans are great meat eaters so the whole project was approached very gingerly but they are being good scouts—both the cooks and the eaters! The high cost (inflation at 1600%) and scarcity of many products high on the food chain (including milk, butter, and cheese) also contribute to "giving it a go." I am learning, too, which makes a nice, relaxed atmosphere among the three of us. Presently we are organizing to grind our own oil from soya. We've mastered making soya milk. All of this makes for great sharing and community among us!

Regarding our two other projects, Good Will and Christian Pre-school Development Project, they are now competently coordinated by local volunteers. I travel to Harare about every two months for "check-ins" and to send out e-mails, which cannot be done from the mission because our phone lines are out of order.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

First, thanks to all who help support me and our projects in so many ways, including with prayer. Also it is edifying to know how many try to keep informed about the situation in Zimbabwe, which is now greatly increasing in violence and demonstrations as life for ordinary people is getting almost impossible. As you can see, working in a developing country with so many needs is what I imagine being a nurse in a "doctorless" clinic or hospital would be like. One does what one never thought one could (or should) do! One becomes a jack-of-all trades.

What are the most important and urgent needs?

The needs are limitless as our country (as described by political and financial analysts) is heading for "melt-down." There are medical, educational, social services, and pastoral needs—needs everywhere! Although the government makes it difficult to come to Zimbabwe, it would be wonderful to have others come and share in this much-needed ministry! Thank you for letting me share about the ministry in Zimbabwe.

Interview by Editorial Staff

From Our Readers

Dear Sisters,

This summer one of my friends joined a monastery. Before this we worked together in our parish. Now she says her life is dedicated to silence and prayer. I would like to know about the difference between being a sister in a monastery and being a sister who works among people. I'm asking this because sometimes I feel God is calling me to be a sister but I don't know where. Thank you for taking the time to answer me.

Alexandra



Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

Dear Alexandra,

I needed to answer that question myself 50 years ago when my sister joined a monastery, and I knew I was being drawn to the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. I went to two years of college while I was letting the decision mature within me. Here's how I understood the choice. Are you called to action-in-contemplation? Or contemplation-in-action?

The first lifestyle is focused on ministry and service supported by an ever-deepening prayer life and spirituality. There are numerous communities of women religious around the globe living the Franciscan, Benedictine, Dominican spirituality who create educational, healthcare and pastoral realities which meet the immediate needs of people of all ages. In my trips to Europe, Central America, Africa and China, I had the opportunity to be with dedicated women working under many difficult circumstances. My suggestion is to visit with some of the women who have lived the action-in-contemplation lifestyle by joining them in their ministries for short or longer time periods. Living the life is an easy way to discern your calling.

The other lifestyle is focused on contemplative prayer and silence as with the Carmelites and Trappistines. Why not visit various monasteries and make a weekend or even a thirty-day retreat? This is a good way to participate in the contemplation-in-action as lived by each community. The direct experience of their prayer life means living into the contemplative spirituality and the traditions of their founders. This can generate an understanding of the gifts of silence and enclosure that provide an atmosphere for a life of stability.

If your call is toward both, there are many religious communities that have both lifestyles in different forms. I have a Benedictine friend who lives in a monastery and does spiritual direction and retreat work at the Benedictine Peace Center in Yankton, S.D. Our own tradition of Perpetual Adoration creates a lived reality of a life of adoration whether it is expressed in a ministry of direct service or in prayer in the Adoration Chapel, which we have continued for the past 130 years. Many blessings and happy adventures await you as you explore these choices. Please know that you are remembered 24/7/365 in our Adoration Chapel, especially on Monday afternoons from 2 to 3 p.m. Hope sees what is yet to be for you!

Nancy A. Lafferty, FSPA

FSPA Snapshots



Dolorice Schier, FSPA

Sister Dolorice taught for

21 years in elementary schools. After serving as group mother and central service coordinator at St. Michael's Home in La Crosse for 32 years, she was the audiovisual department librarian at Viterbo College and then the Viterbo Nursing Center. Several of those years she was sacristan at the Viterbo Campus Church. Sister Dolorice retired to St. Rose Convent in 1996 and this year celebrates her diamond jubilee (75 years).



Nina Shephard, FSPA

Sister Nina was a music teacher

before becoming a missionary in El Salvador. After returning to the U.S. she directed the FSPA social concerns office and was assistant to the provincial for the FSPA western province. After this, she ministered at Franciscan Communications Center and then as pastoral assistant in several California parishes. Nina now lives in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, serves as a pastoral assistant and ministers to the Spanish-speaking at the State Prison in Anamosa. This year she celebrates her golden jubilee (50 years).



Katie Mitchell, FSPA

Sister Katie celebrates her silver

jubilee this year. During her past 25 years of religious life she was the director of St. Paul Video in Boston, M.A., and was involved in many aspects of evangelizing with the media of social communication. In 1999, Sister Katie pursued a master's degree in education and is currently living in Evanston, Ill., where she teaches at Pope John XXIII School. She also serves on the FSPA membership team, is the editor of Sharing: From FSPA to You and is studying theology at Catholic Theological Union.



Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

Spiritual Opportunities

FSPA welcomes you to participate in spiritual growth opportunities in the multiple spirituality centers where we minister. Spiritual companionship and guidance is available at each center.

Franciscan Spirituality Center
 920 Market St
 La Crosse WI 54601-4782
 608-791-5295 or fscenter@fspace.org
www.franciscanspiritualitycenter.org

Enneagram and Relationships..... October 26-27, 2007

Forgive, Because it Feels Good February 1-2, 2008

Marywood FSC
 3560 Hwy 51 N
 Arbor Vitae WI 54568-9538
 715-385-3750
info@marywoodsc.com

Marywood Spirituality Center offers various types of retreats and programs, as well as spiritual companionship. Please contact the center for more information about upcoming programs or about making a retreat in one of their lakeside cabins.

Breaking Peace, Faking Peace, Building Peace.....October 25

A Day With Thomas Merton..... November 17

Being a Sister..... November 17

Prairiewoods FSC
 120 E Boyson Rd
 Hiawatha IA 52233-1277
 319-395-6700
www.prairiewoods.org

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton..... October 11, 25
 November 15, 29

Meditation Retreat..... November 2 - 4

Advent Retreat..... November 30, 6:30 PM

Advent Retreat..... December 2, 1:00 PM

Footprints



Walking With FSPA Jubilarians

This year, 35 Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration celebrated jubilees of service as women religious. Sisters Leclaire Beres, Maria Friedman and Dolorice Schier share with us about their journeys.

Sister Leclaire, what is something you would like to say to God at this point in your life?

I would like to tell God how pleased I am that He continued running after me after I graduated from high school and had been working. I didn't believe I was to be a sister, but God did not give up on me and here I am after being a professed sister for 60 years.

I thank you, God, for all the opportunities you have given me to live my life to the fullest. Not only have you given me the opportunity, but you have also given me your grace to follow your call to different parts of the world ministering to your people. Now as a retired sister you have not stopped pursuing me. You not only call me, but you have given me the gift of good health so I can pursue the call. For this I am grateful. I have not only had the grace to answer the call, but also the gift to enjoy doing what I have been called to do.

As a retired sister I enjoy the gift of retirement with time to wait and pray, to continue your call to the FSPA's to Perpetual Adoration and I have the privilege to participate in scheduled night hours, as well as to pray with you whenever I wish to do so. You have been so good to me, may I remain faithful to you as an FSPA.

Sister Maria, during these 50 years of religious life, what has been the motto or mantra giving you strength and courage?

I'm not sure when the following line entered my life, but it has become something of a mantra to me. "You are God, and you do wonderful things," or sometimes, "You are my God and you do wonderful things." I use it often in my morning prayer, but it comes to me in moments when joy or beauty or

peace come upon me suddenly and I am filled with gratitude. It comes to me when I am concerned about something or someone. I am reminded then that I can trust this God who does wonderful things to provide what is needed. And it comes to me in moments of disappointment or pain. Even though life is not the way I want it to be, what is is okay, and I can trust that this moment, though it seems awful, is graced in some way, and if I allow myself to live into the disappointment or pain, my life will be enriched.

Sister Dolorice, in whose footsteps have you followed these 75 years of religious life?

For me, I joyfully recall a teacher of the past, so many years ago. She taught us as a class of some sixty folks in an over-crowded classroom. It was Friday afternoon, just before the closing time when the bell would ring for dismissal for the weekend to begin. Our little mob would take off for home and enjoy that weekend with no doubt of a promise for a homework assignment to remind us that the next week would soon follow.

To clean out our desks and rearrange things for the coming week was a special time to remember. When all this was accomplished, we could settle back in our "double desks" and Sister would have a special message for those of us who had made our first Holy Communion. Sister would say that we would be receiving our Dear Lord with our parents on Sunday morning in our parish church and she would admonish us not to hurry out of the church but rather to talk to Jesus in a real and personal manner. Could St. Francis and St. Clare have been looking down on us in our early days with this beautiful Franciscan teacher and looking forward to the happy day when later we might become followers as Franciscan Sisters? Could this have been the start of a Franciscan vocation with St. Francis and St. Clare guiding us along the way? Now at the close of a lifetime, I am united with God and hope to have the fervor of a young and happy heart from so long ago and I still cherish the union of our early school days and communicate with our Franciscan teacher of long ago.

Say It With a Smile

by Silvana Panza, FSPA

"Francis' Big Shoes"



Vol. 4 No. 2 FALL 2007

© Copyright 2007, FSPA
All rights reserved.

Sharing Editor: Katie Mitchell, FSPA
srkatiemitchell@sbcglobal.net • 847-492-8335

Assistant Editor: Silvana Panza, FSPA

Layout: Meg Buchner

Address questions for "From Our Readers"
to Karen Flottmeier, FSPA • kflottmeier@fspa.org

Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
Membership Team

Dorothy Dunbar, FSPA

Karen Flottmeier, FSPA

Katie Mitchell, FSPA

Patricia Tekippe, FSPA

Sharing is printed on recycled paper

Address Correspondence to

Membership Team
St. Rose Convent
912 Market St.

La Crosse, WI 54601-4782
1-888-683-FSPA

New Membership Inquiries
www.fspa.org

 **Franciscan Sisters**
of Perpetual Adoration