

ACDP PERSPECTIVES

The Associate Community of the Congregation of Divine Providence
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From the Director: Donna Esposito, ACDP

“Through You comes peace and justice for all who are oppressed.” Psalm 103

As we move toward the end of Advent, it would do well for each one of us to reflect on these words from Psalm 103. Jesus, the beloved Son of God, who came into this world over two thousand years ago, is the perfect model of how we, you and I, must live and act in our personal lives to help bring peace and justice into our wounded world.

As Women and Men of Providence, we witness to the love and mercy of God in our ministries, our families, parishes, and communities at large. The Year of Mercy may have officially ended but not our commitment to strive to be the face of Providence in our living out the Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy. This is our gift to our weary world.

On that first Christmas, the angels proclaimed the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Each time our lives reflect the love, mercy and light of Christ, we proclaim his presence in and among us. This is what Christmas giving is all about.

May you and your family enjoy the graces and blessings of this Christmas season and throughout the New Year. As always you remain in my thoughts and prayers.

In Providence,
Donna



Dates to Remember

February 11th - ACDP Meeting in Providence Hall 1:30 - 3:00 p.m.

March 14 - Lent "The Gathering" Providence Hall

Sr. Lucy Zientek, CDP

Continental Breakfast 9:00 a.m. Speaker 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

April 22 - ACDP Meeting in Providence Hall 1:30 - 3:00 p.m.

May 6th-Derby Day at Holy Family 3:30 p.m. - ????

June 2-4 Associate Annual Retreat



From Our Mentor: Sr. Rose Ann Menke, CDP

During this grace-filled season of Christmas, Father Moye invites us to pray and reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation. He writes:

“Blessed be the moment when the Son of God, coming forth from the bosom of the Father, was made man in the womb of the most Blessed Virgin. Blessed be the womb that bore the Son of God for nine months!...

“Live Jesus, Son of the living God, who was made man for us! The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. All we do during our whole life we want to do to honor the mystery of the Incarnation.” (Directory, page 155)

Reflecting on those words I ask myself: “How am I present to other people? Really present? Or am I thinking about other things that I want to do that day? Am I listening to them with my head or with my heart? Perhaps I need to ask: How am I honoring the mystery of the Incarnation through my presence?”

May our Christmas and New Year be grace-filled as we honor the mystery of the Incarnation through our presence and ministries.



Good News From Maryland! By Sr. Paula Gohs, CDP

We have four informal members of our ACDP Community in Solomons who will be ready for formal membership in the spring of 2017. All of us here are delighted and very much in anticipation of that celebration!

Together we have been listening to Fr. Bill Cleves' tapes on MERCY from the retreat last summer. His talks have sparked animated discussion at our meetings. We are challenged much by Fr. Cleves' application of MERCY to familiar biblical stories. Thank you so much for making these tapes available to those of us at a distance.

I found a gem while browsing at Mary Bauer's Christian Store in Erlanger a year ago. The book is Searching for and Maintaining Peace by Fr. Jacques Philippe. We used it this past year for our ACDP meetings and found it so insightful about Abandonment to Divine Providence. We in Solomons highly recommend it for reflection and discussion among Associates. Advent and Christmas greetings to all Associates of Divine Providence!

*This was submitted by Donna in Memory of all the ACDP's
and CDP's who journeyed to Heaven this past year.*

MY FIRST CHRISTMAS IN HEAVEN!

*I see the countless Christmas Trees around the world below
With tiny lights, like heaven's star, reflecting on the snow.
The sight is so spectacular, please wipe away the tear,
For I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.*

*I hear the many Christmas songs that people hold so dear,
But the sounds of music can't compare with the Christmas choir up here.
I have no words to tell you the joy their voices bring,
For this is beyond description to hear the angels sing.*

*I know how much you miss me. I see the pain inside your heart,
But I'm not so far away. We really aren't apart.
So be happy for me dear ones. You know I hold you dear
And be glad I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.*

*I send you each a special gift from my heavenly home above.
I send you each a memory of my undying love.
After all "Love" is the gift, more precious than pure gold.
It was always most important in the stories Jesus told.*

*Please love and keep each other, as my father said to do,
For I cannot count the blessings or love he has for you.*

*So have a Merry Christmas and wipe away the tear.
Remember, I'm spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.*

Author Unknown

Encuentro: Providential Encounters in Contemplation and Conversation: By Karen Ander Francis, ACDP

On the equator in the summer of 2011, I encountered Providence in a new way and returned with a mission. Following the two-week immersion, first in the life of a small community of our Sisters in urban Quito, Ecuador and in the rural Andean countryside, I attended “Encuentro,” a theological exploration of the role of Providence in the 21st century, where I represented our associate community. I listened day after day, wearing headphones to understand the presentations in my native language, as (mostly) women religious sisters and lay associates spoke of making the message of Providence relevant in their corners of the world at the outset of a new and challenging century. I worshiped at lengthy, boisterous Spanish-language liturgies featuring native dances from the South American nations represented at the

**Providence
is Powerless
without Us**

conference, and cobbled together mealtime conversations in “Spanglish” and bits of high school Latin and French.

How strange it was to be in the minority, a white American, an English speaker, an object of curiosity on the bus and in the shops, dependent on someone else to make me understood—and to help me understand. It was a brief, but life-altering, multi-cultural encounter. Life-altering? Really? You bet.

And as I flew back to the States, to the land of nearly instant hot water and unlimited toilet tissue, I asked myself: What is the single, most important grace from this this diverse, polyglot exposure to a radical theology?

The answer: Providence is powerless without us. Mind-bending? Life-altering? You bet.

It takes our core belief—that we are called to be Providence in the world—to an entirely new depth of reality. How radical to believe that God needs us, that without our consent and action, God’s work on Earth cannot be accomplished. That God has no power except through our actions.

At Encuentro my relationship with God had been rocked. It tilted, in much the same way that my sense of direction on the equator had been re-calibrated—a phenomenon common to visitors from El Norte. My relationship with God shifted in a major way, too, when I realized the truth of the notion that God is powerless that Providence depends on me—on us—to continue the work of creation, the work of redemption, and the work of sanctifying in the places where, and the people with whom, I live, work, and have my being. In the name of the creator, redeemer, and sanctifier...

Back home I lived with another question: How can I make the theology of Providence more relevant in my corner of the world and encourage others to acknowledge and accept their significance in God’s plan?

I waited for guidance and was then moved to invite two people, a woman with whom I have been spiritual companion and a man from church, both of whom had experience with contemplative—listening—prayer, to form a small prayer group. Like me, they desired to be in a community that practiced contemplation on a regular basis. A small group, indeed.

That first group convened in fall 2011 in the name of Providence. Now we are six: A United Church of Christ (UCC) pastor and her husband, a liturgical musician and composer (former Mormon and Southern Baptist, respectively); a retired professor of philosophy, (former Catholic as am I); a homecare nurse (cradle Episcopalian); and an engineer, (a seeker and sampler of several denominations, but an Episcopalian at present). All the men hold doctorates and tend to be sturdy, linear thinkers (left-brained), while the women lean more toward non-linear styles of thinking and responding (right-brain). Except for the pastor and her spouse, we are all now Episcopalians—and all six are staunch advocates of peace and social justice. With such varied “church” histories, you can imagine how interesting our discussions become!

For our meetings, I designed a two-hour format that allows time for a topic to be presented and discussed, 30 minutes of contemplation, and a brief period of sharing. (And we always have time for an afternoon snack to start things off!) We rotate responsibility for convening and leading the group each month, but our custom is to open with the question, “How have I experienced Providence in my life since the last time we met?” At first some found this a bit difficult but gradually everyone began to attend to and name that presence.

Last year when everyone became cozy with that notion, I changed things up a bit and added, “How have I been Providence?” This one is tougher because it requires one to humbly acknowledge that he/she is face of God, to become intentional about living out that principle in a conscious way—and it holds us accountable for taking providential action. At first everyone was a bit uncomfortable, but all are catching on!

Continued on Page 5

“A Funny Thing Happened on My Way to.....Living: By Anne Brien, ACDP

In the early part of September my car was stolen outside my father's condo. In my dizzy life I had left the spare key in the glove compartment....my bad. I called the police who just happened to have stopped the youths about 5:30 am and gave them a speeding ticket. Providence is already working. I waited about 3 weeks and purchased another car (like I have extra money).

That evening the Warwick police said they found my car in Connecticut. I contacted them and made the 2 hour trip. The car looked in good shape but the trunk and back seats were emptied. I drove home somewhat down but feeling blest that Providence had gotten me this far. Now the fun begins. The next morning the starter and battery die but Providence got me home. \$800 later I realize these guys are back scouting the lot and I do not have my spare key. I purchased a club to secure the brake and steering wheel. Now more good news. The police called from Connecticut and took finger prints from the car and the guy who bought my car gave information on the person who stole it. 2 in jail. Next I got a phone call from New York police who found my keys when my car got there and was emptied. He found me because I had a CVS tag on it. I gave this officer the phone numbers of the 2 other police departments involved. 4 more arrested. I now have my keys, my car running, and peace because I believed!

Encuentro Con't from Pg. 4 By Karen Ander Francis, ACDP

The convener is free to bring whatever he or she chooses for the group focus and discussion—a poem, a bit of scripture—someone once brought a long verse about various kinds of cats! Another time we listened to hymns shards from various periods of music history. When it is my turn to lead, I bring material on Providence—and I have a wealth of that after all these years!

But always we carry into the silence something (a word, a phrase, an image) that has resonated during the focus and conversation. And always after the silence and the sharing, we leave, content and at peace, to go out into the late afternoon having encountered Providence.

“Encuentro,” by the way, means “encounter.”

OLD GAELIC PRAYER

DEEP PEACE OF THE RUNNING WAVES TO YOU.
 DEEP PEACE OF THE FLOWING AIR TO YOU.
 DEEP PEACE OF THE SMILING STARS TO YOU.
 DEEP PEACE OF THE QUIET EARTH TO YOU.
 DEEP PEACE OF THE WATCHING SHEPHERDS TO YOU.
 DEEP PEACE OF THE SON OF PEACE TO YOU.

FROM "IRISH BLESSINGS"

Mary, Mother of God and Queen of Heaven (Part 2) Donna Esposito, ACDP

The First Three Apparitions of Fatima

In the September issue of our newsletter I wrote about the three apparitions Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta experienced in 1916. "The children were totally transformed by the last apparition of the angel. The visit of the Angel came as an act of God's goodness. Divine Providence sent an angel to the three shepherds to restore order in His creation because there was much neglect for God and His laws. Today, the action of the angel is more crucial than ever. We must be transformed by prayer. We must bear the cross and be willing to suffer. We must allow God's power to transform us." (*The Angel of Portugal: 100 years later by Blaise Graf*)

On Sunday, May 13, 1917 the three children of Aljustrel, Portugal were tending their flock in the field called the Cova da Iria after attending Mass with their families. Lucia was ten years old at this time and was chosen by God and by Our Lady to communicate to the world the message that was received at Fatima.

As the children began to build a wall around the thicket where the sheep were grazing they saw what Lucia describes as a flash of lightning. They thought it was a storm coming but as they looked up at the holm oak tree they saw a lady dressed all in white, brighter than the sun and radiating a light more clear and intense than a crystal glass filled with sparkling water when the rays of burning sunshine through it. They were surrounded by the light that radiated from the lady. Her first words to the children were: Do not be afraid. I will not harm you. Lucia asked where she was from. Her response was "I am from heaven. I have come to ask you to come here for six months in succession on the 13th day at this same hour. Later I will tell you who I am and what I want. Afterwards I will return here yet a seventh time." Lucia asked if she would go to heaven. The lady said yes and Jacinta also but Francisco must say many rosaries before going to heaven. Next Our Lady asked, "Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and to bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended and in supplication for the conversion of sinners? Their answer was "yes, we are willing." Our Lady responded, "you are going to have much to suffer, but the grace of God will be your comfort." In Lucia's words, she said, "As I pronounced these words Our Lady opened her hands communicating to us a light so intense that its rays penetrated our hearts and innermost soul, making us see ourselves in God, Who was that light, more clearly than we see ourselves in the best of mirrors. Then on an interior impulse that was communicated, we fell on our knees repeating in our hearts: Oh most Holy Trinity, I adore you, my God, my God I love You in the most Blessed Sacrament. "After a few moments Our Lady added: Pray the rosary every day to obtain peace for the world and an end of the war." Then she began to rise going up toward the east until she disappeared. From that day forward this unknown place began to attract many people however there were many skeptics. All roads lead to Fatima.



On that same date May 13th, a bishop was consecrated in Rome; Euginio Pacilli who would become Pope Pius XII in 1939. He had several decisive roles in Fatima throughout his legacy, always showing great appreciation of the message brought by the Mother of God.

After the apparition the children agreed not to tell anyone of Our Lady's appearance however Jacinta was so joyful of this experience that when she saw her mother she ran into her arms and said to her: "Oh mother, we saw a beautiful Lady in the Cova da Iria!"

Continued on Page 7

Once the words came out of her mouth, she was no longer able to hide what happened. Francisco remained silent. He knew of the promise they had made earlier to Lucia not to tell anyone and his sister broke the promise in her excitement. When Francisco was questioned by his father he confirmed what she had said but said nothing more. Mr. Marto expressed his belief in what the children said and ended the conversation peacefully.

The next day Francisco warned Lucia that Jacinta had told of the appearance. Lucia knew from this point on life was not going to be easy. She was correct in thinking so because when her mother, Maria Rosa heard the news she thought Lucia invented the story. As time went on the relationship between Lucia and her mother became very stressful because she thought she was lying and wanted her to tell the people it was a fairy tale. It seemed her parents no longer liked her. This brought much suffering to this ten year old girl. Her "yes" marked her life forever.

On June 13th after Mass the children went to the Cova da Iria followed by many people. As they waited for Our Lady to appear they prayed the rosary. The apparition was announced by lightning. Lucia asked the Lady, "What do you want of me?" She answered, say the rosary everyday and return to this spot on the 13th of next month. The Lady also mentioned she would take Jacinta and Francisco to heaven soon and she would stay on earth for some time longer. (Our Lady came to take Lucia to heaven on February 13, 2005 at the age of 98.) Jesus wants to use you to make me known and loved. He wants to establish in the world a devotion to my Immaculate Heart. To those who accept this, I promise them the salvation of their souls and they will be loved by God like flowers placed by me to adorn His throne. You will not be alone. Don't lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.

At the moment she spoke these last words, she opened her hands and from them came immense rays of light. They were immersed in God. Then they saw in the palm of our Lady's right hand a heart encircled by thorns which pierced it because of the sins of humanity.

The following day Maria Rosa took Lucia to the parish priest after Mass thinking he would resolve the situation about the apparitions but she was wrong. Lucia told him the same story she told her mother of the second apparition. He sent for Francisco and Jacinta finding they had the same story. Together the children prayed often for their perseverance. It was a month of suffering for Lucia and there seemed to be no end to it.

On July 13th Lucia realized the great responsibility that was upon her. She tried to talk herself out of going to the Cova while she was in distress but she knew Our Lady would help her through this time of temptation. Lucia stopped by her cousins house to get Francisco and Jacinta and off they went to see the Lady.

They arrived at the Cova and as they were praying the rosary Our Lady appeared and asked them again to return the following month, to pray the rosary to obtain peace for the world and an end of the war. The children asked her who she was and to work a miracle so everyone would believe she appeared to them. Our Lady told them in October she would tell them who she was and would perform a miracle for all to see and believe. Again the Lady said it was necessary for people to pray the rosary in order to obtain graces.

Next Our Lady showed them the vision of hell where they saw fire and demons. Our Lady told them that this is where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish world devotion to her Immaculate Heart. Many souls would be saved and there will be peace. Then she asked for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not there will be wars throughout the world and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, Various nations will be annihilated however in the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, a period of peace will be granted to the world. In Portugal, the dogma of faith will always be preserved.

Advent Credo: Submitted by Mary Helen Bertolini, ACDP

It is not true that creation and the human family are doomed to destruction and loss—
This is true: For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life;

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction—
This is true: I have come that they may have life, and that abundantly.

It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction rule forever—
This is true: Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, his name shall be called wonderful councilor, mighty God, the Everlasting, the Prince of peace.

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule the world—
This is true: To me is given authority in heaven and on earth, and lo I am with you, even until the end of the world.

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church before we can be peacemakers—
This is true: I will pour out my spirit on all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall have dreams.

It is not true that our hopes for liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity of peace are not meant for this earth and for this history—
This is true: The hour comes, and it is now, that the true worshipers shall worship God in spirit and in truth.

So let us [journey through] Advent in hope, even hope against hope. Let us see visions of love and peace and justice. Let us affirm with humility, with joy, with faith, with courage: Jesus Christ—the life of the world.

From Walking on Thorns by Allan Boesak



At this time she also called people to do penance. The children saw a vision of an Angel crying in a loud voice, "Penance, Penance, Penance!" It was revealed that the Pope would be harmed along with others. After seeing this vision the Lady requested the following; when you pray the rosary, say after each mystery: O my Jesus, forgive us, save us from the fire of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need.

The Lady asked them to keep secret what they had seen in this apparition then as before she began to ascend toward the east, until she finally disappeared. The children had much to ponder. Seeing the vision of hell they were immersed in pain to see so many souls lost forever. They prayed, made sacrifices and grew in love, especially for those who did not love. Sometimes questions remained in their heart: "How can anyone not love God, if God is good?"

The three seers helped and encouraged each other in their prayers and sacrifices during the times when they were alone with the sheep. Lucia's mother continued with her disbelief in the apparitions. She often got after Lucia to admit the truth. Maria Rosa took her to the parish priest but even he could not trick her to see if she would contradict herself. Both mother and daughter suffered, the pain became great and the silence so much heavier was kept in these two hearts that loved each other.

We have heard the message of Fatima in our past but by reviewing the message to pray the rosary and bare our cross will increase our devotion.

Part three will be continued in the next ACDP issue.

Christmas Tree Blessing

*Bless, O Lord, this Christmas Tree,
all that goes on to it
and all that goes on around it.*

*May the decorations remind us to buy things
in a spirit of joy, thoughtfulness, and generosity.*

*May the needles that fall to the ground make
us mindful of the needs of the poor
and the homeless the world over.*

*May the branches that point upwards lead us
to wonder and worship the Creator who came
from heaven to earth as a little child.*

Taken from "Celtic Blessings, Prayers for Everyday Life"

Compiled by Ray Simpson