



NEWS from the Northside

Introducing This Issue

by S. Mary Frances Reis

Greetings and blessings as we embark on another year of grace and possibility! We cannot begin this issue without expressing our profound gratitude to you, our relatives, friends and benefactors near and far, who literally make our very presence here and all of our endeavors possible. THANK YOU! As a guide to this year's planning and implementation, we are launching "THE VISITATION ENGAGEMENT": 5 ways in which people can become involved in our Visitation way of life and ministry:

Following the Spirit: *Monthly group gatherings for those in various stages of life discernment.*

Visitation Internship Program: *For young adults looking to commit to a year of urban ministry while living in community with other young adults.*

Visitation Companions: *Designed to form adults in Salesian Spirituality and to provide an opportunity for intentional community, helping them to integrate Salesian values into their daily living.*

Monastic Immersion Experience: *For women interested in living the rhythm of monastic life with the Sisters within the Visitation Monastery for up to one year.*

Vowed Religious Life: *For Catholic women who are answering God's call to join the Visitation Sisters in an urban monastic community.*

In this and in subsequent issues, we will share our process and progress in each of these areas.

Getting to Know Our First VIPs

by S. Karen Mohan

In this, our inaugural year of the VISITATION INTERNSHIP PROGRAM (VIP) I interviewed our two VIPs, Beth Anne Cooper and Kelly Schumacher "mid year" in their VIP experience.

Beth Anne Cooper was born and raised in the Bronx, NY. She graduated from Hope College in MI, spent a year working on a ranch in Montana and met the Visitation Sisters last year while living in an Urban Homeworks community in St. Paul. A medal of Our Lady is always around her neck, and her organizational skills are in demand when she helps the Sisters twice a week!

Beth Anne loves sports and the outdoors. Two ways that she is bringing these gifts to her VIP service here are by coaching at Ascension (first volleyball and now basketball) and by volunteering to work at the Courage Center where she helps people regain motion and mobility. Beth Anne is currently organizing an "indoor rock climbing" experience for youth in therapy at the Courage Center.

At nearby Ascension School, Beth Anne is a "Homework Helper." This gives her a chance to develop relationships with the students. "It's exciting to see



Beth Anne & Kelly hosted an evening complete with delicious dinner and speaker Sister Mary Mao (left).

VIP continues on page 2



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We are an urban monastic community. Please contact us for more information about our way of life.

Join us on Facebook: Visitation Monastery north Minneapolis

You can read the newsletter online at our website. If you prefer this format, please contact the Sisters at vmonastery@aol.com.

VIP continued from page 1

how the students have begun to confide in me and how their studies are improving,” she said. Next year Beth Anne plans to study Physical Therapy. Living in the neighborhood, just two blocks from the Sisters, has shown her how welcoming and responsive the people of the neighborhood are when she meets them, “out and about.” She appreciates the diversity of the Ascension Parish Community where she participates in the Sunday Liturgy and is a part of the “Future Full of Hope” gatherings there.

Sr. Karen: What piece of Salesian “wisdom” is supportive to you at this time?

Beth: I like St. Francis de Sales’ advice on preparing for the future. He says not to be anxious about it. It’s easy for me to get wrapped up in fear and anxiety about the future. His wisdom helps me to live in the present moment.

Sr. Karen: What would you like to tell our readers about your VIP year?

Beth: I feel so incredibly blessed to have this experience to have a year to focus on my spiritual growth, to walk just a step closer to God. I am grateful for the Sisters and their commitment to living Jesus in north Minneapolis. I am thankful that they have each been willing to impart their wisdom and love on me. I am constantly amazed by all of those whose lives intersect with the Sisters. Whether from within north Minneapolis or without, it has been a blessing to learn from and be supported by each person. I am constantly impressed by the many people who help spread the work of the Sisters.

Kelly Schumacher is a Minnesota native and a graduate of Augustana College in Rock Island, IL. She spent a year in South Africa and two years working at a nonprofit social service agency in Chicago, both at the organizational and grassroots level. These experiences offer her a lens to see peoples’ needs from both the provider and the receiver side of social services, a perspective valuable in her ministry as a VIP.

Kelly is doing ESL work in the neighborhood. She loves the mutuality of teaching conversational English to the women. “I bring them knowledge of English and they give me insights into their culture and an immigrant’s experience of life here. As we laugh and share together, the playing field is leveled.”

In addition to being a “Homework Helper” at Ascension, she also works with Brian Mogren in coordinating college immersion experiences and film nights at the St. Jane House. At the monastery she is updating informational resources to assist those coming to our door for help. Kelly patiently gives computer help to the Sisters as well!

Sr. Karen: What advice from St. Francis de Sales do you find appealing to you right now?

Kelly: I appreciate his wisdom about how to live in the midst of busyness. There’s a lot of that in my daily schedule, and he advises me to seek and find God in the midst of my activities. Life then becomes “full of God’s presence” rather than “busy.”

Sr. Karen: What would you like to tell our readers about your VIP year?

Kelly: When I think about this year I’m filled with gratitude for this opportunity to be a VIP. Living near/in community with Beth Anne and the Sisters; learning about the Catholic expression of spirituality; being able to meet and know

VIP continues on page 3

KUAI LE

by S. Suzanne Homeyer

Kuai Le are two characters of the Chinese alphabet that create the word for joy; happy; to celebrate. An update for the past four months of life here at Visitation can definitely be said to be filled with celebrations — some somber and thought-provoking and some much more light-hearted or even downright silly.

There have been a great number of deaths, funerals, vigils, memorials and celebrations of life. We have remembered the life of a three year old killed by a stray bullet and a 93-year-old mother who went to be with her Lord surrounded by family and friends in a local hospice facility. In all over a dozen people significant to our community members have been called home by God. We grieve with their families and rejoice with them in Jesus' promise of eternal life.

We rejoice in the newness of life and have celebrated new babies and new initiatives in our community. Since the last newsletter we have begun the VIP program, introduced an over-night follow-up retreat for participants in our spring Women's Retreats, and developed a Monastic Immersion Experience. Sr. Mary Virginia held a spirituality group for Hispanic teens and has begun translating some Salesian writings into Spanish. We have reinstated Family Dinners which is a once a month opportunity for us to share a meal, engage in conversation, play board games, and spend quality time strengthening our relationship with a neighborhood family.

New friends and old have come to visit. Four young adults from South Minneapolis joined us for dessert one evening and told us of their dream to begin a Catholic Worker House in the city. Former Visitation students now living in Boston, St. Louis, Wisconsin and one who just traveled for four months in Europe solo came to share their adventures and life's journeys with us. One of our Visitation Sisters from Georgetown (formerly Wheeling), Joanne Gonter visited us for the first time and three former classmates of Sr. Karen visited from South Africa, Massachusetts and Ireland. These special visits all are cause for rejoicing as are our regular ongoing events.

Many have come to the monastery for personal days of reflection and the Salesian Monday study nights draw more each month. Service projects such as Turkey Tuesday, the Christmas Stocking Party, trips to concerts, plays and the Holidazzle Parade continue to connect our neighbors with friends from other parts of "the Cities." Our Visitation Companion group is continuing to welcome new people and is developing its own sense of community. All is cause for joy and celebration! Our community continues to grow in new ways.

Sr. Mary Mao, a graduate student at St. Mary's University Minneapolis campus, has come to live with us while she does graduate work. She brings a new perspective, a new vocabulary which includes *Kuai Le*, and much joy, happiness and celebration.



Visitation Seniors helped serve our monthly family meal . . . and provided a fun activity for the kids!

VIP continued from page 2

the community that the Sisters love (and that loves them) is a huge gift! Likewise, spending a year living with some stillness and contemplation and attempting to embrace the questions and ambiguity is something most 20-somethings don't have the opportunity to do. There are many pressures — to start careers, settle down, keep busy, build your resume, accumulate some wealth. They're not all bad, but I'm thankful to have this year to live a little counter-culturally and find God in the midst here on the northside.

Sr. Karen: All this will serve you well as you prepare for your August wedding!

Those interested in knowing more about VIP can read about the program in our brochure or online. VIP applications for next year are available online as well (applications are due April 30, 2012). Spread the word! The Sisters hope that other young adults will join us in our ministry of prayer and presence in north Minneapolis.



—St. Jane de Chantal

“A simple soul is a confident soul. She trusts in God and has nothing to fear.”

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Catholic Youth Camp (CYC)



“We can't wait for summer!”

—Two eager campers

Please consider sponsoring a camper for \$350. This would be a great Easter Resurrection gift! Call S. Mary Frances at 612-529-8215 or send your tax-deductible donation to Visitation Monastery of Minneapolis by May 15 if possible.

Thank you for sharing the gift of camp!

A Monastic Immersion Experience

By S. Mary Frances Reis & S. Mary Virginia Schmidt

As we listen to the Holy Spirit in the signs of the times, we discern a hunger for prayer and community among contemporary Christians. We know, too, that statistically the average person pursues several distinct directions in a lifetime. Commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is paramount in the lives of many lay persons. We are offering an opportunity for an in depth experience of our monastic way of life in an urban setting for a period of six months to a year.

Interested women must have a desire for and a passion to be a part of our monastic community. She must be ready and able to enter into the prayer and ministries and life of the community. Her heart must include a willingness to grow in Salesian spirituality as well as being open to be a prayerful presence with our neighbors. Prospective participants can come from any Christian faith tradition.

We are excited to share our beautiful way of life with this new initiative. For a fuller explanation and application forms, please visit our website.