



## About Summer 2012: Number 70!

In our last issue we introduced the guide we are using as we listen to the Holy Spirit's inspirations and move forward: THE VISITATION ENGAGEMENT. (You can read more about this guide on our website, & especially in the community brochure.) We have invited a few people to share some ways they have become involved in our Visitation way of life and ministry during the past year.

### Salesian Leadership Training: Food for the Journey!

by Bianca Franks

Greetings ! I am a single mother and member of the Northside community, having had a close relationship with the Visitation Sisters ever since I was a preteen. I have become heavily involved in volunteer work in the community with them over the past 5 years. I was invited to be a part of a Salesian leadership training program they were having which took place over the past two years. I went into this not really sure what to expect other than wanting to grow as a positive contributor in North Minneapolis.

The 1st year I met and befriended other likeminded leaders in the community and we focused on strategies and guidance in our individual projects (mine being a single parent support group). We shared our lives and aspirations with one another and have supported one another on personal and professional levels, facing the reality of successes and failures in a way that those close to us wouldn't understand.

In the 2nd year of training I was pleasantly surprised that the focus was less strategic and more spiritual, teaching us leaders the importance of complete wholeness within you as a way of guiding and following. Upon completion of this amazing journey I know we all walk away tearfully and with a smiling heart because we have come full circle from who we were, and closer to who God has deemed us to become in the Gospel.

My personal and spiritual growth over the past two years is amazingly unexplainable; I have learned to always trust in God, accept my faults, embrace my failures, and never give up. What makes a good leader isn't always the outcome of perfection or winning, but positively changing lives as a demonstration of the God in me, and to lead you must follow humbly. If I had to sum it all up I would say my focus used to be the *destination* and in that there was never any satisfaction or gratitude because I never seemed to get there. My focus is now my *spiritual journey* as I walk the road I've chosen, and if I can share that part of the experience with anyone, the leader in me has achieved a goal higher than I could ask for. ❀



Bianca Franks was a faithful and inspiring participant in our two year Salesian Leadership Series.

—Listen to the Whisper  
of the Holy Spirit  
—Open Mind, Open Heart  
—Enjoy the Journey  
by Beth Anne Cooper, VIP

The above are three of my mom's favorite mantras. They have been repeated so many times over that they have become a part of my family's fiber. They are what have led me through the joys and sorrows of life and to the blessing of a year spent as a Visitation Intern. I was blessed to take a year to learn, discern, and grow as part of this beautiful, urban,



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News from the Northside is published three times a year by Visitation Monastery of Minneapolis, 1527 Fremont Ave. N., Minneapolis, MN 55411 612-521-6113

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

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You can read the newsletter online at our website. If you prefer this format, please contact the Sisters at [vmonastery@aol.com](mailto:vmonastery@aol.com).

"Far from 'saving' anyone, I took away so much. Whether it was from young Quincy's pride and joy in his work at the Cookie Cart, or Eunice and Wilton's flirtatious interactions at Heritage Park Senior Residence, the people, no matter how difficult their life situation, have taught me a joy and strength unique from anything else I have ever experienced."

— Erin Scallen '12

"I'm so blessed to have been given this opportunity to come to a place that is only 15-20 minutes way from my home. People in suburbs often feel as if poverty and homelessness are such far away problems. However, there are so many people struggling in North Minneapolis, just 'down the street.' It was tough sometimes to see the gap between myself and those with whom I worked."

— Sarah Neuberger '12

## Embraced by a Community of LOVE

by Kelly Schumacher, VIP

Where do I even begin to sum up this past year as a Visitation Intern? This has been a tremendous year for me – a year of community, of expanding, of learning, of growing, of challenge, of love, and of blessings!

Throughout the year when people asked me why I decided to become part of the Visitation Internship Program and spend a year in North Minneapolis as a VIP, I almost always gave them some variation of this answer: "When I met the Sisters I fell in love with them and I couldn't imagine passing up the opportunity to learn alongside these beautiful women for a whole year."

I give thanks that my "love at first sight" instincts were well placed!

I have, indeed, had the opportunity to learn alongside these beautiful women: observing the amazing ability they each have to slow down and be truly present to those who come to the door each day; learning the new words to the Catholic liturgy together (although I had the advantage of not being conditioned to the old ones!); and introducing me to St. Francis and St. Jane and the beauty of Salesian Spirituality.

This year, however, was not just about me getting to know the Sisters and Catholicism; it was also about being embraced by the wonderful community that surrounds them! I had the opportunity throughout the year to be involved in the North Minneapolis community in some awesome ways. Praying with the Centering Prayer group at the St. Jane House, participating in community mass at the Fremont house, teaching English to adult refugees and immigrants at the library, and working with Beth Anne to provide homework help at Ascension Catholic School were all part of my weekly structure. Not to mention worshipping at Redeemer Lutheran Church; helping to facilitate service-learning immersions at the St. Jane House; and being a part of "Movies with Jane," our new monthly movie discussion group. It's been quite a year of relationship building and learning from others!

As I look back I also can't help but also notice the small moments that helped to make it so special – playing charades with the Sisters and laughing so hard my face hurt; having our fridge covered in pictures the kids from Ascension drew us; admiring the Windsock Visitation painting while sitting next to its creator, Brother Mickey; and teaching an English lesson about children's games and getting a piggyback ride from my 75 year old ESL student to name a few.

As I transition out of my post as a VIP and move on to married life, I am so thankful for this last year – for St. Francis teaching me more about being gentle with myself and others; for the Sisters teaching me so much about living Jesus in the day-to-day; for the community that has surrounded and supported me, and especially for the fact that my new husband and I will continue to live in North Minneapolis close to all of this! ❀



## Update: News from the Northside

by S. Mary Frances

As we settle into a time of transition from a full and fruitful year to a season of planning and “planting” for the coming year, we are grateful for our Visitation way which calls us to live in the PRESENT MOMENT and to treasure the graces in the relationships. Our daily rhythm of Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, personal prayer and door ministry keeps us centered on Living Jesus in a profoundly incarnational way in the midst of the city!

### A Few Highlight of “the year that has been”:

- The St. Jane House, our urban spirituality center, served as the gathering place for women’s retreats, men’s spirituality & centering prayer groups, several high school and college inner city immersion experiences, discernment evenings, leadership training, From Death to Life meetings, etc., etc. (We even had a baby shower there!)
- Our Visitation Internship Program (VIP) was launched this year, and two lovely young women recently completed their year of community service and in-depth experience of our charism.
- Children and their families enjoyed a myriad of activities: field trips as diverse as the Holidazzle parade, the Children’s Theatre, Minnesota Science Museum, & The Minnesota History Theatre, parties sponsored and run by Vicki Bailey and friends of Mendota Visitation, etc., etc.
- Mendota Visitation seniors were pioneers during their community service weeks here from May 21st thru May 31st. Instead of going to Guatemala, they came to North Minneapolis! It was a great Mission Trip right here in the city!!! The school motto “Not for School but for Life” was in full swing.

### A few Highlights of summer 2012:

- Our dear Sister Karen recently completed six years of selfless and Spirit-filled leadership of our community. Sister Mary Frances succeeds her and will endeavor to follow her example of empowering the gifts of each of our Sisters and lay counterparts.
- Thanks to the generosity of many benefactors & volunteers, we were able to send 75 children and 7 teen “Counselors in Training” to Catholic Youth Camp in McGreggor, MN; 4 teens to St. Louis to participate in Vistory, a program which brings Visitation students from around the country together to serve and learn about Salesian spirituality; and 2 teens to an intensive program at St. John’s University: YTM, Youth in Theology and Ministry . . . As Father Michael O’Connell often says, “Our youth are our future.” We are grateful for opportunities to affirm and form them in positive ways.

### A Few Highlight of “things to come”:

- We recently welcomed the first participant into our Monastic Immersion experience, a 6-month stay in our monastery. Not unlike St. Jane de Chantal, Marsha West, who hails from Forks, Washington, has had many life vocations as wife, mother, grandmother, widow, and on and on! She brings many gifts our way and we are happy to share our life with her. Welcome Marsha!
- We are in the process of interviewing New VIPs for the coming year.
- Our dear Maryann Pearson has “retired” as coordinator of the Visitation Companions, our lay community. Thanks to her untiring dedication, we have about 15-20 members! Jody Johnson has accepted the role of coordinator and will work with Sr. Mary Frances and Linda Goynes to keep the movement growing! ❄️

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monastic community. I remain in disbelief that this year is coming to an end; that soon I will move out of the community and on to new opportunities.

As the time draws to a close, many have asked me to reflect on my time: on what I have learned, on what I have gained, on what I will be bringing forth. I have learned that the journey is never complete, that all the answers are never to be had. For as great as our Father is, we can never fully grasp His majesty. There is always more to discover about God, and therefore our humanity. I have gained a sense of peace. St. Francis de Sales implores us *do not fear*, we are to rest our fears in the love of our Father. Even amidst the unknown and the incomplete, we are not called to lives of angst; we are called to remain transfixed by the love and heart of Christ. Finally, I bring forth a calling, a simple calling. It is a calling to *Live Jesus*, in my home and community, in my workplace and the classroom, on the running trail and the rock wall, wherever the journey leads. I am charged to *do simple things with great love* and to *be who I am*.

I have grown not apart from my roots, but from them. As with most insight gained through time and age, I have learned that my mom continues to be right. The mantras of St. Francis are now eternally mixed with those of my mother.

I pray in thanksgiving for those who are in communion with the Sisters and the North. I wish you mantras of peace and joy and hope that see you through each day. ❄️



—St. Francis de Sales

“Be who you are, and be that well”

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### Vistation Students Visit North Minneapolis



Eight Visitation seniors (in their stylish hair nets) pose with Quincy, one of the neighborhood teens they worked with at the Cookie Cart.

Visitation young women from the Class of 2012 participated in our first ever Visitation Mission Trip to North Minneapolis. Read excerpts from their essays here and on page 2 of this newsletter.

“Sitting at the corner of the freeway, four giggly girls chatter excitedly about their next next week with the Visitation Sisters in North Minneapolis. Windows down, music up, living in our own little world. Out of the corner of our eyes, a man in brown waits at the corner clutching a well-worn sign reading ‘Help appreciated, God bless.’ Ordinarily I would have locked the doors and set my face determinedly at the impending light; however, with a week in North under our belts, we Vis girls scrambled into our bags and emerged successful, with a bunch of bananas. As we drove away, I surprised myself, and I realized how getting to know the community in which the Sisters reside changed my perspective on life. I learned not to judge people on their appearance...”

—Elle Newcome '12