



# NEWS

from the Northside

## Visitation Monastery of Minneapolis Enters 25th Year ... Or 25 Years Young!

By S. Mary Frances Reis

We and you, our beloved extended “family,” are celebrating a milestone: 25 years in north Minneapolis! On October 2, 1989, Archbishop John R. Roach commissioned Sisters Mary Margaret, Mary Virginia, Karen and Mary Frances to establish an urban monastery to companion and affirm those who are impoverished and lonely, to share our Salesian spirituality with those committed to a ministry of peace and justice, and to bring together in relationship those who might not otherwise meet. Sisters Suzanne and Katherine daily enhance the ministry we began so many years ago.

As many of you who have children and grandchildren are all too aware, time passes quickly as you watch them grow into maturity. We have the same sense that this “youngest child” of our Order in the United States, The Visitation Monastery of Minneapolis, has grown and matured all too quickly and beyond our imagining!

Directed by the Holy Spirit through the ten years of discernment that preceded this foundation, we came with no other plan than to be faithful to our monastic way of life, which is centered on prayer and community, and to welcome and listen to those who came to our door. (Jesus promised us he would be there!) By faithfully listening to our neighbors, our agenda began to gradually unfold.

Just one example: Peter Hayden, founder of Turning Point, (a neighborhood agency which serves people desiring to turn their lives away from addiction) rang our door bell

one day in those early years. He told us that he had a volunteer opportunity for us Sisters: PRAYER. “Without prayer and spirituality,” he said, “there is no recovery... If you make a

commitment to pray daily for my Turning Point family, we will shovel your walks, trim your trees, move your furniture, and help you in any way you need. Thus began an almost 25 year mutual relationship, and the Holy Spirit’s confirmation of our mission.

Our life of prayer, presence and unconditional welcome, in the spirit of Mary’s Magnificat, has been amazingly graced. Our ministry has un-

folded in creative and life-giving ways, and we in turn have received new insights into the richness of our charism through the people we serve. We have never doubted that it was God’s loving will to plant a Visitation monastery here, and that through God’s loving providence, the Visitation will be here for many years to come. It may look different in the future, but the same charism will endure.

As we mark this anniversary year we invite you to visit our website — [visitationmonasteryminneapolis.org](http://visitationmonasteryminneapolis.org) — from time to time as we gather up what has been and listen for what will be.

25<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary Year!



The Sisters joined north Minneapolis police for a ride-along before moving in to the Fremont House in 1989.

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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).

## A Unique Moment in Time

by S. Suzanne Homeyer

We are at a unique moment in time — the celebration of a quarter of a century is a milestone. Our vantage point allows us to see what has been nurtured in us to this point. Our own desire to leave a legacy helps us to envision the future. No crystal ball needed — just deep feelings in all of us that we want to leave a legacy to our north side friends. We were given a gift by the Northsiders who were already living here and called to holiness. Their faith reinforced our call to be present here.

One of our earliest neighbors stands out to me as one who passed us the legacy. She was the very presence of all of the love that was to be part of our Fremont House. As a long time friend of Laycious and Margaret Burgess from whom this beautiful home was purchased, Willie carried in her presence all of the history, richness of the earth, and the love, prayer and generosity of heart that had long been present on this corner.



Our first neighbor Willie Mae Allen (right) attended our first women's retreat and each one thereafter until she died.

Willie showed us that the Salesian way would work here in the inner city. When asked if praying the Liturgy of the Hours might be modified to better suit her style she responded that we should just go right ahead and know she was praying along in her own way. Willie had just articulated the pliable heart and flexibility that makes our Salesian Charism so appealing to so many.

We also learned that Willie had a green thumb. A beautiful garden was not only a promise of the harvest to come but an invitation to neighbors to come and visit — to stop a bit, be refreshed in spirit and open to new relationships. Two of these visitors this summer have been Willie's grandson Sammy and his friend Maureen. This very organic gardening has been continued by the Sisters and many friends, Vis alums, neighbor children and even relatives over the years.

Willie showed us that love is in the food — whether it's just in the sheer beauty of the blooming bean plants and zucchini blossoms or the nostalgic taste of a ripe, warm, delicious, just-picked tomato.

We look forward to a future of sharing our legacy in a way that nurtures the hearts and spirits of Northsiders yet to come just as ours have been nurtured.

## Summer Update

by S. Karen Mohan

Summer has a magic all its own. From the “Back to Summer” party in early June to the “Back to School” party in late August, our community has been blessed with “Kid and Adult Friendly” activities that strengthened relationships and thus promoted peace in our neighborhood. Vicki Bailey, our children’s party “wizard,” organizes and executes the delightful parties with a generosity that amazes all!

Our urban monastery hosted a weekly “garden club,” a Tuesday night gathering of neighbors, students from Vis and adults hoeing, weeding and encouraging our plants to grow. Sr. Katherine coordinated these garden efforts, ensuring that the herbs, green beans, peppers, eggplant, lettuce, tomatoes and collard greens were cultivated with care. Meanwhile the cucumbers and squash staged a takeover in the side yard! A snack followed by Night Prayer with the Sisters capped off these magical summer nights that made our garden a work of edible art! Many thanks to all our helpers, especially Nikki Janssen, Vis ’14 who rounded up her friends to cultivate our garden plot!

Vis Companion Jody Johnson and Vis alum, Claire Kranz, reinstated a summer “Windsock Time,” organizing summer Saturday afternoons at “the Sisters.” Children and adults alike “caught” the beat of Zumba one week, Karate another week and good times every week. The joy of neighbor children playing together at “Windsock II Time” was definitely a touch of magic in our midst.

It takes more than the wave of a magic wand to send 80 youth to CYC Camp, and S. Mary Frances, along with Anne Attea, again did an amazing job of making sure that these children had another great summer experience. Meanwhile, the Sisters sponsored three teens to the Salesian Leadership Camp in MI and another three high school to in VISTORY in D.C. Anna Dourgarian helped to chaperone both of these teen leadership ventures as her last “official” VIP responsibility. We are grateful for all that she brought to our neighborhood as a Visitation Intern.

A generous group of Christ Power teens gave of their time and energy to mulch our Girard yard and stain the back deck during their week of service at Ascension Parish. After experiencing the love and faith of these service-oriented young people and their youth directors, we say, “The future is in good hands.”

In July, S. Mary Frances and S. Karen represented the community at a five-day meeting of Visitation Sisters held at our monastery in Mobile, AL. Our dear “brother” and director of the St. Jane House, Brian Mogren received the McKnight Foundation’s “Award in Human Service” at their annual Awards Luncheon in August. “Brian dared to dream a brighter future for north Minneapolis . . . He is a life-changing spirit of hope in a community space that is so often needing it.” We congratulate Brian and celebrate the “magic” of God’s grace alive and active in our midst.



"Hello, earthworm!"



"I'm ready!"

## Live Jesus! Live Peace!

By *S. Mary Margaret McKenzie*

Tommy Tyson, a Methodist friend, and one of my favorite preachers used to say, "Peace is a person, and his name is Jesus." That peace, the message of the risen Jesus, along with love is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We spend a life time bringing it to birth from our depth in small ways, every day contributing to the critical mass—praying peace, waging peace, celebrating peace while pursuing the truth that is justice.

As surely as the windsock has named us for almost 25 years so have the large peace signs on our front lawn. We are "the peace house." We keep a supply of the Peace Prayer of St. Francis de Sales at our front door to prayer with the wayfarers, as well as using it as our favorite enclosure for every occasion.

Live Peace, Live Jesus.

## Our Neighborhood Night of Peace — a gathering of the neighborhood of neighborhoods.



I've always wanted a tutu!

Left: Trying to keep up with the crowd.



A celebration of nations.



Undercover security at work.



Will the real clown stand up?



Let's face it.



Old pros as our MCs.



Door prizes, especially the crockpot "I've been waiting for."

I'm listening.

**D**o not look forward to what might happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and everyday. Either He will shield you from suffering or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it.

— St. Francis de Sales

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“Hold your eyes on God and leave the *doing* to him. This is the *doing* you have to worry about.”

—St. Jane de Chantal



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### ***25 Years Young!*** continued from page 1

Of this we are certain: this Visitation Monastery has grown and flourished because of the Gospel witness of countless men, women and children who have believed in our mission and acted upon it. Our partners are too numerous to name, but we mention some of them here: Visitation Monastery and School in Mendota Heights, MN; our monasteries throughout the country; many churches, schools, agencies and groups in the metropolitan area; Cursillo; etc. etc.

We move into our future with unwavering confidence as we aspire to concretely respond to the mandate of our American Bishops regarding the Catholic Church's “preferential option for the poor.” (*Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, November, 1986.)

Thank you for companioning us and celebrating with us as the next 25 years unfold! Doubtless we will be surprised by the Holy Spirit as we move forward!

Gertrude Reis, S. Mary Frances's mother, does some major sweeping to help get the Fremont house ready to become the Visitation Monastery of Minneapolis, 1989.