

Bylines

Ursulines of the Eastern Province Winter 2006

In This Issue

Global Positioning

St. Angela and her followers have come a long way since she gathered together a small company of Italian women in 1535. Ursulines, arriving in Canada from France in 1639, were among the first women religious in North America. French Ursulines disembarked in New Orleans in 1727. Ursulines from Germany came to St. Louis in 1848, and opened a school in New York in 1855. This is the event commemorated in the several 150th anniversary celebrations of Ursuline presence and ministry in the Archdiocese of New York in 2005 and 2006.

Thus, in this issue of Bylines, we feature two pieces, one by Sr. Madeline Welch on the original foundation in New York, and another by Carole G. Rogers on Sr. Irene Mahoney (Mother Denis). In four of her ten books, Irene has explored the missions of the Ursulines in Canada, China, Thailand, and the western frontier of the U.S.

But that's not all. In News and Notes, in addition to items about our traditional work of teaching, you will read about Ursulines protesting at the "School of the Americas" in Georgia; working on an "ecological" farm in New Jersey; ministering in prison; receiving honors; spreading the word in person and in print.

"All politics is local," they say. And so is the work of the Gospel. In the world we live in, however, the "local" is global. And, thanks be to God, to St. Angela, and to all the founders who preceded us, Ursulines are "globally positioned" to serve.

Nancy M. Malone, OSU, Editor

THREE YOUNG WOMEN

By Madeline Welch, OSU

Three young women came from three cities of the Austro-German Empire, having been drawn to the American mission by a very persuasive recruiter, who also apparently was a talented fund-raiser. The persuader was Mother Magdalen Stehlin of Oedenburg who in 1848 was the founder, and for many years, superior of the Ursuline community in St. Louis.

In 1854 M. Magdalen was assembling all the ingredients of the New York foundation, recruiting and raising funds in Europe and negotiating a site and building in New York. The three founders were no more than twenty years of age when they arrived in New York as part of the eleven German Ursuline delegation that would initiate the new foundation.

It was a German Ursuline foundation, supported in great measure by the Ursuline Community of Landshut, Bavaria. But unlike many other German Catholic endeavors of the nineteenth century, from the start its scope was wider than the German Catholic people. English was the language of the school, and before long, of the community, as new members were received from the Irish immigrant population.

In 1862, M. Magdalen Stehlin and two companions from New York, moved on to make a third American foundation in Michigan, leaving twenty-seven year old Rev. Mother Dominic Weiss as superior in New York, a position to which she was re-elected for the next forty-three years. Her life-long companions



Left to right:
Mother de Sales
Tredow,
Reverend Mother
Dominick Weiss,
Mother Rose Helff.

in the endeavor were Mother Rose Helff and Mother de Sales Tredow. The three women, who shared talents of culture, music and language, of enterprise and of human relations provided a generation of leadership for the New York foundation.

M. de Sales led the group that went to St. Teresa's Parish in lower Manhattan in 1873. In 1881 this predominantly Irish mission became an independent Ursuline community and in stages moved to New Rochelle, where it established what became The Ursuline School and later the College of New Rochelle.

The original East Morrisania convent and school moved to Bedford Park in 1892, and one year later members of that community went to Wilmington, Delaware, to staff a school from which the Visitation Sisters had withdrawn. In a few years the Wilmington Ursuline Community was established as an independent community.

It is a testimony to good human relations that these three Ursuline communities all agreed to be part of the newly formed Roman Union in 1900. The schools and the convents also provide testimony to the success of the founders' endeavors. Their 'letting go' of new foundations to

grow with a new generation of leaders is testimony to the model of Ursuline leadership they experienced in Germany and passed on to their followers.

In a shady corner of old St. Raymond's Cemetery in the Bronx, a single unadorned stone monument marks the graves of these three women. It reads:

**FOUNDERS
of the
URSULINES of New York
at E. Morrisania
1854**
MOTHER M. F. DE SALES TREDOW
Died May 15th, 1910.
Aged 72 Years
In the 53rd Year of her
Religious Profession
Rev. MOTHER M. DOMINICK
KATHERINE WEISS
Died May 2nd, 1914
Aged 79 Years
In the 60th Year of her
Religious profession
MOTHER M. ROSE HELFF
Died February 7th, 1915
Aged 77 Years
In the 58th Year of her
Religious Profession
R.I.P.

This simple marker is both a great summation and a great memorial. It is a summation of events that have

drawn hundreds of young women to Ursuline life in New York and beyond, and a summation of events that led to the foundation of Catholic schools that have educated and formed thousands more. And it is a great memorial to the possibility of what three very young women can do together with their lives.

But what other trace have we of the motivation and of the sustaining beliefs that caused our three founders to give their lives in an alien land? They did not leave us mystical writings nor letters or conferences that provide reflection on their spiritual lives, their view of their own vocation, or the meaning of their religious life.

Even more significantly, perhaps, they left us works of art that both affirm their spiritual ideals and indicate their fidelity to their heritage. St. Joseph stands guard over the Bedford Park property as he had in the Ursuline

Amidst their sisters, a single monument.



Ursuline Bylines

Editor: Nancy Malone, OSU
Editorial Board:
Fran Choquette Broderick,
Terry Eppridge, OSU,
Irene Mahoney, OSU,
Martha Reddington
Production: TE Graphics
Director of Development:
Michele Fagan
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The purpose of *Bylines* is to further the mission of the Ursuline Sisters by sharing the good news of our Sisters with our friends, alumnae and donors. Through this publication, we hope to share the charisma of our community and invite others to become involved in our mission.

Ursuline Provincialate
1338 North Avenue
New Rochelle, NY 10804
914-712-0068
E-mail: devofc@aol.com

We welcome your feedback and comments: correspondence should be addressed to *Bylines* at the address above.

News and Notes

Convent of St. Joseph in Landshut. Inside the convent, we find paintings of Our Lady of Landshut and of St. Angela. The latter image is similar to that still found at Landshut and in many other European convents. Although Angela is variously portrayed in posture and



*Our Lady of Landshut at Bedford Park.
"Show that you are a mother."*

dress according to the custom of the country, the paintings are uniform in displaying the open book and the words: "Love God above all (*super omnia*) and your neighbor as yourself."

It is perhaps this insistent message which provides the key to the call that brought three young women to the shore of the New World for a lifetime.

Madeline Welch, OSU, an attorney, works at the Community Legal Aid Society in Wilmington, DE.

IN THE PURSUIT OF 'PEACE, JUSTICE, AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION' (PJIC), Sr. Mary Sullivan, Province Coordinator of Social Justice, spent ten days in Rome before Christmas meeting with the Ursuline international PJIC commission there to exchange information about our worldwide activities and to discuss "care of creation" as the focus for the Institute in 2006.

And on December 3, in her position as Director for Candidacy, Mary, Sr. Claire O'Mara, and candidates Ann Dumas and Katie Calnon attended the ceremonies in Cleveland marking the 25th anniversary of the murder of Sr. Dorothy Kazel, a Cleveland Ursuline and one of the four church women martyred in El Salvador in 1980.

In November, Mary, and Sisters Mary Dowd, Teresa Byrne, Jean Humphries, Patricia Schifini, and Dolores Yanshak were among 19,000 demonstrators at Fort Benning, Georgia, to call for the closing of what was known as the "School of the Americas." Its graduates were implicated in the deaths of the four church women, six Jesuits and their housekeepers, and Archbishop Oscar Romero. Sr. Sheila Murphy, on sabbatical after completing two terms as superior of the Bedford Park community, went to El Salvador to take part in the anniversary commemorations there. Sheila has been volunteering at Genesis Farm in New Jersey, a learning center established by the Caldwell Dominicans to enable people to "search for more authentic ways to live in harmony with the natural world and each other."

OUR CONGRATULATIONS to the Ursulines who since the last *Bylines* have been honored for their achievements and their service to their local communities and beyond.

Sr. Maureen Welch received the Paul Harris Award from the Malone Rotary Club for exemplifying its motto, "Service Above Self." Also in the North Country, Sr. Ann Peterson was the recipient of the first Vee Bee Award, given by the North Star Behavioral Health Service in recognition of her "dedication and clinical excellence." And Sr. Teresa Byrne, Community Coordinator of ComLinks, the *(Continued on p. 5)*

CELEBRATING 150 YEARS

The Ursulines of the Eastern Province Invite You to Join in Celebrating 150 Years of Ursuline Presence and Service in the Archdiocese of New York.

SAVE THE DATES

Sunday, April 30 - 12th Annual Benefit Concert "Ursulines in Song and Story," at The Ursuline School, Aurianna Auditorium, New Rochelle

Sunday, May 7 - Benefit reception honoring the Ursulines at the Pelham Country Club

Saturday, June 17 - Thanksgiving Mass in celebration of the 150th anniversary and for Ursuline friends and benefactors, at The College of New Rochelle, Holy Family Chapel.

WHERE ANGELA HAS LED

by Carole Garibaldi Rogers

Sr. Irene Mahoney is perhaps best known by many of us for what she accomplished before the age of sixty. She was a college professor, an acclaimed biographer, novelist, and playwright. But what she has accomplished since then is equally impressive. Traveling far from a sheltered campus life in New Rochelle to Taiwan, mainland China, Thailand, Rome, Canada, and Montana, she has devoted herself to recording the history of the Ursuline nuns whose missionary zeal led them to remote areas of the world. Her skills as a storyteller—so evident in the classroom and her novels and biographies—have served her well in the engaging books she has written about the



lives of these earlier Ursulines.

When I visited Sr. Irene this past autumn, our conversation moved naturally from her own story to those of women she clearly reveres. They are, one quickly sees, different facets of the same story—the story of women Angela inspired.

After teaching from 1980-1982 in Taiwan and retiring from full-time teaching at the College of New Rochelle, Sr. Irene became archivist for the Eastern Province in 1989. That work, she says, “raised my consciousness about the importance of what women religious have done” and impelled her to share that past with other people. Soon afterward, she was invited to tell the story of the Ursuline mission in China during its thirty-year history from 1922-1952. For the next five years, from 1991 to 1996, Sr. Irene pored over letters and notes often written on both

sides of pages in fading ink; she gathered memories and stories from sisters in Taiwan; she spent time in Swatow, visiting the old convent and the new cemetery. The result was *Swatow: Ursulines in China*, published in 1996.

In her Preface to the book, Sr. Irene wrote: “suddenly one is plunged into a work that is more than work, a work that becomes a passion. The China mission has been that for me. It has brought together isolated experiences, wandering abilities, unacknowledged dreams. It invaded my heart and became my passion. No writer could ask for anything better.”

She moved quickly—too quickly for her health—into work on her next project, a history of the Ursuline Mission in Thailand during its first twenty years, from 1924 to 1945. Once again she pored over old documents in archives and visited Thailand, working for weeks in both Bangkok and Chiang Mai. *A Far Country: Ursuline Mission in Thailand 1924-1945* was published in 1999.

But working on foreign soil, preserving the lives of earlier Ursulines, was not all Sr. Irene did during those years. In 1994 she organized a summer writing project for eight Ursulines from different geographical locations, of varying ages and occupations. They came together in Cleveland to share with one another their individual experiences of religious life and write essays that would convey them to others. Sr. Irene wrote her own essay, served as editor for the collection, and found a publisher. *A Company of Women: Journeys Through the Feminine Experience of Faith* appeared in 1996.

Not long after completing her work on the Thailand mission, Sr. Irene received another request: to write a history of the Western Province, including Montana, Idaho, California, and Alaska. As she had in Thailand, she saw the need to narrow the scope of the project, and she decided to focus on the Montana mission. Even then, she told me, “This project scared me. It was an entirely new field. I wasn’t familiar with the names or cultures. I had to learn Native American history. It was daunting.” Despite the difficulties, she completed another book, *Lady Blackrobes*, to be published in 2006. In the meantime, Sister Irene has privately printed “Far from Home,” a small collection of letters from the Montana missions. “These women are good letter writers,” she says. “More than half of

them didn't go through eighth grade, but they have a sense of what's exciting, of how to describe an event."

Sister Irene pauses. Then she says, "I love reading other people's letters." She has generously shared her delight—not only in her books but also in person in a variety of settings. For three years, she conducted a seven-day immersion program, "Where Angela Led," at The Ursuline Centre in Great Falls, Montana, focusing on both the history of various Indian nations and the Ursuline missions. The program will be held again in the summer of 2006 and Sr. Irene will again bring to life the pioneer Ursulines of Montana.

Ask Sr. Irene to sum up her work over the past twenty-five years and she is silent. Then, like the college English professor she once was, she quotes from a Henry James short story: I "try to be a person on whom nothing is lost." The daughters of Angela, and her readers, far and wide, past and present, have benefited from her effort.



Sisters Francis Xavier Bell, Irene, and Thai friends.

Carole Garibaldi Rogers, CNR '61, is a writer, editor, and an oral historian. She writes for magazines and newspapers and has published six books. She first interviewed Sr. Irene in 1991 for Poverty, Chastity and Change: Lives of Contemporary American Nuns, her collection of oral histories of women religious.



Two of Sr. Irene's books are available from the Province Center
A Far Country: Ursuline Mission in Thailand 1924-1945
 and
Swatow: Ursulines in China.

1338 North Avenue
 New Rochelle, NY 10804
 \$15 (S & H included)

Please make checks payable to Ursuline Provincialate, Inc.

News and Notes continued

Community Action Agency of Franklin County, received the Employee of the Year award, for, among other things, having tripled awareness of homelessness in the community.

The New Rochelle Council of Community Services honored Sr. Eileen Fane as the founder and executive director of the Adult Learning Center of Ursuline Social Outreach. Sr. Jean Baptiste Nicholson, now president of The Ursuline School, was recognized as a 'Humanitarian' at the New Rochelle Chamber of Commerce's Women of Excellence Awards Dinner. And at the annual juried exhibit of the New Rochelle Art Association, Sr. Anne Thérèse Dillen was awarded a blue ribbon and monetary first prize in watercolor for her painting "Gateway to the Gates."



Sr. Pascal Conforti got a 'Tony' at the 2005 Helen Hayes Awards Gala and Dinner Dance of St. Vincent's Midtown Hospital, receiving the Inspiration Award for 18 years spent in pastoral ministry and as vice-president for mission at the hospital.

News and Notes *continued*

In Wilmington, at the Recognition of Literacy Volunteers Serving Adults, Sr. Laurence Montgomery's ten years of service as a tutor was acknowledged; five years ago, Laurence received a plaque from Lieutenant Governor (now Governor) Ruth Ann Minner for the 700 hours she had already dedicated to tutoring.

And in Orlando, at a solemn evening prayer in the cathedral, Sr. Bernadette Mackay was a recipient of the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* papal award for the unique educational program that she has established in the mountain villages of the Dominican Republic.

MEANWHILE IN OTHER VINEYARDS OF THE LORD

after serving for twelve years as principal of Saints Peter and Paul in Mount Vernon, Sr. Brenda Ann Buckley has joined the faculty of The Ursuline School, where she is teaching Spanish full time. In the field of higher education, Sr. Bridget Puzon was invited by the Center for Religion, Ethics, and Culture at Holy Cross College to serve as a consultant for a project proposal on developing a national faculty seminar on theology and religion. Bridget was also the speaker at the Mount St. Ursula Faculty/Staff Retreat on December 12, encouraging her listeners to carry forward the great tradition of education they have inherited at MSU.

Sr. Patricia Schifini, teacher and Coordinator of the Peer Ministry program at TUS, is also Vocation Director for the province's Pre-Candidacy Program. She has represented us at Vocation Directors' meetings in New York and California, and hosted a National Religious Vocation Conference, Region II meeting at the Province Center.

SPREADING THE WORD in person, Sr. Jane Mennis, who worked in the North Country for nineteen years, returned there at the invitation of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith to preach at the Sunday Masses in St. Patrick's Church, Brasher Falls, NY. Jane spoke about Ursuline service abroad, including her own in Greece. She is now teaching at the Adult Learning Center in New Rochelle and volunteering at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility.

Invited to take part in Fordham University's Sixth Annual International Symposium on Refounding Educational Leadership, Sr. Kathleen Finnerty,

Assistant Superintendent of Schools in the Diocese of Wilmington, spoke on "Angela Merici: A Prototype of Refounding Education." Kathleen made her presentation in Angela's own Desanzano, where she also led a guided tour.

Spreading the word in print: Sr. Michelle Guerin's article, "Cosmic Mother of the Aztecs: Our Lady of Guadalupe," (which first appeared in the journal *Anima*) was featured in condensed form in the *American Vedantist*. Sr. Martha Counihan's essay on "Mother Irene Gill: Foundress of the College of New Rochelle" was published in *The Westchester Historian*. An article about Sr. Claire Smith, "Facing the Challenge: Rolling Out for Peace and Justice," appeared in CNR's alumnae magazine, *Quarterly*. Sr. Nancy Malone did a series of four articles on the Holy Spirit for *The American Catholic*. And in two separate issues of the Ursuline publication *Angela Alive*, Sr. Maryellen Keefe wrote on celibacy, and Sr. Marian Bohlen wrote on her years-long work as graduate teacher and coordinator of educational programs at the Sing Sing Correctional Facility. Now in Chicago as a member of an Ursuline interprovincial community, Marian has been certified as a volunteer in the prison at Joliet, IL.

And very much to the point of this issue of *Bylines*, Sr. Thérèse McMahon, teacher/librarian at Our Lady of Mercy School in the Bronx, has written *A History of the Academy of Mount St. Ursula*, available through the MSU Development Office (718.733.6242).

St. Angela Is on the Move

St. Angela is on the move. On October 16, 2005, Sr. Mary Jane Robershaw's sculpture, "Angela of Desanzano," a fifty-nine inch bronze replica of the original African mahogany statue was installed in Ursuline Academy, Santa Rosa, CA, in celebration of the 125th anniversary of the Ursulines' arrival. Another bronze replica has been placed in the Ursuline Generalate in Rome, anticipating in 2007 the 200th anniversary of St. Angela's canonization.





THANK YOU, DEAR FRIENDS

We were delighted to share Christmas this year with all our Ursuline friends through our traditional Christmas ornament exchange. The response was wonderful.

To accommodate all the ornaments received we needed three different trees! We were very pleased to hang them on trees in the main parlor, the dining room and

the Chapel. The messages sent were very moving; many were heartfelt expressions of love and peace. As each ornament was hung we offered prayers of thanksgiving for the joy you bring to our lives and for your special *intentions*.

After Christmas your ornaments were given to the sisters at Andrus for their continued prayers.

JUBILARIANS

Please join us and our jubilarians in thanking God for their many years of faithful service.

	First Profession	Name	Community
75 years	01/22/1931	Joan Marie Clarke	Bedford Park
	08/06/1931	Loretta Shanahan	Andrus
70 years	02/06/1936	Mary Gerald Carroll	Andrus
	02/06/1936	Jane Clary	St. Teresa's
60 years	04/01/1946	Irene Kutzky	St. Teresa's
50 years	01/16/1956	Teresa Byrne	Malone
	01/16/1956	Theresa Eppridge	Harrison
	01/16/1956	Alice Marie Giordano	Linden
	01/16/1956	Jeanne Hamilton	Wilmington
	01/16/1956	Kathleen Kuczkowski	St. Teresa's
	01/16/1956	Mary Jo Lyons	St. Teresa's
	01/16/1956	Nancy Malone	City Island
	01/16/1956	Sheila Murphy	St. Angela's

May you enjoy peace and prosperity this New Year.

REQUIESCANT IN PACE

We also ask your prayers for the repose of the souls of our Sisters:

Gertrude Marie Krug
(July 23, 1911 - August 3, 2005)

Jean Marie Casey
(January 1, 1906 - October 24, 2005)

Elizabeth Thérèse Doyle
(September 1, 1910 - December 3, 2005)

Bylines

Ursuline Provincialate
Development Office
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New Rochelle, NY 10804-2121

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Should you wish to write
to the sisters at Andrus,
the address is:

Ursuline Marian Community
Andrus on Hudson
185 Old Broadway
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY
10706

PROVINCE MISSION STATEMENT

We, Ursulines of the Eastern Province of the United States, are women religious in an international community, united by the vision and spirit of our foundress, St. Angela Merici.

Impelled by deep personal love for Jesus Christ, Angela sought in a life of prayer and action to bring people from all segments of society to a deeper love of God and one another.

We follow Angela in the service of this twofold love. While we continue to proclaim the Gospel in our traditional work of education, we welcome the call of the Spirit to new ministries.

In response to the needs of our times, we commit ourselves, in both our life and our work, to solidarity with the poor; to the pursuit of justice for all, especially women; and to collaboration with the laity.

As a community that values both tradition and progress, we move into the future with courage and with trust in God.

