



Vision

The National Catholic Office for the Deaf

Winter 2013

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Join NCOD

Amber Court of Elizabeth

a Safe and Welcoming Place for Deaf Seniors

by Deacon Thomas M. Smith, CSW - Catholic Charities' Pastoral Ministry with the Deaf, Newark, NJ

Mrs. P arrived at Amber Court Assisted Living of Elizabeth six years ago. Mr. S arrived two years ago. Miss R only last April. But, even though I helped place each one there, it wasn't until the other day, when I was visiting, that I fully realized what a great blessing it is to have three Deaf seniors living together in one residential facility. They were all signing with each other, sharing stories about birthdays and family histories. The Hearing residents sat mostly alone and silently, staring at the TV or at the floor. But the Deaf residents were connecting with each other, smiling, laughing, in their midst.

I love irony. Usually, when I visit isolated Deaf seniors, they are the only ones not participating in social activities. But on this day in Elizabeth, they seemed to be the ONLY ones who were happy! This was proof that what we are trying to achieve with NJ Deaf Senior Housing Committee is worthwhile and very

Continued on page 3—Amber Court

A Pastoral Service for Persons who are Deaf or
Hard of Hearing

Greetings members and friends,

The snow is already falling in many parts of our country. The holidays are just around the corner. As we reflect on this past year, let us not forget those among us who are in need. Take an ornament off your parish giving tree, smile a little bigger to the clerk at the store when you say Merry Christmas. Throw an extra dollar in the red bucket at the grocery store or go visit those shut in at the nursing home. Open your heart to the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and share him with others this season.

As we immerse ourselves in the joy of this season, be sure to learn about the joys of living at Amber Court of Elizabeth beginning on the cover. Enjoy the conversation between Jule and her mother on Page 5. What a remarkable young woman.

Have you heard of Fr. Dittmeier's work in Cambodia? Be sure to read all about it on Page 10 and find additional information at the links listed in the article.

We are saddened to say that we lost Sister Madeline Studer this year. See the article on Page 14 to celebrate her life.

*And finally, remember that we have Pastoral Week in Las Vegas on January 17-24, 2014. But know that when it comes to Pastoral Week, **what happens in Vegas** is taken home to share with our Deaf Community!*

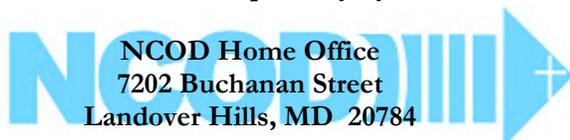
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

NCOD Board of Directors



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Continued from page 1— Amber Court

needed. For once, the Deaf residents were connecting, participating freely in the everyday interactions and relationships that make life meaningful. I didn't have to interpret. I just sat there smiling and watched them exchange personal stories about where and when they were born and grew up, where they went to school, and who their friends were.

When Mrs. P first arrived in 2007, I thought I'd face the same resistance we experienced before when we approached management about setting up visual signaling systems or hiring ASL interpreters for medical appointments. But the owners and staff at Amber Court were very accommodating right from the start. Now, our Deaf Seniors all have flashing doorbells in their apartments and high-speed internet is available for VP's. Many of the staff have learned some ASL on their own and have come to special trainings on Deaf Cultural Awareness. They are comfortable communicating with the Deaf Seniors in a more visual and manual way, even setting up special Bingo games with visible cues so they can participate more easily. The medical staff is very careful to make sure the Deaf residents fully understand doctors' instructions and are able to express their concerns clearly to attending physicians. They inform service providers (like hospitals) about their obligation under ADA to provide interpreters when necessary. Deaf residents are also more comfortable knowing that their sensory difference does not exclude them from recreational

activities or from letting the food servers know their preferences when meals are served. Miss R even teaches crocheting and knitting to some of the other residents. Her handiwork was even given special recognition last month with a Certificate of Appreciation from the Activity Department.

Our Catholic Deaf Ministry volunteers – some of whom are interpreting students – visit our folks at Amber Court regularly. Their presence



provides basic companionship, conversation in ASL, as well as the opportunity for these visitors to improve their receptive and expressive signing skills. It is a “win-win” arrangement. Of course, they are all screened for appropriate placement beforehand and trained to refer to certified interpreters when emotional or medical conditions warrant.

Transitioning to an Assisted Living or Long-term Care facility can be devastating for Deaf Seniors. Just like Hearing Seniors, their world is turned upside-down. They are forced to give up the security and familiarity of their home due to emerging health challenges.

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Some suffer from severe depression and/or increased physical ailments due to the social isolation they face in their new environment. Deafness itself doesn't necessarily cause these emotional and medical problems. Hearing seniors also often have a difficult time adjusting to the loss of some autonomy.

The lack of accommodation to one's Deafness in a Hearing environment can amplify adjustment problems. But in Elizabeth, the warmth, hospitality and understanding of Amber Court's staff and the generosity of our volunteers assure that Deaf seniors transition smoothly and live there as comfortably, safely and well-cared-for as all the other residents.

When Miss R arrived in April, there was a sign on her door welcoming her to her "new community" and her very own efficiency apartment on the seventh floor with a view of NYC.

She now has her daily medications administered by a nurse, help with daily hygiene, her own TV/VP, flashing doorbell, laundry service, and home-cooked meals in a restaurant-style setting. But, most importantly, she has her privacy and her dignity again (things she lacked during the year she lived in Long-term Care). This is because she has others with whom she can easily communicate if she so chooses. She can share her feelings and ideas and concerns without struggling to be understood. She is acknowledged and greeted in her own language every day. She feels safe and happy. She can trust that – if she needs anything – someone will be there for her. She is not alone. They will understand her needs and respond with compassion and competence. Isn't that what we all want (for ourselves and our parents) when the time comes that we can no longer take care of ourselves at home?



A Mother-Daughter Conversation

Day 1: The First Sacrament

While savoring a homemade bowl of chicken soup on a radiant Sunday afternoon, Jule and I were moved to converse about her birth and reception of the Sacrament of Baptism. Before we share our testimony in a mother-daughter dialogue, I'll begin by introducing myself; I am Roberta, the mother of Jule (nickname). Jule is an inquisitive, compassionate thirteen year old with a congenital hearing loss. She has three older siblings, one of whom is Deaf. We were asked by Fr. Paul, our parish priest at St. Benedict Parish for the Deaf, to share a testimonial of Jule's faith for publication in a Vision article. After discussing the request with Jule, she agreed to share some of her experiences over the course of six days at our dining room table in Northern California. Nuances of facial expressions were purposely added in parenthesis, since it is a significant part of communication, particularly for the Deaf (culturally speaking). Jule did her own edits to be certain that translations from sign language to English accurately depict her expressions. By sharing our journey, we hope to encourage others to remain steadfast in their faith, love, prayer life, and devotion to God. Welcome to our dining room... !

Roberta

Jule, now that you're thirteen and have grown up so quickly, at times like today I ponder about

significant moments in your life and the times we've shared. One such moment was when you were first born. I didn't expect that you would be born prematurely.

Jule

Why did God permit me to be born early?

(appearing puzzled with furrowed brows)

Roberta

I don't know and I can't speak for God. I too have wondered about your early birth. Now look at you! You're a healthy young lady and doing well! I am so thankful to God. Although, when you were in the hospital initially you weren't doing so well and intensive care was required.

Jule

I was miniature.

(somber expression)

Roberta

It's true. You were miniature, but look at you now. You have grown up!

Jule

(brilliant grin)

Roberta

One day, while you were still in the hospital, I received a call from the doctor. Apparently, you were jaundiced and not doing well. Your health and spiritual state concerned your father and I. At that point, because of your fragile condition I arranged to have you baptized by a priest who was on call at the hospital. Thankfully, you were baptized.

Continued from page 5—Conversation

Over the next few weeks your health improved steadily. Finally, the moment we had longed for...you were ready to come home! Cradled in my arms, you received a warm welcome by your brothers and sister as your father and I crossed the threshold into our home. We were all eager to care for you!! You know that a Dominican nun and other sisters from another order had been praying for you the entire time when you were in the hospital; they continued to do so even after you came home. Sr. Vincent, especially took you under her wing in prayer. She felt a connection to you. In fact, a close relative of hers bears a similar name, Julia. She too was born prematurely! You weighed just 2 lbs, 4 oz., but Julia weighed less than 2 lbs.!

Jule

It was gracious of the nuns to pray for me.

(gently smiling)

Roberta

Yes, indeed. Others prayed for you too...family and friends! Faithful prayer is a Christian virtue. That's something that you've learned in doing book reports of saints in school.

Jule

Yes. (brimming with joy)

Day 2: A Dominican Nun

Over the years, Jule and I had visited a dear friend at Sister's of the Holy Family and Sr. Vincent, a Contemplative Dominican nun, who religiously kept Jule in her prayers. After the Dominican Sister had passed away, an interest in the prayer life of Contemplative Dominicans became a curiosity for Jule. We discussed her experiences.

Roberta

There was a time when we had visited a chapel where Contemplative Dominican Nuns tend to say their devotional prayers. We both observed the Stations of the Cross that aligned the walls in the chapel. As we drew near the Blessed Sacrament, you caught the eye of a Dominican, all in white habit; she glanced toward you with a smile. You waived to her and she waved back. Shortly thereafter, we left the chapel and you inquired about her vocation and wanted to know where she lives. Do you remember that?

Jule

No. I... don't remember.

(pensive expression)

Roberta

You were very young at the time. I mentioned that she dedicates her life in prayer to God and she lives in a convent. You seemed impressed and asked, "Can I live there with you and pray to God?" Somewhat surprised by your request, I paused for a moment to ponder what you had just asked, before responding. I encouraged you to pray to God at any time and any place. I added, it is a lovely thought, but does not seem practical with numerous responsibilities at home and you being so young.

Jule

I remember...I was about five years old. Is that a common question for someone my age?

Roberta

It is not a question that is commonly asked in our family. As you grew older, you wanted to know, are there nuns who are deaf? You showed an interest in exploring that area.

Jule

Oh, yes...I remember that. I was curious and very inquisitive about the Church too.

Roberta

My how time has passed! We can explore about the Church in class.

Jule

Helps to clear the table.

Day 3: Charity

It is Tuesday morning. Jule has just finished eating pancakes; her favorite! The sun filtered through tilted blinds and cast a bright warm glow in our dining room. After recapping on our conversation about baptism, we branched out to discuss faith in our lives.

Roberta

After learning about your premature birth, you participated in a walk-a-thon to support awareness of prematurity. You were in pre-school at that time. I pulled you in a wagon. Your siblings participated too. Do you remember that experience?

Jule

I don't.

(furrowed brows)

Roberta

Understandably, you may not recall the details since you were very young.

Jule

I remember donating money to a poor woman in Palo Alto. She was missing a tooth and had shabby clothing on. When I asked her how long she had been homeless she said, "for three weeks".

Roberta

That happened a while ago. I too remember that day. There was a time when you were involved in a charity project with your girl scout troop a couple of years ago, about the same time you encountered the homeless woman. The troop reached out to the homeless in Palo Alto. Do you remember what you and your troop did that day?

Jule

I cooked with my troop. We made dinner for the poor.

Roberta

Ah, yes! Shepherds pie, some vegetable dish, corn bread, a dessert and...do you remember anything else?

Jule

We helped to set up cots for the homeless to sleep in. There were lots of poor people lined up outside waiting for their dinner.

Roberta

Was there anything that particularly stood out in your observation of the poor lined up outside?

Jule

Their clothes were dirty, old and tattered; their faces looked sad. But, when they were served dinner, some of them were smiling.

Roberta

At the time, how did you feel about all of that?

Jule

I felt sad, because they didn't have a home or family to care for them. Why didn't relatives help them?

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Roberta

Well, that's a very good question. There can be many reasons, and each person's situation can be different.

Jule

What do you mean?

Roberta

Some relatives may be struggling to care for themselves and their own family. Everyone needs to pay their bills such as rent, gas, electricity, groceries, and the list goes on. Some relatives may live too far; while others may not even be aware that their relative is homeless.

Jule

Can we become poor and homeless too?

Roberta

Yes. We need to be mindful of our prayer life in that we give thanks to God for all that we have. We must also seek His guidance in our daily lives. Also, it is important to reach out to others with our time and resources the best that we can. In fact, not long ago we invited a relative to live with us and helped them to find work. Other families help their relatives too. There are many kind-hearted people willing to help out. How does faith relate to what we've discussed?

Jule

We need to be thoughtful of others and try to help them.

Roberta

True. There have been times when your faith led you to reach out and do something thoughtful for others with your friends and classmates. Remember the time when you had asked your third grade class to help make stuffed teddy bears for donation to

Children's Hospital at Stanford?

Jule

Yes. I remember that! (smiling ear-to-ear) I wanted to bring comfort to children who were ill and needed to stay in the hospital.

Roberta

Tell me more about the bear making project in third grade.

Jule

When you brought the stuff to make the bears, the kids were excited to start stuffing them.

Roberta

Yes. I saw their faces light up when I brought the supplies to class. Everyone was eager to get started; but before they began the project, your teacher asked you to share about your own experiences in making bears for children at Children's Hospital. After sharing those experiences, a boy stood out when he shared about his personal experience. He claimed to have been a recipient of a handmade teddy bear during Christmas time. A nurse at Children's Hospital told him that someone had donated handmade toys. Your teacher asked the boy how he felt when he received the teddy bear. With a warm smile he said, "it was a surprise". What are your thoughts on that?

Jule

I felt connected to that boy, because I've made bears for donation to that hospital at Christmas time. He felt a connection from his own experience receiving a handmade bear at Children's hospital when he was ill. He was happy to be able to bring comfort to another kid staying in the hospital.

Roberta

That is wonderful to bring joy to another human being! Over the years, you had wanted to meet and hand deliver the toys to the children and to be able to see them. How quickly you realized that that was not possible, because children who are ill can't have visitors unless they are family, or close friends. Their fragile condition makes them more susceptible to become ill from a virus or bacterial

infection. Even though you weren't permitted to hand deliver the toys directly to the children, you were able to see your classmate's face light up when he shared about his own experience receiving a handmade teddy bear.

Jule

(gleeful)



Fr. Shawn holding chalice given by the late Pope Paul VI at Our Lady of Skies for the group's opening Mass at JFK Airport prior to departure for Rio.

WYD Rio



The Rio Shades



Pope Francis drove by our group location



Terps' Prep-Time!



Trekking to Corvocado



Deaf USA/Canada Group at Rio Cathedral



Nick signing the WYD 2013 banner

LOUISVILLE priest helps create sign language

"I always say, (Cambodia is) hot, dirty and corrupt — but it's a good place to be. I'll be here until I die." CHARLES DITTMETIER

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — With a hot sun drying a monsoon rain last month, Louisville Catholic priest Charles Dittmeier jumped into a motorcycle-pulled "tuk-tuk" taxi and zipped through loud, diesel-choked streets — toward a cause this country has largely ignored.

Passing a sprawling market, tin-roofed food stalls and a cockfighting lot, Dittmeier entered a center behind high walls where deaf Cambodians communicate using the country's first sign language, which Dittmeier is helping to develop and teach.

It's been more than 12 years since the soft-spoken priest arrived to aid the deaf in a nation still emerging from years of war, genocide, poverty and corruption — and one that before 1997 had no sign language, no deaf schools and no deaf organizations offering services.

Today, his Maryknoll Deaf Development Program, a \$500,000-a-year charity, serves as Cambodia's only program providing adult education, job-skill training, socialization, housing and sign language development to the nation's roughly 85,000 deaf people.

"Most deaf people here have no language beyond rudimentary gestures," Dittmeier said. "They have no language

and have never been able to communicate with another person. They're totally isolated."

Dittmeier, a 69-year-old Kentucky native who spent years as a priest in Louisville, today lives in an apartment in the busy capital and spends his weekdays shuttling among several deaf centers in Phnom Penh and the provinces.

On weekends, he leads a Catholic parish in a rented Phnom Penh auditorium, filled with expatriates from 42 countries working with embassies, aid groups and businesses. "I've got five weddings going on right now," he said earlier this summer.

He laughs as he marvels at how his work in Cambodia has meant learning "things they never teach you in seminary," such as facing bribe demands from a notoriously corrupt government, dealing with power outages and having to evacuate injured staffers by jet because of poor hospitals. But he has no intention of leaving.

"I always say, it's hot, dirty and corrupt — but it's a good place to be," he said. "I'll be here until I die."

Dittmeier's early work with deaf

Born in Louisville in 1944, Dittmeier decided to become a priest and was ordained in his hometown around 1970.

Persuaded by some older priests to help with deaf ministry, he spent nearly 15 years working in the Archdiocese of Louisville's office for the deaf, ministering to local deaf Catholics while also teaching at Angela Merici High School off Dixie Highway and serving as a chaplain for the Holy Cross brothers. He was fluent in American Sign Language after learning it growing up and was adept at using facial expressions and body language to help communicate.

"It was just something I fell into, and came to love," he said.

By the mid-1980s, Dittmeier was drawn to Asian missionary efforts among the deaf, spending two years in India and nearly 10 years with Maryknoll in Hong Kong. In 1997, he went to visit to check on Maryknoll missionaries in Cambodia.

"I arrived during the coup, and they were shelling the airport," he said, recalling the turmoil after current leader Hun Sen ended a power-sharing agreement.

He knew Cambodia was one of Southeast Asia's poorest countries. Even today, one-third of its population lives on 66 cents a day. Nearly half of residents never finish primary school. And 4 million to 6 million landmines still litter the countryside, decades after the late-1970s Khmer Rouge rule left nearly 2 million dead from starvation, disease and execution.

Starting from scratch

Because of decades of war, there were no deaf schools or deaf advocacy groups. And there was no sign language in the native language of Khmer.

Most deaf Cambodians were isolated, mistreated or neglected — some parents refused to name their deaf children. They

couldn't learn, couldn't communicate with anyone and rarely could support themselves, said Selwyn Hoffmann, an Australian who works as a coordinator at the Maryknoll center.

"Imagine having no language to communicate or express yourself," he said.

Cambodian Mao Mano, 27, said through a sign-language interpreter that she lost her hearing at age 4 when she was hit by a truck. Her father left the family, saying "he didn't want a deaf child," Mano signed.

Chansothy Yin, 26, born deaf in a provincial village, also struggled. Her father was barely able to feed her six siblings by selling drinks from his motorcycle. She couldn't speak to her family, using gestures for basic concepts such as cow, rice and rain.

"I couldn't hear or understand anything," she said, with Dittmeier translating. "I'd just be watching everyone else talking and observing what's going on. But I couldn't participate."

Dittmeier arrived in 2001 and began building his program at the same time that a French charity, Krousar Thmey, which means "New Family," began a school to teach deaf children, using Khmer-coded American Sign Language.

But the World Federation of the Deaf and linguists insisted that Cambodia deserved its own sign language. So with the help of foreign linguists and researchers, Dittmeier's program began recording and developing Cambodian Sign Language, documenting signs using video, recording gestures and hand shapes, testing them with deaf people and researching their cultural and linguistic context.

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Continued from page 11—Dittmeier

Recruiting students from remote areas

Today, the Deaf Development Program works to help the deaf over age 16 who arrive at the center or are recruited at villages in the remote provinces.

"The village chief will say, 'No, we don't have any deaf people. Just a crazy woman who makes strange sounds,'" he said. "And even then, many of the families won't let their children go to learn sign language; they're too poor and say they need them to work in the rice paddies. So sometimes we have to pay the families what their children would have earned."

Once recruited, the children start with several months of intensive sign-language training — and it's often a transformational experience, Dittmeier said.

"They finally have real friends, somebody to talk to, and a way to learn about the world around them," he said. "It's amazing to see it."

Then they receive two years of nonformal education, learning reading, writing and math skills so they can read medicine labels, calculate purchases in markets and get jobs.

Their classroom illustrates those lessons, with young men and women sitting at narrow desks under walls covered in pictures of hand signs, scribbling in books and doing math problems on a chalkboard.

Many students live in Maryknoll hostels, with medical care, clothing and other needs provided.

They get job training in areas such as bar-

bering, cooking or motorcycle repair, and there are also daily social activities. On a day in July, Dittmeier joined a group as they went to a soccer field built under a metal roof in Phnom Penh, the barefoot players clapping with delight as they played.

"The idea is to help them become self-sufficient, but a big part of what we do it just to give them the dignity and identity they lack in society," Dittmeier said.

Rights groups

reaching out

Because DDP is the only group of its kind in Cambodia, human rights groups often contact it for help when women are raped (a common problem among the deaf) or deaf residents are unfairly arrested or imprisoned.

Even when a deaf person with severe mental or development issues is referred, Dittmeier said he feels he has little choice but to help.

"We can either put them back on the streets or create a program for them; there's nothing else," he said. "That's why our staff has grown from 13 to 76."

A new anonymous charitable gift of \$750,000 a year will bring the DDP's total budget to \$1.2 million a year, allowing it to expand the number served from the current 500 to 600, add a third year of adult schooling and add more hostel space.

But getting jobs, even low-paying labor work, remains a difficult challenge for deaf people in a country without a disability law and where discrimination is common.

"They say 'Oh, you're deaf, there's nothing for you,'" said Chansothy Yin, who said she hopes to find sewing or cleaning work.

Making a connection

Still, talking with some of the deaf clients makes clear how much the programs help.

Soun Sonam, 22, who took a break from a fan-cooled classroom on the building's fifth floor, said in sign language that he was born deaf in a distant province among poor rice farmers.

"For years I could not communicate, and now I can," he said, noting that today he lives with his sister, who works in a sewing factory near the airport. He's able to ride his bike to the center.

Dittmeier, for his part, often pecks away on his computer at night in his apartment, writing reports or working on a blog about life in Cambodia, called "parish without borders," where he posts photos and comments on everything from Cambodian architecture, elections and gasoline smuggling to official misconduct, health threats, notoriously smelly Durian fruit and motorbikes stacked remarkably high with pigs, baskets of goods and entire families.

Once or twice a year, Dittmeier comes back to the United States, attending Maryknoll board of directors meetings in New York, where the religious order is based, and visiting family in Louisville.

He said he's planning eventually to share the leadership load at DDP but has no intention of leaving his vocation, spending days trying to find solutions to

deaf Cambodians who are struggling to thrive.

"Ninety-eight percent of deaf people in Cambodia still don't know sign language," he said. "There's still a lot to be done."

Reporter Chris Kenning can be reached at (502) 582-4697.

hearing the pleas of cambodians in distress

ONLINE

Explore a photo gallery

and watch a video at www.courier-journal.com/localnews.

"I always say, (Cambodia is) hot, dirty and corrupt — but it's a good place to be. I'll be here until I die." CHARLES DITTMETIER

Learn more

To read Charles Dittmeier's blog, visit: <http://parish-without-borders.net/cditt>

To view the Deaf Development Center's site, visit: <http://ddp-cambodia.org>

How to help

To donate to Dittmeier's program, visit the Maryknoll website, scroll to the Maryknoll Deaf Development Program and click the "donate" button. It can be found at <http://www.maryknollsociety.org/index.php/articles/2-articles/760-100-projects-asia-region>

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**“The words that I have spoken to you
are spirit and life.”**

• John 6:63

SISTER MADELINE (M. CAROLYN) STUDER, SSND



February 20, 1926

March 5, 1926

July 17, 1948

August 25, 2013



Our beloved Sister Madeline (Madge) Studer, 87, died peacefully at 5:35 p.m., Sunday, August 25, 2013, at Mayo Clinic Health System, Mankato, Minnesota. She had been anointed earlier in the afternoon with several School Sisters of Notre Dame and her sister-in-law, Mary, present. Sisters were also with her when she died. Using her second language, American Sign, she often signed the word “Home” before she died.

The funeral Mass for Sister Madge, with Father Ted Hottinger, S.J., as presider, was at 10:30 a.m., Friday, August 30, in Good Counsel Chapel. Burial of her cremains in our cemetery will follow at a later date. The vigil service was at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 29. We extend our sympathy to her sisters, Virginia (Bill) Orthel, Carol Elmore, Kay (Bienve) Perez, Margaret Studer and Rose Marie Studer; her brothers Philip (Rosa Lee), Steve (Hope O’Hara), and Gerald (Mary Ann); her sisters-in-law Mary, Judy and Janet Studer; her nieces and nephews and their families, her former colleagues and students, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents, Julius and

Caroline (Wingert) Studer; her stepmother, Minnie; her sister, Sister Rita Studer, SSND; and her brothers, Vincent, Marvin, Stanley and Cletus. Three brothers also died in infancy.

When Sister Madge was born on a farm near Tony, Wisconsin, on February 20, 1926, the snow was so heavy that the doctor came out on a homemade snowmobile to assist her mother and the midwife. She was baptized Madeline Ann at St. Anthony Church, Tony, on March 5. Shortly after that, Madge moved with her parents and sister Rita to a farm southeast of Wesley, Iowa. Madge wrote, “Growing up on a farm was a delightful and satisfying experience . . . Enjoying nature and life around me. Both my sister and I had to accept a lot of responsibility. We milked cows, helped with cooking, washing, ironing, gardening and canning. I was my mother’s helper, taking over much of the care of my younger brothers and sisters.”

The Catholic faith was important to the Studer family. Madge learned her prayers from her mother and the family prayed the rosary daily. “We learned from our parents the Christian example.”

The Studer children attended St. Joseph School in Wesley and were taught by Franciscan Sisters from Milwaukee.

Music was another important aspect of the Studer family life. Sister Madge commented, “Both Mother and Dad played instruments; Mother played organ and Dad, the clarinet. He and I often played piano and clarinet duets at home. Mother had me begin piano lessons when I was in third grade.”

Because the family valued Catholic education, Rita and Madge attended Good Counsel Academy in Mankato as boarders. During the 1940-41 school year, Rita was called home to take care of the family when their mother was diagnosed with abdominal TB. She died March 31, 1941, leaving ten children. Rita stayed home and Madge helped during vacation. Madge’s autobiography continues, “Eventually our pastor told my dad to stop mourning and go out and find himself a good woman. He did just that and Minnie became our beloved stepmother.” Rita was able to continue her schooling and entered the SSND candidature in 1944, the same year that Madge graduated from high school. Madge worked the next year in her dad’s business office and helped out at home. In August 1945, she entered the candidature, but was called home the following April to take care of her newborn brother while her stepmother recovered from major surgery. Madge re-entered the candidature in July, and taught the next school year at St. Nicholas, New Market.

At her reception into the Novitiate, she was given the name Sister Mary Carolyn, a form of her mother’s name. (Rita had received their father’s name, Julius.) Sister Madge later returned to her baptismal name. Following profession in 1948, she

helped open the new mission of St. John the Baptist, Dayton, Minnesota, where she taught intermediate grades. At Dayton, and wherever she taught, she was the parish organist and often conducted school and adult choirs. Sister Madge also taught at St. Francis de Sales, St. Paul (1954-56); and Assumption, Cresco 1956-61); Immaculate Conception, Gilbertville (1961-62) and SS. Peter & Paul, Springbrook (1962-63), all in Iowa. In 1963 she went to Sacred Heart, Eden, South Dakota, where she was both principal and teacher. She continued in that dual role at St. Joseph the Worker, Mankato (1967-70) and Project Discovery, St. Paul (1970-74). She commented, “That was my last formal teaching experience as my hearing was failing.” During her teaching years, she earned a BE from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, in 1959, and an MS in administration from Loras College, Dubuque, in 1972. Later she earned a certificate in Sign Language from Technical Vocational Institute, St. Paul, and an MA in Christian Spirituality from Creighton University, Omaha, which qualified her for spiritual direction and retreat work.

Commenting on the transition required because of her hearing loss, Sister Madge wrote, “I thought about what I would do now. What could my ministry be? I decided to learn sign language, so I took classes and trained to become an interpreter. It took a long time, like learning any foreign language.” As part of her training, she completed an internship in the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis, and then in 1976 began an eight-year ministry to persons who were deaf in the Green Bay diocese.

Continued on page 16-Studer

In her words, “For eight challenging, delightful years, I traveled the Fox Valley area giving pastoral service, training church interpreters, doing religious education and youth work and building up the Deaf Community.” A 1978 article in the *Appleton Post-Crescent* featured her work with the deaf in the larger community. She was quoted, “Sometimes the week gets too short. Particularly short when the needs are so great.” She worked with the deaf in religious education classes in Catholic and Lutheran congregations; appeared in court to interpret in accident and criminal cases, speaking legal language with her

hands; went to nursing homes, hospitals and Job Service offices; conducted Bible studies in various churches; taught teachers of religious education programs; accompanied parents to school conferences; and taught sign language in halfway houses and the prison. She became an advocate for the deaf, especially because it was an “invisible handicap.”

In October 1984, Sister Madge expanded her advocacy as she began a new position in the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa, as a resource consultant to persons with disabilities. Her goal was to “create a caring community in church” so that anyone with a disability could become fully integrated into parish life. She implemented Jean Vanier’s “Faith and Life” support groups which combined Bible lessons and prayer with song and community-building activity in several parishes. In 1988, sister Madge moved to the St. Cloud diocese where her main role was adult education: preparing religious education teachers. She continued interpreting for the deaf and assisted with

religious education classes for the deaf.

Sister Madge next served as a community leader at Good Counsel (1990-93). She described the following two years (1993-95), “My last real job was in beautiful Montevideo where I worked as director of pre-school and primary religious education plus pastoral work. What a perfect ending to a varied career!” During the 1995-96 school year, she lived in St. Paul and helped her sister, Sister Rita, with Sister Parish work. She also provided spiritual direction and volunteered at Sand Castle Day Care. In 1996, she moved to Good Counsel for a “busy, happy retirement” where she continued Sister Parish outreach, spiritual direction and ministry to the deaf. She also helped care for Sister Rita, who suffered a severe stroke, until her death in 2004. Sister Madge used her sewing and needlework skills as she produced many items for the SSND Craft Fair. She continued sharing her musical abilities, playing the organ for Notre Dame community prayer, and planning weekday liturgies for the Good Counsel community. Throughout her life she stayed closely connected to her family, and they to her.

Known for her caring, listening and understanding heart, she, too could say, “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” May Sister Madge now freely walk in this spirit and life, and clearly hear the words spoken to her for all eternity. *Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND*

Also: Please pray for the soul of Catherine A. Makuch, mother of Sister Mary Beth Makuch, SS.C.M. Catherine died peacefully on Sunday, August 18 following a brief illness. Sr. Mary Beth ministers with the Deaf in the Diocese of Scranton (PA). Please keep in prayer, Mary Beth, her Dad and brother, Paul Stephen.

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Ephpheta: Be Open To Jesus, Cursillo #64

Cursillo #64 was held October 4 to 7, 2012 at St. Benedict Abbey in Benet Lake, Wisconsin. Twenty-five people made the Cursillo. We asked the people who made the Cursillo to share their impressions with us. We are sharing the responses in this article. One of our team members who made her Cursillo in 1996 also shared her impressions.

Kathryn Harbison, Delavan, Wisconsin

Cursillo #64 was a refreshing and inspiring experience for me. Meeting old and new friends was really neat, too. Reconnecting my spirit with God and faith in Him was the main reason I wanted to go to Cursillo.

During my three days there, everyone was kind and patient. I enjoyed the workshops and presentations. Meals were great. The environment there was peaceful and beautiful.

It was worthwhile indeed.

Thanks again for letting me be a part of it.

Brother Joseph, St. Louis, Missouri

Cursillo helped me to learn a lot of things. One of them is that to open our feelings without embarrassment to others at faith sharing groups and sacrament of confession. Other is PSA (Piety, Study and Action). There are many other things, and I encourage you all to see these things for yourself in future Cursillos.

With love & prayers,

Mary Ann Reigert, Madison, Wisconsin

Cursillo did impact me in some ways..All the support from God's people who made things out of love for us and their words from the Holy spirit and hearts touched us...I know God lead me there for a reason.... Spiritual leaders showed us how to solve obstacles, which can destroy our relationship with God.. Drawings on cardboards are great...We poured out our feelings in drawings...and what we saw and learned...from their workshops,.....Cursillo showed us the way that we can be one of Jesus' disciples.. ... Blessings,

Tim Gall, Waukesha, Wisconsin

It was good to re-learn all the religious things I had learned in religion classes' years ago, during my grade school years and it was good to remember and put it to good use today, and especially today's crazy world we live in now.

I hope we can use this experience to spread to people about God and religion.

Susan Murphy, Chicago, Illinois

What can I say about Cursillo? I am pretty sure many will agree with me. It's hard to describe the beautiful experiences I had with Cursillo. When I first heard about Deaf Cursillo #47 weekend in 1996 in St. Louis, MO, I am guilty of this...I went because I was curious. Honestly, I was glad that I went! At the same time, I felt it was the right time to go because I knew I was missing something inside of me about my Catholic faith, so I went. The whole weekend there helped me to understand about myself, my relationship with God, and the community better. In the past, I was asked to give a few talks at Cursillo. The more I got involved with Cursillo weekends, the more I understood how important for us to cherish our Catholic faith. Currently, I am actively involved in the Deaf ministry on the Southside of Chicago. Thanks to Cursillo for the confidence received by listening to God's call to serve the ministry! So, if you are thinking about attending Cursillo, I invite you to go and see for yourself. I will be there waiting for you.

It is interesting to see how different people view their experience. Susan is able to look back over the years at her experience.

Cursillo #64:
Lulu Lee, Rectora
Arvilla Rank, Coordinator,

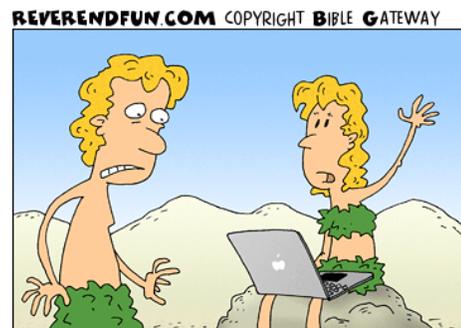
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Just for Fun!

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Thanks to Charles Dunleavy (See Genesis 3) 01-19-2009
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