



Silent Beauty
Reaching with spidered arms
Nature sings praises.

P. Micler, SJ

Peace to you in this New Year.

Servants of Jesus
3142 Weiss, Apt. A
Saginaw, MI 48602

THE *Servants'* WORD

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SERVANTS OF JESUS

Winter 2015

Deacon Ken: Servant among Servants

Many of us have known someone who we believe is going "straight to heaven." For the Grand Rapids parishes of St. James, St. Francis Xavier and Immaculate Heart of Mary, that person is Ken Baldwin. A child of God, son, husband, father of seven, Permanent Deacon of the Church and our latest "Servant of Jesus among us."

There was no task too small or large for Ken. Filling a bus with luggage, running an errand for the secretary, or listening to frazzled parents; all these undertakings were about people. Many days he would work far into the night at St. Francis Xavier parish, only to wind up sleeping on a blanket in the school classroom floor.

Ken's gentle nature is most evident when observing him with Prisilla, his wife, his family of seven children, five grandchildren and especially with his ninety-year-old mother, Mary. But, one does not have to be a family member to receive the compassionate attention of Ken. He has encouraged many young people to become loving witnesses to their faith, involving them in service to the Church as well as in current justice issues.

Ken has spent many Christmases in Juarez, Mexico, serving the families looking for food in the dumps and living in makeshift housing. He has organized youth and their parents for these trips. Ken has collected many donations from businesses and generous parishioners to deliver



Ordnained a permanent Deacon by Bishop Robert Rose at the Grand Rapids Cathedral in 2002, Ken cherished every day and answered every call to serve.

to Mexico. All who participated have been deeply touched by the joy and gratitude with which the families received the hats, gloves, toothpaste, fruit and other small items shared with them.

During their twenty years of mission trips, Ken and companions have built a youth center, repaired and painted many homes in disrepair, wired residences that lost electricity, and provided warm clothes and blankets for the people.

When political tensions became too grave for the group to



Ken has been the center of life in Juarez for the mission families and volunteers.

travel to Juarez, Ken organized a dinner in his Grand Rapids parish which is still held every December. All the proceeds are sent to Juarez to keep this ministry alive in the lives of the people.

Ken's generosity extended beyond parish and the mission. In December, he cut down Christmas trees from his property in the Grand Rapids area and delivered them to families who could not afford one.

In February, 2014, Ken was diagnosed with ALS. Neither Ken nor Prisilla were prepared for this dire prognosis. Anger is not an emotion Ken or Prisilla have room for in their oversized hearts. "Instead of 'Why us?' we've always been open to 'why not me?'" Prisilla said of the anguish thrown their way.

Ken's condition forced him to retire March 31 from his position as Deacon at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Grand Rapids.

Prisilla reflected on this journey during the 2014 Advent season. "It's just crazy that the ALS diagnosis was only this past

February. So now we wait, watch and wonder. For me, it is such a blessing to take care of him. Since I can do something, even little, it helps me process this journey we daily find ourselves on. I depend on others' prayers right now."

In a recent article in the *Grand Rapids Press*, Tom Rademacher recognized Ken's exceptional service to the community: "In place of regret and

Continued on next page

Continued from page one

anger, Baldwin sows his faith, and it is profound, especially when he concluded by saying, 'God's plan for our lives sometimes involves suffering, but we know his will is perfect and true. One day we will understand this perfectly.'"

Winifred Wheeler, SJ, current pastoral associate at St. Francis Xavier/Guadalupe Parish worked with Ken for more than thirty years. She remembers him as minister, friend, and servant – one whose legacy will forever be kindness, patience and profound love.

- Paula Mierle, SJ



In the midst of his outreach, Ken remains a loving husband, father and grandfather.

Servants Welcome New Associate



Anne O'Dell joyfully receives the symbol used by the Servants of Jesus during their July assembly, the lowly donkey.

The Servants of Jesus received their newest associate, Anne O'Dell, at the 2014 assembly in Conway. Anne, the mother of two adult children, lives with Mark her husband of 33 years, in a newly-built home in Suttons Bay.

Anne's first introduction to the Servants was through Patricia Radomski, SJ, who was Pastoral Associate at Blessed Trinity parish in Frankenmuth, where Anne lived at the time. Reflecting on her initial contact with the Sisters, Anne says, "I knew that being with the Servants at meetings, prayer services and social events would not only enhance my faith, but strengthen my own gifts and give me the confidence to share them with others."

Anne also has a passion for peace and justice issues. She is a recently-retired elementary school teacher

of 16 years. As a retiree, she has not stopped serving. She feels the freedom now to choose her involvement in activities that are meaningful to her. Mark supports her in her endeavors.

She serves on the Peace and Justice Commission at St. Francis parish in Traverse City. In keeping with their year's theme of "Moral Purchasing," Anne has distributed some Fair Trade Catalogues as options for Christmas gifts.

Anne and her husband recently donated a meal for 40 people to Michael's Place, an agency in Traverse City that offers grief support to children and families. Anne sees this as an opportunity to "pay it forward" for the support her family received when her sister in Nebraska was diagnosed with cancer and eventually succumbed to the disease.

Once a teacher...this past summer Anne volunteered on the inland Seas Schooner to teach 4th through 12th graders how to be good stewards of the Great Lakes. Growing up on a farm in Nebraska, the beauty of nature holds a strong attraction for Anne, a gardener who shares her gifts with the Suttons Bay Garden Club.

A recent Bike and Barge trip in the Netherlands provided a wonderful opportunity for Anne and Mark to enjoy the beauty of nature first-hand.

Through her children, Anne's sense of mission continues. Leigh, her daughter, married to Eric, is an immigration attorney. Alex, her son, is part of a start-up company in Detroit that encourages use of local talent and recycled materials.

It has been a real joy and gift to welcome Anne to the associate program of the Servants of Jesus. Her gifts of mind, heart and selfless sharing offer inspiration to the Sisters to live the gospel mission of Jesus.

- Cindy LaFond, Associate

Edwin Lewandowski
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Gerald and William Wheeler
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Paul Wheeler
Sr. Paula Mierle, SJ
Sr. Patricia Radomski, SJ
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Kathleen Ozog Heymans
Rev. Edward Zaorski

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Edward and Barbara
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The Servants and their Ministries
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Michael and Julie Mauer
Sr. Jane Przygocki, SJ
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Maria and Peter Vanderploeg
Sr. Patricia Radomski, SJ
Thomas Glowczewski
Sr. Karen Shirilla SJ
Leonard Lewandowski
Sr. Frances Stefanski, SJ
Jo Anne Benigni Chida
Sr. Corinne Weiss, SJ
Carol and Joseph De
Francesco
Sr. Winifred Wheeler, SJ
Donna Mileski

Special Requests

Becoming a Busia
Nadine Begin
Edward and Virginia Bazner's
90th birthdays
Marilyn Elder
Emma Haydock's 90th birthday

Jan Haydock and Connie
Skeltis
Sue Herman's 70th Birthday
John Abad
Clara Herman
Mary Meakin
John and Mary Suiter
Hilary's graduation with an MD
Percy and Julie Bollman
In Thanksgiving for healing
Patricia and Bob Chojnacki
Prayers answered
Paul and Betty Stelmaszek
Sr. Jane Przygocki SJ's birthday
Diane and Ray Davis
Stephanie Brown's health
Robert and Patricia Chojnacki
Ashley Hogan's health
Elaine Hogan
Matthew Poniatowski's health
Diane and Larry Ulanski
Sr. Jane Przygocki SJ's health
Elaine Hogan
Winter Birthday Wishes to:
Ed and Virginia Bazner
Sue Herman
Christine Mihelcic, SJ
Nellie Mihelcic
Jenny Novak
Ann Ozog, SJ
Joan Reeg



Pope Francis proclaimed 2015 a Year of Consecrated Life to be celebrated throughout the world. This special year began on the First Sunday of Advent 2014 and will end on February 2, 2016, the World Day of Consecrated Life.

Numerous activities will take place throughout this year within Catholic dioceses around the world in remembrance and gratitude for these faith-filled men and women religious who dedicate their lives in service to God and the Church.

In Memoriam

The Servants of Jesus extend sympathy to the extended families of four very special, recently deceased persons who were friends and supporters.

Cardinal Edmund Szoka died in August after a long, marvelous career in the Church. He was the Bishop of Gaylord; administrator at the Vatican; and the Archbishop of Detroit.

Monsignor Stanley Milewski, Chancellor of SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary, also died this summer. He was a great promoter of Catholic education; supporter of many endowments and friend to religious orders. Several SJ's enjoyed sharing ministry with him.

Sacramentine Sister Marie McCormack spent more than 60 years as a cloistered sister, the last 25 at the Augustine Center in Conway, MI. The Servants of Jesus used the Center for their general assemblies, retreats and meetings for almost 30 years. Sr. Marie's presence and prayer leave cherished memories with the community.

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated this month for Marjorie Krzyzaniak, sister of Connie Balwinski, SJ, and Rev. Jerry Balwinski. Marjorie, her husband Edwin and children have been a special part of the Servant family since its beginning.

Many thanks to our generous supporters

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In Memory Of

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Blessings, Memorable Events Mark Anniversary Year

The 40th anniversary of the founding of the Servants of Jesus culminated in the celebration of Mass, followed by dinner for the sisters, associates and more than 250 guests. These included clergy, religious sisters, family members and friends.



Most Rev. Donald Hanchon of the Archdiocese of Detroit presided at the Mass on August 10, 2014, at Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Farmington. In his homily, Bishop Hanchon reminded the Sisters of the blessings they received over the years as well as the blessing the Servants of Jesus have been to the dioceses of Michigan.



The beautiful decorations, delicious meal, and gathering of friends and families enhanced the afternoon festivities.

Congratulations to the Fall Raffle winners

1st Prize of \$2,000. To Caroline Hanson of Fremont, MI
 2nd Prize of \$1,500. to John Collins of Toledo, OH
 3rd Prize of \$1,000. to Arlene Eickholt of Frankenmuth, MI

We extend our deep appreciation to all of you who purchased the tickets.
 Our Retirement Fund is really the biggest winner!



The annual July assembly of the Sisters at the Augustine Center in Conway included a special dinner at the Bayview honoring the religious anniversary celebrations of 60 years of Frances Stefanski, SJ (in blue); and the 70 years of Jane Przygocki, SJ (in green).



Rev. Mark Brauer, shares a moment at the dinner held at the Parish Hall with Christine Mihelcic, SJ. Fr. Brauer and Our Lady of Sorrows Parish welcomed the Servants' meetings, assemblies and celebrations many times during the 16 years that Christine ministered in the Parish as Director of Pastoral Services.

Retirement Calls SJ's to Further Mission Experiences

The commitment of the Servants to live the gospel call does not end with the age of social security and retirement from their "day jobs." They feel so blessed to answer the call to volunteerism and use their gifts in varied needy situations.

Five of the Sisters share their experiences in different areas of Michigan:



Patricia Radomski coordinates the weekly READ program at Stone School in Saginaw. James enjoys the time of reading and conversation with her.

READ is a local initiative formed in 1965 to instill in children the value and importance of reading for a lifetime. The mission is simple: to help students improve their reading skills and discover the joy of reading.

Patricia Radomski is the coordinator of this program at Stone Elementary School in Saginaw. Each student meets with his/her mentor for an hour afterschool in the library. The program operates from October through May. The READ program provides the books for the mentors and students to share. Free personal books are also offered to the children a few times each semester.

Currently, there are five students and mentors who volunteer to assist the program. Since this is an afterschool activity, each session begins with a snack. After reading to the students and having them read, the session concludes with a game called WORDO. It's a Bingo game with words. The students really look forward to this game and get prizes when they win.

In addition to helping each student to feel special by having their own mentor, each one's birthday is celebrated. They also receive a card for Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine, and Easter signed by all the mentors.

At the end of the year each child receives a certificate for completing READ for that year.

- Patricia Radomski, SJ

The Matthew 25:35 Food Pantry is an outreach to families and individuals needing assistance in the county of Manistee, MI. It is housed at St. Joseph Parish and managed by Joann Gamache and many volunteers.

Support for the endeavor comes from a variety of sources: the Food Bank of West Michigan; Family Fare and Oleson's Food Stores; Morton Salt; Miller's Produce; and the Manistee community.

A number of other groups also continue to stock the shelves of the Pantry with meat, bakery items, fresh groceries and non-perishable goods. St. Bernard's of Irons, retired school personnel, faith formation students, and the Little Band tribal employees make contributions of foods and financial help. Hearts for Critters provides pet foods as well.

Regular distribution days require many helpers to assist the shoppers in selecting items, packing them and carrying them out. Students from the Manistee High School join the other workers at these times.

Frances Stefanski, a native and long-time resident of Manistee, regularly volunteers her time and service to this ministry. She is motivated, she says, by her own memories of neighbors helping each other out during World War II and her living of the Servants' Mission to reach out to the less fortunate people of God.

- Frances Stefanski, SJ



Frances Stefanski (center) joins the volunteer group in preparing the commodities for the food distribution at the Manistee Food Pantry.



Virginia Skurski (center) meets weekly with the women at St. Sabina parish, Dearborn Heights, to knit and crochet blankets, mats, infant wear and items of warmth and comfort. These items are distributed regularly to needy families, the homeless, young mothers, nursing homes, and hospitals. During their work sessions, the women share patterns and companionship, hear stories of need, pack items to be distributed, and pray for those who will receive the results of their labor of love.

- Virginia Skurski, SJ



Karen Shirilla opens the doors to clients seeking help with housing, employment and proper documentation at the Crossroads Building in downtown Detroit.

Retirement is a gift the Sisters offer in ministry to the poor in the city of Detroit. The reward of helping someone in need is both humbling and joyful. Karen meets weekly with people, young and old, men and women, some with appointments and others standby at Crossroads.

Someone may be looking for a cup of coffee, a sandwich, or the use of the bathroom. Some come to supplement their meager funds with food and clothing. Others are unable to look for a job, a rent, cash a check or apply for benefits because they lost their MI identity card while they were in prison, in a hospital, or on the street. Others may need prescription medicine while they apply or are waiting for approval of medical insurance through Obamacare.

As a volunteer counselor, Karen meets the Lord that day as a gentle man from Memphis, whose van was confiscated by the police because he did not have a valid drivers' license. Penniless, he desires to get back to Memphis by bus to care for his elderly sister just home from the hospital. The same day a young man, considered suicidal and now non-responsive is in the waiting room in need of some liquids to take with his medicine, having spent the night on the streets. He is seeking shelter. Contact was made with Covenant House and they were able to receive him.

On another day a young mother, with two infants is in need of diapers. She was released from the hospital to a friend's house having very recently given birth.

Donations and volunteers are welcome. Crossroads, a ministry of the Episcopal Church is located at 2424 W. Grand Blvd. 48208.

- Karen Shirilla, SJ

Every Monday at Aquinata Hall, the assisted living facility at Dominicans Sisters Marywood in Grand Rapids, a program called "Energizing Your Brain," brings the Sisters and residents together for a social activity.

I have taken part in a number of these programs using my teaching experience. I used many children's stories which have lovely illustrations and are short enough to cover the information and /or narrative. Who doesn't love a good story? Among others, I have used **The Legend of the Strawberry**, and **The Legend of the Pink Lady Slipper**.

We also have a snack that enhances the message of the day – strawberries for June; cherries and blueberries for July; apple pie for September; and Christmas cookies. The snack is always a welcome surprise.

In the photo below, I am reading **The Legend of the Sleeping Bear** followed by blueberry pie because wild blueberries grow on the dunes in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Park.

- Paula Mierle, SJ

