

Visioning for the Mission



January 6, 2009

Dear Friend of the Daughters of Charity,

A previous communication dated July 16th, 2006, informed you that four Provinces of the Daughters of Charity, Albany, Emmitsburg, Evansville and St. Louis, were beginning discussion regarding our future. We formed a Visioning for the Mission Steering Committee which is representative of the four provinces. The Steering Committee has met many times in the course of the past three years in planning for our eventual formation as one Province. There have also been gatherings of the sisters in all four provinces. At this time we wish to share a decision as a result of our prayer and discernment, which involved all of our sisters.

The four Visitatrixes (Provincial Superiors) of the Visioning for the Mission provinces, in agreement with the prayerful discernment of the VFM Steering Committee, have designated St. Louis as the location of the provincial house/offices of the new province. While all of the current provincial locations had potential to be the site of the new province, it was our task to prayerfully discern and choose the site. We believe that we have been led by Divine Providence to make this decision. The goal of the consolidated province is to enable the Daughters of Charity to strengthen our ministry to those living in poverty in the United States. The new province will begin July, 2011.

Our retirement facilities will be operating in their current sites for the foreseeable future. We are aware of the many implications that this decision will have for our lay associates. A plan for human resource policies is in the process of being developed that will fairly balance the interest of all concerned.

Our Heritage ministries, the Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, will always remain in Emmitsburg. We are also aggressively pursuing alternative uses for the Provincial House, especially in the area of services for seniors.

We will continue to keep you informed as we move forward in our deliberations. We ask you to join us in prayer that we will continue to respond to the challenge to trust the guidance of the Spirit while moving forward with humility, simplicity and charity ever by our side.

This is a very significant decision for the Visioning for the Mission process. As St. Vincent de Paul, our Founder, so often said, we trust that the Providence of God is guiding us every step of the way.

In the love of Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sister Claire Debes".

Sister Claire Debes, D.C., Provincial Superior



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“Visioning for the Mission” Unifies the Daughters of Charity

Emmitsburg, Maryland, January 13, 2010 – “With the passing of time, new needs of those who are poor surface, and a response to those needs, for the good of all people, must be addressed differently,” remarked Sister Claire Debes, Daughters of Charity Provincial Superior in Emmitsburg, Maryland. “Our response to these changing needs organized a planning process called Visioning for the Mission (VFM) with other Daughters of Charity provinces located in Albany, New York; Evansville, Indiana, and St. Louis, Missouri. The VFM process and prayerful discernment is helping us strategize our mission for the future.”

As the Visioning for the Mission unfolds, adaptations will become more apparent in each of the provinces. For example, the Visitatrixes (Provincials) have officially designated St. Louis as the location of the provincial house/offices of the new province, effective in July 2011.

What is the future for the Daughters of Charity St. Joseph’s Provincial House in Emmitsburg?

- Our Heritage Ministries, known as the National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, will always remain in Emmitsburg.
- The Daughters of Charity will continue to reside in Emmitsburg fulfilling various ministries.
- Our current retirement facility for the elderly Sisters will continue operating at its current site into the foreseeable future. Changes involving our lay associates are being studied and in the fair interest of all concerned.
- Alternative uses of the underutilized space within the Emmitsburg Provincial House, especially in the area of services for seniors, are being considered.

This has been a difficult yet significant decision for the VFM Steering Committee. The Daughters of Charity ask for your prayers as they continue to respond to the challenges to trust the guidance of the Spirit while moving forward with humility, simplicity, and charity ever by our side.

“Our mission calls us to be innovative, inventive, collaborative, and inclusive. We want to do what is best to advocate for the issues of immigration, human trafficking, social injustice, and national health care reform,” concluded Sister Claire. The Daughters of Charity have provided life-changing education and life-saving care to innumerable children and families who are among the poorest of the poor in the United States for over two hundred years.

Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul

In 1633, Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac established the Company of the Daughters of Charity as a group of women who committed their lives to the service of Christ in the person of those living in poverty, and who recognized prayer and community life as essential elements of their vocation of service.

Two centuries later, Elizabeth Ann Seton, the Foundress of the Sisters of Charity in America, adapted the rule of the French Daughters of Charity for her community. In 1850, the community established by Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg, Maryland united with the Daughters of Charity in Paris and became an American province of the international community. Subsequently, four other American provinces were created as needs evolved.

Within the Roman Catholic Church, the Daughters of Charity are recognized as a Society of Apostolic Life called to serve Jesus Christ in persons who are poor and marginalized.

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