



# Not So Far Afield

A NEWSLETTER OF THE MARYKNOLL AFFILIATES

January/February 2018

Volume 27 Number 1

## MAC 2017 - Guatemala

We will aspire to "be of one heart"  
...to be at peace, in harmony and in balance  
with ourselves, with others, with Mother  
Earth, and with the Cosmos.



We celebrated  
the oneness of all Maryknoll:  
Lay Missioners, Fathers &  
Brothers, Sisters, and Affiliates.

### BUEN VIVIR: LIVING IN HARMONY

Kitty Schiltz – Seattle Chapter

*Kitty sent her reflection as she and Roger were preparing to leave for Africa to attend the graduation of one of the children they have been helping with school since they were Maryknoll Lay Missioners in Tanzania.*

Harmony seems like a stretch in these days of super egos and partisanship, but I saw it develop and flourish over the four days of the MAC 2017 in Guatemala. The deepest feeling I have about the conference is oneness. It wasn't an invasion of North Americans telling Central Americans; it was complete sharing. The celebration of Mayan spirituality brought us together as a sharing in the cosmos. We arrived as individuals and left as one.

All the ceremonies/liturgies, group work and celebrations brought us together. Language was not a problem—there were words spoken in Spanish translated into English and English into Spanish but no need to translate the smiles and good will of all. Singing, dancing, walking, eating together blossomed into a unity of purpose and engendered a new Maryknoll Affiliate essence. At 25 years, we are still beginning.



Noted Mayan spiritual guide Daniel Caño led us in the Mayan Ceremony in Thanksgiving to the Grandmothers and Grandfathers.



At MAC 2017, 120 Maryknollers came together to reflect, analyze, and dream about the present moment and the future for Affiliates, for all of Maryknoll. Read the results (in Spanish or English) at <http://afiliadosmaryknoll.wixsite.com/guate/post-mac-2017>.

**MAC AND BEYOND**

In this issue we have tried to transmit what transpired in Guatemala at the 2017 Maryknoll Affiliate Conference (MAC)—Harmony, Unity, Love—all that Maryknoll is to us. We hope that the Pillars of the Affiliate Movement: Spirituality, Community, Global Vision, and Action, will be reinvigorated in you as you travel through this issue with the Affiliates who visited various mission sites of the Sisters, Fathers and Brothers, Lay Missioners, and Affiliates in Guatemala and El Salvador after the Conference. Mission has planted many seeds. So much is coming to fruition. So much remains to be done. We hope to share in a later issue our visits to the sites of the Salvadoran martyrs, recognizing what mission can demand.

Beyond the MAC, the Affiliates are building the future. Please read Patty Hinton’s Lenten article on page 11, which provides some concrete examples for Affiliate Action. We also urge you to review your experience of Maryknoll, plan the year in your chapters, and as David and Manny remind us, support the Maryknoll Affiliates financially. One of our newer Board members, Sr. Teruko Ito, MM, suggests, “.... tell our new Maryknoll story—how our lives were transformed through interconnectedness in the web of Maryknoll.” Share your story at [NSFA@MaryknollAffiliates.org](mailto:NSFA@MaryknollAffiliates.org).



*MAC 2017 – Inspiring from beginning to end!*



Photo by Paula Schaffner

Rosa Beatriz Castañeda de Larios, left, and two committee members finalize details of Opening Ceremony as Fr. Bill Mullen and Affiliate Steve Barrett prepare to pray and translate for the gathering crowd of Affiliates.



Photo by John Wheatland

Closing Ceremony: In front are symbols of the 4 expressions of Maryknoll and gifts from Affiliate regions. Behind are the organizing committee. Third from left, coordinator Rosa Beatriz and Executive Coordinator Bob Short, who assisted from the US, listen as Board chair David Schaffner says thanks. Steve Barrett, far right, translates.

**Not So Far Afield** is a bimonthly publication of the Maryknoll Affiliates. The name is a play on the title of the original Maryknoll Magazine: *The Field Afar*.

Maryknoll Affiliates are a faith-filled people responding in community to God’s call to participate in Jesus’ mission. We express the Maryknoll Spirit in the context of Chapters which gather for prayer, reflection, and action. We challenge one another to go beyond borders, locally and globally, to walk with the poor and excluded, and to strive for peace and justice for all of God’s creation. We recognize that the Spirit who guides us on our journey moves without boundaries and that God’s unconditional love is present in all cultures and peoples.

Affiliates share in the mission and family spirit of Maryknoll Sisters, Fathers and Brothers, and Lay Missioners living lives of service around the world. If you would like further information or an opportunity to attend a local chapter meeting in your area, please contact the Executive Coordinator of the Maryknoll Affiliates at P.O. Box 311, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0311 or e-mail him at [rshort@maryknollaffiliates.org](mailto:rshort@maryknollaffiliates.org).

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We welcome submission of articles by Maryknoll Affiliates and Maryknoll Missioners, as well as suggestions for articles. All submissions are subject to editing. We publish articles as appropriate in conjunction with issue themes.

Articles in *Not So Far Afield* do not represent the opinion of any of the Maryknoll entities.

Please send any letters to the editor, articles, photos or inquiries to the address below. You may also contact us if you no longer wish to receive Affiliate mailings, prefer to receive them by e-mail or read them on the web, or if you have changed your address.

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**STATE OF THE HEART –  
TODAY AND TOMORROW**

David Schaffner – Board Chair

We are thankful for 2017’s many good memories: chapters hosting Maryknoll missionaries, marching for the homeless in Los Angeles, working tirelessly for immigrant rights, and more.

Affiliates also gathered in Guatemala for MAC2017, our triennial international conference. The Capítulo de Afiliados Maryknoll of Guatemala superbly organized our first one held outside the US. The Affiliate Board appreciates their creativity and hard work in bringing a conference to us that will become a highlight of Affiliate history.



The Board presented members of the MAC 2017 Organization Committee ceramic tiles commemorating their appreciation.

The various post-conference mission trips also deserve special mention: three in Guatemala and one in El Salvador, in which I participated. Fr. John Spain, MM, who lived through the years of the Salvadoran Civil War, brought history alive for us. We visited diverse and inspiring mission projects, particularly those of the Lay Missioners, who are led by Peter Altman, MKLM Regional Coordinator for El Salvador.

Looking forward to 2018, we are continuing to ask, “Where do we want to be in five years?” At our combined Board/Regional Coordinator meeting in Guatemala City, we appointed an ad hoc committee—Rich Lessard, Albany; John and Mary Moritz, Northeast Florida; Bob Short, Executive Coordinator; and hopefully one international representative—to develop four topics identified at the Guatemala City meeting: collaboration, identity, international cross-cultural aspects, and models.

At the Fall 2018 Board/RC meeting, we will use these topics to develop initiatives and suggest actions for Affiliates. In the meantime, many chapters have used the September/October NSFA “Easy Meeting” to brainstorm the future direction(s) of the Affiliates. If it hasn’t done so yet, I encourage your chapter to try this process.

Comings and Goings:

- We welcome our newest chapter, Springfield, Massachusetts, to the Affiliate family. Deacon Kevin McCarthy provided leadership in the formation and recognition process.
- Sadly, the NYC Subway chapter, one of the earliest founded, has decided to disband.
- Lee Fermin, Las Vegas chapter, accepted the position of Regional Coordinator for the Mountain/Southwest Region. Lee has served a couple of stints on the board, and we appreciate his willingness to rejoin the leadership team.
- Two Board members, Patty Barneond, Guatemala, and John Meyer, Phoenix, after serving six years, rotated off the board. We thank both for their contributions and invite new nominations to the board. Contact Gerry Mullaney, on the nomination committee.

Your generosity in responding to our annual appeal keeps our basic operational budget stable but also allows us to pursue special initiatives, such as assisting Board members who could not otherwise afford to travel to Board meetings. Finance Chair Manny Hotchkiss sent out this year’s appeal letter in November. If it’s lost in your holiday mail, perhaps it is not too late to dig it out.

Blessings on your new Affiliate year!



**WE ARE CORN AND BEANS**

Daniel Caño –  
Mayan Spiritual Guide

*Here we are.  
I am the corn  
and you are  
the bean plant.  
Your roots intertwine  
with mine  
underground,  
and embracing  
we flourish together  
in this field  
that is life.*

Originally published in Daniel Caño’s Spanish/Mayan/English book of poetry, *Savage Prayer*. Reprinted with permission.

**SERVING THE “OTHER” IN COATEPEQUE**

Patty Hinton – Midwest Regional Coordinator,  
St. Louis Chapter

I had the good fortune to travel with three other Affiliates: Susan Porrovecchio, Jim Comes, and Gerry Mullaney, on our post-MAC tour to the Cotepeque region of Guatemala.

First, we spent time with Sister-Doctor Dee Smith, MM, and saw her tremendous accomplishments—finding and treating those diagnosed with HIV in and around Cotepeque. Most of those infected live in extreme poverty and also must deal with the stigma of this disease and rejection by their families. With a caring and dedicated staff, Sr. Dee has developed an outreach program to educate not only those in schools, but also families dealing with an infected family member.

Sr. Dee began the Santa Maria center in 2004, where attention is given to improving

on Mondays. The rest of the week, they travel to 15 pueblos in rotation. They have a pharmacy and lab as well as a diabetic clinic which offers testing, treatment, and monitoring. While there, we also met a group of health promoters who were having a training session. They are educated by the sisters to diagnose through observation and treat common illnesses. They can dispense the basic medication the pharmacy provides.



Sr. Jane and Sr. Mary Lou visit with health promoters at their clinic.



James Comes, in the rear, looks on as Sr. Dee Smith works with one of the patients, who had recently been wheel-chair bound and, through PT at the center, is gaining the strength to walk.

not only physical but also emotional care. They provide counseling, spiritual support, nutrition education, and physiotherapy as those infected continue their anti-retroviral treatment. Part of their holistic approach is to encourage the families to establish gardens with vegetables and healing herbs, as nutrition is key to strengthening immune systems. The center needs two new exercise bikes to help counter the various degrees of paralysis the disease can cause.

Then we were on our way to Catarina, San Marcos, to visit Sister-Doctors Jane Buellesbach and Mary Lou Daoust, MM, at their clinic where they see patients

Several of the outlying clinics are associated with fincas (large farms), where the workers, usually with several children, live in substandard housing and work under deplorable conditions, making about \$7/day. Despite working long hours, they volunteer their time to staff the clinics one day a week. The sisters also have a vented woodstove project, as well



Sr. Dee supervises a health promoter tending a patient's feet.

Photos courtesy of Patty Hinton



Two of the health promoters at a rubber plantation clinic.

as a water filtration project, where the families pay half and the Maryknoll Sisters pay the other half of the cost of home water filters. These projects help alleviate a variety of lung and parasite problems.

As with all mission trips, I discovered the connections that exist between all of us, and that even though we are many, we are one!



**SALVADORAN AFFILIATES AND CONTRASIDA\***

Mary Ryan-Hotchkiss – Portland Chapter

CONTRASIDA was the mission of María Recinos and Irma Ventura de Ábrego years before they began attending the Maryknoll Affiliate gatherings. Dr. Mary Annel, MM, founded the CONTRASIDA Center in the 1990s in one of the poorer districts of San Salvador, El Salvador. Sr. Gloria Ardenio Agnes, MM, is now the only Maryknoll sister at the CONTRASIDA Center, but several other of the Salvadoran Maryknoll Affiliates also volunteer there. Affiliates and CONTRASIDA volunteers Norma Araujo de Orellana and Luis Sánchez are in the photo. Affiliate Irma, not pictured, said she had worked with Sr. Mary (who only recently returned to the US due to illness) at CONTRASIDA for 13 years.

Sister Mary initially wanted to elevate the dignity of the AIDS patients, to prepare them to die, but now the center prepares the patients to live fully. Their 170 patients range in age from 2 to 74 years. After receiving retrovirals, one patient has now survived 22 years.

Besides Sr. Gloria, the CONTRASIDA staff consists of a doctor, psychologist, secretary, and many volunteers, some of whom are also patients. The state provides the retrovirals but Maryknoll provides the

“heart,” helping those who still suffer discrimination and stigma because of their disease. The center welcomes the patients in their poverty and addresses the secondary effects of AIDS. The patients appreciate the weekly clinic, and come to socialize in a safe and respectful place and enjoy a snack. The unemployed may receive nutritious staples such as rice and beans.

Volunteers help cook, prepare food packages, measure the physical condition of the patients, and distribute medications. They may accompany Sr. Gloria on home visits ministering to the patient’s whole family, always going in groups of two for safety. Gangs are strong in the area, and Sr. Gloria has to pay to enter her own neighborhood. Affiliate volunteers receive no pay or reimbursement for travel, but she buys tortillas for them and sometimes lunch, and she adds their names to the food distribution list.



Photo courtesy of Rich Lessard

At the CONTRASIDA Center: Maryknoll Affiliates Luis Sánchez, Norma Araujo de Orellana, Cecibel De Flores, Sr. Gloria Ardenio Agnes, MM, María Recinos, and Fr. John Spain, MM.

CONTRASIDA also works to prevent AIDS through presentations to schools and communities. Sr. Gloria meets with a youth group each month, and a dance troupe and actors teach AIDS awareness and prevention. See <http://fundacionCONTRASIDA.org>.

Over the years the Maryknoll Sisters have provided a great deal of financial and personnel support to the center. Sr. Gloria says her work is heartbreaking—not easy but satisfying. When Sr. Gloria leaves El Salvador to profess her final vows in 2018, no Maryknoll Sister may be available to replace her at the CONTRASIDA site. Perhaps the Maryknoll Affiliate volunteers can continue the “heart” that has characterized the Maryknoll presence.



\*SIDA is the Spanish acronym for AIDS.

**A PILGRIMAGE IMMERSION EXPERIENCE  
IN GUATEMALA’S WESTERN HIGHLANDS**

John Moritz – Southeast Regional Coordinator,  
Northeast Florida Chapter

Following MAC 2017, 11 of us journeyed via the Pan American Highway into the western mountains of Guatemala. Our trip took us first to the beautiful volcanic area of Lake Atitlan and the towns around the lake, where one of our guides, Sr. Bernice Kita, MM, spent many years in pastoral ministry. We traveled by water taxi from San Antonio Palopó across the lake to the town of Santiago Atitlan, where we saw the location of Fr. Stanley Rother’s martyrdom, and, perhaps more poignantly, the massacre of many indigenous peoples with whom he lived in solidarity. This was a prayerful and meditative time for all of us. Because of her close association with Fr. Stan, Sr. Bernice made this experience come alive for us.



L-R: Affiliates Connie Centrello, Steve Barrett, Ann Carr, and John Moritz

Then we visited the mission site of our second guide, Maryknoll Affiliate Steve Barrett. in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala’s second largest city. There, street children who work in the marketplace from a young age are provided with onsite learning opportunities that complement rather than conflict with their necessary work time. This ecumenical effort offers fundamental educational opportunities as well as vocational training, within an incredibly holistic approach to becoming a fulfilled human.

Next we visited the Maryknoll Sisters’ contemplative community in Lemoa. At the MAC, Sr. Helen Werner, MM, had delivered an insightful and inspiring homily. Sr. Bernice led us to visit the “summer school” program where recent graduates from Colegio Monte Maria (in Guatemala City) were teaching first- and sixth-grade



Photos courtesy of John Moritz

John Moritz and Sr. Bernice Kita, MM

students supplementary classes in mathematics and Spanish. This immersion experience for the young women is also an opportunity for local children to see and get to know successful role models.

At our luncheon visit to Sr. Connie Pospicil, MM, and Valentina Castro’s mission, we saw a joint public and private effort to improve the nutrition of children in the town. We were treated to a nutritiously balanced and delicious lunch (the same one that the children ate). Hanging on the wall next to their plates and cups were the children’s toothbrushes. It was encouraging to see that, in what by US standards would be considered a simple rural environment, people are quite advanced in their understanding of basic quality-of-life issues.

During our visit to Q’umarkaj, a Mayan archeological and historical site, some of us ventured down an escarpment to enter a cave, and some remained at the top. Some whose physical age exceeds their mental image of themselves wished they hadn’t gone down. The museum gave us a sense of the historical development of the peoples and the effects of foreign occupation.



Srs. Helen Werner and Theresa Baldini, MM

We enjoyed the opportunity to enter into the past, as well as the present, of the peoples who inhabit the western highlands of Guatemala, both urban and rural areas. Everywhere we looked, we saw evidence of a people on the move. This is a country of merchants—people don't beg, they are sellers, incessant in their quest for a sale. They seem to look forward; there is construction everywhere you look. We were told that family members working in the US fund much of the construction. We saw lots of small business and the ubiquitous multinational corporate giants.



Ursula Tupachi, Peru, and Mary Moritz

Spiritually, the experience here reflects that of much of Latin America. The Catholic Church carries a lot of historical context while the evangelical/pentecostal churches present a sectarian Christian church vision. The Maryknollers are reaching far beyond the limits of their numbers as they invite a newness of consciousness that reflects an ever-evolving world. We are deeply grateful to our hosts who enriched us with a glimpse into their lives and helped us to create a sense of community within our small group of pilgrim visitors.



Valentina Castro and Sr. Theresa Baldini

MY MAC 2017 EXPERIENCE

Susan Porrovecchio – Missoula Chapter

Montana had two feet of snow on the ground when I left home for this much anticipated adventure. Flying into Guatemala early in the morning, as the sun was rising over the mountains, was an awesome sight I will never forget. I was not prepared for the city hustle and bustle of Guatemala City. But Verbo Encarnado Retreat House was out of the city, in a very beautiful tropical setting, a paradise for the senses, and warm.

In all the church and health conferences I have attended, never have I had a better conference experience anywhere! Rosa Beatriz and the whole organizing committee were amazing. Our every need was attended to. Many times we were challenged to think how we felt about our mission as Maryknoll Affiliates and how we perceived the future. We had many opportunities to meet with and share ideas with the attendees. It was encouraging to see how the Guatemala Affiliates included many young people and their families. The unique character of Maryknoll—embracing and being open to different cultures and walking with the people—was wonderfully present throughout the gathering. The poet and Mayan spiritual guide, Daniel Caño's presentation was worth the price of admission!

I took the post conference Mission Trip I for its health care focus. We were a small group of four Affiliates, our driver, and our guide, two very kind and thoughtful men who showed us the hill country. They introduced us to the indigenous people who shared their stories and welcomed us so graciously into their homes. It was very evident that the Maryknoll Sisters we met—Dee, Jane, and Mary Lou—had empowered the local people, who in turn were giving voice and ministering to the needs and concerns of others, walking with them and advocating for them.



## AFFILIATES WALKING INTO THE FUTURE

Mary Ryan-Hotchkiss – Portland Chapter

Many people who attended MAC 2017 visited Caminando Por la Paz in Zone 18 of Guatemala City. Caminando is an example of one possible future for Affiliates in mission. The Caminando was formed by Fr. Tom Goekler, MM, along with several young men who came with him from Honduras. After his untimely death a few years ago, Ron Covey and the Houston Affiliates took a bigger role in providing support and a connection with Maryknoll in the US.



The young men and women of Caminando continue to provide local children tutoring and breakfast and lunch, a safe place to gather, wholesome community activities, and coverage of some school fees. They participate in the Guatemala Affiliate Chapter and helped plan the Conference. The Maryknoll Affiliates/Catholic Workers at Caminando Por La Paz send their greetings:

- Carlos Miranda, the house president: "Come visit us any time you want!"
- Fredy Sánchez: "We work with the good to make it the best."
- Isis Miranda: "We loved the Conference. The Affiliates are amazing."
- Lennie Sazo: "The doors of Caminando Por La Paz are open for everyone."

Caminando offers ways for Affiliates to participate besides visiting. Extended homestays could be arranged for Affiliates who would like to help tutor the children after school. Some Affiliates have brought or sent games that are not language specific, such as Jenga or Legos, for use at the House. Caminando offers the opportunity to support and communicate with individual children through an annual sponsorship.

Some Affiliate chapters help distribute the fair trade Family Coffee (<http://fathertomsfamilycoffee.org>) that Caminando sells to raise funds for the children's educational programs while providing a living income to several families of coffee growers in Honduras. Donations of any size are gratefully accepted.

For more information on Family Coffee distribution, volunteer opportunities, or material needs, contact Ron Covey at [rocovey@yahoo.com](mailto:rocovey@yahoo.com).



## SALVADORAN AFFILIATE CHAPTER IS BUILDING

Cecibel Flores and Irma Ventura de Ábrego joined the post-MAC Conference Mission Visit No. 4 in El Salvador. The fledgling Salvadoran Affiliate group had sent Cecibel and Maria Recinos as representatives to MAC 2017. Fr. Jack Northrup, MM, who tries to attend Affiliate meetings, joined the tour at AcoMujerza, the mission site of Melissa Altman, a Maryknoll Lay Missioner. Fr. Jack, with whom Cecibel works visiting the sick in hospitals, invited her to an Affiliate meeting three or four years ago. Now Cecibel is the contact person for the Affiliate group. Irma said about six or seven people typically attend their monthly Affiliate gatherings. A Maryknoll sister or priest sometimes provides the program for the Affiliate meeting.



The group often meets where several in the group volunteer—at the ContraSIDA site. CONTRASIDA was founded by Maryknoll Sister Dr. Mary Annel (See the CONTRASIDA story in this issue.) Irma said she misses Sr. Mary, who returned to Maryknoll in New York the previous week because of deteriorating health. Sr. Gloria Ardenio Agnes, MM, currently at ContraSIDA, may return to New York in Salvadoran Affiliate Chapter is Building 2018. The Affiliates also miss Maryknoll Lay Missioner Joe Hastings, who had attended many of their meetings before he also returned to the US.

The Salvadoran Affiliates were happy to spend time with Lay Missioner Melissa Altman during this mission visit and hope to continue a close relationship with the Lay Missioners. They are learning more and more about Maryknoll and enjoy the *No Tan Lejos del Horizonte*, the Spanish language Maryknoll Affiliate newsletter. Their love and respect for the Maryknoll sisters, priests, and Lay Missioners brought them to the Maryknoll Affiliate group, but the spirituality and their passion for mission keep them coming.





**CIRCLES—“THAT’S WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT”**

Roger Schiltz – Seattle Chapter

At the MAC 2017 in Guatemala, we walked slowly, counter-clockwise around the fire, praying and being with all of nature in the cosmos. Daniel Caño, a Mayan philosopher, poet, and spiritual leader, led the prayer thanking all of nature in the cosmos. We prayed in the circle and discussed the magic in our spiritual being in a circle. Circles are everywhere, in space, math, bubbles. Even honeybees dance in a circle to communicate.



In Honeybee Democracy, Tom Seeley researched the question, “How do honeybees select a new home?” Honeybees naturally swarm. Swarming is the way honeybees reproduce. The queen and two-thirds of the bees in the hive leave the hive and congregate on a branch, the eave of a house, or a fence post, while the rest of the bees remain in the original hive. These bees will make their own new queen from a fertilized egg left by the departed old queen.

Now the queen and two-thirds of the bees, numbering from 10,000 to 20,000, wait, say on a tree branch, sending a few scouts in search of their new home. The scouts return to the swarm and share their site information in a dance. Some scout bees dance in smaller circles indicating their chosen new home is a short distance from the swarm. Another bee will dance in larger circles indicating their choice is a long distance away. Eight to ten scout bees will dance their information to the rest of the hive.

As the bees dance circles, some dance with more vigor, indicating they enthusiastically prefer their choice. Observing the scout bees’ dance, other bees begin to follow the scout bees to have a look at the possible choices. More bees inspect the sites of the enthusiastic scout bees, while the poorer sites have fewer followers, until all of the bees choose one preferred site.

At this time up to 20,000 bees, having decided by consensus, take off for their new home. They forming a cylindrical circle in the sky over 200 feet high and around 100 feet in diameter. What a beautiful sight this circle of bees in the sky is, as they go together to their new home.



Just a side note: How do honeybees know to find a new home by consensus when we humans have such great difficulty? Well, honeybees have more experience. They have been here for around 30,000,000 years; humans, around 200,000.

But we can learn from nature’s circles. Maryknoll sisters, as well as the Affiliates, use consensus in decision-making. Yes, circles! “That’s what it’s all about!” Let’s do the Hokey Pokey.



NOTE: Roger Schiltz claims the world record for dancing the Hokey Pokey (a circle dance). He said they danced with 300 children in Tanzania on the Day of the Child, when they were Maryknoll Lay Missioners in Tanzania. In his honor we danced the Hokey Pokey at the 2017 MAC.

**IMMERSION EXPERIENCE AT THE BORDER**

Are you trying to make sense of the immigration debate or do you know someone who is? If so, Maryknoll’s Spring Immersion trip (April 16-22, 2018) to the Texas Rio Grande Valley may be for you.

Father Gerry Kelly, MM, and Matt Rousso will be directing an innovative and exciting mission immersion program in the Rio Grande Valley in April, 2018. To learn more, see the flyer: <http://maryknollaffiliates.org/news/downloads/not-so-far-afield/supplemental-materials/113-flyer-rio-grande-2018/file.html>. A few spots are still available; if you are interested, apply soon. Just fill out the registration form on the flyer and mail it to the New Orleans Maryknoll Mission Office.



## CASA MATERNA MARY ANN JACKMAN: RAY OF HOPE AND LEGACY OF FRIENDSHIP

Kitty Madden – Affiliate in Nicaragua

The nights here in Matagalpa grow longer as we await the coming of the Light. I write from the Casa Materna, a project I have helped to nurture and one that has so lovingly nurtured me...for over 27 years. It is an appropriate moment to thank all of the Maryknoll Affiliates who have been a bright light for us both spiritually and financially.

I am remembering the warm invitation I received from Mary Ann Jackman in 1985 to “come and work with me and my people in Nicaragua.” Though she did not live to see the Casa that would bear her name and welcome so many mothers, we feel her presence here with us daily.

In early November, I was overjoyed to be with many of you at the gathering so graciously hosted in Guatemala by our sister/brother Affiliates there. At that time, I shared the somewhat bittersweet news that the work of the Casa Materna would end December 31<sup>st</sup>. We are grateful that we have fulfilled our primary goal of providing services for rural mothers with high-risk pregnancies, reducing maternal death here in Nicaragua.

When Casa Materna MAJ received our first mothers in October of 1991, here and throughout the world maternal death was called “the silent epidemic.” There were no news broadcasts or headlines that called attention to “a maternal death every moment of every day.” Programs such as ours were greatly bolstered by the United Nations Millenium Development goals, and maternal death throughout the world has been greatly reduced, close to 50%. In 2012, the Nicaraguan government reported a 75% decrease here.

Through the years, my letters sought to give you a sense of being right here with us in our sacred work of accompaniment, and many of you have come to visit and help out. Thanks to generous friends in the North, we have welcomed more than 17,750 mothers and newborns.

Of that number, there have been only two maternal deaths, and neither Nicolasa nor Susana died in the Casa. We know that your prayerful accompaniment of our staff and mothers brought about this miraculous blessing.

The path has not always been smooth. We nearly lost the Casa in 1995 when fewer than 2,000 mothers had been attended. Thus, we will be forever grateful to the mothers and midwives who gathered together

to “take back the Casa” and reinstate the staff. The subsequent “rebirth of the Casa,” also helped reconfirm the staff’s commitment to loving care and financial accountability.

But the Casa was not meant to continue forever. We had set out to ensure that women did not die in childbirth

in Nicaragua and we were able to make significant strides. Adopting the model we had set up in 1991, the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health has now developed over 177 Casa Maternas throughout the country. However, the government has also decided that “mothers will be attended *only* in their Casas.” Jackie, a longtime community leader and Casa friend in our Detroit Circle of Support recently said to me, “Well, Kitty, it seems like you folks have worked yourselves out of business.” And then she smiled and heartily

congratulated me, adding, “And, isn’t that our hope for every project we start?”

While grateful to all of the Affiliates who have supported our work, my special thanks go to the Sacramento, CA, Affiliates who, through Bob and Nancy Link, have been a Circle of Support for us for the past eight years.

As we approach our final days of service, we are consoled to know that the legacy of the Casa continues. It lives on in each mother and child and in

their families. It also lives on in the Maryknoll Affiliate community that has so lovingly accompanied us in our “heart work.” As Ram Dass reminds us, “in the end, we are just walking each other home.”



**A BUEN VIVIR LENT**

Patty Hinton – Midwest Regional Coordinator,  
St. Louis Chapter



**B**uen Vivir—“living in harmony and equilibrium with the cycles of Mother Earth, the cosmos, and life in all its forms,” caused me to reflect on Lent in some different ways. This Lent, we might do a few things to connect with all creation:

- Take a walk at least once a week and appreciate the beauty of nature—listen and let it speak to your heart.
- Connect with an Affiliate you don’t know well—if possible, someone outside your own country.
- Read a book and reflect/pray on our connection with all life. Check out Orbis books (<http://www.orbisbooks.com>) for some ideas.
- Make it a point to use that leftover food and be conscious of not wasting.
- Try a vegetarian life-style, if possible during all of Lent, or at least more often than on Fridays.
- Fast more frequently, in varying degrees: skip lunch and send the money saved to Maryknoll projects.
- Contact your state/local representatives and stand up against injustice. Many issues are described at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, [maryknollogc.org](http://maryknollogc.org).
- Read **NSFA** or **NTLH** cover to cover, and pray for those mentioned.
- Volunteer at a homeless shelter or food pantry/outreach program in your area.

May some of these ideas, and other ways you think of to connect with creation during Lent, bring a sense of new life to you this Easter.



## News from the Board

**TELLING OUR MARYKNOLL STORIES**

Sister Teruko Ito, MM, – Affiliate Board Member

**A**fter the 2017 Maryknoll Affiliate Conference in Guatemala, I reconnected with my former mission site and renewed my life energy and hope in mission. I was able to visit San Marcos, a beautiful town in the Western Highland of Guatemala near the Mexican border located about five hours northeast of Guatemala City, at an altitude of about 3000 feet. Another Maryknoll sister and I, as members of the Diocesan Pastoral Team for Women, visited many of the parishes, empowering their women’s teams.



Many women, mostly Mayan, shared their joy at being able to see the bigger world more clearly, as though being led out of the smoke in their kitchens. Besides themes from the Bible, we discussed women’s health, women’s rights, ecological projects, and managing profit-generating handcrafts. Many women shared their struggle to find safe places.

I was able to bring in my former ministry experiences: while in Japan, establishing and running addiction centers for men and women, especially the Skid Row people; while in Newburgh, NY, as a Formation Team member in a very culturally diverse community, welcoming and accompanying new members to our Maryknoll Sisters Congregation; and while in Tanzania, my first mission, teaching math to young girls and even creating new mathematical terms in Swahili. Everything is connected, from Kyoto, Japan, where my family met Maryknoll during the difficult time of post WW II, through my Maryknoll Novitiate in the Philippines, to various missions around the globe.

At present I am sitting in one of the Offices here in New York as a member of Maryknoll Sisters Congregational Leadership Team. As a liaison to the Affiliates, I am privileged to journey with many of you as I serve on the Affiliate Board. Maryknoll Affiliates invites us to deeper collaborative mission and expansive rootedness of our Maryknoll Charism in daily living. We are all invited to tell OUR new Maryknoll story—how our lives were transformed through interconnectedness in the web of Maryknoll.



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*How does Buen Vivir inspire you?*

