

The Foundation Day of Fiat Spiritus

Brother Bob Overland, FS

On Friday, June 20th Poor Handmaid Sisters, Associates, family and friends gathered to witness the foundation of the new Fiat Spiritus community—a new expression of the PHJC charism and spirituality of Catherine Kasper. This date was selected since the PHJC Sisters and Associates of the American Province would be gathered in Donaldson for Community Week. The bells atop the Motherhouse rang out to call everyone to this special Evening Prayer. The ringing of the bells was to serve as a link to an occasion 152 years before when six women gathered and the bells in Dernbach rang to call the village people to witness their profession of vows as the first Poor Handmaids.



Fiat Spiritus Community (l-r): Jim and Claudia Swarthout, Br. Bob Overland, Dr. Joan Traver-Appel, Mike Blanchette and Donna Quathamier

The chapel of the American Province was filled to capacity as the procession entered, led by Sister Christiane Humpert who represented the Generalate of the Poor Handmaid Congregation. Sister Jolise May and the American Provincial Leadership Team entered carrying the new Fiat Spiritus community pins that

were to be given as a symbol to each newly-professed Fiat Spiritus community member.



Sisters Shirley Bell and Linda Volk, who had walked with the candidates during their formation period, led them into the chapel. The candidates each carried the prayer cloth they individually created recording their experiences during their formation period and laid them at the foot of the altar.

Sister Jolise welcomed everyone and read a letter from Bishop D'Arcy congratulating the Fiat Spiritus community on its Foundation Day. He invited them to recall the great heritage they can rely on from the Poor Handmaids and the example of the Blessed Mother in her response to God's call. Readings from scripture and from *With Attentive Ear and Courageous Heart*, a biography of Catherine Kasper, led the assembled to reflect on the call to community and the commitment to service.

What followed was a beautiful litany of Holy people sung by the choir and cantors. The litany, set to music by Bernadette Farrell, was created by the Fiat Spiritus community candidates who named persons serving as examples for them.

It was at this moment of the service that Donna Quathamier, Jim Swarthout, Claudia Swarthout and Dr. Joan Traver-Appel professed the vows of poverty,

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WORD GATHERING

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chastity and obedience according to the Rule of the Fiat Spiritus Community. Brother Bob Overland professed vows of poverty, celibate chastity and obedience and Mike Blanchette committed himself as a Formational Member of the community. Applause recorded the moment of the Foundation of the Fiat Spiritus community. For several minutes the newly professed walked through the assembly sharing the sign of peace with everyone followed by the singing of the Magnificat and a final blessing of the new community by the assembly.



Messages from General Leadership and each of the Poor Handmaid provinces around the world were read at a wonderful reception dinner following the service. A special gift for each new member was presented by Sister

Christiane. The gift was a Westerwald pottery candle holder created in Dernbach especially for this event with the words “Fiat Spiritus, June 20, 2003.” The American Provincial Leadership Team presented each member with a framed copy of a painting of Catherine Kasper and a child. The painting had been present for both the Fiat Spiritus entry rite and profession ceremony. Among the invited guests was the Provincial of the Brothers of Mercy of Montebaur who presented the new community with a copy of a painting depicting the brothers’ Foundation Day which took place in the PHJC Motherhouse Chapel in Dernbach in 1866. The brothers recognize Catherine Kasper as instrumental in their early foundation. The evening was concluded with a prayer of Thanksgiving and words of gratitude from the Fiat Spiritus community to the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ for the vision and support given to this new foundation of followers of Catherine Kasper.

The journey now continues for this new community! They meet in October for their first community gathering at the new Fiat Spiritus Community House on the PHJC Ministry Center grounds. Together we go forward in hope and joy supported by the bond of community and the strength of prayer.

A “Thank You” to the Thank You Sisters

Peg VanNevel, Development Director

One of the most incredible ministries here is being performed by our own Thank You Sisters! They take the time to write a handwritten note to each and every one of our donors, as well as responding to each and every prayer request. The friendships they have made, and the families they have touched are too many to count!

A big THANK YOU, to our Thank You Sisters for everything they do! Because they do MORE than just write our thank you notes—they are responsible for every piece of mail that comes out of the Development Office. They stuff thousands of letters for each of our appeals, sometimes having to wear thin latex gloves to prevent paper cuts!

Our Thank You Sisters are: Sister Julia Barry, Sister Richard Mehal, Sister Maxine Peppenhorst, Sister Rosemary Wagner, Sister Lucille Ardelean, Sister Marguerite Niesen and Sister Mary Boby with Sister



Thank you Sisters busy at work

Agnes Muehlenfeld sending birthday wishes to each of our donors!

Our Sisters do not know the meaning of retirement! Rain or shine the Sisters are here, helping the Development Office in any job needed. They continue to hold you and your families in their daily prayers. Please keep them in yours.