

DAUGHTERS OF MARY, MOTHER OF ISRAEL'S HOPE



The Canticle of Simeon

Now dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, in peace, according to Thy word: For mine own eyes hath seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared in the sight of all the peoples, a light to reveal Thee to the nations and the glory of Thy people Israel.

Summer 2009

Volume One

Beloved Family and Friends,

How happy I am at last to be sending you this first newsletter—this first communication of *any* kind since moving to Saint Louis last summer! How I have longed to write to each of you individually. Alas, what did our Lord have in mind in giving us only 24 hours in a day? Oy!

Let me begin to catch you up on the development and events of our new community by way of an article published in the Winter-Spring 2008 issue of *The Hebrew Catholic*:¹



The Making of a Jewish Nun!

That's the title of a new book, if ever I get to write it. Oh the ways of God! How can I possibly tell you all that has transpired in the blessed providence of our Divine Redeemer? I'll tell you by way of the opening and closing paragraphs of my story in "Honey from the Rock"²...

It was in the 1960s. I was young, single, Jewish, and on my own in New York. The headline shot through me like an arrow aimed straight at my heart: "Nuns have re-

ceived permission to shorten their habits to knee length."...(T)he news item wasn't limited to newspapers alone. It aired over local radio. And it went through me as if it were *my* news, and my loss.

What had nuns' habits to do with me? Nothing. I was Jewish...Yet I knew that, *whoever* (these women in long black and white habits) were, they were in the world to affect the world for God. But, alas, I thought, the world has affected them.

What a deep sadness came over me. It was right at the start of the miniskirt era, and I supposed the shortened hemlines were a religious accommodation to the fashion, or, at least, to the increasingly *self*-focused leanings of the day. Somehow I felt robbed of what was never mine to begin with.

I was born in 1943 to Jewish parents of Russian and Hungarian descent...³

I wrote of my upbringing in our Jewish home, of the life-changing moment when the grace of God made known to my fearful heart that the unapproachable God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob took on flesh and became Man—for us—and that the millions of lambs slain throughout the Mosaic sacrificial system could

¹ The newsletter of the Association of Hebrew Catholics

² "Honey From the Rock," Edited by Roy Schoeman, Ignatius Press, 2007

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 153

Meet St. Francis de Sales (1557-1622), our beloved patron. Among his many titles, he is known as the "gentle saint," doctor of love, master of devotion, and model of sanctity.

In his words:

"Truly charity has no limit; for the love of God has been poured into our hearts by His Spirit dwelling in each one of us, calling us to a life of devotion and inviting us to bloom in the garden where He has planted and directing us to radiate the beauty and spread the fragrance of His Providence."



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not take away sin, nor had they power to change the heart, but that every lamb, and all of them together, pointed to the One of whom the Jewish prophets wrote: the *Lamb of God* who took away the sins of the world, and mine.

I wrote of my embrace of Evangelical Protestantism, the only form of Christianity to which I had been introduced, and the yet unfathomable moment when, eighteen years later, I received that very Lamb—the God of Israel—on my tongue, in Holy Communion—the night I was received into the Catholic Church, the completion of all that was promised the Jewish people, and the full measure of Christianity on earth.



Sister and Father Thomas Robertson

enabling this ever-deepening desire to become a reality. On August 22, 2008, the Feast of the Queenship of our Lady, during the 8:00 a.m. Holy Mass at the parish of Saint George in Affton, MO, Father Thomas Robertson blessed the first postulant garments of the *Daughters of Mary, Mother of Israel's Hope*.

of reaching out in full habit to an increasingly needy and hurting world.

Sister Ros... Yes, Zelda my friend.

Can you tell us specifically what your mission, or charism, is?

For sure. Archbishop Burke, in fact, captured the very heart of our vision when, in his response to an interview published in the *Saint Louis Review Online* of February 25, 2008, he said, “*With the help of God’s grace, the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Israel’s Hope will become what their title states: messengers of hope to those who are longing for a sign of God’s mercy.*”⁵ Nothing could state our charism more clearly.

In his weekly column for the archdiocesan newspaper, Bishop Robert Hermann⁶ wrote of the blessed Easter season just past:

For the humble of heart, the liturgies of Holy Week comprise the most moving liturgies of the entire year... At the Easter Vigil the church sings:

“O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer. The power of this holy night dispels all evil, washes guilt away, restores lost innocence, brings mourners joy; it casts out hatred, brings us peace, and humbles earthly pride.

***Night truly blessed when heaven is wedded to earth and man is reconciled with God!*”⁷**

Oh that the whole world knew! Oh that they knew the boundless love and mercy of God that awaits every soul that will put its trust in the God who loved us and gave Himself for us. Bishop Hermann wrote further:

Pope John Paul II tells us in his encyclical, The Mercy of God, that when we find ourselves the object of God’s mercy, we do not feel “humiliated, but rather found again and ‘restored to value.’”

I long to restore the years the locusts have eaten with an order of Sisters that will not only return their hemline to the floor, but the habit—as the glorious sign to God that it is—to the world!

Several thousand words later, I ended the story with these:

I began this story with my initial response as a Jewish girl to a news item in the 1960s about nuns’ habits being shortened. Now I’ll come full circle and tell you that forty years later (forty seems to be God’s favorite figure in the preparation of His people!)—if Messiah grants the desires which He, I believe, has planted in this Hebrew-Catholic heart—I long to restore the years the locusts have eaten with an order of Sisters that will not only return their hemline to the floor, but the habit—as the glorious sign to God that it is—to the world!⁴

It was a moment of unspeakable joy, a joy, however, greatly tempered by the departure of our beloved Archbishop Raymond Burke at whose blessed invitation I moved to Saint Louis to found the new community. Appointed by our Holy Father, Benedict XVI, as Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, His Grace left that very day for Rome—a loss indeed to the flock of God in Saint Louis, but a treasured gain for the Church universal.

The past nine months have indeed brought form and substance to this dream of many years. It is not my dream alone. Over three hundred women of all ages and walks of life have expressed their desire to join in this work

⁴ Ibid., p. 181

⁵ <http://stlouisreview.com/article/2008-02-25/ewtn-personality-start-order-nuns-st-louis>

⁶ Administrator of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis prior to the appointment of our new archbishop

⁷ *Saint Louis Review*, April 10, 2009, p. 5 (emphasis in original)

Baruch haShem! Blessed be His Name!
Messiah seems to be doing just that—

His Excellency's statement nearly made my heart stop. Listen: "...when we find ourselves the object of God's mercy, we do not feel "humiliated, but rather found again and 'restored to value.'"

Can anything be more beautiful, more hope-filled, more *near* to our deepest need?

Therein lies the very reason for our existence as a community: it is for every soul we pass on the street, every family we encounter, every one who may spot us even from a distance—rich or poor, young or old, Jew or Gentile, male or female—to sense, even if for the first time, the *possibility* of God, but more, the *love* of God and the hope that is ours in Him, to the end that they would be "found again and restored to value" and that they might come to know the One who loved them (who loves them still) and who gave His life for them.



How do you plan to do that?

By walking through the streets, shopping malls and parks, riding buses and trolleys, visiting with folks in their homes or in ours, watching good films together, teaching classes, gathering for community and family prayer, and by permeating every neighborhood and culture of society with the love of God and the truths of His Church. Our beginning convent will hold 22 sisters—a very good start. We've heard from a number of priests throughout the country who would like us to come to their

parishes, even some who have offered small convents and large homes that would house several "neighborhood" sisters. All of this is thrilling to us, but we must be planted slowly and grow deep roots if we are to bear fruit that will last.

So what's the next step?

A one-year novitiate. The Church is a wise Mother who requires a year's novitiate for those who have entered religious life. It is a time, following the postulancy stage, of prayer, study, discernment, and coming apart *from* the world in order that we might give ourselves fully *to* the world. It is a year of spiritual richness and one I deeply desire, not only for my own growth, but for the growth of the community.

When and where will you go?

My novitiate year will begin June 1, with a cloistered community in the very order founded by St. Francis de Sales (our patron) and St. Jane de Chantal: the Visitation Nuns in Tyringham, Massachusetts. These dear Sisters who have remained faithful to their charism for 400 years—the anni-

versary of which they will celebrate this summer in Annecy, France—have been gracious enough to agree to receive, mentor, and form me during this year of prayer and study. I will be most grateful for your prayers not only for me during this time, but for the Visitation Sisters themselves who are utterly worthy of your support. *It will be helpful to me if you would refrain from contacting me in any way (by phone, letter, or e-mail) during this time of novitiate.* If any need or question arises, please contact the convent in Saint Louis where my able

assistant, Dawn, will be happy to help in anyway she can.



Will work continue at the convent while you're gone?

Indeed! There is a very wonderful crew of volunteers who will be in charge of many projects, from administrative (data entry, filing, etc.) to construction, to gardening, to setting up our library! We would love your help—whether for an hour, a week or the entire year! Give Dawn a call. She, Marianne, Carrie and the team would be delighted for your assistance! We also will need funds for these projects (in order to "clothe" the cells with blinds and linens, renovate our chapel, put together a beautiful family visiting room with good books and materials, etc.). The enclosed "Wish List" will give you a good idea of the projects planned for this year. Please don't hesitate to jump in. I will keep in touch with the work at the convent as I am able during the year and will be most grateful for your support.

What about speaking engagements and your radio program on Catholic Answers Live?

I have been granted permission to attend one most wonderful conference during the novitiate year which will take place the weekend of July 31-August 2, 2009, at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, Wisconsin. I will be speaking together with Archbishop Raymond Burke, the Shrine's Founder, Bishop Joseph J. Madera, past Auxiliary of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, U.S.A., Dr. Robert Moynihan, founder and

editor of *Inside the Vatican* magazine, and Marty Rotella, songwriter and producer who will also serve as the Master of Ceremonies. I cannot tell you how thrilled and honored I am to be a part of this most glorious occasion sponsored by the Queen of the Americas Guild, in honor of our Lady of Guadalupe, on the anniversary of the dedication of the Church of that magnificent Shrine. You can see all (*and even register*—it would be great to see you there!) at:

St. Paul wrote that our God is faithful to work all things together for good to those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

<http://www.queenof-theamericasguild.org/EventsNew.html>.

Also during the novitiate, I will be able to continue “From the Heart” on *Catholic Answers Live* from the convent in Tyringham, on the first and third Wednesday of each month.

I’ve heard that between 300-400 women have applied to the community. What will become of them during the year you are away?

St. Paul wrote that our God is faithful to work all things together for good to those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). I trust that our Lord has an equally perfect plan for those who are “waiting” with me during this year. *God*, however, does not wait. He is ever about the blessed “task” of conforming us to the image of His Son. For those who have applied, however, I offer these thoughts:

1) Most who have written requesting information regarding a possible vocation should by now have received a packet of information which includes our Spiritual Directory and Informational Application. If you have not received the packet, please feel free to request another or to simply

download the material directly from our website under “Vocations.”

2) If you have returned a completed application and have not yet heard from us, I must ask you to be patient one year longer! I know . . . oy! Upon my return from the year’s novitiate, I will read through all applications received and begin to arrange “Come & See” weekends for those who qualify and who wish to visit.

3) If you have not yet inquired, but wish to, please feel free to print the material directly from our website or contact us and we’ll mail a packet to you.

Would you suggest what we can do while we wait, ways in which we can prepare further?

Most assuredly. Here are a few suggestions:

- As much as possible, you might begin to incorporate into your own lives the daily schedule outlined in the Spiritual Directory—not all at once—but little by little, day by day. For example, if you attend weekly Mass, begin to add a weekday. If you’ve never prayed the Liturgy of the Hours, ask a friend to help you to begin with Morning Prayer. If you already pray Morning Prayer (Lauds), begin to add Evening Prayer (Vespers), etc.
- If you do not have a spiritual director at present, you might ask our Lord to lead you to a holy spiritual guide who can help you to discern our Lord’s will for you. A helpful aid to finding a director, or to spiritual guidance in the interim, is Father Thomas Dubay’s book, titled, *Seeking Spiritual Direction: How to*

Grow the Divine Life Within (Servant Publications, 1994).

- Frequent the Sacraments as often as possible, especially the Sacrament of Confession. In the words of our beloved St. Francis de Sales, “*Never let your soul remain long infected by sin since you have a remedy so near at hand and so easy to apply.*”
- You might dig more deeply into the Scriptures, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the writings of St. Francis de Sales, such as his “*Introduction to the Devout Life*” and “*Treatise on the Love of God.*” Perhaps you can gather a small group of friends (or even one!) to meet regularly to study and pray together.

I will try to write again at Christmas, if not before, from the convent in Tyringham. All of you—friends, family, applicants, and lay associates!—will be in my daily prayers. I will cherish your prayers for me as well for this very important year ahead and for the Nuns of the Visitation and the needs of their community.

My gratitude and love to you, in our most worthy and risen Lamb who is the Hope of Israel, and in His blessed Mother, the *Mother* of Israel’s Hope, the Hope of the world.

Sister Rosalind

Sister Rosalind Moss



“I’m on my way to heaven...and want to take the whole world with me. Come join us! What a fabulous journey it will be!”