



Top Left: The Sisters pray Morning Prayer of the Divine Office in the chapel of Catherine's Residence



Top Right: Sister Marie Therese Ruthmann, VHM '50 gives Linda Mercurio Hirsch '65 her Full Moon pin at Reunion 2015



Bottom Left: Sister Catherine Brady, VHM spends time with Montessori students



Bottom Right: The Sisters and members of the Visitation community join together in a weekly prayer group

The Visitation Sisters' Move from Ballas Road to Geyer Road: One Year Later

By: Sister Marie Therese Ruthmann, VHM '50

"If the time has come to leave your home, Catherine's Residence is certainly the next best thing," commented Sister Margaret Mary as we Sisters marked the first anniversary of our move from Ballas on September 11.

Leaving the monastery where we had lived for over 50 years was heart-wrenching. The

campus was our home where we joined our religious lives with our dedication to the children and young women in our Academy. Most of us are alumnae of Viz or another Visitation school, so it was never just a matter of exchanging one building for another. Our days had been punctuated not only by our monastic schedule but by the joy of the unfolding seasons of school events which we could be part of to help carry on our mission of teaching students to live Jesus.

However, for several years we had been praying and evaluating the reality of our community's situation. We realized that our dwindling numbers, increasing age, and the mounting expense of maintaining our monastery now made it necessary to seek a new living arrangement. Also, the school

needed more space for classrooms and offices.

In 2012, we met with Sr. Mary Roch Rocklege, RSM to ask if the Mercy Sisters could accept about 11 Visitation Sisters in their retirement facility, Catherine's Residence. Although only Mercy Sisters had previously lived there, they wholeheartedly welcomed us. Sr. Mary Roch's assurance laid our fears to rest: "You will be a blessing to us."

In November of 2012, Sr. Baptista Valiquette went from the hospital to Catherine's Residence. In 2013, Sr. Mary Christine joined her. In August of 2014, Sisters Mary Elizabeth, Aloysia, and Margaret Mary went ahead of the rest of us to get settled. Finally, on Sept 11, with the indispensable help of alumnae, friends, family and the movers,



Left: Sister Mary Elizabeth Godefroy, VHM '44, Sister Margaret Mary Gibson, VHM '50, Mary Anne McDonough '65, Sister Marie Therese Ruthmann, VHM '50, Mary Hunn Schergen '65, Mia Cobb '65, Sue Radar Dorris '65, Rose Ann Walther Penilla '65 and Peggy Ross '65 enjoy a visit at Catherine's Residence



Above: Sister Mary Grace McCormack, VHM '60 and Sister Marie Therese Ruthmann, VHM '50 were joined by alumnae Sarah Spaunhorst '03, Caty Hughes '00, Christy Human Hughes '72, and Monica Lewis Merkle '05

the five remaining-- Sisters Veronica, Mary Grace, Marie Therese, Catherine and Barbara—moved our furniture and belongings to the moving van. It was 7:00 p.m. before the van left, and we stayed our first night in Catherine's Residence.



Left: Sister Mary Grace McCormack, VHM '60 and Sister Marie Therese Ruthmann, VHM '50 pose with members of the cast of the Upper School musical the Addams Family

Our new monastery wing is situated at the end of the rose corridor that branches out from the center of the building. Most of us have rooms there; only those who need more assistance live in the blue corridor. Since we came, the three corridors have been re-named: the green one is McAuley Hall, the blue one is Our Lady of Guadalupe Hall, and the rose corridor is De Chantal Hall.

Although we each maintain our uniqueness, we have become a blended community. We have our meals and celebrate the Eucharist with the Mercy Sisters. We contribute to the liturgies as readers, extraordinary ministers, servers, and musicians. Only in the Liturgy of the Hours does each community pray in its tradition. We Visitation Sisters pray together the Divine Office of Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer just as we did in our Ballas chapel. On Sunday evenings, members of the L'Arche Community join us, their prayer partners, for Night Prayer. Sr. Paulinus, RSM has remarked that the presence of the Visitation Sisters has deepened the atmosphere of prayer and the spiritual dimension of our lives together.

We share each other's joys. Both communities and many members of their families celebrated Sister Christine's and

Sister Aloysia's 90th birthdays and 70th anniversaries of Profession. We share each other's sorrows, particularly in mourning the deaths of Sr. Baptista, Sister Christine and nine Mercy Sisters in 2014-2015. Last summer, we all shared a retreat which presented the history and lives of the foundresses of our communities. We were delighted to learn that our charisms are so similar.

All of us are invited to participate in the activities offered: lectures, musical entertainments, liturgical reflections, physical exercise, films, games, and field trips to parks or museums. It is a joy to make new friends here and at the retreat center and a relief not to be responsible for cooking, cleaning up, and meeting maintenance emergencies on weekends. As much as we miss our Ballas monastery, it is a whole new world not to live where we work. This was especially true during the preparation for the on-line auction in August of most of the contents of the monastery.

We each have our personal litanies of thanksgiving, but all include appreciation for the breathtaking beauty of the grounds with their majestic trees, wood-chip walks, cultivated gardens and wildflowers, labyrinth, birds, abundant deer and even

Canadian geese. It is like being on vacation all year long with lovely views from every window. It is also quiet. No longer do we hear the noise of traffic on Highway 40 and Ballas or the whirr of helicopters bringing patients to the hospitals. As Sr. Aloysia says, "What is there not to like?"

Although we are happy to be together here as a community, our hearts are also in our ministry. We intend to continue an active presence in our beloved Academy. Almost every day some of us are at Viz for Board meetings and Association of the Christian Faithful activities, praying with the upper school girls at Class Meetings or with Salesian Study and Prayer Groups, attending Masses, plays, concerts and games. We look forward to the ways that the part of the former monastery we now call The Visitation Heart and Mind Center (VHM) will serve to support the school and its mission and to hand on our charism.

Our new phone number for prayer requests is 314-909-4451. We invite you to come and visit us at 2039 N. Geyer Road just as you did on Cabanne and Ballas. The building is different, but the Sisters are the same.