

Efforts for Peace, Spring 2003

A Transition in our Ministry to the Elderly

After 46 years of ministering to the elderly on the third floor of the LaVerna Heights building, the LaVerna Heights Retirement Center is closing and nursing services are being consolidated to the LaVerna Village Nursing Home. On February 7, 2003, Sr. Kathleen officially announced the consolidation citing various factors impacting the decision: increasingly higher insurance costs, both in general and professional coverage and employee health; a lack of increase in state grants to residents who have financial difficulty with private pay fees, and the reality of a decreasing pool of staff and private pay clients.



We believe that this consolidation will help us continue to give quality care to our residents and to persevere in carrying out our mission to the elderly and infirm. All of the Sisters who have worked in the nursing home and shared the building with residents feel privileged to have been able to provide this care for people of our area since 1957.

When we Sisters of St. Francis purchased the Dr. Nichols' Cancer Sanatorium in 1957 to establish it as our province house and subsequently set up a retirement home on the third floor, we realized Mother Pia's dream of providing nursing care for the elderly. On June 21, 1957, the first patient came. During the first six months of operation of the La Verna Heights Retirement Center, eleven residents were admitted and ten employees were hired. The sisters, postulants, and novices did a great deal of work. Sister Waltrud was the first supervisor of the retirement home. She was assisted by Sister Veronica and a staff of licensed practical nurses. Sister Magdalene was the first administrator. It was not long before the 40 beds were filled and a good reputation attained. Over the years renovations and many changes have occurred, but the core values of compassion, availability, reverence, enthusiasm and stewardship have always



been maintained. We are pleased that over 700 residents chose to come to our nursing home and that we were able to meet their needs during this fragile time of their lives. LaVerna Village Nursing Home, which was established in 1974 and has served over a thousand residents, will now be the focus of our continuing ministry to the elderly.

In many ways this is a very painful "letting go" of something very precious to us. It is difficult to give up a ministry that has continued for so long and has been so meaningful. Our residents and their families, our Board of Trustees, our staff and many others are sad to see the change, but we and they are confident that continuity in the essential mission to the elderly will be preserved and that God will indeed look on this present reformation and give a blessing.

Photos: The first photo features Secretary Beth Miller, assisting Beulah Harrison as she signs paperwork in the office at LaVerna Village.

The second photo is Tammy Myers, Sherri Huntsman, and Roseann Stewart, staff of LaVerna Heights Retirement Center, bidding goodbye to Beulah Harrison as she leaves for LaVerna Village.

Efforts For Peace

We know that as Franciscan Peacemakers in a chaotic world, we are called to be persons of peace and

to be a prophetic voice which speaks peace to our world. Therefore, in opposition to the proposed war in Iraq, we have been actively pursuing peace.



Our efforts have included writing letters to our President and lawmakers, visiting regional representatives offices, organizing and participating in numerous peace prayer services, signing petitions, attending peace rallies and, most importantly, by prayer. At a time when so many voices seem to call for war and revenge, for preemptive strikes and retaliation, it is the cry for peace that is echoed in our home at Mass and Morning and Evening Prayer and brought before the Blessed Sacrament at Holy Hour each day.

We pray that our loving God will enlighten our nation and all of us in ways of peace. We pray that God will protect those who must leave their families and risk their lives in order to serve their country in an unjust war. We beg God to grant us wisdom in proportion to our power, and compassion in proportion to our wealth and might, and to give us the capacity to truly forgive those who have trespassed against us.

Thus, may we trust solely in God and may our nation be blessed with an earnest desire to help all peoples of every race and nation to walk in friendship with us along the road to justice, liberty and lasting peace. For more information about the Catholic peace movement, visit Pax Christi.

Photo: Sr. Mary Ellen Reichert and Sr. Mary Chrisman at the peace rally in Kansas City, holding a peace banner.