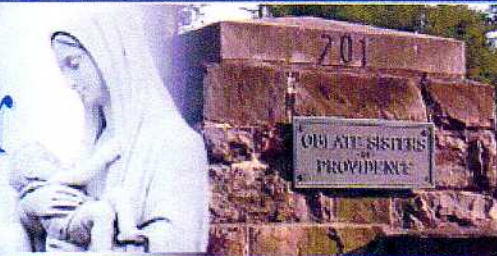




Oblate Sisters of Providence

The Lange Letter



August 2006

Mother Mary {Elizabeth} Lange Guild News

Issue No. 45

The REAL Miracle

Fr. Borbely, SJ challenges members of the Guild to "think outside the box." In an all day Strategic Planning Retreat/Workshop

By Sister Virginie Fish, OSP

We've been so intent on getting Mother Lange canonized, we've become almost myopic. The thrust and interest has become "Where is the cause NOW?" What has ROME said? Do we have a HEALING yet?" Has it passed "muster?" (been approved as a miraculous healing?)

Father James Borbely, Jesuit consultant and spiritual director gave a retreat/workshop to members of the Mother Lange Guild Board and Chapter reps Saturday, April 24, '06.



Father James Borbely, S.J., directed a Retreat/Workshop for members of the M. L. Guild Board and Chapter Reps.

virtues of this woman of God, one gleams evidence of the power wrought through connectedness with Christ.

Mother Lange was patient when she could have been arrogant and demanding. She was generous, selfless and forgiving when she could have been self-centered, angry, and disenchanted with the unspeakable indignities vented by Church and society. (Long before the Emancipation Proclamation, Mother Lange, a woman of color, immigrated about 1812 to Maryland, a slave state. Mother Lange had forbearance and perseverance when it could have been so easy to quit. Mother Lange shared her gift of education with the "have nots" of her day. She sought out the marginalized, the aged and youth. And God used her to work the

miracle of founding the first congregation of women religious in the world, the congregation whose fruit continues beyond 177 years.

The virtues of Mother Lange must be key to promoting her canonization leading to the hope of changing lives. Fr. Borbely challenged his hearers to simply GO OUT and DO IT-leaving the results to God.



Retreat/Workshop participants show various expressions of attentiveness.

To the left Toni Moore Duggan, Guild president and LaVerna Scruggs. Above l. to r. Sister Madeline Swaboski, IHM; Lenwood Johnson; Sister Katharine Brent, OSP

Attendees were reminded that the greatest miracle is the transformation of lives. If lives are changed, good is accomplished. If Mother Lange's life of virtue is known, emulated or practiced, THAT would even surpass physical healing. (Problem: it can not be documented. Rome requires documentation.) Consequently, too much emphasis is placed on a physical healing.

Father emphasized the need to promote the virtues of Mother Mary. Through the knowledge and



Retreat/Workshop participants take a break: l. to r. Sister Babette Opferman, IHM; Carol Depestre; Lenwood Johnson; (seated) Sister Marina Kelly, OSP

Annual Re-Commitment

By Sister M. Virginie Fish, OSP

Members of the Lange Guild Board of Directors along with Chapter representatives and volunteers assembled to give witness to their conviction that Mother Mary Lange is a saint. Mother Mary Lange devotees gathered at Mount Providence May 24th at 7:00 p.m. and enthusiastically renewed their commitment of time and talents in promoting her cause for canonization.

Presiding over the rite was Bishop Denis Madden, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore. Toni Moore Duggan, president of the Board, spoke of new visions and challenging directions facing the Lange Guild. Members of the Board and representative members of six Chapters responded in faith to the opportunity of continuing their quest for the public and official recognition of Servant of God Mary Lange.

The latest Chapter, St. Peter Claver, Inigoes, MD, chaired by Loretta Ann Dove, made an impressive showing. They have achieved a membership of twenty-six (six of whom came for the Commissioning Service). All Chapters reported their efforts to promote the Cause and made a monetary contribution to assist the general efforts of the Board. Reporting for their respective locations were Gift of Providence Chapter, Baltimore (Theodora George, Chair); Haitian Americans United for M. M. Lange (HAU) Washington/Baltimore, (Co-Chaired by Dr. Rose Marie Sylla and Carole Depestre); St. Benedict Chapter (Chaired by Dorothy Gomes, Philadelphia), also Camaguey/Havana Chapter-Cuba (represented by Sister Margarita Musquera, OSP). New York Mother Lange Chapter (Chaired by Deacon Paul Dorsinville) sent an impressive report and contribution.

Idell Pugh received the First Annual M. L. Guild

Board Award—a plaque of appreciation. A second plaque was awarded Sister Mary Alice Chineworth, OSP, Charter member and the Initiating Petitioner. Fr. John Bowen, SS and Sr. Virginie Fish, OSP received plaques of appreciation. Certificates of appreciation for many years of volunteer service were awarded to Charter members Sr. Marina Kelly, OSP and Lenwood Johnson. Other award recipients were, Theresa Royale, Lillian Wainwright, Francis Marinaro, Sr. Mercia Delgado, OSP, Ruth Mangaroo, Florence Cowans and Catherine Thomas. Members of the Board hosted a period of fellowship concluding the ceremony.



Photo by: Sr. Veronica de los Santos, OSP

A group of pilgrims pause to remember and pray at the 610 George St. site where the city of Baltimore erected a monument commemorating the contributions of Mother Mary and the Oblate Sisters to the city of Baltimore.

Mother Lange Was An Immigrant!



*Without immigrants,
where would we,
as a nation, be?*



By Sister Virginie Fish, OSP

While concerned about legislation to curtail and control immigrants, we forget the tremendous contribution immigrants have made to this country, to the church, the world.

As with immigrants the world over, the family of Elizabeth Clarisse Lange fled the revolution of Haiti. They sought a better life taking refuge in Santiago de Cuba. Elizabeth, due to dire circumstances there, migrated to America and eventually settled in Maryland—a slave state, no less. However,



Sketch taken from the Mother Lange Coloring Book



Photo by: Christine Tolson

Members of the Board attend the Service of Re-Commitment. First row: Idell Pugh; second row: V. Esther Sanders, Florence Cowans, Fr. Donald Fest, SSJ, Third row: Sr. Marina Kelly, OSP, Lillian Wainwright

Favors Asked Favors Received Favors Asked Favors Received

For those WITH FAITH, no explanation is necessary; for those WITHOUT FAITH, no explanation is possible.

Lost and Found

To Whom It May Concern: For many years I have been praying to Madre Mary Elizabeth Lange and many of my petitions have been granted. Recently, my daughter, diagnosed with bipolar disease [was in crisis and disappeared]. Worried, I prayed to M. Lange to find her. My petition was granted one more time. I will continue praying to Madre Mary Elizabeth Lange.

T.A.; MD

Exam Passed!

Thanks for your prayers for Mother Lange's intercession. My son has passed the Maryland Bar Exam to practice law. God is Good! Please find enclosed \$50 (check).

M.M.; MD

(E-mail received) Thank you for prayers through Mother Lange's intercession for my sister-in-law. She struggled to pass the MD State Praxis Exam to complete her certification as a teacher. As a non-native English speaker, the reading component was especially hard. After several attempts she was about to give up, but took the exam one more time. My husband and I prayed for Our Lady's and Mother Lange's intercession. I am excited to say she received notice that she passed the exam. Thank you, Mother Lange, for prayers answered. And thank you, Sisters, for adding my family to your prayers.

God's Will Accepted

This is to thank Mother Lange in advance for her intercession: She's such a nice person. And whatever happens or doesn't happen, it's for the best. Thank you, Mother Lange. Enclosed is \$5.00.

R.M.; MD

Hearing Recovered

Thanks for the recovery of H. M.'s hearing. Enclosed is \$25.

J. M.; DC

General Gratitude

Thanks for all blessings. \$25 enclosed.

L.C.; KY

Employment Obtained

I asked Mother Lange to find my son a job. He started working with a good salary plus overtime. Mother Lange always answers my prayers.

C.H.; MD

Since the spring of '99 I began recycling old computers. I found out that to the OSP "old" was relative. I upgraded computers, delivered them and began servicing computers for the Sisters while looking and praying for employment. Thanks to Mother Lange, I obtained gainful employment.

F.M.; MD

If favors are received please notify: THE LANGE GUILD

settling in Baltimore, provided the opportunity for her to be the instrument of God's miraculous intervention.

Due to the political, social, religious and economic situation existing where God "planted" her, Elizabeth Lange, an immigrant, a Catholic and an educated black woman, proved to be a formidable instrument in the hands of a providential God who made a way out of no way. She became the Haitian immigrant that revolutionized the Catholic Church. She founded, by God's grace, the first congregation of women religious of African ancestry in the world. She, an immigrant, is Haiti's gift to America.

Should America ever forget that the only non-immigrant on our shores is the Native

American, we would effectively close doors to a rich source of wealth.—mindful that there is more to wealth than money. There is the wealth of contributions spawned from ideas, vision, courage, determination and the generosity that only the love of God can ferment in the souls and deeds of his instruments.

Immigrants have much to give. We can not allow paranoia, jealousy, fear, power and the status of the privileged make us forget whence we have come. Nothing is impossible with God. We must demand that doors of opportunity be left open for others to come to our shores, enlighten us, gift us, and share with all of us the unlimited wisdom, skills and grace God offers us through his immigrants.



Cecilia Alston, Oblate Alumna gives volunteer time when visiting her "second home".

Education! Like the Endless Waves of an Ocean

By Sister Madeline Swaboski, IHM



Even to the present day, Mother Mary Lange is responsible for *thousands and thousands* of children being educated. This immigrant woman of color came to slave state Maryland in the early 1800's. An educated person

herself, Elizabeth took up the challenge to teach the neglected children of color and followed the Lord's call to found with Father James H. Joubert, SS, the first lasting congregation for women religious of African ancestry, the Oblate Sisters of Providence (OSP).

In her school an older student, Almaide Maxis Duchemin asked to be one of the founders with Elizabeth, Rosanne Boegue and Mary Frances Balas. Elizabeth took the name simply of Sister Mary. Almaide became Sister Theresa. All endured the early years of struggle, destitution and uncertainty. When it seemed that the Oblates would dissolve, Theresa, after being an Oblate for sixteen years, went to Monroe, Michigan to do French-speaking pioneer ministry in Michigan.

Theresa with Father Gillet, CSSR, founded the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM). The IHM Sisters, through a series of church related modifications (not satisfactory to the IHM's) evolved to three independent motherhouses: Monroe, MI, Immaculata and Scranton, PA.

The primary ministry of the OSP's and the IHM's down through the years has been education.* With Oblate membership once totaling more than three hundred, and each branch of the IHM's, in their peak numbered in the low to mid-thousands, historically, the total number of children taught has reached *thousands and thousands*. This **wave of education** has reached across the United States, the Caribbean islands, Central and South America and Africa. All this because of one courageous, daring, faithful woman: Servant of God Mary Lange, OSP, joined by her student Theresa Maxis Duchemin, IHM.

If the reader has been educated by an OSP or IHM, your education has one special person at its root: Mary Lange, now on her way to being named a saint.

* Other ministries are now included.

Speaker's Bureau / Pilgrimage
To engage a speaker or plan a pilgrimage
for your group call or write:

Mother Lange Guild Office
701 Gun Road
Baltimore, MD 21227-3899



Where Is It (the Cause) Now?

This is the question everyone asks. What's happening with the cause for Canonization of Mother Mary Lange?

It's a long story.

The cause for canonization of Mother Mary Lange officially begun in 1991 is in two phases. In the First Phase, the Archdiocese of Baltimore, completed its investigation and submitted documents that demonstrated her life of heroic virtue and charity to Rome. January, 2006.

The Superior General of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, Sister Annette Beecham, appointed a Postulator at Rome. It is his responsibility to review and summarize documents submitted that demonstrate Lange's life of heroic virtue. This means that she not only was an instrument of God in founding a religious congregation whose almost 200 years of existence seems to speak of the miraculous, but that Lange personally lived a life of consistent and universal charity, faith, generosity, hope, peace, kindness, love and forgiveness. It does not, of course, preclude personal characteristics of human nature such as determination, creativity, human emotions of joy, sorrow, disappointment, likes or dislikes, sickness, fatigue or elation. It shows only that the latter was controlled by the graces of the former.

Once the Postulator has concluded his review, he submits it to the Congregation of the Saints at Rome. This congregation, made up of several bishops, cardinals, and professionals, make a determination on the authenticity of the life led by the Servant of God and either accept or reject the findings of the Postulator. If accepted, Servant of God Mary Lange would be designated as "venerable".

The Cause of Mother Mary Lange is in the hands of the Postulator at Rome.

The Second Phase is one to determine if a person's physical healing is inexplicable by medical means. If the healing has been determined unusual, "miraculous" or inexplicable by experts in that field of sickness, it is submitted by the Archdiocese to the Sacred Congregation at Rome. Other medical professionals may concur or reject. If accepted, Servant of God Mary Lange would be designated as "Blessed".

A second healing would go through the same process. If accepted, Servant of God Mary Lange would then be designated as "Saint".

A healing has been submitted to the Archdiocese of Baltimore, but no pronouncement, as of this writing, has been made.

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Phone: (410) 242-6861 Fax: (410) 247-5172

Email: srmmel@aol.com **N.B. Please use "M. Lange" in subject line**
Website: www.oblatesisters.com then choose "Ministries".

Photo by: Sr. Veronica de los Santos, OSP



When Oblates get together... front row: l to r. Sr. Virginie Fish, Sr. Magdala Marie Gilbert, Sr. Anthonia Ugwu, Sr. Annette Beecham; back row: l to r. Sr. Katharine Brent, Sr. Trinita Baeza, Sr. Philomen Chizea, Sister Altagracia Ceballos, and Sr. Crescentia Proctor.