



The Lange Letter

Oblate Sisters of Providence



Spring 2009

Mother Mary [Elizabeth] Lange Guild News

Issue No. 53

Mother Mary Lange: Refugee and Immigrant

by Fr. Donald Fest, SSJ

If you look around our country at some of the older cities you might notice the old churches built several generations ago. Many are huge, magnificent structures built by immigrants - people from foreign lands - most who traveled to this land with no more than the clothes on their backs. They came for a better life. They came for opportunity. Many came to escape famine, war, or lack of work back in their own countries.

What is amazing is once they arrived in this country with their meager possessions, these men and women wanted to build -- and indeed did build -- some of the most beautiful churches in our cities. This happened because of their deep and abiding faith which carried them through life, even traveling over an ocean, into a place that was very strange to them. Once here, most of them would not encounter anyone who spoke their language when they left their neighborhoods.

It was no different with Mother Mary Lange. When she arrived on these shores in the port of Baltimore, Maryland, she was merely a young refugee from Haiti with very few possessions. She had many strikes against her: she was a woman, black, a foreigner and she did not speak English - and all this in a slave state. Like all the millions of other immigrants who came to this country, she also helped to build a Church - not one of brick and mortar, but one of souls for Christ. What vision she

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Mother Mary Lange, OSP (1784-1882): Haitian immigrant educator, a free woman of color in a slave state who had courage, faith, compassion, unwavering trust in God's providence; founded St. Frances Academy, Baltimore, MD, 1828; foundress of Oblate Sisters of Providence the first religious community for women of color, 1829; candidate for sainthood.



PACA STREET, Baltimore, MD, USA

Homily by Fr. John W. Bowen, SS

A pastor was speaking at the 100th anniversary of his parish: "For 100 years priests and people

Feb. 3rd, A Special Celebration, At St. Mary's Spiritual Center.

of this parish have had only one idea". It was not what he meant literally, but what came through! We are not restricted to one

idea after 127 years since the death of Mother Lange. The liturgical readings give two major ideas and many lesser ones.

In the Gospel of Mark, the woman, afflicted with hemorrhages for 12 years, had faith in Jesus' healing power. Making her way through the crowd, all she did was touch his garments to be healed. One touch and she was healed! Elizabeth Lange, before she became Mother Mary Lange and even after, touched Jesus in her devotion to him in the Eucharist. She touched Jesus in her studies as well as in the generations of students she instructed. She touched Jesus in the sick to whom she volunteered to minister. She touched Jesus in all the oppressed, the hungry, the abandoned. These same people, only with

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Above photo: St. Mary's Spiritual Center altar, Mother Lange portrait, BVM statue;

Photo to the right: Feb. 3 concelebrants: Fr. David Arsenaault; Deacon. Siegfried Presberry, Fr. John W. Bowen, SS & Fr. John Kemper, SMSC Director.



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Above photo: Feb. 3 Oblates, guests - Sisters Trinita, Reginald, Marie Vianney, Katherine O'Neil, IHM, Julia, Avila, Virginie, Claudina, Annette.

Photo to the right: Welcome by Sr. Reginald, OSP.

Photo below: Fr. David Arsenaault, Huntingdon, PA; Dcn. Siegfried Presberry, St. Mark, Catonsville, MD.

had to gather women of color with her and establish the Oblate Sisters of Providence! What courage and conviction drove her to establish a

school for black children when it was illegal! She did all this as the expression goes: "Against all odds."

Her contributions, and through her those of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, to our country down the years has been monumental. The presence of the Catholic Church in the African American community existed in many places because of them.

A Special Celebration,

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different faces and needs, are still waiting to be touched by Jesus' mercy, and to be recognized by us in our touch.

The letter to the Hebrews mentions the "cloud of witnesses". We rejoice in the large number of pilgrims gone on record to promote Mother Lange's cause, but we would like other witnesses as well. 1) Witnesses of her early life in Haiti before the Slave Rebellion and independence from France in 1804. We have been to northern Haiti where evidence indicates she came from – not far from the mountaintop citadel built for the emperors of Haiti. But no parish records have survived, and records taken back to France reveal nothing of the Lange family. 2) We know that Haiti had some fine schools before independence, but little is known of them now. So we do not know of the extent of Elizabeth Lange's good education. 3) It is likely that Elizabeth's father sent, or took the family, to refuge in Cuba. No records have been found. Refugees didn't stay long if they were unwilling to give loyalty to Spain. As Mother Lange herself testifies, she was French to the core.



Her life speaks not only to us, but to our entire nation of the enormous contribution immigrants have made to our country, especially in this day and age when so many people frown upon them and want them gone. Who else could have accomplished what Mother Lange accomplished – against all odds? Her coming to this land was indeed *providential*!

Let us invoke her on behalf of all men and women and children who come to us as immigrants. They come with gifts and talents, with a desire to work hard and contribute much, with a determination and vision unlike what most of us are used to seeing.

Watch over them Mother Mary Lange as you did those early sisters who gathered with you. Pray to God on their behalf and on behalf of all people who seek a better life, a brighter future, and a place to call home.



PayPal Using www.motherlange.org you can now donate on the Internet through PayPal. Click on donate; it will direct you to the bottom of the page where you can pay online. This will save you a stamp. Credit Cards are now accepted at the Mother Lange Office, 410-242-6861 We are grateful for all donations and orders of Memorabilia.

Happily we know Elizabeth was in Baltimore in 1812 because of her membership in 3 pious societies and baptismal records at St. Patrick's, Fells Point. It would be good to know what street she lived on and in which house! The rest of her career here we have in Fr. Joubert's diary that became part of the Sulpician community annals. How we long to touch Jesus in other aspects of her life, adding to the cloud of witnesses in our hands and in our records.

On this day marking the anniversary of her early morning call to glory, and the final ministrations of her longtime friend, Fr. Anwander, we ask the Lord to help us find even more about her life. We pray that

we, too, can bring the touch of Jesus to so many in need as she did: the children, the sick and elderly, the poor. We place all the needs of her Oblates of Providence (vocations, the cause for canonization, the coming Chapter of election, etc.) and the Church, into the hands of Divine Providence even as Mother Lange did!

Favors Asked; Favors Received; Favors Asked; Favors Received; Favors Asked

With faith no explanation is necessary; Without faith, no explanation is possible.

I lost my hearing aid and prayed to Mother Lange to find it. Someone called me and said that they had found it.

STM:PA

In thanksgiving for favors answered through the intercession of Mother Lange.

DY: MD

My husband John suffers from a bad case of diabetes and has had trouble getting employment. I turned to Mother Lange in June and asked her to intercede to Almighty God on John's behalf. Soon afterwards he obtained a new job, as a cashier in a casino. Though a scientist, he was happy to get the job because our needs were so great. It also suited his outgoing personality. I ask dear Mother Lange everyday to continue to pray for John, to ask Almighty God to please keep him healthy, happy and safe, and to be able to keep this job until he retires from it. I love Mother Lange, I truly feel she is one of my dearest friends and I pray God raises her to sainthood, which I feel she richly deserves.

Y, PA

I am grateful to Mother Lange for the continued health of my nephew. About two years ago he was diagnosed with cancer. After I prayed through the intercession of Mother Lange, he was tested again and the cancer had gone! To this day he remains cancer free. The doctors are amazed...but they will tell you it was medicine. I know it was Mother Lange's intervention and the loving power of God's healing.

SAF: PA

My cousin was diagnosed with stage four of aggressive lung cancer a year and a half ago. Her surgery showed she not only had a cancerous tumor on one lung but the other lung had cancer cells and cancer was in the lymph nodes. The prognosis was death in six months. This was in September 2007. We put her under mother Lange's care. Her spirits are good and she goes about doing a variety of things she did not do before. The doctors are stunned. We are not. Thanks be to God and Mother Lange!

STR: NY

PROVIDENCE MOMENTS

June 1961: Forty-four exiled Oblate Sisters from Cuba were coming to the new motherhouse. There were rooms, but no furniture!

Prayer – what to do? Trust – God cares. Wait – but they're coming soon. Trust – the phone rings. A Sister Administrator of a Baltimore

hospital asks, "Sister, we are renovating and have some sets of bedroom furniture. Can you use them?" "Yes! How many sets?" "Forty-Four". God will take care of us.

God DOES take care of us: stop and look at each day, every day. Then, give thanks for God's personal love for you.

Many members checked and have updated their dues.

Thanks ever so much! It's never too late Have you checked???

S'il vous plait...Gracias!

SEND IN AND BE COUNTED!

And still they come in... the mail! Signatures attesting to Mother Lange's goodness and charity: the desire for her canonization continues to mount up. The last *Lange Letter* (Winter) began a listing of geographic sources of these names so heartily scribed! We continue... USA: *Florida* - Miami; *Kentucky* - Louisville; *Maryland* (Mother Lange's state of residence) - Ocean City, Olney, Owings Mills, Pasadena, Perry Hall, Pikesville, Randallstown, Reisterstown, Relay, Severn, Severna Park, Silver Spring, Suitland, Sykesville, Towson, Upper Marlboro, Waldorf, Welcome, Westminster, Windsor Mill, Woodstock (A to N next edition); *Massachusetts* - Cambridge; *Michigan* - Auburn Hills, Bloomfield Hills, Brighton, Canton, Clarkston, Ceresco, Dearborn (Heights), Detroit, Fenton, Grosse Pointe, Howell, Marquette, Monroe; *New Jersey* - Bloomfield, Cherry Hill, E.Brunswick, Forked River, Freehold, Hammonton, Irvington, Jersey City... (more next time); *New Mexico*; *North Carolina* - Louisburg, Williamston; *New York* - Baldwin, Bronx, Brooklyn, East Meadow, Elmont, Manhasset, Middleburg, Mt.Vernon, ... (more to come); *Ohio* - Cincinnati, Youngstown; *Pennsylvania* - Carbondale, Cresco, Dunmore, Immaculata, Lansdowne, Malvern, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Pittston, Scranton, West Chester... (more next time). Say these names out loud. Let them roll off your tongue. Chant them! Wonderful places! Others to come- the list continues in the summer edition. **Get some more friends to sign and send in.** The thousands need to be added on to....there's a saint in the making! **Mother Lange, pray for us!**

127th Anniversary of the death of Mother Mary Lange

Cardinal William H. Keeler principal celebrant

Sr. Magdala Marie Gilbert, OSP



Above: Feb. 8 Celebrant,
Cardinal William H. Keeler
with Dr. Marie Boursiquot,
Chairperson, ML Board member.

Mother Mary Lange Guild sponsored the spirit-filled celebration, on February 8, 2009, honoring the 127th Anniversary of the death of Mother Mary Lange, the Foundress of the Oblate Sisters of Providence. Cardinal William Keeler was the main celebrant at this

Eucharistic celebration flanked by visiting Concelebrants and Deacons. The Knights of Columbus, Mother Mary Lange Council #13573, acted as Honor Guards and helped to park cars. Mother Lange Chapters: Gift of Providence (Baltimore), Haitian United for Mother Lange (Baltimore/DC), Mother Lange Chapter (Cuba) and St. Peter Claver (Southern, MD) added to the occasion. The Ladies Auxiliary of the Knights of Peter Claver, Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange Court # 323 also honored us with their presence.

This was a wonderful day full of God's many blessings. The Lord sent us delightful weather and a crowd of about two hundred and fifty to show their allegiance to this great woman of God, Mother Mary

Lange. The Lord is to be praised today and forever for all His goodness to us.

Deacon Turner was the homilist at this event and did an excellent job of tying everything together, giving us a well-rounded picture of Mother Lange in her time and the work of her daughters the Oblate Sisters, now. The Cardinal gave us hope that the process of the canonization of Mother Lange was not far off. Of course we all know that the cause must go through its phases: writing the book, presenting the miracle here to the Archdiocesan Tribunal and then back to Rome, but...we can still hope for a speedy resolve. God is still in control.

Refreshments were served after the liturgy. Good fellowship and camaraderie was enjoyed by all, and strangers became friends.

The Guild Members are to be commended and thanked for a job well executed. God alone can adequately reward them for all their hard work and dedication to the Cause of the canonization of Mother Mary Lange.



Devotees' presence honors Mother Lange.



Above: Deacon Curtis Turner, homilist, principal of St. Frances Academy, with wife and mother

Special Thanks

By Sr. Magdala Marie Gilbert, OSP

To the 127th Planning Committee honoring the death of Mother Mary Lange. Committee members were Marie-Alberte Boursiquot, MD, Chair: Mrs. Toni Moore-Duggan, President MLG, Sr. Magdala Marie Gilbert, OSP, Director, Mr. Daniel Medinger and Deacon Seigfried Presberry. They are to be commended for a well orchestrated day.

Although the committee spear-headed the day it was those behind the scene people like the other Board Members: Sr. Mary Annette Beecham, OSP, Fr. John Bowen, SS, Ms. Florence Cowans, Sr. Veronica de Los Santos, OSP, Carol Depestre, Mrs. Theresa Wilson Favors, Fr. Donald Fest, SSJ, Dr. Kirk Gaddy, Sr. Marcia L.

Hall, OSP, Sr. Canisius Mary Hansberry, OSP, Mr. Lenwood Johnson, Sr. Marina Kelly, OSP, Ms. Laverna Scruggs, Sr. Madeline Swaboski, IHM and Christine Tolson, who did their part to make the day a wonderful success. Each member was an asset to the working of the whole. God has already rewarded everyone for their time and effort. Nothing done in the name of God ever goes unrewarded.

God bless those who were not members of the Board who took part in the incense procession namely, Sisters Stephen Beauford, OSP, Brenda Cherry, OSP, Anthonia Nwoga, OSPN, Aracelly Vargas, OSP, Anthonia Ugwu, OSP and a special thanks to Janice Curtis Greene, a Board member, for her role as Mother Mary Lange. Special thanks to our drummer Ellis Michael Lee who set the tone by calling all to worship.

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

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