



mission

magazine

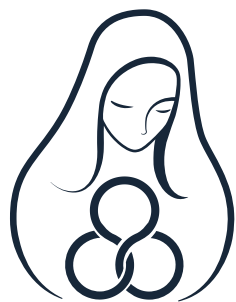
FALL 2019



TEACHING THE WHOLE PERSON:
Sr. Maria Mater Dei Fritz, SOLT

LABORERS FOR THE VINEYARD:
Sr. Megan Mary Thibodeau, SOLT

A PLACE TO CALL HOME:
Fr. Dan Estes, SOLT



SOCIETY *of* OUR LADY
of the Most Holy Trinity

A message from the
**GENERAL
PRIEST
SERVANT**



Forming the Will

In this edition of the SOLT Mission Magazine, you will have the opportunity to read about some of our apostolates in education.

Whether it be in schools, parish catechism classes, or even in one of our drug rehabilitation clinics in Thailand, education forms a very important part of our ministry.

In April 2008, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI visited the United States and gave an address to Catholic educators. At the time, I was myself working in education as the President of a Catholic high school and so was particularly keen to hear his message and insights. One of his comments that struck me profoundly was the following: "While we have sought diligently to engage

the intellect of our young, perhaps we have neglected the will."

In the classical Christian view of the human person, the intellect and will are the spiritual faculties which enable us to know truth (the intellect) and to freely choose the good (the will). Our intellect and will are what distinguish us from the rest of creation and enable us to know and love God. The comment of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI highlights that while we rightfully recognize the importance of handing on knowledge to students, we should never forget the crucial importance of assisting them in the formation of their will. In other words, to help them recognize the moral good to be done, and then to act accordingly.

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***Disciples of Jesus through Mary living in Marian-Trinitarian communion,
serving on Ecclesial Family Teams in areas of deepest apostolic need***

So how does one form the will? Here in South Texas, there are a lot of Dallas Cowboys football fans who are extremely dedicated to making sure they watch every snap of every game, and who make clear by their Cowboys paraphernalia, that nobody accuses them of cheering for another team. Now, nobody is born a Cowboys fan. It is very clearly an interest and behavior which is formed. One first gets exposed to games on the television, or perhaps in person, one identifies the team as being their favorite for one reason or another – in many cases because it is the hometown team or most cheered for by family and friends, and gradually one is conditioned to cheer for their team until they get to a point where their will is so conformed to Cowboys football that they consistently choose to watch every game and follow the team as closely as possible. In other words, from a position of zero desire or interest when they were born into this world, they become rather passionate fans who have their will consistently ordered toward choosing Dallas Cowboys football.

Returning to the notion of Catholic education, whether occurring in a school, parish or family setting, the point is to say that a major part of the goal of education is to assist students to

conforming and ordering their will to choosing Christ and the authentic moral good which will lead them to happiness and holiness in life. Forming the will to Christ ultimately means growing in virtue whereby we are habitually disposed to acting in charity. In terms of how to accomplish the goal of forming the will towards Christ, the process is not dissimilar to the process of becoming a Cowboys fan! Namely, it involves teaching and sharing with others the Word of God, providing opportunities to experience the joy of living the Gospel and serving others, and providing a witness to the joy that comes from living a life of virtue in Christ. Further, and to our assistance, whereas nobody is born a Cowboys fan, each of us is created for the love of God and therefore, in God's design, the decision of the will to love God and neighbor after the pattern of Jesus naturally leads to a happiness and fulfillment in life that nothing else can match. It is the sweetness of this lasting fulfillment that reminds and affirms us that we are indeed created for choosing love.

The youth of today can very easily fall prey into thinking that the good they should pursue with their free will is power, fame, riches or pleasure. At our SOLT missions and educational facilities, following the advice of Pope Benedict XVI, we are keenly aware that education is about much more than informing the intellect with knowledge, it is also about forming the will to be able to choose Christ as the authentic life to live that leads to happiness, fulfillment and eternal life. This is after all what we have been created for.

Left: Fr. Art distributing Holy Communion to the students of Carabel Learning School.



FR. PETER MARSALEK, SOLT

Fr. Peter, originally from Burlington, Ontario, is currently serving as the General Priest Servant of SOLT. He resides in Corpus Christi, TX.

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After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.” (Luke 5:4)

Where SOLT Serves...

AMERICAN REGION

BELIZE

BELIZE CITY-
BELMOPAN

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APOSTOLIC VICARIATE
OF EL PETEN

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QUERETARO



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MACAU

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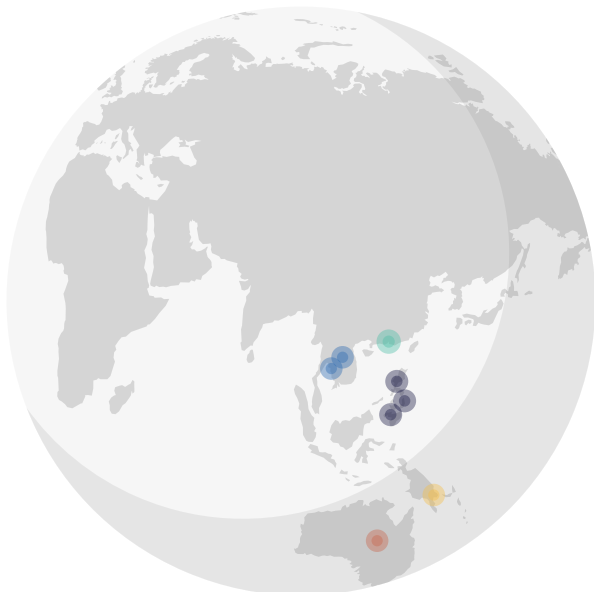
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PAPUA, NEW GUINEA

MT. HAGEN

THAILAND

RATCHABURI
CHANTABURI



PHILIPPINES

CACERES
LEGAZPI
SORSOOGON
DAET
NOVALICHES
LIBMANAN
SAN JOSE IN
NUEVA ECIJA



Teaching the Whole Person



Top: Sr. Maria Mater Dei, SOLT and Sr. Mary of Holy Hope, SOLT share lunchtime with the children at Our Lady's Mostessori School.

Top: Elementary students paint as part of their lesson.

It has long been a desire of my heart to come to know more about Montessori education. I studied elementary education in college, but only two sentences were mentioned about Dr. Maria Montessori and her work in all of my coursework. Those two sentences and a time observing at a small Montessori school in Eudora, Kansas were enough to set afire a little flame to know more.

Maria Montessori was a doctor around the turn of the last century in Italy. After observing children with disabilities, she was able to create materials that allowed these children to succeed in ways that no one had dreamed possible for them. After some time, these children, who were considered handicapped, were assessed and performed as well as "normal" children on national exams. The children showed such a desire to learn. It was almost as if there was within them a little bird ready to take flight. And there began the Montessori model.

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Montessori provides hands-on materials and allows the children to teach themselves, following their interior inspirations.



Above: Fr. Scott Brossart, SOLT celebrates Mass for teachers and students at Our Lady's Montessori School in Kansas City.



Above: An elementary student engages in a geography lesson.

Montessori provides hands-on materials and allows the children to teach themselves, following their interior inspirations. A trained guide is in the classroom, but she is to follow the child and his desires, provided that they are ordered and good. Little has changed over the years and many guides have attended schools to learn this method and continue to follow the child, teaching him reading, grammar, math, and sciences as he shows interest with materials that spark his desire to learn.

Our Lady's Montessori School (OLMS) has served children in the Kansas City area since 1973. SOLT founder, Fr. James Flanagan, encouraged this method of education to develop the whole person of the child. In its early days, the school had both primary (ages 3-6) and elementary (ages 6-12) classrooms. Since the school relocated in 2002, it has had a flourishing toddler and preschool program. Recently, the sisters and board of directors decided to open an early elementary classroom for grades 1-3 to expand on this vision. Last year, when I was asked if I wanted to study Montessori education in order to become the guide in this new classroom, my answer was an enthusiastic yes!

This past summer was a time of renovations to make our classroom ready for older students. Many parents of the OLMS community donated their time, talent, and materials to make our new space beautiful. In August, we opened the room to nine students, ages 6-9! The children are enthusiastic learners and excited to arrive at school each day. They can't wait to get their hands on the materials designed to teach them math, handwriting, grammar, geography, and more. We pray that our little classroom continues to grow and thrive and to serve many more children in the years to come.



SR. MARIA MATER DEI FRITZ, SOLT

Sr. Maria is originally from Garnett, Kansas. She studied elementary education at the University of Kansas and professed her perpetual vows as a SOLT sister in 2017. She currently serves at Our Lady's Montessori School in Kansas City.

Laborers for the Vineyard

Serving in all areas of education has been an important apostolate for the SOLT Sisters, whether it be in the traditional classroom, Montessori, religious education in the parish, or in some other fashion, and a manifestation of our charism from our first beginnings. Although currently we are small in number, about 110 professed Sisters, we serve in seven countries and in a large number of educational ministries. Everywhere from Kansas City to Belize to Papua New Guinea to the Philippines, teaching and handing on the faith is part of our daily lives.

One striking feature of many of the schools and missions where we serve is that prior to our arriving there, another religious community had been present and serving God's people. We stand in a long line of witnesses, who have been steadfastly imparting the faith for many generations. Many times when religious communities can no longer remain in a particular location, they pray that the Father would send other laborers into His vineyard, and so often their prayers are heard. Even the beginning of our community can be traced back to a prayer of this kind.

Fr. John McHugh, SOLT, at the time young diocesan priest, was serving as pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Holman, New Mexico. At the end of the 1957 school year, Fr. John was informed that the Sisters of Loretto, who had faithfully served in the school for many years, would be leaving and shortly after that, the school building burned down. These two events and surely other stresses of parish life, prompted Fr. John to go into the church to kneel before the beautiful statue of our Blessed Mother and pray, "Mary, do something for this valley!"



"Then Jesus approached and said to them, 'All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.'"

Matthew 28:18-20





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We recognize that in being called to impart the faith, we are simply giving as a gift what we have received as a gift. (Matthew 10:8)

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Fr. John's prayer was answered in an unexpected way. Within months, Fr. Flanagan arrived in Holman from Boston with a number of women, trained as teachers and aspiring to be sisters, to begin the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity (SOLT). The school was quickly rebuilt along with the convent and soon Immaculate Heart of Mary School was back up and running under the guidance of the SOLT Sisters. From there, SOLT has gone on to continue the good work that had been begun by others and to continue to hand on the faith in areas of deepest apostolic need.

We recognize that in being called to impart the faith, we are simply giving as a gift what we have received as a gift. (Matthew 10:8) So many individuals have come before us and handed on to us the beauty of the faith and we now have the obligation to continue to hand it on to the next generation. Each of us, as Catholics and Christians, are called to "go out and make disciples of all nations" and to teach them to observe all that He has commanded us (Matthew 28: 19, 20). May we have the courage to answer the call we have received. And may we know the fulfillment of His promise that He will be with us until the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20)



Above: : Fr. John Mchugh, co-founder of SOLT, and children in Holman, NM; Sr. Emmanuel helps students with Bible studies during Catechism class in San Pedro, Belize.

Opposite Page: Students outside of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish School in Holman, New Mexico during the early days of SOLT. Sr. Maria Rosario, SOLT teaching at a family home in Guatemala, Sr. Rosary Marie teaching in the Philippines. Sr. Kateri Marie, SOLT is currently the principal at Holy Redeemer in Detroit Michigan.



SR. MEGAN MARY THIBODEAU, SOLT

Sr. Megan is originally from Monroe, CT and graduated from Franciscan University of Steubenville with a degree in history. She has been the General Sister Servant since 2013 and is currently living in Corpus Christi, Texas.

a place to call home



Above: Sr. Solanus Casey, SOLT shares a moment with a Santa Maria student, who has been learning needle point; Sr. Mary Scholastica, students and teachers assemble for a group picture outside of Casa de San Jose.

The school year is now underway

at Santa Maria del Mexicano. The beginning of the year has been a bit hectic as we get to know the new members of our family and as everyone gets settled in. We are grateful to be able to serve 180 children and 25 elderly this year.

As is always the case, there are many more children seeking placement than we can accept, and it seems to me the living situations that many of our children are coming from get worse each year. They are exposed to more violence and abuse all the time, which is why the work of Santa Maria is so important. Here at Santa Maria, many of our children find a safe place for the first time and would rather not go home. It is such a blessing for them not to worry about their next meal, the leaks in the roof of their house, or the clothes they need. For once, they can simply be children with the concerns of the daily life of a child.

One of our children, Diana, shared the following story. "When I was 2 years old, my mother died in an accident and my father abandoned us. So my brothers and I went to live with my grandmother. As she was very old and lived



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Santa Maria plays a significant role in the lives of the people of central Mexico and relies on the generosity of so many from all parts of the world in order to continue.

alone, she did not have what she needed to feed and care for us, and so she brought us to Santa Maria where we have studied and lived since. It is here, at Santa Maria, that I have come to understand the importance of helping others. I know when I helps others, I can help them to be transformed and become better.” Her story is quite typical of our children at Santa Maria.

One of the most significant blessings that we have received this past year is the assistance of several volunteer groups in helping us to improve the formation of our caregivers. As our children are arriving at Santa Maria with many serious issues due the traumas they have suffered in their lives, our caregivers are in need of further training. Our caregivers are truly dedicated to the mission of Santa Maria and we are grateful to be able to offer

them further training. All of us need to continually learn and improve ourselves so we are better able to attend to the children’s needs with care and compassion in order for them to heal. As we go forward, I foresee that we will need to expand our staff, especially in the area of counseling, to meet the needs of our children.

We are very grateful for all of you who support Santa Maria with your visits, donations and prayers. Santa Maria plays a significant role in the lives of the people of central Mexico and relies on the generosity of so many from all parts of the world in order to continue. If you also feel called to assist this work, please visit santamariadelmexicano.org for more information.

Please keep all of us at Santa Maria in your prayers.

Clockwise (from top left): Student at Casa de Jovenes stands in the doorway; students at Santa Maria learn various skills, including auto repair; students serve and attend Mass regularly.



FR. DAN ESTES, SOLT

Fr. Dan is originally from Wyoming and was ordained a priest for SOLT in 1999. He has been serving at Santa Maria since 2016.



Above: Sr. Cecil, SOLT celebrates the feast of St. Philomena with students at Santa Maria del Mexicano in Colón, Mexico.



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On the front cover: Fr. Scott Giuliani, SOLT teaches a lesson at the local school in Maskall, Belize

Right: SOLT priests celebrate Mass at the Carabel Learning School in the Philippines.



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