

October 28, 2010

Dear Sisters and Friends,

Before Sister Adalberta and I begin our return flight to Rome, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for the time we have been able to spend with you. It has been a challenging schedule, but a great joy and grace to have been able to be with you these three months. We have many wonderful memories to take to Rome with us. The Sisters there are waiting to hear about our adventures. You, too, can view some of them if you go to our website and check out Album 2. There you will find a file for Ellis Island and one for Mendham. Enjoy! I also want to thank those who gave us directions, led us to familiar territory when it was dark, or who actually transported us as we curved through the hills and valleys of our beautiful country. We made some wrong turns at times, but we are grateful that we could find all of our convents. Some I had never been at before, some I always get lost trying to find them, and for some the roads have been changed since I was last there.

In my September letter you had travelled with us to Williamsport and Monroe Township. We spent the Labor Day weekend in Mendham. This gave me the opportunity to make a short visit to see my aunt who is a resident in the King James Care Center in Chatham Township. She didn't know that I had visited, but I know that I did and that is important to me. Sister Margaret ministers there each week, and for that I am grateful.

After Labor Day we went on a three-week excursion, which I nicknamed the Route 80 segment of the visitation. We began by spending a week with our Sisters in Danville. That is always a nice experience both for the Sisters and for us. During our stay, some of our Sisters were in the hospital so we had the opportunity to visit them there. This was the first time either of us had been in Geisinger. It is a massive complex, but everyone we met was very friendly and helpful. On Sunday afternoon we made a visit to the Basilica at the Sisters of Sts. Cyril and Methodius. The Sister who used to live at Holy Spirit was at their entrance and gave us a tour and short history of the basilica. It is very historical and beautiful. I also had had the opportunity of attending Mass there one morning. After that we drove through their massive property to see their buildings for different levels of care and then on to their Retirement Village. As often as I have been in Danville, I had never seen any of that. It was rainy on Sunday, so on Monday evening we made a visit to our cemeteries in town and enjoyed recalling the lives of so many Sisters whom we knew and/or lived with whom we lived. And of course, we prayed for them. Since we were out, we also drove around some of the town to see parts that we usually don't see. During the week we also visited our Sisters buried on the property. Sister Xaveria Kashke, the first superior in New Orleans and the sister of Sister Josefa who was the first superior of the orphanage in Steele, is buried there. A picture of her tombstone is on our website. For me, that connection to our beginnings is powerful. One afternoon, towards the end of our visit, Sister Adalberta and I took a walk to town. We visited Beiter's and also the Dollar Store just to see what they had. Both were very interesting and carried something of almost anything you could think of. During this time I was also able to attend the funeral in Tamaqua of the mother of Father Tom Baddick, a friend from my days in Reading. We have remained in contact through the years and I was very happy to be able to support him at this time. Roberta, our discernor, is from his parish, so she also attended. It was in Danville that I also celebrated my birthday, so we remained for the Wednesday party and then left for Wilkes-Barre.

Our two Sisters from Pittston joined us for supper and the opening of the visitation at St. Nicholas. On Thursday we were able to attend the 8:00 Mass with all the students from St. Nicholas-St. Mary's School. This was a wonderful experience. The students who served as altar servers, lectors, and leaders of song and those who participated in the Offering of the Gifts did a marvelous job. The Mass had been prepared by one of the 7th grade classes. All the students were so well behaved. At the end of

Mass I had a delightful surprise. A woman carrying her child approached me and said, "Do you remember me?" I recognized her face, but could not put a name to her. She had been one of my students in Reading. Two of her children now attend St. Nicholas-St. Mary School. That evening we spent with our two Sisters in Pittston. The next day we visited Good Shepherd Academy. We were greeted by the pre-K class and had our picture taken with them. On our website Sister posted some of the notes we received from the students. It was a nice surprise to meet a student I had taught at Bishop O'Reilly High School. She is now a third grade teacher at the school. What a small world. On Saturday we visited the two cemeteries – the one at our former St. Ann's Academy and the other, St. Nicholas Cemetery in Shavertown. Again, we could enjoy recalling some of our province history and Sisters.

Sunday afternoon found us again on Route 80, this time on our way to Rockaway, but not before we climbed the very scenic and beautiful (when it is not foggy and snowing) Route 115. What magnificent views we had! Fortunately our Sisters in Rockaway arrived home from their parish picnics shortly before we pulled in. On Monday we visited St. Mary's Parish in Dover where Sister Thomasine ministers. While there Sister arranged for us to visit our former school which is now a school for autistic children. What wonderful work those teachers do. I had never had any experiences with autism, so it was a real education for me. Some of the children are not able to express themselves verbally, but they can write what they want to say using a computer. One young boy, around 9 or 10 years old gave us a demonstration. When he came into the room, we said "Hi." After he got settled at the computer, with the teacher helping him control his arm movements, he typed "Hi. I like your hats. Please let everyone know that this is possible for those without a voice." It brought tears to our eyes. Later one of the teachers gave us a test to help us get a better understanding of what a person with autism goes through. We knew we had to draw a circle, square, triangle and curve and then trace the star. However, we had to do so looking into a mirror. We all knew what we had to do, but were unable to do it. It is the same with the children. They know what they must do, but their bodies just are not able to cooperate. Needless to say, the experience was an eye-opener for us. And what patience the teachers and parents of these children must have!

Tuesday we began the day participating with the students of St. Cecilia School in their prayer service for the International Day of Peace. The entire school assembled around the grotto. The mayor of Rockaway was present and read a proclamation declaring the day as a Day of Peace in Rockaway. Then students and faculty led the students in prayer. It was very well planned. Each class had also made a poster for the occasion. Afterwards we visited some of the classes. To my disappointment, in the upper grades I couldn't find anyone whose favorite subject was math! After enjoying a very tasty lunch that one of the mothers made as a surprise for us, we began our "long" journey to Denville. However, we first made a detour and did some shopping at K-Mart.

It was nice to be back again in Denville where I had been missioned for 7 years. There are not many people there now who were on the staff at my time, but seeing how things have changed is always interesting. We had a nice evening with the Sisters and the next day attended Mass in the school chapel, after which we were introduced to the chaplain and principal. Later in the morning we had an appointment with the president. He is very interested in making Mother Pauline and her charism better known among the faculty and students. We gave him some suggestions. As we passed some rooms, he asked what they were at my time. I was able to give him some history of the building and also told the story of how the computer classes began with one time-share computer for a class of 30 students. Then we progressed to 3 PET computers. My, they have come a long way in the last 25 years!

From Denville we returned to Mendham. On September 23 we had the privilege of going with the Sisters to Ellis Island to see the exhibit on the Sisters in America. It is so well done. I would encourage whoever can to make the trip and take pride in all that women religious have accomplished in

our country through the years – and all the hardships that went with their efforts. The exhibit will be at Ellis Island until the middle of January. You can find some pictures on our website in Album 2. Then it was great seeing so many of you at the Assembly and enjoying with you both the program and the Saturday night recreation. We learned very much and also had some very good laughs together.

Since I usually get lost when I go to Jersey City, after the Assembly Sister Joann Marie was kind enough to drive us there. That evening we had a special treat. We visited the “Tear Drop Memorial” that the Russian people gave us to commemorate 9/11/2001. If you check our website and in the left column select “Album 1 and 2” and then “Album 2” – Mendham 2010, you can find pictures of this beginning at the end of page 8 into page 9. If you are ever in the Bayonne area, it is worthwhile to visit this monument.

From Jersey City we traveled to the Bronx. Sister Francis had written very good directions for us, but Sister Joann Marie also gave us her GPS. It had to keep recalculating, but we did follow its direction to always stay to the right. Thank God we did. There had been an accident on the bridge and the trucks were lined up it seemed like miles. We drove along side of them and were able to get right near the toll booths. It was slow going from there, but we avoided the hour or more we would have had to wait if I had gotten immediately in the lanes for the upper level.

While in the Bronx we traveled with Sister Jude and Sister Janice Marie to Christo Rey High School. This was our first experience with seeing this type of school in operation and it was very interesting. The young people are really learning the skills they need to succeed not only in college, but also in life. I hope they all do well. Sister Anna, with the help of other Sisters, made a delicious Vietnamese dinner for us with egg rolls, spring rolls and clear noodles. We enjoyed it so much that we ate leftovers for lunch the next day. And a visit to the Bronx would not be complete without visiting Sister Anna Theresa’s second grade. The students entertained us with several songs that they had learned.

From the Bronx it was back to Mendham and then on to the City of Brotherly Love the next afternoon. What better time could we have visited there than during the parish’s Oktoberfest celebration! After sharing with the Sisters in the evening we went out to enjoy the music and to meet some of the teachers who were there. Unlike the summer carnivals of old (those who spent summers in OLHC know what I mean) this celebration ended around 10 p.m. It was a real family celebration, with games and food and a happy time together.

The following week we slept in Mendham and made day trips to the Novitiate, Postulancy, Metuchen, and Ocean City. On Friday we were able to visit Sr. Mary Edward at the Diocesan Office and Sr. Mary Kim at Care One. Both were new ministries which we had never seen before. Each day had its own joys, especially sharing with our Sisters in prayer, conversation and meals. When possible I assisted a little in the preparation of supper. That was fun. We are convinced that all of our Sisters are good cooks. Thank you for taking care of our bodily needs with such love and concern.

We visited two heart-linked communities next: first the Allentown, Bangor and Reading community and then the Bernardsville, Florham Park and South Orange community. For the first we opened in Allentown and returned there each evening. On Monday and Tuesday mornings we were able to make short visits to the Cathedral, Sacred Heart Hospital and the pre-school and kindergarten at OLHC. Monday afternoon we traveled to Reading, stopping on the way to visit the sister of Sister Janice Borst. Janet had visited me in Mendham and asked me to come to see their new home. And since Dolores Shemanski lived near, Janet also invited her for our short visit. It was nice seeing some friends from my time in Reading. Tuesday afternoon we traveled the very scenic route from Allentown to Bangor. The trees were just magnificent. We were hoping we would be able to enjoy a colorful autumn

while we were in the States, and we have not been disappointed. We had a very “gemütlich” time with our Sisters in each of the convents.

For our visit to our Bernardsville, Florham Park, South Orange community, we spent the night in Mendham and traveled each day to one of the convents. It was nice just spending some hours with our Sisters and sharing with them in prayer, meals and conversation. We were able to complete the visitation in Bernardsville in time to return to Mendham for their Oktoberfest – a long journey to Paderborn on the newly christened ship the SS Mallinckrodt. Our hosts and hostesses were very amiable and entertaining. The chef served a delicious German dinner of Sauerbraten, red cabbage and spaetzle.

After a break of two days we were again on Route 78, this time heading for Camp Hill. This was our home base as we visited our Sisters in Lewistown and Holy Spirit. Our trip to Lewistown the next day was foggy part of the way, but we still got a glimpse of the beautiful scenery. The school and convent seem to be at the “Top of the World” looking down on creation! The view of the mountains from their chapel window is breathtaking. The parish was having their Forty Hours Devotion at the time. Although we didn’t stay for the closing celebration we did take some time for adoration. Sister Marlene was able to join us for lunch, after which she gave us a tour of the K – 5 school, because this was our first visit there. The children are precious. While at Holy Spirit we were able to squeeze in a visit some of the new and/or renovated areas. We are amazed at the technology that is used in healthcare today. It is really mind boggling.

We were very happy to be able to join our Sisters at Danville as they celebrated the Jubilees of their Sisters: 3 for 80 years, 1 for 75, 5 for 70 and 2 for 65 or 75 years of consecrated life as a Sister of Christian Charity. WOW! Our gratitude goes to these Sisters for the example they have given us by their dedication, perseverance and their life.

In order to hear the report about what those entering religious life now are looking for, we altered our schedule a little and returned to Mendham after Danville’s Jubilee. I was glad to see so many Sisters there. Brother Paul did an excellent job and gave some good hints that I hope we put into practice.

On Monday we returned with the Sisters of the Provincialate to Holy Spirit to attend the Annual Boards Dinner and the annual meetings the next day. On Tuesday morning the executive committee of the hospital gave just the Sisters an update of all that is happening. Health Care Reform will require many adjustments. Let us keep our Sisters in health care in prayer as they strive to continue to bring Christ’s loving compassion to all in need.

Now it is time to return to Rome. We are all packed – Sister Adalberta is better at that than I am, and will fly with Lufthansa first to Munich and then on to Rome. We will hopefully arrive at Villa Paolina around 3 p.m. Rome time which would be 9 a.m. Mendham time. Please keep our flights in your prayers. And thank you again for everything. We will bring your love and greetings to our Sisters who are eagerly waiting our return.

Many greetings from Sister Adalberta.

With grateful love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sister De Sales".