

Order celebrates beatification of Mother Theresa of Jesus

Mother Theresa of Jesus Gerhardtinger, the foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, will be beatified on Sunday, Nov. 17, by Pope John Paul II in Rome.

In Rochester, the occasion will be celebrated with a special liturgy of thanksgiving Sunday, Nov. 24, at 10 a.m. in St. Michael's Church, Rochester.

Caroline Gerhardtinger, the only child of a shipmaster, was born in the Bavarian town of Stadthof in 1797. As a child, her vision of service to the children of the working classes was inspired by a wave of secularization which closed religious schools and caused a breakdown of family structures. Caroline's teachers, the sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame, were forced to leave the town and she saw the results — education for the children of the poor became almost non-existent.

With support and encouragement from Bishop Michael Wittmann of nearby Regensburg, 12-year-old Caroline and two other girls were trained as teachers to take the place of the sisters. Bishop Wittmann also prepared Caroline spiritually to enter religious life.

Between the bishop, his friend, Father Sebastian Job, and Caroline — now

Mother Theresa — a new apostolic vision was formed. In contrast to the large formal monasteries of that day, these founders envisioned a congregation of sisters who would go out in small groups to isolated rural villages. The sisters would establish schools for the most neglected children and share the lives of the people so that any village could support their presence.

The Congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame was founded in 1833. Shortly afterward, the congregation's first motherhouse was established in Munich. As their vision was realized, the founders began to see that the Christian education of girls and women was fundamental to the transformation of society.

Although the founding vision called for sisters to go out in two's and three's to live in rural isolation, unity was also a charism of the congregation. That charism took on greater importance as the congregation expanded throughout Germany and into America.

In 1847, Mother Theresa and five other sisters traveled to the United States to establish a foundation that would serve the needs of German immigrants here.

On June 18, 1848, Mother Theresa visited Rochester to explore the possibility of starting a foundation here. She



chose Buffalo instead at that time, but promised the School Sisters of Notre Dame would come back someday. That day came in 1854 when they came to serve at St. Joseph's Orphanage.

Today there are 8,000 School Sisters of Notre Dame serving in 31 countries. In the Diocese of Rochester, members of the congregation teach at the high school and elementary school level, serve in diocesan administration and in many other ministries.

Waiting for Godot

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other damned), as well as to Cain and Abel. The character Lucky (hauntingly played by actor and writer John Dunne), furthermore, begins his famous monologue with a sustained "explosion of the mind" (as Murphy terms it) about "the existence of a personal God ... with white beard" — a physical attribute later ascribed to the elusive Mr. Godot.

Whether, as Martin Esslin postulates in *The Theatre of the Absurd* (his classic study of Beckett, Ionesco, Genet and Pinter), "Waiting for Godot is concerned with the hope of salvation through the workings of grace," or, as he then counters, "a number of very ingenious (religious) interpretations ... seem to overlook ... (the play's) constant stress on the uncertainty of the appointment with Godot, Godot's unreliability and irrationality, and the repeated demonstration of the futility of the hopes pinned on him," critics will perhaps argue the point until Godot finally arrives — if ever he should.

Since Samuel Beckett steadfastly refuses newspaper interviews, television or radio appearances, or commentary on his own work, the ultimate "meaning" of *Godot* will remain a matter of perhaps interminable conjecture. Still, the debate continues to intrigue, madden, mystify and entertain audiences the world over.

With the proverbial luck of the Irish, there may still be tickets left for the Rochester/Dublin run's final three performances at Nazareth Arts Center, Thursday, Nov. 14, at 8 p.m.; Saturday, Nov. 16, at 2 p.m.; and Sunday, Nov. 17, at 8 p.m.

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what money they can to their families. They are men with deep-rooted commitments, Despeines said, and occasionally they neglect their own needs. At the same time, after years of separation from their families, the symptoms of hopelessness are becoming apparent.

"They are beginning to have depression, nervous breakdowns," Despeines said. "It's painful to see these good people turning to drinking or drugs or prostitution in despair."

Without legal refugee status, Despeines added, the Haitians cannot pull themselves out of the ranks of unskilled laborers. "Without knowing English and without papers (to establish their legal status in the United States), the fields are the only

choice," he said. Even for those who are in the United States legally, the tremendous influx of refugees in Florida has left few jobs of any kind.

Migrants in the Sodus-area orchards are paid \$10 for every bin of apples they pick. On a good day, a worker might fill six or seven bins. But when the crop is poor or there is not enough work, he earns little or nothing.

Working 12 hours a day, seven days a week leaves little time or strength for the migrant to study or get medical attention. Despeines has difficulty trying to deal with the multitude of migrants' problems in the few hours when they are not sleeping or working.

One of his goals is to get local radio stations in each town to provide some air time during the day for an educational broadcast to the migrants, who often carry small radios with them into the fields.

He also wants to help relocate Haitians outside Florida, where jobs are scarce and social services are heavily burdened by a concentration of refugees. "Some of them have said they'd like to stay around here (Sodus), but they don't know how to take the first step. They would need someone to help them get settled," he said. Each of those hopes brings him back to a need for community support.

Meanwhile, more migrants are coming to Sodus every year because there are so few

opportunities elsewhere. The local migrant population increased from 200 last year to nearly 400 this year, according to Despeines. But the Sodus crops have not increased, so there are fewer jobs and more crowded camps. "In a room for two people, there were five staying," Despeines said. More migrants are also living outside the camps, which makes them more difficult to reach and help.

He is undecided whether to return to Sodus next year or to continue studying for the priesthood in this country.

Whatever happens, he is determined to somehow continue his ministry.

"What else can I do?" he asked gently.

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