

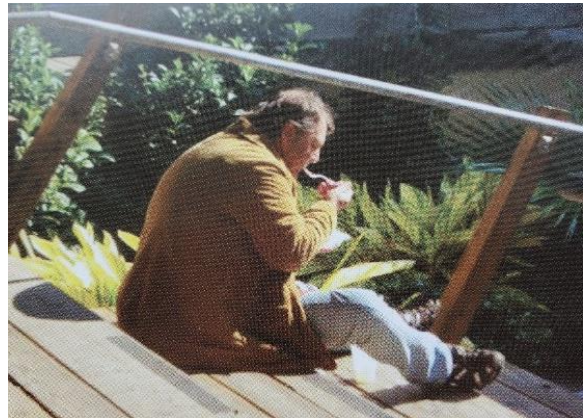
New Orleans “Collaborative Ministry Project” 2005 – with Personal Reflection by Marie Roche, pbvm Looking back from 2022

When asked at a 2003 Jubilee PBVM North American Conference Gathering “What would Nano do if she were in your place right now?”, together as Presentation Sisters we creatively fashioned a response that engendered deep excitement over the potential of what 850 Presentation women could do together for our world. This New Orleans “Collaborative Ministry Project” as it became known, was birthed from the sharing and discernment around the Chapter Decisions of all 8 Presentation Communities.

With their collaborative mission focus having been magnified by the Katrina event, it is amazing how nature can support a ministry, and then transform it, giving it life and energy that it might not have had. Their going was delayed but their enthusiasm was not dampened as they wholeheartedly embraced the unknowns around the new reality that awaited them among the now not only poor but increasingly destitute needing hope and support more than ever before.



*Sisters Joan and Beth filling an ice bucket
outside the Lantern Light trailer*



*One of many finding a welcome, loving support,
and hope at Lantern Light*

Years later In 2016 Joan (C) and Marie (L) shared some of their experiences in a New Orleans Ministry Project Interview with Betty Rae Lee, pbvm, our NL Provincial Leader (R). Their



PBVM - New Orleans Interview Joan and Marie - April 9 2016

Presentation hearts were deeply reflected in the interview in their evident passion and compassion for the poor, by whom they, too, were richly blessed. The video is not currently available.

Joan and Marie both spoke with deep compassion for the “guests”

they ministered among and with deep gratitude for the shared collaboration within the broader community, including so many volunteers, which enabled the mission to continue to evolve and become sustainable.



Sister Marie welcoming guests at Lantern Light as they "sign-in" for the day

In her personal reflections looking back from 2022, Marie shared some very special moments, beginning with how the dawning of each new day at Lantern light was in anticipation of its hidden mystery among God's poor ones.

Note: Joan passed away in 2021. Her life spoke gently yet profoundly what her words cannot now give voice to. Marie's story echoes Joan's own Presentation heart in their Walking One with the people they served with and ministered among in New Orleans.

Read more below in Marie's own words ...

One such moment still moves me to tears as I recall my first encounter with a homeless person. It was a dull, rainy, chilly day when I answered a knock on the door of the trailer. Looking cold and forlorn, was a tall, African American man asking for food he was sleeping under the main bridge with no means of opening a can of food even if he had one. His sincerity and gratitude for "a few pull-up top" cans of food and some crackers was very humbling especially when he asked God to bless me and said, "Could you give me a hug?" I replied, "I surely will give you a hug", as I stood up on tiptoes to reach him. His need to know that someone cared was very real. Many times, I prayed that this warm gesture would be heartwarming for this man and hopefully a sign of God's love despite the cold and the rain.

During the five years in New Orleans many blessed and privileged experiences came my way. The opportunity to share my gift of music with residents at the seniors home, across the river, was one such blessing and privilege. Music has such power to give life, to energize and lift spirits as was quite evident from the happy faces clapping hands and tapping toes of the residents that attended the music once a week. It was truly a heartwarming lifegiving event for all in attendance.

Among the many services available at Lantern light was a place to receive mail, something taken for granted by most of us as we check our mailbox. As guests "signed up" some were embarrassed when they had no fixed address. An unforgettable experience was while observing the joy and gratitude of a guest on receiving his Documentation as a Lawful Permanent Resident, a replacement Green Card. In his excitement he exclaimed, "Now I be a real person. I have ID. Can get job! Gracias, gracias!" A dream that hopefully one day will become a reality is that each homeless person will have "a place" to call home with their own mailbox.

Both Joan (after New Orleans) and Marie (before and after) have also given generously of their time and energies in passionately ministering among the poor and homeless in another "collaborative ministry project", known far and wide as simply [The Gathering Place](#) at home here in NL.