



The Lange Letter

Oblate Sisters of Providence



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Mother Mary {Elizabeth} Lange Guild News

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Photo courtesy of the Catholic Review



Mother Mary Lange prayer book and crucifix – circa early 19th cent. (On display at Mt. Providence Convent.)

A Day to Remember

Toni Moore Duggan, Mother Mary Lange Guild Board President, called the anniversary of the day Mother Lange died “A Day to Pause and Remember.”

February 3, 2008, could not have dawned more beautiful. It was a day made for celebration. Cardinal William Keeler, Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, was celebrant of a joyous Mass of thanksgiving for Servant of God Mary Lange’s life of heroic sanctity. Deacon Paul Shelton delivered the homily. A record number of Mother Lange devotees from local parishes and even a bus load from nearby Washington, D.C. paused to remember the day God called Mother Mary to Himself and she was able to say her own “It is finished.”

Excerpts from an article published in **The Catholic Review** authored by Toni in commemoration of the day Lange died, states:

“Before the Emancipation Proclamation, God placed the desire for consecrated life within the heart of Mother Mary Lange. As with the Virgin Mother, he quieted her soul and she said “yes.” That “yes” resounds in the lives of the Oblate Sisters of Providence today. “...Her call was to reveal the world of consecrated life to women of color as Paul revealed the life of Jesus to the Gentiles...Mother Mary laid down her life...and took up the cross with humility, perseverance and grace, trusting her life and the lives of her followers to the One who sent her...The Spirit of God was upon her. She chose to reveal to all people that...the God who dwelt among them dwelt within them. Mother Lange encountered many barriers in her quest for greater truth. God lined others in her path...Father Joubert, S.S. ...was her unfailing supporter. The transforming grace of God



The faithful give evidence of their devotion in a strong outpouring of presence during the Mass of thanksgiving for the heroic life and virtues of Servant of God Mary Lange during the annual Mass commemorating her death Feb. 3, 1882.

reinforced by the goodness of others fueled her call and her courage. Mother Lange moved beyond herself into the world as a bearer of God and an extraordinary prophet of change through uncharted waters. The life of this extraordinary woman, with her trust in the divine providence of God, speaks to the hearts of many. Her footprints continue to transform lives.

Now, more than 180 years...the Oblate Sisters of Providence continue to live the charisms trusting in Divine Providence...They continue to educate and evangelize children and adults of all colors and cultures. Her cause [for canonization] has progressed to our postulator in Rome. We ask continued prayers that, please God, her cause for sainthood will soon be realized. Continue to bring...needs to God through her intercession.”

The Catholic Review 1/24/08

Photo courtesy of J. D. Howard



Cardinal William H. Keeler, Archbishop Emeritus of Baltimore, pauses to share a picture with members of the Oblate Sisters of Providence Feb. 3, 2008

Photo courtesy of J. D. Howard

Mother Mary Lange and the Haitian Connection

By Marlene Rigaud Apollon

Although the Oblate Sisters of Providence and St. Frances Academy were founded by women of Haitian (St. Domingue) heritage and, until 1845, the sisters' annals were written in French, revealing a continuing attachment to the French language and culture; and although, in a letter to Fr. Kohlman of Rome, dated March 10, 1833, Fr. Joubert expresses his wish to establish an Oblate mission in Haiti¹ and, in another one, dated October 30, 1833, refers to St. Domingue as "my country",² by the time Mother Lange died in 1882, the connection with Haiti was completely severed. It would take more than 100 years for it to be reestablished, when around 1997, Fr. Maurice Elder Hyppolite in Haiti, Mr. Max Auguste in New Jersey and Fr. Andre Pierre in Washington, D.C., found out about her almost simultaneously.

Fr. Maurice Elder visited the sisters in Baltimore and arranged for Fr. Bowen, Sr. Virginie and Sr. Claudina to visit Haiti. This on-site visit was the first official introduction of the Oblate Sisters to the country of Mother Lange's heritage. They remain involved in the promotion of her cause.

Max Auguste, a promoter of the cause of Venerable Pierre Toussaint, joined the Mother Lange Guild and opened the

Pierre Toussaint et Mere Marie Lange Centre d'Information et de Services.

In June, 2006, the Center sponsored a pilgrimage to sites connected to Mother Lange.

In March, 2000, Fr. Andre organized a "Pilgrimage to the Source" which took Haitian-Americans of the Baltimore and Washington Metropolitan areas "in the steps of Mother Lange" and inspired the formation in September, 2000, of



Carole Depestre, co-chair of HAU explains the significance of vocation during the annual Dec. 8th Haitian Pilgrimage held at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Washington D.C.

Haitian-Americans United (HAU) for Mother Mary Lange.

Initially, HAU's mission was to promote the cause of Mother Lange., primarily among Haitians and people of Haitian origin and to translate literature and documents into French and Haitian Creole, as necessary. It later included "Returning Mother Lange to Haiti."

To fulfill its mission, HAU's members focused first on the Haitian-Americans in their immediate communities, distributing information at Haitian Masses, charismatic conventions and other religious



(Above photos from left)
Msgr. Andre Pierre, Secretary to the Bishop's Council, Haiti, West Indies,
Max Auguste, Director of the Pierre Toussaint & Mother Mary Lange Information and Services Center (Jersey City, NJ)
Father Maurice Elder Hyppolite, S.D.B., Historian & Theologian of College Dominique Savio, Petition-Ville, Haiti,

gatherings; publishing the book *Her Name was Elizabeth: The story of Mother Lange*, later translated in French, and an initiative of Fr. Andre Pierre, creating an annual "Mother Lange Writing Contest" for young people inviting them to participate as members of the Youth Choir in the

liturgies at Haitian pilgrimages.

We then reached out to the Haitian communities in other areas of the U. S., in Canada and in Haiti through publication of articles in French, Creole and English in Haitian newspapers, on Haitian mailing lists and websites and invitations to groups from other states to organize pilgrimages to Mother Lange sites of life and ministry. The latter initiative led to the formation in 2003 of the *New York Mother Lange Sainthood Cause Chapter*—which initiated the tradition, that HAU later adopted, of having a commemorative Mass in February

to honor Mother Lange—and, in turn, stronger relationship of HAU with the Brooklyn, NY based "National Center for the Haitian apostolate" (SNAA in Haitian Creole), founded and directed by Msgr. Guy Sansaricq, now an Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn.

Thanks to the strong support of Msgr. Sansaricq and the leadership of his Public Relations person, Buteau Espiegie, an affiliation made it possible to reach a much wider segment of the Haitian clergy and communities of Haitian origin both in Haiti and in other parts of the world. This was done through emails, lectures and workshops at SNAA's conventions, mini-conventions and radio and newspaper interviews. As more and more people learn about Mother Lange, the possibility of returning her to Haiti appears more promising.

To reach that goal, efforts have been made to discern vocations among Haitian and Haitian-American women and invite them to consider joining the Oblate Sisters of Providence. Haitian and Haitian-American priests recommended a few possible candidates, but for several reasons, including political upheavals in Haiti, language barrier and difficulty in obtaining a U. S. visa (or for the Sisters to travel to Haiti) so far, they have not been successful. Nevertheless, we remain convinced that, in His time,

(see Connection pg. 4)

