



# The Alaskan Shepherd

Volume 41 Number 6

August-September 2003



*Some give by going to the Missions*

*Some go by giving to the Missions*

*Without both there are no Missions*

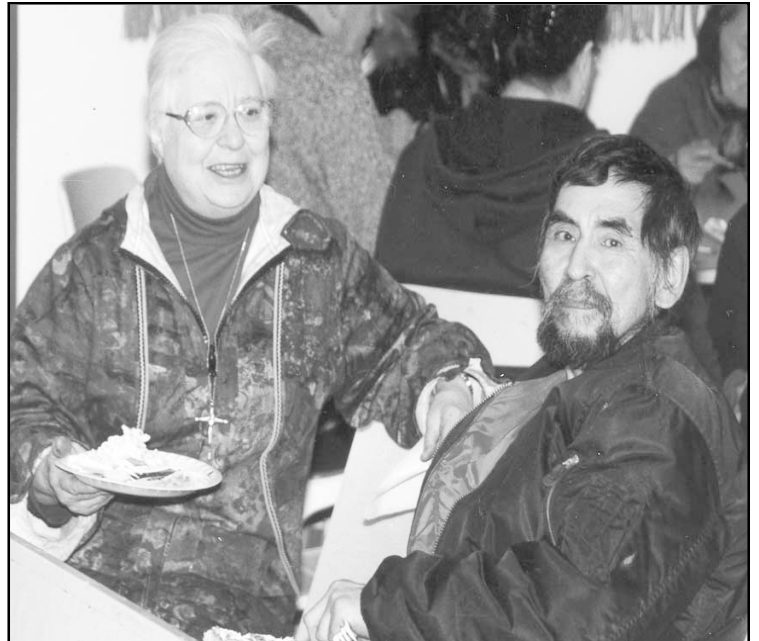
## SISTER ANNE HOGAN, C.S.J.: SHEPHERD IN KALSKAG ALASKA

*Editor's Note: One day, in 1996, while reading the National Catholic Reporter, Sister Anne Hogan, S.S.J., noticed an advertisement for the Alaskan missions. Intrigued and recalling a book she had read in second grade called, "Eskimo Twins"—she applied, interviewed with the late Bishop Michael J. Kaniecki, S.J., and shortly after, boarded a plane bound for Holy Cross, Alaska—population 300. Sister Hogan's service to the Alaskan Missions began after retiring from her career as a sociology professor in Ellenburg, New York—at the age of 63. She has served faithfully, the Kalskag community as Pastoral Minister and Pastoral Administrator. This is her story.*

As a seventy-year-old Sister of St. Joseph, I have just completed seven years in the Alaskan Bush living with the Native Yup'ik and Athabaskan folks. Why, after forty-two years of traditional ministries in the Diocese of Ogdensburg, would I spend one tenth of my life in rural Alaska? My answer resembles that of Ted Kerasoll who writes in his book, *Navigation*, "Each of us is given seventy years—a decent amount of time. In that time one shouldn't be afraid to take a year or two or even more to do something not on the straight path one originally chose in order to watch the slow turning of the stars and clouds and live with original peoples."

June 1996 found me flying around Alaska: Fairbanks, Galena, Holy Cross, and St. Marys. While Bishop Michael Kaniecki was piloting a Cessna 207, I was silently answering some soul-searching questions about my appreciation for Native people; survival skills for the long dark winters; willingness to use snowmobiles, boats, and all terrain vehicles for travel; and tolerance for long periods of solitude. After three days of prayer and discernment, I was ready for another leap into uncertainty as another chapter in my vocational journey began to unfold.

From August 15, 1996, until June 30, 1998, I was privileged to live and work at Holy Cross, Alaska, at a mission founded in 1888 by the Jesuits and Sisters of St. Ann. Elders told me that during the flu and TB epidemics, many orphaned children would have died without the



*Sister Anne Hogan, S.S.J., compliments Ed Michealson for his volunteer work for the Kalskag Community. (All photos courtesy of Sister Anne Hogan, S.S.J.)*

residential care they received at Holy Cross from dedicated missionaries.

Memories abound from my time at Holy Cross: moose peering in our kitchen window or climbing up the church steps; sliding down Holy Cross mountain with the elementary children; skating on Walker's Slough; and the double shift of religious classes on Wednesday afternoons. I also remember Sr. Frances McCarron and I going to the village dump for target practice. I remember going to Albert Lake to camp and hunt moose with the high school students. I learned about fixing things—not having to have repetitious lessons taught by busy people. Once, I responded to an Elder's call to fix an inoperable piano key. Since she had such faith in my supposed expertise, I grabbed a hammer and silently prayed that I would not make the piano worse for my intervention. Voila! The key has worked ever since and now I am on call to fix clogged drains, video machines, and a variety of gadgets that I know little about.

**CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NORTHERN ALASKA**  
1312 PEGER ROAD FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99709  
Phone: 907-474-0753      <http://www.cbna.info>

*A special Mass is offered every day of the year for you and for your intentions in one of the Missions. Please pray that God may bless us and our work.*



*As a Fulbright scholar in India (1980) Sister Anne never dreamed of going to the Arctic for seven years.*

By June 30, 1998, Sister Francis was reassigned to Tok, Alaska, and I to Kalskag, Alaska on the Lower Kuskokwim River. I often remember my forebears Sister Susan Debec, S.S.N.D., and Sister Linda Hogan, C.S.J., who served as pastoral administrators in the early nineties. Since I had regularly visited the Eskimo folks at Immaculate Conception church, in Kalskag, since September 1996, I was welcomed there and given an Eskimo name “Mayurturalia”—the ONE WHO CLIMBS THE MOUNTAIN. I learned that my namesake, now in heaven, climbed the mountain to pick berries until the end of her long life. Now that I was one of the Eskimo family, I was teased, corrected, and taken care of tenderly, when ill or injured.

On September 11, 2001, many neighbors called me to see if I wanted to watch the news on their television, or have someone stay with me for the day. For the first time, some realized that the state of New York and the Big Apple was not the same entity. They were saddened and had moist eyes as they do on Good Friday when the Passion is read.

There are eighteen words for sharing and four words for being mindful in my parishioner’s Eskimo vocabulary. Stinginess can be a serious fault. Choosing not to share the first catch of moose or fish of the season could bring the ungenerous ones bad luck. I found that these people with calloused hands and weathered skin are hunters, providers, and conservationists, with generous hearts. I lived among industrious people who seemed always to be working: hunting, fishing, trapping, repairing boats and nets, and revamping their dwellings—which

were affected by melting permafrost each spring. The women and girls make guspuks, fur hats, fur mittens, and fur boots, for their family members each fall. Natural medicines, teas, and berries, are collected from the tundra; grasses are gathered to line boats and line the huts of the husky doghouses in the village. Somehow, these folks are real existentialists, interiorizing Acts 6, by believing that if you are not in relationship you don’t even exist. As the Elders would say, “If we don’t connect, how can we influence others?” So these marvelous patriarchs, our trustees, stewards, and landlords, teach us by telling stories to us and helping us to uncover the hidden truth. So, I came to believe that everyone is my relative, and when trying to go berry picking alone or hiking alone (with a book in my satchel), I was reminded that such isolating acts could be called “swishing my air around” or being aloof. Sometimes I began to think that I was back in the 1954 novitiate once more where togetherness was a sine qua non! Because I was talkative and always inquisitive, I soon discovered that Native meals were times of quiet and TEA TIME reserved for talk. Inevitably, there was the teasing that came after my *gussuk* (Cossack) blunders. An eighteen-hour power failure prior to our 1998 New Year’s Eve service caused me to use a generator for minimal heat and light. Knowing how dark and cold our church would be for midnight service, I took my big bread pan full of snow and placed in it, dozens of tiny used candles to light up the front porch for church comers. At midnight, I brought the pan into the middle aisle, to provide light and some warmth. Just prior to this, a little boy accidentally tipped over a pail of water I needed to douse a fire. Suddenly, the flames hit the wax, and the fire seemed immense and noisy. The ladies took off their bandanas to fight the fire. In the ensuing chaos, we all forgot our two fire extinguishers. The parishioner, reading the Responsorial Psalm about God being our help and



*Visitors to Kalskag enjoy Sister Anne’s Moose Soup on a wintery afternoon.*

**We want to thank in a special way those of you who have included the Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska (our legal title) in your bequests and wills, and those of you who, at the time of the deaths of dear ones, have suggested that, in their memory, contributions be made to the Missions of Northern Alaska or to the Alaskan Shepherd Endowment Fund. For more information, please contact Tom Buzek, Facilitator of Business Activities: 907-474-0753.**

**CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NORTHERN ALASKA  
ALASKAN SHEPHERD  
1312 PEGER ROAD  
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99709-5199**

August 15, 2003

Dear Friends of the Missionary Diocese of Fairbanks:

*Fifty-seven years ago, in September 1946, under the supervision of Father Edmund Anable, S.J., and the Sisters of Providence, seventy-two 1st-4th grade students began classes in the basement of Fairbanks' historic Immaculate Conception Church. In 1961, six construction camp buildings and the old army officers club were moved to a site on Noyes Slough. These buildings, arranged under a single roof, became the home of Immaculate Conception School and of 115 elementary students. In 1955, the first 9th grade class met at Immaculate Conception Church. In 1956, a \$400,000 high school, named after Father Francis Monroe, S.J., founder of the first Catholic Parish in Fairbanks, was completed and opened. On May 29, 1959, Alaska was celebrating its first year of statehood and Fairbanks' Monroe Catholic High School graduated its first senior class, a class of six. By 1978, enough funding had been secured for construction on a two-story elementary school. In 1980, the first parent-funded kindergarten was held. Today, there are 450 students reaping the benefits of a Catholic education in Fairbanks.*

*Immaculate Conception School and Monroe High School comprise the only K-12 Catholic school system in Alaska. Situated in Fairbanks, just 100 miles south of the Arctic Circle, these schools educate students from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some live within walking distance, others travel 25 miles by bus or car, and still others have left their home villages and towns to board in Fairbanks to attend Catholic school. The Catholic Schools of Fairbanks provide an educational environment that is rooted in faith, rich in academic excellence, strengthened by service and nurtured by community.*

*Until the 1980's, ICS and Monroe employed large number of religious men and women and members of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. In the last 20 years, the JVC has turned its resources to other areas and there has been a significant decline in the number of religious. The religious and the volunteers provided a tremendous amount of time and energy at a very low cost. The increases in educational costs have gone largely to paying teachers and staff.*

*That is why we find ourselves knocking at your door. Contributing to the Catholic Schools of Fairbanks will ensure that the schools will be able to pay for textbooks, computer supplies, salaries, maintenance costs, and other costs associated with running a school. Additionally, your donation will help keep tuitions at affordable levels so that more families will be able to make the choice in the education of their children. Finally, you will be part of a tradition of giving—dating back to 1946 when the schools opened in the basement of Immaculate Conception church.*

TO: CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NORTHERN ALASKA  
1312 Peger Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99709 DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**Dear Bishop Kettler:**

Enclosed is my special donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the **Catholic Schools of Fairbanks Annual FUND**, a fund intended exclusively to help alleviate operational costs in the school.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to: CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NORTHERN ALASKA

*During the month of November, the month of Holy Souls, please remember in your Masses and prayers the following departed: \_\_\_\_\_*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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In Commemoration of Jubilee 2000, the Diocese of Fairbanks published, in 2001, a 96-page volume entitled,

## *A Brief Illustrated History of the Diocese of Fairbanks: Profiles of Prelates and Churches, Past and Present.*

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ copy(ies) of  
*A Brief Illustrated History  
of the Diocese of Fairbanks --\$25.00 each.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

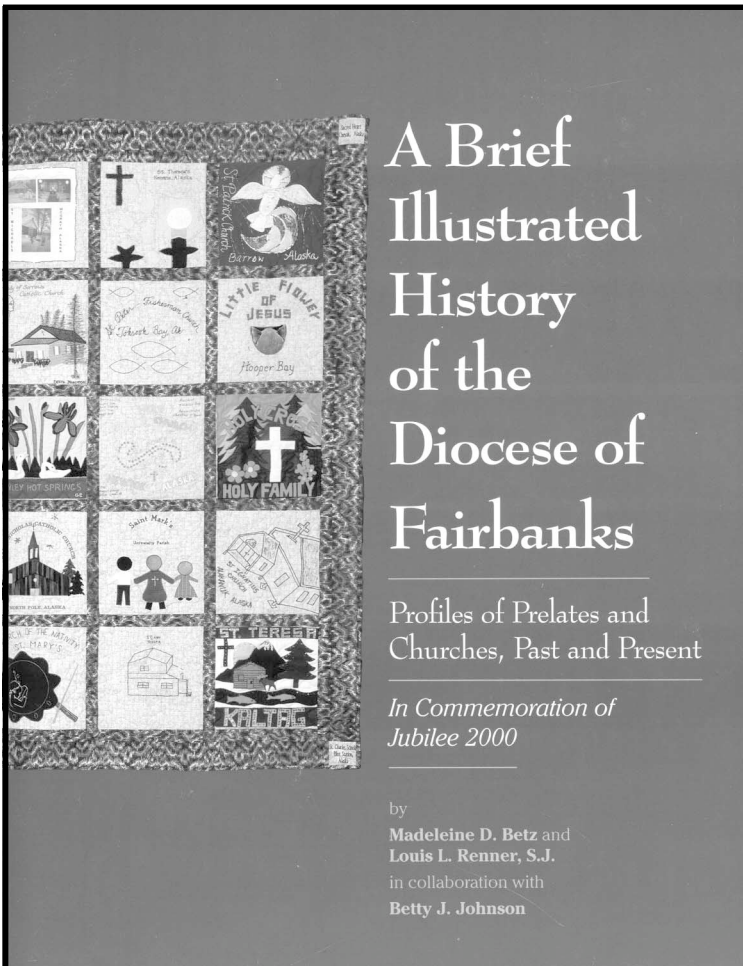
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The book begins with a Foreword and a digest history of the Diocese of Fairbanks by Madeleine D. Betz. Betz is also author of the second and largest part of the book, "Churches of the Diocese." This part has photos--most of them in color--of the 49 parish churches in use today. The photos are accompanied by a brief history of the given parish. The third section of the book, "Former Mission Churches" has photos of five one-time parish churches, with a brief parish history of each, written by Betty Johnson. Many will find the photos and brief histories of these five formerly active churches and parishes--Akukurak, King Island, Kokrines, Marys Igloo, and Pilgrim Springs--of special historic interest.

Part one of the book, "Prelates Past and Present," authored by Father Louis L. Renner, S.J., profiles men who have held ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the geographic region that today comprises the Diocese of Fairbanks. The men in question are: Bishop Modeste Demers; Archbishop Charles J. Seghers; Prefect Apostolic Paschal Tosi, S.J.; Prefect Apostolic Jean B. Rene, S.J.; Bishop Joseph R. Crimont, S.J.; Bishop Walter J. Fitzgerald, S.J.; Bishop Francis D. Gleeson, S.J.; Bishop George T. Boileau, S.J. (Bishop Boileau, though he died before becoming Ordinary of the Diocese of Fairbanks, is included since he was ordained bishop with right of succession to that post.); Bishop Robert L. Whelan, S.J.; Bishop Michael J. Kaniecki, S.J.; and Diocesan Administrator Richard D. Case, S.J. A black and white photo and a biographical sketch constitute the profile of each of these prelates.

The volume ends with photos and brief biographical sketches of authors Betz and Renner, as well as of their collaborator, Betty J. Johnson. It was Johnson who did the final editing and preparing of this book for publication. The truly attractive layout and design of the book is owing to the extreme care lavished upon it by Mr. Dixon J. Jones--a gratis contribution on the part of *Designata/Dixon J. Jones*--to the Diocese's Jubilee 2000 celebrations.



## *A Brief Illustrated History of the Diocese of Fairbanks*

*Profiles of Prelates and  
Churches, Past and Present*

*In Commemoration of  
Jubilee 2000*

by  
Madeleine D. Betz and  
Louis L. Renner, S.J.  
in collaboration with  
Betty J. Johnson

Salvation—kept right on reading. I decided to grab the pan, fire and all, and take it out into the sleet storm. I am teased still, about this incident being a possible “Second Pentecost” with so much simultaneous flame, heat, and light. Additionally, I am teased about leaving the mountain alone one day to check some bread that was rising. Later when the ladies found my bandana, they were sure the bears had eaten me. So much for going it alone!

On another occasion, I was “swishing my air around,” burning papers during a December snowstorm near a parish outbuilding where I store gas, in the church courtyard, when a spark caught some tall weeds. Before long, a spruce tree was aflame. People were coming from all directions with their dog food pails filled with water, to squelch the fire. Imagine my embarrassment when I saw the mayor driving the city truck loaded with firefighters armed with picks and shovels. Never again have I burned papers in that incinerator even during a rainstorm!

Parish life in the Alaska Bush often demands proclaiming the Gospel without words. I soon learned that there was no quick fix for problems—just being there was important. Hearing Scripture read by Native people thrilled me. When Native people preside and serve as Eucharistic ministers I felt deeply touched by this symbol of the universality of the church.

When not being directly involved in parish work, I found myself tutoring and mentoring adult learners who were obtaining college degrees by the University of Alaska Long Distance Learning Program. For two years, I administered diagnostic tests for grades 1- 11, for the Kuspuk School district, in Crooked Creek, Sleetmute, and Kalskag’s three schools. For three years, I helped with village, tribunal, state, and federal elections, hoping more



*High schoolers, unload their new Bell tower that they constructed from leftover steel from the new church foundation.*

folks would take time to become involved in their civic discourse and community building. Our tiny church provided seed money for a demonstration project: RESTORING COMMUNITY. This project is in its third year and initiates talking circles, grief work sessions, wellness rallies, and arts and crafts revival. This idea brings to mind Gandhi’s beliefs about community building being the highest expression of spirituality.

Having time to think and write impelled me to write regularly for the website Newspapers in Education; my community newsletter Fleur de Lis; and a mission column in my home diocesan weekly North Country Catholic. As I write these words in the spring, a battalion of mosquitoes and gnats are awaiting the “go ahead season.” Spring winds have meticulously pruned the tundra that will burst into flowers in late May and fireweed in August. I am grateful that indigenous growth right up to both front and back door pre-erupt raking and mowing the lawn. Our river broke April 30 this year, and ice floes churn in milkshake brown water in front of our church. As spring festoons drab lands with green vines, I know that by October 15 the landscape will again harden into a dungeon of white space sometimes described as lunar desolation.

I have learned a great deal about Sub-Arctic living from our diocesan radio station KNOM, which broadcasts



*Elders, after evening Rosary.*

twenty-four hours per day from Nome, with news, inspirational programming, and science informational programs. The latter, sends me to the window in the dark season to study the latest constellations, meteor showers, eclipses, satellites, and lunar positions. I remember the Elders, gathered for evening entertainment, in prayer, to watch Halley's Comet, to remember our finiteness, and to realize that we would never see this sight again during our lifetime.

Births and deaths are well celebrated in Native families. The name of the deceased (as previously mentioned), is assigned to the next boy or girl born in the village. The dying are lovingly cared for, and the bodies of the deceased are washed and prepared by the family. Caskets are made by village men while women prepare memorial feasts. After nightly wakes and songfests in the home, the church becomes the host for the family and deceased the night before the funeral. After the funeral and burial, all community members are gathered for a feast. Forty days later, there is a potlatch when the guests receive memorial gifts, sometimes owned by the deceased: handkerchiefs, potholders, socks, etc. When I spilled my hard picked berries or dropped a freshly baked roll on the floor, I learned that this food was to be burned—not consumed by me; the spirits were in need. Therefore, I learned to be mindful of those who were born into eternal life.

The mission statement of our parish: HOSPITALITY, SPIRITUALITY, and COMPASSION, generates and directs most of our activities. The parish has hosted summer youth programs (campfire and youth corps jobs) and has served as shelter for guests from Uzbekistan, Armenia, Belgium, St. Regis Mohawk Reserve, Seattle University, Pittsburgh University, Syracuse University, as well as women and children from the village who needed emergency housing. Villagers drop by for tea, coffee, sometimes prayer time, and meals. They also borrow videos from the church library. Our church has sponsored a music fest, an occasional evening retreat, and has become known as a quiet place to spend an hour or two with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. These moments provide a valuable connection that we share with folks of other religious traditions.

The Natives are attuned to matching their beliefs and practices to scriptural resources: 1.) *The psalms as Quyaná prayers.* 2.) *The Holy Eucharist as bread for the journey, to be consumed to assuage their hunger.* 3.) *The cleansing renewal qualities of Holy Water, especially for those who go hunting and fishing or have a lack of peace in their homes.* 4.) *The sealing and healing power of oil as experienced in Baptism, Confirmation, and the Sacrament of the Sick.*

The Yup'ik sense of God's presence overflows in compassionate acts to neighbors (near and far) who suffer: the hungry served by Catholic Relief Services, those who have lost a family member, search and rescue activities, home fires, etc. Recently the people took up a special collection for the victims of the Iraqi conflict. Rice Bowl money continues to pour in three weeks after the deadline each year.

I have been able to combine the charism of my religious community: *service of Christ in the dear neighbor, reconciliation of opposites, and/or the mandate: TO SERVE CHRIST UNTO THE GLORY OF THE TRINITY* in the Alaskan Bush. Moreover, I have been able to use the spirituality of Charles de Foucauld (Ministry of presence) the Catholic Worker and Jean Vanier L'Arche. My pilgrimage has culminated in integrating and savoring various expressions of Matthew 25. Yes, I have learned much in the last seven years. Missionary activity and help began in the Bush when communities were in crisis from epidemics. Sadly, some oral culture went to the grave with the numerous Native burials and displacement of Native homeless children. I cherish my days and years as a Missionary in the Alaskan Bush and take with me a poem published in the Delta Discovery by Bea Kristovitch about termination and praying goodbyes.

*When I come to the end of the day,  
And the sun has set for me,  
I want no rites in gloom-filled room,  
Why cry for a soul set free?  
Miss me a little, but not too long,  
And not your head bow low.  
Remember the love we once shared,  
Miss me, but let me go.  
For this is a journey we all must take,  
And each must go alone.  
It's all part of the Maker's plan,  
A step on the road home.  
When you are lonely and sick at heart,  
Go to the friends we know,  
And bury your sorrow,  
In doing good deeds.  
Miss me, but let me go.*

—Sister Anne Hogan, S.S.J.



Sister Anne Hogan, (back row near Tabernacle), and Bishop Kettler pose for a First Communion photo with Communicant William Lamont (Bishop's left.)

*Special thanks to those of you who have sent stamps! These 37¢ first class gifts are of great use to the Alaskan Shepherd.*

*Again we assure you that we never, under any circumstances, sell, exchange, or give out the names of our benefactors. This has been and continues to be our sacred pledge.*