

## **September 2008**



### **SSS Pioneering Health Care:**

#### **Zacapu, Michoacán, Mexico**

**Hope is the life force that fills the Sisters of Social Service in Mexico.**

This August, we were delighted to receive a new group of 14 young students that came from the Purepecha and rural farming areas of Mexico, **young women full of passion and dreams** that come to the Community with great hope. In September, they started their studies at Stella Maris, our nursing school, working to overcome their individual educational and financial situations as they train as professional nurses, and ultimately

administer to the health needs of their communities when they return home.

The objective of our program is to furnish room, board, and scholarships for their training, and provide a Catholic support network and spiritual guidance to help them as they become professional nurses. We are also honored to help as these women develop as human beings and professionals, as they carry in their hearts great values and a true spirit of service to their own people. This is one of the focuses of the SSS ministries---**advocating for the needs and empowerment of women and children.**

### **Interfaith Peace Garden Opening and Blessing**

The Sisters of Social Service welcomed over 150 people onto our Encino grounds to celebrate the blessing and dedication of the Interfaith Peace Garden Project of the Sisters of Social Service . Representatives from Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Seek, Bahai faiths, as well as many other faith-based individuals and people of conscience came together for the opening of the Interfaith Peace Garden. The garden is an oasis in the San Fernando Valley that is open to all, regardless of faith.

The festivities started with a **panel dialogue** and nearly 200 guests **connecting our individual faith and environmental concerns to local and global action.** Among those in the interfaith community speaking were Rabbi Steven Jacobs, rabbi emeritus of Temple Kol Tikvah in Woodland Hills; Rev. Zelda Kennedy of All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena; Dr. Laila Al-Marayati of the Muslim Women's League; and Dr. Christopher Chapple, Doshi professor of



comparative theology at Loyola Marymount University.

The crowd then trekked up to the physical garden for ceremonies guided by Fr. Alexei Smith, ecumenical and inter-religious officer for the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The spiritual rituals included an Native American song and blessing with sage, a Hindu arati ritual expressing thankfulness for creation, the ringing of chimes, a Christian water blessing, a Buddhist peace meditation and an ecumenical prayer for peace. Special recognition and thanks were given to Monica Hughes, SSS Associate, who chaired the event, the pro-bono garden and landscape design efforts of Sherry Lewis and Sandy Atherton, Jesus Reveles and Salvador Rocha who were instrumental in the building and modification of the garden, and as well as Charlotte Dorsey, the website designer.

The Interfaith Peace Garden, a work in progress, is a sacred space where anyone of any faith tradition many come to walk or sit. We are all blessed by the spare beauty of this small spot on the globe - at the same time conscious that this local is global and the global is local. The Garden programs and projects engage interfaith dialogue and action, peace and non-violence, green or environmental spirituality, and the integrity of the earth. Members of the Garden's steering committee are Sisters Chris Machado, Rochelle Mitchell, Michele Walsh, Martha McCarthy, Anne Field and SSS Associates Olga Sarabia and Monica Hughes.

The garden is located at 4316 Lanai Road on the grounds of the Holy Spirit Retreat Center. For more information, please call 818-784-4515 or visit [www.interfaithpeacegarden.org](http://www.interfaithpeacegarden.org).

## Capital Campaign Celebration



Sisters and many supporters gathered in September **to give thanks once again for this sacred ground we created together.** Donor plaques, lettering and new leaves now grace the halls that you helped build in Encino. Thank you for all your ongoing love and support.