

petite journeys

Sisters of St. Joseph
of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Margaret Pellerite, SSJ
Lily of the Valley



CATHOLIC
SISTERS WEEK
March 8-14

If a lily is symbolic of St. Joseph, then the Lily of the Valley is an apt reference to Sr. Margaret Pellerite. Having ministered for more than 56 years in western Pennsylvania's Shenango Valley, "the valley," Sr. Margaret has firmly planted the virtues of Joseph in the thousands of individuals she has served.

Lilly of the Valley



Situated in the southwest corner of the Erie Diocese, the Valley includes the Pennsylvania counties of Sharon, Farrell, and Hermitage. Though Sr. Margaret was born in Clearfield, Pennsylvania, she considers the valley her home. "I am blessed with many families—my blood family, my SSJ family, and my friends whom I consider family. I have adopted myself into the families here."

Sister Margaret began teaching at Kennedy Catholic High School in 1967. "She is the foundation of Kennedy and has a loving heart for all around her," said Janet Halicki, the school's principal. "She is a strong, caring individual who has dedicated her life to helping others. Sister is always willing to lend a hand."

Sister Margaret spends countless hours on the annual Thanksgiving food drive and Christmas party for ARC of Mercer County. She has influenced every student that has passed through Kennedy Catholic since 1968, including parents and grandparents of current students. In addition to teaching math, she is a big supporter of the school's athletic programs and she is the longtime advisor to Kennedy Catholic's Action Club, a group that instills in the students a commitment to serve others. She finds joy knowing that many of her Action Club students continue

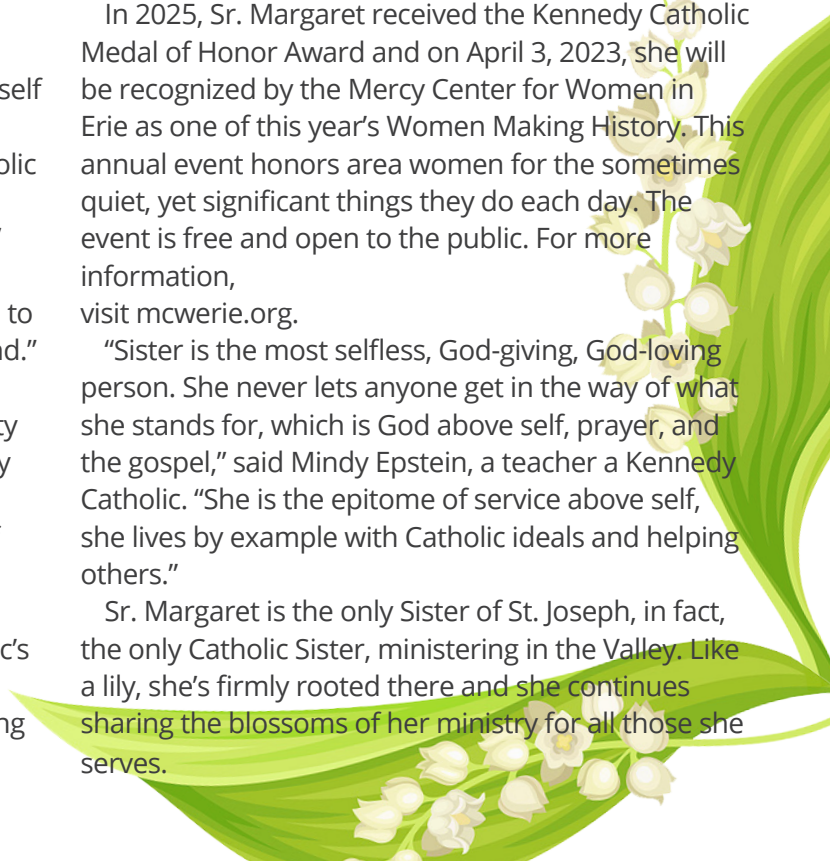
helping others through similar groups when they enter college.

"I have had the opportunity of knowing Sister my whole high school career," said Princess Ochweri, one of Sr. Margaret's students. "She has always been so selfless and made sure to always convey our school's motto of "Christo Servire," which means to serve Christ. Her heart of gold shows during the events she runs at our school. No matter who it is, she is always the first to help."

In 2025, Sr. Margaret received the Kennedy Catholic Medal of Honor Award and on April 3, 2023, she will be recognized by the Mercy Center for Women in Erie as one of this year's Women Making History. This annual event honors area women for the sometimes quiet, yet significant things they do each day. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, visit mcwerie.org.

"Sister is the most selfless, God-giving, God-loving person. She never lets anyone get in the way of what she stands for, which is God above self, prayer, and the gospel," said Mindy Epstein, a teacher at Kennedy Catholic. "She is the epitome of service above self, she lives by example with Catholic ideals and helping others."

Sr. Margaret is the only Sister of St. Joseph, in fact, the only Catholic Sister, ministering in the Valley. Like a lily, she's firmly rooted there and she continues sharing the blossoms of her ministry for all those she serves.



Ministry News and Happenings

- **SSJ Neighborhood Network**
A Night on Broadway Gala Event,
April 15, 2023. Have fun with this friendly “guess that tune” competition. Enjoy music, dinner, theme baskets, and silent auction. Don’t miss it! ssjnn.org/GALA or call 814-454-7814.
- **Saint Mary’s Home of Erie**
Construction of eight new Carriage Homes is underway at Saint Mary’s at Asbury Ridge. Site work for the expansion project began in 2022. Construction began in early 2023 and will continue throughout the year.
- **St. Patrick’s Haven (Erie):** The roof trusses are in and once the weather cooperates, the contractor can tear off the burned section of the roof and begin to replace the trusses. Repairs are moving along, but it will be early summer before we can move back to our home.
- **St. James Haven (Meadville):** Building relationships with the people of Meadville has reaped blessings as has sharing the St. James Haven story. Grants have provided for needed upgrades to the security system, a new boiler, and an enclosed entrance. Interested in volunteering? Contact Samantha at 814-337-6082.



CATHOLIC
SISTERS WEEK
March 8-14

Celebrating
Traditions,
Changing
the World

Fifty-two weeks each year, Catholic sisters quietly stand with the poor and immigrants, teach children, fight injustice, tend to the sick, share spirituality, empower women, defend the planet, promote peace, create community, and offer hope. But for one week, **March 8-14**, we shine the spotlight on the women who give witness to and follow the Gospel of Jesus.

Throughout the world, events and campaigns will highlight the lives, vocations and ministries of Catholic Sisters.





Celebrate the Traditions... and the Women

When I think of women—who we are and what we do—love and strength come to mind. Women exhibit great love of family, love of friends, and love for others who need it most, and we have a capacity of strength and courage that enables us to meet everything we face head-on.

Honor or remember a Sister by giving a gift during Catholic Sisters Week!

Besides my mom and life-long friends, the best models in my life are the Sisters of St. Joseph, who live to serve, especially with their prayers, healing, educating, and caring for others.

Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John, "Let us not love with words and tongue but with actions and truth." To you, dear Sisters, many thanks for your endurance these 160-plus years as you personify God's grace, love, and mercy in all you do.

Thanks to all who support the Sisters' work with gifts of faith, time, talents, and contributions. Like the Sisters, you have shown your love of God through love of the dear neighbor.

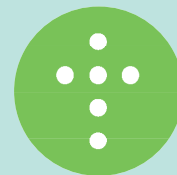
Thank you for sharing your many gifts,

Almi

Almitra Clerkin
Executive Director
Sisters of St. Joseph
Mission & Ministries Foundation



To make a gift, visit us online at www.ssjerie.org or use the enclosed envelope.



we remember

Deceased Sisters

Geraldine Olon, SSJ
December 22, 2022

Martha Ann Rinderle, SSJ
December 9, 2022

Deceased Associates

Loeta Derby
December 14, 2022



(L-R): Carol Morehouse, SSJ;
Mary Drexler, SSJ; Phyllis McCracken, SSJ

It's almost spring!
As we move toward this season of new life, we look forward to many things: we opened our Chapter process, which occurs every four years and helps us to move into the future. The process continues over the next few months—we'll share more in a future issue. In addition, Catholic Sisters Week is March 8-14, and St. Joseph's Day, the feast of our patron, is March 19, when we will also celebrate the 40th anniversary of our SSJ Associates.

In April, we join the Mercy Sisters in celebrating several dynamic women, including our own Sr. Margaret Pellerite, at the Mercy Center's Women Making History event. Sr. Margaret is featured in this issue of *petite Journeys* and referred to as a lily of the valley—the Shenango Valley—where she has ministered for nearly 60 years. The lily is a traditional symbol of St. Joseph. According to legend, Joseph was chosen from among other men by the blossoming of his staff, like a lily. "The just man shall blossom like the lily" (Hosea 14:5) is referenced in the Catholic liturgy on March 19, the Feast of St. Joseph. We also look to the legacy of Sr. Benita Repasky, another lily of the Shenango Valley, who founded the Prince of Peace Center.

There is much to look forward to this spring: a rebuilt St. Patrick's Haven, new living spaces at Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge, the SSJ Neighborhood Network's ever-popular "Guess that Tune" event, and new additions to St. James Haven. Add to all that St. Patrick's Day, the beginning of daylight savings time, and the first day of spring, and we have much to celebrate!

Join us as we move our mission forward.

Sr. Mary

Sr. Mary Drexler, President

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petites pépites des archives

little nuggets from the archives

Sr. Benita Repasky

On Good Friday, April 1, 1983, a rainbow appeared as Sister Benita Repasky, age 68, drove into Shenango Valley to establish a new ministry to serve the poor. She recalled hearing these words: *"My child, take my hand and I shall bring you into a new life and give you health as never before. I will give you vigor and radiant joy. Be not afraid. My love surrounds you and my power preserves and protects you. You are starting out upon a ministry, the foundations of which no man has laid. It shall be a path to holiness, a way of miracles and a life of glory. Lean on me and trust me wholly."*

That trust led to establishing the Prince of Peace Center, a ministry that has served the growing needs of the poor in Sharon and Farrell, Pennsylvania for 40 years. The agency is committed to strengthening families, building community and reducing poverty among people of all races, faiths, ages, and backgrounds. The Prince of Peace Center provides emergency assistance, counseling, a food pantry, mentoring and advocacy, a soup kitchen, a thrift store and other services.

