

Volume 31, No. 2  
Winter 2013-14

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

# Journeys



**We Pray**

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

## From Leadership

In November, we attended the U.S. Federation Sisters of St. Joseph Leadership Assembly with leaders from SSJ Congregations throughout the United States. It was energizing to be among our Sisters and invigorating to discuss many topics and challenges we face as women religious.

As I reflect on the gathering, I am reminded that we are much bigger than just the Sisters of St. Joseph in Northwestern Pennsylvania ministering to our neighbors here. When we gather as one body, I become very aware that collectively, we have a much broader outreach to the global neighbor. When we consider our Agrégées, Associates, other partners in ministry, and even the use of technology, our outreach is growing.

This issue of *Journeys* explores prayer—our personal path to connecting with something much greater than ourselves—God. There are numerous ways in which people pray, and all serve the same purpose—keeping us connected to and part of a bigger whole.

Also in this issue, Sr. Ann Marie Cappello explores our Jesuit connection to Pope Francis. Pope Francis seems to embody the words of Marius Nepper, SJ, a French priest who helped the Sisters of St. Joseph reclaim their founding charism and history in France after Vatican II, in describing the Sister of St. Joseph: eyes open, ears attentive, spirit alert—sleeves rolled up for ministry, without excluding the more humble, the less pleasing, the less noticeable.

Tragic events, whether caused by human actions or natural disasters, remind us that we have much to offer our neighbors who are in pain. Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director of NETWORK, a national catholic social justice lobby, and the woman behind the Nuns on the Bus movement says it well: “We have grown into being that what our nation needs now.”

With all the challenges at hand for the world and for women religious, we are grateful when our friends and families find ways to help us continue helping others. Whether it’s a gift to our Thanksgiving Dinner Fund, our annual appeal, or through major efforts such as the Catholic Sisters Initiative of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, all of these gifts help us to continue helping others.

As we move through this Advent season toward the coming of Christ, our hope is that with all the focus on gifts, it is the gifts we have and the gift we are to others that we think of most and that we are always mindful that the gifts we are given, we are given to share.

*Mary Herrmann SSJ*

Mary Herrmann, SSJ  
On behalf of Leadership



Pictured (l-r): Mary Ann White, SSJ; Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ; and Mary Herrmann, SSJ.



# The Gifts We Are Given

*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12 (NIV)*

## **It starts with a gift.**

At the very heart of our mission and ministry is a gift, our charism. *In Christian theology, a charism, in general, denotes any good gift that flows from God's love to humans. The word can also mean any of the spiritual graces and qualifications granted to every Christian to perform his or her task in the Church. In the narrowest sense, it is a theological term for the extraordinary graces given to individual Christians for the good of others. (Wikipedia)*

The charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph is unity and reconciliation. Our mission, *unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God*, flows directly from our charism and is what we desire to accomplish for the good of the Church. We do this by actively seeking ministry that brings about this unity.

## **Everyone has a gift—Everyone has a charism.**

We are *all* born with a gift that comes from God's love for us through the Holy Spirit. Gifts from God are not just given to clergy or religious; we all have been given a charism—a gift from God to be used for the benefit of others. Whether it is the gift of compassion, public speaking, healing, artistic talent, physical strength, nurturing, leadership skills or the written word, we all have received a gift.

## **How will I use my gift?**

*"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."* 1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

We are not the final, intended recipients of the gift we receive. In living a life of purpose, we each have the responsibility to develop and use our gift for the good of others and in service to God. In sharing, we give our gift back to God and complete the circle. We serve, we minister, by using our gift.

## **The gifts we are given, we are given to share.**

This is the spirituality of ministry. Whether you are a Sister, clergy or layperson, using your gift for the good of the Church and God's people through your words and actions is the spirituality of ministry.



# We Are Given to Share

*Because we are human, we learn in different ways: there are visual learners, auditory learners, and kinesthetic learners. It is the same in prayer.*

by Marie Stephen Kebort, SSJ



There is no one way to pray; there are as many ways as there are pray-ers. Teresa of Avila says, "Prayer is nothing but friendly intercourse, and frequent solitary converse, with Him Who we know loves us." Prayer is my personal relationship with my God, Who speaks to me every day in His Word, in the secret prayer of my heart, and in the events of my life. I need only to listen—and to respond.

Because we are human, we learn in different ways: there are visual learners, auditory learners, and kinesthetic learners. It is the same in prayer. Visual pray-ers appreciate the beauty of nature and creation; they enjoy reading the psalms; they glean ideas from the Bible and from the various books on prayer.

Auditory pray-ers often sing their prayers, their favorite hymns or psalms. They pray best when listening to music—a Celtic harp or the wind of an autumn day, or even the silence of a quiet room or church.

Kinesthetic pray-ers like to "feel" their prayers. The touch of rosary beads between their fingers, the motion of chopping vegetables in the kitchen, sharing with young couples in marriage preparation, or journaling about what inspired them each day.

Just as there is no one way to learn, there is no one way to pray, and we often combine the different ways for a more fruitful prayer life. I believe that many pray-ers combine a contemplative stance with an active stance at prayer ... moving the rosary beads, murmuring the prayers, and mentally picturing the various mysteries of the rosary.

Prayer

Amen Alleluia Glory

Trust

Meditation

Pray

Reflect One

Rosary God Believe

Journaling Contemplation

Presence One with

Listen Open Faith

# How We Pray

Sisters and Associates share their prayer practices . . .

*There is a story about the Curé of Ars who told of an elderly parishioner who used to come and sit in silence for hours before the Blessed Sacrament. When he asked her about this, she replied, "I look at Jesus and He looks at me." This defines prayer for me and is my preference.*

Sister Ricarda Vincent

*On a recent silent retreat, I found that I was (again) drawn to contemplation and meditation watching the ocean waves. I was part of the charismatic movement in the early 1990s, praying in tongues and allowing the music ministry to move me to spontaneous praise.*

*I have prayed the office of hours (Divine Office - Liturgy of Hours) and the rosary and found comfort in both. And sometimes, I just sit and allow my God to speak to me in that still, small voice. Whatever form my prayer takes, it always amazes me that God speaks to each of us in a unique way, and loves us just as we are.*

Associate Marti Michael

*I pray lots but mostly because I am talking to God and asking him for help in my everyday life. But I always say the rosary at nighttime because I was told if you start the rosary and fall asleep your guardian angel finishes the rosary for you ... so through my life my guardian has had to finish a lot of rosaries.*

Associate Mitzi Bannister

*The way I pray often varies. Some of my most profound praying in the past few years has been through my poetry as well as through journaling conversations with God about my discernment and other things going on in my life. Song is another way I pray. For me, it helps transcend all the things going on around me and inside of me, and enables me to truly connect with God who loves and desires deep relationship. I know that is why I find the Taizé form of prayer so life giving and enriching.*

Sister Kelly Smock

*For me, a most effective way to pray and to hear what God is saying is by listening to the stories of others. During prayer with faith sharing, participants listen to the Word of God and then reflect on it in relation to their own lives. These stories inspire me to be more aware of how God does and can work in my life and the lives of others. Every person brings the expertise of his or her own life while together we experience the working of our God.*

Sister Nancy Fischer

*I have time to pray in many different ways, including the rosary. My favorite prayers ... meditation before the Blessed Sacrament, using the Word Among Us, the Mass and listening to religious music.*

Sister Marie Celeste Bindseil

*Continued on page 15.*

For me, Teresa of Avila is the model who represents a Teresa/Carmel moment in prayer: early morning in a quiet chapel, the time of a Jesuit exam in the evening looking back over the day, or journaling about what inspired me during that day.

Sister Dominica is the model who represents active moments for me. I remember her in Spencer Hospital's main kitchen, sleeves rolled back, wearing a huge white apron, cooking, and at the same time, being present to everyone who worked there. My "Dominican" moments happen when I'm focusing on trying to veganize a recipe, or facilitating a baptismal session with a young couple, or sharing in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) process with the candidates.

The early morning is the time when it is easiest for me to pray. Having coffee with God and being on the *Loyola Press* website for its *3-Minute Retreat* sets the tone for my day.

Every pray-er has the grace to form his or her own prayer life to find the best fit, always remembering that nothing will remain the same. If it doesn't enliven your prayer, you need to seek another method. In this way, your prayer becomes a living, grace-filled lifestyle.

Labyrinth Jesus  
Stations of the cross  
Bless Spirit Be still  
Offer

# BEING STILL

by SSJ Associate Jan Staszewski

*"There is really only one prayer . . . this prayer is the prayer of Christ. It is a prayer that continues in our hearts day and night . . . the stream of love that flows between Jesus and his Father. We have to allow this prayer to become our prayer. We must learn a way that is a way of silence—of stillness."*

John Main, OSB

With these words, John Main, OSB, founder of the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM), describes so eloquently what we, his followers, do in our practice of Christian Meditation.

After studying the teachings of Fr. Main for several years, Sister Mary Kay McNelis, SSJ, decided to share her experience with this prayer method and inaugurated the Erie chapter of WCCM in October 2000.

A notice in my church bulletin about Sisters' Christian Meditation sessions literally jumped out at me. I now know that I was "called." Thirteen years later, our group still meets every Tuesday at the poustinia (see page 7) on the Villa Maria Campus. I am still just as drawn to the practice and to the people who share it with me. I asked them to share their experiences.

*"Meditation has made me more accepting of the challenges and difficulties in my life and makes me less stressed."* Mary Kay Kalivoda

*"I am far from mastering the gift of meditation, but I attempt it because I feel it's a special time between me and God. It is made even more powerful when shared with others at our weekly meetings."* Claudia Schneider

*"Happy to be among like minded/hearted/spirited people to share the quiet quest to center with God."* Mary Ann White

*"I loved it from the get-go. It has changed my life. When I am unable to meditate every day, I feel incomplete and can't wait to get back to it."*

Peg Mallin

*"We learn, we share, we study, we converse; and most of all we have learned to adapt our inner self with Christ through meditation."*

Judy Gido

Meditator Victoria Brogdon, who recently started a Monday evening group, believes meditation with a group brings much more power to the prayer. *"To sit in silence with a group of people who are all sitting in The Presence binds us together in the love of God."*

I have great gratitude for the genuine soul-mates that I have met and come to know through this ministry, and for the unexpected bursts of joy on a cloudy day, in a sometimes cloudy life, that I've experienced practicing meditation. I find myself much more open and accepting of others and I have a continuous craving for more spiritual knowledge. I feel connected, as never before, to all of God's creation. The benefits of the practice spill

out into all areas of my life. I was describing to a dear friend and fellow meditator my surprising delight in the mundane task of opening boxes and stocking shelves at work. She reminded me that those simple acts are another form of meditation and mindfulness.

Meditator and SSJ Associate Mary Lou Rathers captures the essence of how I feel about this practice. *"I don't practice everyday and wish I was disciplined enough to do so, as meditation has enriched and changed my life for the better, both spiritually and physically,"* she says. *"I am truly grateful that I am learning this kind of prayer practice and I can 'be still and know'."*

*"Learning to say the mantra requires great patience and demands great perseverance. Don't give up too easily. Stillness of body and stillness of Spirit, this is the aim. To be totally open to the only reality that is ultimately real, the reality that is love."*

John Main, OSB

The instructions for meditation are simple, but not easy: sit still, upright and relaxed, but alert. Silently, interiorly, begin to say a single word, a mantra: Maranatha – which means Come Lord. Do not think or imagine anything. If thoughts and images come, these are distractions, so keep returning to simply saying the mantra. Meditate each morning and evening for 20-30 minutes.



During the summer, the Christian Meditation ministry often uses the labyrinth on the grounds of the Community Living Center as part of its prayer practice.

# OUR JESUIT CONNECTION WITH POPE FRANCIS

by Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ



Jean-Pierre Médaille, SJ

As I read about Pope Francis and listen to what the media is reporting, something resonates deep inside of me. What impresses me most is that he practices what he preaches and demonstrates a desire to be among those he serves, not separate from them.

By his words and example, he encourages us to respond to the needs of the poor, the homeless, the immigrants, the ill, the imprisoned, those suffering from the ravages of wars, and all who are oppressed or isolated in any way. It occurred to me that Pope Francis' words and actions reflect the very mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph—unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God, without distinction.

In a recent interview conducted by Antonio Spadaro, SJ, Pope Francis said, “the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle.”

As Sisters of St. Joseph, the gift of the Holy Spirit that we bring to the Church is that of unity and reconciliation—the togetherness and healing Pope Francis

expresses. Through this all-embracing, all-inclusive love, we are encouraged to live and work among all persons from whom we do not separate ourselves in any way, much like Pope Francis does.

In the same interview, Pope Francis, a Jesuit, speaks of discernment being part of his Ignatian spirituality and how it helps him live his ministry. Discernment, a prayerful process of finding where the spirit of God may be leading us, is also part of our spirituality. As Sisters of St. Joseph, we fulfill our mission by seeking out and undertaking whatever ministry may best bring about unity. We respond to the call to minister through prayerful discernment, both communally and individually.

As I continue to reflect on what I see and hear about Pope Francis, I can't help but think about our Jesuit connection. It was a Jesuit missionary, Jean-Pierre Médaille, SJ, a spiritual director who founded the Sisters of St. Joseph in 17th century France and now, Pope Francis is the first Jesuit pope in the Church's history. Perhaps the time has never been better for unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God, without distinction.



Pope Francis

## OUR POUSTINIA



The SSJ poustinia, a small, tudor-style house on the Villa Maria campus, is named in honor of blessed Catherine Dougherty, a Russian woman who referred to the rustic cabins at her lay community in Ontario as poustinias, meaning deserts or hermitages—solitary places of prayer. Our poustinia has been a powerhouse of prayer for many years and is where the Christian Meditation ministry meets to learn and practice.

Contemplative prayer is a powerful prayer of the heart and is a form of prayer which many Christians don't know. If you are faithful to this silent, interior way of praying this prayer of union, it will transform you. You will experience God's peace, healing, joy and love. If you are interested in learning this form of contemplative prayer and joining this ministry, contact Sr. Mary Kay McNelis for more information at 836-4117 or [s.mkmcnelis@ssjerie.org](mailto:s.mkmcnelis@ssjerie.org).

# PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL MINISTRIES

*Education, health care and social service may readily come to mind when thinking of the ministries of the Sisters of St. Joseph, but the less known spiritual and prayer ministries are equally as significant.*

## Prayer Request Ministry

Every afternoon at 4:00, Sister Margaret Joseph Mokes makes her way to the Day Room at the Sisters' Community Living Center where she joins a group of Sisters who gather each day to pray for the intentions received through the Congregation's Prayer Request (Prayer Call) ministry. Sister Hildegard Boxer and Sister Kathleen Kirsch collect the requests that are called in and Sister Dorothy Wilwohl compiles those received via email and the website. After Sister Hildegard shares some of the intentions, Sister Maria Assumpta Ruza leads the Sisters as they pray for all the intentions that have been received.

"This ministry gives me something to pray for besides my own intentions," said Sister Margaret Joseph. Prayer Request, which began 30 years ago, is a vital ministry of the Congregation. If you submit a prayer request, you can be assured that your intentions are taken to prayer—and to heart.



Pictured are some of the Prayer Call rosary pray-ers. They are (seated l-r): Sisters Margaret Joseph Mokes, Ann Amen, Maria Assumpta Ruza, Marie Celeste Bindseil, Rose Anne Fedorko, Joachim Onuffer, Agnes Marie Hughes, Michaela Fox, Ann Loretta Urmann, Leonella Gingenbach, Norbert Wiley; and (standing l-r): Sisters Lucille DeStefano, Mary Rachael McGuire and Marilyn Zimmerman.



## Eucharistic Adoration Ministry

Sister Rebecca Ann Costa and her sister, Associate Jeanne Costa, were meeting monthly with a group of Sisters to pray the SSJ Maxims in a ministry started by Sister Mary Helen Forney. Out of that evolved a Eucharistic Adoration ministry. The Maxims group continues meeting monthly and the Eucharistic Adoration group now gathers weekly for an hour of silent prayer and adoration. "I believe in the power of Eucharistic adoration," said Sr. Rebecca Ann. "I remember years ago when it was our Congregation's practice to have a silent Sunday each month and the day would conclude with benediction and adoration." Many Sisters participate in this ministry; some of the regulars include Sisters Ann Patrice Murnock, Geraldine Olon, and Ann Loretta Urmann. "We are there spending time with Christ in the Eucharist, praying for God's blessing on the community and our ministries," Sr. Rebecca Ann added.

## Prayer Card Ministry/Pastoral Care

In 2012, Sr. Ann Donohue helped establish a Prayer Card ministry with Saint Vincent Hospital. Prayer cards featuring a photo of a Sister, a prayer and a message explaining the ministry are given to patients by Sisters Colette Palmer and Martha Howick through their pastoral care ministry at the hospital. The Sisters who are featured on the cards are given the first names of the patients who receive their card and the Sisters pray for them daily. Once a week, the Sisters come together, the first names of the patients are shared, and they pray for all of them. When this ministry began the response from the staff and patients at the hospital was very positive. In less than two years, more than 2,750 cards have been distributed. The new administration of Saint Vincent Hospital (now part of the Allegheny Health Network) has asked the Sisters to continue this important ministry.

Other spiritual ministries of the Congregation include Christian Meditation, a ministry established in 2000 by Sister Mary Kay McNelis (see page 6); spiritual direction (*Journeys*, Summer 2013) and numerous small groups that meet regularly to pray. While the needs of the day have changed the focus of the Sisters' outreach ministries, one constant that will continue unchanged is the dedicated and devoted prayerful and spiritual ministries of the Sisters, together and individually.



# PRAYING TOGETHER

From the very beginning, prayer is an important part of being an Associate of the Sisters of St. Joseph. While candidates discern becoming Associates, they are given a copy of the Associate Prayer and encouraged to pray it daily. Each formation session begins with a prayer and reflection based on one of the Maxims of Father Jean-Pierre Médaille, SJ, a spiritual director who founded the Sisters of St. Joseph. This prayer ritual is intended to encourage the candidates to continue in their prayer group, or to join one of six other Associate prayer groups, once they are welcomed as Associates. Some of these groups consist of Sisters and Associates, while others are only Associates.

Most of the groups have a designated leader, though some take turns leading. Some groups use various books to guide their discussions such as *Open The Door* by Joyce Rupp, *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World* or *Having a Mary Spirit*, both by Joanna Weaver. Other groups have members take turns planning and facilitating prayers for each session.

Most prayer groups meet monthly to pray and reflect, some also meet periodically for social events or to volunteer in service. One group prepares meals for St. Patrick's Haven, an Associate ministry that provides shelter for homeless men in Erie. The Meadville Associates meet monthly for prayer and fellowship and come together for an annual picnic, Christmas party, liturgy for deceased Associates, and a day-long retreat.

Sue O'Connell, an Associate since 2002, is in a prayer group

that meets monthly. "No matter the format," she says, "each has much to offer." She shares how the readings have touched her heart and influenced her living the Gospel message in her everyday life. All agree that the small prayer groups are a wonderful, quiet respite from busy schedules, and provide a needed opportunity to become renewed in God's word.

"What comes to mind as I think of our prayer group is part of a prayer by Joseph Nassal, CPPS," shares Cindy Brown, also an Associate since 2002. "*May the passion of Christ help us to know God's passion and rediscover our own.*" This is what I think, and hope, our prayer group is about."

Another form of prayer group is the Associate Prayer Shawl Ministry. This group meets monthly to knit or crochet shawls

which are then prayed over and given to anyone who may be hurting or in need of God's love.

The two longest established groups are the Meadville Associate prayer group and the Thursday afternoon Erie prayer group. In April 2014, the Erie group will celebrate 25 years of praying together. "As always, when we meet we listen to each other and pray for what is in our hearts," said Associate Shirley Mack, a member of the Erie group. "We have grown as true sisters in Christ." Associate Mary Grace DeGeorge adds,

"Participating in our prayer group has enriched my SSJ Associate experience so much. I have grown spiritually and have found special friends among the Associates and Sisters."



Above: Members of the Thursday afternoon Erie prayer group, one of the longest running SSJ Associate prayer groups: (l-r) Mary Grace DeGeorge, Gert Milkowski, Shirley Mack, Rose Jones, Sister Ann Marie Cappello, Jeanne Marie Ryan, and Arlene Chaney. Not present for the photo: Mary Catherine Hosack and Rae Bishop. Deceased members of the group include: Frances Major, Adelaide Fazio, Marlene Shelito, Peg McConnell, and Sister Christine Quirk.

If you are an SSJ Associate and interested in joining or starting a small prayer group, contact the SSJ Associate office at 814-836-4134. Anyone can gather and pray. If you are not an Associate, contact your Diocese or parish office, or invite some friends to gather, pray and reflect.

*For where two or three have come together in my name, there am I among them.*

(Matthew 18:20)

# SEEING GOD IN ONE ANOTHER ...WITHOUT DISTINCTION

The following article is a compilation/adaptation from *God's Overflowing Love Seeks the Common Good*, by Marilyn Nickol, CSJ, *Imagine One*, Vol. 5, No. 1, *Congregation of St. Joseph*; and *Telling Their Stories*, from *Dear Neighbor*, Summer 2012, *Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, Pennsylvania*.

“The ‘fierce urgency of now’ compels us to acknowledge that unless we are Native Americans, at some time in our family history we, too, were immigrants – strangers in a foreign land.” Pat Andrews, CSJ Boston

Migration is at the heart of our faith story. We know that Jesus began his earthly journey as a migrant and displaced person, having been born far from home and having to flee with his family as a refugee. In his public ministry, Jesus is a preacher on the road with nowhere to lay his head. (Luke 9:58)

The stories of the immigrants draw close parallels to those of Catholic Sisters, who with courage and determination, came to America in the mid-19th century to build a network of schools, hospitals and social service agencies.

Migration has always been part of the human story, and with globalization, more people are on the move than ever before. The United Nations estimates that more than 200 million people are living away from their homelands. We continue to hear the cries of the migrants in our midst, who search for a place to call home.

And yet, much of our surrounding culture and political discourse displays fearful and disdainful attitudes towards new immigrants.

We envision a more compassionate and welcoming relationship with global neighbors who migrate into our midst for many valid reasons. The Catholic Church’s heritage as an immigrant church offers a vision for dialogue on the issue of immigration reform grounded in a moral stance that flows from scriptural and Catholic Social Teaching based on the sanctity and dignity of life and the belief that each person is created in the image and likeness of God.

The challenges of immigration in our nation have no easy solutions. Becoming aware of the complexity of each dimension—human, political and economic—can give direction to a response rooted in our faith tradition and the common good.

We can’t enrich the common good of our country by driving out those we don’t care for.

In 2005, U.S. Catholic bishops and leaders of a diverse group of Catholic organizations launched *Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope* (The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform) to address a system which they said was “broken and badly in need of repair.” Eight years later, the goal of the campaign—comprehensive immigration reform, including a broad legalization program—has yet to be realized.

It is long past time for the United States to enact fair and humane immigration reform that reflects the biblical mandate to welcome the stranger and treat all human beings with dignity and respect. Let us work together to bring this to reality.

[justiceforimmigrants.org](http://justiceforimmigrants.org)  
[interfaithimmigration.org](http://interfaithimmigration.org)

## IMMIGRATION REFORM 101

### Root Causes

CONFLICT & VIOLENCE

GLOBALIZATION & FREE TRADE

SEVERE POVERTY

LACK OF A LIVING WAGE

CLIMATE CHANGE

Conditions cause people to leave their home out of desperation.

### Catholic Social Teaching

WELCOME THE FOREIGNER OUT OF CHARITY AND RESPECT FOR THE HUMAN PERSON

THE RIGHT TO WORK ELSEWHERE TO SURVIVE. SOVEREIGN NATIONS SHOULD ACCOMMODATE THIS RIGHT

SECURE ONE'S BORDER AND ENFORCE THE LAW FOR THE SAKE OF THE COMMON GOOD

MORE POWERFUL ECONOMIC NATIONS ARE OBLIGATED TO ACCOMMODATE MIGRATION FLOWS

We are one. God loves us all. We help our brothers and sisters in need.

### Myths & Benefits

DON'T PAY TAXES

IMMIGRANTS DO PAY INCOME, SALES & PROPERTY TAXES & GROW TAX BASE

TAKE PUBLIC WELFARE

IMMIGRANTS BOOST GOV'T, REVENUES, RECEIVE MINIMAL ASSISTANCE

SHOULD IMMIGRATE LEGALLY

THE LEGAL PROCESS DOES NOT MEET REAL HUMAN NEEDS THAT CAUSE MIGRATION

My impression is that immigrants...

### Why Reform?

FAIR PATH TO CITIZENSHIP

CURRENT PROCESS CAN TAKE DECADES AND KEEP PEOPLE IN SHADOWS

FAMILY UNITY

FAMILY UNITY LEADS TO A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY AND STRONGER SOCIETY

PROTECT CHILDREN

PREVENT DEPORTATIONS OF YOUNG ADULTS WHO KNOW THIS COUNTRY AS THEIR OWN

REJECT ENFORCEMENT ONLY

EXACERBATES PROBLEMS RATHER THAN CONTRIBUTE TO SOLUTIONS

Urge your Reps to support these elements of immigration reform.

**Take Action:** Church's Online Resources: <http://bit.ly/CSTimmigrant>

**Call Your Senators and Representatives @ Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121**

Designed by Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange - June 2013

# ah-greh-zhey

*Prayerfully beginning the process*

In January, 2014 we will welcome interested women as Agrégée (ah-greh-ZHEY) candidates. The entrance of these women into this process culminates more than six years of discussion and planning. This new-old form of membership responds to the growing desire among some women for something more.

Agrégée is a French word meaning “attached to.” This form of membership dates back to seventeenth century France when the Sisters of St. Joseph were founded. There were three forms of membership: vowed religious Sisters, Agrégées and lay Associates. Different from Sisters and Associates, Agrégée are Catholic women who are called to permanently commit themselves to Christ by embracing the mission of unity of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and connecting themselves to the Congregation through prayer and personal relationships. Candidates participate in a two-year formation process before acceptance as Agrégées. The Agrégées make a permanent commitment and, though they do not profess vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, they do profess a vow of fidelity. Agrégées remain in their own homes, continue with their independent lives and are responsible for their own financial affairs, including healthcare and retirement.

Following an information night that was held in October, interested women were asked to participate in an interview process and submit a letter requesting candidacy. Each candidate will be assigned a professed Sister-mentor to companion her through this journey.

Prayer is an important part of the formation process. The first year is dedicated to exploring and experiencing vocation and call, as well as studying and experiencing various types of prayer. Candidates will participate in a small prayer/faith sharing group and spiritual direction. Following the first year, the process includes the study of various topics including the history of the Congregation and the Agrégée Constitutions.

As these women prepare to begin this year, we ask your prayer and support as we continue to move forward with this new-old form of membership.

## Membership Forms

### Sisters

**Open to single,  
Catholic women**

**Permanent,  
canonical vows of poverty,  
chastity and obedience**

**6 – 9 year formation process**

**Live in “community”**

**Finances governed by  
the vow of poverty**

### Agrégées

**Open to Catholic  
women**

**Permanent,  
non-canonical vow  
of fidelity**

**Usually a 2-year formation  
process, sometimes 3 years**

**Continue with independent  
living arrangements;  
option to live in “community”**

**Personal responsibility  
for finances, health care,  
retirement, funeral expenses and  
indebtedness**

### Associates

**Open to Christian  
men and women**

**Annual,  
renewable  
commitment**

**1 year formation process**

**Continue with independent  
living arrangements;  
option to live in “community”**

**Personal responsibility  
for finances, health care,  
retirement, funeral expenses and  
indebtedness**

# Who's Responsible

Who's responsible for this? Now there's a question that can send you back in time. Maybe it triggers a split second of fight or flight response. Or perhaps, it conjures visions of a parent, a teacher or even a Sister looking for "the responsible party."

Back to adult reality. Responsibility can be a good thing. It can be a remarkable, life-changing gift – especially when we're talking about responsibility for one another, for community, for sharing God's love and helping to build God's Kingdom.

There's no question, women religious have taken this responsibility not only to heart, but also to hand. They have left an indelible mark on this world, particularly our little corner of it. Try finding a friend or neighbor whose life hasn't been touched in some way by the Sisters of St. Joseph. It isn't easy. They taught us, healed us, fed us, counseled us, raised us, employed us, served with us, spoke up for us, prayed with us and prayed for us—and that's just for starters.

For more than 150 years, the Sisters have worked tirelessly throughout Northwestern Pennsylvania and beyond, founding

and staffing ministries that addressed the unmet needs of our dear neighbors. Dedicated to their mission, they've sought to bring about unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God.

And there it is—the key, the driving force, the foundation of all the ministries of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and the answer to the question, "who's responsible for this?" You are.

Thanks to the grace of God and you—the Sisters' friends and benefactors—all of the SSJ ministries are possible. And this is as true today as it was in the earliest years of the Sisters' presence in the Erie Diocese.

"When Mother Agnes Spencer and three other Sisters arrived in Northwestern Pennsylvania in 1860, they had little more than the clothes on their backs," explains Sister Mary Herrmann, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph Leadership.

"It was the generosity of community members that built our orphanages and later our hospitals. And as needs arose or changed, it was this same outpouring of community love and gifts that enabled us to build nursing homes, to staff schools, to create

## Advancing Mission – Women Religious in the 21st Century Congregation Selected to Attend Conference and Receive Grant Funding

Advancement is a popular term these days in the non-profit sector. In essence, it's the name given to the combined efforts of an organization that relate to building relationships, as well as awareness and support for the organization's mission. Advancement efforts bring together the work of development, mission, communications and public relations. For congregations of women religious, advancing mission also brings a spiritual component to the process and, for Sisters of St. Joseph, it is fundamental to connecting neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God.

We consider it a blessing that we were recently selected as one of only 14 congregations from throughout the United States to participate in a four-day conference titled, *Advancing Mission: Women Religious in the 21st Century*, offered by The Fund Raising School and Lake Institute on Faith & Giving at Indiana University. The conference was funded by the Conrad N. Hilton and GHR foundations, and covered the costs for us to send three participants: Sr. Mary Herrmann, Leadership; Dotty Hanna, Director of Development and Carol Hermann, Development Assistant.

This program focused on the uniqueness of approaching advancement, including fundraising, as a ministry, a way of inviting others to join us in mission. Participants included Sisters, lay staff and experts in advancement who discussed the opportunities and challenges facing women religious and their ministries in this era—particularly the challenge of advancing mission in a time of growing need and diminishing numbers of Sisters.



Director of Development, Dotty Hanna, center, and Sr. Mary Herrmann, Leadership (r), speak with Pat Milenius, Mission Advancement Director for the Congregation of St. Joseph, at the *Advancing Mission* conference in July. The conference was sponsored by GHR and the Conrad Hilton Foundations.

The congregations were invited to apply for grant funding to assist with advancing mission efforts and to participate in a "community of practice," a type of ongoing learning forum for planning and visioning, sharing best practices and participating in research. We were excited, and felt very blessed, to learn that we were selected to receive a grant.

The key, as always, is uniting with community members in mission and ministry in new ways, as well as tried-and-true ways. On the horizon for the Sisters of St. Joseph is our soon-to-be established charitable trust. Our hope is that this charitable trust will inspire even more connectedness, more neighbors helping neighbors, more support for the needs of the era and area—for generations to come.

# for This?

by Dotty Hanna, SSJA  
Director of Development

homeless shelters, to feed the hungry... Wherever we've been and wherever we are today, you can know assuredly that we are there thanks to the benevolence of community members who share our passion for serving the dear neighbor."

"We often wonder whether our friends and benefactors realize how essential they are to our ministries," Sister Mary continues.

"We see each one as a partner in ministry. When someone gives to us of their time, their prayers or their financial resources, we share much more than that. We share a singleness of purpose—a love of neighbor and a desire to bring unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God."

## The Power of One

Unity. Community. One body and one Spirit. This is more than a sentiment or beautiful words inked on paper. It's the core of the Sisters of St. Joseph mission and the power behind their ministries—past, present and future.

Looking to the future, it is clear that community will be more

vital and more powerful than ever in advancing our mission. While community needs continue to grow, the number of vowed Sisters is declining.

"Change is a constant," notes Sister Mary. "And these changing times simply call for us to be more effective planners and more flexible in the way we think about the future of our ministries."

"Today, we have 261 SSJ Associates—lay men and women, who are committed to living the charism of the Sisters. And we've just launched an Agrégée program, which creates yet another opportunity for women to join with us in ministry to the dear neighbor." (See page 11.)

"In addition, within a few months our charitable trust will be fully established, and our hope is that this ministry will provide the inspiration and opportunity for even greater community involvement and support of our mission," she adds.

"In building community, we build oneness—and that's powerful. Community is not only who we serve, but who makes it possible for us to serve."

# the power of <sup>1</sup>

When we speak of the power of one, it's not the power of each or any of us working alone. It's the power of all of us working as one – being of one body and one Spirit.

We thank all of you who have shared in our mission and ministries over the years. Whether you've joined with us by giving of your time and talents, or whether you've supported us with financial gifts, you have been one with us in service to the dear neighbor, especially the under-served and marginalized.

We are grateful for, and humbled by, your love and generosity and we ask you to prayerfully consider supporting our collective work this year.

With gratitude,  
The Sisters of St. Joseph

## Working as one, we can make a world of difference.

### Your gift to the SSJ Annual Fund supports:

**Sisters in Ministry** – Helping Sisters who serve in ministry and receive little or no compensation, therefore serving thousands while saving thousands of dollars for the communities in which they live and work.

**Sisters' Benevolent Care** – Helping Sisters who are no longer able to minister in the community due to medical limitations and who lack adequate retirement funding. Many of these Sisters continue to minister through prayer and spiritual direction, because, in truth, Sisters never really retire.

**Ministry Support** – Helping SSJ sponsored ministries and other organizations that reflect the SSJ mission.

# One

# A BROADER PERSPECTIVE

News and happenings worthy of sharing from the U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph, Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) and other organizations and partners committed to advancing the image and mission of women religious.

## The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Catholic Sisters Initiative

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation recently launched the Catholic Sisters Initiative which seeks to strengthen the vitality of congregations by helping them to attract, form and retain members; develop and exercise effective leadership; and cultivate and steward capital and financial resources. This was particularly important to Conrad N. Hilton, who credited the Sisters with instilling in him the faith and values that guided his life.

The Catholic Sisters Initiative has already awarded five grants including \$3.3 million to St. Catherine University to design, develop, and launch National Catholic Sisters Week in conjunction with Women's History Month; and a \$2.3 million grant that will enable the National Catholic Reporter to build a network of journalists to write about Catholic Sisters around the world. Other grants included \$525,000 to *A Nun's Life*, an internet-based ministry created by two Sisters that offers a first-hand view of religious life through stories, interviews and conversations with Sisters on a variety of topics; \$500,000 to Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) for its Leadership Pathways program to assist elected leaders with addressing more effectively the most pressing challenges facing their congregations, and \$3.85 million to Marywood University, a founding member of the African Sisters Education Collaborative, to expand opportunities for Sisters in seven African countries to earn a post-secondary education credential.

## Communications Director Elected to National Board



SSJ Associate Stephanie Hall-Cabelof, who is also the Congregation's Director of Communications and Public Relations, was recently elected to the Board of Directors of Communicators for Women Religious (CWR), a national organization whose mission is to be a network of professional support and education for members who promote understanding of women religious, enhance their image and advance their mission. Stephanie has been a member of CWR since 2000 and recently attended its annual conference in Baltimore, MD.

Stephanie has been on staff with the Congregation, and a member of CWR, for more than 13 years. She attended 11 CWR conferences and twice served on the conference planning committee. She has 30 years of experience in communications and related fields. She became an Associate of the Sisters of St. Joseph in 2002.



## U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph Leadership Assembly

Our Leadership recently attended the U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph Leadership Assembly held at the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet Provincial House in Latham, New York. Through the lens of the charism, the Sisters sought to recognize and name what is happening within, among and around them; reflect on the role of the Federation today and into the future—nationally and globally; and discern and identify next steps.

*Pictured above (l-r) are Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ, Leadership; Patty Johnson, CSJ, Executive Director of the Federation; Mary Herrmann, SSJ, Leadership; and Mary Ann White, SSJ, Leadership.*

## LCWR Hosts Sisters Documentary

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) is hosting the one-hour documentary, *Sisters*, on the LCWR website ([lcwr.org/publications/sisters-documentary](http://lcwr.org/publications/sisters-documentary)). The film examines the lives of five Catholic Sisters, revealing their humanity and deep spiritual grounding as religious. The documentary is currently being broadcast on selected PBS stations around the country. The stories of the Sisters are told without narration, in the honest and emotionally generous words and actions of the women themselves. *Sisters* began with the vision of Carol Rittner, RSM, who felt the need to tell the story of U.S. women religious today. She is the distinguished professor of holocaust and genocide studies and the Dr. Marsha R. Grossman Professor of Holocaust Studies at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. The film was produced and directed by three-time Emmy winner and Academy Award (Oscar) nominee Robert Gardner. It may be viewed on the LCWR website at no cost; DVDs can be purchased directly from Gardner Films ([www.gardnerfilms.com](http://www.gardnerfilms.com)).



## HOW WE PRAY *Continued from page 5*

*I use the “regulars”—the Hail Mary, Our Father, Glory Be and when there is special need—the Memorare. I also just talk to God and relay the day and worries. I find using the time driving to work is a great time for praying. During Lent, I “give up” the radio and music which I enjoy and I say the rosary, offering each decade for a special intention, like the homeless, hungry, frightened, ill...* Associate Patty McLaughlin

*I remember telling Sister (Sr. Margie Pellerite) that one type of prayer, for me, was activity and open conversation. I’ll never forget her response for it was, and remains, a great inspiration to me. She said, “I always feel that everything I do is a prayer.” If all of us could look at prayer that way, what a change would occur in our lives—and in the lives of others!*

Associate Maggie Shaughnessy

*One of my favorite devotions is the Stations of the Cross. I try to pray this daily so I never forget all that Christ did for us/me by his sufferings and death. Also, listening to music, and singing hymns helps me to keep focused on God.*

Sister Mary Millicent Zimmer

*Prayer is what we are all about. I use several resources—one is Give Us This Day; another is Richard Rohr’s daily reflection found at cac.org*

Sister Moira Sullivan

*I know that confident, faith-filled prayer is vital for my life and our community if we are to be ever fruitful and effective. My prayer is frequently conversing in secret with God Who loves us. Each day, I engage in what St. Teresa calls the “Prayer of Quiet,” reflecting on the Word of God and our Maxims. Contemplative prayer before the Blessed Sacrament graces me to utterly trust and hand myself over to God’s loving designs. Then, too, I enjoy God’s creation by my “rosary walks,” meditating on the mysteries and praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Prayer is my lifeline!*

Sister Mary Helen Forney

*I pray in morning readings, then meditation, then journaling! So much God has blessed me with in my life—I cannot start my day until I pray!*

Associate Margo Keefer

*I go to the Adoration Chapel at St. Joseph’s because I know I am truly in His presence and the quiet allows me to just sit and listen to His messages for me. This is also a great place to say my rosary. It is a quiet, peaceful place where I know there will be no distractions. At that moment, it’s just God and me. I also am a “car pray-er.” When driving alone, I do some of my best talking to God and have the added bonus of truly feeling like He is with me (and I think I drive a little more cautiously as a result!)*

Associate Betsy Weist

*My inspiration comes from music and nature. In the morning, I play quiet music and do centering prayer. This helps me as I prepare for the day. In the evening, before sleeping, I put on one of Kathy Sherman’s (CSJ) discs and reflect on the words and music. We are blessed to have the peninsula and any drive around the peninsula shouts to me of God’s presence.*

Sister Margaret Frank

*“I find meditation to be the most soothing way to start my day. I devote about twenty minutes to it, sometimes using a Meditation Challenge from the Deepak Chopra Center, or just calming readings or music CDs that I enjoy. Meditation puts me in the right frame of mind to recall that all I have is from our Creator, and I should use it that day to spread peace and love.”*

Associate Joy Greco

*I pray different ways at different times—it hasn’t stayed the same. In the morning, I am saying my morning offering prayer, offering all that happens that day to God and placing the day in God’s hands, asking for help with anything that concerns me about the day. Then I say a Jesuit prayer: “Take Lord, receive, all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my entire will. All I have, You have given to me. I return it all to You. All I need is Your love and Your grace.” Then I say, “Lord please help me sincerely mean these words.” And I look out the window at the beauty of nature, whatever the day offers, and praise God and sit quietly in God’s presence.*

Anonymous

## We Remember



### **Mary Frederick Prenatt, SSJ**

entered into eternal life on  
October 24, 2013  
in the 73rd year of her religious life.

### **SSJ Associates**

#### **MaryAnn Runser**

entered into eternal life on September 22, 2013.

#### **Ruth Carney**

entered into eternal life on September 24, 2013.

#### **Robert McCraey**

entered into eternal life on October 17, 2013.



**SISTERS OF  
ST. JOSEPH  
OF NORTHWESTERN  
PENNSYLVANIA**

Do we need to correct your name, title or address? Did you receive duplicate copies of Journeys or do you wish to be removed from our mailing list? Please let us know by faxing the mailing label with corrections to 814-836-4277 or mail it to us at 5031 West Ridge Road, Erie, PA 16506-1249.

**Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Erie, PA  
Permit No. 228**

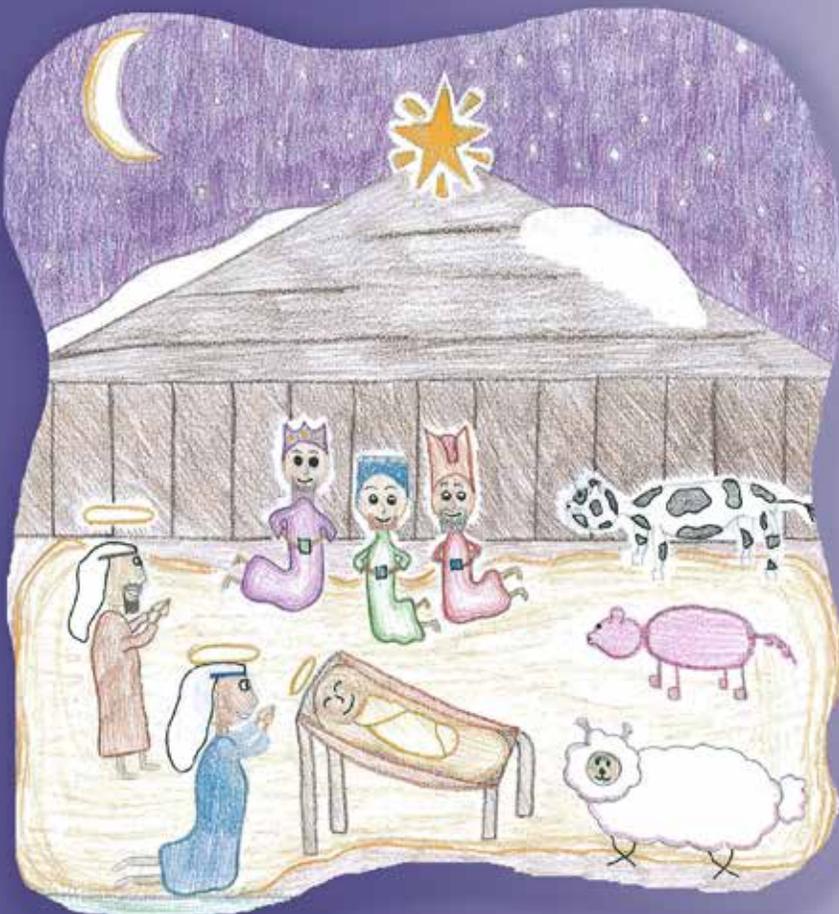
*Connecting with God ✝ Connecting with You*

5031 West Ridge Road | Erie, Pennsylvania 16506-1249

PHONE (814) 836-4100 | FAX (814) 836-4277

WEBSITE [www.ssjerie.org](http://www.ssjerie.org)

**facebook**



### *Jesus came*

with the light of a star  
to lead us into His light.

### *Jesus came*

with hope for all who are  
poor in spirit and those  
who are downtrodden.

### *Jesus came*

with love for the human race  
calling us to love Him  
and our “dear neighbor.”

In this holy season, may Christ come into  
your heart, gifting you with light, hope,  
and love to be shared abundantly with all.

Linda Fusco, SSJ