

Volume 32, No. 2
Winter 2014-2015

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Journeys

Walk into the season with
Generosity...

willing to share the gifts you have
and the gift you are
with those in need.



The Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

From Leadership



Merry Christmas!

During this season, we find ourselves wanting to share our gifts with those who have little or nothing. What a wonderful way to extend the joy of this season to others.

As I pondered the concept of generosity, I couldn't help but think of the immense generosity that has been showered upon each one of us by God. I find myself wanting to respond with a resounding "thank you" for all that God has given us. The image of the outstretched hand on the cover is an example of how I should receive God's generous gift of Jesus. God sent Jesus into this world to live among us, to show us the way to achieve unity with God and the dear neighbor.

Jesus generously shared his vision for our world in John 17:20 when he prayed, "May they all be one." His example throughout his life on earth pointed to something far beyond our comprehension—it seemed impossible, even to his disciples. He challenged His followers to live differently than others did. In 1 Peter 4:10, Peter exhorts the people to whom he ministered: "Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it," (*The Message* by Eugene Peterson). We, too, are called to share God's generosity with others.

How do we share God's generosity?

There are many ways we can share God's generosity, some you will see in this issue of *Journeys*. One family shares part of their Thanksgiving Day to serve those in need; a young woman follows God's invitation to profess the vows of poverty, celibate chastity, and obedience as a Sister of St. Joseph; another woman thought she was called to be a Sister at age 18, but later learned God had a different plan for her life.

How are you being invited to generously share your life and talents? During this season, perhaps you will discover God's call for yourself—not only for the season, but for life.

May the peace and joy of Christmas be yours throughout the New Year!



Tim Rohrbach Photography

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

Mary Ann White, SSJ
On behalf of Leadership

The verses on the front and back covers, as well as throughout this issue, were adapted from the poem, "Walk Into the New Year" by Mary Rose Romeo, SSJ.

YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

by Nancy Fischer, SSJ
Office for Religious
Diocese of Erie

In 2013, Pope Francis declared that a Year of Consecrated Life (YCL) be celebrated throughout the world. This event would also celebrate the 50th anniversary of the document *Perfectae Caritatis*, a decree from the Second Vatican Council which called for a renewal of each religious community and a plea for each to respond to the ever-growing needs of the times. The YCL began on November 30, 2014 and will come to a close on the World Day of Consecrated Life, February 2, 2016.

Consecrated life refers to women and men prompted by the Holy Spirit, who have chosen freely to give the total gift of their lives in service to and for the sake of God. These individuals have left everything to devote themselves to the proclamation of the Gospel, in love and service of their brothers and sisters. From the time of the early Church to today, these baptized persons have given radical witness to love God and their neighbor.

In the document *In Vita Consecrata*, the 1996 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Pope John Paul II wrote of the different forms of consecrated life as, “a plant with many branches which sink its roots into the Gospel and brings forth abundant fruit in every season of the Church’s life.”

The Diocese of Erie began its year-long celebration with a Mass honoring deceased religious on November 20, 2014 at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse. Bishop Lawrence Persico presided at the liturgy as the religious, associates, oblates, clergy and Serra

National Catholic Sisters Week March 8-14, 2015

National Catholic Sisters Week is a three-year national program supported by a \$3.3 million grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and intended to heighten awareness of the lives and contributions of Catholic sisters among young women. National Catholic Sisters Week will be held every year from March 8-14 in conjunction with National Women History’s Month. For more information on how to get involved, visit:

www.sisterstory.org
www.nationalcatholicsistersweek.org
and find National Catholic Sisters Week
on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.



WAKE UP THE WORLD!

— 2015 Year of Consecrated Life —

Since all the baptized share a common relationship with God, all are called to be “religious” or holy in the broad sense of the word. Some men and women, however, choose to live a particular lifestyle called religious or consecrated life. They follow a specific tradition or spirituality patterned after the life and teaching of the founder of their community. A community can include sisters or brothers, or priests, who share a common vision and mission. They profess evangelical vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Every day, they make time for prayer, ministry and community.

Source: www.hbgdiocese.org

Club members who died in the past year were remembered, as well as all those religious who served these 13 counties over the past 162 years. A planning committee of diocesan personnel and representatives from the religious congregations are also planning events and activities for the year. In a few months, the American Church will celebrate the second National Catholic Sisters Week, March 8 - 14, 2015.

From its early beginnings, the Diocese of Erie has grown through the generosity of so many who answered the call to consecrated life and gave of themselves to the Gospel. This group includes hundreds of women and men who dedicated their lives so that the faith might flourish in this area.

Living the consecrated life is not a job, it is a call from God to be for “the other,” or, as the Sisters of St. Joseph say, to be for the “dear neighbor.” Most religious don’t want recognition for their commitment to the Gospel, so it took a declaration from Pope Francis to ask that our work be recognized. May God’s reign increase through this year of celebration.

In Giving, We Receive

by Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ

As preparations for the 26th annual Sisters of St. Joseph Thanksgiving Dinner were underway, several people shared stories about their involvement with the dinner. Two stories, in particular, really exemplified our mission.



SSJ Associate, Joy Sherrred, a.k.a. the “Turkey Lady,” with volunteer Dave Easley.

***“Feeding the hungry...
that is what the
Thanksgiving Dinner
is all about.”***

Associate Joy Sherrred, the “lady with the turkey apron,” has volunteered to help at the dinner since 2010. She felt that it was one way she could live the SSJ mission. The origin of the turkey apron, however, is not related to the Thanksgiving Dinner at all.

Several years ago, Joy received a call from a woman in Kentucky named Tara who asked if Joy was related to John Sherrred. She had purchased a baby book at an antique store believing that its owner would want it back. The name, “John Sherrred” was written in the book along with notations, presumably written by his mother. Tara searched the Internet trying to find John Sherrred or a relative. Little did she know that John was Joy’s late husband. Tara sent the book to Joy who responded with a note and a gift card. Tara replied and the two have kept in touch since. Their relationship has grown over the years.

“It’s amazing that we discovered we had many things in common. We both feel our friendship was God’s plan because the Holy Spirit moved both of us to act on this book,” Joy said.

One year, Tara sent Joy an apron with a turkey applique on it. Joy thought it was appropriate to wear the apron when she began volunteering at the Thanksgiving Dinner and she has worn it every year since.

Joy, who attended Catholic Schools, including nursing school, often reflected on the corporal works of mercy, ways we show charity toward others such as feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless and visiting the sick. Joy recalls writing essays about such works while in school. As we spoke, she was reminded of that and noted, “feeding the hungry...that is what the Thanksgiving Dinner is all about.”

Joy believes that the more you give, the more blessings you get. “Volunteering at the Thanksgiving Dinner has enriched my life,” she said. “It has made a difference in my life. I receive more than I can ever give. It makes me aware of my blessings.” Joy also volunteers at Great Lakes Hospice, the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network and St. Patrick’s Haven. At St. Patrick’s Haven, Joy is known as the “cookie lady” because she brings individual bags of cookies for the men when she visits.

“God has given me many blessings, the least I can do is share,” she said.



The Gleischners: (left-right) Connor, Jeannine, Callie, Rich and Carrie.

It was a chance encounter with Sr. Mary Fromknecht in 1993 that led Jeannine Gleichsner and her brother Rich to volunteer at the Sisters' Annual Thanksgiving Dinner. Having just recently lost their mother, Jeannine and her brother accepted Sr. Mary's invitation to help at the dinner, doing it in their mother's memory. More than 20 years later, the Gleischners haven't missed a year, in what is now a multi-generational, family tradition.

"My mom was a very caring and giving person, so it was an appropriate thing to do," Jeannine explained. Their father also got involved, but unfortunately, died two days before Thanksgiving in 1995. Despite their grief, Jeannine and Rich helped at the dinner because they felt they "had to do it" for their dad. "Dad loved people. If he would have been able, he would have run the event," Jeannine said.

Jeannine and Rich's jobs at the dinner have varied over the years. At first they both served beverages and visited with the guests. More recently, Rich has been in charge of making coffee, while Jeannine dishes up food. "If we can make just one person or family feel special on Thanksgiving, then it is all worthwhile," Jeannine said.

Rich and Jeannine's example of service led Rich's daughter, Carrie, to join them in 2009, the year the dinner moved to Gannon University. Since then, Rich's grandchildren have also come on board. Connor, Carrie's son, began helping in 2010 and three years later, Callie joined them. "I love the fact that my daughter and grandchildren are involved now," Rich said. "My wife, Linda, my daughter Lori, and the rest of the family are home cooking the family Thanksgiving dinner while we are having fun at Gannon." Carrie likes to be in the crowd talking with people. She loves volunteering because everyone is happy and in a good mood. She especially loves the kids. "I wish the hours were longer so that we could stay and serve and be with the people more," she said.

There has never been a shortage of volunteers for the dinner and it's apparent that the volunteers help at the dinner not because they feel they have to, but because they want to. There is a visible display of "mission in action" and, as Jeannine said, "It says something for the Sisters that so many people want to come and work that day."

The volunteers always express that they receive more than they give, just as we are told through the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi which states, "*For it is in giving that we receive.*"



This year, Jeannine, Callie, and Carrie were sporting festive turkey hats!



Walk into the season with GENEROSITY,

willing to share the gifts you have and the gift you are with those in need.

Mission and Ministries Foundation:



Sisters of St. Joseph Mission and Ministries Foundation Board of Directors (l-r) Robert Cox; Mary Herrmann, SSJ; Scott Whalen; Tina Mengine; Bill Hilbert, Jr.; Mary Ann White, SSJ; Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ; and Catherine Manning, SSJ.

On January 1, the Sisters of St. Joseph will begin a new ministry. This new endeavor, known as the Sisters of St. Joseph Mission & Ministries Foundation, will be the fundraising and grantmaking arm of the Congregation. While its work may be fundraising, the Foundation’s fundamental purpose will be uniting with community members to advance the SSJ mission—today and for generations to come.

True, the Sisters have been engaged in fundraising since their earliest days. That’s how every SSJ ministry—from orphanages and hospitals to schools and social services—has come to be. But today, the Sisters believe a different model will better serve the needs of the Congregation and its mission-based works.

That model is a soon-to-be official “charitable trust,” established with funds the Congregation received when it relinquished sponsorship of Saint Vincent Hospital. “When we knew we would receive a substantial payment from Highmark for the release of Saint Vincent, the Congregation studied a number of options,” explained Sister Mary Herrmann, a member of SSJ Leadership. “We knew we needed to do more than simply set this money aside for the care of our Sisters or for operational needs.”

“We asked ourselves, ‘How do we continue to advance our mission—serve the neighbor without distinction and unite neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God—today and into the future?’” she said. “How do we engage more people, foster more relationships and ultimately, have the resources to fund existing ministries, new ministries and other community efforts, as well as meet the needs of our Sisters?”

After much research, discussion and prayerful discernment, the answer was clear: Establish a ministry focused on advancing our mission, call on Sisters and area leaders to serve on its board, invite others to join us in ministry—each giving from the blessings he or she possesses, and together, build true community—a community of compassion and service to the dear neighbor, especially those in need.

“This is an exciting time for us. With wise stewardship of SSJ Mission & Ministry Foundation resources, and continued support from our generous donors, we’ll be able to ensure that our ministries are strong and effective, and most important, that these services remain available for generations to come,” said Sister Mary Herrmann.

Our commitment to advancing the mission.

by Dotty Hanna, SSJA, Director of Development

What is the SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation?

The SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation, established as a separate 501(c)3 organization, will advance the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph by sharing the Sisters' vision, inviting community members to join us in ministry, and ultimately raising, stewarding and granting funds to support the Congregation, its ministries and other like-minded entities. All development/fundraising activities formerly handled by the SSJ Development Department will be managed by the Mission & Ministries Foundation.

In the spirit of uniting in mission, the foundation will be governed by a board of Sisters and community leaders. Current board members are: Bill Hilbert Jr., chair; Tina Mengine, secretary/treasurer; Sr. Clare Marie Beichner,* Robert Cox, Sr. Mary Herrmann,* Sr. Catherine Manning, Sr. Carol Morehouse, Sr. Mary Ann White* and Scott Whalen.

(*ex-officio with voice and vote)

How will this new ministry change the Sisters' fundraising?

Fundraising has always been essential to the work of the Sisters of St. Joseph and other women religious. Over the years, support of generous friends and community leaders has made it possible for the Sisters to serve thousands upon thousands of dear neighbors.

Today, we still recognize the importance of having the funds necessary for ministry, but we also look upon fundraising and development as ministry. Through this work, we share our mission, our vision, and we bring people of all walks of life together—Sisters, donors, volunteers, advisors and the dear neighbor. Some of us bring gifts of prayer and presence; others bring talents, wisdom or resources. All give and all receive when the dear neighbor is served.

Designating this work as a sponsored ministry is one change. Other changes include: the establishment of a separate 501(c)3, the involvement of area leaders on the foundation board, and the charge to not only raise, but also grant dollars. This new model will help advance our mission today and tomorrow, ensuring that the Congregation and existing SSJ ministries thrive and that new ministries can be supported—whether run by Sisters or others who share our call to connect neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God.

“Fundraising is, first and foremost, a form of ministry. It is a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission... Whether we are asking for money or giving money, we are drawn together by God, who is about to do a new thing through our collaboration.”

Henri Nouwen, renowned author, professor and pastor from “A Spirituality of Fundraising”

As a friend or donor of the Sisters, what does this mean to me?

Our hope and prayer is that this new ministry will offer new ways and more ways for friends and donors to become involved and connected with the Sisters of St. Joseph, our ministries and the dear neighbor.

Otherwise, it simply means that benefactors will make donations to the Sisters of St. Joseph Mission & Ministries Foundation, instead of directly to the SSJ Congregation.

Where will my donations go?

All donations will go directly to the Sisters of St. Joseph Mission & Ministries Foundation. Depending upon the donor's wishes, gifts will be earmarked for particular uses, such as support of the Congregation, support of ministries or for unrestricted use.

Will other SSJ ministries continue to raise funds?

Yes, SSJ sponsored ministries will continue to raise funds as they always have. These ministries include: the SSJ Neighborhood Network, Saint Mary's Home of Erie, St. Patrick's Haven and St. James Haven, and Villa Maria Elementary. These ministries have important and meaningful relationships with those who support them, and we, in no way, want to disrupt the remarkable work being done by these organizations and their supporters.

For more information about the Sisters of St. Joseph Mission & Ministries Foundation, please call 814-836-4202.

Walk into the season with UNDERSTANDING,

affording the weary, the worn, and the wounded a safe shelter in you.



RESPONDING TO WHO GOD WANTS HER TO BE

Lessons Learned from the Bamboo

by Sr. Rosemary O'Brien

On November 22, when Sr. Kelly Smock professed vows of chastity, poverty and obedience for one year with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania, she was responding to a dream that was planted in her heart many years ago. In the words of her profession, she desired to give herself to God in our religious congregation, "for the sake of all, bringing unity and reconciliation into the world." In doing this, she shared the dream of the first six Sisters of St. Joseph in LePuy, France in 1650. These early founders also dreamed that the union of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God was worthy of their life commitment.

Kelly's dream began as a young girl, as the daughter of loving parents, Dorothy and Peter Smock. Kelly and her twin sisters, Holly Dickinson and Julie Leiloglou, were raised in an atmosphere where the love of God and others was central. These values were nurtured in Kelly's life through involvement in her parish church, St. Peter's in Conneautville, PA, and later at Our Lady of the Lake parish in Edinboro, PA.

A significant moment in Kelly's faith development occurred in her youth when her religious education teacher, Dr. Carol Bocan, an Associate of the Sisters of St. Joseph, encouraged Kelly to attend a diocesan youth rally. "That experience really taught me what Church could be," Kelly said, and she became more aware of God and the energy that was stirring in her heart.

During her second year at Edinboro University, Kelly participated in a silent, directed retreat for students. It was then that she encountered three Sisters of St. Joseph who were part of the retreat team: Sisters Mary Drexler, Joyce Lowrey and Mary Ann White. Their spirit of zeal and love for God sparked her curiosity and interest in religious life. She remembers returning to school, feeling something tugging at her heart and wondering what religious life might be like. While researching about different religious congregations, someone suggested that she consider becoming an Associate with the Sisters of St. Joseph (Christian men and women who are called to intensify their commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ through deeper association with the Sisters of St. Joseph). Following a year-long formation process, Kelly became an Associate in 2005. Even while living with a closer connection to the congregation, Kelly continued to desire something more. One Sister learned of Kelly's continuing interest and invited her into a process to help her discern God's deepening call. That led to her entrance into the



Sr. Rosemary O'Brien joyfully welcomes Sr. Kelly during the profession ceremony.

Sisters of St. Joseph on January 9, 2011, when she began her formal initiation as a candidate, followed by a two-year novitiate, including nine months in the Sisters of St. Joseph Federation Novitiate in Chicago.

Kelly acknowledges her relationship with God and others as what sustains her. She finds inspiration from various sources including Psalm 139 which speaks of God's intimate love and knowledge of her. Throughout her journey, Kelly uses the Parable of Bamboo, which tells a tale of a bamboo tree that is anxious to be used by the master of a garden because of all the potential sacrifices it may need to make. The bamboo lets go of its fear and allows the master to cut it down, strip off its leaves, and hollow it, in order to carry spring water to the master's dry fields. Although the bamboo felt more beautiful in its previous form, it finds that it's even more glorious in its brokenness and humility, becoming a symbol of life for others. Kelly parallels this to her own journey.

She offers this advice to women considering religious life. "The journey needs to be centered on God and who God calls you to be. It is important to get to know the religious congregation. There will be rough patches, but God's love provides what is needed to get through. This is not a journey for the faint of heart. It is one that is rooted in the reconciling love of God which then flows out into service. Don't sweat the small stuff."



Tim Rohrbach Photography

Sr. Kelly Smock

As the dream to love and serve God as a Sister of St. Joseph continues to unfold, Sr. Kelly takes to heart the words of the prophet Jeremiah: "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord. . . plans to give you a future full of hope."



Walk into the season with JOY,

welcoming all the people and events that will renew and refresh your spirit.



Elaine Clyburn pictured with Sr. Agnes Clare (Buffalo SSJ) at her graduation from Mt. St. Joseph Academy in 1952.

Following God's Will Amidst a Changing Society

by Elaine Clyburn, SSJA

In 1982, allowing God to lead me, I became one of the first Associates of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania. As I signed the first line in the commitment book (it was alphabetical), a voice spoke the words of the prophet Jeremiah to my spirit, *"For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord. . . plans to give you a future full of hope."*

Thirty years earlier, as the first black student at Mt. St. Joseph Academy in my hometown of Buffalo, NY, that plan was not so clear.

It was the early 1950s and American society was deep in the throes of racial tension and prejudice. I was living in two separate worlds. In my neighborhood, I was both "cherished and challenged" among my friends who had their own notions of what went on in the privileged world of private school and/or white society. At school, I was a novelty, a visitor from another planet, an object to be studied and, as I later discovered, the subject of an all-school assembly prior to my arrival.

Sr. Agnes Clare (a Sister of St. Joseph with the Buffalo SSJs), however, treated me just like everyone else. Others assumed I had no father at home (untrue), or that he was unemployed (also not true) or that I was an expert on all things "negro" (again, not true, although I did read a lot and paid attention to black culture and the multi-racial background of my family). Sr. Agnes Clare didn't see me through the lens of stereotypes that were the predominant societal norms; because of her influence and acceptance, I decided during my senior year to join her congregation.

To my surprise, I was told that a "colored" nun would not be accepted by those served by the congregation's ministries in Catholic schools and hospitals, and that I should explore other congregations. If I *truly* had a religious vocation, I would be pleased to be with my "own kind," referring to the orders founded for, and by, black Sisters.

I was devastated. I felt hurt, angry and puzzled. I didn't think God would put that desire in me if I was not to choose it. I rationalized that the rejection was their loss, not mine, and moved forward with college, graduate school and professional employment. Initial feelings of hurt and rejection weren't enough to squelch my desire; that yearning remained deep inside.

It was more a "sign of the times" than a personal rejection and I know today that it was the right decision for the wrong reasons. It didn't make me bitter and it couldn't keep me from the connection I was destined to have with the Sisters of St. Joseph.

My journey led me to Erie, Pennsylvania where I became the Social Work Program

Director at Villa Maria College, a ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania. There I was introduced to the emerging concept of lay membership with the congregation. Sister Dorinda Young beamed as she described how lay women had been a part of the congregation's earliest history. She explained "association" as a manifestation of a reality that wasn't about "having arrived," but rather about having the desire to "be on the journey."

Then and there, I knew that the long ago rejection I felt was a comma, not a period, and my head and heart told me that becoming an SSJ Associate was God's plan for me all along.

The rest is history.

*We'll bring you more of Elaine's journey
and how she beautifully lives the SSJ mission in a future issue.*



First Associates of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania pictured (l-r): Elaine Clyburn, Pat Marshall and Ellen Mooney.

DISCOVERING “THE WAY”

Unique Journeys on a Common Path

by Dotty Hanna, SSJA

In late September, eight pilgrims returned home to the States, having walked the last 100 km of the Camino de Santiago, or Way of St. James. While their feet hiked a common path from Sarria to Santiago, Spain, each pilgrim’s journey was unique.

Prior to the Camino, five of the eight pilgrims, all from Erie, met regularly. They trained together, compared walking sticks, hiking boots and other supplies, and gathered prayer requests from friends, families and strangers to carry along the way. And



SSJ Associate Dr. Patrick Shaughnessy (r) with his friend Mark DelMaramo in photo taken during their journey along the Camino de Santiago.



Pilgrims (l-r): Tom and Sue Elliott, Joan Fels, Barb and Jim McNamara.

collectively, they raised funds to support the SSJ Neighborhood Network. Meanwhile, in Greenville, an SSJ Associate, Dr. Patrick Shaughnessy, was training to do the same 100km journey in October, joining a friend who needed the company of a medical professional. Like his fellow pilgrims from Erie, Dr. Shaughnessy trained, read about the Way and gathered prayer intentions.

Each pilgrim had expectations of the journey—some spiritual, some physical, some fellowship and travel. And each returned having experienced more than imagined.

“From the outset, if I’m going to be honest, I had mixed motives for wanting to do the Camino,” says Jim McNamara, one

of the pilgrims. “First, it was an adventure. Second, it was an opportunity for some spiritual enrichment, and third, I hoped to use it for a reason bigger than ourselves, to generate money for charity.”

“For most people, God is in the back of your mind all the time. Life is so hectic that we only get to scratch the surface of our spirituality,” says Barb McNamara. “All we were doing was walking. We had no plan. There is a freedom in that.”

“It was just a completion of the whole walk,” explains Joan Fels, a fitness instructor at Nautilus in Erie. For Joan, the Camino was personally cathartic, as well. Her husband died in May 2013, and she was searching for what she calls, “spiritual healing.”

Tom and Sue Elliott found time during their long, challenging days of walking to reflect more on their spiritual lives. “If you’re out walking for seven or eight hours, you have time to slow down and communicate with God or the people you’ve devoted your walk to on a particular day,” says Tom.

And for Dr. Shaughnessy, both the spiritual and physical aspects left their mark. “I thought, and hoped, I could manage the physical part of the walk, and I did,” he explains. “And I prayed more than I’ve ever prayed before, along the way and at the end.” But it was the Cathedral that made the greatest impression. “In the Cathedral—the end and most important part of the Camino—there’s an awareness of all who have made this journey before you.”

According to Joe and Carol Pillitteri, whose 2013 pilgrimage inspired the Erie group, every pilgrim has, “a plan, a dream, a hope, but they can’t know what the experience will mean to them until they do it.”

Fireside chat with the pilgrims.

Learn more about their journeys.

Stories and photos will be shared; desserts, coffee and hot chocolate will be served.

Thursday, January 8, 2015

6:00 p.m.

Sisters of St. Joseph
Community Living Center
5031 West Ridge Road Erie, PA
RSVP: Please call 814-836-4198.

Excerpts reprinted with permission from FaithLife, the biweekly newspaper of the Catholic Diocese of Erie.

ROAR Opened My Eyes

by Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ



This year's Roar on the Shore[®] motorcycle rally in Erie brought together three very different groups: nuns, bikers and the homeless. What could they have in common, I wondered, as the event approached and I thought of the thousands of bikers who would take over our community. I used to think of the event as a noisy inconvenience brought on by "motorcycle gangs"—the rough, tough-looking, tattooed guys whom I feared more than liked. Yes, I am guilty of harboring those stereotypes in the past.

My feelings have changed.

Roar on the Shore[®], is more than a motorcycle rally. It is a well-organized, charitable event which, this year, designated St. Patrick's Haven as its beneficiary charity. The Haven, a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph and Associates, provides shelter for homeless men in Erie.



The Sisters donned helmets and leather and roared through town on motorcycles to help homeless men served through St. Patrick's Haven ministry. Pictured above is Sr. Mary Herrmann and left is Sr. Clare Marie Beichner riding with Stephen Heubel.

Because of this connection, I learned about "bikers," especially that all those negative stereotypes just aren't true. Bikers are ordinary men and women who happen to like riding motorcycles. They are our neighbors, friends and family members. Many biker groups are ministry-oriented and host events to raise money for specific causes.



The Manufacturers & Business Association and ROAR on the Shore[®] board presented St. Patrick's Haven with a gift of \$125,000 which included the value of three properties donated by Rick Griffith, a local real estate developer.

Interestingly, the homeless are another negatively stereotyped group. They, too, are ordinary people who have come upon hard times due to various reasons. Many are veterans who loyally served our country.

Catholic Sisters, too, are the subject of negative stereotypes. We have been pictured as overly strict disciplinarian teachers in full habit, overly pious, saintly Sisters with halos, whimsical "Sister Act" nuns or "Sister Mary

Margarita" on cocktail napkins. On the contrary, we are ordinary women who do ordinary things, with an extraordinary vision.

This year, Roar on the Shore[®] included a Faith and Freedom Ride with several of our Sisters, Associates, and Haven board members riding along. That sight alone dispelled some stereotypes and gave clear witness to "unity in diversity."

Inspiring

Tim Rohrbach Photography



2014 Spirit of Courage honorees (l-r): Brandi Kirby, Patricia Mazzaresse, Kelly Meyer and John Michalski, and Tiel Wilczynski.

Inspiration filled the air as more than 300 guests gathered to honor this year's SSJ Spirit of Courage honorees and Unity Award recipients at the 18th annual event.

When **Brandi Kirby** was 9 years old, family tragedy struck. By 14, Brandi was homeless. After help from the Prince of Peace Center, she is now employed, has reconnected with her children, and is a mother, friend, mentor, educator and role model who shares her story of survival and transformation.

Patty Mazzaresse has had uncontrollable temporal lobe epilepsy since the age of 11. Patty opted for surgery in 2012, which temporarily eliminated her seizures, which returned in 2014. Doctors are working with Patty to devise a treatment plan that will allow Patty to continue her full, and courageous, life.

In April 2013, **Kelly Meyer** fell in her bathroom. Within 10 hours, she was diagnosed with bacterial meningococcal meningitis. After a month in the hospital, she returned home but her ordeal continued with amputations and intensive therapy. She continues her recovery today and acknowledges that she was never alone on this journey.



In April of her sophomore year of high school, **Tiel Marie Wilczynski** was hospitalized with anorexia nervosa. Today, Tiel is a healthy 30-year-old graduate student pursuing a double Master's degree in counseling and art therapy. She carefully monitors her own health and speaks openly to those struggling with eating disorders and depression.

Dick and Willie Rahner 2014 SSJ Spirit of Courage Unity Award

by Margaret Ann Hardner, SSJ

Ask anyone who knows Dick and Willie Rahner, and you'll hear what motivates them: the opportunity to make things better. They aren't the kind of people who seek publicity or recognition; that's simply not what moves them.

At a very young age, both Dick and Willie were blessed with parents who served in deed more than word by taking in orphans, feeding the hungry, and cherishing family.

Continued next page

Tim Rohrbach Photography



2014 Unity Award recipients (from left) Willie and Dick Rahner, along with long-time friend and presenter, Sr. Margaret Ann Hardner.



Walk into the season with HOPE,

mindful that each day will be filled with mystery and beauty for those who have eyes to see.



Walk into the season with **PATIENCE**,

knowing that difficulties and challenges are the hallmark of all who follow Christ.

Unity Award continued from previous page

They met on a blind date and, before long, the two were married and raising children—six of their own, an adopted son, multiple exchange students, foster children and even an occasional hitchhiker (as their children explain it). Their home was a haven for anyone who needed a place to stay, a warm meal, conversation, or friendship.

Dick and Willie have given their time, talent and resources to many efforts, such as the Regional Cancer Center, the Boys and Girls Club, United Way and Catholic Charities. They support refugees, foreign exchange students and foreign missions. They support hospitals and schools locally and as far away as Nepal and India, and provide educational sponsorship for students at all levels of schooling.

Their enthusiasm has inspired friends and neighbors to do more than they thought possible. As one friend said, “Their combined impact on the community is far greater than what each could have done alone. They inspire you to think that if they can do this, so can we.”



Dick and Willie Rahner with Mother Teresa during a trip to India.

WELCOME NEW ASSOCIATES

Eleven new SSJ Associates were welcomed into the SSJ community during a liturgy in September. Rev. Dennis Martin, an SSJ Associate, celebrated the liturgy. SSJ Associates are Christian women and men who choose to come together to share the nature and spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph to further the reign of God. Associate candidates are required to complete a year of preparation and instruction about the history, mission, spirit and spirituality of the Sisters before they are welcomed into the program and asked to make their commitment which is renewed annually. The practice of Associate membership dates back to the founding of the Congregation in France in the 17th century.

Currently, there are 259 Associate members of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania. For more information about SSJ Associates, call the SSJ Associate Office at 814-836-4134.



Our newest SSJ Associates, pictured above are (l-r): Maria Ines Patino Giraldo, Denise Krainski, Cynthia Berarducci, Mary Lyons, Tom Lyons. Pictured at right (l-r): Geraldine Gallagher, Teresa Cieslikowski, Susan Shannon, Joann Rupp, Gretchen Gallagher Durney, Carol Picheco.



CONGREGATIONS OF ST. JOSEPH AND THE UNITED NATIONS



The mission of unity within the Congregations of St. Joseph is inherent in the mission of peace at the United Nations. Together, they promote a more just and sustainable society. In 1979, we became an official Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) at the UN and, in 1999, we were awarded General Consultative Status with Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), allowing us to make statements during official UN conferences and meetings and bringing grassroots groups we represent into UN debate, policy and decisions.

What is an NGO?

The UN defines an NGO as, “a not-for-profit group, principally independent from government, which is organized on a local, national, or international level to address issues in support of the public good.”

What is ECOSOC?

ECOSOC is the Economic and Social Council, one of the four major bodies of the UN, along with: the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the International Court of Justice. The ECOSOC promotes sustainable development with concern for economic, social, and environmental challenges.

**The above information was cited from the Congregations of St. Joseph and the United Nations website; for more information please visit, <http://csj-unngo.org/>*

What is the DPI?

The DPI is the UN Department of Public Information; it uses media to raise awareness about the vision and work of the UN. NGOs have access to this information, allowing them to focus on issues important to the UN and promote UN observances.

What is the role of an NGO at the UN?

NGOs help the UN promote its efforts in social progress, better living standards and human rights throughout the DPI. Via ECOSOC, NGOs are able to review and follow-up on the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits, thus providing input into future discussions of the ECOSOC.

ACTING “GLOCALLY”

The Global Joseph Family

by Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ

The annual fall meeting of the justice ministers of the U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph, titled, *A Global Heart for the 21st Century*, was held in late October. Thirty-five Sisters and CSJ Associates gathered and focused on acting “glocally,” maintaining a global vision of justice even though we may be acting locally. We also discussed the importance of our mission at the United Nations in bringing the “Global Joseph Family” together in our efforts to act glocally.

Sister Carol Zinn, SSJ, of Philadelphia, former president of LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious), led the group in reflections and discussions on a variety of topics. She reminded us of the importance of doing advocacy in the light of our charism and mission of unity. As a former UN-NGO representative for the Congregations of St. Joseph, Sr. Carol spoke of how our role as an NGO, with more than 10,000 members worldwide in 49 countries on six continents, allows us to participate in global justice initiatives as the “Global Joseph Family.” When asked about the effectiveness of Catholic religious as NGOs, Sr. Carol said that the international community admires the Sisters’ work for many reasons, notably that when the Sisters come to the table, it’s not about the Sisters—the focus is on those we serve, not on ourselves.

Sister Patty Johnson, Executive Director of the U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph, reported on the Justice and Peace International Commission held earlier this year in Brentwood, NY. Twenty-eight Sisters from 13 countries speaking four languages attended. Participants were informed about the role of NGOs at the UN and the important presence of religious congregations among them. According to Sr. Patty, the Sisters took a step forward when they passed the CSJ guiding statement regarding sustainable development.

Sister Justine Senapati, CSJ UN-NGO Representative



Sister Justine Senapati, a Sister of St. Joseph of Anancy from Bhubaneswar, India, assumes responsibility for the life and vitality of the CSJ-UN-NGO and its mission. During her first year, she will focus on migration, and how the impacts of war, violence, drugs, trafficking and climate change drive these people to migrate. She will attend meetings at the UN and will be assisted by Sister Barbara Bozak, CSJ of Hartford, CT and Sister Marianne Sennick, CSJ of Brentwood, NY.

Continued on next page.



Walk into the season with REVERENCE,

so that the “dear neighbor” beside you and each opportunity before you will be embraced as God’s gift to you.

ACTING “GLOCALLY”

With their presence at the UN, the Congregations of Saint Joseph are eager to:

1. *promote the wisdom of all cultures and traditions;*
2. *be a focus of learning and teaching dedicated to preparing ourselves and others to think and act as global citizens;*
3. *be active participants in global systems change initiatives; and*
4. *take an active role in preserving and using mother earth’s resources through sustainable development to enhance the neighborhood of the universe.*

Three Sisters at the Brentwood meeting, along with our new representative to the UN, Sister Justine Senapati, CSJ from India, will lead the Global Joseph Family in finding ways to live out this statement together. We are encouraged to care for our earth while also enhancing our presence at the UN. International meetings, such as the one in Brentwood, are a necessary and major step in developing the international relationships essential to being a truly Global Joseph Family.

We Remember



Anastasia Valimont, SSJ
entered into eternal life on
August 31, 2014



Emilie Rose LeBoeuf, SSJ
entered into eternal life on
November 17, 2014

WHERE IS SISTER?

What your favorite Sisters doing and how you can keep in touch.

Sister Mary Rita Kuhn, SSJ

Hometown: Erie, PA
Currently Resides: Erie, PA



What was your ministry?

I have been a Sister of St. Joseph since 1950. Much of my ministry was spent in education. I taught at Villa Maria Elementary, Sacred Heart and St. Peter Cathedral Schools in Erie. I also taught at St. Francis School in Clearfield and Our Lady of Peace School in Erie before becoming Principal. In 1984, I became Vicar for Religious for the Erie Diocese and served in that capacity for 27 years.

What are you doing now?

I am retired from active ministry and volunteering for Saint Vincent Hospital in the Hardner Building. A favorite frequent activity is being near the water which means visits to the peninsula on a regular basis.

Share a fond memory from your years of ministry.

The time spent with teachers and students was a very special time and the very different experiences as Vicar for Religious was a time of getting to know and work with so many men and women religious.

Sister Margaret Joseph Mokes, SSJ

Hometown: Clearfield, PA
Currently Resides: Erie, PA

What was your ministry?

I have been a Sister of St. Joseph since 1946. I taught at many parish schools in Erie and Meadville, Pennsylvania including: Blessed Sacrament, Sacred Heart, St. Paul and St. Ann schools, Seton School, Meadville, along with others. I was also the night and weekend manager at Maryvale Apartments, as well as an activity aide at Saint Mary’s Home of Erie.

What are you doing now?

I am presently retired and I participate in our prayer card ministry praying for patients at Saint Vincent Hospital.

Share a fond memory from your years of ministry.

I loved every year of teaching and doing activities at Saint Mary’s. In 1996, I received the Papal Cross “Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice,” conferred by Pope John Paul II for lifetime work in education.



Sister Margaret Joseph and Sister Mary Rita would love to hear from you! If you’d like to contact them, send an e-mail to prdir@ssjerie.org; indicate “Sr. Margaret Joseph” or “Sister Mary Rita” in the subject line and it will be forwarded to them. As well, you can call 814-836-4203 and ask for them directly.



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