

interim

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Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

In the Heart of Joseph: *Now more than Ever*

Pandemic

What if you thought of it as the Jews consider the Sabbath—the most sacred of times? Cease from travel. Cease from buying and selling. Give up, just for now, on trying to make the world different than it is. Sing. Pray. Touch only those to whom you commit your life. Center down. And when your body has become still, reach out with your heart. Know that we are connected in ways that are terrifying and beautiful. (You could hardly deny it now.) Know that our lives are in one another's hands. (Surely, that has come clear.) Do not reach out your hands. Reach out your heart. Reach out your words. Reach out all the tendrils of compassion that move, invisibly, where we cannot touch. Promise this world your love—for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, so long as we all shall live.

--Lynn Ungar 3/11/20
(Unitarian Universalist poet laureate)

In the heart of Joseph, our hearts, like his, are changed and the impossible becomes possible.

Our St. Joseph Day card this year included the above message. As we brainstormed and planned what our card would be this year, we had no idea that we would be dealing with a pandemic that would ultimately lead to the cancellation of our St. Joseph Day celebration.

Now is the time when we are being called, as Joseph was, to

**MISSION:
POSSIBLE!**

Recently I read a March 20 New York Times opinion piece by Kiley Bense titled, "We Should All Be More like the Nuns of 1918." It detailed how a nursing shortage during the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 led the archbishop of Philadelphia to call on nuns in his diocese to "leave their convents and take up posts caring for the sick and dying across the city."

look into our hearts, and be changed in whatever way God desires for us so that the impossible becomes possible.

Our Lenten plans have taken a new direction; our vacation and travel plans are at a standstill. We are confined to our homes, some of us are quarantined for a period of time. We are being asked to let go and do things differently.

One thing we can most certainly do, as Joseph did, is to pray



without ceasing that God will extend mercy on all who are suffering from this virus. Through prayer to our patron, Joseph, may our hearts be changed and the impossible become possible. Blessings,
SSJ Leadership

Socially distant doesn't have to mean spiritually disconnected.

Living the mission amidst the COVID-19 pandemic
by Stephanie Hall, SSJ Communications Director and SSJ Associate

To no surprise and, despite most having little experience of the outside world and no medical training, the sisters responded. They jumped in on the front lines and helped save the lives of others and lost 23 of their own. It was a beautifully inspiring story, and it got me thinking about the Sisters of St. Joseph. After all, that is exactly

what Sisters of St. Joseph were founded to do — respond to the needs of the era and the area. As associates and agrégées who have been drawn to the SSJ mission and charism, we are called to do the same.

Some of us may be on the front lines in some capacity, like SSJ Agrégée Betsy Wiest who is working

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diligently to keep the mission of St. Patrick's Haven in operation to serve homeless men in the midst of the pandemic. County and health department requirements are making it increasingly difficult, but Betsy, as the face of the SSJ, is doing all that she can. While we may not all be on the front lines responding to the critical medical and physical needs of others, the personal and spiritual needs are just as important during these isolated times.

Here are some things we can do.

The advent of technology and social media has been both a blessing and a curse, as we all know. Right now, it's a saving grace. Never before has technology played a more important role in connecting neighbor with **neighbor and neighbor with God**. Through Facetime, videoconferencing and other tools and platforms, more people than ever are using technology to stay connected. When you can't meet someone at Starbucks for a friendly social gathering or to seek guidance through a difficult situation, you can sit at your kitchen table with a cup of coffee and video chat with that person and have virtually the same experience.

Through email and our SSJErie website www.ssjerie.org, we can communicate and share information in a rapid manner. Through social media, we have an online Facebook page that currently connects us to a community of 1700 persons. These are individuals who have "connected with us" because they want our message. If you are a Facebook user, be sure to LIKE the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania Facebook page, and just as

important, extend our mission to others by SHARING the page with your Facebook connections and invite them to LIKE our page.

In addition to our Facebook PAGE, we also have a private Facebook GROUP (restricted to sisters, agrégées, and associates only). This group currently has 75 members who have the ability to share thoughts, have discussions, conversations and share information with each other. If you are a Facebook user, please search Facebook for the group: **SSJ Erie Community -- Sisters, Agréees and Associates** and request to join.

Also, through the use of technology, we started hosting online ZOOM small prayer/sharing groups. ZOOM is a video conferencing technology that allows us to have virtual meetings with up to 100 people. All you need is a computer, iPad or cell phone (see ZOOM prayer groups, page 4).

And even for those of us who may not have technology at hand, there are still things we can do to ease the loneliness of isolation. Scroll through the SSJ directory and make a phone call to someone who doesn't have an email address. A five-minute conversation, or a shared prayer, can go a long way to ease the loneliness of isolation.

Offer to help the dear neighbor. Even amidst social distancing, we still need to make an occasional run to the grocery store for essential items. The fewer people that go, the better. Offer to pick up items for someone else when you go to the store and then safely leave them on their doorstep. Sr. Mary Drexler shared with me her experience

of a neighbor who did this for her. I am personally willing to do this if there are any sisters, associates, agréees who need such assistance, just email or call me.

There are many ways we can help, including praying tirelessly. I am sure that we are all doing something, in some way, to respond to the needs of the era and area. And as we move forward together, we will likely hear many stories of mission in action in the midst of this crisis.

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PRIVATE SSJ FACEBOOK GROUP SSJ ERIE COMMUNITY - Sisters, Agrégées, Associates

This is separate from our SSJ Erie Facebook page. This GROUP began in 2017 and has 75 members. Its purpose is to foster communication, discussions, and relationship building within the SSJ community. This is an opportunity to engage in discussions with each other, offer prayer, spiritual support, and resources and simply keep connected. This is a PRIVATE

Facebook group for the SSJ Erie community. Membership is restricted to sisters, agrégées, and associates. Anything posted in the group is visible ONLY to members of the PRIVATE group.

If you are in the group, you can add members. If you are not in the group, you can search Facebook for **SSJ ERIE COMMUNITY - Sisters, Agrégées, Associates** and request to join.



Thanksgiving letters/comments

Dear Sisters,

On behalf of myself, Saint Ann's Church Food Pantry and Our Mother of Sorrows Parish, I wish to thank you, the Sisters of St. Joseph and the benefactors of the Sisters of St. Joseph, for your recent donation to our food pantry. The continued generosity shared by the Sisters of St. Joseph to the local food pantries, shelters, soup kitchens, etc., shows their faith in all of us who try to carry out the teachings of our God, to care for others. Their kindness enables us to acquire many items that are not always available through the Second Harvest Food Bank, such as paper products or meat. It also allows us to purchase more food when placing our order with Second Harvest Food Bank. Our numbers increase steadily each month. We are proud to say we provided over 75 baskets of food to our registered families for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. And thanks to your generosity, we will be able to continue to serve these many families. Your kindness and generosity to our food pantry is a true gift from God. Our

families are grateful for their groceries and cannot thank us enough. We know our families. They are not just food pantry clients; they are our parishioners, neighbors and friends. Many of the clients are elderly or disabled and are unable to get out to pick up their monthly groceries, let alone carry them back to their homes. We are fortunate to have the help of a few younger gentlemen who deliver their groceries right to their front doors. This is out of the goodness of their hearts, no questions asked, no complaining. They simply do it with a smile. Again, thank you very much for your wonderful and generous donation and for remembering the Saint Ann's Church Food Pantry in your annual giving. You all remain in my thoughts and prayers. Sincerely in Christ,
Rev. James T. O'Hara, Pastor

Dear Dotty,
On behalf of the Board of Directors and the men who seek shelter each night at St. Patrick's Haven, thank you for your generous gift to us from

the Thanksgiving Fund. Last year, we were able to provide 180 unduplicated guests a safe place to sleep, the ability to shower, hot coffee, snacks, weekend meals and always someone from our nightly visiting team to listen to our guests and talk with them. Just talking with our guests is a huge deal to them. I was at the Haven one evening and as a guest walked in, I said with a smile on my face, "Hey, Joe! How are you? How was your day?" He replied, "Betsy, you are the first person today who has even acknowledged that I exist. Thank you." This speaks volumes. Our guests often spend their days being invisible to those around them. We make them feel valued and we treat them as the children of God they are. Your support allows us to continue what we have been doing for the past 35 years – providing a safe haven to homeless men to come to after a long day on the streets. Thank you for your continued support of the homeless men who come nightly to St. Patrick's Haven.
Blessings,
Betsy Wiest

many hands make light work

It takes many hands to bake bread, make candy, polish apples, assemble and deliver St. Joseph Day baskets to 122 dear neighbors.

Thanks to all who made this year's St. Joseph Day possible – and special thanks for the kindness and extra effort when we decided to complete this labor of love three days early.

Bread Bakers:

Sr. Marjorie Adams, Sr. Clare Marie Beichner, Janet Demjanenko, Nancy Donnelly,

Ann Flick, Sr. Michele Healy, Jean Heintzel, Carleen Onuschak, Joy Sherred, Uta Smith, SueAnn Wisniewski and the Sisters in Marycrest, Betsy Williams, Mary Ann Zarnick and Jane Zawacki.

Basket Assembly:

Sr. Jean Baptiste DiLuzio, Sr. Michele Healy, Sr. Veronica Mittal, Sr. Millicent Zimmer, Rebecca Easley, Lisa Kaveney and Jenn Woodard.



Sister Veronica delivered a basket to Pete Manarelli of Metz Services.

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A St. Joseph Day Reflection

It was a rainy day, just like today. I remember that my sister and I were walking in the pouring rain to Our Lady's Christian School. All of a sudden, a green Gran Torino pulled up, the passenger door swung opened and a voice called out: "jump-in!". It was Sr. Karen Talerico, SSJ, our principal. In the back seat, three other sisters, Sr. Ann Louis, Sr. Rose Irma and Sr. Mary Sarah. We had just gotten

The following reflection by Jim Bird, vice-chair of the SSJ Mission and Ministries Foundation, was posted on Facebook and then shared with us by Mark Eisert. It is worth sharing with all of you.

picked up by the NUN CAR! Awesome. No stranger danger here.

Yes, on this Feast of St. Joseph, I remember what the Sisters of St. Joseph have taught me and formed me as a person. They have tilled the ground of my Catholic faith. They have nurtured my mind to be curious and open. They have educated me in mind, body and soul. They have

invited me into their mission of extending myself to the "good of the neighbor".

They have built schools, hospitals, orphanages, clinics, and communities. It is our time now to take the mantle of Sisters of St. Joseph and keep that mission and ministry to generations of good neighbors to come.

ZOOM: Socially Distant but Spiritually Connected Online ZOOM Prayer/Sharing Groups

We hosted our first SSJ online (via ZOOM) Prayer/ Sharing group for sisters, agrégées, and associates on Tuesday, March 24. We were so pleased to have 22 participants. It went well and the group expresses interest in continuing. As a follow up, a survey was sent to all sisters agrégées and associates for input. Be watching your emails for information on upcoming times.

To participate, you need to download the ZOOM app (APP

store) on your mobile device or create a free ZOOM account on your computer. You DO NOT have to give any credit card information to open a FREE ZOOM account.

For computer users, go to ZOOM.us

You will see where it says SIGN UP FOR FREE. Enter your information. It will send you a CONFIRMATION email that you need to open and then follow the steps. You have to click where it says, "I am not a

robot." You can SKIP the step to invite friends.

That should be it. Then when we schedule the next group, you can click on the link in the email invitation to join the prayer.



notes

Thank you to the associates from Sharon for their thoughtfulness in sending me a Feast Day card for St. Joseph Day.

Sr. Angela Marie

A big thank you to all who reached out to me while hospitalized and recovering! I am most grateful!

Sr. Moira

SSJ Mission Possible (Continued from page 2)

Please share your stories. What are you doing? What are you witnessing? We need these stories of hope. Just as the inspirational stories out of the Spanish flu pandemic of more than 100 years ago still inspire today, the kindnesses and actions of today will become part of the legacy of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic.

This is who we are -- this is what we do. We respond to the needs of the day and this makes the **SSJ Mission possible**.

Many hands (Continued from page 3)

Basket Delivery:

Sr. Clare Marie Beichner, Sr. Claudia Dombrowski, Sr. Mary Drexler, Sr. Mary Fromknecht, Sr. Michele Healy, Sr. Susan Herzing, Sr. Mary Herrmann, Sr. Phyllis McCracken, Sr. Carol Morehouse, Sr. Rosemary O'Brien, Sr. Mary Ann White, Sr. Millicent Zimmer, Nancy and Chuck Donnelly, Betsy Wiest and Jenn Woodard.

With gratitude,
Dotty Hanna and
Carol Hermann

Signs of the Times. Signs of Hope.

“Lockdown”

Yes, there is fear.
 Yes, there is isolation.
 Yes, there is panic buying.
 Yes, there is sickness.
 Yes, there is even death.
 But,
 They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise, you can hear the birds again.
 They say that after just a few weeks of quiet the sky is no longer thick with fumes
 But, blue and grey and clear.
 They say that in the streets of Assisi people are singing to each other across the empty squares, keeping their windows open so that those who are alone may hear the sounds of family around them.
 They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.
 Today a young woman I know is busy spreading fliers with her number through the neighborhood so that the elders may have someone to call on.
 Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples are preparing to welcome and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary.
 All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting.
 All over the world people are looking at their neighbors in a new way.

All over the world people are waking up to a new reality:
 To how big we really are.
 To how little control we really have.
 To what really matters.
 To Love.
 So, we pray, and we remember that
 Yes, there is fear.
 But there does not have to be hate.
 Yes, there is isolation.
 But there does not have to be loneliness.
 Yes, there is panic buying.
 But there does not have to be meanness.
 Yes, there is sickness.
 But there does not have to be disease of the soul.
 Yes, there is even death.
 But there can always be a rebirth of love.
 Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.
 Today, breathe.
 Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic, the birds are singing again.
 The sky is clearing, Spring is coming and we are always encompassed by Love.
 Open the windows of your soul and though you may not be able to touch across the empty square,
 Sing.

*Fr. Richard Hendrick, OFM
 March 13th, 2020*

Dear God,

In this time of uncertainty and fear, help us be love, mercy, and peace for ourselves and for others as we face coronavirus in the United States and around the world.

Help us hold close in our hearts those who have died, and their loved ones who mourn them.
 Those who are sick or are trying to seek medical care. Those who don't have paid sick leave, benefits, or job security.
 Those whose schools have closed and don't have access to food, safe homes, or technology.
 Those who can't travel to be with loved ones who are ill or dying.

Those who are facing discrimination and harassment because of their ethnicity.
 Those who are struggling with loneliness during this time of social isolation.
 Those who are frightened and losing hope.

Help us find joy, however small it seems.
 Help us remain hopeful.
 Help us remember that “All shall be well, for there is a force of love moving through the universe that holds us fast and will never let us go.”

Amen



Nominations are open!

Do you know someone age 75 or older who has remained active in the community, and who is doing remarkable things long after they've retired? Consider nominating him/her for recognition as an Ageless Remarkable Erieite to be honored at the 2020 Saint Mary's Follies on **September 10** at the Bayfront Convention Center. **Deadline for nominations is April 10.**

For more details, visit www.stmaryshome.org or call 814-451-1316.

www.ssjerie.org
SSJcommunity page
For community members only
 Sisters, agrégées, and associates — be sure to login in regularly to the SSJ Community page of our website. *(If you forget the login credentials, contact Jenn at 836-4204.)*

UPDATE RE: ERIE DAWN GALA

Erie DAWN has postponed their 25th Anniversary GALA that was May 30, 2020 – to Friday, Oct 2, 2020 at the Bayfront Convention Center. We will be honoring the Sisters of St Joseph, the Sisters of Mercy, and the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.

Lenten Vigils for Immigration Justice NOW ACCESSIBLE ONLINE!

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the remaining Friday Lenten Vigils for Immigration Justice will take place in a virtual prayer community. Each week's vigil will be accessible via an online link. Materials include a digital audio file, a downloadable worship aid, and prayer cards for the children who have died while in US detention.

The vigils are prepared by a local coalition that includes the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas NYPPAW, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania, the Diocese of Erie Social Justice and Life Office, Erie NETWORK Grassroots Advocates, and students from Gannon and Mercyhurst Universities.

Access the vigils and related materials at www.eriebenedictines.org/bfp

If you are not able to participate at the time of the vigil, the materials will be available for access at your convenience.

March 27

Prayer leader: Sisters of St. Joseph of NW Pennsylvania

April 3

Prayer leader: Benedictine Sisters of Erie

**For more information,
 contact Betsy Wiest at 814-836-4153
 or socialjustice@ssjerie.org**



Due to COVID-19, the SSJ Neighborhood Network was faced with the disappointing need to cancel the 14th Annual Guess That Tune Gala that was slated for April 18. We love everything about this opportunity to joyfully gather with so many who support our mission and work. We are

grateful to all Sisters and Associates who were ready to volunteer their time and treasure toward another successful gala. As we now quickly pivot efforts to care for the essential needs of our dear neighbors, we ask that you please keep the staff and residents in prayer during this trying time.

where's the justice?

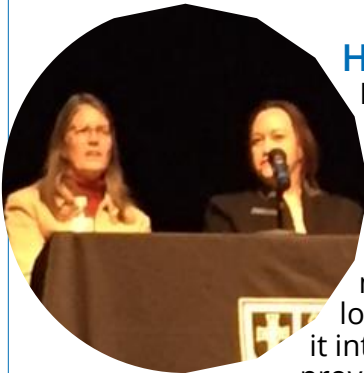
It happens here

The Sisters of St. Joseph, along with the Women of the ELCA and Erie Dawn have sponsored a human trafficking awareness campaign. Billboards with the stophumantraffickinginerie.org website on them were displayed throughout Erie. Lilly Broadcasting assisted in production of television public service announcements to help educate and bring awareness that human trafficking happens here and everywhere.



Coats for the homeless

Creative Imprints recently donated coats for the men at St. Patrick's Haven. They were delivered by their employee, Brenda Villa and her husband, Ben. Thank you Creative Imprints for helping the men who come to St. Patrick's Haven stay warm on the cold, wet winter days. We are grateful to count you as a community partner!



Human trafficking and money

Betsy Wiest, along with Deb Davies of Ridge School of Intelligence, gave a presentation on the link between human trafficking and the banking industry to the Anti-Money Laundering Club at Mercyhurst University. They provided information on what trafficking (i.e. slavery) looks like in the world today as well as how it intersects with the banking industry and provided an opportunity for attendees to sign letters in support of current pending PA legislation to change PA rest stop signage on human trafficking to be more educational and helpful to victims.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Developed in 2015 and to be completed by the year 2030.



GOAL #6:

Clean water and sanitation. Water scarcity affects more than 40% of the world's population and is projected to increase with the rise of global temperatures as a result of climate change. Globally, 3 in 10 people lack access to safely managed drinking water services. An estimated 3 billion people are without basic handwashing facilities at home. Investments in infrastructure and sanitation facilities, protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems and hygiene education are needed to ensure universal access to safe and affordable drinking water for all by 2030.

TAKE ACTION: Contact your legislators and encourage them to work toward combatting climate change and support water development projects.

Do you have a heart for justice? Join JPIC

If you have a heart for social justice and helping people, please consider joining the Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Team. We sponsor activities throughout the year and we welcome your help. Call Betsy Wiest, Social Justice Coordinator at 814-836-4153.



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COVID-19—Changing our world

by Betsy Wiest, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

Covid-19, the coronavirus, has reached virtually every country in the world and every state in our country. This new strain of the flu is deadly and preparations to help stop its spread have been monumental. We've all seen the hoarding of toilet paper, food and other needed daily supplies. Grocery shelves are bare and limits have been placed on the quantity of items consumers can purchase, if they are available.

COVID-19 is a new virus that causes respiratory illness in people and can spread from person-to-person. This virus was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China. Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:

- Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
- Symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Reported

illnesses have ranged from people with little to no symptoms to people being severely ill and dying.

Coronaviruses spread just like the flu or a cold:

- Through the air by coughing or sneezing;
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands;
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it.

To protect yourself:

- Cover coughs or sneezes with your elbow. **Do not use your hands!**
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Clean surfaces frequently, including countertops, light switches, cell phones, remotes, and other frequently touched items.
- If you are sick, stay home until

you are feeling better.

The importance of human dignity and relationship is made clear in a crisis of this magnitude. Follow the instructions from health officials and your state and local leaders. Don't panic but fall on the side of extra precaution for the sake of your own health and of those around you. As is often the case, it is those who have the least who will be hurt the most by this crisis.

Look in on your elderly neighbor. Share surplus supplies with the family who appears to be struggling. Remember the homeless living in shelters who have nowhere else to go if they are affected. Pray for the safety of all health care workers who do not have the option to call in sick.

We will get through this. I pray when this ends, we will be more compassionate and caring toward the dear neighbor.