

# interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 41, Issue 12

December 2023



## Pray for Healing

As I was driving to Mass on Sunday, I recalled that we were having an anointing of the sick service for all who desired it. At the beginning of the homily, Fr. Jerry briefly explained some of the changes in this sacrament from before Vatican II until today, such as the name of the sacrament from Extreme Unction to the Sacrament of the Sick.

This homily set the tone for the receiving of the sacrament by all present in the chapel. Those able came forward and Fr. Jerry prayed and anointed our head and hands. There was a prayerful, reverent

silence as all were anointed. (Those unable to be present in chapel were anointed after Mass.)

All of us need healing...our world...our nation...our community and ourselves need healing in some manner.

After the anointing, Fr. Jerry asked us to hold all those anointed in prayer for the next two weeks as healing happens differently in each of us.

May God's healing reach far and wide and deep and high. For this we pray...

*Sr. Mary*

## Charism/Mission Directional Statement

Conscious of the Holy Spirit's presence, we commit to live more fully the Gospel message; to further develop wholesome relationships among and beyond ourselves; to move beyond our comfort zones; to live the charism so that others may experience the love of God at this moment in our history.

## Governance/Leadership Directional Statement

Conscious of the Holy Spirit's presence and believing that governance is an expression of our mission, we commit to exploring and creating a governance model which may include Sisters, Associates, and Agrégées. We commit to sharing responsibility, and communicating with trust, compassion, and acceptance.

## That's a Wrap!

That's a Wrap is Back! That's a Wrap is a fun event where we get together to wrap donated gifts that benefit one of our ministries.

**Join us!**  
**Sunday, December 10, 2023**  
**1- 4 p.m.**

### CLC Gathering Space

Bring **unwrapped** gifts and we'll wrap them together while we visit and enjoy refreshments. Wrapping paper, tape, ribbon, etc. will be provided, or you can bring your own. **Please bring your own scissors.**

If you can't make it but would like to donate a gift, you can drop unwrapped gifts at the CLC before December 10.

This year we are collecting gifts for the men at St. James Haven and St. Patrick's Haven. Requested items include: backpacks (heavy, durable, solid colored, waterproof if

possible), men's wallets, heavy socks, thermal underwear (sizes L - 5X), belts (sizes L - 5X), gift cards for meals (McDonalds, Wendy's, Burger King, Arby's, Taco Bell). All donated items should be new items.

**Christmas card contest:** Get crafting and make a card to bring and enter. We'll vote for the favorite homemade Christmas cards.

**Please RSVP by December 5, 2023.** [Click here](#) or call 814-836-4040 or email [catherine.shimek@ssjerie.org](mailto:catherine.shimek@ssjerie.org).



# MISSION: POSSIBLE!

## The Gift of Presence

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Mission Integration Coordinator

This year, Advent begins on Sunday December 3, 2023. Advent is a time to prepare – to prepare our homes and our hearts to celebrate the gift of Christ on Christmas Day.

During Advent, as we spend time preparing for Christmas, perhaps we might all consider the gift of our presence to one another by making a phone call, sending a thinking of you card, making a short visit, sending an email or text message, or whatever will bring the gift of our presence to others. Presence can also be our gift to ourselves in

prayer, reflective spiritual reading and just being quiet with our God.

As we enjoy the Christmas carols and festive lights that surround us, may we find time for quiet, peace, and presence to celebrate a new year more fully.



The Associate Outreach Committee has been organizing ways not only at Christmas but throughout the year whereby Associates, Sisters, and Agrégées might reach out to our associates who are lonely, ill, home bound, living in nursing homes or living out of town.

We might consider joining the activities of this group. Our reaching out to the dear neighbor without distinction, however we choose to do it, is what makes the **SSJ Mission Possible!**

*PS: **Your** presence has been a great gift to us throughout the year. Thank You!*

### Scenes from a Productive Community Day November 11, 2023



## 35<sup>th</sup> Annual SSJ Thanksgiving Dinner is a powerful blessing

*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.*

Proverbs 3:27

Thank you to everyone who had a part in our Thanksgiving Dinner! To the Sisters, Gannon University, Metz Culinary Management, AHN/St. Vincent Hospital, Wegman's, and Printing Concepts - for your gifts of time, food, and many talents. To over 300 volunteers - from Blessed Sacrament and St. George

students for their unique holiday greeting cards and those who prepared and delivered 1,342 meals. And last, but not least, to over 560 generous donors who have given over \$58,400 so far. Donations continue to come in through the new year, so thank you to those who still plan to make a gift. Your support of the Sisters, which in turn supports other like-minded agencies who feed our neighbors year-round, will be distributed January 28, 2024.

**Please consider making your Thanksgiving gift in a way that works best for you. Send checks to The SSJ Mission &**



**Ministries Foundation at 5031 West Ridge Road, Erie, PA 16506 OR call 814-836-4198 to make your gift over the phone OR go to [www.ssjerie.org](http://www.ssjerie.org) and click the DONATE NOW button on the top of the home page. Please call Foundation Team member Carol Hermann at 814-836-4198 if you have any questions. Thank you for supporting the SSJ Mission.**



**There's still time to give to the Thanksgiving Appeal—[click here.](#)**

## Excellent coverage of the 35th annual SSJ Thanksgiving Dinner

Check out the following stories featured in national and local publications:

Our Thanksgiving Dinner was featured in the Global Sisters Report, an online publication of the National Catholic Reporter. [Click here to read the full story.](#)

Read 'Mission in action,' Erie SSJ Thanksgiving tradition celebrates 35 years, a Guest Voices column on GoErie.com. [Click here.](#)

Read "Local Sisters of St. Joseph earn national attention for 35 years of Thanksgiving dinners" Erie Diocese E-newsletter. [Click here.](#)



## Associates' News and Happenings

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, *Associate Director*

### Prayers

Please remember in your prayers the repose of the soul of **Associate Elaine Clyburn**. We just learned that Elaine died April 5, 2023. May Eternal Light Shine Upon Her O Lord! Elaine was in the first Associate group and had been an Associate for 42 years. Also, remember in your prayers **Associate Nancy Donnelly's** sister, Joan Rosenthal, who passed away and all the Associates, Sisters and Agrégées and their family members who are dealing with health issues.

### Many Thanks!

Many thanks to Associates **Kathy Anyz, Valerie Carlson, Nancy Donnelly, Carol Dorr, Cynthia Grucza, Stephanie Hall, Maggie Link, Pat Marshall, Richard Marshall, Cass Shimek and Brandon Vogt** for all they did to make the Memorial Service very special for the families and friends of

the deceased who were remembered this year. It was also heart warming to see so many joining us from out of town for the occasion.

### That's A Wrap

Just a reminder to join us in welcoming back **That's A Wrap**, Sunday, December 10, 2023, from 1:00- 4:00 p.m. in the Gathering Room at the CLC. Santa will be stopping by for a visit. It will be an afternoon full of activities, music, refreshments, and most of all comraderies to put us in the festive spirit as well as helping our dear neighbor. We will be wrapping our gifts for the men at St. Patrick's Haven and St. James Haven. Please bring your own scissors. The wrapping paper, ribbon, etc... will be provided. The following items were suggested as presents: Backpacks, men's wallets, heavy socks, thermal underwear sizes L-5X, belts

sizes L-5X, and gift cards to McDonald's, Burger King, Arby's, and Taco Bell. (The complete list was included with the invitation on the cover). Looking forward to seeing you on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

### Memorial Service Reflection

We would like to thank **Cynthia Grucza** for the beautiful reflection she gave during the Memorial Service this past month. There have been requests for a copy of it, so we are including it in this Interim.

### Christmas Blessings

I would like to wish everyone a very Blessed Christmas and a Happy Holy New Year!

*"May the blessing of joy abide within you; May the blessing of peace rest upon you; May the blessing of love flow out through you; May all the blessings of the Lord be yours at Christmas and the New Year."* Woman's Day

Author Unknown

*by SSJ Associate Cindy Grucza*

meet again.

I came across the word grief and the letters in grief actually give us a positive and comforting message:

**G. God** is always with us in whatever we are going through.

**R. Resurrection**, Death is not the end of the story.

**I. I** will get through this.

**E. Eternity**

**F. Faith** tells us we will meet our loved ones again.

*"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path".*

Pope Francis' reflection on Psalm 119, verse 105.

## Memorial Service—A Reflection

My name is Cindy Grucza and I became an Associate of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania in the year 2000. I was truly blessed to have Sister Betty Ruza as my mentor. Being a part of the Associate program and trying to live the charism and ministry of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God has been a challenge and a blessing in my life. We are gathered here today to love, remember, and honor our loved ones - the Sisters of St. Joseph and Associates who have passed away since our last memorial service in June of 2021.

I was asked to share a couple of reflections about grief that



have deeply touched my heart. I also have lost a loved one. In April of 2020, my son Joe, passed away from the Covid 19 virus. Needless to say, when you lose a loved one it is a devastating time in everyone's life. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. A fellow Associate and friend had sent me a beautiful sympathy card that read: We see those we love in every tree and flower, in every sunrise and sunset, and inside the card she wrote the following: Death takes the body, God takes the soul, our minds hold the memories, our hearts hold the love, and our faith tells us we will

## Holy Conversations on the Move

Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ



Synod  
2021  
2023

For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

Our Community gathering on November 11 was an example of moving with the Holy Spirit through a synodal like experience where we prayed and reflected upon our lives since our Chapter in the Spring. We acknowledge the grace of deep listening, awaiting the movement of the Holy Spirit to speak and the need to discern what is being shared through dialogue. We as a congregation, have been blessed to experience the synodal process of prayer, reflection, dialogue, discernment, which leads to action and living our charism more fully the last many years.

Sr. Gifty Atampoka Abane, a member of the Society of the Child Jesus of Ghana shared about her experience for the synod. Perhaps it mirrors your experience or your hope for the Church.

"The synodal process awakens in me a new

consciousness of a journey in which the perfect, the imperfect, the seekers, the prophets, the weak and frail, the strong, the wise and foolish, the patient and enlightened, young people, older people, and children are united on a mission towards the Father's home.

The synod has ignited in me an intentional and conscious practice of being, listening, acting and meaningful dialogue. This change in mindset recognizes that each and every individual is an integral component of the family of God, each offering his or her very presence, gifts, and skills in service of the church in ways suitable to one's capabilities. It is a time to discard all forms of distinctions, segregation, discrimination, and exclusion based on limited human categorization of people. Instead, view all members of the same family,

each gifted differently, with equal opportunities to serve."

I encourage you to read the two articles on the synod that have been posted on the SSJ Weekly News from November 20. Both articles provide an in-depth review of synod process and promising potential outcomes for our local and global Church along with the everyday call to live the Gospel more effectively with wholesome relationships.

[15 Hidden Gems in the Synod on Synodality report.](#)

[How has the Synodal Process affected Catholic Sisters?](#)



### The Memorial Service Committee

Left-right: Valerie Carlson, Nancy Donnelly, Richard Marshall, Pat Marshall, Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, Cynthia Gruzca, Sr. Ricarda Vincent, Maggie Link, Carol Dorr, Kathy Anyz (Not pictured: Stephanie Hall, Cass Shimek, Brandon Vogt).

### Advent and Christmas Liturgical Events at the CLC

Advent begins on Sunday, December 3 and ends on Sunday, December 24

**Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary**  
Friday, December 8 – 8:00 a.m. Mass

**Communal Reconciliation Service**  
Monday, December 11 – 3:15 p.m.

**Afternoon of Advent Songs**  
Wednesday, December 20 – 1:15 p.m.

**Christmas Day Mass**  
Monday, December 25 – 9:00 a.m.

## Welcome to Women's Christmas!

Celebrated on Epiphany (January 6) in Ireland and elsewhere, Women's Christmas offers an opportunity at the end of the holiday season to celebrate with friends and to gather ourselves before diving into the year ahead. This day invites us to pause, to rest, to reflect. In this spirit, Jan Richardson creates retreats that you are welcome to download and use, at no cost, either by yourself or with others. Blessings on your Women's Christmas!

***We look forward to releasing the new Women's Christmas Retreat on January 4, 2024.***

Click the link below to download *In the Light of a New Constellation* as a PDF.

[Download the 2023 Women's Christmas Retreat](#)

*If you would like to make a contribution in support of the Women's Christmas Retreat, [click here](#). (We suggest a donation of \$7, but whatever amount you'd like to donate will be much appreciated.)*



***Sanctuary of Women will share donations with [The A21 Campaign](#), an organization devoted to ending human trafficking and providing sanctuary and healing for those rescued from slavery.***

## SPIRITUAL DIRECTION: *Who? What? Where? When? Why?*



Visit the Spiritual Direction page of the SSJ website to access a recording and handouts from the recent presentation on Spiritual Direction. [Click here](#) or go to [www.ssjerie.org](http://www.ssjerie.org) and click on Spiritual Direction.

## Reflections by Sr. Ardath Blake, HM

Sr. Ardath, a sister of Humility of Mary from Villa Maria, PA, offers regular inspirational talks throughout the year at the CLC and she is available for spiritual direction. This year she is sharing her reflections on the book, *[Between Heaven and Earth](#)* by Gerhard Lohfink: New Explorations of Great Biblical Texts. All Sisters, Associates and Agrégées are invited to attend any or all her presentations in the

Gathering Room from 3:30-4:00 p.m. on the following Wednesdays:

December 13

January 17

February 21

March 20

April 24

May 24

Come and be spiritually nourished!



## Retreat Opportunities

As a reminder, there is an extensive compilation of retreat opportunities available to peruse on the SSJ website. [Click here](#).



## SSJ Neighborhood Network News

### SSJNN Seed Money Challenge

SSJNN will receive additional monies from Seed Money if they reach their \$600 goal. Please consider supporting the SSJNN gardens via the Seed Money challenge through December 15th. Many thanks! [Click here](#)



**We remember . . .** St. James Haven trusted board member, Walter Lasch, III, who passed away unexpectedly on November 18. Walter volunteered many hours and touched the lives of many guests. We were so blessed by him and he will be greatly missed. [Read the obituary.](#)

### Blue Christmas Service

*"Comfort, comfort my people, says God."*

Christmas can be an exciting time of year. But, it can also be a difficult time for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, dealing with illness, the loss of a job, or other circumstances.

We invite you to attend our Blue Christmas service to hear Christ's message of love on Wednesday, **December 13, at 6 pm in the main church, located at Luther Memorial Church, 225 West Tenth Street in Erie.** Enter from West Tenth Street. Please join us for this beautiful uplifting service showing God's love for us all. God is always with us. The church is handicap accessible, the parking lot is well lit, and has security.



### Green Corner NWPASynod Green Team

Speaking of That's a Wrap, here are some ideas for earth-friendly wrapping. Consider using alternatives to traditional wrapping, such as:

- ◆ Newspaper or brown paper rolls (kids can decorate with markers or Christmas card cut-outs)
- ◆ Reusable shopping bags (preferably cotton)
- ◆ Re-use gift bags (make it fun - see how many years you can use the same one)
- ◆ Recycled Christmas cards make great gift tags
- ◆ Wrap items in a t-shirt
- ◆ Wrap items in a tablecloth or blanket
- ◆ Instead of ribbon, use 100% cotton yarn (such as Sugar and Cream, available in many colors), use jute twine (100% biodegradable); add a fresh holly sprig for color
- ◆ Avoid shiny, glossy wrapping, as it is not recyclable
- ◆ If giving multiple gifts to a person/family, place them unwrapped in one (reusable) bag and have the recipient select one at a time. (No peeking inside first!)



## ssj community December Birthdays



Dec. 1	A. Jack Martin A. Paul Wilkosz
Dec. 7	S. Nancy Prenatt
Dec. 9	A. Connie Pellerite
Dec. 10	A. Deborah Maciak A. Mary Ann Cox
Dec. 11	A. Lucille Sitzler S. Barbara Ann Vavreck
Dec. 13	S. Ann Patrice Murnock
Dec. 14	A. Mary Alice Haibach
Dec. 15	A. Brandon Vogt A. Mary Schmidt
Dec. 20	A. Janet Demjanenko A. Jean Heintzel
Dec. 21	A. Linda Ferrare S. Veronica Mittal
Dec. 22	A. Frank Mozdy
Dec. 24	A. JoAnn Elwell
Dec. 25	A. Judy Lynch
Dec. 29	S. Marianne Stuckert S. Ricarda Vincent
Dec. 30	A. Ellen McNerney

### Holiday Publication Schedule

Due to the Christmas holiday, the January issue of Interim will be published on January 5, 2024. The deadline to submit items will be Tuesday, Jan. 2. A deadline reminder will be e-mailed. Thank you. Merry Christmas!

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## COP 28- Dubai, United Arab Emirates

**30 November -12 December, 2023**

*by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator*

When I first heard about a COP meeting, the only thing I knew was that it had something to do with climate. I began to research and learned that since the Rio Summit in 1992 and the launch of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP) has convened member countries every year to determine ambition and responsibilities and to identify and assess climate measures. I remember the 21st session of the COP (COP21) that led to the Paris Agreement, which mobilized global collective action to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels by 2100, and to act to adapt to the already existing effects of climate

change. This was very hopeful. Unfortunately, there has been no significant progress toward the goal.

On October 4, 2023, Pope Francis released his Apostolic Exhortation, *Laudate Deum*. In this exhortation he spends a great deal of time pointing out the progress and the failures of these meetings. The Pope states "if we are confident in the capacity of human beings to transcend their petty interests and to think in bigger terms, we can keep hoping the COP28 will allow for a decisive acceleration of energy transition, with effective commitments subject to monitoring. This conference can represent a change of direction, showing that everything done since 1992 was

in fact serious and worth the effort, or else it will be a great disappointment and jeopardize whatever good has been achieved so far." (LD 54) Pope Francis is planning on attending COP28 in person. This is the first time a pope has attended. What can we do as individuals? We can pray. The Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation committee will be sending out some of the key statements from *Laudate Deum* for you to reflect on. As we reflect please also pray that the members who are participating will realize that if we are to care for our common home we must work together for the common good and the future of our planet.