

interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 43, Issue 4

April 2025

Renew Your Commitment

I would like to share some reflections around our recent St. Joseph's Day celebration. First, a big thank you to Cass Shimek for chairing the event and to the Celebrations Committee for helping to execute it.

Secondly, the liturgy was alive with great music, great participation, and a great homily. We are blessed with those who so generously share their talents with us. I'd also like to share some thoughts around the commitment we renewed. That commitment isn't meant to be a one-day commitment but rather a year-long commitment. How will you "live out" your commitment throughout the year? Here's a thought — mark your calendar for the 19th of each month (St. Joseph's Day is celebrated on the 19th of March). Spend some time on that day reflecting on how you are doing with your commitment, where you might improve, or what



you might get involved in, or. . . The ideas are limitless.

Lastly, I want to share some thoughts on the mural of St. Joseph that was done by our Sisters with the assistance of artist Lee Steadman. Each Sister received canvas pieces to paint over several months, wondering how this was going to come together.

It was on display for our St. Joseph day celebration and it is BEAUTIFUL!

Together we can do great things. Our talents, our gifts spread far and wide. Working together makes all the difference. Thanks to all who made the difference in our mural.

And last of all, thanks to you who celebrated with us and who strive live the values of Joseph each day.

God bless,

Sr. Mary
Sister Mary

Lent & Holy Week Liturgies at the Community Living Center

Sunday, April 14
9:00 a.m.

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Thursday, April 17
4:00 p.m.

Holy Thursday
Liturgy of the Lord's Supper

Friday, April 18
2:00 p.m.

Good Friday
Liturgy of the Lord's Passion

Sunday, April 20
9:00 a.m.

Easter Sunday
Liturgy of the Lord's Resurrection

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.



IMPORTANT
Community Day
Saturday,
April 26

See Page 2
for more details.

MISSION: POSSIBLE

Reaching Out

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Mission Integration Coordinator

As I began writing this article, I intended a completely different topic. However, after I met with the Meadville Associates on Tuesday, I realized what reaching out to the dear neighbor was all about. Nancy Donnelly and I headed south to have lunch at Perkins with the Associates who live in Meadville, Conneaut Lake, and Frenchtown area. Since some of them are finding it more difficult to travel to Erie, we began our meeting with the recommitment ritual that we used at Sunday's St. Joseph Day celebration at the

CLC. Not all Meadville area Associates were able to attend. Associates Hal and Charlotte Sheldon, (Ruth Mercier's sister and brother-in-law) came from Erie to make sure Ruth could attend.

It was during this brief ritual that I was once again made aware of what living the charism and reaching out to the dear neighbor without distinction is all about. I began reminiscing about my first and many subsequent trips to Meadville with Sister Margaret Joseph to join with the

Associates for prayer, retreats, picnics, boat rides, etc. I remember their welcoming hospitality, graciousness, and generosity. This same spirit continues to this day every time I meet with them. They are an inspiration to me as each in their own way continues to reach out to the dear neighbor without distinction however, wherever or whenever they are able. This is what makes the **SSJ Mission Possible!**

Important Community Day Saturday, April 26, 2025 9 a.m.—12 noon

Your presence is important, not only to expand your understanding of our process moving forward, but also to continue in a participative and collaborative manner. This meeting will be foundational in helping all of us gain an understanding of future possibilities from the perspective of canon law and religious life. RSVP by April 11 and indicate if you will be staying for lunch. To RSVP: click the link below, call 814-836-4040, or email rsvp@ssjerie.org.

CLICK TO RSVP



Suggested Reading to Prepare for Community Day

The Winter 2025 issue of *The Occasional Papers*, published by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), is entitled '*Betrothed to the Unknown*.' As enrichment for our ongoing discernment regarding the unknown areas of our journey as the Family of Joseph, you are encouraged to take advantage of the articles in this publication. Two articles in particular are recommended:

"Wisdom to Live in a Rapidly-Changing, Often Uncertain World," an Interview with Brian N. McLaren, and *"Integrating Our Betrothal to Uncertainty into Our Lives Through Ritual,"* by Pat Kozak, CSJ.

Some may want to form small conversation groups to discuss the ideas presented and how they relate to our personal and communal experiences.

From Leadership

Following the last Community Day, Leadership has approved the recommendations of the Governance Committee which include:

- Professional consultation with a Canon lawyer
- Education
- Adjustments to the current Leadership model
- Exploring options for the future of Agrégées and Associates

The Governance Committee will continue to guide us in this process.

Copies of these articles will be available for reading at the CLC and on the SSJ Community login page of our website.

A fireside conversation about the articles is scheduled for Friday, April 11, at 1:15 p.m. in the Gathering Space for anyone who would like to come. Sr. Rosemary will facilitate.

[Click here for articles.](#)

**I LOVE
St. Joseph
Day!**

**Great
homily today!**

**Irish coffee
anyone?**

**Nice to see
you, Mary
Lou!**

**Celebrating
Joseph!**



Associates' News and Happenings

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Associate Director

Prayers

Please remember the family of Joan Austin, mother of Associate **Lisa Austin** who died February 16, 2025. May Eternal Light Shine upon Her O Lord! May she rest in peace. Also keep in prayer all the Associates, Sisters and Agrégées and their family members who are ill, especially **Jon Fuhrman, Carol Dorr, Connie Pellerite, Lani Reinwald, Toni Stebell, Peg McCrarey, Susan Reda, Lorna Waddell, Joy Sherred's grandson, Dylan Wentz, and Don Swift's** nephew.



What's Happening?

It was great to get caught up with **Toni Stebell** who moved back to Erie recently; **Susan Reda** from Greenville; **Linda Daugherty** who does not get out much now days; **Cindy Bielanin**, who reminisced about Villa Maria High School and some of the Sisters she had as teachers during her school days. She also remembered Saint Mary's Home (east) and the Sisters who lived and worked there. I also spoke with **Rose Jones** who recently moved to Zelienople, PA from Florida to be close to her children.

Living the Charism

I would like to share the following note that I received from Agrégée **Tammy Van Buren** and to say "**many thanks**" to those involved with this project: **Associates Jane Zawacki, Marilyn Mead, Jan Larrey, Paul Wilkocz and Lew Nordin. Sister Josette Marie and Agregee Tammy Van Buren**



*"I wanted to share this with you. **Jane Zawacki and Marilyn Mead** organized this project for the residents at Heritage Apartments to celebrate St. Joseph's Day. Jane baked a yummy treat to put in the boxes Marilyn found and a couple of us put the stickers on the cards that were attached to the boxes. Each resident received a box, and it went over very well. We have a great community here and it is because of the Associates that the Mission is being lived every day!"*

Many Thanks!

Many thanks to the Associates from Mercer County for remembering the Sisters during Catholic Sisters Week and on St. Joseph's Day! The Sisters are grateful for the little gifts you made for each of us over the last few years. The cedar balls you have sent this year, will be a reminder of the quiet manor of St. Joseph as he went about his work and his care of Jesus and Mary. Once again, many thanks.

Meadville Associates

The following Meadville Associates, **Rosemary Oehmler, Joan McCain, Chris Partin, Debbie Hamilton, JoAnn Elwell, Ruth Mercier, Hal Sheldon, and Charlotte Sheldon** met Tuesday March 25, 2025, for lunch at Perkins. **Nancy Donnelly**, my sister Rita, and I joined them. Associates **Dan Partin, Kay Hotchkiss, Jennifer King, Jerry Derby, Lorna Waddell, Marlene Lyda, and Linda McQueen** were unable to be with us. Before lunch, Nancy led the group in the recommitment ceremony that the community used Sunday during the liturgy. It was great being together and looking forward to meeting again next month. I hear that next month we will be meeting at Pizza Hut.

SSJ Fellowship Sunday A Community Gathering

Sunday, May 4, 2025
SSJ Community Living Center
9:00 a.m. Mass followed by
fellowship and sweet treats
Associates, Agréegés, and Sisters
ALL are welcome!



Summer Picnic

The Associate Program Committee is planning our annual summer picnic. It is scheduled for Saturday, June 28, 2025. We are in need of a co-chair and lots of volunteers for the day of the event. If interested in participating, please contact Carol Dorr at 814-434-6858 as soon as possible.



MONDAY, MARCH 31
7:00 PM

MERCYHURST
UNIVERSITY

PERFORMING ARTS
CENTER

It's FREE!

Exciting News

SSJ Associate Gretchen Gallagher Durney will be honored as a Woman Making History by Mercy Center for Women. We hope to have a big turn out in the audience for the event.



Living Laudate Deum *by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator*

This year, April 22nd marks the 55th celebration of Earth Day. Close to 200 countries and more than a billion people around the world are expected to participate. This year's theme is **"Our Power, Our Planet"**. The goal is to triple the global generation of clean energy by 2030. How can we do our part? Go to earthday.org to find out more about renewable energy and ways advocate for clean energy. We can all do something to help combat climate change.



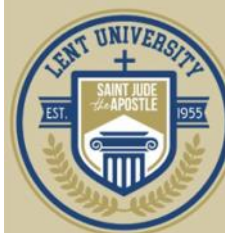
Agrégée Betsy Wiest attended a USPS rally in Perry Square to bring attention to the issue of privatization of the United States Postal Service and the anticipated massive layoff of postal workers, including many veterans. The USPS was initially developed by Benjamin Franklin and is in our U.S. Constitution. Some of the concerns with privatization are increased costs to mail letters and a reduction in delivery to many locations. This will dramatically impact those living in very rural areas. Mayor Joe Sember and state representatives Pat Harkins and Bob Merski spoke at the rally against privatization of the USPS. U.S. citizens should contact their senators and representatives in Washington and strongly urge them to support the US Postal Service.

Save the Dates!

**April 26, 2025
Community Day**

**May 4, 2025
Fellowship
Sunday**

**June 28, 2025
Summer Picnic**



Vespers (Evening Prayer)
March 23rd | March 30th

April 6th | April 13th
4 Sundays At 4 PM

In Saint Jude Church

Immediately Following Vespers
Our Speaker Series "The Gift Of Femininity"

Featuring:



Sr. Natalie Rossi
Sisters Of Mercy
March 23



Sr. Josephine Vuodi
Sisters Of The Work
March 30



Sr. Nancy Fischer
Sisters Of Saint Joseph
April 6



Sr. Mary Ellen Plumb
Benedictine Sisters Of Erie
April 13

Circles

Gathering in a circle is an innately human experience. Fond memories are stirred around dinner tables and campfires with our loved ones. Circles are a way of coming together for prayer, sharing, discussions, celebrations and comfort. Faith communities often use circles for shared prayer, leadership and decision-making. Circles are being used in



**Synod
2021
2023**
For a synodal Church
community • participation • mission

the synod process for deep listening, sharing ideas and connecting with one another. The Catholic Mobilizing Network reminds us that "Conversations in Communion offer this approach to dialogue as a way of remembering our belonging to one another and honoring integral human dignity." Circles are invitational and mission-oriented toward creating

Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ

conditions where dialogue is Spirit-inspired and from the heart. They encourage openness to those whose values or attitudes differ, bearing witness to unanswered questions, and respecting each person's joys, desires, pain and needs.

In community, we regularly use the circle model to expand our understanding and share heartfelt concerns and

(Continued on page 7)

Shamrock Showdown: A Triumphant Night for St. Patrick's Haven

On behalf of the St. Patrick's Haven Board of Directors, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supported our inaugural Shamrock Showdown trivia competition. Your participation, enthusiasm, and generosity made this event an incredible success.

From brain-busting trivia rounds to spirited raffles and standout costumes, the energy in the room was electric—and all for an amazing cause.

Thank you to our sponsors whose unwavering support and commitment to our mission made this event possible. Because of their generosity, we're able to continue providing essential shelter and care to individuals experiencing homelessness in our community. We were blown away by your creativity and competitive spirit. Whether you came to play, cheer, or champion our cause,

your presence truly made a difference.

Thanks to you, St. Patrick's Haven can continue to serve those in need with dignity and compassion. We are deeply grateful for your support and look forward to seeing you again at future events. Together, we are making a difference.

More pictures on page 7.



First Place



Second Place



Third Place

Congratulations to our winners:

**1st Place: Golden Knights
Gannon University**

**2nd Place: SSJ Thinking Caps
Sisters of St. Joseph**

**3rd Place: Irish You Knew
Angie Kontur and Friends**



SSJNN Guess That Tune Gala May 3, 2025 Bayfront Convention Center

Join us for a fun and friendly competition of guessing songs and celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network. Music, dinner, theme baskets, silent auction, and "A Silver Celebration" themed evening you won't want to miss! Please save the date and invite friends.

Interested in donating money or gift cards for Guess That Tune Gala theme baskets? Drop off donations to the CLC front desk or 425 W. 18th St. no later than April 7th. Baskets will be valued at \$250 and will be on display at the CLC 4/30 – 5/2 if you are unable to attend but want to purchase chances.

For updated info, visit www.ssjnn.org/GALA or call 814-454-7814
THANK YOU so very much for your support of SSJNN ministries!

Circles

(Continued from page 6)

questions to further our transformation. Engaging with one another leads to deeper respect and acceptance. This process is mirrored in synodality to promote deeper communion, fuller participation, and greater openness to creating a united Body of Christ.

To facilitate this process of more inclusive engagement and transformation for our Church community:

- Our Diocese established a group to promote the implementation of Synod goals using this model of

engagement to develop a greater understanding of the Synod model and its stages, and to provide insights and opportunities gleaned from the 2022 and 2024 listening sessions.

- Pope Francis established ten synod study groups for further reflection and research on specific themes that require "in-depth study" in the Spring of 2024. These groups will present their insights and recommendations in June 2025.
- In March 2025, Pope Francis approved a new three-year reform process for the Catholic Church. This renewal

SSJ community April Birthdays

- 1 A. Evelyn Visnoski
- 2 A. Jan Larrey
- 3 A. Gina Adams
- 3 A. Jon Fuhrman
- 4 A. Margo Keefer
- 4 A. Amy Dennen
- 7 A. Alice Connelly
- 8 A. Donna Geiger
- 9 S. Margaret Ann Hardner
- 13 S. Mary Carol Hoke
- 14 A. Cindy Bielamin
- 14 A. Susan Reda
- 17 A. Suzanne O'Connell
- 17 A. Stephen Branton
- 17 A. Brenda Desser
- 19 A. Audrey McLaughlin
- 23 A. Lani Reinwald
- 23 S. M. Millicent Zimmer
- 26 S. Nancy Sonnenfeld
- 26 A. Marlene Scully
- 28 Agr. Charlene Kellerman
- 29 A. Linda Dougherty
- 30 A. Ann Flick

process likely will address the key themes raised in the study groups. There will be an "ecclesial assembly" in the Vatican in October 2028 as a culmination of the on-going renewal process.



Best Dressed



SPH Board

Best Dressed:
Kilted Kommandos
(Stephanie Hall & Friends),
St. Patrick's Haven Board

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

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Erie, PA 16506-1249

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Community Makes the Difference

As a justice promoter, seeing so many services, help for those who need it, and environmental protections be reversed or eliminated, can become very disheartening. I am sure many of you are feeling the same thing. It is easy to become complacent, and do nothing. But, we can't give up.

Last week I attended a meeting with 100 justice promoters from different religious communities throughout the country. The theme was *Living Integral Ecology: How are we to be? What is ours to do?*

For three days we explored topics including embracing the spirituality of Integral Ecology, the history of the doctrine of discovery, congregations' experiences with repair work and how to create common

ground. The speakers and workshops provided wonderful presentations and insights. I learned a lot but the thing that was my greatest take away was that we need *community*. We need to work together. We need to support each other. If your inbox is like mine, it is full of pleas to write, call, or join a protest. The issue you choose to focus on depends on what is most important to you. I encourage you to get involved, whether it's writing a letter, calling your legislators, or showing up at a protest — do *something*. I try very hard not to add to your clutter in your inbox. But if I knew that you were interested in a particular issue and some action came across my inbox, I would be happy to send you the connection. You can always email me and let me

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

know what type of action interests you.

deb.seng@ssjerie.org

I left the meeting with renewed energy, new resources, and an understanding that I am not alone and that together we can make a difference. There is an action that all of us can take — prayer. Our final day was St. Joseph Day, I share the prayer we used and encourage you to pray it often. *Glorious Patriarch St. Joseph, whose power makes the impossible possible, come to our aid in these times of difficulty. Take under your protection the serious and troubling situations that we commend to you, that they may have a happy outcome. O beloved St. Joseph, our trust is in you. Amen.*