interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 42, Issue 12 December 2024

Thank you for Another Blessed Thanksgiving

How do you do it? That is the question I hear at this time of the year as we prepare for the Thanksgiving Dinner. It takes good organization, the hard work of many, volunteers from all areas of the city to get it all done. Believe it or not, the work starts in July and doesn't conclude until January. We partner with many friends to "get the job done." The Erie Catholic School students make cards to give to dinner recipients, Gannon University and Metz Culinary Arts cook and package the meals, and volunteers from the SSJs package cookies to include.

What else goes into this day? A request goes out early for delivery volunteers. And the slots fill quickly. Some say, "This is the way we begin the Thanksgiving Day celebration in our home."

About a week before Thanksgiving, we accept phone orders for meal deliveries. Again, it's volunteers who do this work. Names and addresses are sorted and organized for delivery. Done by volunteers, of course.

On Thanksgiving morning, people gather to greet the drivers with a warm "Happy Thanksgiving" and a trunk load of dinners. And off they go! It all happens because of the generosity of Sisters, Associates, Agrégées, and partners in mission.

Thanksgiving—a day we all celebrate with an enjoyable meal. Thank you to so many generous volunteers who once again helped us deliver more than 1300 meals so that our neighbors could also enjoy a home-cooked meal with family or friends. We couldn't continue doing this without your help, your generosity, and, of course, the grace of God.

I hope you enjoyed a wonderful and blessed Thanksgiving.

Sr. Mary

Sister Mary

P.S. A special thank you to the Foundation Team, consisting of Almi Clerkin, Cathy Fresch, Carol Herrmann, and Carleen Onushak for their very detailed work in organization and planning. This would not happen without their contribution.

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 2024

"Sharing Hope for the Homeless"

An Advent service project with some fun rolled in.

Sunday, December 8, 2024
2-4 pm
Community Living Center

See page 3 for details.

MISSION: POSSIBLE

Be Thankful and Be Kind

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Mission Integration Coordinator

As I celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday each year, I take time to sit and reflect on all that I am grateful for in my life since the last celebration. This year, as I reflect and give thanks, I am reminded of the many blessings that God has sent my way. I began to give thanks for the Family of Joseph – the Sisters, Associates, Agrégées, and partners in mission who have reached out to me and my sister, Rita. I am especially grateful for all who welcome us at the Community Living Center each time we visit – the receptionists, the Sisters, the employees, Leadership, and the administrative staff in the administration building who are most welcoming as well as helpful. From the minute we arrive in front of the administration building, more often than not, someone, is there to open the car door, help my sister out of the car and walk her into the building, as well as to carry our things into the building for us. And lest I forget, those who retrieve her cane from wherever she leaves it!

I am also reminded of all the Associates who ask about my sister when I am talking with them on the phone or in their written communication. As I think of all these people who come into my life on a regular basis, I think of the words from Josh Groban's *song Thankful*, especially the line "There's so much to be thankful for."

In writing this column I am also reminded of one of our Maxims of Perfection, Maxim 64, which reads:

Seek to be kind always to everyone and unkind to no one.

The contemporary version reads:

Make a practice of being kind all the time.

Maxim 64 suggests that each person who crosses my path is an opportunity for me to be *love*. It is an opportunity for me to reach out to the dear neighbor without distinction. This is what makes the **SSJ Mission Possible!**

Living Laudate Deum

Celebrate Christmas Sustainably

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

Kermit the frog said "It's not easy being green." This can especially be true at Christmas time.

One fifth more trash is thrown out at Christmas than during the rest of the year. Here are a few ideas that can help you to keep your environmental resolutions:

- Use gift bags rather than gift paper for wrapping.
- Buy eco-friendly gifts. Just google eco-friendly gifts to find a large selection.
- Make or use recycled cards.
- Toast the season with drinks in reusable or recycled containers.
- Make sure your Christmas lights are energy efficient LEDs.

Let's all make an effort to reduce our waste and celebrate this Christmas by giving back to the Earth.

2025 Save the date: SSJ Conference Retreat – August 3-8, 2025
Fr. Tom Hartle, OFM

That's a Wrap 2024

"Sharing Hope for the Homeless"

An Advent service project with some fun rolled in.

Sunday, December 8, 2024 2-4 pm
Community Living Center

This year we will collect toiletries as gifts for those served by St. Patrick's Haven, St. James Haven, and the SSJ Neighborhood Network. We hope to collect enough toiletries to make blessing bags for 250 people (75 female, 175 male).* We are also accepting gift cards.**

If you can't make it, but would like to donate a gift, you can drop it off at the CLC in December before the event.

Please RSVP by Monday, December 2, 2024 by calling 814-836-4040 or RSVP@ssjerie.org.

**Please limit the size of the toiletries to 18 oz bottles or less as they need to fit in gallon bags. Items in greatest demand are: Men's Winter Gloves, toothpaste, toothbrushes, bar soap, body wash, shampoo/conditioner, deodorant, feminine hygiene products, and washcloths. Hint: Amazon has some great deals on bulk travel size items. Sheet sets, bath towels, and thermal underwear are also needed.*

The Fun Part:

When we gather to collect the items, we'll enjoy some cookies and beverages and we'll have an Ugly Christmas Sweater contest. Be sure to wear your ugliest sweater!

Please feel free to bring a couple dozen cookies to share. Any leftovers will be donated to St Patrick's Haven. Beverages will be provided.

Any questions can be addressed to **Carol Dorr at 814-434-6858 or Nancy Fetzner-Brown at 814-835-8030.**

*** Gift cards for McDonald's, Country Fair, Arby's, Wendy's, and Taco Bell are greatly appreciated at St. Patrick's Haven. Gift cards to Walmart or Dollar Tree are appreciated at the SSJ Neighborhood Network.*

The SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation Trustees & Staff wish you a season of light and love to guide and keep you today and always.

Thank you for your 2024 support of the Sisters and their Ministries.
www.ssjmmf.org

Associates' News and Happenings

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

Prayers

Please remember in prayer the following people who passed away recently: Howard Wissinger, brother of **Associate Pat Marshall**; Ottis Wright Sheldon III, brother of **Associate Joy Sherred** and David Heubel, brother of **Associate Mitzi Bannister.** May Eternal Light Shine Upon Them O Lord! May they rest in peace. Please remember Pat, Joy and Mitzi and their families at the most difficult time.

Also keep in prayer **Associates Kathy Anysz, Jerry Derby, Shirley Beyers, Alice Connelly, Peggy Zeigler, and Peggy's husband Charles** and all the Sisters, Associates and Agrégées and their family members who are dealing with health issues.

Many Thanks

Many thanks to **Associates Kathy Anysz, Patricia Marshall, Cynthia Grucza, and Brandon Vogt; Agrégée Charlene Kellerman; and Sisters Mary Fromknecht and Carol Morehouse** for the beautiful and meaningful prayer service for our Sisters, Associates and Agrégées who died during the past year. Also, a big thank you to **Associates Nancy Brown, Valerie Carlson, Nancy Donnelly, Carol Dorr, and Maggie Link,** for the beautiful Fall environment and the refreshments for the social that followed the service. Thank you to **Stephanie Hall** for the beautifully designed invitations, memorial video, and other elements.

That's a Wrap for 2024

Sharing Hope for the Homeless, will take place Sunday, December 8, 2024, from 2-4 pm in the Community Living Center. In place of wrapping gifts, we will be assembling blessing bags to be given to those who are served by the SSJNN, St. Patrick Haven and St. James Haven. Our goal is to assemble 250 bags. In addition to assembling the bags, we will have time to socialize and enjoy treats as well as a visit from someone special. Hope to see you there! For more info regarding the items to be included in the bags, see p. 3.

New Associate Candidates

The new candidates and their mentors met in November for their second session. Their next session is scheduled for Saturday December 14, 2024. Keep the candidates and their mentors in prayer.

What's Happening in your corner of the world?

I was able to spend some time talking with **Mary Yochim** from Erie. She shared what is happening in her little corner of the world. **Kathy Higgins,** an Associate from Sharon, PA called the other day. When I asked her how the weather was in her area, she shared that they were experiencing their "first winter weather in the valley."

It was great to speak with **Toni Stebell** recently. She is getting ready to move back to the Erie area soon. When she is here and settled, we will publish her new address and info in the directory. I also had the pleasure of speaking with **Shirley Mack** who lives in South Carolina. It was great to connect with her as it has been a while since I have had a chance to speak with her. At the present, she shared that all is well in her corner of the world.

Program Committee

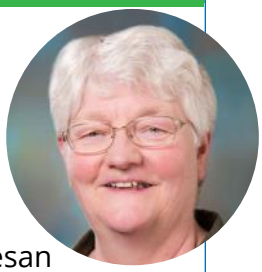
Have you felt a nudge in your heart to deepen your connection with the Family of Joseph? Do you have a passion for nurturing spirituality and relationships among Sisters, Associates, and Agrégées? We invite you to take a moment to reflect and pray. Might you be called to contribute your gifts to the program committee? This group plays a vital role in enriching the life we share together, weaving moments of faith, fellowship, and shared purpose into the fabric of our community.

For now, simply let this question rest in your heart. Stay tuned for an invitation in the coming weeks to explore this calling more fully. Together, we are the Family of Joseph, and together, we grow.

2025 Save the date: SSJ Conference Retreat – August 3-8, 2025
Fr. Tom Hartle, OFM

The Final Synod Document

Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ



Synod 2021 2023
For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

The final Synod document was published in October 2024. Its message strongly calls for "participatory bodies" provided for in canon law such as diocesan synods and diocesan and parish pastoral councils, to be mandatory. This was requested at every state of the synodal process. A synodal church is based on the existence, efficiency, and effective vitality of these participatory bodies. Pastoral councils with members affirmed through discernment rather than by appointment was the focus identified at the recent United States Diocesan Synod Leaders meeting. The Erie Diocese will encourage pastoral councils to be more involved with using the synodal model for listening and decision-making.

Pope Francis hopes the final document will be a "gift to the people of God," that speaks of the universality of our unity through our common Baptism. This was echoed by Bishop Flores of the USCCB Synod as he shared that the Holy Spirit was palpably present within the respectful listening, dialogue, and decision-making. Lay participation and inclusivity are integral to the process of recognizing that everyone is part of building and sustaining our Church—a Church that embodies all the concerns and needs of the human family. Their roles and responsibilities will continue to evolve with greater discussion and implementation.

Women are particularly encouraged to be part of decision-making bodies at the local and diocesan levels.

A call emerged for a Church with a greater capacity to nurture relationships with the Lord, between men and women, in the family, in the local community, among social groups and religions, with all of creation (#50). Within families, we first learn to how to discern and decide together, accept and exercise authority that is loving and life-giving, and to be co-responsible and accountable. (#35) Both of these concepts parallel our life and mission within the Family of Joseph. We model the synod approach. Let us continue to implore the Holy Spirit to guide the use of synodality at all levels of Church.

Pictures with Santa!

Memories from our Christmas Album

Top (l-r): Sr. Mary Theno, Sr. Ann Amen, Sr. Virginia Ann Gardner, Sr. Gertrude Marie Peterson.
Bottom (l-r): Sr. Marie Claire Kearney, Sr. Eugenia Dixon, and Sr. Teresa Masello

Cindi Olesky, SSJ Director of Finance (left) and Cass Shimek, SSJ Executive Assistant, put the finishing touches on the Sisters of St. Joseph tree on display at this year's Festival of Trees. The tree, named "A Sweet Christmas Story," featured the Legend of the Candy Cane (below) and was trimmed in a candy cane theme.

get to know the Agrégées

Jeanne Marie Ryan

Associate - 1988
Companion:
Sr. Rosemary O'Brien
Agrégée – 2016
Mentor: Sr. Michele Healy

Jeanne believes a good life involves following calls from the Lord. It began with her call to attend college, then teach special needs students for 30 years – not remotely her plan. Beginning with Villa College, the Lord kept calling her to association with the SSJs. This call led to becoming an Associate.

As Associates, Jeanne and Arlene Chaney always felt called to "more." They approached Leadership about the call to a deeper, permanent relationship, but were years ahead of the Agrégée vocation. Jeanne was called to active participation in parish ministries, including facilitating a weekly prayer group/monthly healing mass for 25 years. A large endeavor resulted with Jeanne's call to begin having garage sales, originally to assist another Associate and promote recycling. In 2015, Jeanne felt called to focus on fundraising for Hekima Place in Africa. Family and friends have felt called to join Jeanne in supporting this "like minded" ministry. Called to be an Agrégée, Jeanne awaits new calls from the Lord. Maybe He's calling you to something new, too?

2025 Save the date: SSJ Conference Retreat – August 3-8, 2025
Fr. Tom Hartle, OFM

40 Years of Providing Shelter in Erie

This year, we commemorated the 40th anniversary of St. Patrick's Haven homeless shelter for men in the City of Erie. We chose to commemorate, rather than celebrate, this milestone because the celebration doesn't happen until homelessness is no longer a reality. Each night, as many as 22 men find shelter, food, comfort, and a sense of community at St. Patrick's Haven.

St. Patrick's Haven
providing shelter for 40 years

More than a look back at its history, this anniversary is a reminder that there is more work to do. As we look toward the future, we hope there won't be a need for shelters like St. Patrick's Haven someday. Until then, St. Patrick's Haven will continue to be a place of welcome, refuge, and compassion for those who need it most.

A $40 anniversary donation provides one night's shelter and essentials for one person. In the cold winter months, $40 can truly save a life. Use the QR code here or go to stpatrickshaven.org

SSJ community

December Birthdays

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

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

5031 West Ridge Road
Erie, PA 16506-1249

Phone: 814-836-4100
Fax: 814-836-4278
E-mail: publicrelations@ssjerie.org

SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Connecting with God + Connecting with You

WWW.SSJERIE.ORG

Post Election Thoughts

It's time to build bridges.

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

Regardless of whether your candidate won or lost the election, I think we can all agree that we are glad the political ads are over! I am very grateful to be affiliated with the Sisters of St. Joseph and their mission of unity: *Unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God, without distinction.* It is time now to build bridges. We must be true to who we are, a group that focuses on the needs of others. For 36 years we have been feeding those in need on Thanksgiving. This year, we delivered over 1,300 meals in the Erie area. Throughout the year we get requests from people who have fallen on hard times to help with things like rent, clothing, food, and funeral expenses.

Our call for unity extends to praying for peace in the world and in our neighborhood. Through our two Havens, we offer shelter for those men who need it. The SSJ Neighborhood Network helps many families in the area as well as revitalization of the neighborhood. We also need to do our part to reduce our carbon footprint so that we can ease the burden of the climate crisis.

We are all called to live the Gospel and work for unity. So please, stay the course, continue to be who you are and as Pope Francis has said, " We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family."