

# interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 42, Issue 2

February 2024

## Transformation

We read and hear about “transformation” everywhere, from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) to Community Day speakers, to religious leaders and theologians. An article in LCWR’s *Occasional Papers* points out an essential attitude for transformation — we must re-develop our sense of wonder, and an openness to mystery.

Mary McGlone, CSJ, reminds us that God, from Abraham through

Jesus’ ministry, has always called disciples to wondrous journeys. Think about Abraham and Sarah, Elijah and Jonah, Nicodemus and the apostles, all astonished and full of awe.

As a community of faith in today’s world, we must be ready to respond to God’s invitation to the unknown future with wonder, awe, and a “yes.”

*Sr. Mary Sister Carol O’Byrne*

Joseph,  
for these times.  
Joseph,  
for all times.



*Please join us*  
**St. Joseph Day Celebration**  
**Sunday, March 17, 2024**

**10:00 a.m. Liturgy**

**Followed by dinner**

***Please RSVP by March 5***

**[Click here](#), or call 814-836-4040 or [Event-RSVP@ssjerie.org](mailto:Event-RSVP@ssjerie.org)**

## 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.

## SSJ Community Day “Living the Charism Now”

**February 17, 2024**

**9:00 a.m. - 12 noon**

**SSJ Community Living Center**

**Please RSVP by Feb. 9**

**to 814-836-4040 or [Event-RSVP@ssjerie.org](mailto:Event-RSVP@ssjerie.org)**

*Please include your name and indicate whether you will be staying for lunch.*



# MISSION: POSSIBLE!

## The Presence You Are

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Mission Integration Coordinator

As I was going through some papers on the table in my office, I came across the words to a song by Jan Novotka, *The Presence You Are*. I shared this song with the Associates on several occasions, but as I read the words once again, I was reminded of the discussions that were held by our newly formed Associate Outreach Committee. Since its inception, the committee has been brainstorming and planning ways that the Associates can stay connected with each other. There are at least 61 Associates who are not able to attend events easily, or who now live

out of town, as far away as California and Oregon. If Associates can't attend events in person, then the next best thing is to be present to them through other means.

Some ideas that surfaced by the committee were sending cards or letters, making phone calls, visiting in person, or sending emails and text messages.

Three Cathedral Prep School students who belong to an outreach group are trying to reach out to the elderly. These students recently helped us in our endeavors by sending Christmas greetings to these 61

Associates.

As the words from Jan Novotka tell us...

*"It's not what you do,  
but how you do it,  
It's not what you see,  
but how you see,  
It's not what you say,  
what you know, or achieve,  
But it's the **Presence**, the  
**Presence** you are."*

It is reaching out to the dear neighbor without distinction by our presence that makes the **SSJ Mission Possible**.



CATHOLIC  
SISTERS WEEK  
March 8-14

**How will you celebrate?**  
*See special Catholic Sisters Week insert  
in this issue of Interim.*

## Charism/Mission Directional Statement

To continue the work of our Chapter meetings and to deepen our understanding of and commitment to living out our Charism/Mission statement, we ask that you spend time praying

with the statement (on the cover). To assist you, we are sharing weekly reflection questions in the e-News. Please spend time prayerfully reflecting on each question in

light of the Charism/Mission statement and, if possible, share with others.

Each month in Interim we will include the previous month's questions, as well.

**To further develop wholesome relationships among and beyond ourselves,**

- What can you do to develop these relationships? What can the community do?
- How does this statement draw you into the prayer of Jesus, "that all may be one?"
- What might hinder me/us from living out this statement?
- What choices do you have to make in developing wholesome relationships?



## 2023 Thanksgiving Dinner Annual Liturgy and Check Presentations



The Sisters of St. Joseph and the SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation Staff are disappointed that we could not celebrate in person with local nonprofits for the Annual SSJ Thanksgiving Dinner Liturgy and Check Presentation on January 28. Unfortunately, a resurgence of COVID made it impossible. We are, however, pleased to share the following:

- 60 volunteers delivered more than 1,300 meals.
- 648 donors made 656 gifts.
- We re-established a *Penny Challenge* among SSJ employees with proceeds going to the Thanksgiving Dinner Fund. More than \$900 was raised.
- 60 nonprofit organizations received more than \$69,000 to feed our neighbors year-round.
- Gannon University and Metz Culinary Management awarded their annual **Thanksgiving "Giving Back" Award** of \$500 to the **United Way Community School Stores**.
- Peter Lyons awarded his **Thanksgiving "Giving Back" Award** of \$500 to the **SSJ Neighborhood Network**.
- In addition, we established a new award this year in honor of Sr. Teresa Marie Bohren (see box).  
We look forward to gathering with those supported by the SSJ Thanksgiving Fund in 2024.

### Teresa Marie Bohren, SSJ, Memorial Award

In recognition of the 35th Annual Thanksgiving Dinner, the Sisters of St. Joseph established the **Teresa Marie Bohren, SSJ, Memorial Award**. Sr. Teresa Marie answered the call from Peter Lyons to join in a "friends of Thanksgiving" dinner for the poor and lonely 35 years ago. Sister Teresa Marie passed away on May 12 of this year. The recipient of the first award was chosen by the dedicated Thanksgiving Dinner volunteers. They each voted for their top-three agencies. Votes were tabulated and the organization receiving the highest number of votes received the \$500 award. Congratulations to the inaugural recipient, **SafeNet**.



### Transforming Grace: The Work of Transformative Justice *What's It All About?*



You've been seeing these words and logo in Interim and the e-news. We've made available prayer and reflections for you to use individually or in groups. But you may still be wondering what it's all about.

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) is inviting us to look at the 2024 U.S. national election campaign through the lens of transformative justice. We are encouraged to engage in a collective discernment on

#### *"What is ours to do in this time?"*

The work of transformative justice is grounded in contemplation and in skills and practices that lead to decision-making and action resulting in right relationship with Earth and all human persons.

We are invited to take responsibility for the personal and collective responses we make in the challenges we encounter during the election period.

This is a nationwide initiative with Congregations of Sisters and their charism families coming together to do the work of Transforming Grace.

**Want to learn more?**  
**JOIN US for**  
**What is Transforming Grace?**  
**Monday, February 12**  
**6:00—7:00 p.m.**  
**[ZOOM link](#)**  
**Passcode: Grace**

## Associates' News and Happenings

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

### Prayers

Please remember in your prayers the repose of the souls of Sam Barzano, the brother of **Associate Mary DeSanti**, and Joseph Gallagher, father of **Associate Gretchen Gallagher Durney**. May eternal light shine upon them, O Lord and may they rest in peace. Remember Mary and Gretchen and their families in your prayers at this most difficult time.

Also, remember in prayer all the Associates, Sisters and Agrégées and their family members who are dealing with health issues.

### Program Committee

The next program committee meeting will be on February 7 via ZOOM. We're grateful for the successful *That's A Wrap* event



### It's a Super Bowl Watch Party!

The Sisters at the CLC are hosting a Super Bowl Watch Party and you're invited!

**Sunday, February 11  
6:00 p.m.**

All Sisters, Agrégées, and Associates are invited. There will be plenty of pizza and assorted beverages available -- feel free to bring a snack to share if you wish.

**Please call the Front Desk  
(814)836-4100 to RSVP**

and indicate your pizza preference: cheese OR cheese and pepperoni.

We look forward to being together again!

they organized. They are in the process of planning a variety of events for the year. More information will be coming soon.

### Thank You!

We received the following note from the St. Patrick's Haven Board:

*SSJ Associates,  
That's A Wrap was amazing! We had 100+ socks, 10+ hoodies, 10+ book bags, and a lot of love!*

*Blessings!*

*The St. Patrick's Haven Board*

### Outreach Committee

The outreach committee met on January 15 via ZOOM. They are completing plans for **SSJ Fellowship Sunday** in April. It

will begin with the celebration of the Sunday Liturgy at the CLC at 9:00 a.m., followed by an informal gathering with coffee and Danish. More information to come. The committee also discussed reaching out to those who are not able to attend events in person due to their health, their age, or their geographic location. (see **Mission Possible** article.) The next outreach committee meeting is February 12, 2024.

### Prayer Groups

The prayer groups continue to meet regularly. The First Monday Prayer Group will not be meeting in February due to illnesses, etc. Hopefully, they will resume in March.

## Living Laudato Deum

### *The Pope's Apostolic Exhortation*

As promised, the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation committee will offer monthly suggestions on how to modify your lifestyle to be more Earth friendly.

The Sisters at the CLC have decided to SMOW (Skip Meat Once Weekly), their version of Meatless Mondays. And here is why: research shows that livestock production contributes more greenhouse emissions and consumes more resources than most plant-based foods.

- Livestock production produces more greenhouse gases than the world's entire transportation sector - cars, trucks, planes, trains - combined.
- Considering all stages of production, a hamburger made with 1/4 lb. of beef requires 425 gallons of water to produce.
- If everyone in New York City chose a (soy) veggie burger instead of a ¼ lb. beef burger once a week, it would save enough water to fill 79,000,000 bathtubs of water and carbon dioxide emissions equivalent to charging 2.6 billion smart phones.\*

Can you give up meat once a week for all three meals and eat more plant based foods? This is one of the most effective actions individuals can take to reduce the world's eco-footprint. It also provides significant health benefits. More ideas next month. Please share your ideas. Send them to: [deb.seng@ssjerie.org](mailto:deb.seng@ssjerie.org).

*\*Statistics from research conducted by the Meatless Mondays Campaign and the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future.*

## The Face of the Synodal Church *Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ*

The recent Synod meeting surfaced common understandings and desires that need to be sustained by a hope that the climate of mutual listening and sincere dialogue will expand and spread through the entire Church and humanity. Part one of the Synthesis report focuses on the *Face of the Synodal Church*. A synodal way of being includes silence, praying, listening, and speaking, rooted in the Word of God, while recognizing that we are all sisters and brothers in Christ. The Church needs to be closer to the lives of all people in a relational mode of unity among diversity. The Assembly spoke often of the need for more hope, healing, reconciliation, acceptance, and restoration of trust. People throughout the world are hurting and desire hope that

they be respected and heard regardless of their economic status. The Eucharist is seen as the primary source of unity and union among all people and thus needs to be celebrated well.

Some proposed ways to bring about a greater degree of synodality is to expand participation and overcome the obstacles that keep people at odds. More clergy, deacons and bishops are encouraged to be involved as are people of all ministries. There is to be a greater focus on having the voices of intergenerational, youth, and family groups heard and represented.

We, as the Church, need to recognize it is of the Holy Spirit and grace that we move forward to the fullness of the reign of God lived here on earth. Christian communities



Synod  
2021  
2023

For a synodal Church  
communio | participatio | missio

can build more solidarity with other traditions. A more pastoral approach to all ministry, acceptance of people being engaged, and the invitation of more persons to accept co-responsibility for building a better, more wholistic Church as a faith community is a key message in the report.

Those in poverty ask the Church for love, respect, acceptance, and recognition while integrating wholesome social teachings and justice.

I invite you to pray that these emerging graces of the Synod can bear fruit for all of us.

## All are invited to take part in the interim phase of the Synod on Synodality

Many participated in parish-level listening sessions of the Synod. After the international gathering in Rome, organizers asked dioceses to cultivate dialogue before its October 2024 session. The Diocese of Erie is hosting dialogue sessions, open to all, to deepen their prayerful reflection. These ZOOM sessions will be held on Wed., Feb. 28 at 8 pm, Thurs., Feb. 29 at 10 am, and Tues., March 5 at 12 pm. [Click here to register](#). More information about the synodal process can be found [here](#).

## Single Point In Time Count

On January 25 and 26, SSJ Agrégée Betsy Wiest was part of a team of people that visited homeless shelters, soup kitchens and makeshift encampments throughout Erie County to conduct the annual Single Point In Time Count, which is mandated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The team members packed blessing bags of personal care items for each person they interviewed. Participants were gently asked where they slept the previous night, their age, and other demographic questions. This data will help

provide an accurate picture of how pervasive homelessness is locally. The count focuses on getting an estimate of the Erie area's unsheltered homeless population. Data from the count conducted in January 2023 identified 266 people spending the night in emergency shelters such as St. Patrick's Haven, as well as other area shelters.

If you would like to help St. Patrick's Haven continue to

provide emergency overnight shelter for men in need in Erie County, please contact Shelby Folga, Executive Director at 814-836-4153 for more information.



**Single Point in Time Team  
packing blessing bags**

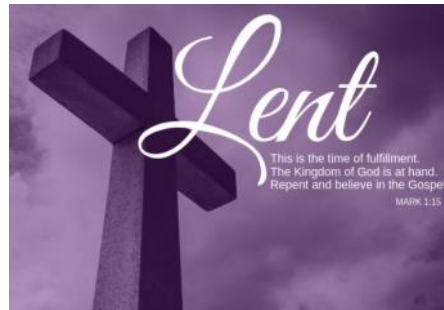
## LENT is just 14 days away. What if ...

◆ *we would enter this Lent in the spirit of beginning a 40-day retreat—an opportunity to grow more deeply in love with God, ourselves and others, and the life that is ours to live?*

◆ *we would accept life as it comes to us through personal encounters and ordinary experiences with greater attention and intention?*

◆ *we stepped outside our comfort zones more often to bring God's love to others?*

◆ *we took the opportunity to expand our consciousness?*



As you open yourself to the graces of your Lenten retreat, there are many opportunities for personal growth.

Here are a few:

### February 17

Charism Now — SSJ Community Day

### February 21

Sr. Ardath, a sister of Humility of Mary from Villa Maria, PA, offers an inspirational talk at the CLC. Come and be spiritually nourished. 3:30-4:00 p.m.

### February 24

Forgiveness: A Lenten Journey (see below).

### Ongoing

LCWR – Continuing the Journey of **Transforming Grace: Transforming presence** Weekly reflections. Join us on March 12 to learn more. See page 3.

## Forgiveness as a Spiritual Practice

*A Lenten Journey with Gary Loncki*

**Saturday,  
February 24  
Community Living  
Center  
8:30 a.m.**

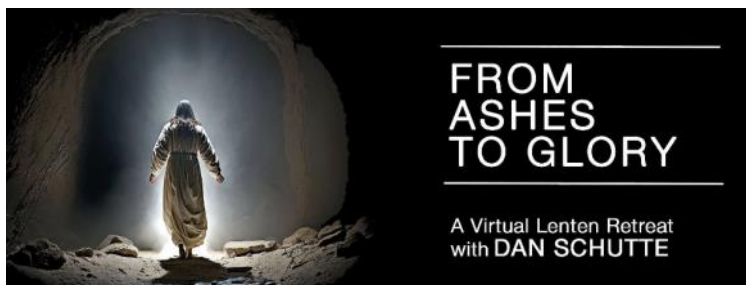
**Coffee and Conversation  
9:00 a.m. – noon  
Morning of Reflection  
Free will offering.**

[Click here to RSVP by February 16](#)  
[or call 814-836-4040](#)



Gary will facilitate an interactive day of reflection on forgiveness as part of our Lenten journey. A thought-provoking talk using quotes and stories can help loosen the soil for participants to focus on

forgiveness in their lives. When were they forgiven? When did they forgive others? Who do they need to forgive? What feelings are connected to each process? A guided meditation and small and large group sharing also will be part of the morning. Participants are invited to take notes and bring their journals. Also, they will be given a handout suggesting valuable tools for forgiveness to help them continue the journey.



Click below for more information about this virtual retreat opportunity and to register.

[CLICK HERE](#)

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

## SSJ Ministry News



  
**17TH ANNUAL**  
 .....  
*Guess*  
*That Tune*  
  
**GALA**  
 .....  
*With hosts*  
**MAYOR JOE &  
 RHONDA SCHEMBER**  
 .....  
*Save the date:*  
**MAY 11, 2024**  
*Bayfront Convention Center*  
 .....  
**TO BENEFIT THE  
 SISTERS  
 OF ST. JOSEPH  
 NEIGHBORHOOD  
 NETWORK**  


## ssj community March Birthdays



- 2 A. Sandy Greggs
- 2 A. Tina Branton
- 2 S. Ann Stephanie Stano
- 2 A. Chris Laythe
- 4 A. Ginny Hughes
- 6 A. Shirley Byers
- 8 S. Josette Gocella
- 8 A. Cynthia Grucza
- 9 A. Penny Guelcher
- 9 S. Moira Sullivan
- 17 A. Jane Zawacki
- 19 Agr. Cindy Polesnak
- 19 A. Charlotte Sheldon
- 21 A. Carol Picheco
- 23 S. Mary Drexler
- 23 A. Ann Semler
- 26 A. Rhonda Sharie
- 28 A. Donna Maycock

## Students' Fund for St. Patrick's Haven

*"Every night, countless men in our community find themselves without a safe place to sleep. They are our brothers, fathers, and friends who, due to unforeseen circumstances, have fallen on hard times. As a community, we believe that every person deserves a warm and secure place to rest their head, which is why we are reaching out to you for support."*

~Students' Fund for St. Patrick's Haven  
Students of Cathedral Prep school are raising funds for St. Patrick's Haven during its

40th anniversary year to support its mission of providing a ministry of presence and a place of welcome, nightly refuge, food, comfort, and friendship.

The students started a Go Fund Me page and set a goal of raising \$1040 for St. Patrick's Haven. Your contribution will make a significant impact. Your generosity will go a long way in making a positive difference in the lives of these men. Please join us in supporting this vital mission and helping these



students in their effort to be of service to the community. Thank you for your willingness to help and for making a difference in our community.

[Click here of you would like to contribute to their Go Fund Me campaign.](#)

## Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

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SSJERIE  
.ORG



## Nuns Against Gun Violence Lenten Fast

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

Following is a letter from the Nuns Against Gun Violence Coalition, which was founded in April, 2023 to bring together congregations of Catholic Sisters in order to speak with a united voice against the crisis of gun violence. We are among more than 60 congregations who have joined.

*As Catholics, our faith calls us to protect life, and yet our country continues to be plagued with an epidemic of gun violence. **In response, we invite you to participate in a fast against gun violence during Lent.** Our fast will be a prayer to God and an opportunity to publicly appeal to our civic communities for action to reduce gun violence.*

*The toll gun violence takes on our communities is staggering with 120 firearm deaths and 200*

*firearm casualties a day.*

*Death by suicide, homicide, and mass shootings ravage our communities at rates 26 times higher than other high-income nations.<sup>1</sup>*

*Troublingly, the leading cause of death of children and teens in the United States is now firearms.<sup>2</sup>*

*Despite public support, gun violence prevention legislation stagnates in Congress, and many state and local representatives enact extreme laws that ignore the public call for gun violence prevention legislation.<sup>3</sup>*

*As we prepare for the Lenten season, we reflect on this reality and the devastating effect of gun violence on our nation. The loss of life and continuous toll of grief and trauma on individuals,*

*families, and communities compel us to take action to change our society to protect life.*

*It is our hope that members of our coalition congregations, as well as like-minded individuals, will join in this fast against gun violence. **To demonstrate your commitment to undertake this fast, please complete this form.***

*We will join our hearts, minds and bodies in a sacrifice – **according to our capability** – as an expression of love, in a spirit of generosity, willingly abstaining from food and drink or undertaking other meaningful sacrifices as we put forth our united call for people to lay down their guns and enact gun violence prevention legislation. May our prayers and fast strengthen a desire to create a society of peace.*

<sup>1</sup> [Everytown Research & Policy, "Gun Violence in America," Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 13 February 2023](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Everytown Research & Policy, "Gun Violence in America," Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 13 February 2023](#)

<sup>3</sup> ["Statistics," Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, Accessed 11 January 2024.](#)