

interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 43, Issue 2

February 2025

Go For It!

A little over two weeks ago, I received an email from Monica, a young student whom my brother Chuck welcomed into the Church while she was a student at Gannon University. Having gone to Mass on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the priest suggested in his homily that those assembled in Church reach out to the person who baptized them with a message of gratitude. Monica followed through only to find out that Fr. Drexler was deceased. However, they did give her my email address. She connected with me to share how her faith grew while she

was a student at Gannon. Monica wanted to share that with me. I shared it with my siblings because we never know what an impact we can have on another's life. Why not reach out to someone who has touched your life and share with them the gift they have been for you. It can only brighten someone else's life.

Go for it! Blessings!
Blessings,

Sr. Mary

Sister 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.



Community Day

**February 22
9 a.m. - Noon**

We will focus on Governance and review the information reported from the Wisdom Circles who met and shared State of the Heart in response to what they heard at the November Community Day which surfaced the idea of "completion."

Please RSVP by February 7 or send email to RSVP@ssjerie.org. Please indicate if you will be staying for lunch.

CLICK HERE TO RSVP

TAKE BACK THE SITE

Prayer Vigil



Please join us in prayer

**February 4, 2025 at 5:15 p.m.
West 31st and Liberty Streets
at the site of the
December 17, 2024 murder of**

Armoni Cantu

sponsored by:
Benedictine Sisters of Erie
and Oblates
Sisters of St. Joseph, Agrégées,
and Associates
Sisters of Mercy and Associates

Super Bowl Party at the CLC — See page 7

MISSION: POSSIBLE

AHN/Saint Vincent—Making the Mission Possible for 150 Years



AHN/Saint Vincent kicked off its 150th anniversary celebration on Friday, January

24 with a press conference in the hospital's lobby. The Sisters of St. Joseph founded the hospital in 1875 and stewarded its mission for 138 years. In 2013, Saint Vincent Health Center became AHN Saint Vincent through affiliation with Allegheny Health Network.

Several Sisters and AHN Saint Vincent staff members gathered for a unique photo in a 1-5-0 formation.



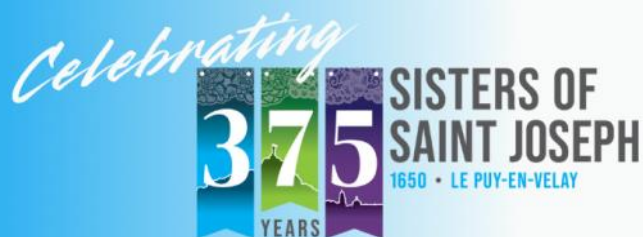
Pictured above, l-r: Sisters Carol Morehouse, Ricarda Vincent, Mary Ann White, Catherine Manning, Marjorie Adams, Nancy Fischer, Mary Drexler, SSJ Associate Fr. Dennis Martin, Sisters Susan Herzing, Veronica Mittal, Clare Marie Beichner, Claudia Dombrowski and Phyllis Hilbert.

At right, S. Carol Morehouse delivers remarks at the event.



You are also invited to share your favorite memory of AHN Saint Vincent Hospital as part of our 150th celebration. Share how AHN Saint Vincent has impacted your life as we commemorate 150 years of care.

[Click here to share a memory.](#)



**Get Ready
It's Time to
Celebrate!**

In preparation for the 375th Anniversary Celebration event, the Federation is holding two information sessions, to share all the details about the event, including location, the hotel, an overview of the schedule, speakers, presenters, and more. There will also be information on how to register (*registration officially opens Feb. 18*), how to get a discount for registration, and the scholarship process.



Did you know?

The first Sisters of St. Joseph were originally called the Daughters of St. Joseph. They became the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1807 after the French Revolution.



Please register for one of the sessions below. To accommodate a variety of schedules, two sessions are being offered. If you can't make either of the scheduled sessions, please register anyway and you will receive a recording to view at a later date.

Tuesday, Feb. 11

7:30 p.m. EST

[Register Here](#)

Wednesday, Feb. 12

1 p.m. EST

[Register Here](#)

We Remember . . . Barbara Ann Vavreck, SSJ

Sister Barbara Ann Vavreck, SSJ, 87, died on January 15 in the 70th year of her religious life. She was born on December 11, 1937, in Philipsburg, PA, to the late Andrew and Barbara (Rusnak) Vavreck. She attended Hawk Run Elementary School and graduated from Morris Township High School in Morrisdale, PA. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph on August 31, 1955, from St. Peter and Paul in Hawk Run, PA, and professed her final vows on August 15, 1961. She received a BS in

Home Economics from Villa Maria College, Erie, in 1971 and an MA in Home Economics from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), Indiana, PA, in 1975. She also earned a PA State Certified Nutritionist Certificate from IUP and a Food Protection Certification from the Erie County Department of Health.

She ministered as a teacher in several Diocesan schools, including St. John and Our Lady of Peace Schools in Erie and Bradford Central Christian

School in Bradford, PA. She was a housemother and dental assistant at St. Joseph's Home for Children, a food service manager at Saint Vincent Hospital, and a purchasing director at Saint Mary's Home of Erie.

[Click here for full obituary.](#)



Associates' News and Happenings

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Associate Director

I hope all of you are staying safe and warm during this "wonderful winter weather."

Prayers

Please remember Olga Filippi, sister of **A. Lucille Sitzler** who died this past month. May Eternal Light Shine Upon Her O Lord! May she rest in peace. Please remember Lucille and the family in prayer during this difficult time. Also keep in prayer all the Associates, Sisters and Agrégées and their families who are ill, especially **Associates Carol Dorr, John Fuhrman, Ann Flick** and Dylan Wentz (grandson of **A. Joy Sherred**).



What's Happening in Your Corner of the World?

I spent some time visiting via the phone with some of our Associates who have been ill or hospitalized. I was so sorry to

learn that **A. Ann Flick** had been seriously ill and is now recuperating at home after a stay in the hospital and nursing home. I spoke with **A. Bonnie Short** who shared that her husband, **A. Michael Short** is feeling much better after a bout with the flu. **Associates Mary and John Fuhrman** called. That was the first I spoke to John since he was hospitalized a while ago. He is recuperating at home and doing much better. **A. Joy Sherred** updated me on her grandson Dylan's health issues. He is still undergoing tests to determine what medications and treatments he should undergo.

A. Carol Dorr has been providing us with updates on her health issues. I had an enjoyable conversation with **Associate Renee Clark** last week. She retired in November and has been enjoying her free time by traveling, relaxing at

home, and enjoying time with her puppy. Congratulations, Renee, on your well-deserved retirement!

Program Committee

If you wish to join the Program Committee, call me at 814-823-1182.

Postponed But Not Forgotten

We postponed **That's A Wrap** for the second time due to weather so we are going to wait until the weather gets better. We have all the items that were dropped off for the Blessing Bags and hope we can get together soon. St. James Haven and St Patrick Haven can always use the Blessing Bags.

Save the Date

Please mark your calendars for **April 5, 2025**. Sisters Ricarda Vincent and Rosemary O'Brien will give a presentation on the State of the Heart Prayer.



Compassion, Self-acceptance and Self-emptying love

A Lenten Morning of Reflection with Mary Dwyer

Saturday, March 8, 2025 9:00 – Noon CLC Gathering Room

Mary Dwyer is a long-time student of Fr. Thomas Keating and has been practicing Centering Prayer since the 1980s. In the early 1990s, she lived at Chrysalis House, a contemplative live-in community experiment blessed by Fr. Thomas in Warwick, NY. It was her experience there that proved to her that a life of prayer, consent, and practice is real, stable and deeply rewarding. She learned that a devoted life of prayer was the real work of life; what we did the rest of the time was just

how we made a living.

Mary received her undergraduate degree from Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. in economics and worked as a banker and college administrator. After a few years at Chrysalis House, she returned to school and became a licensed clinical social worker practicing this vocation for the next 15 years while maintaining her commitment to the contemplative life and to the mission of Contemplative Outreach.

Mary is currently in private practice as an LCSW in Erie. She devotes her time between

private practice and conducting retreats and workshops throughout the U.S. and internationally on behalf of Contemplative Outreach.

As we begin our Lenten journey together, Mary will guide participants through a process of presentation, prayer, and reflection through the lens of compassion, self-acceptance and self-emptying love.

Please register by Monday, February 17. You can sign up at the CLC, register online by clicking the link below, or send an email to RSVP@ssjerie.org. Be sure to indicate if you are staying for lunch.

REGISTER



SSJ Agrégées Donate to the Neighborhood Network Food Pantry

The SSJ Agrégées and Sr. Susan Herzing did an Advent calendar style donation to the SSJ Neighborhood Network Food Pantry. For each day of Advent, we purchased an item from a suggested list. The items were delivered to the SSJNN by Deb Seng. It was a fun way to contribute to the Food Pantry and serve our neighbors.

Pictured above, l-r: Theresa Cieslikowski, Judi Janke, Cindy Polesnak, Deb Seng, Betsy Wiest, Arlene Chaney, Jeanne Ryan, Charlene Kellerman, Tammy Van Buren. Inset: Lisa Ramsey, SSJNN and Deb Seng.



Spirits on Fire

A morning of sharing

It was a heartfelt morning of sharing by some of the past Spirits on Fire participants. Pictured above with Sr. Phyllis DiFuccia (2nd from left) and S. Clare Marie Beichner, far right are l-r: Patrice Swick, Brian Tenney, Betsy Wiest, Deb Seng, Cindi Olesky, and Stephanie Hall.

Living Laudate Deum by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

The US has withdrawn from the Paris Climate Agreement and it looks like the President is going to issue a series of executive orders on energy, with one declaring an "energy emergency" in order to expand oil production. In addition, he moved to lift restrictions on drilling in Alaska, halt offshore wind farms, and roll back environmental protections and clean energy and environmental justice policies established under President Biden. Although things look grim, the Pope challenges us to be "Pilgrims of Hope." I encourage everyone to pick one thing that you can do, to help heal our ailing planet. Challenge others to do one thing also. Together we can make a difference!

Get to Know the Agrégées

Tammy Van Buren
2003 Associate Companion:
Sr. Marjorie Adams
2016 Agrégée Mentor:
Sr. Margaret Frank



Tammy loves spending time with the SSJ community as well as other friends and family. Currently, she is the co-captain of the SSJs & As Relay for Life Team. In addition, she volunteers at the SSJNN Gala, helps prep for the Sisters of St. Joseph Thanksgiving dinner and delivers meals on Thanksgiving morning. Tammy is a longtime member of the Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation (JPIC) committee, and was recently invited to be part of the SSJ program committee.

Tammy works for the Commonwealth of PA in the Unemployment Dept. as a Claims Examiner. But, that job just pays the bills. Her two favorite jobs are working at the CLC switchboard and dog sitting.

She lives at the Heritage Apartments with her cat, Ellie. Tammy has two brothers, Jason and David, and tons of cousins. She serves on the board of the Erie County Dairy Princess & Promotions Team working to promote the dairy industry and farmers. Tammy enjoys writing and traveling and hopes to do more of both.

Missionary Disciples

Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ

Becoming missionary disciples is part of our faith journey and is rooted in Baptism. Over the years, our encounters with people helped foster our relationship with God. Ongoing growth "demands continuous conversion, growing in love, to the measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13) and being open to the gifts of the Spirit for a living and joyful witness of faith. This involves active participation in the practice of synodality. It is decisive and results in the grace of nurturing unity and reconciliation. It also involves mutual learning, sharing, and discovering the importance of co-responsibility in building bridges of understanding. Our cultural perceptions, acceptance of all persons as being created equal, and having safe places for

minors and vulnerable persons.

Our commitment to the Church's social doctrine, peace and justice, care for our common home, and interreligious and cultural dialogue is key to establishing a more just and compassionate world. We can build unity and reconciliation by embracing servant leadership, setting the tone, being attentive, calling forth, and animating the gifts of all based on our shared sense of mission. We can renew our efforts to become a community of faith that journeys together.

The October 2024 Synod meeting began with a Penitential Vigil led by Pope Francis. Participants requested forgiveness and expressed feeling shame for:

- lacking the courage to seek peace among people and



Synod
2021
2023

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

nations in recognition of the dignity of every human life

- being accomplices or directly committing abuses of conscience, power, and sex,
- not recognizing and defending the dignity of women,
- turning their heads to the needs of the poor and marginalized,
- transforming authority into power, suffocating plurality, and not listening to people.

These same areas are causing polarization in our country today. Let us seek peace, unity, and reconciliation. as is our mission as the family of St. Joseph every day.

Pilgrims of Hope: Embracing the Call of the Jubilee Year

by Associate Brandon Vogt



This year, the Church celebrates a Jubilee Year with the theme "Pilgrims of Hope." We are all invited to embark on a spiritual journey to bring healing and renewal to individuals, communities, and the world. Jubilee Years are also known as Holy Years because they call us to renewed relationship with God, one another, and creation.

The concept has its roots in Scripture, specifically the Old Testament. In the Book of Leviticus (25:8-13), God commanded the Israelites to observe a year of rest and restoration every fifty years. Known as the Jubilee, the year was marked by freeing slaves, cancelling debts, and returning land to its original owners. It was a time of justice, mercy, and renewal.

Jesus began his public ministry with the words of the prophet Isaiah: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord"* (Luke 4:18-19). With these words, Jesus connects his ministry with God's ancient vision for the Jubilee. Through his teachings, healings, and forgiveness, Jesus brings about the renewal of relationship with God, others, and creation, which is at the heart of the Jubilee Year.

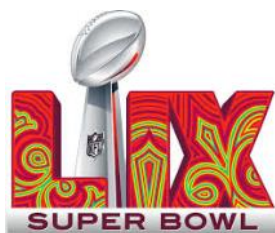
The Christian tradition of the Jubilee Year began in 1300, when Pope Boniface VIII declared a Holy Year of forgiveness and pilgrimage to Rome. Since then, the Church has celebrated both ordinary

Jubilee Years (every 25 years) and extraordinary Jubilees, proclaimed for special occasions or needs, such as the Jubilee of Mercy called by Pope Francis in 2015.

The Jubilee Year takes on profound meaning under the theme "Pilgrims of Hope." In a world marked by division and despair, our charism of unifying love and service to the dear neighbor calls us to embody God's love through compassionate service and authentic relationships that bring hope to those in need. *"Hope calls us to become pilgrims in search of truth, dreamers who never tire, women and men open to being challenged by God's dream which is of a new world where peace and justice reign."* (Pope Francis, Christmas Eve Homily 2024, Opening of the Jubilee Year)

Stay tuned for more ways to celebrate and live out the call of the Jubilee Year. You can visit the official Jubilee website at www.iubilaeum2025.va/en.html

Everyone is invited
Super Bowl Party
February 9, 2025
CLC Gathering Space
Beginning at 5:30 p.m.



Please RSVP by February 3rd so we know how much pizza to order. When you tell us you are coming, let us know what kind of pizza you would like and how many slices. Your choices are Cheese, cheese and peperoni, or white pizza.

Snacks and drinks will be provided. If you want to bring a snack to share you are welcome to, but it is not necessary. There will be plenty to share. Click below to RSVP or call 814-836-4040.

[Click here to RSVP](#)

SSJ community
February Birthdays

- 2 A. Sandy Greggs
- 2 A. Tina Branton
- 2 S. Ann Stephanie Stano
- 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

Shamrock
howdown
 a trivia competition to benefit St. Patrick's Haven.

Emcees: Drs. Walter and Mary Iwanenko
President and First Lady of Gannon University

March 15, 2025
6-9 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center

- Six rounds of trivia
- Prizes for the top three teams
- A prize for the best dressed team reflecting its team name
- Delicious hors d'oeuvres
- snacks, and beverages
- 50/50 and basket raffles
- Cash bar



Trophy shown "actual" size.

Register by March 1!
\$50 per person/
\$400 for a team of eight

To register your team
 or for more info,
 scan the QR code,
 visit stpatrickshaven.org,
 or call 814-836-4153.

Pot of Gold sponsors:



25TH ANNIVERSARY
Guess That Tune
GALA
A Silver Celebration
 Save the date:
MAY 3, 2025
 Bayfront Convention Center
 TO BENEFIT THE
 SISTERS
 OF ST. JOSEPH
 NEIGHBORHOOD
 NETWORK

Part-time
Pastoral Care

Interested in a part-time pastoral care opportunity at AHN Saint Vincent? If so, please contact Sister Carol Morehouse at 814-836-4208 or s.morehouse@ssjerie.org.

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



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What Can We Do?

Watching the news night after night and seeing the fires in California, I keep coming up with the same question, "What can we do?"

The SSJ Federation has put out the following update from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet-Los Angeles regarding Sisters in the area. *The area around Carondelet Center has been downgraded from a 'mandatory evacuation' zone to an 'evacuation warning' zone. Our grounds remain evacuated, and we are continuing to closely*



monitor the situation. We are in awe of the firefighters and all those managing this emergency for their tireless and heroic efforts. Please continue praying with us for the containment of these devastating fires."

As a community, we will be sending a donation. Both the Federation and LCWR have given us places to send donations. They assure us that the money will go to the places where it is most needed. If you would like to donate, you can do so by check made out to the Sisters of St. Joseph and put

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

CA fires in the memo section. You can mail it to the CLC, 5031 West Ridge Road, Erie, PA, 16506 attention Deb Seng, or drop cash or a check off at the front desk in an envelope with my name on it. We would like to have all donations by February 15.

We are grateful for all those who will donate. I ask that all of us continue to pray for everyone affected by the wildfires and in thanksgiving for all the fire fighters and first responders that have come from all over the world to fight these fires.