

interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 44, Issue 1

January 2026

Reflect on the Blessings, Ponder What's Next

Dear Friends,

We certainly had a year of excitement, challenge, and great celebration in 2025. Take a few moments to reflect on the blessings of this past year. Give thanks to our God for all the ways we have been blessed.

It is the beginning of the new year. We began by celebrating Mary, Mother of Jesus. We ask her to walk with us each day during this coming year with its known and unknown challenges and opportunities, just as she did in accepting her call to be the Mother of Jesus. Let us ask Mary for the grace to "pray and ponder in our hearts" what God desires for us. Praying and pondering in our hearts demands work on our part. Are we ready for this challenge? Are we willing to put in the time it takes to ponder in prayer? Can we face the

hard questions and answer them with honesty and integrity? Will we be able to let go of those things that no longer give life in favor of new ways of being or acting?

While there are many things on the horizon for us, we are empowered by a God who deeply loves us. We have Mary and Joseph to look to for guidance and direction as we move forward.

Let us embrace our call to "Ponder in our hearts" all that is before us, knowing our God and Mary and Joseph accompany us. Happy and blessed new Year to all!

Blessings,



Sister Mary

We Are In This Together

Part of the prayer from our November Community Day was "God...provide us with insight to recognize Your will in our working together..."

On **Sunday, January 11**, the Charism Committee will facilitate a fireside chat that will focus on the second core value that surfaced from the Wisdom Circles: *Relationships*.

Our lives are full of relationships. There are those we have with our family and friends, with neighbors, co-workers, our SSJ Community and even ourselves. First and foremost is our relationship with God. All relationships require attention to remain healthy and grow. We will

explore how our living Charism can impact our relationships, and suggest practical methods of strengthening relationships daily. Join us on **January 11 for mass at 9 a.m. followed by a fireside chat**. Invite others to join you. Coffee/hot water and a snack will be provided.

Come Together Around the Charism



The Charism Committee has planned opportunities to come together around the charism. Join us for Sunday mass at 9:00 a.m. followed by a fireside chat on the following themes:

**Sunday,
January 11**
Relationships

**Sunday,
February 8**
Inclusive Love

The Charism Committee:
Srs. Ricarda Vincent,
Marianne Stuckert,
Clare Marie Beichner,
Agrégee Teresa
Cieslikowski, and
Associates Sue
Wisniewski and
Pat Marshall.



MISSION: POSSIBLE!

The Work of Christmas Begins

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Mission Integration Coordinator

Happy New Year! Happy 2026! As the Sisters who live in Trinity Hall gathered to celebrate and spend time together on New's Year Eve, we began with a short reflection. I was surprised to see that Sister Marie Stephen, who led us in prayer, gave each of us a copy of one of my favorite poems, *The Work of Christmas Begins*, by Michael Dougherty. In my article last January, I reflected on this very same poem. I began by saying I wanted to share the poem just one more time and I added "maybe." I'm glad I said maybe because here I am sharing it again!

After liturgy this past Sunday, I had coffee with a few Sisters and a guest. As we sat around the table, we began reminiscing about growing up in families that continued customs related to our ethnic heritage. As we shared stories, one of the Sisters remarked that she learned to live the SSJ mission way back then. We shared how

our families and friends reached out to help each other whenever someone needed encouragement, friendship, or help.

During the Christmas season, many people reach out to the less fortunate in the spirit of the season. However, once Christmas has passed, these neighbors are frequently forgotten. In his poem, Michael Dougherty reminds us that in the spirit of Christmas, we must continue to reach out to our neighbors, whoever they are or wherever they may be, to welcome them, feed them, share our gifts with them, seek justice and peace for them, and build bridges of trust for them. If we remember that the work of Christmas continues throughout the year, and we continue to reach out to the dear neighbor, without distinction, wherever, whenever, and however we can, this is what makes our **SSJ Mission Possible!**

The Work of Christmas Begins

When the carols have been stilled,
When the star topped tree is taken down,
When family and friends are gone home,
When we are back to our schedules
The work of Christmas begins:

To welcome the refugee,
To heal a broken planet,
To feed the hungry,
To build bridges of trust,
not walls of fear,
To share our gifts,
To seek justice and peace for all people,
To bring Christ's light to the world.

Michael Dougherty

BEWARE: Microsoft Security Scam!

Please be aware that there is a SCAM circulating that appears as a pop-up on your computer, iPad, or mobile phone.

The SCAM mimics being sent from Microsoft. IT IS NOT!!!! The above photos are a few examples of how this may appear on your screen -- there are many variations. Please be aware of this and DO NOT call any number shown on the screen or click on any links on the screen. If you call or



click on any links, you may be giving access to your computer, it may wipe out your data, and worse, they may get access to your personal information. Simply close or X out of the screen.



Sisters:
If you have any questions or are tempted to call the number on the screen, DON'T. Call Vickie first.

Lit by Love

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Agrégées Vocation in Erie

Ten years ago, nine women pronounced their Vow of Fidelity and committed to living the Charism and Mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania. These women were followed by three more women who pronounced their Vow of Fidelity in 2018. They pray to remain open to the transforming love of Christ so they can continue to share this love with the dear neighbor.

Join us for a celebration mass to commemorate this milestone of the Agrégée vocation in Erie

January 18, 2026

9:00 a.m.

Community Living Center



TAKE BACK THE SITE

Prayer vigil for

Michael A. Webb-Mendralla, Jr.

Please join us in prayer

Monday, January 12, 2026, at 5:15 p.m.

505 West 9th Street

the site where he was murdered on December 2, 2025

Sponsored by:

Benedictine Sisters of Erie and Oblates

Sisters of St. Joseph, Agrégées, and Associates

Sisters of Mercy and Associates



Virtual Book Discussion: *The Gift of Years*

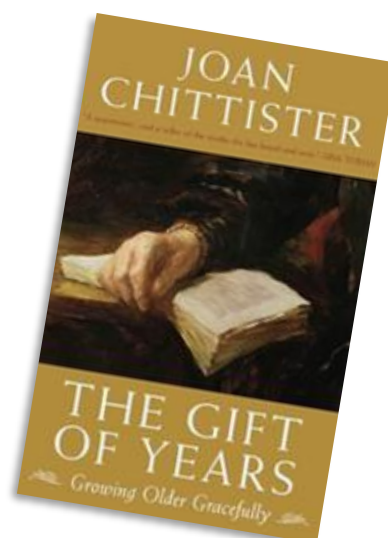
Join us via ZOOM on **January 14, 2026, and February 11, 2026 from 6-8 PM, or January 16, 2026 and February 13, 2026 from 1-3 p.m.** for an engaging discussion of Joan Chittester's acclaimed book, *The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully*.

We will discuss the first half of the book at the January sessions and the second half at the February sessions. You may join for any or all of the

sessions. The book is available through major retailers and at some libraries.

[Register here](#) for the sessions. You **MUST** register by the **Sunday** before the meeting to receive the ZOOM link.

**CLICK HERE
TO REGISTER**



Lenten Morning of Reflection

Lent as a Hymn of Promise

Presented by Sarah and Dave Roncolato
Saturday, February 28, 2026 9:00 a.m.—12 noon
Community Living Center

Prayerfully unpacking lines from *The Hymn of Promise*, we will spend the day of reflection preparing for the Lenten season.

This hymn begins;
In the bulb there is a flower;
In the seed, an apple tree;
In co-coons, a hidden pro-mise:



Together we will reflect and pray with images from scripture and nature that deepen our experience and understanding of the Paschal Mystery which is the core of our Lenten Journey.

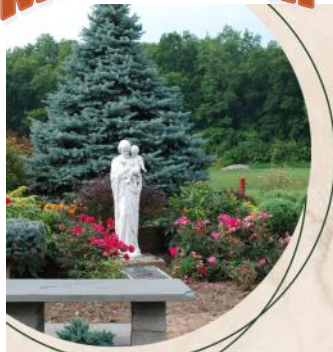
RSVP/registrations due by Friday, February 6

[Click here to RSVP.](#)



For over forty years, Sarah and Dave Roncolato have been partners in ministry and life. While raising two daughters and two sons, both had careers in ministry and service. Sarah served for almost thirty years as a United Methodist pastor, Dave in higher education at Allegheny College and as a spiritual director and retreat leader. Now retired, they enjoy time with their family, which now includes eight grandsons, community work around justice and equity, and cycling.

Make Your Plans Early!



2026 Summer Retreats

With Extended Stay
option over
Holiday
weekend/following
week

June 28– July 3rd

Women Religious with Sr. Julie Vieira, IHM

July 12th– July 17th

Preached Retreat for Men & Women with Sr. Mary McGlone, CSJ

July 19th– July 24th

Silent Directed Retreat with Jodie Scordo, Fr. Dennis Billy, C.Ss.R. and Fr. Philip Sutherland, SJ and solidifying other(s)

August 2nd– August 7th

Women Religious Retreat with Fr. Eugene O'Reilly, C.Ss.R.



**NOTRE DAME
RETREAT HOUSE**

585-394-5700
info@notredameretreat.org
5151 Foster Road
Canandaigua, NY 14424

www.notredameretreat.org

**GEORGETOWN
UNIVERSITY**


Initiative on
Catholic Social Thought
and Public Life

50 Years Connecting Catholic Social Thought and Public Life: Lessons from John Carr's Leadership Livestreamed on Wednesday, January 21, 2026 6:00 p.m. - 8:15 p.m. EST

John Carr, the founder of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University, is retiring. This special Public Dialogue and gratitude reception will honor John's founding of the Initiative in 2013, his more than 25 years of service at the USCCB as head of the bishops' justice and peace efforts, and his leadership at the Archdiocese of Washington and other vital Catholic and interfaith efforts. We will also explore how lessons from John's leadership can help us advance the principles of Catholic social teaching, lift up "the least of these," and advance the common good in these challenging times.

[Click here to Register](#)

EXPLORE THE INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY



THOMAS MERTON BIOPIC

WHAT TO EXPECT

- WATCH THE BIO-PIC
- HAPPY HOUR
- DISCUSS THE WORK OF INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY

OUR LADY OF MERCY
837 BARTLETT RD.,
HARBORCREEK

3:00 PM
24 JANUARY

RSVP TO AARON AT AKERR@ERIERCD.ORG

MORE INFORMATION AT WWW.REALLYGREATSITE.COM HELLO@REALLYGREATSITE.COM

Thomas Merton Event

On **Saturday, Jan. 24 at 3 p.m.**, the International Thomas Merton Society is hosting a gathering at Our Lady of Mercy, 837 Bartlett Rd., Harborcreek. There will be a biopic film presentation on Thomas Merton followed by a happy hour. Merton was a great Catholic writer committed to monastic renewal, lay spirituality, Catholic social teaching, poetry and civil rights. Please RSVP to Aaron Kerr at akerr@eriercd.org.

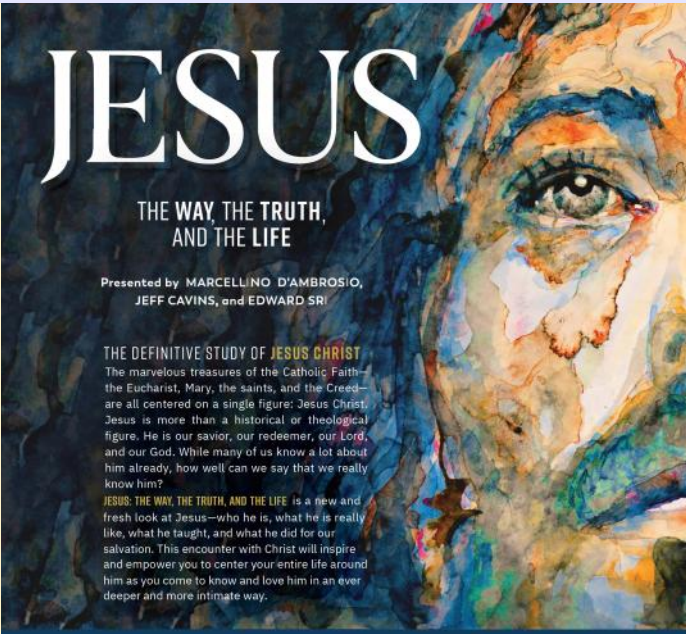
Our Lady of Mercy parish
837 Bartlett Rd.
Harborcreek

Jesus The Way, The Truth and the Life *A Definitive Study*

St. Francis Xavier parish is hosting a definitive study of Jesus Christ. This is a new and fresh look at Jesus and his life, what he taught, what he was like and what he did for our salvation.

This includes 10 weekly sessions every **Wednesday from 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m. beginning Jan. 21, 2026 and concluding March 25.** For more information, contact: Irene Schneider 814-476-7657 ext. 7 or send an email to: evangelization@stfrancisxaviermckean.org.

St. Francis Xavier parish
8880 Main St.
McKean




JESUS

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

Presented by MARCELLINO D'AMBROSIO, JEFF CAVINS, and EDWARD SR

THE DEFINITIVE STUDY OF JESUS CHRIST
The marvelous treasures of the Catholic Faith—the Eucharist, Mary, the saints, and the Creed—are all centered on a single figure: Jesus Christ. Jesus is more than a historical or theological figure. He is our savior, our redeemer, our Lord, and our God. While many of us know a lot about him already, how well can we say that we really know him?

JESUS: THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE is a new and fresh look at Jesus—who he is, what he is really like, what he taught, and what he did for our salvation. This encounter with Christ will inspire and empower you to center your entire life around him as you come to know and love him in an ever deeper and more intimate way.

<p>DATES - TIMES - LOCATION</p> <p>Wednesdays, Beginning January 21, 2026 10 Sessions (Concludes March 25, 2026)</p> <p>St. Francis Xavier Parish Center (Handicap Accessible)</p> <p>10:00 - 11:30 a.m.</p>	<p>COST - REGISTRATION</p> <p>Online Access only: \$7.40 Study Set (Book, Workbook, & Timeline Chart): \$40 Both: \$47</p> <p>Just come to watch & discuss free.</p> <p>FOR MORE INFORMATION</p> <p>Irene Schneider 814-476-7657 x7 or evangelization@stfrancisxaviermckean.org</p> 
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ASCENSION

Visit ascensionpress.com to learn more!



BEGIN THE NEW YEAR

WITH A VIRTUAL RETREAT

In our present world with such great challenges, hope is the light that guides us forward. As we step into a new year, join composer and guide Dan Schutte for a virtual retreat in the quiet of your own home. Rekindle your spirit and invite God to make a home in your heart this new year.

What You'll Experience

- twenty uplifting video reflections focused on hope
- inspiring music to create a sacred space in our soul
- quiet moments of prayer and peace
- a God who loves you beyond what you've ever imagined

The retreat will be available to you from January 6, Feast of Epiphany, until February 18, Ash Wednesday, when Lent begins.

For fifty years, Dan Schutte has endeavored to inspire people with music of faith and hope. As composer of beloved hymns Here I Am, Lord, City of God, and You Are Near, his music has been a companion on our journey of faith.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

Living Laudato Deum

by Deb Seng,
SSJ Social
Justice Coordinator

As we begin a new year it is a good time to ask yourself, "How did I do with my 2025 goal of reducing my carbon footprint?" This is a goal that we all need to make every year. We will continue giving ideas of things you can do each month. You don't have to do them all but if we all do something, we can do our part to fight climate change.

The first idea is to be a conscientious consumer. Everything we buy has an impact on the environment. Before you buy ask yourself a few questions. How was it made? Did its manufacturing produce pollution? Does it use a lot of energy? Can the packaging be recycled? Can I buy the same thing from a local vendor? New year, new start. Buy only what you need, and buy the most eco-friendly articles available.

Leadership Collaborative

The Leadership Collaborative was birthed to harness the energy of the amazing leadership capacity of women Religious and Associates.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Leadership Collaborative has prepared a themed program for next year that addresses important aspects of the life of a Charism Carrier. These themes will also be developed in the monthly newsletter from the different voices and perspectives of the Leadership Collaborative team. "Vocation and the unique calling of an associate," Sr. Linda Buck, CSJ, will lead us on this distinct calling.

[Click to register for 2026 events](#)

Please join us on this special program with two offerings:

January 27 - 7 - 9:30 pm EST
January 28 - 9 - 11:30 am EST

Upcoming Topics:

May - Outreach: How we communicate our message effectively.
August - Community: The importance of our community and the value of togetherness.
November - Advocacy: Sharing our gifts with others.



[Get connected with Leadership Collaborative](#)

Dear Neighbor— SSJ Legacy Documentary Screening

There will be a screening of *Dear Neighbor*, the SSJ legacy documentary on Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at the 1020 Collective, 1020 Holland Street, Erie. The screening is part of the FILM 10|20 Women's History Month film series. Here is the evening's schedule of events:

5:00 p.m.

Erie Screenwriting
Collective meet

6:00 p.m.

Dear Neighbor documentary followed by Q&A

7:00 p.m.

Sarah's Oil

Tickets are \$10 at the door



SSJ community January Birthdays

- 4 A. Dotty Hanna
- 4 A. Kathy Davis
- 6 Agr. Michelle Tortorelli
- 7 A. Mary Ann Zarnick
- 8 A. Pat Montifiori
- 9 S. Perpetua Dickant
- 11 S. Colette Palmer
- 13 S. Frances Therese Matia
- 14 S. Marjorie Adams
- 14 S. Nancy Fischer
- 16 A. Maria Ines Patino Giraldo
- 18 A. Michael Short
- 22 S. Rosemary O'Brien
- 23 A. Joann Rupp
- 24 S. Phyllis Hilbert
- 25 Agr. Tammy Van Buren
- 29 A. Debbie Brasili

Save the Date!
Join us for the second
annual



We are pleased to invite you to the second Shamrock Showdown, a lively trivia event filled with fun, community spirit, and purpose.

Saturday, March 7, 2026 5-9 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center

Join us for a friendly competition that includes:

- ◆ Six exhilarating rounds of trivia with prizes for the top three teams
- ◆ A prize to the team that's dressed the best to reflect its team name.
- ◆ A simple meal - the same as our shelter guests will be served that evening.
- ◆ 50/50 and basket raffles
- ◆ Card-only bar

Mark your calendars and join us for a night to remember!
\$50/person or \$400/table **Registrations due by 2-20-26**
For more information, or to register, go to stpatrickshaven.org

Your participation helps us to continue providing vital services for Erie's homeless, while fostering the joy and solidarity that make our community strong.



SISTERS OF
ST. JOSEPH
OF NORTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA

5031 West Ridge Road
Erie, PA 16506-1249

Phone: 814-836-4100
publicrelations@ssjerie.org
www.ssjerie.org

Update on Gun Violence in PA

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

As 2025 ended, my inbox was inundated with appeals from every cause I ever donated to. As we are planning another Take Back the Site Vigil on January 12 (see page 7 for details), one appeal in particular caught my attention. It was the news from Cease Fire PA. Cease Fire PA is an organization dedicated to ending the epidemic of gun violence in Pennsylvania. Its goal is simple: everyone in the Commonwealth should live in a safe community. Gun violence, in any form, makes that an impossible reality.

Its 2025 report stated that gun homicides are at the lowest level in Philadelphia since 1966. Allegheny County saw gun

homicides drop by 39% since last year. York had its safest year since 2015. Delaware County banned machine gun converters. Overall, across PA, gun deaths have decreased by 47% from 2022. In addition, Cease Fire PA has also secured \$62 million in state funding for violence prevention programs.

Despite the federal government cutting deals with the gun lobby and defunding violence prevention programs, PA has made positive strides in reducing gun violence. All these things happened because



people showed up, organized, and kept pressure on legislators year-round. It's important that we act on a local and state level. We can't accept that gun violence is inevitable. We can be part of the solution. If you are interested in being informed about legislation, join the mailing list at ceasefirepa.org. It outlines how easy it is to contact your legislator and have your voice heard.

Let's continue to make PA safer place to live in 2026.