

interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 43, Issue 3

March 2025

Joseph . . . Known by His Virtues

We have many titles for Joseph. All you need to do is walk around the Community Living Center to get a glimpse of who Joseph is. Down by the pods there are several hangings that speak of Joseph. The Gathering Space also has some wall hangings about Joseph. Other spaces do as well.

Some of the titles I came up with for Joseph are: protector, father, carpenter, guide, dreamer, silent one, companion, teacher, parent.

What titles do you consider when you think of Joseph? Why not make a list or add to the one I made.

To honor Joseph during this month when we celebrate his feast day, why not take a quality of Joseph each day and pray with it. What new insights do you get from your prayer... about Joseph, about yourself, about our world? Journey with Joseph this month through your prayer. You'll be glad you did.

Blessings and Happy St. Joseph's Day.

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.



CATHOLIC
SISTERS WEEK

Catholic Sisters
Week
March 8-14

St. Joseph Day Celebration

Sunday, March 23, 2025
10:00 a.m. Liturgy
Followed by dinner

Be filled with St. Joseph's silence . . .

Please RSVP by March 10
[Click here](#)
or email RSVP@ssjerie.org
or call 814-836-4040

MISSION: POSSIBLE

Springtime Means St. Joseph Time

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Mission Integration Coordinator

Wow! I can't believe that March is upon us. Time flies by fast the older I get. Lent begins in a few days. Spring is almost here and St. Joseph Day is fast approaching. And I'm sure you can add other important dates to this list.

For the family of Joseph, the celebration of the feast of St. Joseph is special every year. It is during our St. Joseph Day Liturgy that Sisters, Agrégée, and Associates renew our vows and commitments to live the charism

and mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

This year, Pope Francis has proclaimed that 2025 is a Jubilee year. This happens every 25 years. For 2025, he chose the theme "Pilgrims of Hope." This year is a time for us to renew our faith, our hope, and re-establish relationships with God, each other, and creation. "We are invited to embark on a spiritual journey to bring healing and renewal to individuals, communities, and

the world."

As I wrote this article and pondered on all of this, it made me more aware of our charism and mission directional statement: *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.* For me, this is what makes the **SSJ Mission Possible!**

A Lenten evening prayer opportunity for everyone.

Taizé Prayer

Monday, March 10, 2025

6:00 – 6:30 p.m.

CLC Chapel

Taizé prayer is a distinctive style of meditative prayer developed by an ecumenical community of monks in rural France. This quiet, moving reflective prayer combines elements of the Church's traditional Liturgy of the Hours with elements of contemplative meditation, with sung and chanted prayers, readings, and concludes with prayers for the world. The purpose of the prayer is to foster reconciliation and peace among all peoples.

We hope you will join us!

Brandon Vogt, Dir. of Worship

Sisters Josette Gocella and Rosemary O'Brien
Spiritual Growth and Development Team



Lent & Holy Week Liturgies at the Community Living Center

Wednesday, March 5

9:00 a.m.

Ash Wednesday

Mass with distribution
of ashes

Monday, March 10

6:00 p.m.

Contemplative Prayer
in the spirit of Taizé

Wednesday, March 26

3:00 p.m.

Lenten Reconciliation Service

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

Serving the Dear Neighbor

On February 24th, Agrégée Betsy Wiest who is also a Mental Health Association (MHA) of NWPA board member, along with Pat Stucke, MHA Executive Director, and Colleen Hammon, MHA board VP, gave a presentation at the Jefferson Educational Society. Pat gave an overview of services available to members of the MHA and also services available to library patrons at the Blasco Library where two Peer Navigators from the MHA are available. She also talked about the collaboration with other agencies to support

those in need. Colleen spoke about the current status of mental health inpatient beds at Warren State Hospital. She shared how after St. Patrick's Haven experienced a fire in September 2022, the MHA opened their doors so they could continue to serve homeless men seeking shelter each night. Betsy also spoke about the difficult road those experiencing mental health, addiction, and homelessness walk on a daily basis.



Agrégée Retreat: Tending Our Gardens So All May Be One

The USA Agrégée group meets quarterly via ZOOM to share State of the Heart and Order of the House, and to discuss a variety of topics. At one meeting, it was suggested that we have an Agrégée retreat.

That retreat took place on the last Saturday in January via ZOOM to make it easy for as many to attend as possible. About 60 Agrégées participated, coming from various locations.

A retreat planning team with the guidance of Sr. Phyllis Esposito, CSJ, chose the theme *Tending Our Gardens So All May Be One*. Kathy Sherman, CSJ, from LaGrange, IL, served as retreat facilitator. The day offered presentations, song, reflection time, and small and large group sharing. Kathy incorporated the theme by leading us through the process of beginning a garden intertwined with our core values:

Preparing the Garden as



Our SSJ Agrégées, (l-r) Betsy Wiest, Theresa Cieslikowski, Arlene Chaney, Jeanne Marie Ryan, Charlene Kellerman, Deb Seng, Cindy Polesnak, and Tammy Van Buren.

Discernment and Community; Planting and Tending the Garden as Zeal and Community; and Harvesting the Garden as Gratitude, "the MORE," and Community. For reflection, Kathy invited us to "faithful listening" as it has its heart in relationships. It is there that we discover "the MORE" of who we are, and who we are in relationship to everything else. Our lives are a garden of relationships.

Kathy closed the retreat day in a ritual, using song and blessing over the seeds and bulbs we brought to the retreat. We will plant them to remind us of the process of growing in relationships with God and each other.

The USA Agrégées are planning to offer a presentation at the Federation Event in July. The team is in the midst of planning for this.



Associates' News and Happenings

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

Prayers

Please remember in your prayers



Associate Shirley Byers who died February 8, 2025. Also remember Frances Maras, mother of **Associate Jan Staszewski** who died January 27, 2025. May Eternal Light Shine Upon them O Lord! May they rest in peace. Please remember these Associates and their families at this difficult time. Please keep in prayer all the Associates, Sisters and Agrégées and their family members who are ill, especially **Associates Mary Ann White, John Fuhrman, Ann Flick, Carol Door, Mary Schmidt, Chris Opron, Maggie Shaughnessy, and Dylan Wentz, grandson of Associate Joy Sherred.**

Recommitment Time Is Fast Approaching!

All Associates received a recommitment form either in the mail or via email. This is a reminder that if you have not responded, please do so by March 19. [CLICK HERE TO RESPOND ONLINE.](#)

Congratulations, Gretchen!

Congratulations to **Associate Gretchen Gallagher Durney** who is one of this year's Women Making History Honorees. She will be recognized at the annual event, hosted by the Mercy Center for Women, on March 31, 2025.

Save the Dates

- *That's A Wrap* rescheduled for **March 29, 2025**

- *State of the Heart Prayer Presentation* on **April 5, 2025**, with Sisters Ricarda and Rosemary
- *Fellowship Sunday* **May 4, 2025**, following 9:00 a.m. Liturgy at CLC.

Belated Birthday Wishes

Belated happy birthday to **Elaine Hirsch** who celebrated her birthday February 18, 2025. It was brought to our attention that Elaine's name was not included in the February Birthday list last month.

What's Happening in Your Corner of the World?

It has been very enjoyable to read the "little notes" that you included with your recommitment forms. Thanks for the updates. It is great hearing from you.

That's A Wrap - Spring Session

After enduring an exceptionally challenging winter, we hope that all are excited to get back together and finish our Advent - now Lenten project. Thank you for all the very generous donations of hygiene and winter items. We met the urgent needs of the ministries through the winter holidays and have leftovers for Easter! The next collection and blessing bag creation party will be at 1 pm on Saturday, March 29, 2025 in the CLC Gathering Space. Please do NOT feel

obligated to donate again; although we are still accepting donations if you were unable to bring them earlier. Your presents are greatly appreciated; but more importantly, your presence is requested. A huge part of being an associate is drawing upon each other's presence and grace. We are looking forward to an awesome blizzard-free turnout with amazing friends and a sweet treat. There will be a \$25 Giant Eagle gift card for the person who wears the most



fun hat. So come celebrate each other, support our ministries, and have some fun! Please RSVP by March 20 by clicking the link below, or calling 814-836-4040. Questions can be addressed to Carol Dorr at 814-434-6858.

[RSVP HERE](#)

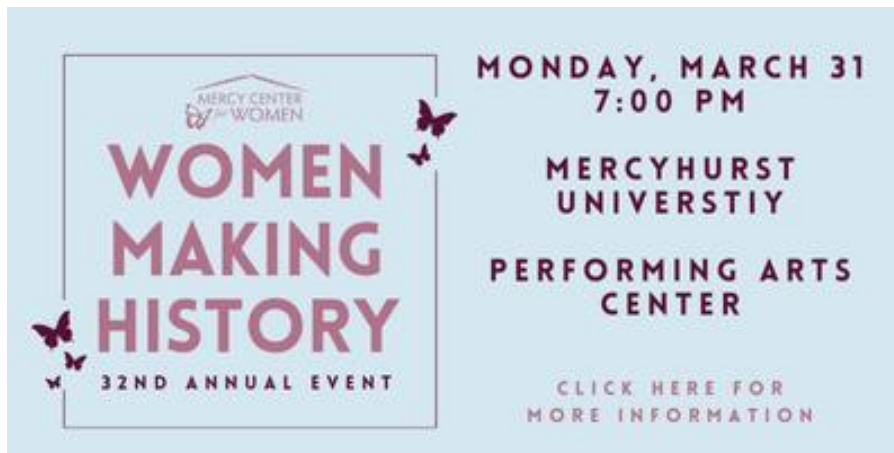
California Fires Donation Update

Thank you to all who donated to help the victims of the California wildfires. We collected \$3,000. We will be splitting the money between LA Catholic Charities and Mt. St. Mary's University, which is a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet-LA. Both places have the ability to get funds and supplies to those most in need. Please continue to keep the victims in prayer as they begin to rebuild their lives.

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 event.

It's FREE!



Living Laudate Deum

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

This year, 2025, marks the 10th anniversary of Laudato Si. It also marks 800 years since Saint Francis of Assisi composed "*The Canticle of the Creatures*." And don't forget that the Pope has declared this year a Jubilee Year and challenged us to be Pilgrims of Hope. So, what does all this mean?

All these things remind us that we must think of our life as intimately connected to all of creation, God's creation. Each in our own way we have been doing something to live into care of the Earth and care of the poor. This is a good time to evaluate how we are doing. Can you do a few more things, can

you step up your efforts, or have you lost your enthusiasm?

Please take a minute, and read Saint Francis' beautiful Canticle and hopefully be inspired to continue to care for all of creation. Read the Canticle below, or on our website via this link: [CLICK HERE](#)

Canticle of the Creatures

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honor,
and all blessing.
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no human is worthy to mention Your name.
Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;
and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and
the stars, in heaven You formed them clear and
precious and beautiful.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every
kind of weather,
through whom You give sustenance to
Your creatures.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
who is very useful and humble and precious and
chaste.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,

through whom You light the night,
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and
strong.
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister
Mother Earth,
who sustains and governs us,
and who produces various fruit with colored
flowers and herbs.
Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give
pardon for Your
love, and bear infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily
Death,
from whom no one living can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your
most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.
Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.

Family Matters

The family is the domestic Church. We know that the Synod is about communion, participation and mission. The family is core to the Church and journeying together to be in full communion with God. As part of this communion, we are brothers and sisters in a family that highlights the value of being intentional about fostering unity with all family members: children, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and others we consider to be family. Unity is enriched by spending quality time together, sharing meals, attentive listening, and dialogue. Sharing life experiences and challenges is part of listening and praying together. Participation in the richness of family life within our homes includes sharing responsibilities, and helping one another through troubled, painful, and joyous

Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ

times. Nurturing wholesome attitudes and openness can encourage sharing frustrations and times of fun with hope and problem-solving. Integrated families provide support, attention and care for elder and single members. Willingness to reach out to those who are hurting, feeling estranged, or dealing with sickness and death is part of being Church. Living the mission of being families who care for one another is synodal. It is living the Gospel in word and deed. It is actualizing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Being attentive to the spiritual life of the family is key to sharing and being Church in natural ways. Plan times to grow in holiness together through prayer, incorporating times to nourish what you value -- the dignity of each member, celebrating his/



Synod
2021
2023

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

her gifts and value with each other. Involve your family in the life of the Church and the seasons of the year. For those who need healing and being a graced family today, we pray: *Loving God, you invite all who are burdened to come to you. Allow your healing hand to come upon all. Touch souls with your compassion. Touch hearts with your courage. Touch minds with your wisdom. Touch bodies with your love. Teach us to trust you for our daily bread. Embrace us and those for whom we pray this day. We ask all blessings through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Walk in the Light of Hope

Exploring *State of the Heart* and *Order of the House*
April 5, 2025 9 a.m. – noon (coffee at 8:30 a.m.)
Community Living Center Gathering Room

Today our world calls us to respond in new ways, to look for meaning and hope in a world and society that seems to have lost its way. What is ours to do as Sisters, Associates, Agrégées and partners in ministry? Perhaps we can look to the original six women who found themselves in a similar situation and walked in the light of hope as they gathered in community to support one another, to deepen their relationship with God and others. Their walk in hope was strengthened by sharing the *State of their Heart*, and the *Order of the House*, a spiritual practice that goes back more than 360 years.

Join us for this opportunity to learn more about this prayer in a contemplative listening environment and to enhance your Lenten journey. All are welcome.

Sisters Ricarda Vincent and Rosemary O'Brien will facilitate the morning. They bring their many years of life experience as Sisters of St. Joseph and their love of the Spirit and Spirituality of the Family of Joseph.

Please register by **Monday, March 17**.
To register, click the link below or email RSVP@ssjerie.org or call 814-836-4040.



[**Click Here to Register**](#)



SSJNN Guess That Tune Gala 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.

Tickets will be on sale March 10th!

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!

A Different Kind of Fast

**A SIX-WEEK LENTEN JOURNEY OF
LIFE-GIVING PRACTICES**

MARCH 6 THROUGH APRIL 10, 2025

Thursdays meeting weekly from 4:00 – 5:15 pm

Mount St. Benedict Monastery, 6101 East Lake Rd., Erie, PA

For more information or to register, please email retreats@eriebenedictines.org or leave a message at the Retreats Office 814-899-0614, ext. 2403.

Suggested donation for the 6-week series is \$50.

Facilitated by Sr. Ann Muczynski, Laurie Smith, and Sr. Anne McCarthy

**[SSJ ONLINE Community Directory—UPDATED](#)
[Click Here](#)**

SSJ community March Birthdays

1	A. Linda Winters
3	A. Mary Yochim
4	A. Jeannette Barczynski
4	A. Pat Moyer
6	A. Renee Clark
7	A. Martha (Marty) Connelly
9	A. Lorna Waddell
9	A. Rebecca Hower
11	A. John Mang
13	A. Barb Noonan
13	A. Mary Hickin
15	A. Patricia George
15	A. Jan Staszewski
15	A. Mark McNerney
16	A. Nancy Donnelly
20	A. Cindy Ferber
20	A. Stephanie Domitrovich
21	S. Margaret O'Brien
25	A. Ron Visnoski
26	S. Mary Helen Forney
28	A. Nancy Fetzner-Brown
29	A. Toni Stebell
30	A. Lewis Nordin
30	A. Linda McQueen
31	A. Anna Turco



The Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network is currently in search of additional

volunteer garden coaches to work with teens in our Youth Work Program. Coaches would work with teens in our gardens and greenspaces providing guidance and mentorship throughout our growing season. Interested? Questions? Contact Connor Herron – 814.454.7814 ext 209 or cherron@ssjnn.org.

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

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Our Lenten Practice

Lent is a time when we are called to prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Almsgiving embodies Jesus' call to love and serve others. As part of the family of Joseph we are called to love of God and love of neighbor. We find many examples in the Bible calling us to help those in need.

"Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and God will repay them for their deed." Proverbs 19:17

"Each one must give as they have decided in their heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Jesus said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35

Each year during Lent we

participate in Lenten almsgiving. The entire family of Joseph is invited to participate. Considering the many changes to programs that help those in need, this year we have decided to help our neighbors close to home. We will donate this year's funds to Catholic Charities Counseling and Adoption Services, specifically the Refugee Resettlement program.

The executive order of January 24th eliminated funds to this program. These funds are needed to help the people who arrived in Erie prior to the beginning of 2025. I spoke to Dr. Dawn Joy, the Chief Executive officer, who did an

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

interview on Erie Talks last week. If you'd like to listen to her interview, the link is below. The last 17 minutes she talks about the Refugee Resettlement program. It's very interesting.

If you'd like to participate, there will be a place for donations in the CLC lobby during Lent and until Easter. You can also send or bring a check payable to the Sisters of St. Joseph to 5031 West Ridge Road, Erie, PA 16506, attention Deb Seng.

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)