

# interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

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## Where does God fit within this whole process?

*"Voting is the expression of our commitment to ourselves, one another, this country, and this world."*

- Sharon Salzberg, world-renowned mindfulness and lovingkindness teacher

Yesterday afternoon I spent time thinking what I should write about for this month. Suddenly I thought that what is most obvious is right before me—exercising my right to vote and praying for God's guidance in this election. I thought about commercials on TV, newspaper headlines and articles, YouTube and other media presentations, the plethora of campaign mail, and conversations I have had with friends and people of influence in my life.

Where does God fit within this whole process? Do I spend time in quiet to hear the word of God speaking to me? Am I looking at the whole picture of elections and not just one issue? Can I put aside all that the media puts out and ask God for a message of truth that lies at the heart of who I am as a person created in God's image?

Blessings as you vote!



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.

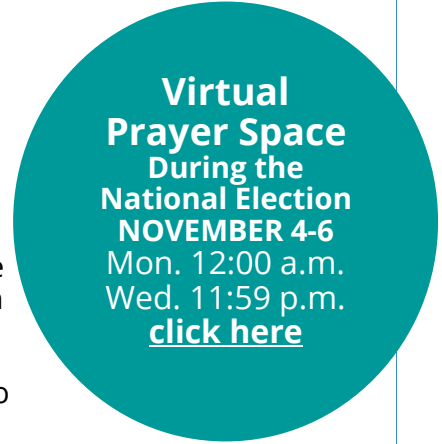
## Transforming Grace: Virtual Prayer Space Pray in Silent Solidarity During the Election



The Leadership Conference of Women Religious invites you to around the clock contemplative prayer throughout the days of the United States national election. These days of prayer are open to all, bridging the divide between culture, religion and politics through the witness and commitment women religious make

to the power of collective contemplation. There will be no presentations or comments during the virtual gathering. To participate, log in, review the orientation to our gathering in the waiting room, and join women religious from around the world as they pray in silence. To join the Virtual Prayer Space, [click here](#).

**NOTE: The Virtual Prayer will be running in the reading room next to the library at the CLC for anyone who wishes to stop in and spend time in quiet prayer during the days of the election.**



**Virtual Prayer Space**  
During the National Election  
**NOVEMBER 4-6**  
Mon. 12:00 a.m.  
Wed. 11:59 p.m.  
[click here](#)

**MISSION:  
POSSIBLE!**

## Awaken the Original Fire

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Mission Integration Coordinator

Each year on October 15, we celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Le Puy, France. This year, the 374th anniversary took on extra special meaning as it was also the kick-off of a year-long celebration leading up to the 375th anniversary in 2025. There was also added significance as this year, October 15 also marked the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Sisters of St. Joseph International Centre in Le Puy. You may recall that our own Sr. Josette Gocella was a member of the first administrative team of the International Centre. She just returned from a trip to France for this year's anniversary.

As part of the year-long celebration leading up to the 375th, the Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph has planned four global, livestreamed prayer services throughout the year for the family of Joseph.

The first, "Awakening the Original Fire of our Founders" took place on October 14, 2024, the

eve of the anniversary. Sisters and members the family of Joseph in forty-nine countries participated. The prayer included recorded reflections from three Sisters from various parts of the world and one lay partner. Stephanie Hall, one of our Associates and our Communications Director, was invited to give the lay partner reflection.

It was 374 years ago that six women in France ignited the flame that continues to burn worldwide as the mission and charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph. This original fire continues to be our beacon today. We are a global family of Joseph, built on the foundation of a loving charism and always responding to the needs of our dear neighbor. Our charism of unity and reconciliation—bringing people together—is what the world needs now more than ever. In her reflection, Stephanie stated, "We need the fire of the first sisters. We need to come together and reignite that original fire."

SISTERS OF SAINT JOSEPH



During the prayer service, the following reflection questions were posed:

*How can we deeply listen to the needs of our dear neighbors as we circle the city now in our times?*

*How can we listen deeply to God's invitations to us today.*

Our response to these questions is what makes our **SSJ Mission Possible!**

[Click here to view a recording of the October 14 prayer service.](#)

*Future Federation prayers are planned for January 29, 2025, March 18, 2025, and May 1, 2025. The Federation's celebration of the 375th anniversary will culminate at the Federation Event, July 18-20, 2025 in Kansas City, MO.*

GEORGETOWN  
UNIVERSITY

Initiative on  
Catholic Social Thought  
and Public Life

A week after election day, this online Georgetown University dialogue will bring together respected reporters and analysts to examine what happened, why, and how religious values, voters, and communities shaped the debate and affected the outcome of the presidential election. They will explore what was surprising and what issues,

strategies, and tactics had the greatest impact.

This conversation will also look ahead to whether and how the nation can come together after the election, as well as the roles of religious believers and communities in defending human life and dignity, lifting up "the least of these," protecting our democracy, and pursuing

the common good in a bitterly divided nation.

[Click here to Register](#)

## An Online Public Dialogue on Faith and the Faithful in the 2024 Election: What Happened, Why, and What Now?

Tuesday, November 12, 2024  
7:00 - 8:00 pm EST Online Via Livestream

**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.

*\*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*

**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.**

*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.*

*\*\* 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.*

**It was an enjoyable afternoon at the Founder's Day Celebration hosted by the SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation.**



## Associates' News and Happenings

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

### Prayers

Please remember in prayer **Associate Thomas Hoffman** who passed away on October 18. May Eternal Light shine upon him O Lord! May he rest in peace. Please remember **Tom's wife, Carol who is also an Associate**, and his family at this most difficult time. Also remember all the Sisters, Associates, and Agrégées and their family members who are dealing with health issues.

### What's happening in your corner of the world?

I was able to talk with most of our Associates who reside in Florida to see how they were doing after the latest hurricane went through the state. Everyone I spoke with said that they were blessed and spared from the devastating damage. Most said that they were without electricity for a while, had minor damage to their property and a lot of debris left behind.

I spoke with **Rose Jones** who said that the hurricane left much damage in the mobile home park where she lives. She had minor damage to her

home, but many residents were not so lucky. Her area was without electricity and water for five days following the storm. I asked if we could help in any way, and she responded - prayers. **Tina and Steve Branton** said that they were spared much damage but had strong winds which scattered much debris around. She said there is still much debris on the roads in their area which is waiting to be cleaned up. Electricity continues to be a problem for many. **Brenda and Ben Villa** told me that all was okay. They had very little damage to their home despite all the damage around them. They were without power for a while, but they relied on their generator. Brenda also said that the hurricane was very devastating for all the beaches around there. **Mary Lou Rathers** told me they were fine. As was everywhere in Florida, they had debris scattered around the yard that they had to clean up. I was unable to contact **Marvin Ridgeway**, so I hope all is well with him.

Please keep all these associates in your prayers and all the dear neighbors who have suffered much from the hurricanes and storms this year.

### Welcome

Welcome to our four new associates, **Joseph Sette, Bonnie Short, Michael Short, and Rose Strazisar**, who made their Associate Commitment on Sunday, October 13, 2024. A big thank you to **Sister Susan Herzing, Pat and Richard Marshall and Sister Mary Fromknecht** for being their faithful mentors during the year.

### Congratulations!

**Associate Stephanie Hall** was invited by the SSJ Federation to give a reflection for the global prayer service they prepared for the International Founders' Day Celebration. The prayer included reflections from three Sisters and one from a lay partner in mission. Stephanie was invited to give the lay partner reflection. The prayer was livestreamed on Monday October 14, 2024. If you missed it, [you can access the recording here](#). Congratulations Stephanie for a job well done!



On the left: New Associates, (l-r): Mike Short, Bonnie Short, Rose Strazisar, and Joseph Sette. On the right: New Associates and their mentors, (l-r): Bonnie and Mike Short, Rose Strazisar, Richard Marshall, S. Mary Fromknecht, Pat Marshall, S. Susan Herzing, Joseph Sette and S. Ann Marie Cappello.

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

**“Advent Reflection: Mary Woman of Hope—and One of Us!”**  
**An Advent Morning of Reflection**  
**Saturday, November 30, 2024**  
**9 am - 12 pm**  
**Community Living Center**

Come aside before the Christmas rush to reflect on two gifts the season of Advent wishes to bestow upon us: Mary and Hope. We will focus on how Mary is like us in many ways and, therefore, she is extremely relevant for our lives. We will also explore the virtue of hope and some ways we can nourish hope in our daily lives. The morning will include scripture, prayer, input, quiet time, sharing, and short music videos.

Sister Melanie Svoboda, SND, will help us start our Advent journey with "Unwrapping the Gifts of Advent: Courage, Hope, and Peace." Sister Melannie has been a Sister of Notre Dame of Chardon, Ohio, for many decades. She has served as a high school and college teacher, novice director, and provincial (president) of her congregation. She also ministered in the Jesuit Novitiate in Detroit for six years. Teaching religion for so many years and



working with novices confirmed for her just how important faith is in everyday life. That's what she tries to do in her writing and talks: connect the spiritual life with what happens every day and relate scripture and the Paschal Mystery to people's hopes, struggles, joys, and sorrows. Currently she writes and gives talks and retreats nationally. Her articles have appeared in numerous publications including America, Catholic Digest, National Catholic Reporter, Liguorian, Living Faith, and Country Woman. When she is not writing or giving retreats, she can be found walking in a park or around the neighborhood, making tapioca or apple strudel, conversing with friends, listening to music, cheering for one of Cleveland's sports teams, or struggling with a crossword puzzle.

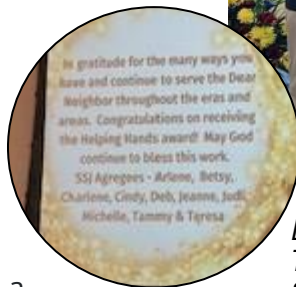
**RSVP by November 18, 2024**  
**Call 814-836-4040**  
**or email [RSVP@ssjerie.org](mailto:RSVP@ssjerie.org)**

## Sisters of St. Joseph Honored at Helping Hands Gala

The Helping Hands Gala is an annual event hosted by Catholic Charities, Inc., of the Diocese of Erie. This year's event was held on October 10 at Gannon University's Yehl Alumni Ballroom. The gala is the signature fundraiser for Catholic Charities to help grant aid to the many affiliate agencies throughout the Erie Diocese. The event honors people who have served their communities in exceptional ways.

The Sisters of St. Joseph were presented with this year's Helping Hands of Justice award which honors those who take the long view, looking for the strategic solutions that will improve systems and society on a grander scale, with that effect reaching individual people. Deb Seng, Chair of the Justice and Peace Integrity of Creation Group for the Sisters of St. Joseph, accepted the award on behalf of the Sisters. The Sisters of St. Joseph are committed to addressing the issue of homelessness in their communities. They coordinate many channels for advocacy on a wide array of topics from immigration to care for creation to human trafficking to food insecurity and more. They have dedicated years of work

advocating for peace, justice and care of creation "Working for Justice is in the DNA of the Sisters of St. Joseph," said Seng. "Their mission is to live and work so that all people will be united with God and one another."



*Pictured above (l-r) at the Catholic Charities gala are Eric Dart, Catholic Charities board president, Erin Tubbs, Catholic Charities, S. Phyllis McCracken, S. Carol Morehouse, Bishop Persico, S. Mary Drexler and Deb Seng. Inset photo (left) is the congratulatory message to the Sisters, sponsored by the SSJ Agrégées that appeared on the screen at the event.*

## Living Laudate Deum

### Energy-efficient Holiday lights

by Deb Seng,  
SSJ Social Justice  
Coordinator

Buy energy-efficient holiday lights Following up after last month's light bulb facts, here are some holiday lights facts. If left on from dusk to dawn, 10 strings of standard Christmas lights produce roughly 300 pounds of carbon dioxide. The same number of Light-emitting diodes (LEDs) generate only about 30 pounds. By switching the lights on its iconic Rockefeller Center tree to LEDs, they cut the tree's energy use in half,

each day.

Some manufacturers make lights that come with a small solar panel for recharging. LEDs don't overheat so they are safe to use on trees, and the biggest plus in my book is, if one burns out, it does not affect the rest of the strand. Even if you use LEDs, control them with a timer to limit the number of hours you run your holiday lights.

## Message from the CLC Safety Committee

The safety committee has been reviewing and rewriting policies as they apply to Community Living Center. We are asking all visitors to sign in at the front desk when they arrive and sign out when they leave. This includes all who do not reside at the CLC, Sisters, Agrégées and Associates. We are not keeping track of who comes and goes but in the event of an emergency, the fire department needs to know if there are extra people in the building. The job of the front desk worker is to take that book with them as they exit the building. Thank you for understanding.



## Notes

Congratulations to all the Sisters celebrating their Jubilees and Birthdays! I have made a donation to the SSJ Neighborhood Network In your honor. Thank you so much for your many years of dedicated service. God Bless You All. Love and prayers.  
*Sister Veronica*

### CROP Walk thanks 2024

We thank the Sisters, Agrégée, Associates, and friends

for their support of this year's 49<sup>th</sup> annual CROP Walk. The total donation is \$1058. The funding raised from this effort will be shared both globally and locally. SSJNN receives a grant each year for our food ministry. We are proud of our community's involvement.

Grateful and looking forward to next year's 50<sup>th</sup> campaign!

*Sisters Millicent Zimmer  
and Phyllis Hilbert*

## get to know the Agrégées

### Deb Seng

**2003**  
**Associate Companion:**  
**Sr. Marianne Stuckert**

**2016**  
**Agrégée Mentor:**  
**Sr. Nancy Prenatt**



Deb Seng exemplifies "service" in many ways. She often travels to Harrisburg and Washington, DC, to advocate on behalf of the American Cancer Society with lawmakers. She also sits on the Leadership Team for the local Relay for Life Chapter and spends countless volunteer hours preparing for the annual event. And, as the current SSJ Justice & Peace Coordinator, Deb organizes the Take Back the Site Vigils with the Benedictines and the Mercy Sisters, as well as the Silent Peace Walks here at the CLC. She also serves as the Director of Sister Services for the congregation. Through the years she has supported all of the sponsored ministries in various ways.

Deb was born in New Jersey. She began her professional career at St. Elizabeth's in Allentown, PA, teaching 7th and 8th grade. She moved to Erie and taught Earth/Space Science at Cathedral Prep before becoming Villa Maria Academy's Director of School Counseling for 20 years. Deb is a huge fan of Lucille Ball and I Love Lucy. She also enjoys theater, reading, and going on adventures with her friends.



We've added a Transforming Grace video playlist to our YouTube channel. The playlist includes all the videos used in the prayer/reflection guides. The videos are worth watching either as part of the prayer/reflections or just on their own.

[Click here to access the playlist.](#)

[Click here to access the Transforming Grace Prayer/Reflections](#)



Enjoying the Foundation Day celebration are (l-r) S. Mary Drexler, S. Mary Herrmann, Bishop Persico, and S. Phyllis Hilbert.

## From the SSJ Neighborhood Network

SSJNN Youth Programs are in need of SMALL prizes for the kids in the tutoring program. They love small stuffed animals, jewelry, games, etc. Thank you for your continued generosity! Questions? Contact Connor Herron at 814-454-7814 x209.





**#iGIVECATHOLIC**  
ON GIVING TUESDAY

## Support SSJ Neighborhood Network

**12.03.24**  
Advance Giving Starts Nov 18

1

**VISIT**  
[www.iGiveCatholic.org](http://www.iGiveCatholic.org)

2

**SEARCH**  
 For SSJ Neighborhood Network

3

**DONATE**  
 \$10 or More



## SSJ community November Birthdays

- 1 A. Sueann Wiest
- 1 A. Shirley Mack
- 2 A. Timothy Natale
- 3 A. Joy Sherred
- 3 A. Patti Sullivan
- 4 A. Brenda Villa
- 6 A. Mary Lou Rathers
- 7 A. Marti Michael
- 7 A. Betsy Williams
- 8 A. Debbie Thompson
- 10 S. Catherine Manning
- 10 A. Linda Kuhn
- 11 A. Ted Wright
- 12 A. Frank Mariella Jr.
- 17 A. Frances Skobieranda
- 17 S. Carol Morehouse
- 17 A. Rev. Dennis Martin
- 18 A. Sandy Clark
- 21 A. Sue Ann Wisniewski
- 23 A. Patricia J. Marshall
- 23 S. Mary Claire Kennedy
- 24 A. Mitzi Banister
- 26 A. Edith Benson
- 26 A. Cynthia Berarducci
- 28 A. Eileen McLaughlin
- 29 A. Mary Stephany Theiss Lyons
- 29 A. Jeanne Brim
- 30 A. Rose Ronzitti
- 30 A. Jack Martin



## 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](mailto:publicrelations@ssjerie.org)



Connecting with God + Connecting with You

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.ORG



## Erie Spiritual Coalition



As I was contemplating what to write about this month, I received an email from the Erie Spiritual Coalition. I wasn't aware of this group, so I did some investigating. According to their site, this group works with neighborhood groups, associations, nonprofits, and individuals to better understand the needs of our city, craft relevant solutions, generate buy-in, and work for policy change. Its members include the Episcopal Cathedral of St. Paul,

the Islamic Society, Benedictines for Peace, Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network, Emmaus Soup Kitchen, Gannon and Mercyhurst Universities and various other churches.

Grounded in spiritual principles, the group strives to bridge the gap between people, organizations, and government by advocating for policies that foster human flourishing and thriving communities.

The Erie Spiritual Coalition espouses these core values:

- Collaborating for the Common Good
- Striving for Integrity
- Pursuing Sustainable Solutions
- Fostering Openness

*by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator*

The group is presently working on issues related to housing, particularly for people most at risk of losing their housing and becoming homeless. They have drafted a Tenant Bill of Rights. The coalition will be advocating to Erie City Council to pass the Tenant Bill of Rights on November 6th at 8:30 a.m. and November 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.. Even if you do not want to speak, or you live out side of the city, please consider attending as they want to pack the house as they present this Bill of Rights. Their goal is to improve housing security in Erie by preventing evictions, blight, and homelessness. This is a goal that we all can get behind.