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Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

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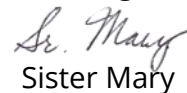
## We Are One

On Saturday, October 25, 2025, the SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation, along with the Sisters of St. Joseph, celebrated 165 years of the Sisters in ministry here in the Catholic Diocese of Erie. The event was well attended by Associates, Agrégées, Partners in Mission, Sisters and other guests. You only needed to get near our Gathering Space to know that those in attendance were having a good time. Short tours were available as were some video clips and memorabilia of the past. In the Gathering Space were French crudités, refreshments, and entertainment by *Me and Julio*. At 4:00, we blessed the mural of

St. Joseph that was artistically painted by our Sisters in Lee Steadman's art class.

The afternoon event was a great way to mingle with friends we haven't seen in a while. Our *Nous sommes un! We are one! Open House* was well received by all who came through our doors. It carried out well the theme, *We are One*. A hearty thank you to all who helped make the day so delightful. What a great way to end our year of celebration!

Blessings,



Sister Mary

See pictures on page 2.

Reminder  
**Community Day**  
**Saturday,**  
**November 8**  
**9:00 – Noon**

**Governance:**  
**Moving**  
**Forward**  
**Together**

The agenda includes a review of the Wisdom Circle responses and recommendations of the governance committee.

*"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 includes Sisters, Associates, and Agrégées. We commit to sharing responsibility, and communicating with trust, compassion, and acceptance."*

## Our Legacy of 165 Years of Responding to the Needs of the Day Continues

Throughout our 165-year history in Northwestern Pennsylvania, our mission *"to unite all people with one another and God by responding to the world's ever-changing needs and serving the neighbor without distinction,"* has never changed, nor has our desire to fulfill that mission.

### Responding to Today's Challenge: Food Crisis and SNAP Cuts

Pennsylvania is facing a serious food-assistance challenge with the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) because of the Federal government shutdown and its impact on SNAP funding beginning November 1. SNAP provides more than \$365 million monthly in cash benefits in the food system — benefits which support not only families but local farms and grocers. When SNAP support shrinks, the ripple effect hits: food banks face

greater demand, fewer resources are available, and neighborhoods already vulnerable feel the strain.

For 36 years, our Thanksgiving appeal and dinner has fed hundreds on Thanksgiving Day in addition to helping numerous food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other agencies that feed the hungry every day with excess funds from the appeal. In 2024, we delivered more than 1,300 meals and distributed more than \$70,000 to numerous different organizations, which we will do again with this year's proceeds. But right now, the need is urgent as roughly 2 million Pennsylvanians will not get their food benefits in November if the federal shutdown continues. (*Go Erie*)

In the spirit of our mission, we are making an immediate monetary

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contribution to the Second Harvest Food Bank and 18 food pantries that have been proactive in food-security work in our area. As the SNAP system faces disruptions, the on-the-ground infrastructure of these organizations is especially critical. They serve as both a safety net and a place of empowerment for neighbors facing food insecurity and economic instability.

This is our mission in practice, and it embodies a response to a practical, urgent need: food and sustenance. Service is not a static tradition, but a living call to “meet the needs of the day” with compassion, creativity, and commitment.

**How You Can Help**

- Support our [Annual Thanksgiving Appeal](#)
- Support **Erie News Now/ Second Harvest Food Bank 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Food Drive November 19, 2025**

The Second Harvest Food Bank serves 11 counties throughout the Erie Diocese and all food donations collected at the various drop off sites remain in the community where they were collected.

You can donate non-perishable food items, frozen turkeys, and money without leaving your car by visiting one of the following sites.

**ERIE: Erie News Now**  
3514 State St | Erie, PA  
6:00 am – 6:30 pm

**MILLCREEK: Northwest Bank**  
850 Pittsburgh Ave | Erie, PA  
9:00 am – 3:00 pm

**WATERFORD: Fort Leboeuf High School**  
865 Cherry St | Waterford, PA  
7:00 am – 6:00 pm

**EDINBORO: Northwest Bank**  
1000 Marketplace Dr | Edinboro, PA  
9:00 am – 3:00 pm

**MEADVILLE: Meadville Downtown Mall**  
920 Water St | Meadville, PA  
7:00 am – 6:30 pm

[Click here for other drop-off sites in the Diocese.](#)

**Open House Soirée**

*Pictured, top row (l-r): S. Ann Marie Cappello, Lucille Eberlein, S. Moira Sullivan, S. Marjorie Adams. Bottom (l-r): S. André Feulner, Jane and John Rastetter. S. Claudia Dombrowski, Sue Drexler, S. Phyllis McCracken. Mary Lee Hudson, A. Tom Hudson, S. Mary Ann White.*



Photo credit: Norma Hiller (top row), Rick Klein Photography (bottom row).



## Celebrating Foundation Day October 15

We celebrated the 375th anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Le Puy, France on October 15th. We started the day with a beautiful liturgy including a homily by Sr. Phyllis DiFuccia ([click here.](#)) Then later that afternoon, the Agrégées hosted a beautiful French-themed reception for the Sisters, Agrégées, and Associates.

*Pictured, top-bottom:*  
Liturgy at the CLC, Sr. Josette Gocella, S. Phyllis DiFuccia,  
Seated, (l-r) S. Nancy Sonnenfeld, S. Jude Marie Talerico, S. Perpetua Dickant.  
Standing, (l-r): Associate Stephanie Hall, Agrégée Betsy Wiest.  
The hosts: Agrégées Charlene Kellerman, Deb Seng, Betsy Wiest, Arlene Chaney, Jeanne Marie Ryan, and Cindy Polesnak.  
Seated (l-r) S. Mary Drexler, S. Linda Fusco.



## There is Hope

My October Synod article reported on the results of the listening sessions for religious. This month focuses on the synthesis, compiled by Maria Caulfield, Assistant Chancellor, of more than 50 listening sessions throughout the Diocese.

The most significant focus was evangelization:

*People want to see the churches full. They want to bring back everyone who has stopped going to church. They want to be Christ in the world: loving and serving and bringing the Gospel to their community and their community to church."*

*"Baptism brings us into God's family, the Church. It makes us part of the community of believers, in which and with which we pray and serve...Because we are baptized, Jesus lives in us. We*

*by Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ*

*have to love as Jesus loves, see as He sees, serve as He serves...called to do Corporal works of mercy...modern technology has facilitated the spiritual life and catechesis of parishioners..."*

Responses about feeling co-responsible for the work and mission of the Catholic faith included:

*a call to evangelization with witness spoken and unspoken and the importance of sharing the faith with their children and grandchildren.*

*Parishioners contribute by actively participating in liturgical ministries and ministries of care within their parishes and local communities.*

Prayer remains a top priority for sharing faith and in deepening a relationship with God and others. The call to respond comes from the Holy



Spirit through private and communal prayers, Mass, scripture, silent listening, and through service in parishes and local communities.

Hope and joy was seen most commonly in families, children, and young people participating in Mass, learning more about their faith, and being involved in various activities.

A great hope for the future is more involvement in leadership roles among women and the laity in the Church. Another is a desire for more inclusivity among those feeling marginalized such as divorced and fallen away Catholics. There is hope for unity within the American and global Catholic Church.

## Living Laudato Deum

*by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator*

I received this email from the Laudato Si' Movement and Partner Organizations and I am sharing it because the message is so important.

At the *Raising Hope for Climate Justice* conference, actor and former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger called Pope Leo XIV an "action hero for climate justice." Smiling, the Pope turned the attention away from himself and redirected it to the people gathered before him:

*"There is indeed an action hero with us — it is all of you, who are working together to make a difference."* And he ended with a challenge that still echoes today:

*"God will ask us if we have cultivated and cared for the*

*world He created, and if we have taken care of our brothers and sisters. What will be our answer?"*

While governments debate their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), often too little and too late, people of faith and goodwill are stepping forward with their own People's Determined Contributions (PDCs) — concrete actions of hope for our common home. These are not just promises on paper. They are living commitments made by families, parishes, schools, and communities across the world.

Add your voice and your action at [raisinghope.earth/action](https://raisinghope.earth/action). Finally, help amplify this campaign by sharing the official 50-second video on

your social media. Tag your parish, your movement, or your family and show the world that hope is alive.

Watch and share the video [here](#). Use the hashtags #AnswerTheCry #CommitToOurCommonHome #RaisingHope

Together, we are the action heroes Pope Leo spoke of — ordinary people with extraordinary determination. While world leaders prepare their next round of weak promises, we are already at work.

This is what hope looks like.

## Advent with Meister Eckhart: *The Birthing of Christ within Us* Led by Melinda Hall Saturday, December 6 9 a.m.— Noon Gathering Space

Join us as we spend a morning exploring in brief the major components of Meister Eckhart's thought. Eckhart lived in Germany at the turn of the fourteenth century. Over the course of his life, he was a lecturer at the University of Paris, and a Provincial superior of 47 convents in Germany, all while continuing in the Dominican order as a priest. Accused of heresy in 1325-26, Eckhart's theology fell into disfavor and was forgotten until more recently. His ideas of God

and the soul, as well as his concept of our birthing God, are unique, and yet fit with other mystical writings in the Christian tradition. As we explore together, you can expect more information about Eckhart, a chance to write and reflect, table conversation, and some poetry. This experience will be led by Melinda Hall, who serves as Dean of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. Paul and who is



Marcy Hall, Artist

not an expert on Eckhart, but very enthralled by his teachings.

[Click here to RSVP by November 24, 2025, or email \[RSVP@SSJerie.org\]\(mailto:RSVP@SSJerie.org\) or call 814-836-4040](#)

## Come Risk the Sacred Journey: From Grief to New Life – Part 2 with Fr. Dennis Martin, SSJ Associate Wednesday, November 19, 2025 3-4:30 p.m. Community Living Center

In October, Sr. Ann Billard, a certified grief recovery specialist, presented on the topic of "From Grief to New Life." Her presentation was well received by the 55 Sisters, Associates and Agrégées who participated.

The presentation explored the nature of grief, its impact on individuals, and various tools for processing loss, with



participants engaging in reflective exercises and discussions about their personal experiences with grief. As a follow up to Sr. Ann's presentation, Fr. Dennis Martin, who served as chaplain at St. Vincent/AHN for 30+ years, will facilitate a process to further explore experiences of loss and grief. All are invited to attend

on Wednesday, November 19, from 3:00-4:30 in the Gathering Room and to join the CLC community for supper.

**Reservations for the program and meal are due by November 12. [Click here to RSVP or email \[RSVP@SSJerie.org\]\(mailto:RSVP@SSJerie.org\) or call 814-836-4040.](#)**

## A Safe Space for Belongings and Basics

St. Patrick's Haven received funding to launch the Safe Haven Storage Project through a grant from the *Catholic Social Ministry Endowment at the Catholic Foundation of Northwest Pennsylvania*. This project will enhance our guest storage area and provide new

interior space for essential health and hygiene supplies. It's about more than shelves—it's about safety, dignity, and the peace of mind knowing your belongings are secure. Thank you to the Catholic Foundation for helping us live our mission.



Pictured, (l-r): Bill Steger, Catholic Foundation, Lisa Louis, Catholic Foundation, and Shelby Folga, St. Patrick's Haven.



## Exercising their Rights

Some familiar faces were seen at the recent rally in Perry Square, downtown Erie. Pictured, l-r: S. Rosemary O'Brien, S. Phyllis DiFuccia, Betsy Wiest, and Stephanie Hall.

# The Cabrini Pledge

*The Cabrini Pledge* is a reminder of our immigrant heritage and a call to deeper engagement with our faith in response to current events.

### I PLEDGE:

- **To affirm, in word and deed, the inherent dignity of every person**, regardless of immigration status or country of origin, seeing each as a child of God before all else.
- **To engage with Scripture and the Church's social teaching**, reflecting on the role of migration in salvation history, the history of the United States, and the history of my own family.
- **To listen and learn about the circumstances facing migrants and refugees**, including those in my community, with an open heart and mind.
- **To seek opportunities for encounter**, so as to grow in deeper understanding and communion that leads to an authentic solidarity with those in need.
- **To consider what it means to be a good neighbor** and how I am called to reflect the love and hope of Christ to others.
- **To encourage civic dialogue that places the human person and the sanctity of families at the center of policymaking**, especially toward the end of meaningful immigration reform.
- **To join with Pope Leo in praying for all migrants and refugees** as fellow travelers on the journey to our true homeland.

## Exploring Inner Realms: Mastering Self-Guidance in Stressful Moments

with Dena DeLuco & Lee Ann Heltzel  
7 p.m. Friday, November 21 to  
12 p.m. Sunday, November 23, 2025  
Villa Maria Spirituality Center

This retreat is designed for those seeking greater resilience, presence, and self-compassion. Supported by a spiritually open and curious community, it offers a sanctuary to embrace inner calm, expand in love, and reconnect to one's true essence.

Step into a transformative retreat experience created for those ready to explore and nurture their inner world in an open, welcoming environment. Join us in a safe, sacred space where self-care and deep spiritual practice meet. With guided meditation, calming hypnosis, time for creative expression through writing, and gentle techniques to support stress relief, you'll be invited to release the weight of daily pressures and uncover new layers of inner peace.

[Click here for more information/to register.](#)

## Choose from Three Virtual Fall Retreats with Dan Schutte



[Click here for more information/to register.](#)

## Haven of Hope: Investing in People with Purpose

At St. Patrick's Haven, hope takes the shape of a warm bed, a hot shower, and the compassion of someone who understands. For 40 years, we have opened our doors each night to men experiencing homelessness, offering shelter, safety, human connection, and dignity.

This year, we are deeply grateful to the Sisters of St. Joseph Mission & Ministries Foundation for a \$50,000 grant in support of our *Haven of Hope: Investing in People with Purpose* initiative. This generous funding provides critical general operating support to sustain nightly shelter services for up to 27 men, 351 nights each year. The grant will help offset growing utility and maintenance costs, while supporting wages and benefits for five dedicated staff members—two managers, two assistants, and one full-time executive director. Four of the five team members once sought refuge at St. Patrick's Haven themselves. Today, they bring empathy and experience to their work, walking beside guests on their own paths toward stability.

"Our staff is the heart of our mission," shared Executive Director Shelby Folga. "Their lived experience allows them to



*Pictured, l-r: Cass Shimek, Shelby Folga, Almi Clerkin.*

meet each guest with compassion and understanding. This grant ensures we can continue providing the consistency and care our guests rely on."

Following the 2022 fire that temporarily displaced operations, the staff of St. Patrick's Haven has worked tirelessly to rebuild, reopen, and renew its mission. With the foundation's support, we can maintain stability, reduce financial strain, and continue offering a safe place for those still searching, still knocking, and still praying.

To the Sisters of St. Joseph Mission & Ministries Foundation, thank you for believing in our mission and helping us invest in people with purpose. Your partnership strengthens our ability to serve with compassion, hospitality, and hope.

## SSJ community November Birthdays

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

### MANY THANKS

We thank the Sisters, Agrégées, Associates, and friends for their support of this year's 50<sup>th</sup> annual CROP Walk. Our total donation is \$2,442.50.

The funding from this effort will be shared both globally and locally. The SSJNN receives a grant each year for our food outreach programs. We are proud of our community's involvement.

Gratefully,  
Sisters Millicent Zimmer and Phyllis Hilbert

*(pictured, l-r: Agrégée Charlene Kellerman, S. Phyllis Hilbert, S. Mary Helen Forney, and S. Millicent Zimmer.*

**ENDING  
HUNGER  
ONE STEP  
AT A TIME  
CROP HUNGER WALK**





5031 West Ridge Road  
Erie, PA 16506-1249

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

## 37th Annual Thanksgiving Dinner November 27, 2025

To reserve a meal for delivery Thanksgiving morning,  
please call the number below on  
on Tuesday, November 18  
9 a.m. and 12 noon  
This is the ONLY time dinner orders will be taken.

**814-836-4198**  
*Phone lines may be busy,  
please keep calling.*

## One Church/ One Family- A Catholic Public Witness for Immigrants

*by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator*



On October 22, Catholics across the U.S. joined in a national day of public witness for our immigrant brothers and sisters. Pope Leo urged the Church to be “united and forceful” in our protection of migrants’ rights in the U.S.

Working in collaboration with Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Erie, Office of Social Justice and Life, the Benedictines for Peace, and the Justice Team of the Sisters of Mercy of Erie, we joined together to pray a living rosary. We did this across from the Erie County prison where

dozens of immigrants are detained by ICE. Braving the wind and cold, more than 75 people came together to pray.

On November 13, the Feast of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, patron of immigrants, there will be another opportunity to pray in solidarity with those detained and at risk for deportation. This will be a virtual prayer at 1:00 p.m. [Click here to register and](#)

[receive the link for the prayer.](#) If you’re unable to watch, you will also receive a link to the recording as soon as it is available. This prayer service will give everyone an opportunity to reflect on how we can lift up the dignity of migrants and reject the culture of fear and silence that dehumanizes. There will also be an opportunity to take the Cabrini Pledge, an invitation to be Keepers of Hope (*see page 6*).

Participating in this prayer will unite us with others across the U.S. Hope you can make it.

