



interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 43, Issue 10

October 2025

Célébre!

- 2025 Milestone
SSJ Anniversaries**
- 375th Anniversary
of the Founding of
the Sisters of
St. Joseph**
- 165th Anniversary
of the Sisters
of St. Joseph
of Northwestern
Pennsylvania**
- 2025 Ministry
Milestones**
- Saint Vincent
Hospital
150 Years**
- Gannon University
100 Years**
- SSJ Neighborhood
Network
25 Years**
- Sisters of
St. Joseph
Mission & Ministries
Foundation
10 Years**

Once again, the Sisters, Agrégées, and Associates will be celebrating! On October 15th we celebrate the 375th anniversary of Sisters of St. Joseph foundation in France. During the coming days, the Hagan History Center will showcase memorabilia from our 165 year history in Northwestern Pennsylvania. In addition, you can also visit the display AHN Saint Vincent has that offers a glimpse into the past 150 years since the founding of the hospital. The Gannon Alumni House (221 West 6th Street) is now open with the opportunity for visitors to see the renovated building as well as our connection with Gannon University. Take some time this fall to visit these places and celebrate the 375th Anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Le Puy, France, and our continuing world-wide presence today. And, join us in celebrating the 165 year legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania.

Célébre!

Sr. Mary
Sister Mary

The feast of the Guardian Angels

by Mary Drexler, SSJ

My dear friend, Linda, died about a year ago this fall. There are many things I could share about her but one thing I treasured was her devotion to the angels. This October 2, the Church celebrates the feast of the guardian angels and so my reflections are about Linda and the angels. Linda had a unique way of

(Continued on page 2)

Leadership and the Formation/Lifelong Learning Office are pleased to announce a special Community Day presentation and an opportunity to support each other on our journey from grief to new life in these challenging times.

From Grief to New Life

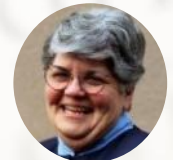
with Sr. Ann Billard, OLM, Ph.D.

Saturday, October 11, 2025 9 a.m.—12 noon

This virtual seminar will provide an overview of the dynamics of grief using Luke's Gospel story of the Journey to Emmaus to illustrate a way to navigate the crossroads of change and transition. Hope and healing await those willing to share their sacred grief journey with God and each other.

Sr. Ann, a Sister of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy, has many years of pastoral ministry experience. She has a graduate degree in pastoral

counseling from Loyola University, Maryland, and is a certified grief recovery specialist. Currently coordinating *Transformative Aging* programs, she provides spiritual direction, webinars and retreats on the spirituality of aging. She has presented at national conferences and to groups of older adults both nationally and internationally.



[Click here to RSVP by 10/2, or email \[RSVP@SSJerie.org\]\(mailto:RSVP@SSJerie.org\) or call 814-836-4040.](#)

Guardian Angles
(Continued from page 1)

bringing the angels into most conversations, just as a way of reminding us to pray for their guidance, their protection, or their assistance. She had deep faith in the work of the angels, and she never hesitated to share that part of her faith life.

October 2nd and, yes, the month of October is a time to remember those living angels in our lives. Who are the people in your life who have been there for you, who have challenged you, supported you or walked with you through a difficult time. Why not give them a call or



send them a card thanking them for being there when you needed them. We might be more inclined to describe them as friends, but in addition to being friends, they are angels of hope, kindness, generosity, patience, support, and... who is your "Linda angel?"

From Our Friends at AHN Saint Vincent

Sisters of St. Joseph,
It is with deep admiration and heartfelt gratitude that we, your friends and colleagues at Saint Vincent Hospital, extend our warmest congratulations on the momentous occasion of Saint Vincent's 150th Anniversary.

For a century and a half, Saint Vincent's has stood as a beacon of hope, healing, and unwavering commitment to our community. This remarkable milestone is a testament to the Sisters of Saint Joseph's enduring legacy of compassion, service, and dedication to providing exceptional care to all those in need.

Throughout this past year, we have been honored to celebrate this legacy through

various events, each designed to recognize the profound impact Saint Vincent's has had on countless lives. We are especially excited about the upcoming display at the Hagen History Museum, which will serve as a lasting tribute to your extraordinary contributions and the values you instilled in the organization.

As friends and colleagues, we have been privileged to witness firsthand the Sisters' selfless spirit and unwavering devotion to the values that define Saint Vincent's. Your commitment to excellence, your compassionate hearts, and your tireless efforts to improve the lives of others have inspired us all.

On this special day, we celebrate not only the past 150 years but also the enduring spirit of service that the Sisters of Saint Joseph have imparted to Saint Vincent's. May Saint Vincent's continue to thrive, upholding the legacy of love and compassion you established for generations to come.

With sincere appreciation,
Christine M. Bowen
Executive Director
of Development
Saint Vincent Hospital



The SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation

Soirée Open House

Saturday, October 25
3:00—5:00 p.m.

Sisters of St. Joseph Community Living Center

Join us as we commemorate the Sisters and their 165 years of ministry in the Catholic Diocese of Erie.

Stop by for light hors d'oeuvres and refreshments, brief tours, and entertainment by *Me and Julio*.
RSVP by October 14 to almi.clerkin@ssjerie.org, or call 814-836-4202.



Sr. Mary Ann White (l), Chris Clark, AHN Saint Vincent President, and Sr. Carol Morehouse at the recent celebrity bartending event to benefit the Saint Vincent Heart Walk.

**Pilgrims on the Way of Hope:
Jubilee of Consecrated Life
A CELEBRATION of CONSECRATED LIFE**

*during the Jubilee Year of Hope
and remembrance of deceased religious, clergy,
Serrans, Agrégées, Associates, and Oblates.*

Saturday, October 18, 2025

10:00 a.m.

Eucharistic Liturgy
with Bishop Persico
followed by a reception
Sisters of St. Joseph
Community Living Center



Please RSVP by October 8.
[Click here to RSVP.](#)
or email RSVP@SSJerie.org
or call 814-836-4040



**Global Family of Joseph
Founders' Day
Virtual Prayer Service
Tuesday, October 14
7 pm EST**

The Federation Lifelong Transformation Committee will once again host a Founders' Day Prayer Service. We invite sisters, associates, agrégées, and all charism carriers to join us as we close out our jubilee of 375 years of the Sisters of St. Joseph foundation.

[Click here to register.](#)

Dedication and Blessing of SSJ Legacy Room at Gannon University

On September 11, Gannon University President Walter Iwanenko, Jr. Ph.D., and Chaplain Father Michael T. Kesicki '83, led a dedication and blessing of the Gannon University Alumni House at 221 West 6th Street. The Alumni House includes an SSJ Legacy

Room in honor of the Sisters of St. Joseph and features memorabilia and a timeline of the Sisters' 165-year history in the Erie Diocese.

Gannon University was founded 100 years ago on the Villa Maria College (VMC) Charter. VMC was founded by

the Sisters and is now part of Gannon University.



Pictured above, l-r: Sisters Michele Healy, Carol Morehouse, Ann Stephanie Stano, Mary Drexler, Ann Marie Cappello, Marianne Stuckert, Lucille DeStefano, and Clare Marie Beichner.



Welcome!

On September 7, we welcomed two new SSJ Associates to the family, **Barbara (Barb) and Robert (Bob) Olon**. Barb is recently retired from the Erie City Parking Authority. "I believe I was put on the earth to help people when I can, and when they need help," she says. Barb does that by babysitting and helping the elderly. Barb is a convert to the Catholic faith. After completing the RCIA Program in 2021, she was baptized at St. Luke's Church by Father John Malthaner during Easter services. Along with her husband, Barb belongs to the Purgatory Prayer Group, the Serra Club, and St. Mark's



Pictured above: Sr. Susan Herzing, Bob Olon, Barb Olon, and Sr. Martha Howick.

Seminary Auxiliary. She enjoys walking, reading, praying, visiting with people, and quiet time at home and in adoration at St. Joseph Bread of Life Adoration Chapel. **Sister Susan Herzing** is her mentor.

Bob Olon is no stranger to the Sisters of St. Joseph as he is the nephew of Sister Geraldine Olon (dec.). "I really feel at home and welcome as part of the (SSJ) community," he says. Bob and Barb have been married for 37 years. He is a member of Our Lady of Peace Parish, the Serra Club, St. Mark's Seminary Auxiliary, and the Knights of Columbus. Bob also belongs to the Wattsburg Wireless Association Amateur Radio Club. When Bob is not at his workplace, he enjoys hunting, fishing, and gardening. **Sister Martha Howick** is his mentor.

Living Laudato Deum

On September 13, the SSJ community came together to participate in a Pilgrimage of Hope. People from around the world have been encouraged to participate in a pilgrimage during the Season of Creation, September 1 - October 4.

2025 is a special year: it is the Jubilee Year of Hope, the 10th anniversary of Laudato Si, and the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Creatures.

During our pilgrimage, we walked the path around the CLC. We were called by the Spirit to renew our relationship with God, with one another and with all of creation. As we walked, we took in the wonder of nature and renewed our commitment to protect and preserve the beauty of creation for future generations. The time of

reflection also allowed us to consider the ways we have harmed God's gift of creation. We recognized that we are not facing two separate crises, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Our walk had three stops where we prayed to eliminate racism, to help mitigate climate change and for the safety of migrants. We can all do our part to be Pilgrims of Hope in this troubled world.



PILGRIMS OF HOPE FOR CREATION



Listening Sessions

In becoming a more synodal Church, Pope Leo XIV said, "We are a missionary Church, a Church that builds bridges and encourages dialogue, ever open to welcoming all and those in need of our charity, our presence, our readiness to dialogue and our love."

During September, parishes were invited to have listening sessions during the Pathways for the Implementation Phase. As one pastor shared, "You have often been told what to do and how it is to be done in parishes. Now you are invited to come and share by listening and dialogue how you would like our Church to be more synodal so together we may live our faith more fully."

Recently, I facilitated two listening sessions for the Sisters in our Diocese. Faith-filled women shared their

Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ

responses with wisdom, insights, and inspiration. They expressed their concerns for our Church and how the Spirit is inviting more involvement with the laity and taking their rightful co-responsibility with leading and sharing faith. Some of the top priorities they shared included:

- Affirm, empower and uphold the gifts of the laity;
- Have more dialogue to help re-imagine a parish community with active, engaged lay leaders;
- Continue to model living the Gospel message with the quality of our presence with rightful respect and dignity;
- Build relationships, recognizing the gifts of each person and educate those sharing the message.

Among the concerns they shared around lay ministry,

formation and parishes were:

- Have greater outreach, engagement and improved communication with people around the Diocese;
- More in-depth education and training among laity and seminarians in faith formation, pastoral ministries of a sustained synodal process and the concepts of Vatican Council 2 Church;
- Greater acceptance of lay leadership with pay and benefits for those in parish ministries commensurate with their responsibilities;
- Be intentional in inviting people to engage in the synodal process and encourage its use in their parishes and all levels with the diocese.

Let us each do our part by the quality of our presence, by listening, and engaging in dialogue.

Happening at the Haven

Helping Hands at the Haven

Several much-needed improvements were made at St. Patrick's Haven this past year thanks to a grant from the



Catholic Social Ministry Endowment at the Catholic Foundation of Northwest Pennsylvania. This funding allowed us to purchase sturdy storage shelves to keep our supplies organized, soap for dispensers, nutritious food

supplies, and essential health and hygiene items for the men we serve.



We also purchased a lawn mower and weed eater to help maintain our outdoor space and ensure a safe and welcoming environment for our guests and neighbors.

These investments made a meaningful difference in keeping our shelter clean, stocked, and inviting for everyone who comes through

our doors.

Getting Our Irish On!

St. Patrick's Haven was well represented at the recent Irish Festival at St. Pat's parish. We were especially grateful to have **Sr. Mary Fromknecht**, the first director of St. Patrick's Haven, join us alongside dedicated board members and volunteers to support the cause. (Pictured l-r: S. Mary Fromknecht, Shelby Folga, and Tammy Van Buren.)



Villa Maria Education & Spirituality Center

A sacred place where God's abundant life unfolds



The Christic Self: What it is and Why it Matters

with Ilia Delio, OSF

Saturday, November 15, 2025

9:30 am to 3:30 pm

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

This talk will explore Teilhard de Chardin's notion of the Christic self, looking at its formation, significance, and the bigger question of whether or not the Christic self makes a difference to a world evolution. Do our beliefs and spiritual practices really make a difference?

Ilia Delio, OSF is a Franciscan Sister of Washington, DC and holds the Josephine C. Connelly Chair in Theology at Villanova University. Her area of research is Systematic-Constructive theology with a focus on evolution, quantum physics and artificial intelligence, and the import of these for Christian doctrine and life. She is the

author of twenty-four books including *The Not-yet God*, *The Hours of the Universe*, winner of the 2022 Gold Nautilus Book Award, and *Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology and Consciousness*, a finalist for the 2019 Michael Ramsey prize. She lectures nationally and internationally on topics in science and religion, and is founder of the Center for Christogenesis, an online spiritual and educational resource for the integration of science, religion, and culture.



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

Choose from Three Virtual Fall Retreats with Dan Schutte

<p><i>Find the Grace in Every Season Under Heaven</i></p> <p>SEASONED BY GRACE</p>	<p><i>Make Your Way Forward in the Light of Hope</i></p> <p>A PATH TO HOPE</p>	<p><i>Rediscover the Wisdom of the Gifts of the Spirit</i></p> <p>AWAKEN THE SPIRIT</p>
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[Click here for more information/to register.](#)

**WELCOME, Theresa R. Walsh, M.A., CGW
SSJNN Grants Specialist**

Welcome to **Theresa Walsh** the newest member of the Sisters of Saint Joseph Neighborhood Network team! As the grants specialist, Theresa will be responsible for securing and tracking the many grants we receive and for exploring alternate funding opportunities. An Erie native, Theresa was in the first Kindergarten class at St. George School, and graduated from Villa Maria Academy. She earned a bachelor's degree from Alvernia University and studied at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome. She has a master's degree from Washington Theological Union. In 2011 she became a Certified Grant Writer® with the American Grant Writers' Association



(AGWA) and attained Permanent status in 2018. Theresa taught high school in Olney, MD, was an adjunct Instructor of Theology at Gannon University, served with a U.S. Senator's District Office in Allentown, PA, the City of Erie, LECOM, and Erie Management Group. She was the assistant director of grants, sponsored programs and research at Gannon University and helped the school exceed a multi-million-dollar goal. Theresa loves to cantor/sing at St. George Church, spend time with her parents and family, attend local church festivals and just relax. Theresa had a special bond with Sr. Carol Wilcox, SSJ, co-founder of the SSJNN and she is grateful for this opportunity to serve the ministry.



THANK YOU to everyone who supported the SSJNN Celebrity Bartending Fundraiser! From attending to volunteering to getting behind the bar - we could not have done it without YOU! Thank you for your continued generosity as we strive to love our neighbor daily. **SSJNN** is always collecting the following items for our neighbors. Thank you for your continued generosity!

- pasta
- spaghetti sauce
- canned chicken
- SPAM
- baked beans
- canned veggies
- canned fruit
- protein bars
- granola bars
- bottled water
- body wash (3-in-1)
- toothpaste
- deodorant
- all-purpose cleanser (small)
- liquid dish soap



**SSJ community
October Birthdays**

- 1 A. Rose Strazisar
- 2 A. Karen Grove
- 5 A. Nancy Imler
- 6 A. Mary Ann Weber
- 7 A. Bob Olon
- 10 A. Patricia Fronzaglia
- 10 A. Richard Marshall
- 11 A. Joan Fels
- 12 A. Jennifer King
- 14 A. Kristina Huber
- 15 A. Sheila Causgrove
- 16 A. Kay Hotchkiss
- 17 A. Dave Sharie
- 20 Agr. Judi Janke
- 29 A. Stephen Kuhn
- 29 A. Elaine Mozdy

A Note

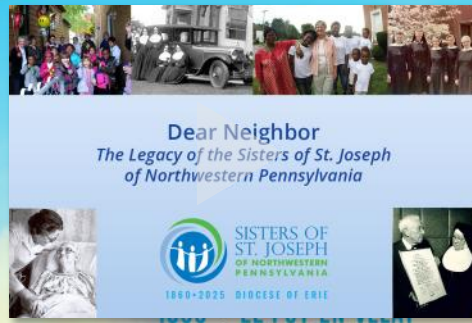
In honor of the 2025 Jubilarians, I am making a donation to the Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge Benevolent Care Fund. I would also like to thank all the Jubilarians for all their loving care and service over these years. God Bless you all, Sr. Veronica

*Women of Spirit,
Courage, and Vision
1860-2025*

A special exhibit at the Hagen History Center in celebration of the 165th anniversary of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the Erie Diocese.

Celebrate with us!

Click to view the trailer for *Dear Neighbor: The Legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania*. Be watching for details on how you can see the entire film, coming soon!



SISTERS OF
ST. JOSEPH
OF NORTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA

1860 • DIOCESE OF ERIE

You can also view the trailer on the SSJErie YouTube channel.

Why Advocacy is Important

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

On September 16, I had the opportunity to be in Washington, DC to advocate for important health care legislation. I was among 750 people from the U.S., including Puerto Rico and Guam. We asked for three things:

1. for Congress to support the highest possible funding increases for cancer research and prevention programs in the fiscal year '26 budget
2. to support the final passage of H.R. 842, the Nancy Gardner Sewell Medicare Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Coverage Act
3. to support a pathway to extend health care tax credits before they expire at the end of 2025.

In Pennsylvania, 430,000 people get their health care from the marketplace. Without extending the tax credits, the premium costs will skyrocket. It is estimated that 85% of PA residents receiving enhanced

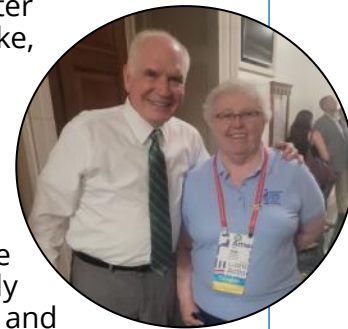
premium tax credits will have difficulty affording insurance.

I usually get one day on the hill and a meeting with my representative and senators. This year was different. The House Ways and Means Committee was meeting and anyone whose representative was on the committee could attend the H.R. 842 markup hearing. The essence of the bill is that Medicare would pay for a single blood test to test for up to 40 cancers. This blood test would be a game changer. Early detection and treatment are key for survival. This is a bipartisan bill that currently has 300 House co-sponsors. Watching the process of getting this bill out of committee was fascinating. Representatives could speak for 5 minutes; many spoke about how important our presence was and how advocacy was the key to getting the bill across the

finish line. After everyone spoke, a vote was taken. The final tally was Yeas and Nays: 43 - 0. I was told by a legislative aide that this hardly ever happens and that we would not likely see this again anytime soon.

Rep. Kelly wanted to see me after the vote. I thanked him for his yes vote. Watching politicians put aside partisanship to pass a bill that is good for everyone showed me that it can be done. Only by letting your legislators know how you feel and reminding them that they represent you will any good result. Keep those letters and phone calls storming Washington and/or Harrisburg.

There is still a lot of work to be done.



TAKE BACK THE SITE

Prayer vigil at the site of the July 27, 2025, murder of Jerry Hamilton Ellis
Please join us in prayer Monday, September 29, 2025 5:15 p.m.
2637 Peach Street