



interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 43, Issue 9

September 2025

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

Hope Unbroken

Having just returned from the LCWR (Leadership Conference for Women Religious) Assembly in Atlanta, I'm excited to share some of what I gleaned from the excellent keynote addresses, in particular, the talk titled *"Hope Unbroken: Jesus, Martha, Mary and the Future of Women Religious in the United States"* given by Rev. James Martin, SJ.

Fr. Martin shared about the women religious who helped shape his spiritual life during years of formation. They were his spiritual directors, professors, role models, mentors, and friends. He extended his thanks to all. He focused his talk on Scripture, specifically the story of Lazarus from John's Gospel (John 11). Martha and Mary send word to Jesus, "He whom you love is ill." Jesus receives the message but waits two more days before leaving. Like

Martha and Mary our question most likely is, "Where are you, Jesus?" In her encounter with Jesus, Martha is blunt. "If you had been here, our brother would not have died." She says it like it is (more about that in just a bit). When Jesus asks where Lazarus is laid, Martha uses Jesus' own words, "Come and see." When Jesus says, "Take away the stone," Martha's thoughts go to the stench (mine would, too). Then Jesus finally says the words, "Come forth."

What does this story have to do with us? What does it say to us? Read the story in John's Gospel. Sit quietly with it. Try to respond to the following questions (page 2) and many others that may arise. What else do you need to talk over with Jesus? Go for it! Blessings,

Sr. Mary

(Continued on page 2)

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 will open on September 4, 2025.

A private reception for Sisters, Agrégées, Associates, and Partners in Mission featuring French-themed hors-d'oeuvres will be held on

Wednesday, October 15, 2025

3 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Hosted by the SSJ Agrégées

RSVPs are required by September 16, 2025.

[Click here to RSVP](#) or call 814-836-4040 or email RSVP@ssjerie.org

MISSION: POSSIBLE!

Meaning in the Maxims

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Mission Integration Coordinator

Wow! I can't believe that summer is almost gone, school bells are ringing, and fall is fast approaching! I remember hearing my grandparents and my parents say that the older they got, the faster time went. Now, I understand what they meant.

This year, the administrative staff has been focusing on the Maxims of Perfection for our weekly staff prayer. As I was praying with this week's Maxim, I was distracted. I decided to check what the Maxims had to say about "time," since the Maxims

were written by Jean Pierre Medaille for the first sisters, offering them guidance. As I checked, I found that Maxim 69 states: "Stay in the present. Trust the future to God." The contemporary translation reads, "Stay present to the moment and the future will take care of itself." Maxim 70 states: "Trust God's timing. The future will unfold." The contemporary translation reads, "God's timing is the priority."

Both of these Maxims speak to me and I have been pondering and praying with

the following thoughts for reflection given for these particular Maxims: *I renew my practice of finding God in the present moment; God's name is "I am," not "I was," or "I will be".*

I have much to think about and pray with during the remainder of these summer days, while I continue to reach out to the dear neighbor without distinction whenever and wherever I can. After all, this is what makes the **SSJ Mission Possible!**

(Continued from page 1)

Hope Unbroken Reflection Questions

- Are you more like Martha or Mary and why?
- How blunt or direct are you with Jesus?
- Where is Jesus in your life right now?

- When has Jesus asked you to "Come and see?"
- What is your reaction to Jesus' words, "Come forth?"
- Who are the people in your life who need to help untie you and let you go free? Why?
- What do you need to be freed of or freed from?

- What does this story say about your relationship with Jesus?

For the full transcript of Fr. Martin's keynote and other LCWR speakers, go to: [2025 LCWR Assembly | LCWR](#)

Erie County Crop Walk 2025

This year is the 50th Anniversary of the Erie County CROP Walk! CROP Hunger Walks are interfaith events that build community while raising funds to end hunger in our own community and around the world. Your participation impacts families in more than 35 countries. One in nine people worldwide lack access to clean water and a healthy diet. We walk to be in solidarity, bring awareness to these issues and raise the funds for permanent change. The Sisters of St. Joseph have participated in this effort since it began.

Please join our SSJ team in the 2025 CROP Walk on **September 28 beginning 1:30p.m. at Presque Isle, Beach 1.**

Prayers and donation are valuable ways of supporting this effort. Your donations can be given to:

Sister Millicent Zimmer
814-836-4184

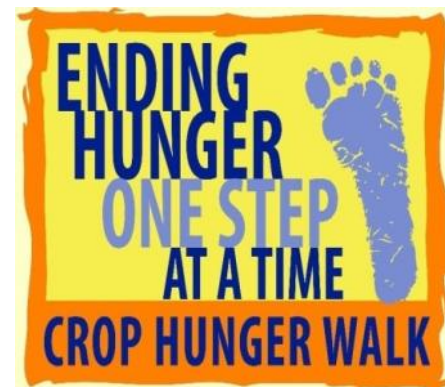
s.mzimmer@ssjerie.org

OR

Sister Phyllis Hilbert
814-454-7814 ext. 203

philbert@ssjnn.org

We thank you for your continued support.





MISSION & MINISTRIES
FOUNDATION
SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH
OF NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA



Thank you for our Generosity!

Below are preliminary Erie Gives results for SSJ ministries. Gifts are still being tabulated and the pro-rated match is not yet included. Final results will be announced on September 15.

SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation

\$47,847

St. Patrick's Haven

\$38,240

SSJ Neighborhood Network

\$37,129

Saint Mary's Home of Erie

\$5,365

Dedication and Blessing of SSJ Legacy Room at Gannon University

On Thursday, September 11, Gannon University President Walter Iwanenko, Jr. Ph.D., and Chaplain Father Michael T. Kesicki '83, will lead a dedication and blessing in honor of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation and others who made the restoration of the GU Alumni House at 221 West 6th Street a reality.

The GU Alumni House

includes an SSJ Legacy Room in honor of the SSJs. It includes memorabilia and a timeline of the Sisters' 165-year history.

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.

The GU Alumni House will be open during Gannon's Homecoming celebration September 12-14. Personal



GANNON UNIVERSITY

tours of the SSJ Legacy Room will be led by foundation staff in late September and early October. Interested? Please contact: Almi Clerkin almi.clerkin@ssjerie.org or 814-836-4202.

*Nous sommes un.
We are one.*

The SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation
invites you to

Soirée Open House

Saturday, October 25

3:00—5:00 p.m.

Sisters of St. Joseph Community Living Center
5031 West Ridge Rd., Erie

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 to almi.clerkin@ssjerie.org, or call 814-836-4202.

Associates News

Prayers

Please continue to pray for Associates **Patrick Shaughnessy** and **Jon Fuhrman** as they recover from surgery.

Please remember in prayer, all the Sisters, Associates, and Agrégées and any of their family members who are dealing with health issues.



Looking Toward the Future—Associate Planning

A group of Associates met to start planning our future as SSJ Associates. Strategic planning and an interest/needs survey were discussed. We will keep you informed of what is going on and invite

anyone else who is interested to join us.

We are all journeying - Sisters, Agrégées, and Associates - along an unknown path. With the guidance of the Spirit and the SSJ mission and charism we will find our way

together to continue what was started 365 years ago.

Please contact **Nancy Donnelly** (814-455-5154) for more information or if you would like to join the group in exploring the future of Associates.

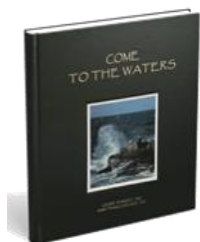


Associates from Around the Country

This is a photo of SSJ Associates in attendance at the U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph Event that was held in July in Kansas City, MO. Four Associates from our community were in attendance at the event: **Pat and Richard Marshall, Cass Shimek, and Stephanie Hall**. Can you find them?

Come to the Waters

A history of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania
by Leonie Shanley, SSJ (dec.) and Mary Francis Becker, SSJ (dec.)



Come to the Waters chronicles the first 150 years of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania. From the congregation's beginnings in Le Puy, France, in 1650 to the present, Sisters Leonie and Mary Francis beautifully share the story. You can experience a digital version of *Come to the Waters* at

ssjerie.org. A limited number of hardcover books are available on a first-come, first-served basis for Sisters, Agrégées, and Associates who may not have one. Stop at the CLC front desk by September 15 if you are interested to pick up a copy.

Listening Sessions

I recently reviewed the key points from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) listening sessions on the synodal process that were submitted to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. They showed a deep love for the Church, consecrated life, and the people of God. Using the synodal process of prayer, listening, conversations of the Spirit, and identifying possible actions, the key points offered many insights. They included:

- affirmation and grace of the synodal process
- the importance of prioritizing lay leadership and involvement
- the desire for a Church that is inclusive and welcoming
- a hunger and need for spiritual and theological formation
- responding to the needs of people on the margins and our Earth.

Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ

These same priorities surfaced in the final document published after the Synodal session in October 2024. In June, Pope Leo affirmed the need for the synodal process and the implementation phase to continue as planned by Pope Francis, stressing the need to implement the process at every level of Church, with an emphasis on local Churches.

Our Erie Diocesan Synod committee, with the support of Bishop Persico, has established a process that encourages greater utilization of the synodal approach at the parish level. This summer, pastors were invited to identify a few members from their pastoral councils to be trained as facilitators in the synodal process and who would share the information with other council members, ultimately leading to parish listening sessions in September.

If you are invited to participate, these are great



opportunities to share your concerns about your local church and the identified themes.

In late September, I will facilitate a virtual listening session for religious around these two questions:

- How do you primarily interact with lay ecclesial ministers, formators and lay apostolate leaders?
- What concerns might you have around lay ministry, formation, apostolates, or the church workplace?

Reports from all of the listening sessions will be synthesized and sent to the USCCB. Whatever the listening sessions identify may serve to improve the quality of life and faith experience within the parish and Diocese.

Hope Unbroken: Journeying in God's Promise

The 2025 assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) entitled **Hope Unbroken: Journeying in God's Promise** drew

approximately 560 LCWR members as well as about 300 collaborators to Atlanta, Georgia recently. Four representatives from our community attended including Srs. Mary Drexler and Carol Morehouse along with Deb Seng and Cass Shimek.

Throughout the event, participants acknowledged the struggle of these times and



explored the practices that can ground them in faith so they can live "hope unbroken" for the sake of the world, the church, and their religious communities.

Speakers included LCWR president Sister Kathy Brazda, CSJ of LaGrange, Illinois, Sister Simona Brambilla, MC, prefect of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in Rome, Rev. James Martin, SJ, editor-at-large at America Media.

Transcripts and video recordings of the presenters are available at lcrw.org



Left-right: Carol Morehouse, SSJ, Deb Seng, Mary Drexler, SSJ, and Cass Shimek.

Special VMA Reunion Guests of Honor

Joanne Curry Carlburg, VMA '65, sent the following information.

The VMA Class of 1965 was delighted to have two Sisters of St. Joseph as their honored guests at their 60th year class reunion held on August 16, 2025 at the Villa Space at Prep.

The guests of honor were Sisters Josette Marie Gocella and André Feulner, the two remaining Sisters who were teachers and mentors for the the class of '65 during their time at VMA. They were each presented with a book containing a collection of thank you notes to them and all the Sisters. All of the classmates were contacted and asked to send a note of gratitude for the guidance and support of the Sisters. The class wanted to

honor all the Sisters of St. Joseph, particularly those who were their teachers.



Living Laudate Deum: *Take a break from online shopping.*

When you shop online it produces a lot of packaging waste and produces excess carbon emissions from airplanes and ground vehicles. Take a month off online shopping or reduce what you buy online. Try to make local purchases and don't forget about supporting small businesses.



Every Day is Take Back Day

Dispose of unneeded
medication

Nearly 17,000
locations
nationwide



TOPS PHARMACY
712 W 38TH STREET
1702 EAST 38TH STREET

PHARM SV
AHN Saint Vincent
232 W 25TH ST

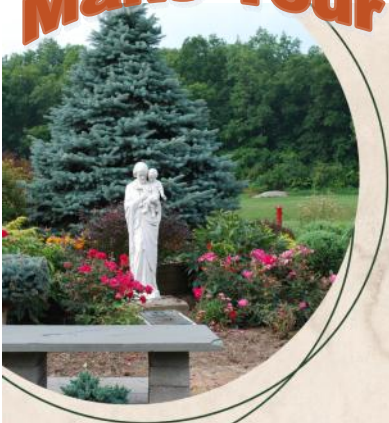
**GIANT EAGLE
PHARMACY**
2501 W 12TH ST
4265 BUFFALO ROAD

**THE LANE DRUG
COMPANY**
163 WEST 26TH STREET

CVS PHARMACY
410 EAST 12TH STREET
3800 PINE AVE

WAL-MART PHARMACY
1825 DOWNS DRIVE
2711 ELM STREET

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

SSJ community September Birthdays

- 1 A. Barb Jones
- 2 S. Margaret Frank
- 2 S. Dorothy Wilwohl
- 2 A. Gerald Derby
- 2 A. Benjamin Villa
- 3 A. Patricia Mayer
- 4 A. Fr. Ray Selker, OFM
- 4 A. Mary Dennis
- 8 S. Claudia Dombrowski
- 8 A. Valarie Carlson
- 11 S. Josephine DePetro
- 12 Agr. Arlene Chaney
- 13 S. Stephanie Wagner
- 15 A. Betty Jo (BJ) Chitester
- 15 A. Lynn Jones
- 16 A. Gary Flick
- 16 A. Mary Ann Larimer
- 20 S. Elizabeth Ann Niebauer
- 21 A. Mary Fuhrman
- 23 A. Rosie Schaaf
- 24 A. Mary Grace Lewis
- 30 A. Tom Hudson

Little Italy Farmer's Market, 430 West 19th Street, runs through September 29, every Monday 3—6 p.m.

SSJNN Youth Programs could use support in the form of volunteer tutors, prepackaged snacks and juice boxes! Thank you for your continued generosity. Interested in tutoring? Contact Connor Herron at 814-454-7814 x209.



SSJNN are 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



*Sisters of St. Joseph
Neighborhood Network's*

CELEBRITY BARTENDING FUNDRAISER

Friday September 19th from 5:30-10pm
Nuova Aurora Club
1518 Walnut St, Erie, PA 16502

FREE ADMISSION (\$10 SUGGESTED DONATION)
GAMES OF CHANCE
LIVE MUSIC FROM THE BREEZE BAND
SNACKS AND LIGHT REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED
BASKET RAFFLE

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



Connecting with God + Connecting with You

WWW.
SSJERIE
.ORG



Pilgrimage of Hope

As we celebrate the Jubilee of Hope, the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, and the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Creatures*, we hear a Spirit-filled call to renew our relationship with God, one another, and all of creation.

During this year's Season of Creation, Sept. 1-Oct. 4, Catholic communities across the U.S. are organizing pilgrimages as sacred opportunities to pray for the grace to encounter Christ in creation and renew our

relationships with God, the Earth, and one another.

We are living in a time of countless challenges, and yet our world is filled with hope and opportunity. Though God has lovingly brought us into being, many of us have fallen "out of right relationship" with creation, each other, and God. As we continue to proliferate issues such as the climate crisis, ecological degradation, and social injustice, we further stray from God's love, and

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

suffering takes its place. Environmental harm impacts the environment, it affects human health, it intensifies natural disasters, and it impedes our witness to the Gospel, especially our call to stand with the poor. As Pope Francis teaches in *Laudato Si'*, environmental degradation disproportionately affects the vulnerable. This is a matter of justice. Connection and care for the Earth is not optional, it is a core expression of our faith.

Join us in this unprecedented effort to lift a unified voice around *Laudato Si'* and the importance of care for creation in the United States and the Catholic Church.

Sisters of St. Joseph **Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation**

Saturday, September 13, 2025

1:30 p.m.

SSJ Community Living Center



**PILGRIMS
OF HOPE FOR
CREATION**

We will walk the paved path around the Community Living Center while praying for creating communion at the intersection of racism, forced migration, and climate crisis. Join us in this sacred mission to live the teachings of Jesus, St. Francis, and Pope Francis. Let's walk together on this path of hope and healing. Only united can we make this Jubilee year one of faith, action, and care for our common home. (CatholicPilgrimsofHope.org) All are invited—bring your family and friends!