

interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

June 27th Community Day: Thoughts from Leadership

Stimulated by the Holy Spirit of Love and receptive to Love's inspirations, the Family of Joseph moves always toward profound love of God and love of Neighbor, without distinction, from whom we do not separate ourselves, and, for whom, in the following of Christ, we work to achieve unity – both of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God,

Directly in this apostolate and indirectly through works of charity,

In humility, the spirit of the Incarnate Word, "though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped but rather, emptied himself becoming a slave..."

In sincere charity, the manner of St. Joseph whose name we bear,

In an Ignatian – Salesian climate,

That is with an orientation toward excellence, tempered by gentleness, peace and joy.

This is who we are.
This is what we are about.
This is our mission.

We are an apostolic community – meaning much of our focus is on the needs of God's people and what we can do about them. Chapter is a time for us to reflect and discern – about the needs of this time and place and about who we are in this time and place.

From the fireplace of those first six women of LePuy – across more than 375 years; from a hearth fire in Corsica, PA across—166 years the Spirit's fire is still calling us to meet the needs of this era and area –

As far as we are able and as fully as we are able.

This is who we are.
This is what we are about.
This is our mission.

Will we be open enough? Honest enough? (to hear the Spirit's whisper: in our own hearts... and in each other?)

Will we be emptied enough? Courageous enough? (to let go of our past ways – lots of doing; and embrace the ways of our present – more being?)

Will we recognize who we are at this moment and recognize that the way we fulfill mission has changed.

We have changed.
Mission has not.

For Reflection...Ask Yourself:
How will I be open and honest?
How will I empty myself?
How will I find courage?



We launched
our 250 Acts
of Kindness,
Justice, and
Peace Initiative
on June 28th.

[Click here
to record
your Acts.](#)



MISSION: THANKS FOR MAKING POSSIBLE THE MISSION POSSIBLE

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Mission Integration Coordinator

In 2018, the Sisters of St. Joseph decided to establish **the House of Blessing** at the St. Paul's Parish Rectory which was not being used at the time. The purpose was to provide an SSJ presence for those seeking to grow in their relationship with God, themselves, and others. It was an extension of the Sisters of St. Joseph's social and community-building services in the Erie area. After being a part of a discernment process, Sisters Susan Herzing and Clare Marie Beichner started the House of Blessing. With the onset of Covid, came a change in programs being

offered; however, Sisters Susan and Clare Marie have continued to be an SSJ presence through their parish engagement and willingness to assist with many parish functions such as Lectors at weekly Liturgies, Eucharistic Ministers, helping with parish dinners, and the annual parish festival. They also have walked with many parishioners through many of life's struggles, sickness and deaths and have also celebrated their blessings and good times with them. In the Fall of 2025, Sisters Susan and Clare Marie began a discernment

process concerning their futures. After their decision to move to the CLC, the rectory became available for other uses. Although they are no longer in residence there, they plan to continue their presence in the parish.

Many Thanks, Sister Susan, and Sister Clare Marie for reaching out to the dear neighbor without distinction and for being present to the people of St. Paul's Parish and neighborhood for the past eight years - thus making the SSJ Mission Possible!



FROM THE CHAPTER STEERING COMMITTEE

We are grateful to you for your presence, participation, and/or prayerful support of the pre-Chapter community meeting at the CLC on Saturday, June 27.

Leadership's message calling us to the More—to be our authentic, best selves—was an inspiring challenge. We are encouraged to reflect on the message of Sr. Mary's article in this issue of Interim, and to engage in conversations with each other in a spirit of

communal prayer and discernment.

Sisters, Associates and Agrégée were led through a process of personal and group reflection, sharing and decision making, regarding each person's manner of participation in the Chapter proceedings.

Facilitator, Sr. Sherryl White, SSJ, continued to lead us through the afternoon process to surface Chapter agenda items.

We will process the information from this meeting as we plan for our ongoing discernment together. Please contact us with any questions or insights.

Sisters Phyllis DiFuccia, Nancy Fischer, Mary Herrmann, Marie Stephen Kebort, Rosemary O'Brien, Associate Nancy Donnelly, Agrégées Charlene Kellerman and Betsy Wiest.



Save the dates:

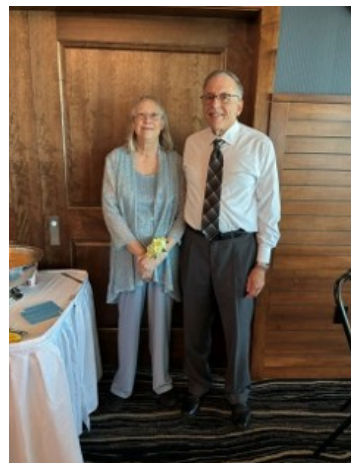
Oct. 3-4, 2026

Nov. 7-8, 2026

April 13-17, 2027

Associate and Agrégée News

Congratulations to **Associates Ann and Gary Flick** who recently celebrated their



45th wedding anniversary with a party at the Erie Yacht Club. A group of Sisters, Associates, and Agrégées was in attendance, as was Fr. Jerry Simmons who had married the couple.

SSJ Associates Linda Kuhn, Kris Huber, and Stephanie Hall recently attended a retreat at Center of Renewal and Conference Center in Stella Niagara, NY. The retreat was presented by Sr. Marcella Kiesel, OSF and focused on Energy Centers (Chakras).



Congratulations to Associates Celebrating Milestones

5 Years

Renee Clark

10 Years

Francine Ballard
Sheila Causegrove
Cindy Ferber
Sandy Filippi
Marjorie Fischer
Rosemari Graham
Mary Ann Larimer
Barb Noonan
Lewis Nordin, Sr.
Connie Pellerite
Mary Schmidt
Joanne Sprickman
Mary Yochim

15 Years

Jon Fuhrman (deceased)
Mary Fuhrman
Judy Pratt
Rose Ronzitti
Rosemarie Schaaf
Rhonda Sharie
Charlotte Sheldon
Harold Sheldon
Sue Ann Wisniewski

20 Years

Betty Chess (deceased)
Irene Danko
Brenda Desser
Dotty Hanna
Carol Hermann
Rita Lyle
Patricia Mayer
Lucille Sitzler
Jan Staszewski
Toni Stebell

25 Years

Linda Kuhn
Stephen Kuhn
Mark McNerney

30 Years

Patricia Fronzaglia
Jack Martin
Sheila Martin
Arlen Twerdok

35 Years

Margaret Chrymko
Jennifer King



What's Going On In Your Life?

We want to know what is going on in the lives of our Agrégées and Associates! Are you celebrating a special anniversary or birthday? Is there an addition to your family? Maybe you are taking an exciting trip or have started a new job. Don't be shy about telling us. We really want to know. Sharing details of our lives is one way for us to stay connected. If you have something to share, email us at SSJNews@ssjerie.org.

Jubilarians Honored at Diocesan Event

Bishop Persico presided over the annual Jubilee Mass for Women Religious on June 11th at St. Mark's Catholic Center. The celebration recognized 18 women religious marking milestone anniversaries of 60, 70, 75, and 80 years of consecrated life. Dinner and time for fellowship followed the liturgy. Shown with Bishop Persico are Sr. Lucille DeStefano (3rd from left, 80 years) and Sisters Phyllis DiFuccia and Susan Herzing (5th and 6th from left, 60 years). Other Sisters of St. Joseph celebrating anniversaries are Sisters Mary Carol Hoke and Barbara Ann Zakutney (75 years) and Sisters Marie Stephen Kebort, Catherine Manning and Margaret O'Brien (70 years).



SR. BENITA REPASKY INCLUDED IN WRAC VIDEO

Catholic Charities USA has launched an immersive storytelling experience with a travelling museum exhibit that celebrates the power and transformative impact of service to neighbors. **The People of Hope Museum: Faith-Filled Stories of Neighbors Helping Neighbors** celebrates the power of Christian service and its transformative impact on both giver and receiver. There will be over 150 stops nationwide, including the 2-day stop in Cleveland on July 8th and 9th.

During the Cleveland stop, The Women Religious Archives Collaborative (WRAC) had a display table outside the museum including a brief video which was a series of short spotlights on several Catholic Sisters, Women of Hope, who exemplify the People of Hope Museum's theme of bringing hope through service. Sr. Benita Repasky was included for her founding and work with The Prince of Peace Center, now a part of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Erie. The following is the description of Sr. Benita which was used in the video, as written by Stephanie Hall.

*Sister Benita Repasky believed the rainbow she saw while on her way to establish a new ministry was a sign to trust God. That led to a ministry that has served the poor for more than 30 years. The Prince of Peace Center, now part of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Erie, strengthens families and builds community by addressing the economic, emotional, and spiritual needs of those seeking self-sufficiency. The Prince of Peace Center provides emergency assistance, counseling, a food pantry, mentoring, advocacy, a soup kitchen, a thrift store, and other services. Sister Benita is credited with having the vision and leadership that resulted in this thriving and vital ministry. **Sr. Benita Repasky is a Woman of Hope.***



Sr. Benita passing the keys to Sr. Clare Marie

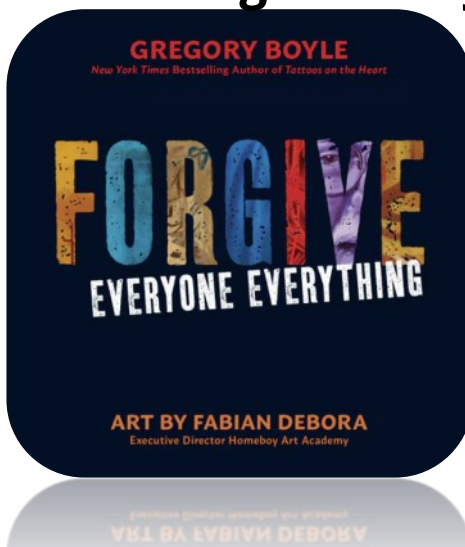
Living Laudato Deum

Use Eco-friendly Sunblock

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

There is a difference between sunscreen (which uses chemicals to absorb and reflect the sun's harmful rays) and sunblock (zinc or titanium-based formulations that physically block UVA and UVB rays). Protecting your skin from the sun is very important to your health, but many of the chemicals in brand-named sunscreens are incredibly harmful to coral and marine life. Each year swimmers add roughly 9 to 13 million pounds of sunscreen and tanning products to our oceans. Recent studies show that parabens, cinnamate, benzophenone, and camphor derivatives- all common ingredients in commercial sunscreen- can cause dormant viruses in coral reef algae to bloom, which can eventually kill the coral. Protect yourself and our oceans by using biodegradable sun blocks that are designed to protect your skin without leaving behind toxic chemicals. Products that have titanium dioxide and zinc oxide as active ingredients are the safest. They sit on top of your skin to reflect UV rays and do not break down into toxic compounds in the water. We can all do our part to protect our skin and our marine life.

Forgive Everyone Everything Book Discussion



Join us for a conversation around a bold and hope-filled book that challenges us to see others—and ourselves—through the power of radical compassion.

Forgive Everyone Everything by Gregory Boyle, SJ.— The 112 page book is available at online retailers and some libraries.

Click [HERE](#) to register and receive the Zoom link for:

- ☐ August 12, 2026 | 6–8 PM or
- ☐ August 14, 2026 | 1–3 PM (repeat of August 12 session)

The Zoom link will be sent the week of the meeting to those who have registered. If you have difficulty registering, please send your name, email address and date(s) you wish to participate to mchrymko@hotmail.com.

Special Fall Weekend Event!

The Program Committee has planned a special Community Event for September 25-27, 2026 and we want to encourage ALL to participate. **Srs. Kathy Sherman and Pat Bergen** from the Congregation of St Joseph in LaGrange, IL, will be presenting **“Let Us Sing As We Go: Dreaming the MORE for Us and the World.”** Both Kathy and Pat have been with us previously and are looking forward to returning to renew old friendships and meet new friends!

There will be opportunities for prayer, reflections, music, and fellowship throughout the weekend, beginning with a concert on Friday, September 25th. Saturday will have morning and afternoon sessions as well as evening conversation. The weekend concludes on Sunday, with a closing session following Mass.

Detailed registration forms and information will be included in the August Interim but we hope you will mark your calendars now for this very special time as we continue to focus on and celebrate our Charism.

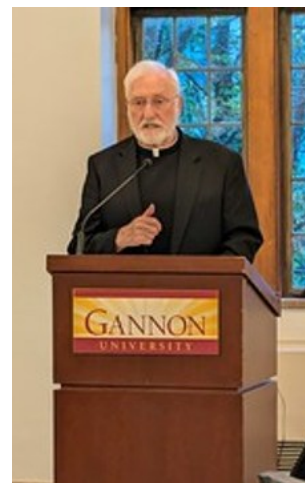


Click here to see a video from Srs. Kathy and Pat.

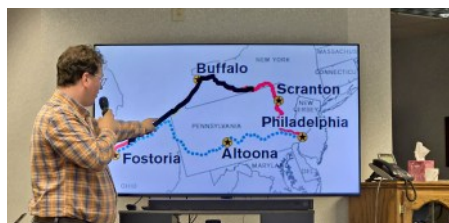
Fr. Jerry Simmons Receives Priest of Year Award

Each year the Serra Club of Erie gathers for its annual Installation Mass and Dinner and also recognizes individuals in the categories of Outstanding Layperson, Deacon, Religious, and Priest. This year on June 2nd at Gannon University, Fr. Jerry Simmons received the Priest of the Year Award.

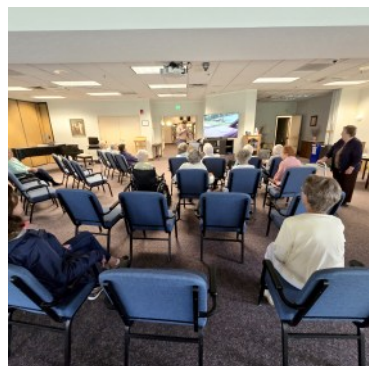
The Serra Club supports vocations and service to the Church. Those receiving awards have been chosen based on witness and service which has strengthened the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Erie.



Those attending the event from the SSJ Community included (*pictured left*):
A. Joan Fels, Sr. Veronica Mittal, A. Stephanie Domitrovich, Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, Almi Clerkin, Sr. Claudia Dombrowski, Fr. Jerry, Sr. Linda Fusco, A. Cass Shimek, Sr. Millicent Zimmer, Sr. Mary Drexler, Sr. Carol Morehouse, and Sr. Rosemary O'Brien.



SSJ employee, Alec Durfee, is a "Rail Fan." On June 23rd, Alec gave a presentation to the Sisters at the CLC about the Union Pacific "Big Boy" No. 4014 Steam Locomotive that came through Erie on June 10, 2026.



SR. MARIANNE STUCKERT RECEIVES RELAY FOR LIFE VOLUNTEER AWARD



When Sister Marianne Stuckert (AKA Stuckey) was working at Villa Maria Academy she was asked one summer if she would like to chaperone Villa students to Relay of Life. She had known many who were diagnosed with cancer and wanted to support the fight so of course she said yes. At the end of Relay, a survey came out and one on the questions was "Would you be willing to be on the planning team?" Her answer was MAYBE. To the staff at the American Cancer Society a MAYBE meant YES. Since then, she has led

many committees over the years, Luminaria chair, Spirit Point chair, and recently as part of the Event Leadership Team, going to monthly planning meetings. At this year's Relay, Stuckey was honored with a 30 Year Volunteer Award. We are all proud of her accomplishment and congratulate Stuckey on her award!



SSJ Community July Birthdays



- 3 S. André Feulner
- 4 Agr. Betsy Wiest
- 5 A. Cindy DeCoursey
- 6 S. Mary Ann White
- 10 A. Patrick Shaughnessy
- 11 S. Susan Herzing
- 12 S. Marie Timmons
- 13 S. Jude Marie Talerico
- 14 A. Suzanne Newmann
- 15 S. Barbara Ann Zakutney
Agr. Deb Seng
- 17 A. Stephanie Hall
- 18 A. Peggy Zeigler
S. Marie Stephen Kebort
- 19 A. Kathleen Mannino
- 20 A. Marvin Ridgeway
- 22 Agr. Jeanne Marie Ryan
- 25 A. Christine Opron
- 27 A. Anne Swift
A. Joan McCain
- 28 S. Mary Herrmann
A. Mary Schwenk-Roach
- 30 S. Carmel Rojek

What's Up With You!

Send your life updates
and happenings to
SSJNews@ssjerie.org

Mark the Date




Erie Gives Day

Tuesday, August 11, 2026






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



**SISTERS OF
ST. JOSEPH
OF NORTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA**
Connecting with God • Connecting with You

Relay for Life Thank You

Thank you to every survivor, caregiver, participant, donor, volunteer, sponsor, team captain, family member, and friend who helped make this year's Relay so special. Whether you walked a lap, lit a luminaria, made a donation, shared a fundraiser, or simply showed up with heart, you helped remind us why this work matters.

Relay For Life is more than one event. It is a community coming together to support people facing cancer, remember loved ones we carry with us, and raise critical funds for the American Cancer Society's programs, services, and research. That work reaches people right here in Erie County and across the country through resources such as Hope Lodge, which provides a free place to stay when treatment is far from home, and Road to Recovery, which helps patients get rides to treatment. These programs matter. They ease burdens. They bring comfort. And they remind people facing cancer that they are not alone.

Together, we can continue supporting the American Cancer Society's work to end cancer as we know it, for everyone. With everyone's help Relay for Life of Erie County raised \$131,509.16 which exceeded their goal of \$130,000. The SSJ and A's raised \$5,300 which exceeded our goal of \$5,000. Pictured are some of the team members who stopped by.



S. Nancy Prenatt, Agr. Charlene Kellerman, S. Nancy Fromknecht, Agr. Deb Seng, S. Nancy Fischer, Agr. Tammy Van Buren, S. Marianne Stuckert, S. Carol Morehouse

Advocacy: The Importance of Making Your Voice Heard

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

On June 2, 2026, I made my yearly trip to Harrisburg to meet with my legislators. This year we were advocating on behalf of three issues: Increased access to colorectal cancer screening, increased access to prostate cancer screenings, and to establish a paid family and medical leave program.

In 2026, it is estimated that 6,520 Pennsylvanians will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer and 2,240 will die of the disease. Colorectal cancer is the number one cause of cancer-related deaths in adults under 50. This bill passed in the House with bipartisan support and now waits to go to the Senate. The bill would align Pennsylvania law with national guidelines and provide coverage for colorectal cancer screenings starting at age 45.

In 2026, it is estimated that 13,470 Pennsylvanians will be diagnosed with prostate cancer and 1,450 will die from the disease. Early detection is critical for effective treatment. There is a 99% survival rate for early-stage diagnosis, compared to 29% for late stage. Unfortunately, screening rates are decreasing with only 33% of Pennsylvanian men 50 and older being up to date with their screening. Since prostate cancer is often asymptomatic until metastatic, screening is crucial.

About 4 million workers in PA must make the impossible choices between work and caring for themselves because they don't have paid leave. In 2026, 90,250 Pennsylvanians, newly diagnosed with cancer, will need paid leave so they can access time consuming and costly cancer care. This bill passed the House with bipartisan support and is in the Senate Labor and Industry Committee.

Each legislator I met with, Senator Dan Laughlin, Representative Pat Harkins, and Representative Bob Merski, were asked if they would work to bring these bills to a vote and each one answered yes. If you are willing to advocate for these important bills contact your legislator and ask them to support; HB 1123 the colorectal cancer screening bill, HB 281 and SB 447 the prostate cancer screening bill and SB 906 the family and medical leave bill. We can all make a difference by making our voices heard.