

interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

It's Back to School Time...

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter, I am aware that the school year has started for some or begins very soon. Since all of us have had some experience in education at the elementary, secondary or college/university level, we can perhaps offer some wisdom to those we know who are getting ready to go back to school.

Whether you are a parent, an aunt, uncle, or special friend to a returning student, taking them shopping for school supplies can be a wonderful opportunity to have a heart-to-heart talk about the upcoming school or academic year. It's an opportunity to talk about taking advantage of a new beginning, how bullying hurts so many, working your best rather than taking the easy way out, and other things you might think would be helpful. And don't forget to mention the importance of God, prayer and forgiveness, to name a few.

If your school has a "back to school night" be sure it's on your calendar to attend. Make it a positive event—no negative talk is permitted. For a great beginning, school must start on a positive note.

Many of our sisters began their ministry in education. If you also started your ministry in education, I invite you to reflect on what made your teaching experience—whether

long or short—memorable. Recall a student who let you know you made a difference in his/her life. What did you learn about yourself during that time? What skills from your educational experience did you carry into something new? What else do you remember?

Whatever your experiences were as a teacher, parent, student, or volunteer, take time to reflect on them and pray for those students starting a new school year. Pray that God will keep all safe from harm, that students will find joy in the learning process and, that our communities will be safe from all harm. Remember all involved in education frequently in your prayer asking our loving God to watch over them with His loving care.

Blessings,

Sr. Mary

Sr. Mary



Our 250 Acts of Kindness, Justice, and Peace Initiative continues so please [Click here to record your Acts.](#)



MISSION: THANKS FOR MAKING POSSIBLE THE MISSION POSSIBLE

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Mission Integration Coordinator

As the Mission Effectiveness Coordinator for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern PA, I have been privileged to conduct orientation sessions with our new employees at the CLC and the Administrative Staff. During these orientation sessions, I have been using a slide presentation which includes a brief history of our beginnings in LePuy, France and our coming to America and to the Erie Diocese. I also discuss the SSJ charism and mission and the various ministries we have done through the years.

Currently, I am in the process of updating the pictures and information in this slide presentation to reflect the changes that have occurred since my last revision. As Alec Durfee, our Social Media Coordinator, and I have been working on updating pictures and information, I find myself reflecting on each picture that I am replacing or deleting and the stories and history that each one tells. I am reminded of all the Sisters who have gone before me and all they have

accomplished over the years by reaching out to the dear neighbor without distinction as far as they were able. This is what has made the SSJ Mission Possible!

I am grateful that I have had the opportunity recently to share our story with several of our new employees who have begun working with us! This is what continues to make the SSJ Mission Possible!

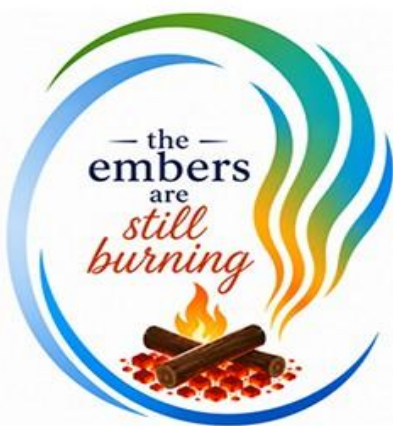
Pre-Chapter Meeting - October 3-4, 2026

The process of preparing for Chapter will officially begin with the first Pre-Chapter meetings on the first weekend in October. While the chapter planning committee has been meeting and preparing it is now time for those who have chosen to be delegates, participants and prayer partners to engage in the process.

As you may recall, all Sisters were asked to discern their individual level of involvement as a delegate, a participant or a prayer partner. Agrégées and Associates were invited to discern if they were called to be a participant or a prayer partner. Six Agrégées and twelve Associates will be participants in the pre-chapter and chapter gatherings.

Delegates and participants are expected to attend both Pre-chapter weekends (October 3&4 and November 7& 8), as well as Chapter which is April 13, 14, 15, 16 & 17.

Communication of the details of those sessions will be communicated to those participating in the process.



SAVE THE DATES
for Pre-Chapter and Chapter

Oct. 3-4, 2026

Nov. 7-8, 2026

April 13-17, 2027

ALL ARE WELCOME!!! WE DON'T WANT YOU TO MISS IT!

Yes, ALL...*Sisters*, **Associates**, *Agrégées*! While we may live our call differently, we can all relate equally to the love of our Charism. The Program Committee has worked hard over the past several months to provide a weekend experience centered around that call and invites you to come and share in this time. While we certainly encourage you to attend all of the sessions, we understand this isn't possible for everyone. However, we do sincerely hope that you make every effort to attend at least a part of the weekend.

The upcoming special Community Event, *Let Us Sing As We Go: Dreaming the MORE for Us and For the World*, to be held September 25-27 at the Community Living Center, provides a unique opportunity to gather and **reconnect with each other** through that shared call for unifying love. We won't be talking about governance or the future or leadership or Chapter. This weekend is only focused on the opportunity to come together as one and experience music, reflections, quiet time, fellowship and grace-filled moments through the lens of our Charism.

Joining us from The Congregation of St. Joseph, LaGrange Community, are Srs. Kathy Sherman and Pat Bergen. While each Sister has been here previously on her own, this weekend they are here together! Srs. Kathy and Pat have a gift for bringing the Charism to life. Having both of them here together promises to be an extraordinary time.

There is still time to register, **until noon on September 11th**, and you can easily register from the link below. You may register for all of the weekend or for only those sessions which you are able to attend. And remember...**ALL ARE WELCOME!**



Pictured: Srs. Pat Bergen & Kathy Sherman

Weekend Schedule:

Friday, September 25th

2:00-4:00 Opening Session

4:30 Supper (\$10)

6:00-8:00 Concert with

Sr. Kathy Sherman

Saturday, September 26th

8:30 Light refreshments

9:00-11:15 Morning Session

11:30 Lunch (\$9)

1:00-4:15 Afternoon Session

4:30 Supper (\$10)

6:00 Conversation Circles

Sunday, September 27th

9:00 Liturgy

10:15-11:15 Closing Session

11:30 Lunch (\$9)



Image credit: "Women Singing Earth" by Mary Southard,
www.ministryofthearts.org

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

Please welcome our two newest employees

Cheryl Bryan, Staff Accountant



It is an honor to join the Sisters of St. Joseph's organization. I am a graduate of Villa Maria Academy and earned my BA in Accounting from Penn State Behrend. I have worked in the accounting and finance field for more than 25 years. I reside in Fairview with my husband, Jim. Together, we are blessed with three wonderful sons, Joseph, Adam, and Christian; a beautiful daughter-in-law, Emily; and a new granddaughter, Rhia. My husband and I are active members of Our Lady of Peace Parish. I look forward to working with the sisters and staff and to getting to know this community better as I begin this new chapter.

Michele Cooney, Resident Care Coordinator



Originally from Erie, PA, I am a proud Gannon University alumna, earning my ADN in 1992 and BSN in 2015. My nursing journey actually started early on as an aide, which paved the way for my rewarding career in long-term care, teaching, and LTAC. Home these days is Edinboro, where I live with my dog, Lily. Family means the world to me—I have two wonderful kids, Danny and Cindy, and I'm overjoyed to welcome my first grandson this coming December! In my free time, I love traveling and connecting with new faces.

Our Next Book Discussion

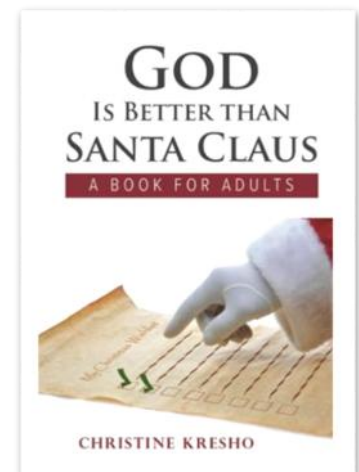
Join us for a meaningful and inspiring discussion of *God Is Better Than Santa Claus: A Book for Adults* by Christine Kresho, an SSJ from Baden, PA. This 70-page book invites us to reflect on our faith and explore how we grow in our understanding of God's unconditional love. Come share your thoughts, insights, and perspectives with us!

Wednesday, November 18, 2026 from 6:00–8:00 PM on Zoom.

Click [Here](#) to register.

The book is available through online retailers and some libraries. Those who register will receive the Zoom link the week of the meeting.

Having trouble registering? Please send your name and email address to mchrymko@hotmail.com.



Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network's

CELEBRITY BARTENDING FUNDRAISER

Friday September 18th from 5:30-10pm

Nuova Aurora Club
1518 Walnut St, Erie, PA 16502

A purple rectangular banner with white and yellow text. It is decorated with stylized illustrations of wine glasses, bottles, and party poppers in white and yellow.

Living Laudato Deum

The Season of Creation

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

The Season of Creation is the annual Christian celebration to pray and respond together to the cry of Creation. The Season's celebration begins September 1st, the World Day of Prayer for the care of creation and ends on October 4th, The Feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

This year's theme is "Living Water", with the symbol "immersion in living water", inspired by Ezekiel 47: 9 and 12. These passages are a powerful biblical vision of hope and ecological healing. We are very fortunate to live on Lake Erie but with that gift is also a great responsibility. The action that you can take is to refrain from and to denounce harmful pollution of our wonderful lake. We need to urge governments, local authorities, industry, and agriculture to act responsibly and protect water sources.

Associate and Agrégée News



Pictured starting at left: Carl Hotchkiss, Kay Hotchkiss, Debra Hamilton, Nancy Donnelly, Rosemary Oehmler, Wanda Schmidt (guest), S. Ann Marie Cappello, Linda Kuhn, JoAnn Elwell, Kathy (guest).

Meadville Associates and guests gathered for lunch in July. It was a wonderful time sharing stories of family and friends as well as the many ways these associates are living the SSJ Charism every day.

Church and prayer are the center of their lives as they carry out their mission caring for all those they encounter in expected and unexpected ways. May God continue to bless them and their works as they share the SSJ Charism and Mission with the dear neighbor.

What's Up With You?

If you have something to share, email us at SSJNews@ssjerie.org.



The 51st Erie County CROP Walk will take place on Sunday, September 27, 2026, at Presque Isle State Park beginning at 1:30p.m. The CROP Walk is an interfaith event that builds 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 funds for permanent change. The Sisters of St. Joseph have been participating in this effort since its beginning. The Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network receive funding each year from this campaign.

Please know that prayers and donations are valuable ways of supporting this effort.

Your donations may be given to:

Sr. Millicent Zmmer (814-836-4184) or Sr. Phyllis Hilbert (814-449-2901)

CELEBRATE THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH!

SAVE THE DATE! SSJ SOIRÉE



OCTOBER 24, 2026

3 TO 5 PM

5031 West Ridge Road

*Sisters of St. Joseph Mission &
Ministries Foundation*

Thank you to our exclusive event sponsors



**Sisters of St. Joseph
Neighborhood Network**

LITTLE ITALY FARMERS MARKET

331 West 18th Street

**EVERY MONDAY
3:00 - 6:00 PM
JUNE 26 - SEPT 25**

Featuring produce from several local farms,
including the SSJNN Urban Farm Project.
Special event days last Mon. of each month!
Little Italy Farmers Market doubles
SNAP, WIC and FMNP Senior Vouchers!



NO Farmer's Market September 7, 2026

Due to the Labor Day Holiday



"5th Annual

**Sound Off for St. James Haven"
Fundraising Event**

Saturday, September 19th

1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. at St. James Haven.

Amazing local churches perform live worship music.

This will be an outside event with delicious food trucks, a basket auction, bake sale, children's activities, and the opportunity to

Nourish Your Spirit *Click on the images below for retreat opportunities.*



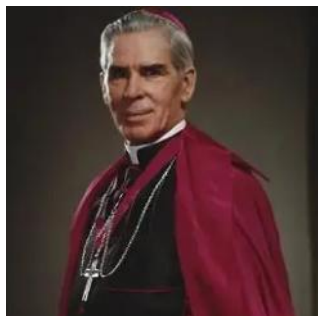
WRAC Enlarges Archivist Team



WRAC (Women Religious Archives Collaborative) has enlarged its team by hiring four additional archivists. Each archivist has been assigned to be the primary contact person for specific congregations and monasteries. Aly Nahra, a Digital and Processing Archivist, has been assigned to our SSJ Community.

Aly earned her Master of Library and Information Science from Kent State University in 2020, specializing in Archives and Special Collections, and became a certified Archivist in 2023. Before joining the WRAC team, Aly served as an Archives Assistant for the Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland and, most recently, worked as a Librarian at the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. Aly's education and experience will serve us well as we move forward in transitioning our archives to WRAC in the future.

Bishop Sheen Had Tie to Villa Maria College



Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, who will be beatified on September 24th, once spoke at an event sponsored by Villa Maria College.

In the Fall of 1942 Villa Maria College sponsored a series of lectures and entertainment for the people of Erie. Bishop Sheen

was the guest speaker for the third presentation in the series. His topic was "The Crisis of Christendom." The program was held in St. Mary's Auditorium in Erie on November 25th. Bishop Sheen was well-known for his television program "Life Is Worth Living," his radio ministry, and mission work. He was declared Venerable in 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI, and the miracle involving the recovery of a stillborn baby clearing Sheen for beatification was officially approved by Pope Francis in 2019. Canonization, the next step, would declare him a saint.

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.

SSJ Community September Birthdays

- 1 A. Barb Jones
- 2 S. Margaret Frank
- 2 S. Dorothy Wilwohl
- 2 A. Benjamin Villa
- 3 A. Patricia Mayer
- 4 A. Fr. Ray Selker, OFM
- 4 A. Mary Dennis
- 8 S. Claudia Dombrowski
- 8 A. Valerie Carlson
- 11 S. Josephine DePetro
- 12 Agr. Arlene Chaney
- 13 S. Stephanie Wagner
- 15 A. Betty Jo 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



VMA 1979 alum Sally Painter to speak during Jefferson Education Society Global Summit on October 21, 2026.

[Click here for more information.](#)

Make Your Voice Heard!

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

Being a part of the family of Joseph we are called to love our neighbors. This can be manifested in many ways, including voting in the November elections for candidates that will make life better for all our communities.

Pope Leo tells us that "Democracy recognizes the dignity of every person and calls each citizen to participate responsibly in the pursuit of the common good." As we come closer to the November elections we are called to look closely at the candidates. Network Advocates provide a checklist for us to use to evaluate the candidates. All these questions are grounded in Catholic Social Teaching.

Will your candidate work for the following:

Good paying jobs with benefits and protections?

Quality, affordable health care for all?

Affordable food and housing for all?

Safe and welcoming neighborhoods?

Affordable energy, clean air, and safe drinking water?

We all have time to educate ourselves as a faithful voter. If you would like more information about each of these questions, go to networkadvocates.org/vote. Let your voice be heard in November, get out and vote!

Charism In Action - Annual Garage Sale

3309 Asbury Road

9AM-5PM

August 28, 29, 30

September 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13

Recycle - Reuse - Repurpose

Agrégées Jeanne Marie Ryan and Arlene Chaney invite you to support their annual garage sale!

For the 12th year, proceeds from the sale will benefit Hekima Place in Kenya, Africa. Founded as a girls' orphanage, Hekima Place has grown to include co-educational classrooms and community outreach programs that serve children and families in the surrounding community.

Sale items include new and gently used items, vintage finds, collectibles, household goods, workshop items, seasonal decor, crafts, books, clothing, and much more. If you're looking for it, there's a good chance you'll find it here! Whether you come to browse, shop, or simply say hello, you're welcome. We take pride in creating one of the friendliest, most organized, cleanest, and best-priced garage sales in the area. Thank you for your support! We look forward to seeing you!

Help Needed! We're looking for friendly folks to help us continue our annual garage sale benefiting Hekima Place! If you could spare a few hours to assist our shoppers, we'd truly appreciate your help. Call Jeanne or Arlene at (814)838-7873 with questions or to share your availability for August 28, 29, and 30 and September 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, and 13.

Thank you from us and the Hekima Place family!

