

imagine
ONE

CONGREGATION OF THE
SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH

FALL/WINTER 2015
VOL. 7 | NO. 2

*At a
Turning
Point*

Our mission as Sisters of St. Joseph flows from the purpose for which the congregation exists: We live and work that all people may be united with God and with one another.

We, the Congregation of St. Joseph, living out of our common tradition, witness to God's love transforming us and our world. Recognizing that we are called to incarnate our mission and charism in our world in fidelity to God's call in the Gospel, we commit ourselves to these Generous Promises.

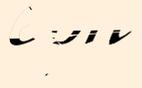
- ⊕ We, the Congregation of St. Joseph, promise to take the risk to surrender our lives and resources to work for specific systemic change in collaboration with others so that the hungers of the world might be fed.
- ⊕ We, the Congregation of St. Joseph, promise to recognize the reality that Earth is dying, to claim our oneness with Earth and to take steps now to strengthen, heal and renew the face of Earth.
- ⊕ We, the Congregation of St. Joseph, promise to network with others across the world to bring about a shift in the global culture from institutionalized power and privilege to a culture of inclusivity and mutuality.
- ⊕ We, the Congregation of St. Joseph, promise to be mutually responsible and accountable for leadership in the congregation.

WE CARE ABOUT ALL CREATION

In awareness of our mission, the Congregation of St. Joseph is pleased to present this issue of *imagineONE*, which has been produced in an environmentally sustainable way through the use of recycled paper manufactured by windpower and printed using soy- and vegetable-based inks.



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We apologize for an error...



Sister Joan Kaucher, CSJ, of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet notified us that on page 21 of our last issue, we incorrectly identified the CSJ on the left in this historic photo as one of our congregation's members. She is actually a Sister of St. Joseph from Carondelet by the name of Sister Ernest Marie Schmidt (now Sister Roberta Schmidt). The sister on the right is Sister Thomas Marguerite Flanigan (now Sister Rosemary Flanigan). They are both members of the St. Louis Province of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. At the time of the march, they were both professors at Fontbonne College (now Fontbonne University).

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(From l to r) Sisters Jen Graus, Judith Minear, Maria Hill, Paula Terese Pilon and Kathleen Durkin signaled their buy-in on discussions about the formation process for Sisters of St. Joseph.

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On the cover:

The pirouette in ballet is the reference we chose to illustrate the concept of a turning point. To keep from falling when executing a series of rapid pirouettes, the dancer has to have a visual focus, or turning point, to maintain her balance. In the life of our congregation, Jesus the Christ is our spiritual focus so that we keep our balance in responding to the changing needs of our dear neighbors. See this issue's cover story on page 14 that explains today's turning point in the life of our congregation.

Sister Pat Bergen

Reflects on . . . *Turning Points*



The song *Canticle of Turning*, by Rory Cooney, includes a line, “the world is about to turn.”

As I sing that line, a sense of adventure and excitement rises in me. Some of it may be that as a child, I loved anticipating the surprise of new things to see as roads twisted and turned. When this song takes over in my soul, my eyes open wider in search of the newness that is about to emerge. In times of grief, as well, when I feel as if the world has indeed turned and is falling

apart, this song evokes a hope that sings loud in me!

Turning points in our lives can evoke a host of feelings. When did your life take a turn? Was it the day after you graduated from school, masters or doctorate in hand and there was no job? Was it the day after your honeymoon, the birth of your first child, when someone you loved died, or your job suddenly ended? Or maybe it was when someone dared to tell you a truth about yourself that you denied for a long time and suddenly your world began to turn. Each of us can tell stories of turning points in our lives! We know from our own lives that turning points evoke choices.

As I look at some larger turning points, I see that they have evoked huge changes in our culture, such as Vatican II in the church, Sputnik in the universe, and 9/11 in the world! These turns evoked changes in my consciousness of self, God, and all my relationships. As I reflect further, I see that what I first perceived as an ending was really the beginning of what was coming next!

There is a call for those whose lives are dedicated to contemplation and community discernment, as religious are, to notice the nudging of the Spirit leading into the turn and to notice the newness longing to come into being. Search for the blessing

in it. We have choices that can guide the change about to take place. Choose actions born of love.

Earth has experienced a whirlwind of turns in the past three decades in which humans are having a hard time finding footing. Climate crisis, food shortage, emigration, escalating fear and violence and the breakdown of economic, education and political systems that formerly seemed to hold our world together have seemingly turned the world upside down.

These are signs that a new consciousness is coming to birth in humanity. Humans are realizing that we are interconnected to everything that is, was or ever will be. All is one. Science is saying there is an energy field that is the connector and all that exists reveals that field. Religious people are realizing that the deepest field connecting all is the Spirit of Love – Who is in all, through all, with all, without whom no being exists.

We perceive a deep Field of Love longing to come into being. What the world so desperately needs now are communities committed to resisting violence and fear and deepening the Field of Love. Whatever choices we make now become integrated into the life of the world forever.

Sisters of St. Joseph are among those with eyes open, ears alert, spirit awake. With a vision of all being One, we commit ourselves to let go of systems and expectations that no longer work and to lift up those that are life-giving, promote Love and deepen relationships. We live and work that our planet may be filled with love and live as one with God and every kind of neighbor. We believe this work is worthy of our lives.

There is no time to waste. Please join us in deepening the Field of Love.

Sr. Pat
Sister Pat Bergen, CSJ



Student leaders meet in City of Brotherly (and sisterly) *Love*

Student leaders from three of our academies – Nazareth Academy in La Grange Park, Illinois; St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and Saint Joseph Academy in Cleveland, Ohio – met on the campus of Chestnut Hill, a Sisters of St. Joseph sponsored College in Philadelphia, with student leaders from Mount St. Joseph Academy in Flourtown, Pennsylvania for the first Sisters of St. Joseph Student Leadership Conference. They were there to learn more about the history, mission and charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph. They learned about the Sisters’ call to conserve the environment, act for global unity and serve the *dear neighbor* without distinction. They also learned effective leadership skills in light of the Sisters’ charism. They will promote the knowledge gained at the conference throughout the school year. In addition, the group spent a service day in Camden, New Jersey, one of the very poorest cities in the state. They cleaned up a park and made dinner for a homeless shelter. History tells us that William Penn chose the name Philadelphia for the city combining the Greek words for love (*phileo*) and brother (*adelphos*). ●



More than one hundred people accepted our Wheeling Center sisters' invitation to a full day focusing on the growing local food movement there and around the country. These are some of the presenters and people who created the event.

Growing Food, Health and Hope

In his "Portrait of a Daughter of St. Joseph," Father Marius Nepper, SJ, wrote that she has her "eyes open, ears attentive and spirit alert." That explains how sisters at our Wheeling, West Virginia Center developed a clear reading of the signs-of-the-times and are supporting growing numbers of their *dear neighbors* who are building a strong, integrated local food movement.

"There is a lot of attention being paid today to developing opportunities to grow local foods and here in Wheeling, West Virginia, so many people are getting involved," Sister Kathleen Durkin, CSJ, says. "County schools and Catholic and other private schools, along with church and neighborhood groups, are paying attention to hunger issues and how people can get access to good healthy food."

With co-sponsorship by the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston and the Sisters of St. Joseph Health and

Wellness Foundation, the sisters hosted an ambitious program that drew some 100 actively interested people on the first day of spring. It featured 27 presenters and programs underway to make locally grown food more accessible and affordable for residents in the Upper Ohio Valley area. In addition, participants had the opportunity to visit demonstrations by bee keepers, chicken keepers and people doing aquaponic, hydroponic, and aeroponic gardening. The goal was to bring educators, church members, social service providers, local families and organic food providers together to talk about crises and opportunities related to hunger and to learn about some of the creative solutions already underway in the area.

Keynote speakers Ken Peralta and Kate Marshall explained that their nonprofit, Grow Ohio Valley, exists specifically to develop a local food economy. They reported the agency is now harvesting dozens of varieties of organic produce on several previously blighted and disconnected urban plots. Today, Grow Ohio Valley includes a mobile vegetable market, urban gardens, Farm-18 and plans for an urban apple orchard.

According to Mr. Peralta, a U.S. Agriculture Census report indicated that residents and visitors in the local area spent \$354 million on food in 2007. "Shifting just 10% of that spending toward locally produced food would keep \$35 million circulating in our own local economy instead of going to one of the agribusiness giants."

Ms. Marshall added that Grow Ohio Valley is now supplying fresh produce to the Catholic Charities food

pantry, where, until now, the only vegetables the pantry could offer were predominantly canned or frozen.

Another key pioneer in the area's local food movement, the Jesuit Appalachian Institute installed a community garden at a low income high-rise, resulting in the residents not only having access to safe, nutritious and affordable produce, but also to each other. Thanks to the garden, residents came to know each other and build strong relationships, leading to the breakdown of loneliness and isolation.

A significant announcement capped the day: The congregation and Grow Ohio Valley offered details of a contest called "A Garden in Every School." The winning school will receive a \$2,500 grant to build an organic vegetable garden with ongoing assistance from Grow Ohio Valley.

"As a congregation committed to the ever-changing needs of the *dear neighbor*," Sister Kathleen explained, "our congregation began a new, comprehensive planning initiative in 2012 called Neighboring aNew and identified four focus areas of concern as we look at the future of our land and buildings." Growing Food, Health and Hope was a response to one of those focus areas: Environment.

Environment is also one of the congregation's key commitments for years to come, "to take steps now to heal and renew the face of Earth." ●



Discussing the production of organic honey are from left to right: Steve Roth, Beekeeper at "Beeholding Acres and Roth Apiaries"; John Moses, Executive Director, Youth Services System; Kathie Roth, Beekeeper at "Beeholding Acres and Roth Apiaries"; and an event participant.



Aundrea Spain, seated, and Gabrielle Marshall, standing, participate in "worm races" as part of a lesson on worms and composting.



It took many volunteers like those shown above to ensure the day's activities went smoothly. We are so grateful!

Academy students host *big city tour for youngsters* from ABLE families in rural West Virginia

The summer of 2015 marked the fourth year students from Saint Joseph Academy (SJA) in Cleveland, Ohio, spent two weeks in Kermit, West Virginia, running two youth camps for ABLE Families, one of our congregation's sponsored ministries. Then, for the first time, the SJA students turned around and hosted 15 youngsters from ABLE Families, ages 8-15, on their first trip to Cleveland.

SJA College Counselor Maria Mueller, who has traveled to Kermit with the students for the last three years, explains that "ABLE Families is dedicated to empowering families in the rural area of northern Mingo County, West Virginia, and focuses on women and children because they suffer the effects of poverty most severely."

After working at the camp in 2014, SJA student Emma commented that "I didn't know there were places in the U.S. that didn't have access to clean, running water. During that week in Kermit, I realized that we sometimes take so much for granted in our lives. Spending a week amongst pretty extreme poverty was a reality check."

According to Sister Pat Murray, executive director of ABLE Families, "The students make the camps both

educational and fun for our local kids." The theme for this summer's first week was "Around the World." It highlighted French-speaking countries connected to the Sisters of St. Joseph roots in France and included games, art projects, food and activities that have a French theme. The SJA students' plan for the second week was "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

"Because our children don't have the opportunity to experience life outside of our rural area, our hope is to open up the world to them and have them start thinking about their futures and the endless possibilities that await them outside of Appalachia," Sister Pat said.

On what was their first trip to a large city for most of the youngsters who went to Cleveland, it was a whirlwind tour. They went to the Museum of Natural History, the Great Lakes Science Center, the Cleveland Public Library and the Museum of Art. They also attended a Cleveland Indians baseball game and saw a performance of *Cinderella* at Playhouse Square.

"I want to share everything with them. Everything I feel I want them to feel and I want to encourage them to want to reach for more and see how much they can accomplish in life," SJA student Annie concluded. ●



Youngsters from rural West Virginia got 'up close and personal' with a T-Rex during their visit to the Cleveland Natural History Museum this past summer.



Walk with me: These fourth- and fifth-graders from 12 different schools in greater Chicago authored and illustrated their book, "Walk with Me," released earlier this year.

The WELL publishes the fourth book in its *Stories of Oneness* series

The WELL Spirituality Center's *Stories of Oneness* project continues to thrive with the release of its fourth book, *Walk with Me*, earlier this year. The book is based on an original composition of the same name by Sister Kathy Sherman, CSJ.

The book results from retreats The WELL's visioning team plans and arranges for fourth- and fifth-grade students from a diversity of schools in the Chicago area and from different cultures and economic circumstances.

What made this latest experience unique, according to The WELL Spirituality Center Director, Bridget Spurduto, is that students here participated in the retreat virtually simultaneously with a similar group from different schools in Nsukka, Nigeria. That was made possible by a multi-year commitment the Archdiocese of Chicago made to help the Diocese of Nsukka develop a 21st century school system and curriculum.



Sister Bee Jay Ciszek, CSJ, (recently deceased) was involved from the beginning. She'd made the long trek to Nsukka for several summers to

These students from Nsukka, Nigeria, display some of the art they contributed to the book.

teach teachers their effective ways to teach – teachers who have meager supplies and resources and almost no training in how to teach. In recognition of her significant work, the student authors and illustrators of the new book dedicated it to Sister Bee Jay. While she advised The WELL visioning team here, Esther Hicks from the Archdiocese of Chicago Office of Catholic Schools went to Nsukka to direct the retreat with the children there.

The purpose of the *Stories of Oneness* project is to engage the students in a greater appreciation for the world's diversity and to nurture the students' sense of belonging to an earth alive and interconnected with all people and all creation. According to Bridget, "Throughout the program, students are challenged to look beyond their own world and to open their eyes to another place that they do not know. The book's theme *Walk with Me* is fitting because the students in Chicago and Nigeria were invited to look at one another's lives and culture with appreciation of the differences and the similarities."

To order copies of the book go to www.ministryofthearts.org.

Collaboration with Kalamazoo Nature Center provides *safe green space* for our *dear neighbors*

Children, teens and families living in poverty on Kalamazoo's East Side have a new, safe green space on our Nazareth Center property where the Kalamazoo Nature Center (KNC) will be offering nature walks and other programming and workshops to connect them with the natural world. Surrounded by urban wear and tear where they live, they now have a natural place to play and learn.



The development is a result of the Neighboring aNew process the congregation began three years ago to assess how to best use our resources, including our buildings and properties, to serve our *dear neighbors'* needs of today. As this issue of *imagineONE* went to press, the congregation and the Nature Center were conducting a six-month market study and relationship building effort with the East Side residents and schools in the area to assess need and spark interest in programming in the area.

During the market study, the Nature Center will be offering programs, running summer day camps and measuring the impact of the programs offered. For example, the goal for a summer science program was to teach youngsters how to think like a scientist, develop critical thinking skills and discuss career opportunities.

Jenn Wright, vice-president of education with the Nature Center, commented that "(We are) thrilled to be partnering with the Congregation of St. Joseph to connect the residents of Kalamazoo's East Side as well as those living at the Nazareth Center with the natural world. We will be (using) the natural treasures of the Nazareth property and the Bow in the Clouds preserve to the north to offer nature walks, programs and workshops for people of all ages."

The nature center partnership is part of the congregation's vision to "strengthen, renew and heal Earth." Sister Pat Bergen, CSJ, added that "Children and families will be invited to explore and discover awe and wonder at the workings of nature ... and develop a sense of bonding with nature. ... This will offer the hope that participants will work to preserve what they love." ●



Joy, curiosity and wonder register on these youngsters' faces.

Wichita partners with Catholic Charities to ease crowding in homeless shelters

Now celebrating its 100th anniversary, the Mount St. Mary's Convent building in Wichita is about to become a bridge to more permanent housing for many of the area's homeless people. The decision is the sisters' response to keeping aware of the changing needs of the *dear neighbor* and choosing to do something to help meet those needs.

Today, the Wichita Center houses 75 sisters, but has a capacity to house up to 150 people. Given that the nation's long-term economic downturn has put Catholic Charities' two existing shelters in a position to have to turn away up to 50 families and 130 domestic violence victims each month, the congregation chose to partner with Catholic Charities and convert the Mount building into bridge housing for people who are recently homeless. All too often people remain in Catholic Charities' two existing shelters longer than necessary simply because they have no place to go, i.e., their permanent housing isn't ready yet. These are the folks who will be coming to the Wichita Center, thus making room for those who need to stay at an emergency shelter.

"We wanted to help people who are vulnerable," said Sister Margaret Nugent, who is center coordinator for the congregation in Wichita. "This is going to be for families and we want it to be a home."

While some renovations are underway, residents will be welcomed in four phases. The first phase will open in October or November with 14 rooms for 21 or more residents. Phase two, in the fall of 2016, and phase three in the spring or summer of 2017, will open about 24 bedrooms. The final phase making another 20 rooms available is scheduled for some time in 2018. Then, Catholic Charities will lease the entire building and it will become the Mount at Catholic Charities.



Pleased with their agreement that will lease the former motherhouse at our Wichita Center (background) are Catholic Charities Executive Director Michael Burrus and Sister Margaret Nugent, CSJ. It will then be renamed the Mount at Catholic Charities.

According to Catholic Charities Executive Director Michael Burrus, the residence will be staffed at all times and offer classes on such topics as financial management, parenting and professional skills.

"The intent of the building is for residents to establish their independence," Mr. Burrus explained. "We want to be helpful, but we don't want to be enabling. We want them clearly to be moving toward independence." Residents will be allowed to stay for up to 90 days, while staff members will evaluate progress every 30 days. ●

WICHITA CENTER TAKES IN ANOTHER NEW RESIDENT

Wichita Center now also houses the offices for the congregation's newest ministry, CSJ Initiatives, which was formed in 2014. CSJ Initiatives will manage the Congregation of St. Joseph centers and related property; manage other nonprofit senior care properties; and provide consultation and property management services for nonprofit senior care providers and other religious groups.

Academy alum becomes new *CSJ Ministries Associate Director*



Theresa Denton, formerly executive director of the La Grange Park Center's School and Tutors on Wheels ministry, has been selected as the new Associate Director of CSJ Ministries. Theresa's CSJ roots are deep as an alum of Nazareth Academy. She also served on the Academy's board of directors until accepting her new position.

Theresa became employed with the congregation in 2011 as executive director of School and Tutors on Wheels.

"I am delighted to have been invited to work in a new capacity with CSJ Ministries," she commented. "Working with talented staff, loyal volunteers and the board of School and Tutors on Wheels these past four years has given me a chance to build strong relationships with my ministry colleagues from La Grange Park. I look forward to building new relationships with each of the CSJ ministries' staffs and to supporting their work for the CSJ mission of unity." ●

Chicago Archdiocese honors Sister Kathy Brazda for her essential ministry with Hispanic people

The Archdiocese of Chicago presented Sister Kathy Brazda, CSJ, with its St. Teresa of Avila Award September 11th at its annual Noche de Gala event that celebrates Hispanic ministry in the Archdiocese. The St. Teresa award specifically honors a woman religious or a religious order in recognition of their special work and achievements in Hispanic ministry.

Sister Kathy is cofounder of Taller de José (2009) and its executive director. Taller de José is one of our congregation's sponsored ministries whose staff makes social services more accessible to immigrants by accompanying them to government, medical, legal, financial and other service offices that they would have difficulty approaching and navigating on their own. Each staff member, *compañera/o*, is trained to listen to clients to assess the services they need and then accompany the client in the process of finding those resources.

By fostering the model of accompaniment, Taller de José challenges social structure in order to create a

culture of inclusivity and mutuality; creates, maintains, and supports just relationships with individuals and organizations; seeks to create systemic change to promote a more just and equitable society; and cultivates a consciousness of the inherent worth of each person.



The St. Teresa of Avila Award comes in a banner year for Sister Kathy, who made a pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago de Compostella during her sabbatical in early 2015. She will celebrate her 25th jubilee in October.

SPIRIT OF GIVING

Volunteering helps one friend of the congregation remember and keep in touch

Giving of one's time is a powerful way to connect with the mission of the sisters. Opportunities to serve draw people into the life of the congregation in a very real way.

Michael Kirkmeyer has been volunteering alongside the sisters since he was a young man. His mother, Bonny Mutran Kirkmeyer, graduated from St. Joseph Academy in Tipton, Indiana, in 1961. In the final days of her struggle with cancer, the sisters cared for Bonny until her death in 1991. Mike and his brothers say the sisters treated them with great kindness during this time. They have never forgotten. "Working with the sisters is an easy way to thank them for their kindness and openness and also a way to just stay in touch," Mike says.

During the years following his mother's death, Mike helped with special events such as Christmas parties and conferences, as well as the event which became his calling: the St. Joseph Academy Alumnae Gathering. For many years, Mike has helped organize the event. He created a database and a directory to help keep alums connected. Through his excellent computer skills, Mike is able to locate alums and help ensure they can stay in touch with each other and with the



CSJ Associate Program Coordinator Carolyn Perry, CSJ Associate Bridget Brewster, and Mike Kirkmeyer gathered in Tipton in June 2015 to help host an all school reunion for the former St. Joseph's Academy in Tipton, Indiana.

sisters. This year, he even established a Facebook page where alums can chat with each other and share photos. Helping with this particular effort was a terrific experience for Mike, not only because he was helping the sisters, but because it also made him feel closer to his mom. Additionally, Mike helped Sister Marty McEntee, CSJ, transfer the Tipton Archives documents to Cleveland.

In an age where time is at a premium because of our busy lives, volunteering is a priceless gift. Each person gives as they can and for various reasons. Mike Kirkmeyer gives because, "I feel like I continue to get back more from the sisters than I give. They continue to touch the lives of those they taught, nursed and comforted. They all still bring hope and joy to others. I'm grateful to be a small part of all they do."

So many friends, donors and volunteers are a part of carrying out the sisters' mission to meet the needs of the world. Every one enhances the effectiveness of the many CSJ ministries. Since 1650, Sisters of St. Joseph have welcomed, indeed, relied upon, their friends and families to be with them in service to and with the *dear neighbor*. ●



*Eyes open,
ears attentive
and spirit alert*

As our congregation reaches its own
turning point, our focus has never been

stronger

By Jeannie Masterson, CSJ

Turning is a common theme in Christian theology. We encounter the image of turning from the time of Isaiah's "Turn to me and be saved, says the Lord" (45:22) to songs as diverse as the Byrds' 1965 adaptation of Ecclesiastes (To everything *turn, turn, turn* there is a season *turn, turn, turn* and a time for every purpose under heaven) and the 1848 Quaker tune "Simple Gifts" (To turn, turn will be our delight, Till by turning, turning we come 'round right).

Visually, ballet is a prime example. In that world, a pirouette is the basic turn. To accomplish multiple successive, rapid pirouettes without falling on her face, the dancer has to have a visual reference point, or turning point, to maintain her balance. She chooses a spot straight ahead and as she makes the turn away from the spot, her head is the last to leave and the first to return to the spot as the body completes that turn. This snap of the head gives the impression that the face is always turned forward and prevents the dancer from becoming dizzy.

This image is also an apt one for the Congregation of St. Joseph. Jesus the Christ is our spiritual "spot" or still point; from our contemplation with him – Bible in one hand and news in the other – we pirouette to follow God's Spirit; we turn to the melody of love played in the lives of our *dear neighbor*. Our orchestra members are people and agencies with whom we collaborate or partner, rooted in our Generous Promises.

In recent years, as we contemplated the future needs of our own members as well as our history of commitment to vulnerable populations, we entered the process we called

"Neighboring aNew" – that is, looking at the signs of our times through the eyes of Jesus' desire "that all may be one." We recognized that every day, 10,000 U. S. citizens reach their 65th birthday, and learned that current senior housing addresses only 30% of the need. We asked ourselves how our own wisdom years could serve this need, which will continue to grow. What "turn" in our thinking, what collaborative partnering could offer a new perspective to our world?

Jesus the Christ is our spiritual "spot" or still point; from our contemplation with him – Bible in one hand and news in the other – we pirouette to follow God's Spirit; we turn to the melody of love played in the lives of our dear neighbor.

Additionally, we have been aware that increased mobility and multiple other factors are changing the landscape of family life, and our long tradition of education could continue to influence every generation. How might we use our buildings and properties for education beyond the classroom to address





CSJ Initiatives staff (from left), Sister Pam Young, CSJ, Director of Mission Integration; Jerry Carley, CEO; Katrina Davis, Administrative Director; and David Haase, Director of Operations, gather for a meeting.

current gaps in people's lives, whether intellectual, emotional, spiritual, or physical? How might we offer our spiritual rootedness as a "spot" for others, to help maintain their balance? How might we increase awareness of our mutual role in caring for the environment, so that Mother Earth continues to turn and flourish well into the future? Knowing that sustainability relies on collaboration, which are the existing groups with similar values with whom we can partner in this new dance?

Not surprisingly, contemplating these realities individually, in small groups, and as a congregation turned us to a new milestone in our lives, creating CSJ Initiatives (CSJI) in 2014. We became fascinated with the potential that by remodeling or rebuilding our living spaces to address our own needs, we could simultaneously be creating spaces to share with others. By developing these spaces in such a way that they can become licensed, we may be able to offer security and stability to people who will need the compassion, respect and integrity we named as core values.

Because of the staff we've hired, CSJ Initiatives has already entered into two separate consulting services agreements with other religious orders, validating that this

"need of the day" is real. Eventually CSJI will offer health care and management services to other religious congregations and non-profit groups, with the twist that all is offered through the unique lens of religious life. This implies a focus on spirituality, community building and honoring of each unique individual.

We have also realized that we do not always have to be the initiator of future partnerships. Perhaps there are potential partners who already have well-established ministries or work who need some of the space we no longer use. For example, open land on some of our properties could be good places to begin sustainable farming, which will offer local communities non-genetically modified (GMO) food that is also free of insecticides that contain lethal chemicals. How many other possibilities that we have not yet discovered could engage diverse local communities near our centers?

Continued contemplation and conversation with partners have already turned us in new directions. In Wichita, we learned about a local family shelter that was unable to serve an average of 50 families a month seeking services due to limited space. In addition, a domestic violence program was unable to provide services to more than 130 victims seeking shelter per month due to its limited capacity.

Responding to this need, in August, an agreement with Catholic Charities helped begin a new ministry - The Mount at Catholic Charities - to provide residential facilities and housing and employment specialty services for single and pregnant women, veterans and families needing time to secure permanent housing, in part of the historic buildings of our Wichita Center. Probably not coincidentally, the sisters began caring for orphans on this site in 1900, and are

celebrating the 100th birthday of the oldest Center building this year. Our sisters will continue to reside in, and minister from, other sections of the property as renovation and new building turns our attention both inward and outward.

Also this summer, through a new partnership with the Kalamazoo Nature Center and multiple Eastside organizations, our Nazareth Center became an additional location for experiential nature programming specifically geared toward kids of all ages (including families and Sisters of St. Joseph). The area of our property used by the Nature Center abuts Bow in the Clouds, 60 acres of property the sisters donated to the Southwest Land Conservancy in 2007, allowing participants access to variations of landscapes, plants and wildlife. Additionally, the Nature Center hopes to use this programming concept as a model that can be shared and hopefully duplicated at other nature centers across the United States. See page 10 of this magazine for more information on the Kalamazoo Nature Center and our partnership with them.

Other partnerships are forming across the congregation. We know we neither can nor should try to change systems alone. We continue to listen deeply to the needs and yearnings of the world around us, to discern where the Spirit is inviting us to turn next to deepen the union of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God. ●



Sister Jeannie Masterson, CSJ, is serving a second term on the Congregation Leadership Team. Earlier, she served in provincial leadership, as a teacher, a high school administrator, and as a pastoral associate for adult formation. Sister Jeannie was the founding director of Cincinnati's Jordan Center, which brought health attention to uninsured working people and their families.

As you turn, consider joining us by

- **Finding a way to connect regularly** (perhaps once a month) with people in vulnerable situations: those living in poverty and/or homelessness, those in prison/on death row, those victimized by sex and labor trafficking, those in nursing homes who have no family to visit them. The simple offer of friendship, a listening ear and compassionate heart are gifts that can turn a person's heart around - and ultimately turn the "giver" into a person with a passion to make a difference for more people.
- **Connecting with your spiritual spot** by taking contemplative walks, alone or with others, in a natural setting, listening with the eyes of your heart as well as your head for the healing power of peaceful quiet. Perhaps this could be integrated into a weekend retreat at one of our centers on occasion.
- **Pirouetting your attention to something you've never thought about before** - commit yourself to learning about a culture, a life situation, a population you've never met to expand your awareness of the oneness of all creation.

What makes a woman decide to become a *Sister of St. Joseph?*

Persistent questions of the heart

By Cami Taylor



Cami Taylor

Growing up, I never knew any nuns. Well, there was one who wore a big black habit in Montessori School. In my childlike view, she was a peripheral and brief nuisance, much like the church we attended on Sundays.

However, I was always amazed by the lives of saintly people I encountered sporadically through books, movies, and even magazine articles (Mother Teresa). The allure of their loving and service-oriented lives existed like a seed in my mind: interesting, yet best to ignore. For years I existed in a state of tension: pulled, curious, and yet totally resistant to whatever sacrifice might be required of me.

In college, I majored in religious studies and pored over fascinating texts from the New Testament. I studied a passage from I Corinthians that trailed me like a lingering perfume: "If I speak with the tongues of angels but have not love I am only a resounding gong or clanging cymbal. ... If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing." These words continued to haunt me and guide my movements as I graduated from college, volunteered in India as a Salesian Lay Missionary, and eventually entered law school in Chicago.

The nagging idea of religious life drifted out of my mind. I was a busy and important law student living in a big city. I dated, traveled, studied, interned, worked and made new friends. I nursed fantasies of marriage, children and weddings and diamond engagement

rings – the bigger, the better!

However, on a cold and dreary October day during my second year of law school, I met Sister Celeste Cotter, CSJ at a DePaul University career and vocation fair. I was a strung-out student, and discerning religious life was not a high priority; but she gave me her business card and we kept in touch. Through her, I met Alison McCrary, who was in formation as a novice. Alison made a special effort to invite me to various CSJ events, picnics, conferences, and other gatherings. Gradually, I learned of the sisters' anti-racism, anti-trafficking, and abolishing the death penalty ministries. I saw that they were highly educated women: school principals, attorneys, and social activists; and yet they were not clanging cymbals. Their love – for one another, the world, and God – was quite palpable. They made me feel welcome in their midst, inviting me to share meals and helping me to express my hopes and dreams. It felt like home.

Several years have passed since then, and I moved into community as a candidate with the CSJs. Fear and resistance still flare up, but I am at peace with the journey and glad that I am no longer ignoring a question that has been in my heart for so long. Furthermore, I am not alone. The sisters are with me, and the saints who inspire me are now my friends. ●

Cami is a candidate with our congregation.



Le coeur d’Afrique (The heart of Africa)

By Erin McDonald, CSJ

It was in the lush and broken heart of Africa that I found great consolation and great desolation. It was in the beauty of Rwanda’s plush volcanic mountains where I lived in awe of God’s magnificent creation and where the mist rising through the forest each morning unveiled the wounds of violent conflict. The pain of a long ethnic war rages in the Democratic Republic of Congo and echoes through the mountains of



Erin McDonald, CSJ

Joseph. I hesitated to say yes, unsure of whether I could live the vows, unsure of what my friends and family might think of me, and uncertain of my own courage to let go and follow God completely.

Then I followed this prayerful nudge to leave it all behind – my job, my apartment, my car – to go off to Rwanda and minister in one of the most violent and broken places on earth, in central Africa. In the face of such suffering my own life was stripped down to its simplest form; stripped down to the heart of what matters most in this world. What matters most is love. A deep God-centered, unioning love.

It was through this experience that I found myself in a new way. I found God in a new and intimate way. Finding God so unexpectedly in the darkness of suffering shed light on the courage to say yes to religious life. I no longer worried what my friends might think of me or if I was good enough to be a sister. As I rummaged for God in my heart, I found the charisma of the Sisters of St. Joseph emerging from within like sunlight through a prism.

“It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

– Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Rwanda. It is here where I served as a humanitarian aid worker for two years with Congolese refugees. As a humanitarian aid worker I ran my fingers through some of the most horrific wounds of humanity and in the darkness of it all, I experienced a profound turning point, I found God. It is here, where I had a personal and mystical experience of God in the midst of profound suffering.

Before I flew off to serve in the Jesuit Refugee Service in Rwanda, I had been discerning a call to religious life for several years. I always found it hard to say yes to this mysterious desire to be a Sister of St

“It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.” These beautiful words of French author Antoine de Saint-Exupery express the moment when my world turned upside down and, in the midst of this conversion, I found the courage to say yes to my vocation as a Sister of St. Joseph. With my hands to the brokenness of this world, I learned that “it is only with the heart that one can see rightly.” So from my heart, I say yes each day to being a Sister of St. Joseph. ●

Sister Erin is making her first vows with our congregation in October, 2015.



Getting a grip on climate change: *Are we there yet?*

By Virginia (Ginny) Jones, CSJ*



*Colleagues of Sister Ginny who also contributed to this article: Cybelle Shattuck, doctoral candidate, University of Michigan, whose thesis is "Environment and Faith Communities"; and Dr. Steve Berman, Professor, Environmental Chemistry, Western Michigan University.

One of the biggest fears about climate change is that it may be triggering events that would dramatically alter life on Earth as we know it. Scientists call such events “tipping points,” defined as: “a threshold for abrupt, irreversible change.” Since climate change is VERY complex, there are a number of tipping points that have been identified that are of serious concern to scientists. While the precise levels of change sufficient to trigger any specific tipping point are uncertain, it is clear that the risk associated with crossing multiple tipping points increases with the rise of temperature.

Climate scientists are carefully studying at least nine positive feedback loops and have so far only identified five negative feedback loops that would slow down the warming process – clearly not enough to change the overall outcome. The potential consequences of arriving at additional climate change tipping points are likely to be severe, especially for the most vulnerable people and organisms in our world. This is an issue of moral and ethical concern to all people of faith, so much so that Pope Francis has called climate change the church’s #1 pro-life issue of our time. The Pope’s recent encyclical “Be Praised: On Care for Our Common Home,” as well as a variety of statements by leaders of other faith communities, calls our attention to our responsibility to act.



Just as human activity has and is contributing to our climate crisis, so too, we humans have the power to change direction. Perhaps the most challenging issues we need to address at this time are “behavioral” ones: What will it take to motivate people and governments to take action? What will constitute a turning point which will result in significant behavioral change... and what types of action can we/should we be taking?

The International Panel on Climate Change has stated that it is imperative that we cut total global greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2050 to escape disastrous overheating. Individuals and households are being encouraged to do and continue to do a number of things, such as switch to green power; install efficient

furnaces, light bulbs and appliances; double-glaze windows; drive even our energy-efficient cars less; and increase our use of public transportation and reduce air travel, to name a few. While all of these will be helpful, the magnitude of the changes needed also requires us to address larger system and policy issues, both on the national and international levels, and this will require serious cooperative efforts on the part of corporations and governments.

Viewing things from the perspective of system change, the human community could best be served by a return to a precautionary principle that states when human health and the environment are significantly at risk, perfect scientific certainty is not required and the burden of proving that a practice is safe should not be placed on the public that could be harmed. Alternative economic strategies might be employed such as cooperatives in business ownership, purchasing, and housing. An examination of the systems we use for agriculture and energy production and distribution is also important. All of these would lead us to return to the values of the common good by making sure the resulting products or services are more beneficial to the people of whole communities than strictly to business profit.

What kind of progress are we making toward stabilizing our climate? Are we anywhere near behavioral turning points yet? On the international level, both the U.S. and China agreed to serious reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and both have already made progress toward the stated goals. China, in fact, appears to be moving faster than its pledge would require. Mexico became the first developing country to pledge a 22% emissions reduction by 2030. In December of this year, 200 world leaders will gather in Paris for climate change negotiations. Pope Francis will address both the U.S. Congress and the U.N. General Assembly in September to encourage leaders of the world to take serious actions regarding climate change. He has also encouraged all of us to pray for these leaders that they may be guided to act in support of all life on this planet; to pray that this meeting will move us toward a turning point in our commitment to really make significant social, political and systemic changes required to deal with this serious global concern.

Are there signs that we are beginning to take at least some preliminary steps, some actions on the national level? In spite of political difficulties in the U.S., a study by the Union of Concerned Scientists found that many states are well-positioned to reliably and affordably achieve emissions reductions set forth in the EPA's Clean Power Plan. The Pentagon and the Dept. of Defense (DOD) have identified areas of national security related to the consequences of climate change, and the DOD issued its first-ever Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap. The Federal Emergency Management Agency says that it will deny disaster preparedness funds to states that don't plan for the effects of climate change. 40% of the largest U.S. corporations have committed to reduce greenhouse gases, improve energy efficiency and obtain more renewable energy. So some progress is being made. As we face the 2016 presidential elections, we will all have the opportunity to address the candidates and inquire what they would do regarding climate change issues.

What might our world look like in 2050 if enough individuals, corporations and nations made real movement toward a behavioral turning point and some actions were taken to slow down our movement toward climate change tipping points, hopefully preventing some of the worst predicted consequences? I invite you to take a peek into what might be some possibilities by visiting www.changethecourse.org and working through its visioning process. I think you will find it most interesting and encouraging. Finally, I encourage you to add your voice to the voices of an international multi-faith campaign in support of meaningful climate action. Visit www.ourvoices.net. ●



Sister Virginia (Ginny) Jones, CSJ, is a retired adjunct professor of environmental studies at Western Michigan University. She holds a doctorate degree in environmental education from Michigan State University and has been teaching environmental studies for more than 40 years. She also serves as a spiritual director.

POPE'S ENCYCLICAL OFFERS A LIFE-SAVING AGENDA FOR THE WORLD

With the announcement that he had chosen the name Francis, the Pope instantly signaled what the focus of his papacy would be. Like the work of his namesake, St. Francis of Assisi, it would encompass care of all creation in many initiatives: care for all people, particularly those who are poorest and most vulnerable among us; honoring consecrated life this year, those who serve the people of God; the announcement of a jubilee year beginning in November 2015 to rekindle mercy in a highly judgmental world; and a comprehensive encyclical, "Be Praised: On Care for Our Common Home."

The timing for releasing the encyclical in June was strategic, enough in advance of the 2015 U.N. Conference on Climate Change from November 30 - December 11th in Paris to have an impact on proceedings there.

With our congregation's decades-long concern for Earth, as articulated in our second Generous Promise (see p. 2 of this issue), Justice Team member Mary Ellen Gondeck, CSJ, announced that "We invite everyone to pay daily attention to the reality of Earth's struggle by engaging each other in discussions in our communities and in our parish and ministry families." Some groups have planned to study the encyclical over a period of a year or so.

Copies of the encyclical are available online from Ministry of the Arts, www.ministryofthearts.org - click on books & bookmarks, and through commercial booksellers. In addition, National Catholic Reporter offers a discussion guide through <http://ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/readers-guide-laudato-si>.

The Leadership Conference for Women Religious (LCWR) offers the following additional resources:

- Global Catholic Climate Movement: www.catholicclimatemovement.global
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: www.tinyurl.com/ndlyf31
- Catholic Climate Covenant: www.catholicclimatecovenant.org
- Interfaith Power and Light: www.tinyurl.com/oxklcc8

STUDENTS WILL INHERIT A PLANET THEY HOPE TO HELP REJUVENATE

Humans have gotten away with living alongside these environmental issues so long that we have become numb to them. Because we have lasted this long without ecological problems impacting our everyday lives, these issues often go unnoticed. It is unfortunate that people need to “see to believe” in order to act because when, in fact, we do finally see the effects of the damage we inflict upon this planet, then it can already be too late.

In order to prevent tardiness in our time of action, we all have a duty in the fight to take our planet back. First of all, older generations need to be role models, working as environmental advocates for the next generations to follow. That means not only doing what they can to be environmentally conscious in their lifestyles, but also educating others, especially youth, on how to live as stewards. In turn, our future generation, if well-educated about our responsibility to God’s creation, will live with the earth as a main priority.

- Colleen Cavanaugh
Nazareth Academy Class of 2016

Researching climate change can be tricky. It has been difficult to find sources that I trust to be unbiased by politics and that still address the basic science of climate change. Without trust in my source, I wouldn’t have understood the abstract outcomes of climate change or believed that we have a great affect on a planet that has existed long before humankind. The research becomes even more complicated when you factor in the need to look at the motives and reliability of the people behind the source. High schoolers are perfectly capable of doing in-depth research, but this ability is normally focused in databases for English papers. There is a lack of motivation to go outside the required school work to dig through articles that seem irrelevant to our immediate everyday life about something we don’t see how we can affect.

Maybe one solution would be for biology classes to concentrate on the science of climate change so we can get beyond the extreme sides taken on talk show debates saying climate change is either a hoax or the apocalypse. It would eliminate confusion and give students a place to start research on their own.

- Josie Suter
Nazareth Academy Class of 2016



Both Colleen (center) and Josie volunteer with “Save the Prairie Restoration Society.” Here, Colleen’s helping to clear brush.



Educators' challenge: *teaching essential values in a digital world*

By Jean McGrath, CSJ

I am old enough to remember a very special day in August many years ago when my siblings and I went to my aunt's summer cottage to be with our extended family because Aunt Bea from Ireland was *calling on the telephone!* The magic of hearing her voice from across the ocean was absolutely stunning!

Fast forward to several weeks ago when I received a phone call from a teacher colleague reminding me to order tempura paints for her pre-school classroom. She was using her cell phone to call from the base of the Himalaya Mountains before starting her climb to the first plateau! Our casual and very clear conversation affirmed ours is a far different world than when I sat around the table with my siblings waiting for the miracle phone call from Ireland.

The rapid escalation of communication, symbolized by quick access to social media, is mind-boggling! We live in the global village that communications guru Marshall McLuhan foresaw many years ago, and a new malady - "nomophobia," defined as the fear of being without one's electronic device - is rampant among young people.

A recent survey I read reported that 91 percent of students in grades nine through twelve own smart phones. More astounding, 21 percent of students in

kindergarten through grade two also have smart phones!

While we celebrate the immense potential of all forms of technology, we also realize that, all too often, "screen time" fosters isolation and loneliness. While most students are very proficient at texting and tweeting long before they are in high school, educators need to help even our youngest scholars realize that communication is far more inclusive than what can be conveyed in a quick message on Facebook or Twitter. The joy that children discover when they hear the sing-song rhythms of nursery rhymes, or when we hear the magic of a Shakespeare sonnet, or when we recognize the rich nuances of a carefully constructed essay - these can never be sacrificed for the efficiency of social media. Digital imaging allows young people to create and expand their experience of many art forms but can never replace the delight of a kindergartener's Picasso-like finger-painted masterpiece.





Students have a variety of ways to learn, study and communicate with the abundance of electronic products available today.

Clearly, iPads, smart phones, and other electronic devices have a tremendous impact in all areas of our lives, most notably in the field of education, where children from pre-school through students in graduate school have seen the most dramatic changes. Instant access to “apps” and digital media that open an amazing new world of discovery and information to eager learners now complement and radically change instruction in Reading, Writing and Rithmetic. Even toddlers can now learn numbers, colors, and storybook tales at the touch of a button, which they learn to navigate as easily as they once learned to shake a baby rattle.

The potential for learning is limitless, but educators face multiple challenges as they help mold the values essential for responsible citizenry in a digital world.

The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph includes a rich legacy of sisters who spent their lives as teachers and administrators in all areas of education. Schools staffed by the sisters, most linked to strong Catholic parishes, were cornerstones in neighborhoods and cities across the country. Although fewer sisters are now in classrooms, education remains a vital and more broadly defined mission and ministry throughout the congregation. Our work in various sponsored ministries and programs provides new and exciting kinds of learning experiences, many enhanced by the unlimited potential of technology that encourages students of all ages to be aware of a world well beyond classroom walls and traditional textbooks.

Relationship building remains a core value in the congregation. Research and experience verify that quality education, both inside the traditional classroom and in

broader environments, needs to be attentive to the development of the whole person and the opportunity to create relationships that are built on respect for diversity, sensitivity to cultural differences, and honoring the values and rich cultural experiences of neighbors both across the street and around the world.

For example, geography is no longer just a subject to be taught; instead, we can “virtually” share the real life experiences of Sister Dianne Fanguy, CSJ, in Nicaragua. We can skype conversations with our sisters working with the immigrant population at the Texas border. Children in Nigeria recently swapped beautiful art work with children from the Chicago area and, together, have published an awe-inspiring book, *Walk with Me* (See story on page 9). Our Spirituality Centers reach far outside their physical locations by providing online reflections to enrich internet users in their quest for a deeper realization of the presence of God in their all too busy lives.

Our sisters and our ministries continue to educate as we partner with others to open eyes to a world in need of hope and healing, to open hearts to compassion and kindness, and to open minds to the talents and resources in this rapidly changing digital environment to help us all build a more peaceful world.

The wisest people I know are life-long learners who embrace every opportunity to explore a new idea, engage in rich conversation, and even master the complexities of new apps and tweets. Their openness to intellectual growth is complemented by their desire to live whole-heartedly, aware of how their gifts and talents can be used to make a difference in their corner of the world.

I think that is what Aunt Bea showed me on that wonderful day I heard her voice from “across the pond.” ●



Sister Jean McGrath, CSJ, is an educator who serves as principal at St. John Fisher School in Chicago.

Reflection



Turning Point

By Christine Parks, CSJ

Close to another autumn equinox our home grows depleted. Blue-green turning through birth, growth, death, rebirth, even as we deny our complicity. The only untenable stance at the turning—cling to what was, lose our balance, fall away from the center. Earth rotates so swiftly, if gravity didn't hold, we might fly off. Even running, we cannot stay in place.

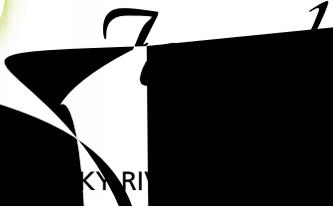
We know a point that holds even as we turn, even as everything turns around us. Creation surges forth, all emerging from the dust of stars long gone but never still, only the Center holds in the wobble of rotation where each turning is born.

We can choose to grieve old views, eyes closed. Or—eyes open, embrace our promise. Earth is dying, and we step forward to heal, renew our home.

We choose—knowing the Center holds.



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The Heritage Society was founded in order to gratefully recognize the friends of the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph who have included the congregation in their estate plans. These can include gifts through a will, life insurance policy, charitable gift annuity, or pension.

Please consider remembering the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph when making your estate plans. To learn more, call Gary Mulhern at (304) 232-8160, ext. 148. Additional information is also available on our gift planning website, www.csjgiftplanning.org. Information is kept in strict confidence.

