

imagine ONE

CONGREGATION OF THE
SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH



COURAGEOUS *Love*

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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On the cover:

The cover of this issue features just a few worldwide examples of living courageous love, the theme of this issue. We live in shifting times that call for grounded hearts - hearts that don't look away in the face of poverty, illness, violence or brokenness; hearts that believe that all life is sacred.

Among examples of daily life on the cover are some extraordinary examples: 2014 Nobel Prize recipient Malala Yousafzai who, after being shot in the head by the Taliban, recovered and demanded that Pakistani girls be allowed access to an education. In China's 1989 democracy movement, a single hero who, for love of country and fellow citizens, stopped and stared down the tank in Tianeman Square. In Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1996, a National Women's Rights Organizations Coalition member in the white U.S. sweatshirt acted to protect a KKK member from further injury, even though her group had come out to protest the KKK rally.

"Do not be afraid," Jesus tells us. And what happens in the absence of fear? Love.

imagine
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On a special "tour" guided by Sister Ann Catherine Burger, CSJ, (r) in her familiar golf cart, St. Joseph Worker Jenny Ploussard visited The Lord's Diner (background), a Diocese of Wichita mobile ministry that stops to feed our Wichita Center's low income neighbors in the Hilltop community. The Lord's Diner delivers one meal a day 365 days a year. Prior to the arrival of the Lord's Diner, Sister Ann Catherine used her golf cart to deliver food to Hilltop families.

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Reflects on . . . Courageous Love

Be courageous to undertake what God wants of you and constant to persevere in what you undertake, never giving up, whatever difficulties occur and whatever obstacles may be placed in your path unless you become totally powerless against them. (Maxim 66; Jean-Pierre Medaille, SJ)

As a Congregation, we have entered into this year which the church has designated the “Year of Consecrated Life.” Even more significant for this year is Pope Francis’s call to “Wake up the World.” As I consider all the ways we can respond to this imperative the realization dawns that in order to “wake the world” we must first have the courage to be awake ourselves—awake and aware of all in our world that is both wondrous and needs celebration, and of all that is wounded and needs healing. We cannot wake up the world and remain asleep ourselves. Waking to this realization requires a courageous heart, and is more than enough reason to rise each morning—if we choose to.

It is worth thinking about what it is that gets you out of bed in the morning. What catches your attention, wakes you up, and moves you to action? What is it that enables you to face the day, with its unknown gifts and challenges? What enables you to face the world with courageous love? For sisters and associates of St. Joseph a significant part of the answer is our mission to be one with God and nurture that in all the *dear neighbors* we come in contact with each day.

Once we’re awake, it only takes a glance at the world—at a headline or the evening news; at one of the multitude of electronic communications on issues needing immediate action we receive daily—to realize that it would be much easier to remain asleep and unaware. It takes a great deal of courageous love to wake up and face the reality of each day. It takes courage to love enough to take action for good. It takes courage to take to heart, and live out of the Gospel call to spread the “good news;” to wake up the world to the reality of God present everywhere in our world, present in every person, in every being.

The truth is that all creation is Holy; all life is consecrated; all life is already one with God. Our task is to wake ourselves to this truth; then wrap ourselves in the courage and love that are the gift of the Spirit; to be alert to opportunities to act, to consciously be God’s presence wherever we find ourselves.

Within these pages you will find stories of those who are awake to the Holy, and who, once awake, were impelled to live and act, in courage, with love. May they inspire you to wake up and live with courageous love wherever you find yourself.

Christine Parks, csj

Sister Christine Parks, CSJ



The Year of Consecrated Life calls us to be One with *God and neighbor*

Although it has faded from the “the front page” and nightly news, this is still the “Year of Consecrated Life” proclaimed by Pope Francis on the First Sunday of Advent last November. Scheduled to continue until February 2, 2016, the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, the driving thrust, as explained in his Apostolic Letter on the subject, is an enduring directive: Wake up the World. And, although Pope Francis addressed his letter “To All Consecrated People,” he wrote, “The Year for Consecrated Life concerns not only consecrated persons, but the entire Church.”

How much of the Apostolic Letter’s purpose and teaching has “gotten through” to the faithful and remains memorable isn’t practically measurable; however, there is value in focusing on what we might do as Pope Francis asks, “to step more courageously from the confines of our respective lives to work together” and “to go ever more to the peripheries to proclaim the Good News.”

In his Apostolic Letter, Pope Francis tells us:

I am counting on you ‘to wake up the world’ since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy.

Prophets receive from God the ability to scrutinize the times in which they live and to interpret events: they are like sentinels who keep watch in the night and sense the coming of the dawn (cf. Is 21:11-12). Prophets know God and they know the men and

women who are their brothers and sisters. They are able to discern and denounce the evil of sin and injustice. ... Prophets tend to be on the side of the poor and the powerless, for they know that God himself is on their side.

...In a polarized society, where different cultures experience difficulty in living alongside one another, where the powerless encounter oppression, where inequality abounds, we are called to offer a concrete model of community which, by acknowledging the dignity of each person and sharing our respective gifts, makes it possible to live as brothers and sisters.

Christ served people who were marginalized like lepers and widows, strangers from other lands, ordinary crowds of people, children, a prostitute and lame, blind and deaf people. Today, our concerns are quite similar. And, we are being asked to live at the margin serving victims of human trafficking, “strangers” we call immigrants, prisoners on death row and our plundered Earth, as well. That is why you will see Sisters of St. Joseph networking and collaborating with others, to bring about Christ’s mission of unioning love “that all may be one.” It is important for us to stand together, to contemplate the hungers of our world, like poverty and injustices, and to act in a way that will heal and unite.

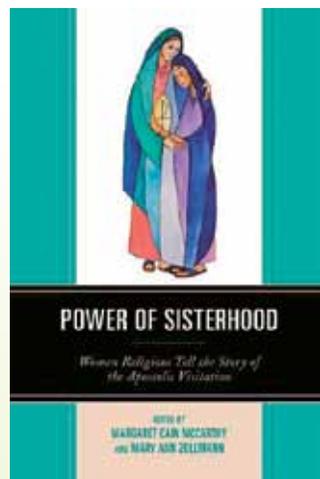
Together, in doing this we can be a prophetic witness in the church. ●



Vatican issues its report on the *faith and fidelity* of U.S. Sisters

What began as a stunning and painful announcement from the Vatican for many U.S. congregations of women religious in December 2008 ultimately came to a low-key and somewhat conciliatory conclusion in December, 2014. The short notice announcing the press conference and its timing so close to Christmas, seemed fitting to the tempered conclusions the *Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life* announced from its lengthy investigations into U.S. nuns' faithfulness to Church doctrine.

The first step in the investigatory process was that each congregation received a detailed questionnaire inquiring not just about their mission and work, but also specific information about financial, operational and spiritual practices. Considered by most to be intrusive in tone, discerning how to respond led to collaboration within and among the many congregations. Most, like our own Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, approached their participation with research, consulting with canon lawyers, discussion, and discernment and prayer. Over time, that disciplined approach transformed and strengthened the sisters with the blessings of the Holy Spirit.



A collaborative effort by 10 women who were all serving in elected leadership for their congregations or provinces during the Apostolic Visitation, this book tells the story from the perspective of women who fully experienced it. One important conclusion is that many sisters have grown into the solidarity that they now belong to a community of communities.

You can order *Power of Sisterhood* from the CSJ-sponsored Ministry of the Arts at www.ministryofthearts.com by entering the title in the search box. It is also available from Amazon.com.

In its conclusion, the final report affirms that, "Our times need the credible and attractive witness of consecrated religious who demonstrate the redemptive and transformative power of the Gospel. Convinced of the sublime dignity and beauty of consecrated life, may we all pray for and support our women religious and actively promote vocations to the religious life."

The whole experience cannot be anything but oversimplified in a short news article; however, a grassroots group of women religious were thoughtful enough early in the process to document their personal experiences throughout the process. To provide history with a comprehensive view, they wrote the book: *The Power of Sisterhood: Women Religious Tell the Story of the Apostolic Visitation*.

The members of our congregation and those of other congregations we talked with during the Apostolic Visitation process want people to know how grateful we are for the public outpouring of support from associates, friends, donors and family during the time of the visitation. ●

CSJ Ministries is first Catholic organization to receive *Seal of Excellence*

CSJ Ministries, Inc., which provides oversight and support to 26 of our sponsored ministries, became the first Catholic organization to receive the *Seal of Excellence* as a result of employing the “Catholic Standards of Excellence” code of the Leadership Roundtable on Church Management. The accreditation process is administered by the Standards for Excellence Institute, the third-party licensing partner of the Leadership Roundtable.

The code consists of 55 best practices in eight areas of management including: mission and ministry programs, governance and advisory bodies, financial and legal issues, fundraising, human resources, openness (or transparency), public life and policy, and conflict of interest. Catholic parishes, dioceses, schools, nonprofits, apostolates and religious communities are all encouraged to assess their operations against the best practice benchmarks in the Catholic Standards for Excellence.



Gress introduced the Catholic Standards of Excellence code resource materials to leaders and boards of the sponsored ministries, it heightened awareness of good practices and increased staff, board and constituents’ pride in the organization.

In a joint statement, Sister Janet and Bill explained, “The Seal of Excellence gives donors, grantors, clients and sponsors the assurance of a well-run organization. This can be especially helpful in today’s climate of growing accountability on the part of nonprofits. ...”

When CSJ Ministries Executive Director Sister Janet Fleischhacker, CSJ, and Associate Director Bill

The Leadership Roundtable makes the *Catholic Standards for Excellence* codebooks available to interested



The congregation’s ABE Families ministry assists low-income moms to achieve personal goals, like earning a GED certificate or drivers license, and supports all aspects of children’s health and development.

Catholic organizations. For more information, contact Peter Denio at pad@TheLeadershipRoundtable.org or (201) 335-0315. ●



Join us in welcoming Cami!

We are delighted to introduce you to Cami Taylor, a new candidate for membership in the Congregation of St. Joseph. Cami is a native of Colorado and a graduate of DePaul University Law School. Prior to law school, Cami served a year-and-a-half as a Salesian lay missionary in India.

Cami lives in Chicago and is employed by AmeriCorps. She is a member of Old St. Patrick’s parish where she sings in the young adult choir.

We ask you to join us in extending a welcome and a promise of prayer and support to Cami as she explores the call to Gospel life in the congregation.

Welcome, Cami!

It was an 'awesome' meeting

for presidents, principals of CSJ/SSJ secondary schools

Linda Harvison, principal of St. Joseph's Academy (SJA) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, summed it up dramatically: "Those of us from SJA Baton Rouge met our colleagues from SJA in Puerto Rico. We were going on a mission trip there over Thanksgiving and did not even know we had an SJA there!" She was commenting on the value of the first-ever meeting of presidents and principals from 20 CSJ/SSJ-sponsored high schools and academies across the United States.

The historic gathering that took place in Naperville, Illinois, in November was organized and presented by our congregation's three academies in Baton Rouge, Cleveland and La Grange Park to ensure a vibrant continuation of the CSJ/SSJ mission and charism (gift) in all of these educational institutions.

Jeff Sutliff, principal of Saint Joseph Academy in Cleveland explained, "As (CSJ/SSJ-sponsored) schools, we have special gifts that come to us through the sisters. We reached consensus that the purpose should be to strengthen the way the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph is manifest at each school."

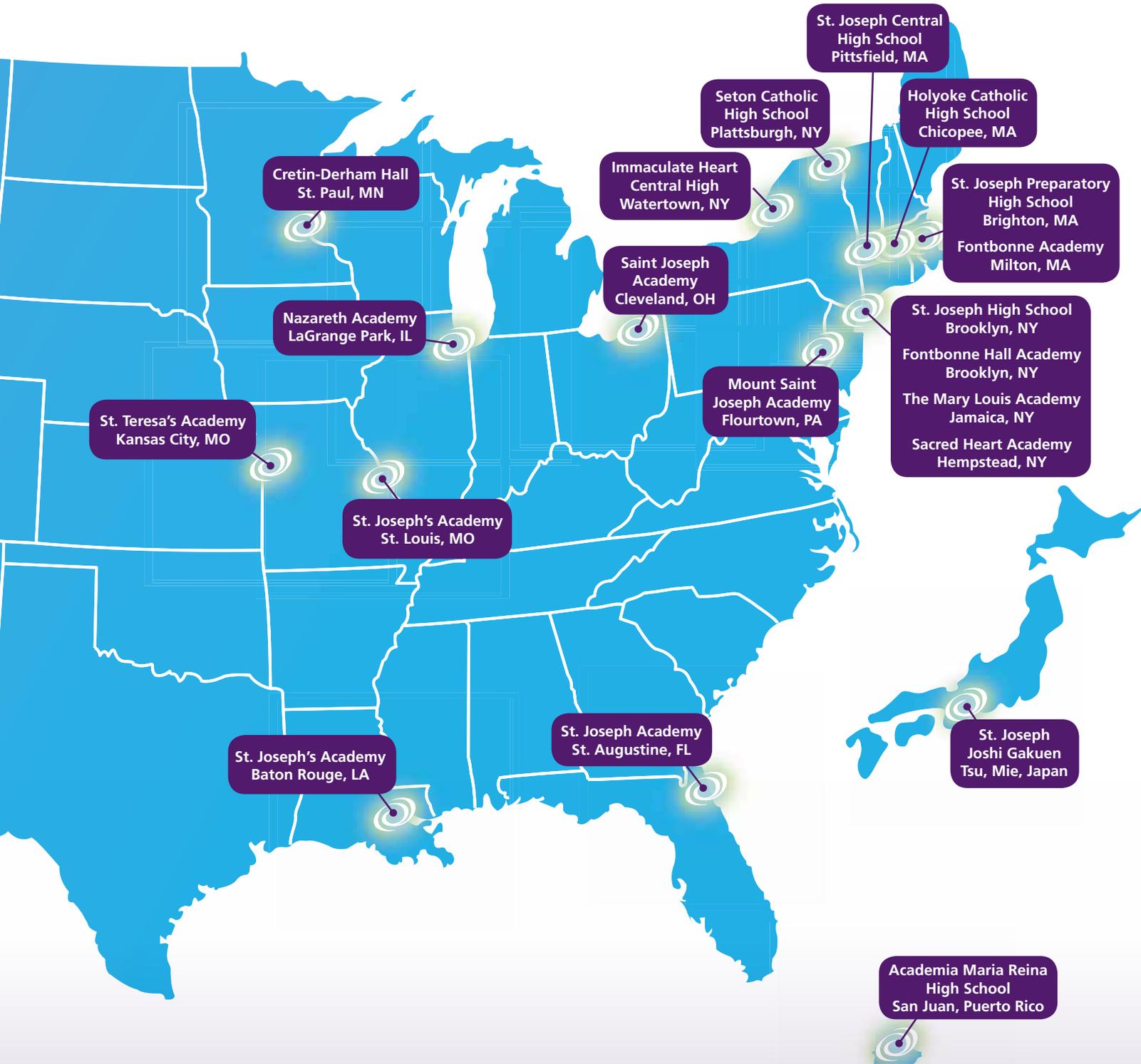
Examples he cited included 1) continuing to use the sisters' practice of sharing "the state of the heart" as a way of strengthening relationships; and 2) developing a formation program for new members of the school communities, based on sharing the charism.

Deborah Tracy, principal of Nazareth Academy in La Grange Park, Illinois, and CSJ Associate, called the meeting "awesome."

"It is as if the stars aligned just right, as all seemed so very eager for this type of connection to happen — all of these wonderful people gathered in the same room, all speaking the same "language" and all with the same roots in Le Puy, France. We accomplished what we initially set out to do: to create a connection and network of leaders in CSJ/SSJ high schools; to begin dialogue about our future vision and best practices; and to talk about the characteristics of graduates from our schools."

The next steps are already in process. Before the meeting concluded, participants selected a committee to begin planning the next gathering. In the early years, the group agreed they should meet annually. Eventually the conferences could include assistant principals, campus ministers, development directors and others. ●





We're reengineering our Centers for energy efficiency

One significant aspect of our congregation's Neighboring aNew effort is our commitment to collectively reduce our carbon footprint – that is, how much carbon dioxide we produce from our use of energy and waste materials. To do this we had to first determine what our existing carbon footprint is and then acknowledge how to right-size our buildings for greater energy and operations efficiencies.

Working with our engineering and architecture consultants from Hoffman, we are reviewing possibilities and plans to move to a much lower carbon footprint within the next ten years. A core value of the congregation and our Neighboring aNew process is to reverence Earth and all its resources. By working to right-size our buildings, apply LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and other sound green guidelines, and investigate the possibilities for solar panels and geothermal systems, we are determined to be gentle with our demands on the planet and how our energy use affects our neighbors.

One of the first things we are hoping to integrate into our right-sizing efforts is the use of solar power. We are investigating the installation of solar panels into our strategies for our centers. It seems possible that solar panels will be installed at a couple of our centers. The viability of solar energy at our centers is evaluated in terms of economic conditions in terms of energy prices, the amount of sunshine a location gets and varying regulatory issues per location. The congregation is using careful financial analysis to discern the amount of solar, the best location of solar and whether to involve third party owners or organizations. There is much that needs to be considered before we commit to installing solar panels and we are persevering with the effort.

Solar power possibilities and implications are much more varied than the dictates of the LEED program. The United States Green Building Council is dedicated to

promoting green buildings through the LEED program, which has stringent guidelines. Striving for LEED certification at some of our centers seems possible; but LEED is not the only source for guidance with green design and construction. According to Mark Hanson, from Hoffman, "LEED provides a systematic, organized approach to enable the Congregation of St. Joseph to work through these considerations. LEED also allows the congregation to see how its work and decisions compare to some of the best projects and practices."

Areas of green design and construction that are important to us are: site planning (including storm water management and habitat), water utilization, energy utilization and renewable energy, materials selection and environmental quality (including indoor air quality, daylight and views, quietness). We know we can utilize LEED whether we are formally certifying or not. We are eager to integrate the challenges of green design and construction into the building projects we are exploring.

"It is exciting for us to be making these changes and taking actions to realize our commitment to Earth," said Sister Christine Parks, CSJ, a member of the Neighboring aNew coordinating group. "We want all our neighbors to join us in embracing ways to honor the wonderful resources that God has given us. It takes courage to change systems; however, we are determined to do our best in every possible way with our properties and plans." ●

110 congregations meet to plan peace and justice strategies

Congregation of St. Joseph Sisters Mary Ellen Gondeck, Marilyn Nickol, Joellen Sbrissa, and Mary Ellen Loch were among more than 150 social justice representatives from more than 100 congregations of women religious in the U.S. and Canada for a two-day convocation on "Entering the Transforming Future: Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Ministry in the Coming Age of Religious Life." The convocation, which took place at our COSJ-sponsored River's Edge – A Place for Reflection and Action in Cleveland, created a dynamic opportunity to share innovative strategies and best practices to respond more effectively to issues that affect the lives of people and the planet.

Keynote speaker Marie Dennis, co-President of *Pax Christi International*, challenged participants to work toward the New Creation.

"Work for peace is like that – slowly pushing back the fear, the terrible threat of violence, the reality of social injustice to make room for life. Effective peace-making acknowledges the interdependence of communities around the world. The fact that our security is intrinsically connected to that of families in that little village in Afghanistan is crucial. In the soil surrounding the village are planted the landmines of further violence and the seeds of peace. But to understand that fact and to discern how we as individuals or nations might nurture the seeds of peace and snuff out the roots of violence, we have to get close enough to such marginal places – from where the world looks entirely different – to understand."

Associate Director for Social Mission for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious Ann Scholz, SSND, noted that "Women religious take seriously the Gospel call to stand with those who are marginalized and forgotten and we have a long and rich tradition of advocating for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. We remain faithful to the call to transform structures that oppress and to build the reign of God. These days have been a sacred time to learn from one



(L-R) Sisters Marilyn Nickol, CSJ, and Donna Korba, IHM, shared peace and justice experiences and learnings with Father Terry Moran.

another and to strengthen the networks which will multiply our ministry."

Ann Oestreich, IHN, co-chair of the conference, added that "While the future is unknowable, the fact that these sisters and those who represent them remain deeply committed to justice, transformation and collaboration is a sign of hope for all." ●

“There are so many ways to make a difference in this issue,” Sister Marie said, “including education, participating in a human trafficking task force, and volunteering at an agency providing services to those rescued from trafficking.” Here are just a few examples of how the congregation is currently engaged:

Associate Janet Frayer and her husband, Frank, have been involved with Project Liberty, a 501(c)3, faith-based task force in Lansing, Michigan. They have attended conferences to increase their awareness about human trafficking issues in Michigan and throughout the world. They also participated in a personal shower for a survivor to support her efforts to become independent. They have attended anti-trafficking fundraisers and supported financially both Project Liberty and the Michigan Human Trafficking Task Force. The current project with Project Liberty is assisting in developing trained teams to work one-on-one with victims of human trafficking.

Sisters Carmella Campione, CSJ, Kathleen Durkin and Jane Harrington collaborated with the Appalachian Institute at Wheeling Jesuit University to provide a forum discussing what West Virginians need to know about human trafficking. The purpose of the forum was to raise awareness about human trafficking in West Virginia and about the need for additional legislation. Speakers included William J. Ihlenfeld II, U.S. District Attorney for Northern West Virginia; Delegate Barbara Evans Fleishauer, D-51st, sponsor of human trafficking legislation; and Joyce Yedloskey, Team Coordinator, West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

After attending the congregation’s annual assembly and an anti-trafficking conference, Sister Ellen Poche, CSJ, learned that a residential program for trafficking victims called Eden House had opened in New Orleans and she could assist them by driving the women to various classes and meetings. In her time with the women each week Ellen hopes to convey the message of Jesus, “You are a loved and precious daughter of God; you are not alone.”

Other of our sisters and associates participate in human trafficking task forces in the areas in which



Sister Carmella Campione, CSJ, helped arrange the forums to raise public awareness of human trafficking.

they live. Although each task force has its own mission and direction, these groups work to prevent trafficking of persons through education and advocacy, to protect and rehabilitate trafficking victims and to pursue prosecution of perpetrators.

Project Irene, developed by congregations in Region 8 of the Leadership Conference for Women Religious (LCWR), offers additional ways we can make a difference:

- Support anti-trafficking legislation at state, national and international levels.
- Share accurate information about human trafficking with family, friends and colleagues.
- Ask libraries to purchase credible materials related to trafficking, including the *Trafficking in Persons Report*, published annually by the U.S. Department of State; and books like *The Natashas; Not a Choice, Not a Job; What I Have Been Through is Not Who I Am; Girls Like Us; and Life Interrupted*.
- Keep the national trafficking hotline number – 888-373-7888 – with you at all times and call it if you think you have witnessed a trafficking situation.

If you are interested in joining us in our efforts, please contact Sister Marie at mhogan@csjoseph.org. She will assist you in finding where your skills and interests can be used. ●

When art reflects life, opera considers the death penalty

First it was a best-selling book (1993), then a film that won Susan Sarandon an Academy Award as Best Actress (1996) playing the lead role of Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ. Our previous issue of *imagineONE* featured the *Dead Man Walking School Theatre Project* (begun in 2004) that has brought the issue of ending the death penalty to 240 schools and colleges across the country. Like the *Energizer Bunny*®, the ministry to win hearts for restorative justice instead of retribution keeps going and spreading.



Mezzo-soprano Claire Shackleton, center, daughter-in-law of CSJ employee Kim Shackleton, sang the role of the mother of one of the victims in the opera "Dead Man Walking." Here, she and her husband in the opera appear in a scene with another mezzo-soprano singing the role of Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ. Central City Opera named Claire its Young Artist of the Year.

Photo by Mark Kiryluk. Printed with permission from Central City Opera.

One more venue, opera, reaches yet another segment of society. At the turn of the Millennium, the San Francisco Opera commissioned Jake Hegge, a prominent contemporary American composer, to write the opera *Dead Man Walking*, which the company premiered in 2000. Since then, there have been more than 40 productions of the opera worldwide.

"Since its premiere in 2000, Dead Man Walking has become a modern classic, one of the most important, powerful operas ever written. ... From its shocking beginning to its emotionally searing final scene, this opera changes everyone who encounters it. Its stunning score and intense story combine into a work that "must be reckoned something of a masterpiece – a gripping, enormously skillful marriage of words and music to tell a story of love, suffering and spiritual redemption"

– San Francisco Chronicle

Kim Shackleton, a member of our congregation's mission advancement team, and her husband, Dr. Robert Shackleton of Metairie, Louisiana, took a trip to the Central City Opera House near Denver, one of the oldest opera houses in the country, to see and hear the opera. The special attraction was that their daughter-in-law, mezzo-soprano Claire Shackleton, was singing the role of Jade Boucher, mother of one of the victims.

"When Claire took on the role in the opera, she already personally opposed the death penalty," Kim revealed. "Claire told us that it was very difficult to play the role of a parent of a victim who wanted the death penalty for her daughter's killer."

Prior to the performance, the assistant director gave a talk to the audience about the show and Helen Prejean and the ministry. "It was great!" Kim said. "Claire was very influenced by the composer and director. They feel the opera does not answer any questions or favor either side. ... The point is to give the audience all the information and let them decide for themselves. ..."

Currently 34 states, the federal government and U.S. military have active death penalty statutes: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington and Wyoming. Sixteen states and the District of Columbia have no death penalty: Alaska, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia and Wisconsin. ●

Some 10,000 prison cells are brighter this year

Thanks to the generosity of some 3,000 donors, Ministry of the Arts (MOTA) was able to give away more than 10,000 of its signature wall calendars (2015) to chaplains at prisons across the country to distribute to inmates. Some customers even donated the full cost of multiple calendars and additional funds for shipping the large quantities. Last year, the prison calendar ministry received its largest donation ever: \$1,000. Both chaplains and some inmates themselves have written back to tell how the calendars have introduced a touch of beauty and spiritual refreshment to their lives in prison.



Photo by Joellen Shriisa, CSJ

Sister Chris March, CSJ, displays one of the congregation's 2015 calendars that went to prison inmates across the country for Christmas.

At 125 years, Saint Joseph Academy Still vibrant, vital and valued

Celebrating 125 years since its founding, Saint Joseph Academy (SJA) in Cleveland has not only stood the test of time, it's still acing the test. The only remaining Catholic high school for girls in the city, the academy has 710 students from 60 different feeder schools and 100 faculty and staff this 2014-15 academic year.

"Saint Joseph Academy has always encouraged each young woman to discover her unique talents," according to Principal Jeff Sutliff. "For 125 years our curriculum has evolved in anticipation of the changing demands and needs of society."



Saint Joseph Academy strives to inspire young women like those in its Class of 2018 pictured here for living lives of compassionate leadership.

SJA's academic requirements are rigorous and include 15 advanced placement courses and 30 honors classes. Its health science honors program, which has 42 students in its inaugural year, will guide and inspire students interested in healthcare careers ranging from physicians, nurses and biomedical engineers and therapists to everything in between.

Saint Joseph Academy President Mary Ann Corrigan-Davis, an accomplished businesswoman and a 1971 graduate of SJA, noted some significant facilities upgrades. "In the last three years, the school building has undergone more than \$7 million in improvements, including creating a state-of-the-art biology lab for a new health sciences honors program; upgrading WiFi, electrical and heating units; and adding a state-of-the-art fire alarm system."

"Our 125th anniversary" she continued, "is an opportunity to celebrate what makes Saint Joseph Academy a vibrant, valued and vital part of Northeast Ohio," she said. "It is and always has been a strong, academically challenging institution that guides young women to lives of compassionate leadership." ●



Saint Joseph Academy senior Emily Keller (l) Abby Gonzales (r), both members of Catholic Schools for Peace and Justice (CSPJ), introduced Sister Griselda to the student assembly.

CSJ and former NGO representative to the UN leads off the 125th Anniversary Speakers Series

Sr. Griselda Martinez Morales, CSJ, served as the inaugural speaker for Saint Joseph Academy's 125th Anniversary Speakers Series. The former non-governmental organization (NGO) representative to the UN for some 14,000+ Sisters of St. Joseph from 57 countries also visited classrooms and then spoke to an all-school assembly.

The issue of what Sister Griselda calls "the slavery of the modern age," is a focus this year of students involved in the diocesan group Catholic Schools for Peace and Justice (CSPJ).

Sister Griselda shared these facts:

- Human trafficking generates \$9.5 billion yearly in the United States.
- Approximately 300,000 children are at risk of being prostituted in the United States.
- The average age of entry into prostitution for a child victim in the United States is 13-14 years old.

"Your task," she told the students, "is to prevent. The worst thing we can do is to do nothing." ●

SPIRIT OF GIVING

Don and Marilyn Chopp

Don and Marilyn Chopp are two regulars when the Congregation of St. Joseph in LaGrange Park, Illinois, hosts special events, meetings or Mass. They have been CSJ Associates “for a very long time,” as Don says, so they consider the sisters family.

Don’s relationship with the sisters began in 1941 when he attended St. Hugh grade school in Lyons, Illinois. After college, followed by two years in the Army Chemical Corps, he went to work at the nearby Electro-Motive Division of General Motors, where he socialized with the young co-workers in his department. One Halloween, the group agreed to meet at the Lilac Lodge for dinner. Don showed up and Marilyn showed up; but no one else did. It turned out their friends “set it up” because they thought the two were perfect for each other. It worked, and Don and Marilyn are married 54 years!

In the early years of their marriage, Don and Marilyn lived around the corner from St. Hugh Parish and raised four children, who walked past the convent on their way to school each day, and often met with Sister Marlene Schemmel, CSJ, who was then principal of St. Hugh. Don went on to serve on the school board and it was the start of a lasting friendship between the Chopp family and Sister Marlene.

Sister Dorothy Lynch, CSJ, was also living in Lyons then and was on the staff at Nazareth Academy. “Don used to drive me to Nazareth every day and our friendship



Sister Grace Sbrissa, CSJ, (center) visited with longtime congregation friends and donors Marilyn and Don Chopp at the annual Donor Liturgy.

grew while we had some great conversations in the car. I feel I could ask Marilyn and Don for any favor and they would be there to help. I am grateful for their presence in my life.”

All of the Chopp children, Cathy, Dan, David and Patty, attended the sisters’ high school, Nazareth Academy in La Grange Park. Cathy graduated in the last all-girls class. Dan was one of eighteen boys

in the first co-ed class, and he also was the quarterback of the first Nazareth Academy football team. David was also a pioneer in the second co-ed class, and Patty went on to serve on the Nazareth School Board for a number of years.

“In later years, Marilyn and Don Chopp inspired me with their dedicated work for justice programs,” Sister Marlene adds. “They were very active in a ministry of a coalition of local churches settling refugees from places like Bosnia and South Sudan. I don’t think there was a thing they would not do to make life a little easier for these families.”

Just as their relationship with the sisters is long-standing, so is their commitment to giving. The Choppes have financially supported the congregation for forty-two consecutive years, donating to annual fund appeals, fundraisers and ministries. When asked why they chose to be so generous for so long, Don replied, “Friendship. It’s just a part of us to give.” ●

‘... putting
on the mind
and heart of
Christ Jesus’,
is the ultimate
source of
courage

By Cynthia Sabathier, CSI

In the beginning,
there is love. Love
is the motivator.
Love grows,
multiplies, reaches
out. Otherwise, it
atrophies and dies.
Consciously developing
an interior life is
foundational for Gospel
living, for practicing
faith that does justice.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus, by British artist Stephen B. Watley.

One of the best descriptions of the lived CSJ charism is that of contemplatives in action. This is not only distinctive of CSJs, of course. It was first coined to describe on-the-move Jesuits who took to heart the values of Jesus whose focus was bringing to birth the reign of God among the people of 1st century Palestine. For Jesus this took unprecedented courage as it does for us in the 21st century.

Putting compassion before law Jesus found himself ever more alienated from religious and political leaders. Standing with people who were marginalized identified him with them. For this, Jesus paid the ultimate price, laying down his life that others might live (John 15:13). Christians today in many parts of the world are paying this price. Each of our sisters who walk with someone on death row to the very end follows the courageous Jesus. For some of us, the price asked of us by God or our dear neighbor may be less dramatic but just as real and costly. It may mean lending my voice for those who have little or none: by speaking publicly, by writing to change legislation, by speaking up when I hear a racist remark among friends.

“Courage is the most important of all virtues, because without it you cannot practice any other virtue consistently,” said Maya Angelou, paraphrasing St. Thomas Aquinas. What makes one courageous when it is easier to turn one’s back? Courageous people act when it matters. Fear may well be present but willingness to act under the influence of grace carries the day. This requires contemplation – reflection followed by action followed by reflection. It is a learned rhythm, a way of being. It centers on relationship, THE RELATIONSHIP each human has with Jesus of Nazareth who became the Cosmic Christ. Sometimes we name this lived way of being, “putting on the mind, and heart of Christ Jesus,” (Phil. 2:5) incarnational spirituality, or embodied spirituality.

From our earliest years in religious life CSJs are formed as a Eucharistic people, cultivated in this unique field of grace, with sound habits of contemplative prayer, giving substantial time to this daily. Other foundational practices are daily, weekly and monthly *examen*, spiritual direction, conferences, retreats and individual and shared discernment. Since Vatican II, many of our lay colleagues both live and attest to the grace of these habits in their own lives. We regularly employ practices we call sharing the State of the Heart and the Order of the House. The natural growth of these lived practices, sometimes described as ongoing conversion, is to move always outward towards inclusivity. This is as natural

and as dynamic as the ever expanding universe. The only power capable of stopping the outreach is humans choosing otherwise.

Where do you see this embodied spirituality? How lived? Practiced with grace? With courage? Endurance? Magnanimity? Powerful words which produce powerful deeds.

Near the end of my time in Manresa, Spain, a young woman colleague sought me out with, “I see how you love everyone. How do you do it? I want to be able to do that. Can you teach me a first step?” This is our charism: to love everyone, every time, every place. It is God’s vision for the human race. Sister Kathy Sherman sings our CSJ mission mantra: “We are a people moved by profound love of God and of the neighbor. We live and we move to draw all into union with God and with one another. Amen.”

Wherever we find ourselves, we are among those who are eager to love. Eager to learn the great love to which God invites us. Let us be clear that we have no patent or copyright on the spirituality I have just described. Our only claim is our great desire to live well the generous charism God puts into our hearts. It takes shared as well as individual grace to do this, to show our love in deeds over and above words (#234 Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius). This grace is ours abundantly. Witness “our deeds over and above words” enfolded in the dynamic living of our Generous Promises. (See page 2 of this issue.) We find it enfolded in our willingness to do the hard work of listening to those who embrace views different from us. Our deeds match our words as we read and research facts to support, speak and act on our Gospel values. May we be faithful to the One who goes before and beckons us, who confidently leads by example, “I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly...pressed down... full measure...flowing over.” (John 10:10; Luke 6:38) ●



Sister Cynthia Sabathier, CSJ, (Sr. Maura) is a spiritual director and facilitator of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius at St. Joseph Spirituality Center Baton Rouge. With her master’s degrees in English and in ministry, she has used her lifelong passion of faith formation in a variety of ministries including teaching, administration, initial and ongoing formation of religious, and pastoral work with laity. Her avocation is journaling and the arts.



American Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King (1929 - 1968) and his wife Coretta Scott King lead a black voting rights march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capital in Montgomery.

To everything there is a season, and a time for courageous love

The history of race relations in America is much like the stories told on a quilt that continues to grow, with each patch telling a remarkable tale. Today, a large public story patch is the national 50th anniversary commemoration of three difficult attempts people made to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965, resulting in the passage of the *Voting rights Act of 1965*. Another is the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* Supreme Court decision that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Other patches of the quilt of race relations tell more local and individual stories, painful stories and stories of great courage. Here are just a few examples from Sisters of St. Joseph experiences:

Contributors to this article: Sister Mary Palmer, CSJ, Wheeling, West Virginia; Sister Jane Aucoin, CSJ, Wichita, Kansas; Sisters Janet Bolger and Marlene Schemmel, CSJs, La Grange Park, Illinois; Sister Dolores Keller[†], CSJ, and Sister Mary Pung, CSJ, Nazareth, Michigan; and Dawn Gruba, Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester.



His voice charged with emotion, Congressman John Lewis thanked the Sisters of St. Joseph for nursing him back to health from severe injuries on "Bloody Sunday."

'Bloody Sunday' in Selma, Alabama – 1965

On March, 7, 1965, a young John Lewis was beaten so badly during a civil rights flashpoint known as "Bloody Sunday," he wondered if he would survive. It was the first of three attempts to get the citizens marching for voting rights from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, the state's capital. In Selma, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester, New York, who were missioned in the south since 1940, nursed his long recovery and hundreds of other injured marchers at Good Samaritan Hospital. Locally known as "the Negro hospital," it was the only hospital in nine counties that served African American patients.

Then, Lewis was chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Today he is the congressman from Georgia's Fifth Congressional District, since 1986. Sister Barbara Lum, SSJ, was a nurse in Selma when Lewis was injured. Today, she is on the nursing faculty at the Rochester Educational Opportunity Center (REOC), which provides career training for adults. Not long ago, she invited Congressman Lewis to be the guest speaker at the REOC graduation, with a special reception following.

In a voice charged with emotion, Congressman Lewis talked about the care he received from the Sisters of St. Joseph so many years ago.

"Thank you to Sister Barbara and all the SSJs," he began. "Thank you for what you did on March 7, 1965, and before and after. ... I was wounded, hit in the head and thought I was going to die. I thought to myself, how can President Johnson send more troops to

Vietnam, but not send troops to Selma to protect us? You took care of a lot of people that day and I have been wanting to come here for a long time and say thank you. Without you, I don't know what would have happened to us."



Sister Barbara Lum, a nursing supervisor at Good Samaritan Hospital, "capped" graduates of the licensed practical nursing program at the hospital.

Congressman Lewis came to realize that the serious wounds he and others suffered were not in vain.

"The Monday morning after the march," he recalled, "Dr. Martin Luther King came to visit me and said, 'Don't worry. We will make it from Selma to Montgomery.' A few days later we did just that and Congress and Johnson introduced the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*, which was signed into law on August 6, 1965."

Sympathizers from the north join the struggle



Sister Dolores is the person on the left in the CSJ/SSJ habit.

Sister Dolores Keller[†], CSJ, (formerly Sister Marie Dolores) participated in the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery. She was invited by Father Jim Sheehan from the Archdiocese of Detroit to go with him and three other sisters from Detroit to march.

Sister Dolores remembered that upon arrival they were asked to go to Brown Chapel to leave contact

information, in case of death. On March 21, federal troops and federalized Alabama National Guardsmen escorted the marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge and down Highway 80. Sister Dolores remembered shaking the hand of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Upon returning to Detroit, Sister Dolores gave several talks around the state and shared her experiences with various audiences. Subsequently, she was invited by Dr. Charles Wright of Detroit to be a charter board member of the newly forming Charles Wright African Museum.

Another hospital, another time for courage

St. Francis Hospital in Charleston, West Virginia, hired its first three well-qualified graduate nurses of color between the spring of 1950 and spring of 1951. In May 1951, twenty white nurses demanded – without making any professional complaint against the three nurses – that Administrator Sister Helen Clare Bauerbach dismiss them. When she refused, they threatened a walk-out.



Sister Helen Clare, CSJ

“Reserved and gentle though she was,” according to the archival files on St. Francis Hospital, “Helen Clare stood firm, ... The 20 did, indeed, walk out and influenced all but two of the 25 physicians on the medical staff to espouse their cause. The doctors who would leave advised Sister Helen Clare that it was best that the black nurses be ‘eliminated.’”

The Sisters of St. Joseph announced publicly that “As a Catholic institution, this hospital will continue to uphold Christian principles of charity and justice as well as the spirit of the United States Constitution.” Mother Perpetua Hurley, SSJ, Bishops Swint and McDonnell and the entire SSJ congregation stood by Sister Helen Clare throughout the nasty ordeal.

The support from SSJ hospitals in West Virginia and from Sisters of Divine Providence in Pittsburgh was truly magnanimous. Substitute nurses came in from

other cities and stayed until enough new nurses could be hired to return staffing to its normal level. The ugly situation created a short-term administrative nightmare and a long-term financial burden which took a couple of decades to overcome.

Sister Helen Clare’s courageous action spoke volumes about charism, service and leadership on behalf of the *dear neighbor* without distinction. The Jesuit weekly, *America*, and *Interracial Review* both lauded the gallant position taken by St. Francis Hospital as having tremendous national significance in upholding the dignity and worth of every person.

Early integration of schools in New Orleans

As a young nun in 1949, Sister Jane Aucoin, CSJ, taught four weeks of religion classes to black children in Grosse Tete, Louisiana, in a public school building for blacks: a tin roofed, four-room school house; no running water, no indoor plumbing, crude wooden floors, with cracks between the boards large enough to lose pencils; set in the midst of a cow pasture. “That was the end of any possibility for me to believe ‘separate could be equal,’” she decided.



Segregationists picketing the Louisiana State Supreme Court building in protest of integration in the schools in 1960.

Years later, in the summer of 1962, Sister Jane was preparing to be principal of St. Joseph Academy in New Orleans. Word had come from Archbishop Cody that spring that white Catholic schools were to prepare to receive Negro students in September.

“On September 4, several extraordinarily courageous young women broke the color barrier at the then 104-year Catholic school,” Sister Jane recalls. “Concerned parents were on hand in greater numbers than usual. So were segregationists and white-supremacist protesters, shouting and waving signs. There were police, too, of course.” Only seven black girls enrolled that first year.

"I cannot say enough to praise them for making this step, in spite of threatening shouts and the very real danger from rabid segregationists," Sister Jane concluded.

In December 1963, *Interracial Review* ran an extraordinary personal account of integration at St. Joseph Academy written by two unnamed students, one Negro, one white. Summarizing the account, Sister Jane explains, "The black girl wrote about the experience of being shunned by many and welcomed by a few students. She found all her teachers 'nice.' ... But she added this: 'There is only one thing I wish. I wish they would talk about race. The Ole Miss crisis is the talk of the country right now, but not once have we discussed it in class. ... It is obvious that the teachers are avoiding the issue. I would prefer it being discussed openly, but again, I think they are trying to spare our feelings.'"

According to Sister Jane, "It took some time for the faculty to overcome this reticence; but eventually, we did learn that silence can be more hurtful than facing differences openly and working to resolve them. ..."

The Chicago Archdiocese tries 'Operation Hospitality'



Demonstrators and Chicago Freedom Movement members march in lines, some with posters, under the Chicago El (elevated railroad) during a protest calling for the firing of School Superintendent Benjamin Willis by Mayor Daley over the former's delays in integrating area schools, Chicago, Illinois, mid 1960s.

In January 1968, the Chicago Archdiocese announced it would begin a school integration program it called "Operation Hospitality" the following September. It would involve bussing black children from Chicago to white suburban schools in an effort to begin providing equal education. In the interim, Dr. Martin Luther King,

Jr., was assassinated on April 4, 1968, leading to riots and arson in cities across the country, including Chicago.

With tension in the country still palpable that September, Sister Janet Bolger, CSJ, was just leaving a 6-year assignment as principal of all-white St. Hugh grade school in the western suburb of Lyons and Sister Marlene Schemmel, CSJ, would be her replacement.

"We were told that we would be receiving 12 or 14 little children from St. Agatha's." Sister Janet recalls. "The memory that I have – that is so mixed – is when we had the parish meeting. The parents, some of the parishioners, gathered in the hall. It was filled. A representative from the archdiocese was there to explain. But it was so sad, because, for me, after years of living there and loving Lyons and loving the children and the parents – who were so good to us – to hear the comments, the fear – 'We don't want them coming here.' – It was just a very sad moment for me. One lady said to me on the way out, 'This has nothing to do with religion.'" Author Mary Anne Radmacher reminds us, "Sometimes courage is a little voice at the end of the day that says 'I'll try again tomorrow.'"

When she became principal there, Sister Marlene described the first day of school when, as the children were arriving, a reporter from a major Chicago TV station was there with two big TV trucks and several hostile and some friendly parents. "Now one group of parents were called the host parents, because they would take the kids with their kids home for lunch every day. I want to say several of the children and parents developed strong relationships. There was another group of parents who were not interested in integrating the school standing by the reporter. Actually I could not believe, when they were interviewed, what they said about this program; nor could I believe the signs and posters they held in their hands protesting this program coming to St. Hugh."

Offering an assessment of the program, Sister Marlene said, "It made some impact. I believe it raised the consciousness of some people about the Gospel and its teaching about being one. The program lasted three short years. The reason the program closed was because it was very expensive to bus the children and I think the diocese began to see that the busing program wasn't going to be reciprocal in any way. One other

thought was that the sending schools were depleted of their leaders, because those who came to the Western Suburbs were hand-picked. They were smart, disciplined and encouraged by their parents to be part of this program.”

In closing, Sister Marlene observed, “Those kids who came were in the fourth-to-seventh grades. They’re now in their 50s. Wouldn’t you like to see some of them now,” she asked Sister Janet.

The Freedom Quilting Bee success made it all the way to the Smithsonian



A sparsely populated and very poor farming community called Gee’s Bend, 35 miles from Selma, consisted mainly of African American people whose ancestors had worked on a large plantation. After the Civil War, they remained

in the area and made a meager living by sharecropping. Winters were short, but cold, so the women made quilts for their families.

One day in 1965, an Episcopalian minister named Reverend Francis X. Walter was touring the area and noticed the quilts with their bold and distinctive designs airing in the yards. He encouraged the women to organize a cooperative, and they named it the Freedom Quilting Bee. Reverend Walter took the quilts to New York City and sold them at auctions. Top decorators and department store buyers began to place large orders, and soon the Freedom Quilting Bee expanded.

But Reverend Walter noticed the quilters needed help with bookkeeping. He appealed to the Edmundite/SSJ Mission office in Selma where the director, Father Crowley, recommended Sister Catherine Teresa Martin, SSJ, who had just arrived from Rochester, New York, to work at the mission office. Now deceased, her role was pivotal in getting the business in order. She set up an efficient bookkeeping system, organized orders and typed letters.

“In the beginning,” she told the sisters, “we weren’t certain as to whether a number of the quilts had been

paid for. We didn’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings, but we needed to know. So, we wrote letters saying something like, ‘We are a new grassroots organization and our bookkeeping isn’t the best. Please forgive us, but we need to ask if you paid for the quilt you purchased from us.’” Checks began to come in immediately.

As additional orders came in, some from big companies such as Sears, Roebuck and Company, Sister Catherine created cost analyses to help quilters figure out ways to make production more efficient. The quilters accepted the new ways of working, happy to be part of an organization that belonged to them.

In 2003, the quilters of Gee’s Bend, founded a new group called “The Gee’s Bend Quilters’ Collective.” In August, the U.S. Postal Service issued a book of Gee’s Bend Quilt commemorative stamps showing ten quilt patterns made between 1940 and 2001. In 2006, the *Smithsonian* magazine announced “There’s a new exhibition of works by the quilters of Gee’s Bend, Alabama, whose lives have been transformed by worldwide acclaim for their artistry.” ●



Titled Rosa Parks I, by Yvonne Wells and made in 2005, this quilt measures 89.5 x 73 inches. It is made of cotton, polyester, and plastic buttons. Photo courtesy of the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts.

Generating the energy of love and leadership into the future

By Kathleen Durkin, CSJ, and Kathy Brazda, CSJ

It will come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the demographics of women's religious congregations that an age gap exists between us and younger Catholics from where the next generations of leaders will be coming. There is, however, no "gap of the spirit," which stretches our hearts and commitments across the expanse of years.

Though fewer in number than years ago, there are sisters who continue to minister in our high schools, in elementary schools, college and university campuses and in parish ministry. Their ministry affords a valuable perspective into the worldview of younger persons. Recently, the congregation has directed attention on these age and culture gaps. We've asked: How will we demonstrate a "preferential option for the young" in our mission of active, inclusive love? How might our ability to listen and dialogue help generate a future that will ignite and support the spirits and gifts of younger generations?

These questions have prompted some specific initiatives. A couple of years ago, in response to a U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph call to get involved in conversation with lay groups, the Congregation of St. Joseph committed to inviting people together to talk about their experience of "Church." As a result, two groups of younger adults - one in Wheeling, West Virginia, and another in LaGrange Park, Illinois - continue to meet and share experiences of faith and its connection to their lives.

One participant in Wheeling explained: "For me, when I am busy, reflection and things that feed my spirit are often the first to go. When I was invited to join this faith sharing group I was excited. Each time we meet it feels like a mini retreat. The others who attend are all like-minded people who are also looking for something more. These meetings allow us to have discussions that are thought provoking, as well. Often I find myself leaving, thinking about something someone else said."



These volunteers and staff came to Taller de José from Amate House, a Chicago Archdiocese young adult volunteer program.

Another said: "This group is a wonderful opportunity to break bread together, pray, share faith and talk about things of the heart. The people in this group are filled with depth and substance and rooted in Gospel living. That is important as I share in the charism of the Congregation of Saint Joseph as a lay employee and as someone who has been connected with the Sisters of St. Joseph for about 30 years."

A group of seven younger adults meet with Sisters Kathy Brazda and Pat Bergen in the LaGrange Park area. They come together for a spiritual practice the sisters use called "Sharing of the Heart" and discussion of CSJ spirituality. One participant explained: "I keep coming to this gathering because in the sharing



I experience a deeper sense of being one with others, find God in the midst of what's happening in my life and leave with a sense of purpose and direction."

New times call us to be alert to new settings for connecting with and supporting a next generation of leaders who share our vision and values, even indirectly. Sometimes that connection comes through our commitment to "share our resources." Recently, the Congregation Gift Committee provided funds for a collaborative effort between Wheeling Jesuit University and FracTracker Alliance. Our historical connection with the Jesuits created a natural relationship for us to support this project and our commitment to care for Earth made the educational mission of FracTracker a good fit.

FracTracker's Student Monitoring Research Team (SMRT) program offers unique opportunities for groups of highly motivated students and supportive faculty to participate in field research programs focused on the environmental impacts of unconventional oil and gas extraction.

Through Mary Ellen Cassidy, Community Outreach Coordinator for FracTracker, student teams are trained to locate natural gas well pads and other gas related activities by studying maps and imagery provided by FracTracker and following up and partnering on referrals from impacted communities. Students will share their findings and experiences with the impacted community and other interested parties, including regional/national audiences affiliated with Wheeling Jesuit University and FracTracker.

One of the student monitors, Rachel Wadell, thought this about her experience: "Participation in this project definitely connected to the Jesuit value of 'educating women and men for others.' As a biology major, I was able to understand the processes that were involved in fracking and explain them in a way that others would understand.

"One of my favorite parts of this project was meeting with members of the community who had concerns about fracking in their area. We were able to answer questions they had, and they often posed questions we had not thought of. Evan (Collins) and I researched these questions and were able to meet back up with the community members later to explain what we had found."



Rachel and Evan monitoring a site.

Evan Collins, another student monitor, commented that "The Jesuit ideal of learning and then teaching others about what is happening in the Wheeling area and beyond is of great benefit." From the students' perspective it was important to learn from those involved in the fracking/drilling process as well as those experiencing its effects. Learning, documenting, gathering information for purposes of educating the public is the larger goal of this program.

In another case of finding substantial ways of engaging young people, Sister Kathy Brazda, executive director of CSJ-sponsored *Taller de José* in Chicago asked our congregation's previous Leadership Team to consider "a preferential option for the young." By this she meant that the team might provide funds to support the leadership development of young adults who serve as volunteers in the *Taller* ministry. Happily, the Congregation Leadership Team responded with an enthusiastic "Yes!"

Since *Taller* opened eight years ago, Sister Kathy has had the opportunity to work with approximately 50 young adults. She says, "I am intentional about passing on our charism to these young adults who serve at *Taller de José*. They come as social work interns, Clinical Pastoral Education interns, seminarians, ministerial students, and from the Chicago Archdiocese young adult volunteer program called Amate House. The financial contribution of the congregation paid for the stipend of the Amate volunteers."

Sister Kathy believes that by ministering at *Taller de José*, each of the young adults has learned how to 'be one with the *dear neighbor*.' "They articulate and live the mission of inclusive love. They know and understand

the call of our Generous Promises (See page 2 of this issue.), especially working in collaboration to feed the hungers of the world and networking to bring about inclusivity and mutuality.”

Kerry McGuire, a law student at the University of Minnesota who worked at *Taller* in the past, shared that her law instructor had commented on her capacity to be “present” to clients when interviewing them. Kerry noted: “I have the Congregation of St. Joseph and *Taller de José* to thank for that. What can be an intimidating part of law school is not so for me.”

Another *Taller* volunteer, Anna Mayer shared that, “Ministering at *Taller de José* has taught me that work can either be “just a job” or it can be a ministry, depending on how you approach it. Whether it is accompanying clients, waiting at a courthouse for hours, planning fundraising events, or even just taking out the trash, I’m learning to remind myself that everything we do should ultimately serve the mission of *Taller*.

“Ministering at *Taller de José* has meant a great deal to me. It is where I’ve encountered the harsh realities of broken and unjust social systems. It’s where I’ve learned from the wisdom of women who have served in ministry for more than 50 years. It’s where I’ve been challenged to see people and situations differently. It’s where I’ve felt encouraged and supported to grow, to find my voice, and to take on leadership roles far earlier than I expected to. It’s where I’ve had the pleasure of meeting so many generous individuals who are committed to creating real change.”

Another *Taller* worker, Carla Leon, said “Today’s fast-moving society can be a barrier to developing



Young adult groups meet regularly with Sisters Pat Bergen and Kathy Brazda in La Grange Park, near Chicago (top photo), and with Sister Kathleen Durkin (photo below) in Wheeling, West Virginia, to share experiences of faith and its connection to their lives.

effective interpersonal relationships. We can get too distracted and ignore the presence of our neighbor. Working at *Taller de José* has allowed me to build on my interpersonal relationships at work, which plays critical role in developing trust and positive feelings with co-workers and clients.”



When we come together with younger adults for prayer and sharing, for ministry, for supporting leadership development or when we share our resources, we create relationships by which we discover shared values, vision, desires and hopes for the future which can surpass any generational divides. The younger women and men we’re coming to know are signs of hope for all of us as we seek to generate the energy of love and leadership into the future. ●



Sister Kathy Brazda, CSJ, has served as executive director of *Taller de José* since 2007. She has ministered in the Archdiocese of Chicago as a Junior High and High School teacher for seventeen years and then as pastoral associate of Notre Dame de Chicago Parish for eleven years. As a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, her work as executive director of *Taller de José* enables Sr. Kathy to expand the congregation’s mission of active, inclusive love.



Sister Kathleen Durkin, CSJ, is a retreat leader, spiritual director, formation mentor and facilitator. Kathleen served in congregation leadership and holds master’s degrees in religious education and organization development. Inspired by our call to neighbor anew, Kathleen is engaged in convening a group of younger adults for “Food, Faith Sharing and Conversation” and in planning a day, “Growing Food, Health and Hope” for people involved in developing a local food economy.



Vicki Schieber holds a picture of her daughter, Shannon, who was brutally raped and murdered when she was a graduate student.

Letting go of anger was *key to forgiving*

By Marianne Race, CSJ

I met Vicki Schieber after a talk she gave that mesmerized the audience, bringing many to tears. Shannon Schieber, the only daughter of Vicki and her husband, Sylvester, had been raped and murdered. When Vicki tells the story of this tragedy and its aftermath her listeners are spellbound. It isn't the gruesome details of this horrific crime that cause the silent attention; it is Vicki's telling of her journey to forgiveness.

"If you had asked us a month before Shannon's death what our reaction would be to losing our precious child through a violent crime," Vicki says, "we would have responded like any parent. Our reaction would be shock, horror, grief, anger and a strong desire for revenge." Those emotions are normal.

"We experienced all of that," she says, "but we didn't want to stay there. We are not angry people."

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hen she and her husband came home from identifying Shannon's body, they were met by their parish priests, by family and neighbors and co-workers who greeted them with love and compassion. That

community continued to surround them with great care in the weeks and months after Shannon's death. "We were so blessed then, and to this day, by our faith and the support of others," Vicki says. Vicki's background also helped her journey. She was trained as a social worker. She knows that if you hold on to and continue to feed anger you cannot heal. She had counseled others paralyzed by anger and knew she had to apply this same principle to herself.

Her Catholic faith supported her, too. Both she and Syl grew up in Catholic families and cherish their faith. She believed in the sanctity of life before this tragedy and was able to hold on to that belief, even applying it to someone who had committed a terrible crime that changed her life so profoundly. Syl, too, was supported by his faith. "Syl," Vicki says, "is a more analytical person, our pace was different. His journey was a bit longer than mine." Vicki remembers the moment when, at a Saturday evening liturgy, Syl was able to say the *Our Father* again. It had taken a long time before he could pray the words, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

In the years since her daughter's death Vicki was first supported by and now works with Murder Victim's Families for Reconciliation (MVFR). MVFR is a national organization of families who have had loved ones taken by homicide, including the legal homicide of capital punishment. They know what families and communities need in the aftermath of murder. A death penalty trial can cause significant harm to families.

"The whole process is an ordeal for the families of victims," says Syl. "For many it is devastating to go through the trial and hearings and media attention while they're grieving and angry. We've seen it ruin family members' health, their marriages and even their lives." MVFR advocates to replace the death penalty with responses that help heal the damage caused by violence and build safer communities.

Four years after Shannon's death, the person responsible for this crime was apprehended. The



Shown with Vicki at a Catholic Mobilizing Network conference, Kirk Bloodsworth was the first person in the U.S. to be exonerated from death row by DNA evidence. He had been convicted of murder in Maryland in 1985. After serving almost nine years in prison, two on death row, he was released in 1993.

prosecutor wanted the death penalty. The Schiebers did not agree. "The prosecuting attorney said she didn't care what the Schiebers' position was; the appropriate penalty here was the death penalty," says Syl. "The vast majority of people probably would not have stood up to that, but we were not about to be party to another killing," Vicki added. The Schiebers made their position clear to the prosecutors. After his apprehension in April and aware of the clear evidence against him, the offender pleaded guilty to multiple acts of rape and assault in two states. Five weeks later, at the sentencing hearing, the offender was given life without the possibility of parole. Had the sentence been the death penalty appeals are required, which involves the victim's family and can stretch over 20 years, though the average length is 17 years. The Schiebers were grateful to be relieved of this extended anguish.

Vicki's faith, her training, a supportive family and community, MVFR and her buoyant personality are all significant and essential factors that helped and supported her in her journey to forgiveness.

Vicki was born on Pentecost. She quotes her mother as saying, "those tongues of fire descended on you and you haven't stopped talking since." This tragedy and

the grace that helped her heal have led to her current ministry. And it is talking! Vicki works full-time in efforts to abolish the death penalty. She has helped eliminate the death penalty in several states including Connecticut, New Jersey and her home state of Maryland. She is hopeful that Kansas and Nebraska will move in the direction of abolition. She talks with the families of murder victims and the families of those who have committed these crimes. She will speak to large groups or to a peace and justice class in a high school. The best place to change hearts and minds, she believes, is among high school and college students, as this is a strong venue for education about the death penalty.

Vicki is hopeful that her efforts and the work of so many organizations across the country will eventually make a significant difference. "Changing minds is a slow, evolving process," she says. But support to end the use of the death penalty is coming from new and surprising sources. For example, a new organization--Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty --made its debut at the 2013 Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC) conference. Roy Brown, former Montana House Majority Leader stated, "It might be easier to allow the death penalty to continue if it were less expensive than life in prison; if the courts treated rich and poor equally; if it truly was a deterrent and if everyone that was executed was guilty. But the death penalty is none of those things." Another source, the European Union (EU), makes no secret of its death penalty stance. EU guidelines call for universal abolition of the death penalty and declare that doing so would "[contribute] to the enhancement of human dignity and the progressive development of human rights." EU agencies contributed more than \$4.8 million to U.S. anti-death penalty organizations between 2009 and 2013. Manufacturers in Europe refuse to sell certain chemical drugs to the U.S. that will be used for



Vicki and Syl (l-r) travel to speak to groups all across the country about ending the death penalty.

executions. The U.S. media, too, is a source of hope in its education of the general public, bringing the death penalty with its errors and inconsistencies out of the shadows into everyday conversation.

Vicki attributes her ability to forgive to "amazing grace." There is no doubt that her act of forgiveness has unleashed in her a powerful energy capable of changing the world. She can't do it alone. I, for one, am ready to help. ●



Sister Marianne Race, CSJ, lifelong Chicagoan, has served in high school and congregational leadership. She is currently co-leading women's retreats in the Holy Land, working with Catholic Mobilizing Network and providing some adult education in Scripture.

Vicki Schieber serves as the Education Coordinator for the CSJ-sponsored Catholic Mobilizing Network (CMN) and staffs its internship and educational programming initiatives at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, MD. Vicki also served as co-editor of "Where Justice and Mercy Meet: Catholic Opposition to the Death Penalty," published in 2012 by Liturgical Press. This book won two national awards as a comprehensive exploration of the Catholic stance against capital punishment, and was written and edited primarily by Mount faculty members. Vicki became active in the abolition movement following the murder of her daughter Shannon in 1998. Initially Vicki worked with murder victim family support groups like Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation, and now is actively engaged in state-level abolition work across the United States.

Reflection

Choosing to love courageously

By Sister Mary Clark, CSJ

Recently I was asked to give a talk to a cancer support group. Over the years I have given many talks, to many groups of people; but this one was clearly different. "I come as one of you. ..." There was an immediate connection among all of us. Each of us in the room was living in an "unfamiliar land," a place where we were all finding our way with the help, love and support of family, friends and a deep belief that God is very close.

We seem to live so much of our lives unconsciously until something happens and we find we need to make some courageous choices. My sister is living through bankruptcy. This has resulted in the loss of a way of life she held dear for many years, giving up her home and friends, moving to a new state, learning to live simply and finding it is enough. I too am living in this unfamiliar land where I continue to befriend the cancer that has made eating and speech so difficult. Sister Kathy Sherman's mantra, "I (God) am with you, always with you," has become a part of my daily prayer. Compassion (to suffer with another) enables us to listen to another's story without judging or even offering advice. In Henri Nouwen's classic book, *Heart speaks to Heart*, he offers this sage advice: "Our hearts can be changed and transformed as we listen with the human heart of Jesus."

How can our hearts not be moved as we watch the nightly news and see small children sleeping on the floor in centers where they await deportation back to the very violence their families had fled? What about when the news reported that several church members had been arrested for feeding homeless people in Florida? Surely we, as a country, need to rescue our very soul from greed and power. We see the Pascal mystery being lived out daily right in front of our eyes. Lord, have mercy on us.

In other ways, courageous love abounds: See the husband lovingly spoon-feed his wife of 60 years who is suffering with Alzheimer's. A friend takes time to visit the single mom of two children with autism. Tens of thousands of volunteers work tirelessly for immigration reform. We can talk to the young man working at McDonalds - his third job today. He is simply trying to make a living for his family. These are the ways of ordinary people.

We are invited to open our eyes and see with the heart of Jesus everywhere we look these days. There is no shortage of moments in our lives where we can love courageously. Are we willing to resolve to live consciously of those moments when we can choose to love courageously? ●





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Do you love serving God's poor and vulnerable people? Would you like to volunteer for a year with other young women who have that same love of serving people in need? Do you want to enhance and improve your leadership skills, deepen your spirituality and experience living intentionally in community and being part of social justice in action?

If your answer to any or all of these questions is "yes," then we Sisters of St. Joseph invite you to consider serving as a St. Joseph Worker.

The St. Joseph Worker Program is a dynamic volunteer program that offers meaningful experience to women who are generous enough to give a year ministering, sharing community and praying together in the spirit of Sisters of St. Joseph. It is a life-changing opportunity for women to share in Gospel work while growing your talents in an environment of intentional community, simple living, leadership, justice and spirituality.

Our next program runs from August 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016 in Wichita, Kansas. Call or email, Sister Lois O'Malley, CSJ at 316-689-4029 or lomalley@csjoseph.org if you would like to consider the possibilities. You can also find us on Facebook at Wichita St. Joseph Worker Program.