

Meeting Pope Leo

In April, Sister Kathy Brazda (far right), President of the Congregational Leadership Team and Past President of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), traveled to Rome along with other LCWR officers - Sisters Deb Sciano, President-Elect, Carol Zinn, Executive Director, and Vicky Larson, President. During their time at the Vatican, they met with several dicasteries and were blessed to have a private audience with Pope Leo where they discussed everything from immigration to religious life. Before their meeting, they presented the Pope with several gifts including CD's of Sister Kathy Sherman's music.

"It was truly a privilege to meet with Pope Leo during our visit to the Vatican," said Sister Kathy. "A deep listener, he wanted to know about consecrated women serving in the Church, and we shared a deep concern about the plight of immigrants in our country." Sister Kathy described their conversation as free flowing, discussing everything from the current state of the nation and world, to the call to synodality, to working to end polarization in the Church and country. "We also thanked him for his leadership and the appointment of new Bishops in the U.S.," said Sister Kathy. "We were so grateful for the opportunity to meet with him and it gave all of us such hope for the Church and world." ●



MIRABEAU WATER GARDEN UPDATE

Construction continues on the Mirabeau Water Garden project in the Filmore (Gentilly) neighborhood in New Orleans. When complete, the 25 acre water garden will help manage flood water from periodic torrential rains by holding and slowly dispersing water, thus helping protect neighbors' properties.

The land, once home to a congregational provincial house where our sisters lived and ministered from 1950 to 2005, remained undeveloped for many years until our sisters met New Orleans architect David Waggoner of Waggoner and Ball Architects, a global expert in natural water management. He dreamed of creating a water garden that could manage flood waters and serve as a model for working with nature to control flooding.

The sisters shared his dream and through a collaborative effort between the congregation, Waggoner and Ball Architects, and the City of New Orleans, the Mirabeau Water Garden was born and broke ground in 2023. It is now scheduled for completion in early Fall.

Once operational, the Mirabeau Water Garden will help mitigate flooding and potential loss of property for the people and City of New Orleans. Developing this sacred land for use in this way bears witness to our mission and commitment to care for God's creation and one another without distinction. In addition to water management, the land will also function as recreational space for the community and will include playing fields, green space, and walking paths.

Phase two of the project which includes a dedication to the sisters will follow in the years to come. We are so proud to be part of this innovative, inspiring, and much needed project! ●



Phase one of the water garden project is expected to be completed in early Fall.



Construction continues.



Sister Joan Laplace talks with a construction worker on site.



ASSOCIATES

Earlier this year, a commitment ceremony was held in Minnesota for new Associate Vera Zapata (right). Sister Sue Torgersen, a member of the Congregational Leadership Team, was there to help welcome Vera to the community with others joining via Zoom. Welcome Vera!



At the holidays, associates in Baton Rouge organized a food drive for their local Hispanic community. In response to heightened fear caused by the presence of ICE, the community requested food assistance. Associates, sisters, and brothers responded generously, filling the room with donated items. The food was delivered to the Hispanic Apostolate community. Meat was purchased for the Gardere Street Initiative and monetary donations were shared with both organizations.

IN MEMORIAM



Sister Caroline Benken, CSJ
Entered into eternal life on
March 9th, 2026, after
76 years of religious life.



Sister Patricia Sullivan, CSJ
Entered into eternal life on
February 20th, 2026, after
73 years of religious life.



Sister Dehra Elliot, CSJ
Entered into eternal life on
December 20th, 2025 after
76 years of religious life.



Sister Ruth Kettman, CSJ
Entered into eternal life on
November 10th, 2025 after
66 years of religious life.

We celebrate the lives of all our sisters who passed away this year.

IN THE COMMUNITY

In March, sisters, associates, and other partners in mission celebrated People Program in New Orleans at its annual Gala. A member of our Mission Network, People Program is an educational non-profit that provides seniors with creative ways to enjoy community, learning, and staying active.



In April, Sister Joan Laplace sat down with Dina Dow, Director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, and Catholic Life Television to talk about her vocation path, call to religious life, and the beauty she finds in consecrated life. Sister Joan serves as Liaison to Consecrated Men & Women for the Diocese of Baton Rouge. You can find this and all episodes on Catholic Life's You Tube channel.



January is Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention Month, and on January 11th, sisters, associates, and staff from around the congregation, including these sisters and Brothers of the Sacred Heart who reside in Baton Rouge, wore blue in recognition of National Human Trafficking Awareness Day.



In March, Sister Kathleen Babin celebrated her 100th birthday with a party at the center on Hundred Oaks in Baton Rouge. Please join us in wishing Sister Kathleen a very Happy Birthday!

ST. JOSEPH'S ACADEMY



On March 19th, sisters in Baton Rouge joined students, faculty, and staff at St. Joseph's Academy for Mass to celebrate the Feast of St. Joseph. Front row from left are Sisters Lucy Silvio, Adelaide Williamson, Dianne Fanguy, Julie Kraemer, Joan Laplace and Cynthia Sabathier. Front row from left are Annie Ramagos, Evelyn Mee, Barbara Hughes, Adele Lambert, Anna Schellhaas, and Kathleen Babin.

In January, sisters had the opportunity to have lunch at SJA as part of their Catholic Schools Week celebration where they got to spend time with students, answer their questions, and talk about their vocation journey and what led them to religious life.



Congratulations to 2026 graduating class of St. Joseph's Academy! As you go forth into the next chapter of your journey, know that our sisters and associates are praying for you now and always. We wish you all the best!



In April, the National Catholic Education Association honored Jan Breen, President of Saint Joseph's Academy in Baton Rouge, with the Catherine T. McNamee Award during their annual awards ceremony. The award is given to a leader in education who works to advance inclusive, diverse Catholic education. In attendance to support Jan were leadership team members Sisters Sue Torgersen and Kathy Brazda, and Sister Joan Laplace. Congratulations, Jan on this well deserved recognition!

Jubilee

2026

The following sisters from our founding community of Medaille are celebrating Jubilee this year. Jubilee is the anniversary of a sister's entrance into religious life.

Congratulations to all our sisters who are celebrating from all around the Congregation this year!



Sister Anita Germain, CSJ

70 Years



Sister Cynthia Sabathier, CSJ

65 Years



Sister Adele Lambert, CSJ

70 Years



Sister Janine Beniger, CSJ

60 Years



Sister Kathleen Pittman, CSJ

70 Years



Sister Janet Franklin, CSJ

60 Years



Sister Phyllis Mary
Tousignant, CSJ

70 Years

To view biographies of all our sisters celebrating Jubilee this year, visit: CSJoseph.org

Catching up with Sister Helen Prejean



On April 24th, Sister Helen Prejean attended, “A Beacon of Light in Darkness” at DePaul University in Illinois to commemorate the 15th anniversary of Illinois abolishing the death penalty. Sister Helen donated her personal archives to the university in 2011. Pope Leo delivered a special recorded video address for the occasion. Above are Sisters Juli de Tarnowsky, Helen Prejean and Mary Jo Curtsinger at the event.

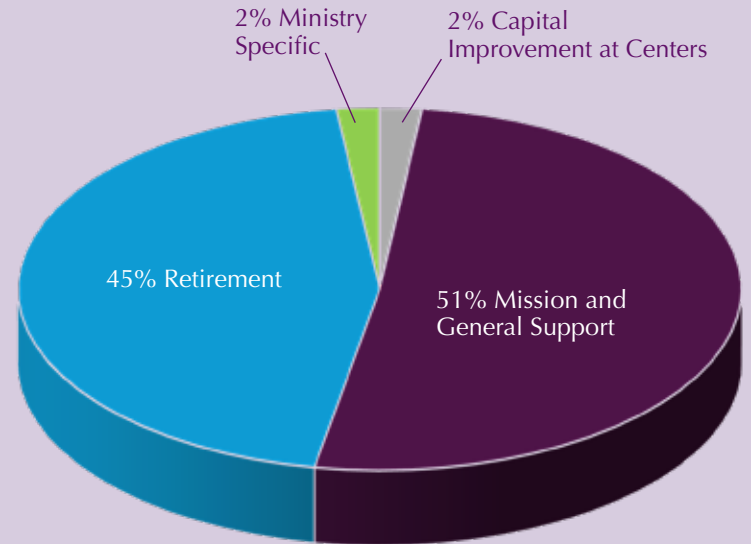


In March, Sister Helen attended FADICA's (Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities) Catholic Philanthropy Network's 50th anniversary conference. Above are staff member Eileen Biehl with Sister Helen and Executive Director of Catholic Mobilizing Network, Krissane Vaillancourt Murphy. Above right is Sister Helen with Cardinal Joseph Tobin of the Archdiocese of Newark, NJ. ●



In Gratitude...

Your gifts of support are a blessing – thank you for partnering with us in mission and for helping us provide for our retired sisters. Here is how we used your charitable contributions from July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025:



For Your Consideration...

● Qualified Charitable Distribution

Did you know that you can direct unneeded required minimum distributions (RMDs) to us through a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from your IRA? If you don't need the income, or the taxes it may incur, ask your advisor about a QCD.

● Donor Advised Fund

If you have a donor advised fund (DAF), please consider including us in your grant recommendations this year. We welcome DAF gifts!

● Leave a Legacy of Love

You can continue to partner with us in our mission of unifying love and service even after your lifetime by including the congregation in your plans. A planned gift may also reduce your estate taxes. Request our Legacy of Love brochure today.

To Learn More, contact Melissa Haley O'Leary at moleary@csjoseph.org or **216-688-3474**

The Congregation of St. Joseph cannot give you financial or tax advice, so please consult with a financial or tax advisor before making any financial decisions.

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Spotlight Photo



In Baton Rouge, sisters welcomed Albert Godfrey and his daughter Nicole for lunch at Hundred Oaks. Albert worked at the Mirabeau Provincial House in New Orleans for 45 years, first as a cook and later in maintenance. It was a very special reunion and visit for all!

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