

# Vision

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF NEW YORK

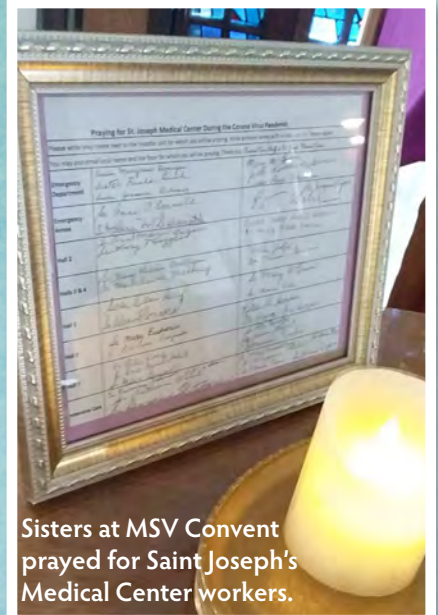
VOL. 24, ISSUE 3 *Now in Our Third Century of Living Lives of Love* SUMMER 2020



Sisters at Mary Jerome Ely Hall expressed gratitude to those who continue to provide everyday services.



Sr. Anita Lavelle sewed face masks for sisters at St. Patrick Villa and residents of a nursing home.



Sisters at MSV Convent prayed for Saint Joseph's Medical Center workers.



Sisters Carol Barnes, Sheila Brosnan, Miriam Kevin Phillips, and Mary Ellen O'Boyle join New Yorkers in saluting health care workers at 7 p.m.

## Contagious Charity



Saint Joseph's Medical Center staff and administration



Frontline heroes at Saint Joseph's Medical Center



## From the President

Dear Friends,

June 30th marked the first anniversary of the installation of the new Leadership Team. Before starting my new position, I had heard from many that upon assuming the presidency of the Sisters of Charity, I would receive the “grace of the office.” This could not be more true! The first six months called for making difficult decisions, and a few challenging situations did arise.

Yet there were great experiences with much hope for exciting times ahead and, indeed, the support of a dedicated, hard-working, committed Leadership Team—women of faith who have the sisters’ interests and well-being in mind at all times. There was also the ongoing affirmation from sisters in the Congregation in the form of a note or card or a phone call thanking us for something we had done. I truly felt the “grace of the office.”

Then COVID-19 appeared at our doorstep in mid-March and life as we knew it immediately changed. The most difficult part of these past two months has been the physical isolation from our sisters, especially those who are confined to and in quarantine in nursing homes. Like so many families living through this pandemic, I feel powerless in not being able to provide comfort or assurance to those with dementia or to be and pray with those sisters succumbing to the virus or dying of natural causes.

While the Leadership Team was privileged to be at the burials of the sisters, we were unable to give them the send-off they so genuinely deserve after their years of dedicated service. We miss the stories and memories that we would usually share with their families and friends and discovering something we hadn’t known about but would then never forget.

Just as we were anticipating a partial reopening of our city, the tragic death of George Floyd challenged our country and our world. Diversity in our city and nation is something to be celebrated, not destroyed. How long will racism and senseless killing be with us? The outpouring of support across our country gives us hope, as people join together to demand change and an end to hatred. We support and applaud the countless peaceful demonstrators throughout the country and world, as well as the men and women who work to maintain peace, sometimes at a cost to their safety.

While these past few months have been very difficult, I know that I am not alone in this experience. Somehow I think, or at least I hope, that our world may be coming closer together and, perhaps, heading toward becoming more empathetic and understanding. There is little else to do at this time except to speak out for what we believe and to continue to pray. Thus, we all need to be open to the “grace of the now.”



Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Donna Dodge".

Sr. Donna Dodge, SC

*VISION* enables the Sisters of Charity of New York to make a cohesive statement about how we reveal God’s love in our lives and the many and varied ways in which we respond to the signs of the times.



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NEW YORK

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# Contagious Charity – Catch It, Pass It On!

By Regina Bechtle, SC

In his 2020 Easter message, Pope Francis called for a “contagion of hope.” Surely he wouldn’t mind if the Sisters of Charity borrowed his words. **Charity, too, needs to be contagious!** Charity can spread faster than any microbe through our deep reflection, our energetic hopefulness, our focused prayer, our intense attention to the needs of the most vulnerable.

Anyone can catch Charity through eyes that smile, hands that pray, and hearts that care. During this pandemic time our sisters, associates, companions, and ministry colleagues have found ways to do just that. May their stories of contagious charity lift our hearts!

## CHARITY INVITES US TO GO DEEP

This time calls us to think deeply and prayerfully about big questions. What does it mean to “be present” to those in need when we can’t be with them physically? How does the pandemic impact our mission? How would St. Elizabeth Ann Seton respond? Sr. Carol De Angelo invited Sr. Mary Kay Finneran, Associates Bill Hurley and Owen Smith, and Jesuit volunteer John Alexander, colleagues in her PJIC work, to reflect on those questions.

Their responses included: Focus on the power of prayer. Be attentive to what you’re feeling. Lift up the stories of those most vulnerable. Link those in need with resources of which we are aware. Be patient with those close to you. Like St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, meet the grace of the moment; trust that all is in God’s hands; be awake to the wonder, awe, and beauty of creation; feel the pain of others; live in hope.

During May, Sisters Margaret Donegan and Barbara Srozenski conducted a weekly prayer seminar at Mount Saint Vincent Convent. Sisters appreciated the reflective readings and opportunity to share (in a suitably distanced setting). For years Sr. Barbara has also led a group on “life-transforming spirituality” that explores how God is inviting us into a new way of thinking, acting and living through the massive changes of this time in history. Recently the group reflected on “*What have I learned from this pandemic? Where is God in all of this? What good can come out of it? What are my hopes for when it is over? How will it change my life? How will it change us as a nation and as a world?*”

Here is a sampling of responses:

- » Calamities have long arms. They can reach into our world and squeeze the life out of us. But these same long arms can sweep us into an embrace, revealing to us our oneness.
- » God has given us the time to reflect on the great gift God has given to us in our universe—how our polluted waters are being cleansed, how deforested areas are being restored, and how our polluted air is now cleaner.
- » The pandemic is a “GAP” time: A time to open up, move on, and let God offer a new future. A time to open our

emotions and realign our thinking. This GAP time is essentially God’s time to help us grow.

- » This “liminal state” of our fragility, mortality, and interdependence as humans should alert us to the urgency of pressing social issues that have been passed over in favor of partisan politics. Listening must replace monologuing, gentle speech must replace harsh, critical words. Such a conversion must be a miracle ...

- » I have learned what it really means to be “out of control” and have discovered an opportunity: for going deeper into God; for reading and reflection; for simplifying my life; for reaching out to others.

## CHARITY UP CLOSE AND Personal

Living together in the close quarters of our homes and communities in pandemic time can certainly test our capacity for Contagious Charity. Years ago Associate Peggy B Cekoric, former Coordinator of SC Associates, addressed an Assembly gathering with a message that is as relevant now as it was then.

At a parish program for young parents Peggy reflected that “Our sin as spouses and parents in family life is this: the people we are supposed to love the most are the people with whom we are sometimes the most unloving. Might it also be the same for those in community life? We are imbued with the Charism of Charity, yet we sometimes are impatient and we sometimes are domineering. And if community life is like family life it takes loving patience, active listening, and it takes resolve—again and again.”

Fr. Chris Keenan, OFM, an SCNY Associate, shared his pithy wisdom with the wider public on an April 10 iHeart radio podcast. Speaking of the pressures of up-close, 24/7 life, he suggested that with one’s attitude “I can choose to give life or take it away. It’s not about me, but about us—as a family, a city, a country, as a citizen of the world.”

## CHARITY SPREADS GOOD NEWS

Even the nightly news programs and commercials, it seems, include more good news, more local and global stories of kindness, courage, goodness, and faith. Definitions of “hero/heroine” and “essential workers” have broadened as we honor frontline health workers, police/fire/EMT personnel, grocery clerks, delivery personnel, garbage collectors, and transportation workers, among others.

Hopeful, positive news about our sisters and our ministries—Saint Joseph’s Medical Center, Elizabeth Seton Children’s, NY Foundling, LEFSA—made local and national news, as well as our own print and social media, including *Mission Possible*, the e-newsletter from the SC Development Office. The SCNY.org website, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram regularly featured inspirational quotes from Saints Elizabeth Ann Seton (who had personal experience of quarantine), Vincent de Paul,

*Continued, see page 12*





## *Saint Joseph's Medical Center Navigates COVID-19 Challenges*

The COVID-19 pandemic created an unprecedented crisis for administration and staff alike at Saint Joseph's Medical Center (SJMC). Still, relying on its proud 132-year tradition, the hospital pulled together all its resources to respond with professionalism, dedication and compassion. SJMC was never busier, preparing for and treating the many sick patients who arrived at its door day after day. As the last Catholic hospital in New York City and Westchester County, SJMC takes its mission and commitment to the care and safety of its patients, staff and community seriously. The staff worked diligently to meet the needs of all throughout this crisis.

As a safety net hospital, SJMC serves the densely populated immigrant community in Southwest Yonkers and beyond. At the peak of the crisis, the hospital was inundated with COVID-19 patients, making up 98% of the inpatient census. In response to Governor Cuomo's request, SJMC increased its bed capacity, adding close to one hundred additional patient beds. To treat the high volume of patients arriving, the hospital erected a screening tent in the parking lot, which served as an extension of its overflowing emergency room. The tent served as the testing area for symptomatic patients as well as local police, fire and emergency medical service (EMS) personnel. When the virus was at its peak, the SJMC frontline staff—the heroes—were literally risking their own lives to treat patients.

Saint Joseph's Medical Center also developed a unit in Yonkers to serve as the receiving hospital for COVID-19-positive acute psychiatric patients. At the SJMC Harrison campus, St. Vincent's Hospital (SVH), a COVID-19-positive cohort area was equipped to accommodate higher-than-anticipated



referrals. As the sole operator of the Westchester County Crisis Prevention and Treatment Team, SVH provided mobile support and mental health crisis intervention, including a 24-hour COVID-19 support line. SVH is currently preparing for the anticipated surge in substance abuse and behavioral health patients resulting from the pandemic.

To learn more about the SJMC journey during the pandemic, visit the "news" section of its website at [www.saintjosephs.org](http://www.saintjosephs.org). The SJMC administration is humbled by and

grateful to the heroic staff and the tremendous outpouring of support they received from the community.

*Saint Joseph's Medical Center is a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Charity Ministry Network.*

*By Lorraine Horgan*





## Doing Everything to Keep Kids Safe

At Elizabeth Seton Children's Center, none of the 169 children have tested positive for COVID-19. Moreover, since March 17, 2020, there have been no viral infections of any type. The nursing staff and all the frontline heroes made this incredible and miraculous achievement possible. Their phenomenal success did not come without hard work, preparation and dedication.

In the first week of March, the Children's Center instituted rigorous additional infection control measures that successfully achieved a safe environment for children and staff. Patricia Tursi, CEO and SC Associate said, "We wanted to make sure we did everything we could to protect the children. We got ahead of the curve. We started implementing things two to three weeks ahead of executive orders."

Elizabeth Seton Children's School on both campuses is closed in accordance with Governor Cuomo's Executive Order. In the meantime, staff have implemented a robust distance learning program during the closure at the White Plains campus. The Elizabeth Seton Children's Rehabilitation Center, which provides essential services, remained open with reduced hours of operation. Staff launched a telemedicine program so rehabilitative and medical visits, as well as equipment/brace orders, could be accomplished safely from the comfort of home.

Governor Cuomo's no-visit policy required staff to create a new normal for the children. In an interview with the *New York Post*, Nurse Jillian Coar said, "We're not just nurses now, we're standing [in] for the parents also." Additional measures to help fill the void included FaceTime visits for the children with family and friends. The staff has implemented virtual activities for the children, including museum and aquarium visits, as well as video-conferencing games that enable them to engage with each other.



Jillian Coar, RN, with Elizabeth Seton Children's Center resident, Reham

Reflecting on the separation from her 17-year-old son Max who resides at the Children's Center, Rachel Amar told the *New York Post*, "If I could tell the staff who care for Max one thing it would be: Their hard work and dedication is greatly appreciated and their love for these children is apparent. I cannot thank you enough."

*Courtesy of Elizabeth Seton Children's*

"Being a nurse at The New York Foundling during this challenging period is an avenue for me to foster positive difference in the lives of those we serve and their families." Ben Arubuola, RN, Developmental Disabilities Division



programs, including residences for people with developmental disabilities, continue to operate with on-site staff. Whether at home or in the field and on the frontlines, the workforce remains strong and committed to those they serve.

In addition, The Foundling established a fund to support its community members who are most in jeopardy during the unprecedented pandemic.

The Foundling COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund helps the organization remain flexible by providing their most at-risk members with basic necessities, making sure that programs remain adequately staffed to support the safety of their participants, ensuring that all with whom they work have access to healthcare, food and technology, allowing them to access needed services while maintaining safe distance.

Healthcare workers are—and have always been—essential to the work at The Foundling. The organization operates four medical clinics for children in their programs, has a nursing team to care for those in the Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Puerto Rico, and provides medical care to those residing in our supportive residences for people with developmental disabilities. The Foundling aims to support their neighbors in reaching their full potential, and the nursing staff ensures that the children, adults, and the families they serve are in the best physical shape possible.

Since February, the role of nurses and their entire medical team has become even more prominent at The Foundling. Working on the frontlines, the compassionate and caring staff is currently facing the COVID-19 crisis with strength and resilience. Visit [www.nyfoundling.org](http://www.nyfoundling.org) to learn more.

*Courtesy of The New York Foundling*



During the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, The New York Foundling continues to be proactive in their efforts to provide support, stability and strength to the children, adults and families in our communities and neighborhoods across New York and Puerto Rico. While much of their work is accomplished remotely, many of The Foundling's essential

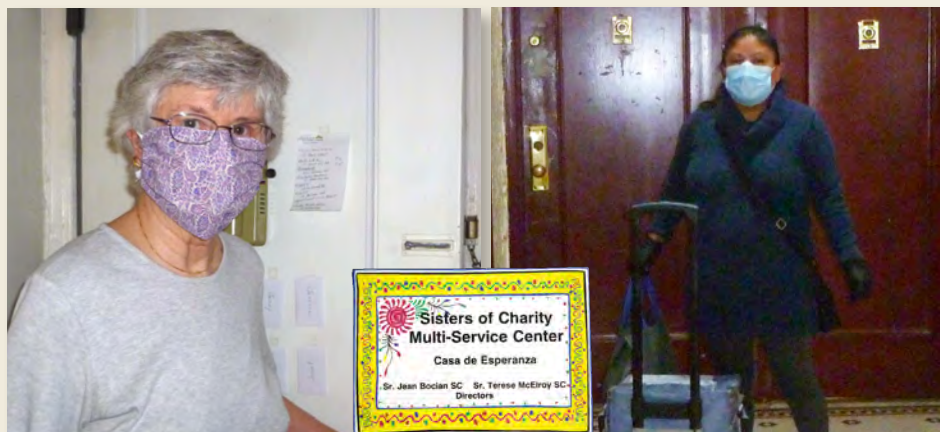
# COVID-19 & Casa de Esperanza

By Mary E. Mc Cormick, SC

There is an unforgettable image with which most of us are familiar: Christ on the breadline standing along with a line of impoverished men and women who are suffering through the Depression. He is there, one of them, offering only his presence and love to those around him.

Presence, though at a distance, is the gift Sisters Jean Bocian and Terese Mc Elroy are offering the women who have been their students at Casa de Esperanza. They have kept in touch with them, providing the women an opportunity to be listened to with respect and love.

The women, many undocumented, have few resources on which to rely. Their situations are, in many cases, desperate. Family members who have had work have lost their jobs or have had their hours reduced.



But presence in the Charity tradition always has a practical side. Sisters Jean and Terese have been able to give each family a small amount of money to help them get through these hard times. It is a loving gesture extended to those who have returned this generosity with their thanks and prayers.

The ministry at Casa may undergo challenging changes when the pandemic is over. What will never change is the bond uniting our sisters with the women who have called this House of Hope their home away from home.



Above left: Sisters Terese McElroy (photo) and Jean Bocian made arrangements to safely provide assistance to families (above right) in need. Left: A note of thanks from a grateful young Casa beneficiary.

## SC Ministries Continue to Serve

By Anne Marie Gardiner



Food distribution in Harlem

In partnership with the Franciscan Friars' St. Francis Breadline on West 31 Street, Manhattan, **Life Experience and Faith Sharing Associates (LEFSA)** continues to serve those living on the streets by distributing sandwiches and drinks while maintaining safe distancing. They deliver prayer booklets to the shelters to assure residents that they are not forgotten. The LEFSA team has reached out to community members who have recently obtained housing to offer prayer and counseling and to ensure that they have food and other necessities while they are confined to their apartments.

LEFSA team member Pastor Carl Petrus leads a daily prayer service via teleconference at noon to keep the community and the team connected. Pastor Carl is also working on a plan to help team members relate to the homeless experience during the pandemic, so they are better prepared to help others rebuild their lives.

Team members have stayed connected to provide care and service to the

community, as well as supporting each other. They hold a safe-distanced meeting once a week to share new information about the shelters, the street ministry and the formerly homeless community. The team feels blessed that they can continue this great ministry.



Director Ellen Mihovics worked with members and students via video conferences.

Adjusting to meet the changing situation, the **Elizabeth Seton Women's Center** continues its outreach and activities. In a true spirit of collaboration, members have provided homemade baked items and sandwiches to the LEFSA office for distribution in their street ministry.

*Continued, see page 15*



Even in the best of times, the Sisters of Charity ministries face numerous challenges. Helping the homeless, those who are hungry, the many who suffer from mental health difficulties or a myriad of life's other problems has always been the mission of Charity. In the face of COVID-19, that challenge has grown exponentially.





Above from left: Assistant Manager Ella Schwarzbaum and apprentices Cassandra and Justin; right: Cassandra planting Cosmos in the flower patch.



## Sisters Hill Farm: Hope Amidst the Pandemic

By Lisa Shay, SC Associate

*"Praise for the farmers, tilling soil, planting seeds so food can grow, an act of hope if ever there was."*

This verse from Christine Valters Painter's *Praise Song for the Pandemic* aptly describes the work at Sisters Hill Farm. Farmer Dave Hambleton and Assistant Manager Ella Schwarzbaum have been tilling and planting for weeks. They were prescient in placing early orders for seeds, safety supplies, and everything else they could think of before the pandemic caused widespread shortages. By the time you read this, they will be well into the distribution of healthy, delicious food!

Due to their preparation, everything has gone quite smoothly. As in previous years, the two apprentices, Cassandra and Justin, arrived on April 1. The planting beds are 200 feet long, giving plenty of space for social distancing. They wear masks and gloves when working together. Ella is living in the hermitage next door to provide Cassandra and Justin more room in the apartment on the farm.

Not only are they ready, but they have expanded their service to meet a significantly increased demand. Usually, the farm will still have a few shares to sell in May. By mid-May this year, the farm had sold the standard shares, increased capacity by 10%, and sold all those shares, too. Farms in the area have seen similar increases, and one can understand why. As Farmer Dave stated, "You know that at most, only four people have touched your food before it arrives in your hands." It's like having a vegetable garden without the back-breaking labor.

In this pandemic time, the farm's long-standing practice of donating ten percent of its harvest to charity is crucial. Ella explains how this works, "When we are taking our final tally of produce before distribution, we set aside cases specifically for donation. The produce is always the same quality we would give to our farm members; it's never leftovers. The

process has not changed this year since we primarily work with New York City-based organizations, especially Part of the Solution (POTS), a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Charity." Dave adds, "We also give four free shares to Casa de Esperanza, another Sisters of Charity organization that works with immigrant families. In addition, we provide 12 to 15 free and lower-priced shares to local families."

Of course, the pandemic has made an impact. Sisters Hill Farm is not just a source of exceptional produce; it's a community. The farm is usually supported by many dedicated volunteers who help with weeding, harvesting, distribution, and a myriad of other tasks that farming requires. Dave has had to turn away those volunteers.

The distribution will also be quite different in Stanfordville. Usually, large groups gather around the bins, socializing while choosing their produce. Some shareholders are happy to take a smaller portion, or even pass on a vegetable now and then. (This writer is still in search of a kale recipe that my family likes!) Because social gathering is not permitted, the distribution will be pre-packed in bins. The July 4 Garlic Fest, where the community gathers to bring in the garlic harvest, is unlikely to happen. And who knows about the great midsummer and end-of-season barbecue parties?

Despite the uncertainty, Farmer Dave is optimistic about the future. The farm will adapt its systems to provide safe distributions with as much community feel as possible. Hopefully, before the season ends, shareholders will be back to picking flowers and tomatoes and gathering produce into their baskets, a task they all enjoy.

The many who love Sisters Hill Farm are living the poem above, which ends, "And when this has passed, may we say that love spread more quickly than any virus ever could, may we say this was not just an ending but also a place to begin."







These are 18 of the 40 nuns from the Convent of Mount St. Vincent who want to be counted in the census. Post Photo by Mary McLoughlin

## Sisters Stand Up to Be Counted for the 1980 Census

When the 1980 Census was conducted, Sr. Mary T. Higgins was an administrator at Mount Saint Vincent Convent. The sisters who lived at the Convent at that time were determined to be included.

Mary said of the College, “but when we didn’t get our questionnaires in April, I called the Census Bureau and they said they would get back to me.”

However, despite multiple appeals to the Census Bureau for recognition,

### From the Archives

As identified by Sr. Mary T. Higgins, bottom row:

Sisters Marita Eileen O’Boyle, Dolores Josita DiLorenzo, Regina Mary Elwell, Mary Patrice Sheehan, Mary Ellis; second row: Sisters Maria Paschal Klein, Margaret Stella Clarkin, Vincent Dolores Fosket, Mary Gratia Doyle; third row: Sisters Marie Leonore Fell, Marie Clotilde Young, Marita Paul Neylan, Marie Lucille Farrell, Constance Mary Hottenroth; back row: Sisters Marie Charita Neary, Catherine Marie O’Brien, Eileen Finnegan, Paula Marie Spaight.

The new mail-out/mail-back enumeration using questionnaires for larger metropolitan areas was implemented during the prior census, in 1970. Sr. Mary’s multiple telephone calls to request questionnaires were never answered. “They got their forms,” Sr.

their interests were discounted. Sr. Mary believed that this was due to an administrative oversight, by which the Convent was regarded as part of the College of Mount Saint Vincent because of its location on the same campus. The accompanying photograph includes 18 of the 40 sisters who stood up to be counted.

“We feel neglected by the United States government. We like our neighborhood,” said Sr. Mary, “and we want to make sure it gets all the federal aid and congressional representation it’s entitled to.”

Sr. Mary, now retired and residing at the Mount Saint Vincent Convent, was administrator at the Convent when this article was published. Excerpt from article by Eli Teiber, *The New York Post*; photograph by Mary McLoughlin, 1980.

*Mindy Gordon, Archivist*



## Thank you, Frontline Workers

The Congregation is grateful to all the frontline workers in New York who cared for the victims of COVID-19. To thank individuals who have served, the Sisters of Charity have offered a vacation respite on the premises of the Sisters Hill Farm in Stanfordville, N.Y., during this summer. Sr. Maggie Kelly suggested using the Congregation’s vacation house, St. Mary’s Rest (pictured above), to offer a stress-free environment for those who risked their health to care for those affected most during the pandemic.

With the Council’s blessing and the Congregation’s support, Sisters Maggie and Mary Lou McGrath worked to create a comfortable, welcoming place of relaxation for frontline workers. The first group invited was Saint Joseph’s Medical Center nurses and doctors. Five nurses were the first to accept the invitation; they arrived in late June.

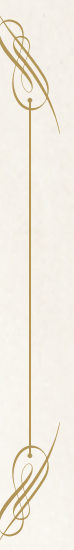
Each guest had a private room, all meals provided, access to the entire house, spacious grounds, wi-fi, several walking paths and a pool, which is about a short distance down the road. With the assistance of volunteer sisters and associates, Sisters Maggie and Mary Lou hosted this group and will also serve as hosts to other groups throughout the summer months.

New York City and the surrounding areas could never have managed the pandemic without the tireless efforts of frontline workers. To these and all fearless frontline workers, who continue to respond to the urgency of this public health crisis, the Sisters of Charity thank you for your selflessness, courage and hard work.

*A million thanks for all you have done!*

*Maryellen Blumlein, SC*



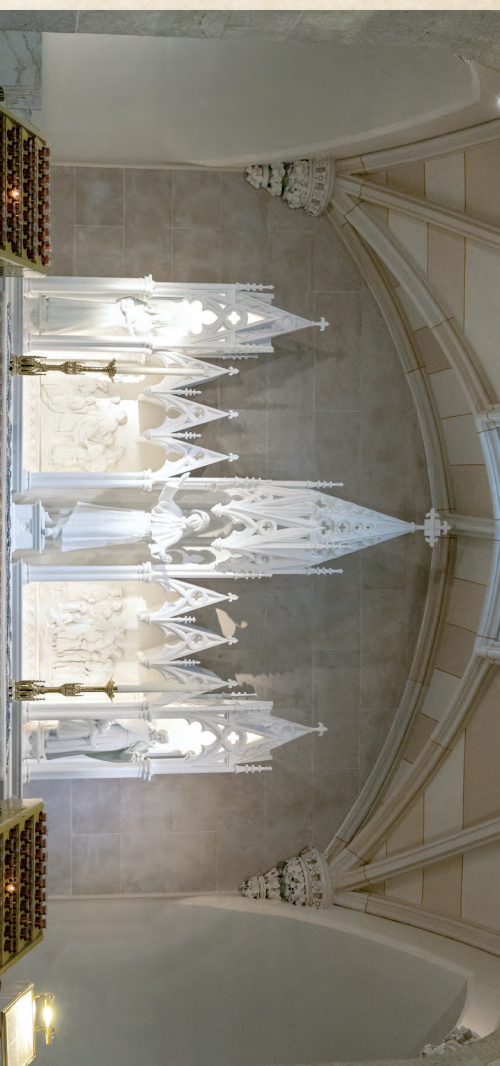


God of the ages,  
we praise your faithful love.  
Christ of the now,  
we seek to meet our grace.  
Spirit of tomorrow,  
we trust your sustaining presence.

Whatever the risk,  
whatever Providence provides,  
we stand secure in your love.

Mary, Mother of the Church and our Mother,  
in this time of fear and danger  
we look to you to protect  
the people of the world,  
especially those most vulnerable.

As it was in the beginning,  
is now and ever shall be,  
may your love press us forward,  
may Charity impel us on! Amen



*Together as One*  
*Praying for One Another*







*United  
in Charity*





# The Pandemic in Guatemala

By Sheila Brosnan, SC

It seems impossible to identify the exact time when the coronavirus entered the United States, and it was even less possible to determine its manifestation in Guatemala, Central America. In conversation with the Sisters of Charity in the rural areas of Sololá and Quiché, we gleaned some information about the virus' impact on people's lives. In mid-May, when the death toll reached a daily one hundred fifty, the country was mostly shut down.

The Guatemalan government, headed by President Alejandro Grammatei, a medical doctor, has been implementing the universal precautions associated with the virus. As is the situation throughout the world, the safety of vulnerable people depends on curbing the spread of the virus. Gatherings and celebrations of any kind are prohibited in Guatemala. Even while extensive precautions are taken to control the virus, there is enormous stress on the country's limited medical resources.

Public transportation is prohibited in rural areas and the city. People are expected to stay at home, even when home is a tiny overcrowded dwelling with limited access to food and water. Checkpoints are strategically located to prohibit travel in private vehicles. Citizens are permitted to leave the



house to get food or other necessities, but people 60 years or older must stay indoors.

Most of the people in rural Guatemala work on the land. At this time of year, they need to go to markets to buy seeds. During these months of our springtime, they are hard at work to prepare the land for planting. Any circumstance that limits this preparatory work may result in severe food shortages in the coming year.

How did the virus enter Guatemala, apparently at the same time it emerged in the United States? One possibility could be the deportation of undocumented Guatemalans to their country of origin. In addition, there continues to be a large number of Central Americans awaiting processing at the Mexican–United States border. People who may have been poorly housed and fed for many months are natural hosts for the virus. Some become discouraged and return to their hometowns in

Sr. Rosenda, center, with volunteers Tomasa, right, and Ana Maria, make masks for the community of Ixcán.

poor physical condition with no work, no wages and no food.

What gives us hope? Sr. Rosenda in the House of Formation works with neighbors Tomasa and Ana to sew masks for the remote community of Ixcán. Sisters Nora Cunningham and Rosenda share dinner each day, at a safe distance, with some of the young women students.

Staff in the Barbara Ford Peacebuilding Center have culled contributions from Oxfam, a Lutheran Church, the Swedish Embassy, and a German agency to assemble one thousand emergency food packages for distribution. The staff uses Zoom for meetings, guided meditations, and prayer.

In Sololá, Sisters Gloria, Rosita, Manuela and Margarita are experiencing the limitations of ministry, imposed by their confinement at home. However, they are taking advantage of the opportunity to enhance their skills in English. Sr. Gloria is helping each one to improve her accent, vocabulary, and grammar. Recently a study group started to work on learning the Quiché language.

Although preventive measures for COVID-19 are consistent internationally, it is evident that smaller nations with limited resources may suffer acutely during this time. With hope and prayers for all, particularly the most vulnerable, the world awaits an effective vaccine.

## Together as One

At Sr. Donna Dodge's request, a card was created with thumbnail photos of every living Sister of Charity of New York as of April 25. The card was distributed to members of the Congregation to help them pray for each other during the pandemic. "As you look at all our hope-filled faces," said Sr. Donna, "picture the time in the not-too-distant future when we can be physically present to each other again." If you would like to add our sisters to your prayer list, we invite you to cut out page 9/10 and fold it in half. Your prayers for our sisters are gratefully appreciated. For your reference, a corresponding name chart is available on our website at [www.scny.org/together-as-one](http://www.scny.org/together-as-one).



Louise de Marillac, and others. From Lent through Trinity Sunday, sisters and associates shared weekly reflections on the Scriptures as a lens through which to view the current crisis.

### CHARITY MAKES CONNECTIONS

Suitably masked and socially distant, we have found ways to connect with people via phone, e-mail, video chats and handwritten notes—ways of connecting made more precious at this time.

Regular communications from **Sr. Donna Dodge, the Leadership Team, and the Health Services staff** kept us connected through updates on the status of recuperating sisters, protective measures being taken, and developments in our ministries. Donors to the Congregation received personal notes assuring them of the sisters' prayers. At Sr. Donna's request, an attractive prayer folder with thumbnail images of every sister was created by **Elena Miranda**, Communications Director, reminding us to pray for one another at a time when we can't visit in person. In lieu of actual visits to those in nursing homes, **Deborah LaRusso**, Health Services Director, **Sr. Margaret Egan**, Councilor, and others made FaceTime visits possible.

As late winter moved into spring, many have renewed their relationship with God's creation. Time spent outdoors, sitting or walking, refreshed bodies and spirits, whether on the less-crowded streets of Manhattan or amid the lush flowering trees of the almost-empty campus of Mount Saint Vincent.

### Charity Stands on the Firm Ground of Prayer

Prayer is a sacred ministry that not even the coronavirus can interrupt. Though distant, sisters and associates are united in the Congregation's prayer for the pandemic: "*God of the ages, we praise your faithful love . . .*" Our retired sisters at Kittay Senior Apartments, MSV Convent, and St. Patrick Villa faithfully hold the needs of people known and unknown who send prayer requests. **Sr. Ceil Harriendorf**, coordinator at Kittay, spoke of the sisters' prayer expressed in word and action, and their ongoing remembrance of the men and women of our armed forces, especially those in the Veterans Hospital directly across the street from Kittay. Through their quiet contemplation, intercessions, rosaries, phone calls, notes and care for one another and staff members who serve them, these sisters, as well as those who are ill in nursing homes, spread the warmth of God's love.

We are honored and humbled by the trust that others place in our prayers. As Saint Joseph's Medical Center in Yonkers grew crowded with severely ill COVID-19 patients, the hospital sent an S.O.S. to the **sisters at MSV Convent**, asking them to pray for specific floors, departments, units, doctors, and nurses. The sisters quickly took on this commission as a sacred project. The framed sign-up sheet with a lit candle still remains in the Convent's Assembly Room where the sisters gather to pray.

For St. Francis Xavier parish in Manhattan, **Sr. Charlotte Raftery** coordinates sponsors in the RCIA program for those who are seeking to become members of the Church. When the Easter Vigil and reception of the sacraments had to be cancelled, weekly sharing sessions continued virtually. Sr. Charlotte reported that for participants and sponsors alike, "Our faith journey is being deepened and enriched in ways we would not have imagined... as we live through this time of waiting to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation. We have supported one of our candidates, an E.R. [nurse] in his recovery from the virus. Even on Zoom there is profound sharing of growth in faith experience."

**Sr. Carol Barnes** based her April "Mission Message" for New York Foundling staff on the theme, "We believe in the power of God to help us through this time."

A group of **sisters at Seton Center** stand on their balcony overlooking Washington Square at 7 p.m. each evening to join thousands of New Yorkers in a communal supportive shout-out for health care workers coming off their shift. Others like **Sisters Geri Hanley and Doris Heinlein** use those few minutes to pray for essential workers, including the maintenance personnel in her Manhattan building.

Even though retreat houses are closed and face-to-face visits are on hold, **Sisters Margaret Ellen Burke, Regina Bechtle, Mary Ann Daly, Nancy Kellar, Mary Mc Cormick, and Barbara Srozenski** continue to offer spiritual guidance via phone or the magic of Skype, FaceTime, or Zoom. **Sister Nancy** says that she and the Sisters at Saint Elizabeth Seton House of Prayer, Scarsdale, often give "spiritual direction and healing prayer in the parking lot"—suitably masked and distanced, of course.

When students and faculty at the College of Mount Saint Vincent moved into distance learning mode, so did the Campus Ministry staff. **Sr. Mary Ann Daly with Associate Matt Shields** and others offered a virtual "busy person's" retreat, programs on St. Vincent de Paul, pre-exam "Blessings of the Brain," prayer services, and Instagram Easter reflections. Chances are that the theme of their planned post-Pentecost series, "Finding God in the Messy Middle," will resonate with many weary staff, faculty, and administrators.

### CHARITY REACHES OUT IN SERVICE

At the heart of Contagious Charity is the desire to serve others in need. On Palm Sunday Pope Francis reminded us, "*We were put in this world to love God and our neighbor. Nothing else matters... Life is measured by love... Let us ask for the grace... to live in order to serve.*"

Jen, a trustee of the Sisters of Charity Ministry Network, and her family—Stacy, David, and Madeleine, provided dinner one evening to the staff at Saint Joseph's Medical Center ICU and Emergency Room during one of their most hectic weeks. **Associate Sue Porcelli, Volunteer Peg Maloney, and**

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## Staff at MSV Convent Respond to COVID-19

By Anne Hennelly, MSVC Administrator

The staff at Mount Saint Vincent Convent (MSVC) responded to the pandemic by demonstrating their dedication and commitment to the Sisters in residence in amazing and thoughtful ways.

The staff acted swiftly at the first hint that the virus was a significant problem by ordering personal protective equipment (PPE) and disposable items, as well as stocking up on nonperishable foods. To stay ahead of potential danger, the Convent underwent professional cleaning during the second week of March.

MSVC nurses, nursing aides and College of Mount Saint Vincent nursing students have worked around the clock to care for the Sisters and maintain the infection protocols put into place during this pandemic. The staff obtained PPE and disinfectants from multiple sources. When an employee tested positive (whether asymptomatic or symptomatic) or came into contact with a COVID-positive person, the staff member stayed home for a minimum of 7 to 14 days and, in most cases, was tested multiple times.

Administrators, directors, housekeepers, drivers, chefs, the maintenance technician, dietary workers, and receptionists worked tirelessly to clean, cook, fix and serve while wearing their masks and gloves. Everyone at MSVC played a role in keeping the sisters healthy. Nurses served food, drivers cleaned dishes, and so on, and so on—many hats were worn by the staff.

Some of measures taken to ensure safety included:

- » **Meals:** More frequent seatings allow for smaller groups. For additional safety, the staff serves the meals to the sisters rather than the customary self-service practice.
- » **Pastoral:** The Director of Pastoral Services conducts prayer services and discussions in smaller groups, often on the outdoor patio; the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament occurs every Friday instead of once a month; prayers are read daily over the public address system.
- » **Recreational Activities:** An increase in recreational activities includes: Trivia, Bingo, Travelogues, virtual museum

Above left: The sisters gathered on the patio for a prayer service on Pentecost Sunday. Above: MSVC staff treated the sisters to an outdoor lunch at the "Red Brick Cafe." Below: Sr. Mary Carmel Craig shared a prayer for SCNY social media followers.



tours, play and pray with clay and group word/puzzle games.

- » **Physical Therapy/Fitness:** Physical fitness DVDs demonstrating "sit and be fit" and "gentle tai chi" have kept the sisters active. The physical therapist provides private therapy instead of group sessions.
- » With a keen eye on Archdiocesan "Faith Forward" guidelines, MSVC is looking forward to resuming Mass and Holy Communion. The Sacrament of Penance, which will return first, will be offered outdoors to increase safety.

All activities adhere to social distancing guidelines, with sisters and staff always wearing a mask.

The Sisters at MSV Convent are grateful to the staff for the dedication and determination to keep them healthy. The staff and sisters at the Convent have always been like a family. Since COVID-19, that family bond is stronger than ever.



# With Love and Appreciation We Remember...

Visit [www.scny.org](http://www.scny.org) for complete biographies

## Sister Mary Catherine Ryan, SC

Entered: 2003 + Date of Death: April 11, 2020 + Age: 87

For her first 14 years of ministry, as Sr. Miriam Richard, Mary Catherine taught art in schools in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Rye. She earned an MS in Art Education from Pratt Institute, Manhattan. In 1967 she was granted an Indult of Exclaustration from the Congregation. As a laywoman, she continued her work as a teacher of young children, an artist, and photographer; she married and was widowed. She requested to return to the Congregation and, in November 2006, she professed final vows in the Congregation. As Sr. Mary Catherine, she taught art classes at Mount Saint Vincent Convent and volunteered at the Convent of Mary the Queen and the Development Office.



## Sister Grace Henke, SC (Sister Mary Adrienne)

Entered: 1951 + Date of Death: April 27, 2020 + Age: 88

Sr. Grace spent her entire ministry in the field of nursing and nursing education, largely at St. Vincent's Hospital, Manhattan, as student, staff nurse, supervisor and as instructor in SVH School of Nursing, where she initiated a bioethics course and courses in drug therapy and pharmacophysiology. In addition to teaching, she wrote articles and professional textbooks and taught courses at the College of Mount Saint Vincent. Sr. Grace volunteered with organizations in support of the elderly and disabled, at Casa de Esperanza, and served on the Scientific and Ethics Review Board of St. Vincent's Medical Center. She conveyed her own love of teaching and nursing to her many students over the years.



## Sister Patricia McGowan, SC (Sister Kathleen Mary)

Entered: 1956 + Date of Death: April 19, 2020 + Age: 80

Sr. Patricia's first two decades of ministry were spent teaching in elementary schools in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Port Chester. After receiving advanced degrees in education and journalism from Hunter College, NYU, and Teachers College, she taught at the College of Mount Saint Vincent. In her 38 years as teacher and Chairman of the Communications Department she taught Journalism and other courses. Sr. Pat taught and mentored hundreds of students, inspiring them in their lives and their careers. She was also involved in other projects and activities, such as volunteering at Saint Joseph's Medical Center and the LifeWay Safe House where she tutored students for general equivalency exams.



## Sister Marguerite McGilly, SC (Sister Regina Richard)

Entered: 1958 + Date of Death: May 5, 2020 + Age: 82

Sr. Marguerite's early years of ministry were in childcare at Holy Name Day Nursery in Manhattan and St. Joseph Hall in Brooklyn. She spent many years as a primary-grade teacher in the upper counties of the archdiocese and in several New York City schools. In the weeks after 9/11 Sr. Marguerite and Sr. Mary Richard Rowley ministered to people in Staten Island who lived near their home, listening to them and consoling them. They knew their presence gave strength and courage to those who mourned. In 2004, Sisters Marguerite and Mary Richard turned to a new area of ministry, volunteering for eight years as Pastoral Ministers in St. Sebastian Church, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.



## Sister Patricia Ann O'Brien, SC (Sister Andrew Marie)

Entered: 1952 + Date of Death: April 21, 2020 + Age: 86

Sr. Patricia spent the first 40 years of her ministry teaching in schools in New York from Staten Island to St. Joseph in Florida. She worked at the Elinor Martin Residence, White Plains, before becoming Director of Personnel at the Convent of Mary the Queen. Sr. Patricia was later Administrator at Mt. St. Joseph, New Windsor, N.Y., where she coordinated activities at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. During her retirement at Seton Village, Nanuet, Sr. Patricia volunteered her services wherever needed. She is remembered by the many children she taught over the years and their families.



## Sister Clare Regan, SC (Sister Grace Matthew)

Entered: 1947 + Date of Death: May 21, 2020 + Age: 93

Sr. Clare ministered in education for 50 years at all levels. She earned degrees in Education, Mathematics, Religion, and Counseling from Fordham University, Catholic University, and Manhattan College. She taught in elementary schools in the Bronx for ten years and then in high schools in York, Pa., Staten Island, and Manhattan, and for two years at the College of Mount Saint Vincent. She served in the Guidance Departments of St. Catharine Academy and Mt. St. Michael Academy for over 25 years. In retirement, Sr. Clare enjoyed keeping in touch with family and former students and volunteering at Sacred Heart Convent in Yonkers.





### Sister Angela Marie Rooney, SC

Entered: 1934 + Date of Death: May 27, 2020 + Age: 103

Sr. Angela's ministry for 40 years was teaching in elementary schools in Manhattan, the Bronx, Mt. Kisco, Yonkers and Brooklyn. Before entering the Congregation she had earned a business diploma from Grace Institute, attended Hunter College for a year, and had a few years of work experience. For her next 31 years of ministry Sr. Angela used these skills as Staff Secretary and Volunteer at the Sisters of Charity Center. Sr. Angela enjoyed her long years of retirement, keeping in touch with former students and relatives in Ireland. She especially enjoyed greeting and serving new residents who went to live at the New Jewish Home Assisted Living and at Kittay Senior Apartments.



### Sister Grace Anne Troisi, SC

Entered: 1944 + Date of Death: June 17, 2020 + Age: 93

Sr. Grace's first 29 years of ministry were in elementary schools in the Bronx, the Bahamas, and Queens, and in high schools in Staten Island and the Bronx. Over the next 43 years Sr. Grace brought her growing fund of knowledge and experience to support and develop projects of many kinds. She organized, planned, and/or directed programs for New York Public Schools and for a wide-ranging variety of community and religious organizations, training youth and young adults in leadership skills. She also taught at the College of Mount Saint Vincent, Fordham University School of Social Work, and City College Graduate Education Department. Sr. Grace touched and changed the lives of thousands by her presence, support, and work.



### SC Ministries Serve

*Continued from page 6*

Director Ellen Mihovics started a Ben Franklin Circle for St. Raymond Academy for Girls in the Bronx. The Ben Franklin Circle was developed by the 92nd Street YMCA in Manhattan to enable young people to gather and discuss in depth the virtues that Ben Franklin emphasized, and how to incorporate them into their lives and serve their communities better.

The Women's Center routinely works with Midnight Run Inc. of Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., in distributing food and supplies to those in need in Manhattan. Despite the difficulties, Ellen recently collected toiletries, new tee shirts, and monetary donations from members and delivered them to Midnight Run.

Recognizing the greater need created by the pandemic, the LEFSA team and Women's Center members enthusiastically await the physical reopening of their ministries. In the timeless tradition of founder Elizabeth Seton and the Sisters of Charity, they *Hazard Yet Forward*.

### Contagious Charity

*Continued from page 12*

many other friends and neighbors have cheerfully kept sisters supplied with groceries and other necessities.

And then there was the miracle of the multiplication of salmon. It began toward the end of March with a phone call from **Barry**, owner of **Mark Foods**, a certified sustainable seafood company, to **Sr. Karen Helfenstein**, SC Director of Sponsorship Services. He had a huge quantity of fish; could Sr. Karen find people who could use it? Within days, contacts were made with several of our sponsored ministries including POTS and LEFSA, as well as families of Thomas Cornell Academy, a public school in southwest Yonkers.

Barry, a long-time supporter of LEFSA, reached out to **Rodrigo**, a former colleague, now an owner of his own company, **Capital Sea**. Together they contributed 800 pounds of top-quality salmon, cut, frozen, and neatly packaged. On April 2 **Associate Sue Porcelli** and Sr. Karen coordinated the pickup from a warehouse in New Jersey and scheduled its safe distribution in a parking lot at Mount Saint Vincent. As vans drove up, stories poured out: one family was caring for a son with leukemia; another supported a large family on a custodian's small salary. James Addison from LEFSA delivered the fish to formerly homeless persons who he knew would gladly receive it. The salmon made its way to POTS, the soup kitchen, food pantry, and center for family resources and referrals near Fordham. When those most in need received their portions, the remainder went to sisters and staff at MSV Convent and to St. Patrick Villa and Seton Village in Nanuet.

When the two donors were thanked, Barry replied: "I am grateful that you gave me the opportunity to help." Rodrigo asked, "Keep praying for us and all businessmen and workers suffering out there, trying to make an honest living in these turbulent times."

That day, everyone involved in the miracle of the multiplication of salmon—donors, pickup crew, organizers, connectors, distributors, recipients—carried the unstoppable Contagion of Charity and made the love of Christ incarnate.

### THE STORY CONTINUES

The most frequently repeated phrase in the Scriptures, it is said, is "Fear not! Do not be afraid." In Elizabeth Seton's words: *"At all events, happen now what will, I rest with God ...so now I can pass the Valley of Death itself."*

We believe that our God is indeed creating something new. What is the Spirit saying to us through this worldwide time-out? How is God inviting us to change, to grow, to move beyond fear, to allow ourselves, our priorities, our way of living, to be transformed? How might we use our hearts, minds, and bodies, our creativity and imagination, for the greater good of all, for more equitable sharing of resources?

One thing is certain: Contagious Charity will not be contained. What does it impel us to do and to be? If we let the Spirit lead, we will surely find out. Stay tuned!





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## Getting By with a Little Help from Our Friends



Friendships are a blessing, and during the pandemic, it's good to know you can count on friends. But what can you say when a friend you haven't seen in 49 years comes through for you and 46 other sisters? Kevin Bolger had not seen or spoken to Sr. Nancy McNamara, his principal at St. Peter School in Brooklyn, since graduating in 1971. Upon learning from a Facebook friend that sisters at Mount Saint Vincent Convent needed face masks in early-April when they were scarce, Kevin and his wife, Debbie, immediately started constructing and sewing face masks at home in Prospect Manor, Ill. The Bolgers donated their time, materials, and even shipping. The best part of this story? The hours-long conversations between a former student and his principal. Kevin and Debbie look forward to visiting with Sr. Nancy as soon as safely possible.



## Sisters Call for Justice and Equality



Above: After the tragic death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, sisters gathered on June 8 at the Riverdale Monument in the Bronx to add their voices in the call for racial justice. From left: Sisters Claire Regan, Mary Ann Daly, Kathleen Byrnes, Sheila Brosnan, Carol De Angelo, Ellen Rose O'Connell, Mary Kay Finneran, Mary Donagher, Regina Murphy, and Margaret O'Brien.

After a prayer service on June 9, the sisters at Mount Saint Vincent Convent demonstrated their support for racial equality. Below from left: Sisters Ann Marie Lagan, Mary Adele Henze, Joan Burbage, Marie Tolle, Theresa Courtney, Genevieve Wetmore, Nancy McNamara, Lorraine Cooper, Associate April Boone, Sisters Patricia Morgan, and Rita King.

