

Vision

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF NEW YORK

VOL. 24, ISSUE 4 *Now in Our Third Century of Living Lives of Love* AUTUMN 2020



From the President

Dear Friends,

After reading this issue of *Vision*, I cannot help but conclude that education in one form or another is in our DNA. In every ministry in which we served, our focus has always been to engage others and ourselves in learning. Two recent projects illustrate this belief.

With diligent attention to the hybrid learning method now implemented in our schools because of COVID-19, the Sisters of Charity staff, with the Leadership Team's blessing, transformed the SC Center lower-level community room into a learning hub. This hub enables employees to have a safe and secure environment for their children every school day. The children work remotely with their computers, monitored by some of our sisters, associates and friends who generously volunteer their time. It is truly a lively learning environment!

On the other end of the age spectrum, many of our sisters at Mount Saint Vincent Convent and Kittay have returned to "school" to learn the ins and outs of using iPads and Amazon Echos. Thanks to a recent grant from the Robert and Joan Dircks Foundation in memory of Sr. Georgette Dircks, SC, and very committed volunteers, the sisters can ask "Alexa" to play their favorite music, set the alarm or reminder, and answer questions. They can surf the web on their iPads, take photos, or write emails. One of our sisters, who will soon celebrate her 100th birthday, jokingly told me she enjoys her "eye" pad very much and looks forward to learning more about it.

Education is alive and well, as you, too, will discover when you read this issue.

Please stay well and know that you remain in our prayers.

Blessings,



Sr. Donna Dodge, SC



Left to right: Sr. Paula Holdman learns to master her iPad; the community room at Le Gras Hall now hosts a new community: school-age children of SC Center staff, who converted the space into a learning hub.

Cover photo: Le Gras Road, Mount Saint Vincent; photo by Elena Miranda

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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For over 50 years, Sr. Margaret Dennehy has been actively engaged in elementary education, and for the past 25 years she has been advocating for primary school libraries in New York City. A highlight of her recent involvement includes a unique partnership to enhance inner-city parochial and public school libraries with multiresource materials appealing to a diverse student population.

Sr. Margaret entered the Sisters of Charity of New York in 1958, earned a bachelor's degree from the College of Mount Saint Vincent, and master's degrees in Education from Hunter College, and in Library Science from St. John's University.

Vision asked Sr. Margaret to share her journey of transition from the classroom to librarianship, the services provided to students resulting from the newly available resources, and her thoughts on the value of literacy.

Sr. Margaret Dennehy:

As a life-long learner, I've welcomed the challenges that accompany inner-city education, teaching grades 1, 2, 3, and 6 at St. Peter School, Yonkers, from 1961 to 1965; at Epiphany School, Manhattan, from 1965 to 1971; and at St. Brigid on the Lower East Side from 1971 to 1978. While I was teaching at Epiphany School during the late 1960s, with an energetic committee of parents, and with support from the school's principal, we raised the funds to create a school library. After joining the staff at St. Brigid in 1978, my eventual move into librarianship was in great measure due to the exceptional leadership and commitment of the Sisters of Charity, working with the Lower East Side Hispanic community.

My arrival at St. Aloysius School in Central Harlem in 1995 was the beginning of a wonderful new chapter. With Jesuit support and the generosity of donors, three unique libraries for elementary students, middle school boys, and middle school girls were developed in separate locations. It was the

fulfillment of the ideals and dreams of a visionary leader, lay principal Laurel Senger, and extraordinary colleagues at St. Aloysius School, following in the footsteps of the Franciscan

Handmaids, the African-American order who founded the school in 1941.

The new libraries received an early infusion of materials and experiences to support the arts, particularly African-American contributions. The developing libraries were active participants in this ongoing process and priorities, including these incentives:

» Twelve years of involvement by faculty and leadership in "Library Connections." This was a dynamic four-year program designed to revitalize inner-city elementary school libraries in the Archdiocese of New York through curriculum and classroom activities and collaboration among library, computer and classroom teachers. This program was funded by the Altman Foundation and the Patrons Program of the Archdiocese of New York.

» Library collection-building and sharing

among 32 inner-city schools, while investing time and talent in creative curriculum initiatives. Collaboration among and across specialties and grade levels resulted as school-wide projects supported understanding and celebration of important themes.

» Meaningful engagement of contemporary authors in support of literacy initiatives included an ongoing relationship with renowned children's and young adult author Walter Dean Myers and his son, Christopher, an author/illustrator.



Sr. Margaret Dennehy
at St. Aloysius School

Sister Margaret Dennehy: *Advocate for* ***Primary School Libraries***

By Mindy Gordon

Continued, see page 10



Construction of Aquino Hall, named for CMSV graduate Corazon Aquino, former president of the Philippines, is almost completed.

Nursing Tradition Grows at the College of Mount Saint Vincent

Frequently recognized for student success, the College of Mount Saint Vincent's nursing programs are some of its most rigorous, competitive and nationally recognized—and they've got the facts to show it. Mount students training to become professional nurses learn critical thinking skills to address complex health-related problems and use leadership concepts to plan, implement, delegate, supervise, and evaluate outcomes of patient care.

CMSV alumni/ae, for example, Regina Cunningham '82, an oncology nurse, scientist, educator, clinician, and executive, share a tradition of becoming leaders in health care. Ms. Cunningham has led innovations in health care that advanced

the nursing profession and has established a reputation as an influencer shaping the future of nursing. A more recent alumna, Stephanie Widmer '11, has been courageously working at the COVID-19 front line, providing lifesaving care and treatment as an emergency medical physician and medical toxicology fellow at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset.

Nursing remains one of the CMSV's signature programs and the Mount continuously works to strengthen the program and keep it at the cutting edge of the profession, furthering it as a leader in preparing nursing students for practicum placements. Their success is frequently recognized through grants and awards, including a \$125,000 grant from the Hearst Foundations to support the creation of state-of-the-art, self-contained, high-fidelity nursing simulation laboratories. The first two floors of the CMSV's latest residence building, Aquino Hall, will house technologically advanced nursing simulation laboratories that will support the latest and best practices for training nursing professionals.

Expanding its facilities enables Mount Saint Vincent's nursing programs to remain among the best in the region. Through instructional technologies—including innovative patient simulators, live-action simulation, and observation areas—the laboratories will allow students to master the essential skills for several nursing specializations, such as clinical assessment and adult/primary care, as well as pediatric, maternity, and community health nursing.

Courtesy of the College of Mount Saint Vincent

Inspiring the Next Generation:

Seton Scholar Olivia Hilliard

By Lisa Shay, SC Associate

Seton Scholarship recipient and CMSV senior Olivia "Liv" Hilliard is a shining example of how the Sisters of Charity continue to inspire the next generation of nurses. Liv chose the Mount for her nursing degree because of the Seton Service and Leadership Program. The program was perfect for her. Her volunteer service in high school shows she lived the Charism of Charity long before coming to the Mount.

Over the last three years, Liv has volunteered in every ministry. She particularly enjoys using her passion for dance, such as dance therapy for Parkinson's patients and "Dance with Me" at the

Hebrew Home. She is also grateful for the financial assistance. Although she had been accepted at other universities, none were as affordable.

Liv has wanted to be a nurse for a long time; she helped care for her grandmother who was stricken by serious medical conditions. Liv was inspired by how involved nurses were in caring for her grandmother, a much closer relationship than the doctors.

Since the end of the spring 2020 semester, Liv is acquiring practical nursing experience working at the Sisters of Charity Convent. The sisters appreciate her service; several said she is friendly and hard-working. Cathy Sullivan, RN, FNP, Director of Nursing at MSV Convent, says of Olivia, "Olivia Hilliard is a young woman with an innate talent and ability in the field of



healthcare. She provides excellent care to everyone at the Convent. Olivia's energy coupled with her compassion makes her a talented and accomplished team player, creating a synergy and 'can do' attitude."

And Olivia loves getting to know the sisters! She has especially enjoyed learning from the nurses and nurse practitioners. "They are all amazing!"



Responds to Increased Demand from COVID-19

Part of the Solution (POTS), a Bronx-based sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Charity of New York, has provided nutritious meals to those in need since its beginning in 1982. Because of the current pandemic and the rise in demand for their valuable services, POTS has responded to the new circumstances by implementing new safety measures, hiring new staff, distributing supplies, and assisting clients in applying for government assistance. Still, the need is great.

The program's modified Emergency Food Programs serve existing clients as well as clients who currently cannot afford daily meals. To support the safe distribution of to-go meals and prepacked groceries to clients, POTS purchased protective gear and supplies, including t-shirt bags, to-go plates, gloves, plastic forks, extra disinfectant wipes and spray, and a pallet lifter.

POTS also hired new staff to ensure that these programs can efficiently serve a larger number of clients. Two additional Food Pantry employees help with client intakes, as well as with unloading food trucks and helping clients to maintain social

in 2020. POTS has provided 752,802 total meals during this period or 445,405 more than in 2019. POTS's food services peaked in the last week of May, providing an average of 11,000 meals a day to 220 households.

Since the transition to its new service model, POTS has also distributed approximately 12,000 hand sanitizers and 35,000 masks to its clients. They have distributed cleaning products to families for personal use, laundry, and living space. This effort has made an enormous difference in reducing the spread of disease among POTS's homeless clients.

Beyond the provision of food and other supplies, POTS's remote services remain critical for many individuals and families in the Bronx. The Next Step Services staff has utilized new and upgraded technology to continue connecting clients to life-stabilizing resources. Despite the challenges of physical distancing and the cancellation of one of POTS's more popular service offerings, the tax prep program, the general case management team served 7,987 clients in the first six months of 2020, 16 percent more than in the first six months

FINANCIAL UPHEAVAL

- The Bronx Unemployment rate went from 4.4% in December to **24.9%** in July.
- Cash assistance recipients in New York City grew 15% from a low point in December.
- Food Scarcity increased from 12% in late April to over 18% in mid July in the New York Metropolitan area. There has been no reduction in belief that future income will decline.
- Business bankruptcies are up 23% nationwide — local data not available.



distancing while waiting on line. Some existing staff has also been reassigned to support the Emergency Food Programs during this time.

The increased distribution of meals at POTS since March, when New York State's "Pause" went into effect, demonstrates the immense increase in needs of both existing and new clients. Since March 20, POTS has been serving an average of 8,020 meals to 150 households or 450 people each day through the Food Pantry, compared to a 2019 average of 2,700 meals to 75 households a day for 225 people.

In addition, distribution of prepared meals has more than tripled and has remained elevated throughout the crisis—from an average of 490 meals served daily in 2019 to 1,390 so far

of 2019. POTS has also helped clients receive 1,025 new benefits worth over \$4,050,000 and helped many connect with the U.S. Census.

POTS's case managers have been using current technology to help clients navigate the process of applying for SNAP benefits and unemployment. For those ineligible for benefits or a government stimulus check, POTS was able to distribute 240 \$50 cards and 155 \$500 cards. POTS is also distributing \$80,000 worth of emergency grants to clients facing financial hardship because of rental arrears.

As it has since 1982, when it was first established by the Sisters of Charity, POTS remains true to its name and mission.

Courtesy of POTS



Mike Carr created this cross for Holy Week, a time when, because of the pandemic, sisters were restricted to the Convent. The frames used to make the cross originally came from the Convent of Mary the Queen.

A Thank You from the “Sisters’ Mister” at Mount Saint Vincent Convent

At our Mount Saint Vincent Convent I see many Sisters of Charity faces. Some come from near and some have come from faraway places. But all of them are here to reach one common goal—to heal the body, mind and the soul.

My life has taken me on many paths. I enjoyed most of my jobs along these paths, and even if I didn’t, I still did them always to the best of my ability. I learned that from my Mom, who would say, “Do it right, or don’t do it at all.” I love Mom.

I started my first job at the age of ten, after my dad died, to help Mom with money by delivering newspapers for the *Daily News* before school in the morning at St. Margaret of Cortona. This is where I met and was taught by my first Sisters of Charity—Sr. Mary O’Brien, Sr. Dominic and Sr. Nazaretta. They and others were great teachers.

I’ve worked many other different jobs with people of all races, creeds and colors over the years. I even worked in Ireland one summer and then, ultimately, became a carpenter for 36 years. But I always knew something different was out there for me.

I never in my wildest dreams thought that I would ever be working in one of the most beautiful, peaceful pieces of

land in the Bronx. When I was 12 years old, I used to ride my bicycle really fast down the big hills on the Mount campus, right past the Sisters of Charity Convent. It was great fun for us as kids, not so much fun for the security guards chasing us out of the college grounds.

I never realized that being taught by the Sisters of Charity was preparing me for the job that I now have; it was the one job I was always looking for over the years. I got to really understand the mission of the Sisters of Charity, and they are still teaching me. It is just great. I learned French from Sr. Helen Fleming; I learned Gaelic from Sr. Aquin Flaherty; I am learning to speak German from Sr. Paula Holdman; I learn patience from Sr. Genevieve Wetmore, and gardening tips from Sr. Mary T. Higgins. I have learned all that, and so much more from all the other sisters at the Convent. What wonderful, smart, creative, caring and intelligent ladies they all are!

Oh brother, as kids being taught by the sisters, we didn’t understand

they were preparing us for the world. Sometimes in life we miss or don’t take the opportunity to say how we feel, and then regret it when we don’t. I don’t want to regret it when I get older that I should have told the Sisters how I felt. I remember years ago when Mom was having a baby, I wished for another sister, but I got a brother instead. That wish was still out there I guess, and it finally was answered 47 years later! Now I have close to a few hundred sisters—yikes!

And a special “Thank you” to Mother Angela who brought the first sisters to the Mount Saint Vincent property after they purchased it back in 1856. Thanks to them we are all here at this piece of heaven on earth... Great, strong and smart women.

So, I would like to say I am very grateful that the path I was on finally gave me the job I was always looking for but had never found. I just want to say to all the Sisters of Charity I have met, present and some who have passed on, I am grateful and honored to work for you all. I look forward to many more years working with you, having a few laughs with you, and learning more along our path together. Besides, my Mom likes to brag to her friends in Ireland that her son Michael goes to college every day and works in a Convent.

*Sincerely,
Mike Carr, Your Maintenance Man*

Elizabeth Seton College—

An Educational First, 60 Years Ago



Sr. Rose Maria Laverty photographed registration of the first class of Elizabeth Seton College students.

The Charity of Christ impels the Sisters of Charity to provide every service in our power. In 1898, that meant opening the first Catholic secondary school in Yonkers, Seton Academic Institute. After several incarnations (including “The Pines” on the northeast corner of Mount Saint Vincent) it became Elizabeth Seton School. In 1951 it moved to the former W.B. Thompson estate on North Broadway in Yonkers, where it provided an outstanding education to hundreds of young women (including this writer). Boarders from the U.S. and other countries lived in Alder Manor, an Italian Renaissance Revival mansion furnished with tapestries, Italian porcelain bowls and Ming Dynasty vases. Commuters and boarders attended classes in a modern brick building overlooking the Hudson River and strolled at lunchtime in a Greco-Roman sculpture garden adjoining the Manor.

By 1960 a growing number of students in a booming economy were seeking college courses and job skills. The Congregation was asked to transform Seton into a two-year college, the first such college under Catholic auspices in New York State. By a happy coincidence, the state official charged with

approving the required charter change was the father of Sr. Mary Ellen Brosnan. Chancellor John Brosnan’s family had close ties to the Sisters of Charity since a relative was taught by the Sisters in 1862. The charter was speedily granted.

Seton College’s opening in September 1961 pioneered a new approach to higher education even before the growth of the state’s Community College system. The curriculum offered a basic liberal arts major, with both transfer and terminal degrees, as well as career majors in radio/TV, merchandising, nursing and other fields.

Under Seton’s first President, Sr. Miriam Imelda Kieley, Bosch Residence Hall was built, and Middle States accreditation was granted. Successive Presidents—Sisters Mary Elizabeth Kelly, Eileen Farley and Mary Ellen Brosnan—encouraged creative approaches adapted to the changing needs of diverse students, such as weekend and adult programs, branch campuses in Manhattan, co-education and experiments in experiential learning.

Sr. Francis Marita Sabara “had the privilege of being invited to join the first faculty at ESC,” teaching science and biology. Besides the strong academic curriculum, she remembers the “great (dramatic) productions” of Sr. Marian Francis Harriott, the “joyous choral and concert” performances directed by Sr. Thomas Mary (Helen) O’Connor, and the art department led by Sisters Marie Mercedes (Catherine) Murphy and Christine Marie Murphy. Only Sisters Francis and **Therese Donnelly** remain from that inaugural faculty roster.

Other memorable teachers mentioned by graduates were Anne Murray, Ingeborg Torrup, George Hoenig, Pat Bree and Sisters Mildred Azevedo, Margaret Beaudette, Marie Irene Breheny, Marian James Deegan, Alice Regina Epes, Irene

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Right: Sr. Francis Marita Sabara, member of the first faculty, taught science.



Mary Elizabeth Holdman as a young child on the S.S. *St. Louis* en route to visit her grandparents in Germany via Ireland and England, 1925; her father and sister are at right.



Mary Elizabeth, right, graduated from College of New Rochelle in 1942.

Sister Marie Paula Holdman Celebrates 100 Years of Life

By Patrice Athanasidy



Mary Elizabeth during the summer of 1942 prior to entrance to the Congregation.

Sister Marie Paula Holdman has spent her first century being a life-long educator and student. She shares her passions for languages, the arts, travel, and education with everyone she meets. “I cannot state that ‘fond-est’ applies to any one of the ministries because there were great rewards both spiritually and humanly in all of them,” Sr. Paula reminisces.

She shares stories of her varied ministries, from teaching seventh graders at the Academy of Mount Saint Vincent as her first ministry, to teaching German for decades at the College of Mount Saint Vincent, to becoming the director of communications for the Sisters of Charity and the College of Mount Saint Vincent historian. Her stories always include the people who were important during those periods of her life.

Mary Elizabeth Holdman was born in New York City on November 6, 1920, the first of three daughters. She moved with her family to Scarsdale at a young age, where she first met the Sisters of Charity at Immaculate Heart of Mary School. Calling her education “varied,” Sr. Paula explains that she had a mix of

public and Catholic education, including Eastchester High School, the College of New Rochelle (CNR) and CUNY’s Graduate Center. She says her calling began when her mother, Margaret, introduced her to St. Thérèse of Lisieux at the age of 10.

“There is no doubt about it,” Sr. Paula says. “St. Thérèse turned my attention toward teaching as a religious. Sr. Mary Jerome Cusack (a teacher at Immaculate Heart of Mary who remained a mentor) made it practical. She showed the practicalities of what you would do in such a way of life.”

Sr. Paula entered the Sisters of Charity in 1942, following her college graduation from CNR. “There were only 13 who entered that year, a very small group. All of us had been very much influenced by the canonization of a young St. Thérèse of Lisieux at least some part of our vocation.”

Sr. Paula also credits her family, especially her father, Ernest—a native of Germany—with giving her a love of travel. They sailed to Europe several times when she was a young girl and traveled around the United States. Sr. Paula



Sr. Paula Marie Holdman, 1955



Sr. Paula at her parents' 50th wedding anniversary, Hilton Hotel, Tarrytown, October 1969

continued to visit Europe for a number of summers at Middlebury College and the University of Kiel and the University of Freiburg to study German. She shared those experiences with students at the College of Mount Saint Vincent as both professor and chair of the department for decades.

While at the Mount, where she began in 1953, Sr. Paula also worked with students on the newspaper. In fact, she worked with student newspapers at all her ministries. "We have wonderful people who graduated from the Mount and have followed their own careers as journalists—really great writers among the people whom I taught in the college and afterward."

Sr. Paula put those communication skills to use in her own ministries, including director of communications, college historian, and a speaker who

spread the news about the Sisters of Charity at conferences around the country. While at the college, Sr. Paula began by writing about the life of Sr. Josephine Rosaire Rae, who served as director of novices and dean of the college. "She really was a magnificent educator," Sr. Paula says.

Sr. Josephine led the college but was not president, Sr. Paula explains, because no nun had the title at that time. "The nuns were deans, and the presidents were all archbishops—perfect example of the women doing the work," she says with her knowing chuckle.

Looking back on her own education, Sr. Paula calls her college years at the College of New Rochelle "an adventure." She says, "We started the year at the Great World's Fair on Long Island. Everything about the four years was fascinating—meeting wonderful people,

having marvelous professors. The whole experience of New Rochelle was the certainty that when you stepped out of New Rochelle you are going to conquer the world."

Sr. Paula took on all her projects with the same energy and enthusiasm. During her teaching years, she also taught German to adults. She says some wanted to tell their family histories and some needed to learn German for their careers, such as the Metropolitan Opera and the FBI.

She has kept in touch with many of her students over the years which makes for having friends around the world. Sr. Paula speaks of all those relationships as enriching her life and points to the sisters in her community as a life-long blessing.

"I had such an opportunity to share so much with them.... They all in their own way, encouraged students and that encouraged their fellow faculty members. They shared what they found interesting and amusing. They enriched your life."



Far left: Sr. Paula stands in front of a "Germany" poster in a classroom at the College of Mount Saint Vincent, circa 1975–80, when she was Associate Professor of German and English.

Left: Grandnephew Jeffrey Wilsey and grandniece Danielle Wilsey visited Sr. Paula in 2019.



Celebrating Our Jubilarians

We honor, we celebrate, we thank our sisters who celebrated
milestone Jubilees on September 8, 2020

SEVENTY-FIFTH

Sister Ellen Quirke

SEVENTIETH

Sister Jeanne Delaney
Sister Mary Donagher
Sister Mary Thérèse Hannaway
Sister Mary A. Jordan
Sister Aileen Kelly
Sister Anita Miriam Lavelle
Sister Rita Nowatzki
Sister Mary O'Brien
Sister Rosemary Petrucelli
Sister T. Marie Tolle
Sister Kathleen Tracey
Sister Alice Joan Ward

SIXTY-FIFTH

Sister Helen Bryant
Sister Margaret Ellen Burke
Sister Kathleen Fitzgerald
Sister Kathleen Gilmartin
Sister Doris Heinlein
Sister A. Jean Iannone
Sister Constance Kelly
Sister Eileen T. Kelly
Sister Kathryn McDermott
Sister Patricia Morgan
Sister Sheila Normoyle
Sister Mary Sugrue
Sister Kathleen Sullivan
Sister Catherine Walsh

SIXTIETH

Sister Eileen Fagan
Sister Maria Iglesias
Sister Frances Keegan
Sister Nancy Kellar
Sister Florence Mallon
Sister Terese McElroy
Sister Marie Morris
Sister Patricia Noone
Sister Margaret M. O'Brien
Sister Anna Roche
Sister Carol Ruf
Sister Virginia Searing
Sister Mary Tommasino

Sr. Margaret Dennehy

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- » Longtime involvement with the NYC School Library System (NYCSLS), as a participant and Advisory Council member, provided a voice and presence for non-public school libraries. One of many enviable outcomes was the opportunity to curate and maintain a special collection of picture books to be shared widely through inter-library loan. Ongoing professional conferences and workshops provided by NYCSLS enhanced appreciation of and involvement with the wider library world beyond.
- » Development of a series of Parent Literacy Nights, with NYCSLS funding.

Those achievements were complemented by innovative approaches to teaching and learning, rooted in the context of an enriching and empowering cultural and historical African-American heritage. I was privileged to be part of living out that vision for 21

years. A bittersweet summary of and tribute to the unique contributions of St. Aloysius School for over 75 years was recorded in a June 2016 broadcast of a PBS MetroFocus segment. This was done as an unsuccessful struggle to prevent the school from closing was being waged. After the school closed, I spent several months dispersing the library's resources to other schools.

Currently, as a member of the Sisters of Charity Creation's Transformative Energy Committee, I periodically compile and update bibliographies of notable children's books on ecological issues such as climate change and water. After all, the keyword that remains is "Connections" to nurture and encourage creative collaboration.

During the past two years, Mt. Carmel-Holy Rosary School (MCHR) had the opportunity to join an innovative pilot project, MyLibraryNYC, along with 600 or so libraries across the five boroughs. A unique relationship with NYPL offers a range of opportunities

for teachers, librarians, students, and families to access an extraordinary collection of print and digital resources of over 10,000 teacher sets, deliverable via United Parcel Service. A designated Resource Librarian is available for on-site teacher and parent sessions, class visits, and special programs to enhance implementation of this program. When we are able to convene post-pandemic classes, I plan to seek funding for Parent Literacy Nights that will also offer refreshments, book giveaways and other incentives.

I have been gifted with generous and talented individuals, mentors and colleagues, enabling me to develop the skills, values and connections that I bring to my work today. As I continue library work at MCHR, my days include sharing stories with a new generation who continue to delight and surprise: when two third-grade boys organized a "book club" without adult involvement, they let me know, "You're in!" And I'm in—all the way!



Education in The Bahamas

By Mary E. Mc Cormick, SC

The second Sisters of Charity mission* outside the United States was Nassau, Bahamas, an island colony of the vast British empire. When Archbishop Corrigan asked Mother Ambrosia Sweeney to send sisters there, she remarked that *"This mission was the closest we have come thus far to the Vincentian concept of charity."*

It was a surprising place for the community to choose as a missionary endeavor. The language spoken was English, but little else was familiar. The state religion was Anglican and the national anthem was *God Save the King*. Money was counted in pounds, shillings, and pence, and Thanksgiving Day was just another Thursday in November. There were no Roman Catholics except

for a few representatives from foreign governments. (Today, Catholics are about 12 percent of the population.)

There is, though, an American connection: many Bahamians are descended from a group of Loyalists from the southern colonies who chose not to become part of the United States in 1783, emigrated to the Bahamas, and brought their slaves with them. Slavery was abolished in Great Britain, and also in the Bahamas, in 1834. Today Black Bahamians comprise about 90 percent of the population of about 400,000, and White Bahamians, 4.7 percent.

Five Sisters of Charity arrived with three graduates of the Academy to assist them, on October 28, 1889. One week later they began St. Francis Xavier, the

first parish school in the country. Two months later, in January 1890, they started St. Francis Xavier Academy, a select school for girls, which later became Xavier College, and more recently Xavier Lower School. A second school, Sacred Heart, was established in the area known as "out east" in 1893. No other schools were started for thirty years.

Life was hard for the early sisters on this tropical mission. There was very little by way of fresh milk, vegetables, and meat, although there was much fresh fruit. After their wells were shut down the water became almost undrinkable.

The sisters wore a habit of black merino wool until 1923, when they were permitted to wear white. (At this time

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Sr. Richard Marian (Virginia) Unsworth with students, Nassau, Bahamas, ca. 1950–1960.



Sr. Margaret McEntee with students at St. Augustine School, ca. 1986
Top photo: St. Francis Xavier School, Nassau, 1976



The four Presidents of Elizabeth Seton College, left to right: Eileen Farley, (1971–1975); Sr. Mary Elizabeth Kelly (1966–1971); Sr. Miriam Imelda Kieley (1960–1966); Sr. Mary Ellen Brosnan (1975–1989)

Elizabeth Seton College

Cont'd from page 7

Fugazy, Regina Kraft and Katherine Talbot.

Sr. Ann Citarella (who attended Seton in her pre-SC days) vividly remembers Sr. Francis calling the class to look out the window at ice chunks on the Hudson River moving in two directions at once, a fact that continues to amaze her. Her years at Seton marked Sr. Ann's first encounter with the Sisters of Charity, whom she joined almost 20 years later.

As a novice and junior professed attending Seton, **Sr. Andrea Dixon** recalls the atmosphere of beauty and freedom she found there. Alder Manor's tapestries and the Greek garden's huge stone pillars brought to life treasures she had only read about.

Associate **Barbara Stasz Sweeney** remembers Seton's "welcoming" atmosphere, "magnificent campus,... the flora, the gardens, the view" and the "many opportunities to feel connected." Teachers were "engaged and well prepared,... always challenging us to go beyond the obvious and to think outside the box." Associate **Sandy Figueroa** described the faculty as "open and exciting." She credits her English teacher at

Seton with sharpening her skills in clear, creative writing and awakening her interest in Eugene O'Neill, the subject of one of her term papers.

Sr. Mary Eucharica Carrigan served as a librarian at Seton for 20 years until it closed. She recalls the "fantastic students," especially the adults in the nursing program. "They had homes and families to care for, plus a job.... They were determined to keep up with their studies and get degrees."

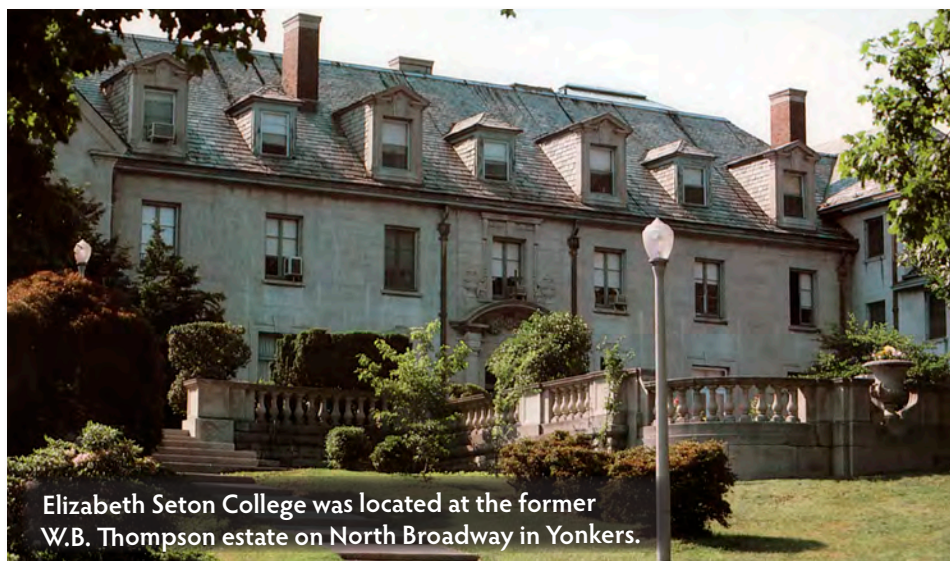
Memories of students also remain vivid for **Sr. Barbara Srozenski**, who taught chemistry to student nurses. After their shift at Calvary Hospital ended at 3 p.m., they hurried to Seton for a 4:30

to 6:30 class, always on time, always with assignments done. As they shared their nursing experiences in class, Sr. Barbara "...became the student and marveled at the way they integrated book knowledge with loving, compassionate care."

Elizabeth Seton College remained an independent institution until its merger with Iona College in 1989. Regrettably, the Seton campus was closed just two years later; the entire property was sold by Iona in 1995.

2020 marks the 60th anniversary of Seton College's founding. In its brief but spectacular history, Seton attracted women and men of varied cultural, economic and social backgrounds; talk-show host and journalist Denise Richardson and actress Jane Curtin are among its more famous alumni/ae, but hundreds more witness to its lasting legacy. Seton's programs responded to the need for a fresh approach to higher education, especially for the "nontraditional" students whom it was Seton's mission to serve. That need still exists. Sixty years ago (and long before), the Sisters of Charity were part of the solution. Their commitment to education continues in innovative ways, as this issue of *Vision* proudly describes.

By Regina Bechtle, SC, with contributions from: Associates Sandy Figueroa, Barbara Stasz Sweeney; Sisters M. Eucharica Carrigan, Ann Citarella, Andrea Dixon, Francis Marita Sabara and Barbara Srozenski



Elizabeth Seton College was located at the former W.B. Thompson estate on North Broadway in Yonkers.

By Mindy Gordon, Archivist
Adapted from an article by
Sr. Maryeugene Gotimer

The Villa at Mount Saint Vincent

The Villa is a 19th century cottage, one of three original structures that comprised the Fonthill estate when the Sisters of Charity of New York purchased the property in 1857. When the Congregation had to relocate the first Motherhouse and girls' Academy of Mount Saint Vincent from McGown's Pass, Manhattan, for the construction of Central Park, the sisters' preference was to relocate to the "Hudson River above Spuyten Duyvil and below Dobbs Ferry." After viewing several estates, they decided to purchase the Fonthill property in Riverdale in the Bronx from Edwin Forrest, the celebrated Shakespearean actor.

The three original structures included the fieldstone barn, today's Boyle Hall, and the next-door cottage known as "The Villa," the latter described to appear like a "farmhouse at the edge of a deep woods." Prior to the sisters' residency, Forrest occasionally remained in the cottage while he inspected the building of his riverfront Castle, planned as a home for himself and his new wife. Due to an early divorce, Forrest never did establish residence at Fonthill, and was ready to relinquish the property less than 10 years later, as the reminder of domestic unhappiness.

Architecturally eclectic and skillfully crafted in English style, the two-story landmark Villa is of massive-faced rusticated fieldstone, quarried nearby. The interior is two rooms deep, and two rooms wide, separated by a center hall. Three-dimensional vertical glass panes also flank the front door, and the diamond-shaped motif recurs in a pyramidal design above the portal, with diamond-pane casement windows. Gray shingling extends directly below the eaves of the gambrel roof. Broken lintels and curvilinear wooden brackets, also gray, produce a gingerbread effect.

Despite its charm, the small cottage on the grounds was unsuitable for the site of the relocated girls' Academy. Initially the home of a caretaker, the rent in 1876 was \$75 annually. By this time, a grotto and shrine with goldfish pond had been erected near the cottage. From 1887 until 1910 it became the temporary location of a school and dormitory for displaced students from St. Aloysius Academy, Yonkers, when the school was destroyed by fire. Among these fifteen students was ten-year-old Lionel Barrymore, a pupil in early 1888. In October

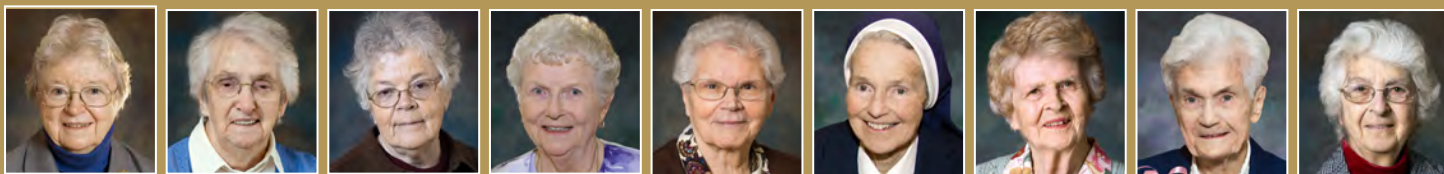


1895, Master Eugene O'Neill, age seven, was enrolled by his actor father in the cottage school and remained there until 1900. In O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, the description of the shrine at a convent school resembles Lourdes Grotto, now overlooking Forrest's goldfish pond. When the College of Mount Saint Vincent opened in 1910, the boys vacated the premises.

Renamed Lourdes Villa, the cottage provided dormitory accommodations for college students. During the 1920s and 1930s, part of the cottage was the campus tearoom. In 1942, after the interior was remodeled, the building became the College priests' residence. From 1952 to 1959, Archbishop (later Cardinal) Paul Yu-Pin of Formosa lived at the cottage.

Today the Villa is home to sisters who work at Sisters of Charity Center in Leadership and administrative roles.

Sisters Memorialized in Videos



Since the beginning of the pandemic, nine Sisters of Charity have gone home to God. As we were unable to gather for traditional prayer services, we created videos to memorialize their lives of devotion and service. These short video portraits of each sister may be found on the Sisters of Charity website: www.scny.org, with links to the individual videos on Vimeo.com. We hope you will view and share them.

The following Sisters of Charity are featured:

Sr. Janet Baxendale
Sr. Mary Catherine Ryan
Sr. Patricia McGowan
Sr. Patricia Ann O'Brien
Sr. Grace Henke
Sr. Marguerite McGilly
Sr. Clare Regan
Sr. Angela Marie Rooney
Sr. Grace Anne Troisi

Narrated by fellow sisters, family members, and illustrated with original photos and quotes, the videos provide a vivid portrait of the sister's individual spiritual lives and journeys. As the videos show, many of the sisters knew one another since their school days and worked side-by-side for decades in service to the poor.

Some sisters worked in healthcare and others in education, but all maintained a lifelong passion for learning and were blessed with an infectious joy.

We hope these videos help our communities, family members and friends remember and honor the lives and contributions of our beloved Sisters. In time we hope to come together again to honor their lives at a memorial Mass.

Susan Oxley, who works with the Sisters of Charity Federation, created the videos in collaboration with Elena Miranda, SC Director of Communications.

By Teri Tynes

Education in The Bahamas

Continued from page 11

they were also dispensed from wearing the shawl, gloves, and outdoor bonnet the sisters in the north were required to wear!)

The early schools were primitive. Parishes were poor and could provide little but the basics: a parish hall, some chairs that became desks when the children needed to write, a few books. School didn't start until 10 a.m. so the children could help with the chores at home and sell their produce in the marketplace. School ended at 1:30 to allow the sisters to do home visiting in the afternoons. They were also responsible for the upkeep of the parish church connected with their school: they cleaned, washed and ironed the altar linens, and attended many evening services, including rosary, holy hour, and Benediction.

Beginning in 1926 other schools opened whose names many Sisters of Charity have long been familiar with, including Our Lady's, the largest and perhaps best known, St. Joseph's in Baintown, and St. Anselm's in Fox Hill. In all, eleven schools were opened in Nassau, and two on Harbour Island. Sisters also spent time on the Out Islands during the summer, hosting catechetical and summer enrichment programs.

In 1974 Xavier Academy merged with Saint Augustine College, founded by the Benedictines in 1945. Teachers included the monks, whose community had arrived in 1893,

Sisters of Charity, and a large lay staff from the United States and various parts of the British Commonwealth.

In the one hundred eighteen years of Sisters of Charity presence thousands of children were given an education in these schools that placed many of them in the forefront of Bahamian political, economic, spiritual and cultural life before and after independence was attained in 1973.

The schools started by the Sisters of Charity continue today to provide quality education for the children whose forebears came to know and love their American sisters.

In his history of Catholics in the Bahamas, Colman Barry, OSB, pays this tribute to the Sisters of Charity:

... their coming to the Bahamas was the single most important development of Catholicism... the very presence of these women, their selfless devotion to the poor and needy, their love and patience with the children, have made a lasting impression on Bahamians of all persuasions. (Colman Barry, OSB, Upon These Rocks, Catholics in the Bahamas)

*The first foreign mission, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1849, became an independent congregation, the Sisters of Charity – Halifax, in 1855.

Material from: *The Sisters of Charity of New York* by Marjorie Walsh, SC; *From the Void to the Wonderful* by Patricia Gladstone Meicholas; *A History of the Bahamas* by Virginia Unsworth, SC.

With Love and Appreciation We Remember...

Visit www.scny.org for complete biographies

Sister Mary Christine Rogers, SC

Entered: 1958+ Date of Death: August 20, 2020 + Age: 90



Sr. Mary Christine's fifty-three years of active ministry were dedicated entirely to youth. After receiving a BA in History from the College of Mount Saint Vincent, an MA in Sociology and Behavioral Sciences from the City College of New York, and teaching certification, Sr. Mary Christine taught elementary grades for several years. For six years she served the children as "mother" at St. Joseph Hall, Brooklyn, and for 29 years tended their faith development at St. Agatha Home, Nanuet. St. Agatha became home for Sr. Christine in 1964 and would remain her devoted community for the rest of her life. She rarely missed a celebration, meeting, liturgy or funeral.

Sister Anne Miriam Connellan, SC

Entered: 1946+ Date of Death: September 16, 2020 + Age: 95



After graduating from the College of Mount Saint Vincent with a degree in English, Sr. Anne began her life of service while continuing her studies in both English and art. She earned an MA in English from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and later received teaching certification. Sr. Anne began teaching high school at Cathedral in Manhattan where she devoted thirty-three years as a teacher of English and Art Appreciation. Sr. Anne's missions include Nassau, Bahamas, as Headmistress of Xavier College, St. Barnabas, Bronx, and St. Joseph by-the-Sea, Staten Island. She excelled in sketching, painting and needlework.

Sister Kathleen McKiernan, SC (Sister Dolores Elizabeth)

Entered: 1951 + Date of Death: August 31, 2020 + Age: 86



Sr. Kathleen devoted 53 years of active service to the healing ministry of nursing. She was a staff nurse and assistant head nurse at St. Vincent's Hospital, Manhattan, an instructor and later Associate Director at St. Vincent's School of Nursing, and Associate Director of the School of Nursing at St. Vincent Hospital, Staten Island. She would become known for her abilities as an administrator of various nursing programs and services, directing the Nursing Service of Saint Joseph's Hospital, Yonkers, and serving as Administrative Coordinator of Cabrini Nursing Home, Dobbs Ferry. Sr. Kathleen possessed a lively wit and a warm personality, and remained close to family and friends.

Sister Ellen Dunne, SC

Entered: 1966+ Date of Death: September 22, 2020 + Age: 73



Sr. Ellen's ministry for fifty years was in the field of elementary education with a concentration in the primary grades, all in Bronx schools. She attended St. Joseph Hill Academy, Staten Island, for both elementary and high school, and the College of Saint Rose in Albany for one year before entering the Sisters of Charity of New York. Sr. Ellen received a BA in History from the College of Mount Saint Vincent and an MA in Education from Lehman College. She began her Bronx ministry at Our Lady of Angels, teaching grade two for eleven years and grade three for thirty-two years. In recent years she taught at Saint Nicholas of Tolentine and at St. Raymond.

In response to the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis by police officers on May 25, 2020, Sr. Kathy Byrnes turned to Life Experience Faith Sharing Associates (LEFSA), a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Charity Ministry Network. After hearing their powerful reflections, Sr. Kathy proposed to Sr. Donna the need to create a video in response to this tragedy. The result is *My Life Matters*, which is available for viewing at www.scny.org

My Life Matters reflects on the resurgence of racial injustice within the context of the public health crisis. As Pastor Carl L. Petrus observes, the early days of the pandemic brought a sense of shared humanity, but then racial inequalities began to surface. With the death of Floyd and the release of the

My Life Matters.

shocking video of his murder, a surge of protests followed.

In the video, which was created by Katherine Perez—a 2019 College of Mount Saint Vincent graduate—LEFSA team members share their reflections on the personal effects of discrimination as well as the hope that the global reaction may lead to greater awareness of racial injustice and genuine change.

LEFSA thrives on hope. Its members, many of them formerly homeless individuals, have found renewed strength and faith by working in street ministry, empowerment groups, and in city shelters.

We invite you to share the video with friends and continue this important discussion.

By Teri Tynes



Sisters of Charity Center
6301 Riverdale Avenue
Bronx, NY 10471-1093
718.549.9200 • www.scny.org



Every Vote Counts!



This photograph showing Sr. Anastasia Marie Doyle at the 87th Precinct polling station, ca. 1970–75, demonstrates the sisters' commitment to participate in the electoral process. Mary Gertrude Doyle was born on June 7, 1894, in New York City. As a young girl, she resided St. Peter's Parish, Staten Island, and attended St. Peter Academy. Sr. Anastasia Marie entered the Sisters of Charity of New York on September 8, 1912; Sr. Mary Gratia Doyle, her sister, entered six years later. Sr. Anastasia Marie attended the College of Mount Saint Vincent while teaching elementary school at St. John the Evangelist, White Plains. From 1917 until 1922, she taught at St. Edwards in Shamokin, Pa., an area where illness was particularly harsh during the 1918 epidemic. Sr. Anastasia Marie retired in 1971 and lived at the Mount Saint Vincent Convent for the next seven years; she passed away in 1978 at St. Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan.

Mindy Gordon, Archivist



Vincent's Village First Residents Selected by Lottery

Forty-five lucky seniors were winners of the Vincent's Village lottery, held on September 9th. Current plans call for the first residents to move in during mid-November. Almost 200 seniors applied.

Photo below from left: Maura Buke (Hog Hill Management), Matthew Janeczko (SCHDC, Executive Director), Sr. Donna Dodge, Ann Marie Smith (Chairperson, Rockland Housing Board), and Sr. Eileen Walsh (Resident Services Director, Seton Village) participate in the Vincent's Village Housing Lottery. *Above:* The soon-to-be-finished Community Center at Vincent's Village will consist of staff office space and a large common area for resident gatherings and activities.

