

Vision

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF NEW YORK

VOL. 25, ISSUE 4 *Now in Our Third Century of Living Lives of Love* AUTUMN 2021



Vincent's Village Dedicated



From the President

Me: I will choose the category VINCENTS, for \$800, please.

Jeopardy Host: His vision and spirit of service are the inspiration for the Sisters of Charity of New York.

Me: Who is St. Vincent de Paul?

Jeopardy Host: Excellent, select another category.

Me: VINCENTS for \$1000, please.

Jeopardy Host: The name of the Village for affordable housing for seniors that recently opened in Rockland County.

Me: What is Vincent's Village?

Jeopardy Host: Very good. Choose another category.

Me: VINCENTS for \$1200.

Jeopardy Host: The name of the food distribution center sponsored by the College of Mount Saint Vincent and the Sisters of Charity.

Me: What is Vincent's Table?

Jeopardy Host: Congratulations! You are a big winner!!!!

The Sisters of Charity were certainly big winners during September with two projects that officially opened named after St. Vincent de Paul. Vincent's Village is particularly special in that it is built on land that had housed thousands of orphaned boys and girls since the late 1800s. Now it is home to senior citizens in need of affordable housing. The mission changes with the times but continues as new needs emerge.

Also of great significance is that the first floor of Rosary Hall, located on the campus, will house a food pantry that will distribute food in the surrounding area for those who are food insecure. It is ironic that in our early years workers would come to the back door of the Convent across the road where Sr. Benedict would give them food left over from her cooking. The mission changes but it does not end.

Me: I choose the category SUBSCRIPTIONS for \$2000.

Jeopardy Host: Name the best magazine published by a congregation of women religious.

Me: What is *VISION*?

Jeopardy Host: Congratulations!!!!

Please read on to learn more about these two new projects as well as many other features of interest.

Blessings,



Sr. Donna Dodge, SC



Cover photos: (top) Aerial view of Vincent's Village, consisting of 93 units affordable senior housing in Nanuet, N.Y.; (bottom left) a guest of honor indeed, Linda Shaner (second from left), was a resident at St. Agatha Home as a child. Today she is a resident at Vincent's Village. She was joined by three sisters who served at St. Agatha Home: Sisters Robert Marie Fimbel, Eileen P. Walsh and Loretto Thomas Donohue. (bottom right) Ribbon cutting ceremony included Sisters of Charity, SCHDC executives, Rockabill executives, state and local officials, board members and community leaders.

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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To those who see: The Survivor Tree & The Sphere

Commemorating the 20th anniversary of 9/11

By Mary Mc Cormick, SC

*...to those who see miraculous sights and envision all the wonders hidden from the eye...
hear multitudinous sounds and listen to the symphonies that silence brings...*

To Those Who See, by Gwen Fostic

It takes no time at all for those who were alive on September 11, 2001, to remember where they were and what they were doing when the planes hit the Twin Towers, and life in New York City changed forever.

Today, twenty years later, what was Ground Zero continues to be rebuilt.

Buildings one, three and four are completed. Finished in 2014, the National Memorial and Museum attracts thousands of visitors each year, and Liberty Park has become a place of calm and respite.

The Reflecting Pools, erected in the footprints of the two towers, have been called “a sea of names over an ocean of tears.” Even today, birthday roses left on the engraved name of a loved one are heartbreaking reminders of the incredible losses so many have endured.

Close to 3,000 people perished on this site in the attacks of 1993 and 2001. First responders worked heroically and at significant personal cost to rescue survivors.

Our associate, Mrs. Pat Devaney, developed an outreach initiative, Small Miracles, to connect with mothers of young children or those who were pregnant when their husbands were lost that day. She and a group of associates located 53 of the women, visited some and sent letters of condolence to all. Birthday cards celebrated the children for their first ten years.

Beyond the human dimensions of rescue, recovery and



restoration, two relics endure as icons of the indestructible spirit of New York City.

In October 2001, workers noticed the limb of a Callery pear tree in the rubble. It was severely damaged, more dead than alive, with snapped roots and burned and broken branches. It was taken to the Parks Department Nursery in Van Cortlandt Park in the hope that it could be revived.

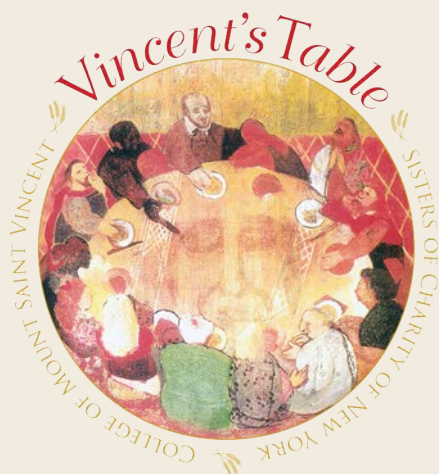
By the spring of 2002, it had sprouted a riot of leaves, and a dove made her nest in its boughs. Today, scarred but robust, it thrives in its new home next to the South Reflecting Pool. Called the Survivor Tree, the Callery pear serves as a sign of resilience and hope.

The Sphere, a 25-ton sculpture placed atop a fountain between the twin towers on the Astin J. Tobin Plaza, was dedicated to world peace. It is the only remaining work of art that, though damaged, survived the attack. It was first brought to a hangar at Kennedy Airport, then to

Battery Park, and finally, unrestored—by popular demand—to its current location in Liberty Park. Once a sculpture, it has become a monument where an eternal flame honors the memory of those whom we lost.

As we continue to memorialize what occurred on that early fall morning twenty years ago, may the survivor tree and the Sphere be marks of the tenacity and strength that have always characterized the city of New York and its people.

Announcing Vincent's Table—A Co-Sponsored Program by CMSV & SCNY for Neighbors Facing Food Insecurity



Vincent's Table, a new program sponsored by the Sisters of Charity and the College of Mount Saint Vincent, is designed to provide food and other items for their neighbors facing food insecurity and homelessness in the Northwest Bronx and Yonkers. The collaborative ministry will also provide a space for staff, student volunteers and Sisters of Charity to share in prayer, meals, and life experiences on the Mount Saint Vincent campus.

The facility is located on the first floor of Rosary Hall. Jordan Douglas, a graduate of the Mount, has been appointed as the administrator of Vincent's Table. He will oversee food pantry services and supervision of volunteers. Douglas says of the program, "Vincent's Table will

foster a stronger community through leadership and collaboration to address the needs of those who face food insecurity in the Bronx and Yonkers."

"It is difficult to imagine," said Sr. Donna Dodge, "that in this day and age in the U.S. there are people who are hungry on a regular basis. I am so pleased that Vincent's Table will enable the students at the College of Mount Saint Vincent to volunteer with the Sisters of Charity to serve those who are food insecure in the surrounding area."

Dr. Susan R. Burns, President of the College of Mount Saint Vincent, comments, "Vincent's Table is a beautiful example of the Mount's and Sisters' shared commitment to human dignity. I am excited to support this side-by-side work with the sisters to address food insecurity in our community. The efforts

of Vincent's Table provide our students the opportunity to live CMSV's mission in the spirit of Vincent de Paul and Elizabeth Ann Seton by fostering an understanding of our common humanity and obligations to each other."



Jordan Douglas, CMSV '21, was appointed as the administrator of Vincent's Table.

A message from the Development Office

Donor Advised Funds

A Donor Advised Fund (DAF) is an investment account for philanthropic giving that offers an immediate tax benefit and the flexibility to support your preferred charities right away or over time.

The advantages of giving through your DAF

- **Simplicity** Your sponsoring organization handles all record-keeping, and tax receipts and provides you with a single document at tax time.
- **Timing** You can request that a donation be made at any time or make automatic recurring gifts on a schedule of your choice.
- **Open to all** Individuals, families, companies, foundations and other entities can start a DAF.
- **Increase your philanthropic capital** With varying investment strategies available, the funds in your DAF have the potential to grow tax-free.
- **Flexible funding options** Fund your DAF with the assets of your choice, including cash, stock, securities, and even real estate.

Why recommend a grant from your DAF to the Sisters of Charity of New York?

Our Sisters are passionate about serving others. We don't shy away from tackling society's toughest issues including homelessness, poverty, and human trafficking. We commit ourselves to inclusiveness and community with all people. Your gift will support our ministries and more:

- LEFSA
- Sisters Hill Farm
- Sisters of Charity Multi-Service Center
- Elizabeth Seton Women's Center
- Sisters of Charity Housing Corporation

Questions?

Please call Anne Marie Gardiner, Director of Development at: 718-879-5262 or e-mail amgardiner@scny.org. Visit our website at scny.org/about-us/sisters-of-charity-ministry-network/

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If your clients are looking to make a gift through their DAF, please note the Sisters of Charity of New York's tax ID number is 13-1740394.

Profile

Sister Kathleen Tracey

A Life in the Advanced Sciences

By Teri Tynes

Sister Kathleen Tracey's decades-long career in scientific research and teaching exemplifies the Sisters of Charity's commitment to education at all levels, not just the early years. While many sisters are known for their service to primary and secondary education, Sr. Kathleen nurtured the hopes and dreams of students pursuing advanced degrees, especially in the sciences.

Her life in advanced science teaching demonstrates that excellent teaching and inspiration do not require world-wide travel, but may be found close to home. In her case, the inspiration flowed from her alma mater, the College of Mount Saint Vincent (CMSV). Here, she encouraged generations of students to pursue graduate studies in biology, genetics, medicine, and biochemistry.

Sr. Kathleen joined the Sisters of Charity of New York shortly after

graduation from the Mount in 1948. She earned her Ph.D. in biology from Fordham University, followed by post-doctoral programs at the Universities of Chicago, Tennessee and Illinois. She returned to the Mount's science department, where she became its chair in 1976. She held the post for three independent terms: from 1976 to 1984, in 2006, and from 2008 to 2010. She also held a position at Manhattan College.

A deft administrator, she served at the Mount as the Associate Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Public Relations for more than two decades. Her work helped advance the college's fundraising efforts. In 2017, the college presented the first Kathleen Tracey, S.C. Medal for Service and Leadership to a graduating senior in the natural sciences.

A teacher to the core, Sr. Kathleen found novel ways to engage her students. Charles L. Flynn, Jr., President Emeritus at CMSV, recalls the stories she told about her teaching methods:

"As Sr. Kathleen and I traveled the country, her favorite stories were from teaching. When some students were more interested in horse racing than biology, she researched the genetics of the gait of horses to engage them.

In the Bahamas, she hung her habit



on a bush as she taught students how to scuba dive. She and a good friend created the marine biology program in the Bahamas—among the first in the country. With another friend, Fr. James Griffin, she created what may have well been the first undergraduate bioethics course in the country. 'I didn't know anything about it,' she said, 'but it was certainly very interesting.'

What came through all the stories was the immense size of her vocation, her capacious intellect, her wide-ranging curiosity, and her love for her students and colleagues."

Sr. Kathleen now lives in retirement at Cabrini of Westchester, comfortable in a long life of inspiration, humor, knowledge and grace.

An Unusual Incident Near Home

Sister Kathleen achieved some accidental acclaim for a series of unlikely incidents near her hometown in New Jersey while a teenager and then as a teacher at the Mount.

She grew up in Little Ferry, N.J., where her father owned Tracey's Nine Mile House, a steak and seafood restaurant situated on the Hackensack River in Teaneck. The Tracey home was located close by at the intersection of Queen Anne Road and Cherry Lane. On May 24, 1942, a Sunday morning, on her way to Mass, 16-year-old Kathleen witnessed a mid-air collision of two Army planes practicing a maneuver. Part of the debris landed on the Tracey family's garage, engulfing the structure in flames and destroying their cars.

But that's not the end of the story. Eight years later, on September 5, 1950, Sr. Kathleen was 24 and teaching at CMSV. She received an excited call from her mother, who said, "It's happened again." That day, the pilot of a single-engine plane had crashed into the very same intersection near their home. The pilot died, and a passenger was injured. Fortunately, there were no injuries on the ground or to the Tracey home this time.

Sr. Kathleen told the story of the twin crashes to the local paper, recalling the unusual incidents. In an article published in [newjersey.com](https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/2017/05/15/archive-1950-plane-crash-second-teaneck-intersection/323975001/) on May 17, 2017, she added, "We do feel blessed. We have been blessed all these years."

Source: <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/2017/05/15/archive-1950-plane-crash-second-teaneck-intersection/323975001/>

Celebrating Our Jubilarians

*We honor, we celebrate, we
bless, we thank our sisters who
celebrated milestone Jubilees on
September 8, 2021*



SEVENTIETH

Sister E. Bernadette Brennan
Sister Elizabeth Mary Butler
Sister Winifred Goddard
Sister Mary Adele Henze
Sister Helen McTaggart
Sister Patricia Padden
Sister Francis Marita Sabara
Sister Barbara Srozenski
Sister Elizabeth A. Vermaelen

SIXTY-FIFTH

Sister Carol A. Barnes
Sister Rose Ann Bianco
Sister Mary Elizabeth Clancy
Sister Margaret Egan
Sister Anne Marie Falloon
Sister Mary Kay Finneran
Sister Mary Ann Garisto
Sister Mary T. Higgins
Sister Eileen Judge
Sister Mary Ellen McGovern
Sister Helen McGovern
Sister Dorothy Metz
Sister Mary Ellen O'Boyle
Sister Patricia Walsh

SIXTIETH

Sister Helen F. Connors
Sister Nora Ellen Cunningham
Sister Jean Flannelly
Sister Linda Giuli
Sister Winifred Lyons

Congregation Issues Public Statement in *Laudato Si'* Movement

On September 27, 2021, the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, the Congregation gathered in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at Mount Saint Vincent to publicly proclaim its commitment to the Church's *Laudato Si'* Action Platform. Joining with congregations, schools, dioceses and health systems around the world, the sisters will work over the next seven years to grow in understanding how their actions impact all of creation and to change their thinking and practices to help the planet be sustainable. Pope Francis has demonstrated a vision of an interconnected world. This coming year will be spent in educating and engaging members and colleagues in setting specific goals. Each year's progress will be published and the goals revised, until there is reason to celebrate significant change at the end of the seven years.

Praise God for the Wonders of Creation!

In all our deliberations we must be mindful of the impact of our decisions on the seventh generation to follow ours.

Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Seventh Generation Principle

In this, our third century of responding in love to those in need, we, the Sisters of Charity of New York, grieve over the ailing condition of the home we share with our sisters and brothers throughout the world. Creation is God's gift and first revelation, to be received gratefully and tended respectfully. Instead, our common home and all who dwell in it are dangerously close to cataclysmic change, if not extinction.

Believing in the interconnectedness of all life, we open ourselves to a conversion process that will align our hearts, minds and practices with this integrated vision. We join with others across the globe who seek the flourishing of all life and who are determined to be part of the solution to our catastrophic situation.

From September 2021 through August 2022, we commit to educating ourselves on what more we might do to alleviate the cries of the earth and the poor and develop a contemplative view of our life on this planet. In this year, we will involve ourselves and our partners in choosing the specific ways we will work over the next five years:

- » to renew our common home
- » to grow into this contemplative mindset
- » to combat poverty
- » to restore dignity to the excluded
- » and to simplify our lives.

Joining the global Church in the *Laudato Si'* Movement, we make this public statement to invite others to join us on this sacred journey and to hold us accountable to our promises.



Seeking Authentic Freedom...

By Bill Hurley, Associate & Co-Chair, Immigration Committee

When Pope Francis released *Laudato Si'* in 2015, the Immigration Committee—functioning within the Congregation's Ministry of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation—realized that the document provided a road map to achieving our mission.

In his introduction, Pope Francis writes, “I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home.” Throughout the remainder of this encyclical, one can easily recognize the Mission Statement of the Sisters of Charity, especially the words “by revealing God’s love in our lives and our varied ministries with and for all in need.”

As Catholics, we believe every one of us is created in the image of God. God is love. Therefore, as Catholics, we love all human beings living on our earth, our common home. Pope Francis reminds us that God’s creation of our world and all its living entities is a gift from God. The care of creation is strongly linked to protecting human dignity. This protection includes all who live in poverty and are vulnerable.

Through its work, the Immigration Committee has made efforts to assist the immigrant community. These efforts have focused on advocacy, working with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Justice for Immigrants campaign, the New York Immigration Coalition, New Sanctuary Coalition and NETWORK Lobby and Faith in Action. The committee:

- » advocates for comprehensive immigration reform
- » writes letters to local, state and federal elected officials
- » has accompanied undocumented persons to immigration hearings
- » and has advocated against walls built to separate God’s people.

The Immigration Committee raises awareness of and addresses the root causes of migration,

especially among people from the Northern Triangle—Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Conversations with Barbara Ford Peacebuilding Center staff and participation in the Faith in Action Root Causes Initiative advocacy meetings connect committee members with people who experience the corruption, violence, drug trafficking, poverty and hunger that force people to travel north for survival.

In response to Pope Francis’s plea to assist ALL in need, efforts seek to promote systemic change. We believe this philosophy will help us to be a small part of effecting positive changes worldwide. We stand with and for the vulnerable.

Laudato Si' speaks to every one of us. Pope Francis directly tells us that throughout the world we are faced with a problem that should be inspiring us to search inside ourselves and ask, “Am I responsible for someone’s loss of dignity?” He states that it is not enough to live our own lives with dignity. He emphatically reminds us that “No one has the right to take it from us.” The Immigration Committee strives to enact these words.



The release of the recent United Nations climate change report gives new urgency for us to take individual and collective action on behalf of the environment. In their August 2021 report,

the scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) state unequivocally that human actions have created not just the potential but the reality of global warming. Drawing on 14,000 scientific studies, the report finds that the Earth’s temperature has gone up 1.1 degrees Celsius since the pre-industrial age, with several harmful effects now irreversible.

While many aspects of climate are locked in, aggressive and timely steps can be taken to halt carbon emissions and protect against even further warming.

Limiting warming to 1.5 or 2 degrees Celsius is critical, because the “tipping point” would bring catastrophic and unsustainable change. If emissions were drastically reduced we could see immediate benefits such as cleaner air.

In the spirit of *Laudato Si'*, we continue to discuss ways to reduce our carbon footprint and take better care of our common home.

The following are a few additional ways to promote a healthier and more balanced relationship with our environment. *Continued, see page 13*



Vincent's Village in Nanuet Dedicated & Blessed

September 14, 2021, was a blessed day. Joined by residents, state and local officials, community leaders, board members, sisters and staff, the Sisters of Charity of New York celebrated the grand opening of Vincent's Village, a 93-unit affordable housing development primarily for seniors in Nanuet, Rockland County, N.Y. Sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of New York, Vincent's Village continues the Congregation's long history of providing housing for those in need. The day coincided with the anniversary of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton's canonization.

Vincent's Village was co-developed by the Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation (SCHDC) and Rockabill Development.

Located on the former site of the St. Agatha Home, the development includes,

a laundry room, community rooms and Vinny's Café, a communal space sponsored by SCHDC. Staff members will be on-site to provide health and wellness services.

Matthew Janeczko, SCHDC Executive Director and CEO, observed in his opening remarks, "Vincent's Village— and Seton Village next door— could not have become a reality without the vision and commitment of the Sisters of Charity of New York. The Sisters have always responded to the needs of the people they serve, and in seeing this need, they have pledged their time, their talent and, indeed, their treasure."

SCNY President Sr. Donna Dodge said, "We are grateful for the support of N.Y.S. Homes and Community Renewal and so many others who have made this project possible. The hope of the Sisters

of Charity of New York is that the residents of Vincent's Village will experience many years of happiness, good health, and community in their new homes."

Rockabill Development Managing Principal Niall J. Murray added, "Rockabill is honored to have partnered with the Sisters of Charity on a project of such importance to this community. In line with the sisters' mission, Vincent's Village will provide high-quality homes and help seniors maintain their independence and well-being as they age. We wish to thank our many partners in this effort and are grateful for the teamwork that brought this vision to life."

A special guest on hand was Linda Shaner. Ms. Shaner lived at St. Agatha Home as a child and today is a Vincent's Village resident. Some connections really do run deep. (*See cover*)

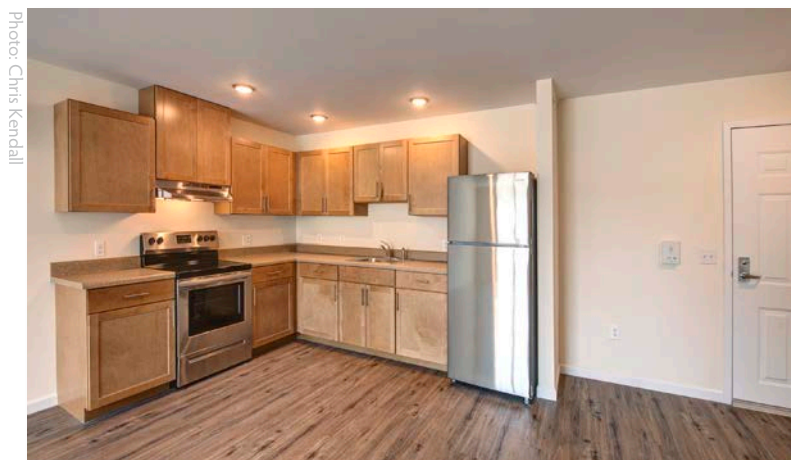


Photo: Chris Kendall



Photo: Chris Kendall



Page 8 photos, top from left: 1. Sr. Donna Dodge addressed Vincent's Village residents and the many gathered at the Vincent's Village dedication. 2. Matt Janeczko (second from left) presented flowers to Sr. Donna Dodge; Ann Marie Smith, SCHDC Chair of the Rockland County Housing Board; and Sr. Eileen P. Walsh, who provided valuable assistance throughout the process.

Page 8 photos bottom: Vincent's Village residents enjoy modern kitchens and bathrooms equipped complete with safety features.

Page 9 photos, above from left: Sisters Dominica Rocchio, Donna Dodge and Regina Bechtle stopped in Vinny's Cafe before the dedication; additional views of the beautifully decorated café and gathering space.

Pete Beckerle, Trustee Emeritus

By Maureen Reiser

Laurence "Pete" Beckerle first became acquainted with the Sisters of Charity through his female relatives. His mother, Ellen C. McEntegart, was a graduate of the College of Mount Saint Vincent (CMSV) in 1917, the first class to complete the full four years of study. Later, as a young driver, Pete would bring his sister Marcie from the Yonkers Ferry to CMSV. It was during that time that another of his sisters, Joan, would befriend Helen Murphy, who would enter the convent and later become the head of St. Agatha Home in Nanuet.

In the early 1970s, when the Congregation first invited lay people to serve on boards, Sr. Helen Murphy asked Pete to serve on St. Agatha Home's board in Rockland County. When The New York Foundling Hospital and St. Agatha Home boards merged, Pete remained and would continue to serve as a trustee for many more years.

Soon after the Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation explored possibilities for senior citizens in



Rockland County, Pete was invited onto a committee to develop housing on Convent Road in Nanuet. His knowledge of the local area and familiarity with politicians helped to move the project along. Pete stayed on as a trustee when Seton Village was opened in 2003 and continued to lend his expertise when the concept of Vincent's Village was proposed.

Pete estimates that he has served on SC boards for approximately 50 years and describes those years as "quite an experience." He reflects that the Sisters of Charity ministries span from the infants he saw at The Foundling to the seniors residing in Seton Village and Vincent's Village. He got to know the sisters and their work during that time and observed that "the nuns are really devoted to taking care of people."

Pete has found the sisters to be highly professional. He speculates that if they were in the business world, they would be very successful. "Sisters just jump over hurdles and accomplish whatever they set out to do."

Now 90, Pete has earned "Trustee Emeritus" status from the Rockland County Housing Development Corporation. He insists that "I got more from them than I ever gave to them."



Heart of a Missionary — Sisters Missioned in Guatemala, Part II

We continue to highlight the dedicated and courageous women who lived the mission of Charity in Guatemala during the past 50 years, a mission that continues today in the Novillero and Santa Cruz del Quiché regions.

Sister Marie Tolle, Novillero, Sololá, 1971–1972, 1981–2018

By Maryellen Blumlein, SC



“Iwant to convey the excitement of going there!” Sr. Marie Tolle exclaimed of her many years in service in Guatemala. “It was a wonderful, wonderful experience.”

In November 1970 Sr. Marie attended language school in Cochabamba, Bolivia for four months to learn Spanish. Upon completing her studies, she served in pastoral work in Novillero, Guatemala, where the Diocese of Spokane, Washington had invited the Sisters of Charity to join their mission.

“We arrived during Holy Week,” Sister Marie recalled of that spring in 1971. On Good Friday the sisters met the men carrying the cross coming down the mountain. “When they got to the eighth station, where Jesus meets the women, the women began carrying the cross. All were dressed in their very best, but without shoes.” She noticed their footprints in

the dirt and the small footprints of the children. “It was just so moving! Things like that you’ll never forget!”

Sr. Marie left Guatemala in 1972 to serve in mission and pastoral work for three years in San Jose Parish, Santiago, Chile, before returning to the United States.

In September 1981 Sr. Marie returned to the Diocese of Sololá in Guatemala, to live again in Novillero. She devoted the next 37 years to working with the Guatemalan people in Novillero and the surrounding areas. She provided education and catechesis, spiritual guidance, pastoral care, compassion, and kindness.

“I loved the first years when it was very simple,” she said. One Holy Week, Sr. Marie and Sr. Immaculata were among the first group to visit a community far down a mountain valley, arriving at midnight. Days later, when it was time to leave, the women of the village insisted on accompanying them back up the mountain.

Sr. Marie’s love of the people was evident in all she did, from providing lollipops for the children, to offering a listening ear to all ages, and an open, warm heart to all who needed her. She helped the Guatemalan people grow in the understanding of their faith and their practice of the gospel.

Sr. Marie was a missionary in Guatemala but is beloved by the people as one of their own. When she bid farewell to her companions in Guatemala in 2018 and returned to New York City, she left her heart in Novillero with her many friends, who will always love and remember her.

Sister Constance Kelly, San Cristobal, Cucho Parish, San Marcos, 1986–1995

By Lisa Shay, Associate



Six years after returning from Chile, where she served from 1972 to 1975, Sr. Connie Kelly volunteered to be missioned to Guatemala to do pastoral care. She lived in the Novillero

convent but covered a large area—the entire Santa Lucia parish—which included many villages tucked away in the mountainous region. Driving around the parish was often a challenge because of the narrow roads, hairpin turns, and rain and dense fog in the rainy season!

One aspect of her work was running a program to provide scholarships for children to attend secondary school. Every term, students would bring their report cards to Sr. Connie. Those encounters served several purposes. They verified that the student was still attending school, because many dropped out to earn money for their families. They also allowed Sr. Connie to see how the child was doing and learn about the entire family situation.

Her passion was caring for the local women and children. Her enduring memory of Guatemala was the enjoyment of “working with the women who always had the desire to better themselves.”

The Woman Who Stopped by the Side of the Road

Sister Barbara Ford, Novillero, Sololá, 1978–1985; Chupol, El Quiché, 1989–1995; Lemoa, El Quiché, 1995–2001

By Ellen Rose O'Connell, SC

Sister Barbara Ford is remembered in life as well as in death as one who listened to the cry of the poor, the sick, women and children, and the young. She was a woman of action who gave little time to abstract theories but sought creative ways to attend to large challenges such as access to clean water, adequate health care, housing for a growing elderly population, safety for those caught in dangerous circumstances, and compassionate care for those left behind.

Bobbie, as she was commonly known, went to Guatemala to experience the Guatemalan people and how they lived. She could imagine solutions to seemingly insurmountable problems and then work to find practical solutions and put them into operation. The water project brought drinkable water from the mountaintops to the villages, saving women countless hours of hauling fresh water. Bobbie also inaugurated a way to sell beautiful weavings made by women in the villages and provide markets and income for the workers. When grief overwhelmed the



survivors of the civil war, she helped them to grieve their losses, bury their dead, and heal their spirits.

Her legacy continues today through the projects of the Barbara Ford Peacebuilding Center. Headed by Sister Virginia Searing and supported in part by the Congregation, the ministry continues to serve the Guatemalan people. The staff conducts job training in modern practices of farming and land conservancy. The work of healing continues through special programs for those dealing with losses and alcohol abuse, as well as programs designed for women and young girls.

The Good Samaritan of the Gospel was one who happened to see tragedy on the road of life, stopped to help, and found solutions for the difficulties. This is also the story of Barbara Ford, SC. She focused on her selfless mission, and with the help of her Sisters of Charity and the Guatemalan people, brought hope and healing to a new generation of “travelers on the road.”

Sister Cecilia Harriendorf, Santa Cruz, El Quiché, 2013; Novillero, Sololá, 2013–2016

Sister Cecilia Harriendorf entered the Sisters of Charity of New York in 2002. While serving as the director of Campus Ministry at the College of Mount Saint Vincent she began a program of bringing final semester nursing students to the Sisters of Charity clinics in Sololá, Guatemala.

In May of 2013 Sr. Ceil was missioned to Guatemala full time. She first lived in Casa de Formación in Quiché as a vowed member of the local community. She soon returned to Novillero in support of the medical and catechetical activities of Sisters Immaculata and Marie and Doctor Jose Miguel, the medical director of the Sisters' four clinics. She spent the next three years bringing nursing students to Guatemala, as well as expanding the program to include mission experiences for Sisters of Charity, associates, professional nurses, and employees.

Sr. Ceil remains in touch with most of the nursing students she introduced to Guatemala and is always happy to hear about



Sisters Ceil Harriendorf (front right) and Anne Denise Brennan (right) welcomed CMSV alumnae/professional nurses, who traveled to Guatemala to serve in the medical clinics alongside Dr. Jose and his staff.

their wedding plans, to see pictures of their babies, and to learn about their professional activities as healers and women of faith.

“The Sisters of Charity have been a great gift to Guatemala,” she says, “and the students who volunteered there have been forever gifted by the openness, the gentleness, and the gratitude of the people they were privileged to serve.”

Since returning to New York in 2016, Sr. Ceil has worked with senior Sisters of Charity. Currently, she volunteers at the newly opened Vincent's Village in Nanuet, where she provides a Sisters of Charity presence among residents and staff.

Sister Elizabeth Judge, Novillero, Sololá, 1984–1989; Chupol, El Quiché, 1989–1990

Sister Elizabeth (“Liz”) Judge blended three ministries in her life as a Sister of Charity: teacher, missionary and advocate for social services. Her love of people propelled her service to all in need, especially those living in poverty.

She already had international expertise when she came to Guatemala in 1984, having served as a Spanish teacher at St. Augustine’s College in the Bahamas from 1972 to 1980. After a brief return to the United States, Sr. Liz heard the missionary call again.

From 1984 to 1989 she worked in catechetical ministry in the province of Sololá. She lived in the convent in Novillero with several other Sisters of Charity, but her office was in the town of Nahualá, about 10 miles away along the Pan-American



in the department of Quiché, where she lived with Sr. Bobbie Ford.

By Lisa Shay, Associate

Sister Kathleen Byrnes, San Cristobal Cucho, San Marcos, 1989–1991; Novillero, Sololá, 1992–1993; Chinique, El Quiché, 1993–1997

After almost two decades in the education field and a year in child care, Sr. Kathleen Byrnes further pursued her call to continue ministering to those in need. This time it took her to San Cristobal Cucho, San Marcos (1989) and Chinique, Santa Cruz del Quiché (1993). Pastoral and parish work were her main roles on both missions, due to the absence of a priest living in the parish house.

In Chinique, Sr. Jan Gregorcich, SSND, and Sr. Kathy worked with indigenous widows in the villages to build and use solar ovens for their families. They collaborated with Caritas/Catholic Charities in animal projects for the village people to enable them to gain some income and food. It was imperative to rebuild a working relationship in the parish between the indigenous and the ladinos, which was destroyed during the time of the violence. Their greatest privilege was participating in REMHI (Recovery of Historical Memory Project), a project created by the Guatemalan Bishops to listen to and record testimonies from parishioners who witnessed and survived the violence of the 1980s. This work was later published (1998) in four volumes, titled *Guatemala Never Again*. The accompaniment and empowerment



of the indigenous in Chinique were among Sr. Kathy’s tasks assigned by Bishop Julio Cabrera.

“We learned much from the Guatemalan people,” says Sr. Kathy, “their open hospitality and generosity; their total acceptance and respect of us as foreigners; their cultural ways of dealing with conflict; and most especially, their deep humble simple faith that they witnessed to us daily.” Blessings and gifts multiplied!

Sister Linda Giuli *Doctors Without Borders*

Sister Linda Giuli had a love of the missions from elementary school. Having entered in 1961, she learned of the Congregation’s mission work as a second-year novice.



After years of teaching, Sister Linda studied to become a nurse practitioner. In 1990s, she volunteered with Doctors Without Borders, joining them for three trips to Guatemala and work in the SC-run clinics. During one visit, she lived with Sisters Marie Tolle and Immaculata Burke. On her third visit, she traveled to the hospital in Santa Cruz to translate for a team of doctors from New York State were performing eye surgery. She witnessed many people regain their eyesight.

Sister Linda visited Guatemala twice more, staying in the Casa de Formación and working with Sr. Eileen Judge in a home for the elderly who lost their families during the Guatemalan Civil War. She got to know the sisters and their service to the Guatemalan people. “The poverty was profound,” she says, “but the country and the people were positively beautiful.”

By Maryellen Blumlein, SC

Sister Gloria De Arteaga, Novillero, Sololá; Santa Cruz, El Quiché, 2006–2021

ASister of Charity of New York for 67 years, Sr. Gloria De Arteaga spent 17 years in education and other ministries and the following 31 years of ministry in the St. Elizabeth Seton House of Prayer in Scarsdale. Not expecting to ever leave New York, she then answered the call to go to Guatemala.

In 2005 she was invited to a meeting on the topic of Hispanic vocations. At the meeting were letters from six young Guatemalan women asking to become Sisters of Charity. When the discussion turned to Guatemala and who would accompany them, it was clear to all that the obvious person would be Sr. Gloria.

She recalled, “It has to be someone who speaks Spanish; somebody who has the background in spirituality; and someone who is available. I wasn’t planning on leaving New York. I was shocked. I prayed about it.” About a month later, she left for Guatemala for a week to look over the situation..

In Sololá, she felt the call during mass. “The scripture was about Jesus asking his disciples to follow him: ‘At your side, I will seek other shores.’” The voice that spoke to her was clear. Back home in New York, she made the decision, knowing already that she would go.

Sr. Gloria served first in Novillero and then in Quiché. In April of 2008 she moved into the Casa de Formación in Quiché and became part of the Formation Team. She worked with Aspirants and Postulants, assisting Sr. Nora Cunningham with instruction and community living experiences. She also worked with the associates.

“Women would come and go. Sr. Nora and I did the best we could to explain religious life, but sometimes there was



From right: Sr. Gloria De Arteaga with Sisters Nora Cunningham, Maria Pablo Andres Santos, Rosa Tzul Say and Sr. Margarita Tax Alvarez

the pull of family.” Four became postulants and stayed a year. “You pray together. I gave them bibles. I shared my background.” Of Puerto Rican heritage, Sr. Gloria had grown up in an Irish neighborhood in Manhattan. “Having lived in an Irish neighborhood also helped me understand many of my fellow Sisters of Charity,” she said.

Sr. Gloria ministered among the people of Quiché and the surrounding area for ten years. In 2018 she moved from the Casa de Formación in Quiché to the Spokane Mission in Novillero with two of the Guatemalan Sisters of Charity. There she provided pastoral and spiritual ministry to the people.

Sr. Gloria returned to the U.S. in 2021, having spent 15 years working among the Guatemalan people, answering the call to mission.

By Maryellen Blumlein, SC

Caring for Our Common Home

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» **Switch to LED light bulbs**

LED (light-emitting diode) bulbs use energy more efficiently than other bulbs, requiring far less wattage than the old fluorescent lights. The old bulbs were far from efficient, wasting most of the energy on heat and not on light! While LED bulbs cost more, they last longer, are more environmentally safe than CFL bulbs and help lower the average electricity bill.

» **Beware of “vampire” energy**

Conserving energy is not only good for the planet but it’s a good way to lower consumer costs. Unplug devices when you’re not using them. Plug several devices into the same power strip, and then turn off the whole device to conserve energy.

» **Collective action**

While lowering one’s own carbon footprint is a positive step, it’s clear that collective action is necessary to address the current climate crisis. Global crises demand coordination and

solutions at all levels – neighborhood, state, national, and global. As *Laudato Si’* acknowledges, “self-improvement on the part of individuals will not by itself remedy the extremely complex situation facing our world today.” (212) Even taking part in an effort to clean a local river or protect a park can help strengthen relationships and build ties to a larger community.

On July 29, the Global Catholic Climate Movement changed its name to *Laudato Si’* Movement (LSM) (<https://laudatosimovement.org>) to better reflect the collective organizations’ commitment to integral ecology, ecological conversion, and ecological justice. Member organizations have resources on how to become more involved, including prayer gatherings, tips for making your local parish more green, and strategies to divest from fossil fuels.

Watch this space for more suggestions on how to lower your carbon footprint.

Then & Now

SISTERS OF CHARITY ARCHIVES

Situated off Riverdale Avenue at the southeast corner of the Mount Saint Vincent campus is Le Gras Hall, a distinctive brick, 19th Century mansard roofed building that houses the administrative offices for the Sisters of Charity of New York. It was named after St. Louise de Marillac (Louise Le Gras, August 12, 1591–March 15, 1660) who was guided in charity by St. Vincent de Paul. Together they founded the Daughters of Charity in Paris, France. In common with Elizabeth Seton, she was a widow from a wealthy family who felt a call to minister to the poor.

The establishment of the Academy of Mount Saint Vincent on the Bronx campus in 1856 resulted in the construction of St. Vincent's Free School, the first occupant of the building. Inaugurated in 1876, the school provided a Catholic education for children in the area without the means to pay tuition. It was funded primarily through a legacy from a former pupil of the Academy, Miss Elizabeth E. Duffy, with additional funding from a clerical friend, the Rev. John B. Daly, and subsequent donations from the pupils of the Academy in 1874 and 1876. A total of \$27,000 was used to build the schoolhouse. Mrs. John Purcell, a domestic at Mount Saint Vincent, donated funds to furnish the building. Thomas C. Cornell, Esq., of Yonkers, who accompanied Mother Angela Hughes in 1856 to view the Bronx campus for the relocation of the Academy from McGown's Pass, Manhattan, contributed his services as architect and superintendent.⁽¹⁾

When the school opened with nearly 100 pupils on September 12, 1876 it was the crowning achievement of Mother Mary Regina Lawless, who was Superior General from 1870 to 1876. The schoolhouse was described at the time:

Le Gras Hall, Mount Saint Vincent

By Mindy Gordon, Director, Archives and Museum



There are four classrooms in the first story, each 30 x 30 feet and fifteen feet height, two smaller rooms, reception room, cloak room. Two winding staircases lead up to the grand hall, sixty feet square and sixteen feet high. The stage is on an elevated platform, twelve by twenty-eight feet, with two pleasant rooms on either side, and a large lobby and hallway in front of each room. One side of the classroom is appropriated to boys and the other to girls, each side with separate grounds, gateways, and entrances, and with separate and roomy stairways leading to the grand hall.

The building is heated, lighted with gas, and furnished throughout with all modern appliances and school fixtures. About 130 pupils have been in regular attendance since the opening of this school in September 1876. Every succeeding Christmastide convenes an immense crowd to view the beautiful crib, which is always arranged with taste, devotion, and exceeding care, in the recess formed by the stage in the grand hall.⁽²⁾

The building also originally contained two large furnaces in a high stone basement, further divided into spacious halls for recreational use during inclement weather.

When St. Margaret's Parish in Riverdale was founded in 1887, part of the school building became a temporary chapel until 1892. At that time, Mother Mary Ambrosia Sweeney (Superior General, 1885–1891) supplied the altar, vestments, and everything needed for the celebration of the first mass ceremonies at 7:30 am and 10:00 am on November 24, 1889. The following Sunday, 183 parishioners, mostly Irish domestics employed at nearby estates, attended mass. The total collection amount that day was \$21.87.⁽³⁾ According to a notation in the Community archives, daily Mass was offered in the chapel until St. Margaret's Church was completed in 1892.



The Free School also served as a local parish school for St. Margaret's until 1911, when the parish school opened. When the College of Mount Saint Vincent was opened that same year, the building, renamed Le Gras Hall, included the day students' cafeteria on the first floor and the College auditorium on the second floor. The cafeteria remained on the first floor, and with tables removed, the space was also used as a gym until 1962. The second floor was used in turn as the College Auditorium from 1911 to 1930; the College Library from 1931 to 1942; by the Elizabeth Seton School Drama, Choir, and Physical Education departments and for the annual Commencement from 1943 to 1961; then

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With Love and Appreciation We Remember...

Visit www.scny.org for complete biographies

Sister Mary Damian Gardner, SC

Entered: 1950 + Date of Death: July 24, 2021, + Age: 90

Sr. Damian devoted 41 years of active ministry teaching primary grades: first grade for nine years; second-grade for 11 years, and third-grade for 21 years. Sr. Damian's gentleness endeared her to both children and parents. During the next 20 years, Sr. Damian assisted departments caring for the retired sisters at the Convent of Mary the Queen. During retirement she lived with the community of Sisters of Charity in the Kittay Senior Apartments, and later moved to Cabrini of Westchester. Her gifts of simplicity and kindness enabled her to live peacefully with others. Sr. Damian died on in the twenty-second year of commitment as a Sister of Charity.



Sister Kathleen Gilmartin, SC (Sister Thomas Marita)

Entered: 1955 + Date of Death: August 30, 2021 + Age: 97

Sr. Kathleen's 61 years of ministry in education were spent in the higher elementary grades and later, teaching young adults. After 39 years teaching children, she taught business courses for adults at Grace Institute. When she retired in 1998, she volunteered at Grace Institute, St. Vincent Catholic Medical Centers and Mary Manning Walsh home. While living at Schervier Nursing Care Center, Bronx, she was known to tell nurses to check on a resident "not looking well." She had a keen sense of humor and maintained interest during retirement in Congregation events. She treasured visits from her sister Theresa and Sisters of Charity. Sr. Kathleen thoroughly enjoyed teaching and watching her students grow.



Sister Kathleen Sullivan, SC (Sister Kathleen Dolores)

Entered: 1955 + Date of Death: July 30, 2021 + Age: 83

Sr. Kathleen devoted 52 years of ministry as an elementary school educator and administrator. After she served as Principal, she was appointed District Superintendent and then Associate Superintendent for Professional Recruitment, both appointments for archdiocesan elementary schools in Staten Island. Sr. Kathleen received numerous awards including the Women of Achievement Award from the *Staten Island Advance* in 1989. In 1991, she was inducted into the Alumni Hall of Fame of the College of Staten Island. Sr. Kathleen retired in 2010 and had recently moved to Cabrini of Westchester, where she died in the sixty-sixth year of commitment as a Sister of Charity.



Sister Patricia Ann Brennan, SC (Sister Maureen Margaret)

Entered: 1956 + Date of Death: September 5, 2021 + Age: 87

Sr. Patricia Ann Brennan was a teacher, social worker, practitioner, and a supervisor of school social workers. She taught in elementary grades, was a childcare worker and involved in parish ministry, before devoting 32 years to social work endeavors. She worked for 20 years at Fox House, then retired and continued on as a volunteer. She also volunteered at a safe house for victims of human trafficking. In 2018, she joined the community of Sisters of Charity at Kittay Senior Apartments, Bronx. Devoted especially to her nieces and nephews, she offered sage advice. Sr. Patricia's gift of empathy and respect made a difference in the lives of many children and their families.



Then & Now: Le Gras Hall

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the Elizabeth Seton Junior College maintained a student residence from 1963 to 1990.

During this period, the Mother Seton Museum, curated by the sisters, occupied the lower level of the building. The Congregation's Juniorate resided in the building from 1964 until September 1968, followed by the Novitiate, from October 1968 until 1969. The College used the building as a residence hall from 1969 until August 9, 1971, when the administrative offices relocated from the former Motherhouse (now Founder's Hall) to Le Gras Hall, during the beginning of Sr. Margaret Dowling's term as President (1971–1979). Thus, wrote Sr. Mary Elizabeth Earley, "the Center brought together past and present with a strong sense of continuity and rootedness in a sturdy, lifegiving tradition."⁽⁴⁾

After a fire in 1990 destroyed the second floor of the building, extensive renovation modernized the space as offices

for Leadership and Administration on the first and second floors, and additional office space, kitchen and dining areas, and a large Community Room on the lower level. Today the Community meeting room is used for staff and Congregation events. During this fiftieth anniversary of the Sisters of Charity Center at Le Gras Hall the offices for Leadership, Sponsorship Services, Mission Advancement, Finance, Facilities, and Human Resources continue to preserve and advance the mission of the Community.

1. "A Descriptive and Historical Sketch of the Academy of Mount Saint Vincent on-the-Hudson," New York City, 1847/1884. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1884, pp. 4243.

2. Ibid.

3. Tieck, William A. Riverdale, *Kingsbridge, Spuyten Duyvil, New York City: A Historical Epitome of the Northwest Bronx*. William A. Tieck: 1968, p. 166.

4. Earley, Mary Elizabeth, SC. *The Sisters of Charity of New York, 1960–1996*. Mount Saint Vincent: The Sisters of Charity of New York, 1997, Vol. IV, p. 66.



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A Day of Gratitude Celebrated in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception



September 12, 2021, was a day of gratitude and joy as the Congregation came together for the first time since January 2020. The new *Constitution* and *Directory*, approved by Timothy Cardinal Dolan in December 2020, was distributed to every sister present. Associates and companions received an acknowledgment of their special relationship with the Congregation and its mission. Under the guidance of Committee Chair Sr. Dominica Rocchio (pictured at right), the revision was the first since 1984. A festive luncheon followed the Mass.

