

imagine
ONE

THE CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH

SPRING/SUMMER | VOL. 3 | NO. 1



Transforming
Times

Our mission as Sisters of St. Joseph flows from the purpose for which the congregation exists: We live and work that all people may be united with God and with one another.

We, the Congregation of St. Joseph, living out of our common tradition, witness to God's love transforming us and our world. Recognizing that we are called to incarnate our mission and charism in our world in fidelity to God's call in the Gospel, we commit ourselves to these Generous Promises through 2013.

- ⊕ We, the Congregation of St. Joseph, promise to take the risk to surrender our lives and resources to work for specific systemic change in collaboration with others so that the hungers of the world might be fed.
- ⊕ We, the Congregation of St. Joseph, promise to recognize the reality that Earth is dying, to claim our oneness with Earth and to take steps now to strengthen, heal and renew the face of Earth.
- ⊕ We, the Congregation of St. Joseph, promise to network with others across the world to bring about a shift in the global culture from institutionalized power and privilege to a culture of inclusivity and mutuality.
- ⊕ We, the Congregation of St. Joseph, promise to be mutually responsible and accountable for leadership in the congregation.

WE CARE ABOUT ALL CREATION

In awareness of our mission, the Congregation of St. Joseph is pleased to present this issue of *imagineONE*, which has been produced in an environmentally sustainable way.



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If you guessed Nazareth, Mich., you are right! The "Great Wall of Nazareth" was built between 1927-1929, and stretches along Gull Road to the gateway arch that ushers visitors onto the property. Aloysius Flach, the brother of one of our sisters, brought the stones by truck from Southern Michigan, Northern Indiana and parts of Ohio. The wall contains granite, varieties of quartz and jasper, and other rocks and minerals — a geologist's delight!

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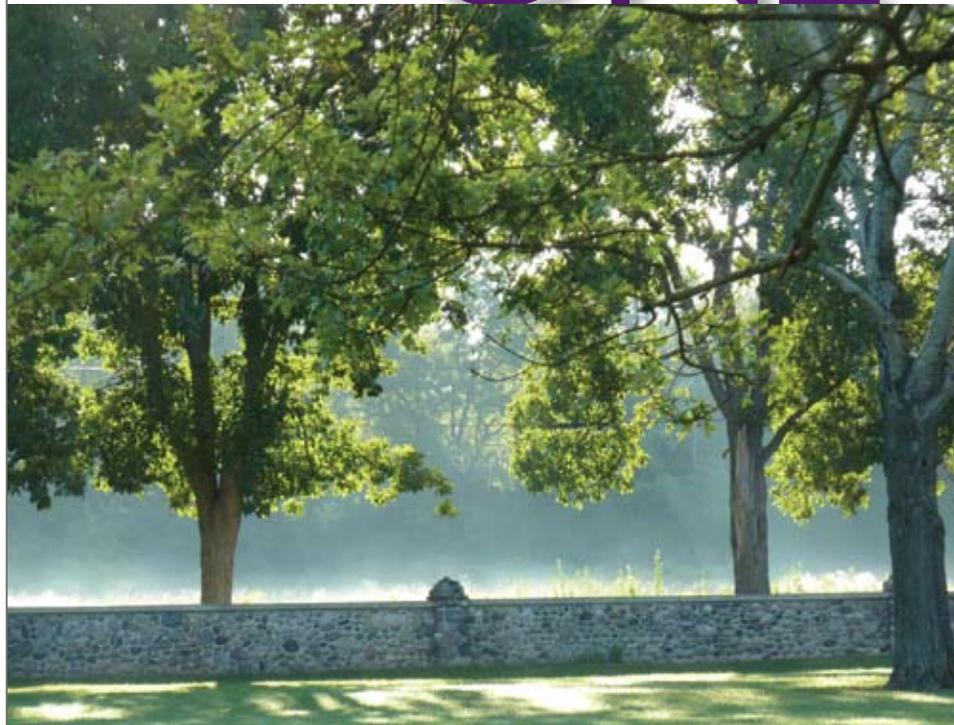


Photo by Mary Anne Hebert, CSJ

Where is this?

This image comes from one of our congregational centers. Do you know which one? See below for answer.

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Transformation

The theme of this issue of *imagineONE* is “*transforming times*.” It seems appropriate to reflect on *dramatic change* as we look forward to spring and its promise of new life and prepare to celebrate Jesus’ victory over sin and death with the great feast of Easter.

If we pay attention, many things can change us for the better. In fact, all of life can be transformative if we are open and attentive.

Family transforms me. In my relationships with parents and siblings, I come to know myself and learn how to live with others, softening my “sharp edges.”

Education transforms me. As I learn about other times, other cultures, other ideas, I reach beyond my environment and experiences and grow to appreciate the richness of diversity.

The agents of transformation are endless. My work, prayer, art, literature, theater, travel – even illness – all have the power to transform.

What transforms YOU? Go ahead. Make your own list.

Let’s answer these questions about events and situations that have the potential to change us to see how transformation happens: *Am I open to the transformation? Do I approach new situations with anticipation or dread? Am I paying attention? Am I aware? Is this transformation a choice or is it inevitable? Will my attitude toward this **transforming** event make it a positive or negative change in my life?*

Anything in life has the potential for positive transformation if we are aware of it and open to it. We can even help to make it happen.

Our *Generous Promises*, which we acclaimed at our inaugural Chapter in 2007, begin with this expression of our faith: *We, the Congregation of St. Joseph, living out of our common tradition, witness to God’s love transforming us and our world.*

In this issue we explore a contemporary understanding of our founder’s hope that we would be “a congregation without walls” as we consider the global outreach of our CSJ mission. Certainly our sisters who minister in faraway places like Peru, Nicaragua and France are *transformed – changed dramatically –* by their experiences, and when they come back “home” (and even that designation becomes ambiguous for them), they alter the whole body of members because they bring their insights and experiences into the group.

Indeed we live in “transforming times.” We invite you to stand with us and “*witness to God’s love transforming us and our world.*”

Sr Jeanne

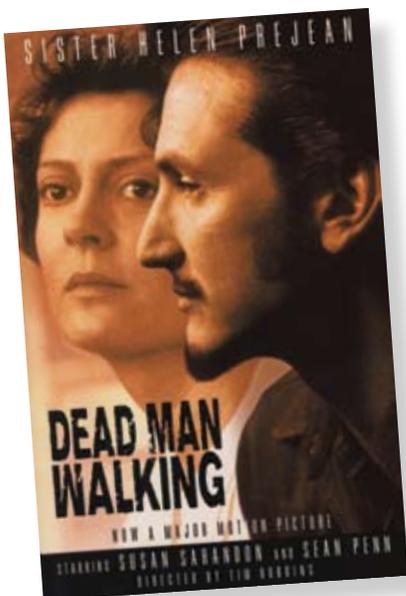
upfront



‘Dead Man Walking,’ author, activist, entrusts archives to DePaul University

MEETS WITH ILLINOIS GOVERNOR

Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, was her regular high-energy, seriously focused self as media and special guests gathered at a news conference in Chicago February 9th. DePaul University President Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., made the announcement: Sister Helen Prejean has chosen DePaul University to house her personal archives that chronicle her work as a national voice calling for abolishing the death penalty in the U.S. DePaul is the largest Catholic University in the United States, with an enrollment of more than 25,000 students.



“S

ister Helen has done extraordinary work on behalf of those in the world who don't have a voice," Father Dennis told the audience. "That is to be honored here at DePaul University, where we're named for a man who cared about those who didn't have a voice. It makes me very proud that an institution with St. Vincent DePaul's name on it would hold in trust the work that this wonderful woman has done."

For more than 30 years, Sister Helen has been working to end the death penalty, in part, because of fatal flaws in the legal system that lead to convicting too many innocent people - prisoners who have no resources to get competent defense and impartial trials.

"The simple most direct answer of how I got involved with the death penalty is that I got involved with poor people,"

Sister Helen related. "There are only poor people on Death Row."

But Sister Helen also ministers to those who are not innocent. In a video that DePaul produced about the archives, Sister Helen asked, "When everybody's killing you, and it's all legalized, and everybody's glad to

see you go, what is the last piece of dignity a person has? - to be truthful about their life and to take responsibility for their own life."

Sister Helen gave three reasons for choosing DePaul University as the repository for her archives.

First, "Our Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph has a deep connection in history with Saint Vincent DePaul." She explained that, initially, women religious always had to be cloistered, until St. Vincent found a way in the year 1610 to allow them to serve the people - "with the streets as their cloister and the parish as their chapel." He paved the way for congregations like the Sisters of St. Joseph, who followed in those footsteps when they were established in LePuy, France, in 1650.

Second, "DePaul has a long commitment to social justice issues," Sister Helen said, connecting that to our congregation's mission to serve the *dear neighbor*, especially those who are poor and have no one to defend their rights. In addition to being available to outside researchers and advocates, the Prejean archives will benefit DePaul University's College of Law students working in its Center for Justice in Capital Cases (CJCC). Its year-long program examines the complexities of capital punishment and its impact on society.

Third, "We're talking about the good news of the gospel: Life is better than death; compassion is better than vengeance," Sister Helen told the media at the news conference. "Jesus talked about standing on the housetop and getting the word out. So it's an exciting thing, turning the papers over in a partnership to DePaul. The community Jesus called us to is always about teams. It's never about one person."

Other important materials the university's archives hold include a broad array of social justice-related materials, such as: the Berrigan-McAlister Collection, which gives insights into the history of the Catholic peace movement led by activists the late Phillip Berrigan, a former Catholic priest, his wife Elizabeth McAlister and his brother Daniel Berrigan, S.J.; and an important



Sister Helen enjoyed the back and forth with media at the news conference.



Sister Pat Bergen, CSJ, Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ and Fr. Edward Udovic Secretary of the DePaul University.

collection of historic materials on Oscar Romero, the martyred archbishop of San Salvador.

Reporters asked whether Sister Helen had spoken with Illinois Governor Patrick Quinn. In January, the Illinois legislature voted to abolish the death penalty and the bill was with the governor, who could either sign it into law or veto it. He had not had not yet decided as this issue of the magazine was going to press. Sister Helen said she had written to him but not spoken with him.

The following morning, February 10th, the news developed that she would be meeting with the governor. Later, the congregation learned that "Helen met for 35 minutes with the Governor and his aides. They had a wonderful conversation. He did not give her anything definitive. He told her not to worry and that she will hear from him in a couple of weeks."



Sister Helen's archives represent a 30-year history in her personal journals, correspondence with prisoners on death row, letters to governors, speeches and artifacts, plus the manuscripts for her books, "The Death of Innocents" and "Dead Man Walking." The latter became the basis for the 1995 movie by Academy Award-winning director Tim Robbins, starring Academy Award winners Susan Sarandon as Sister Helen and Sean Penn as Patrick Sonnier – the first of six people she has accompanied to their executions.

Sister Helen and the congregation's Ministry Against the Death Penalty and peace & justice team continue their work, networking with organizations like the National Coalition Against the Death Penalty and its state affiliates, among others.

"If people could be educated, if they knew what was going on here and that we have an alternative, then we will do away with the death penalty," Sister Helen said. "I devote my life to that." ●

– Grace Skalski

"I tell people to go back to the gospel. Look at who Jesus hung out with: lepers, prostitutes, thieves – the throwaways of his day. If we call ourselves Jesus' disciples, we too have to keep ministering to the marginal, the throwaways – the lepers of today. And there are no more marginal, thrown-away and leprous people in our society than death row inmates."



People were fascinated with the display of items from Sister Helen's archives.



Sister Helen and Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., were the key presenters for the news conference.



The display that DePaul's Archives Assistant Helen Fedchak (l.) and Department Head of Special Collections and Archives Kathryn DeGraff (r) arranged for the announcement event brought back a flood of memories for Helen Prejean.

Transforming lives THROUGH CSJ MINISTRIES

by Bill Gress, Associate Director, CSJ Ministries



"I used to imagine a future where I may (sic) speak proper English," wrote Olga from Chicago. "Six years ago. We had two little kids, and my husband worked 48 hours a week. I felt so frustrated because I couldn't communicate with people. ...That's when I started to study English with *School on Wheels*...

"The first year was difficult, but I was eager to learn," she continued. "Little by little, my life started to improve. I didn't need much help from translators anymore. My life changed a full 360 degrees. I feel like a new person. I'm not afraid anymore to go to doctors' appointments, to speak with people, to talk to my son's teachers. ..."

School on Wheels is one of thirty-one ministries the congregation sponsors in fourteen cities in seven states. Overall, they are working to bring about a societal shift from a culture of power and privilege to a culture of inclusivity and mutuality. Just last year, our two adult education ministries – the LaGrange Park-based *School on Wheels* and *Tutors on Wheels* and their 424 volunteers served 842 clients, like Olga; and our three high school academies enrolled 2,351 high school students.

Our five housing ministries served 329 people in 2010. One of those, StepStone, provides homes and supportive services for women and children survivors of domestic violence in Wichita, Kan. A mother with two children wrote, "We appreciate having a nice house to live in, but everything else you do is above and beyond! My kids and I love the group meetings! I learn so much, and the feel of family and a place to belong is nice."

The congregation's seven social service ministries responded to more than 10,000 people last year, with the help of some 550 volunteers. *ABLE Families* in Kermit, W.Va., is typical of these. (ABLE stands for Affirming, Believing, Learning, Empowering.) The town is set in a

"Supper in a Sack" is a popular seven-week program at ABLE Families that offers hands-on experience in healthy meal planning, meal preparation and budgeting.



rural Appalachia county that ranks near or at the bottom of a recent study of health, education, social and economic factors. The fifteen-year-old ministry's mission is "to confront the systemic causes of poverty by supporting families as they make positive changes in their lives." Nine staff members provide in-home family education to pregnant women and mothers of young children. They address maternal and child health, parenting skills and child development with 100 families every month. Its after-school program finds kids practicing the dulcimer, exercising or getting help with their homework. Another program helps adults get their GED certificates and computer training and learn leadership and job skills. Last summer, about 90 kids participated in summer camp activities.

Our nine spirituality, hospitality and retreat centers served 16,500 people last year with programs, classes and retreats on spirituality; personal and societal transformation; and the sacred healing and caring for Earth, people, and creation. In addition, *The Well* in LaGrange Park, Ill., runs a six-week summer sabbatical program blending Christian spirituality with

developments in science, giving participants a contemplative experience that nurtures a sense of oneness with all creation.

A pastor who heard a presentation by Richard Rohr, OFM, at Transformations Spirituality Center, in Kalamazoo, Mich., wrote, "Within a week, I had two opportunities to apply what I learned to difficult situations. ...the presentation taught us greater freedom to open our hearts, set aside our egos and find common ground. This work is transformational."

There are more CSJ ministries, covering a range of services such as facilitating infant adoptions; arranging for volunteers to assist family taking care of sick, elderly or disabled loved ones at home; accompanying immigrants to find help from social service agencies; funding two granting ministries; offering Ministry of the Arts products to nourish the spirit; and working to abolish the death penalty. The commonality is that the mission of every ministry is aligned with that of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph: *to live and work so that all may be one with God and with each other.* ●



Richard Rohr, OFM, (left) talks with an audience member following his talk at Transformations Spirituality Center in Kalamazoo, Mich.



St. Joseph Workers part of something larger than self

It is just past the half-way point since Jill Nelson (above left) and Cathryn "Rynnie" Henderson (above right) started their year's commitment as St. Joseph Workers in New Orleans, and both have already concluded it's been a worthwhile experience.

Our sisters started the program in 2009 in New Orleans where, even five years after Hurricane Katrina, there is still a great need to help people and rebuild structures from the devastation.

Rynnie, a marine biology graduate of Mobile, Alabama's Spring Hill College, is working as an activity coordinator at a senior adult day health center called PACE of Greater New Orleans. Jill, a sociology graduate of St. Mary's College near San Francisco, works at Crescent House Healing and Empowerment Center, a Catholic Charities agency that provides services such as counseling and safe housing for survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Rynnie's responsibilities for managing activities to keep all the participants alert and engaged at the adult day center may seem typical; however, the circumstances of Katrina's effects on older New Orleanians make those responsibilities substantially more critical.

"My coworkers said that almost all of the seniors I work with had to move to a completely new place after the storm, and many were traumatized," Rynnie explained. "Many who were in the beginning stages of dementia, declined quite rapidly after the storm, and some, who had no cognitive issues before, began developing some. These people were struggling with immense tragedy, severe daily routine disruption and unimaginable loss of family members and homes.

“Without PACE,” Rynnie continued, “most of these people would be sitting at home with little or nothing to do. I provide them with an involved, active day. I provide an ear when they want to talk about how frustrating it is to live with their kids and grandkids or just want to talk about their love of cooking.” Rynnie engages them with arts and crafts, keeps them active with exercise, and dances with them. “I hope that by keeping a big smile on my face I help create an atmosphere where they feel loved, happy and important.

“I may not be saving the planet ...but I am making a difference in the lives of individuals ... by providing them with the respect and dignity that all elderly deserve. As Mother Teresa said, ‘Every act of love is a work of peace, no matter how small.’”

At Crescent House Healing and Empowerment Center, Jill works with the children’s program providing “homework assistance and educating middle and high school students about what healthy relationships look like; how to recognize red flags of abusive relationships; how to help a friend in an unhealthy relationship; and how to protect oneself from assault.

“With the stress and despair that Katrina wrought, incidences of domestic violence and sexual assault skyrocketed,” Jill explained. “People couldn’t find a healthy outlet for their problems.

“Two evenings a week, we have group sessions where survivors get together, have a meal and chat while the children have play time,” she continued. “This is my favorite time, because I get to spend it with the kids. We talk about what’s going on at school, what they want for their birthdays and who their favorite Saints player is. However, it’s also a serious time to connect one-on-one with each child to assess their state of health, safety and happiness at home and at school.”

During the day, Jill answers the crisis line, does paperwork and prepares for upcoming events.

“Most people think my job is depressing, and while those are the feelings that come with this area of social work, it also gives me great joy. ...I’m a part of something greater than myself. I go to work knowing that I am making a difference in so many people’s lives, from listening to their stories on the crisis line to providing Christmas presents for our kids,” she concluded. “I’m grateful that the St. Joseph Worker Program has given me the opportunity to work at Crescent House to help others while I benefit educationally, spiritually and socially.”

Grounded in the values of justice, leadership, spirituality, community living and living simply, the St. Joseph Worker program also provides mentoring, spiritual development related to the core values of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and leadership training. ●

– Grace Skalski

If you are, or know, a single woman, 21-35, who would be interested in applying to become a St. Joseph Worker for one year, contact Sister Jackie Schmitz, CSJ, at jschmitz@csjoseph.org. The next group of St. Joseph Workers will begin its volunteer year in August 2011.

“Most people think my job is depressing, and while those are the feelings that come with this area of social work, it also gives me great joy.”



CSJ ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP GROWS, EXTENDING OUTREACH TO THE *Dear Neighbor*

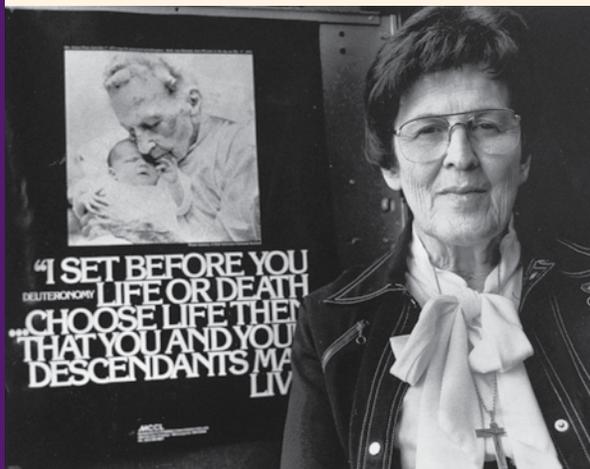
The congregation welcomed twenty-two new CSJ Associates in 2010, extending our charism and mission of unity even further. As they deepen their personal relationship with God, neighbor and all creation, they each offer their gifts, life experiences and hopes to share.

In Wichita, Kan., Sue O'Brien, Janie Stein, Denise Northup, Martin Bates, Mary Denny, Rita Sadowsk, Christine Faulk and Salvador Robles became associates on March 20. On May 1, Louise Alcott Lutz from Hayward, Cal., joined 25 Wichita Center associates in the California region where the Wichita Center once had a hospital and three schools in the San Francisco Bay area. The Tipton, Ind., Center received Melissa Bear in a ceremony held in August and welcomed three new inquirers wanting to learn more about the CSJ Associate program. Katelyn Stroh, Aggie Hoskin, Ron Perger, Rosemarie Dougherty, Jeanne Boros, Marilyn Lombardo and Mary Zavoda became associates in Cleveland, Ohio, in August. Illinois' LaGrange Park Center celebrated new associates Julia Aguirre, Karen Doyle, Megan Mio, Scott Schenone and June C. Stella in October.

If you are interested in joining the congregation's more than 500 associates, visit our website at www.csjoseph.org and click on "How to Join Us."

Associate directors are exploring ways associates can connect with each other across the miles through shared projects, retreats and family relationships. ●

Sister Jeanne Therese honored for LifeCare Centers



Pictured in 1984, Sr. Jeanne Therese Condon called herself "Foundress (under God) of the The LifeCare Centers."

Eighteen years after Sister Jeanne Therese Condon, CSJ, entered eternal life, some 200 people came to honor her at the 35th anniversary celebration of the University LifeCare Center she started on the University of Minnesota campus in April 1975. Her passion was to save lives of unborn babies, and the LifeCare Center was her response to the historic 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision to legalize abortion. It was also the inspiration for 28 more LifeCare Centers now operating in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

While Sister Jeanne Therese transformed the lives of those she helped, she also went through a transformation of her own, according to Sister Elaine Dufresne, CSJ. It was important to Sister Jeanne Therese to "respect the seeds of a person's integrity," she said. "She wanted all of the volunteers and staff to hear the truth of those who came for help. Staff views were not to be imposed on their clients."

The University Life Care Center is situated on the college campus and is one of the oldest in the nation. Records show that the center staff has visited with and helped at least 11,400 clients in 35 years and administered at least 6800 pregnancy tests. ●

– Ann Hultgren

VOCATIONS TEAM

goes where the action is

The Vocations team has been brainstorming new ways – like YouTube and Facebook – to connect the mission and ministries of the Congregation of St. Joseph with women who may be considering religious life.



The congregation used YouTube and Facebook to promote a conference in Cleveland for young adults engaged in ministries, like Kristin Lazarine (left) and Alyce Manning.

Our goal is to extend a vocation invitation to women among the diverse people we serve, not just on campus or in parishes, but in our ministry sites and schools and centers, as well. Our focus is to reach out especially to those active in church or service ministries. Diocesan Young Adult Coordinators have been collaborating with team members in Cleveland, Chicago and Baton Rouge, and team members already work with their local dioceses giving Busy Student Retreats on campuses. The Busy Student Retreat, created by Sister Ily Fernandez, CSJ, and Father Marvin Kitten, SJ, is now used across the country. In addition, our congregation is a

partner with Charis Ministries, a Jesuit program that offers retreats by and for young adults, even beyond the areas where we have centers.

Since the founding of the Sisters of St. Joseph in France over 350 years ago, we continue to bring our mission of unity and reconciliation into the world. ●

– Celeste Cotter, CSJ



CSJ candidate Alison McCrary (left) and Ofelia Delgado welcomed the students to the event.

Jenn Graus' First Vows a Celebration of Joy

Jenn Graus, CSJ, saw God in everything Sister Joyce DeShano, CSJ, said and did, and she wanted that.

"There was an authenticity that Joyce was living, which drew me to learn more about the sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph," said Sister Jenn, who entered the order in Michigan in 2006. In 2008 she became a novice, and on January 15, 2011, professed her first vows at the LaGrange Park Center. "Jenn is a woman deeply in love with God, and proclaiming her desire to



Sister Jenn signs the congregation's book of professed members.

walk the path of serving God as a sister of our congregation calls her to be her best self," says her formation director, Sister Ann Letourneau, CSJ. "She finds that her hopes and values parallel who we are as a congregation."

Jenn is the technology coordinator/teacher at Josephinum Academy in Chicago, where she strives daily to grow in being one with God and wishes to bring others, most especially her students, to a strong

awareness of God's love. ●

WE WELCOME

New Candidates



Mary Kay Ruvolo, left, and Alison McCrary are the newest candidates for membership in the Congregation of St. Joseph. Each will serve for two years in ministry and live in community before entering the novitiate.

Something different for your summer break...

For the tenth consecutive year, the congregation is inviting single women, 18-45, to become "Companions in Mission," providing a week of service to *dear neighbors* in the greater Kalamazoo, Mich., area. This year the week is June 27 to July 2.

Companions in Mission strives to offer participants a full program that matches faith with actions, time to think with others about faith and life and the chance to meet and serve with those whose life circumstances are different from theirs. Companions in Mission work with non-profits like Habitat for Humanity, the Caring Network, Meals on Wheels, Gospel Mission and Rickman House, among others.

If you would like more information about participating in "Companions in Mission," please contact Sister Celeste Cotter, CSJ, at ccotter@csjoseph.org or at 708.482.1207.

'I'm just a helper,' he said.

Can you imagine being handed two envelopes stuffed full with fifty dollar bills? That is exactly what happened to Sister Mary Clare Doebel, CSJ, recently. Sister happened to be in the lobby of the Wichita Center of the Congregation of St. Joseph early one morning. She was preparing to leave on an errand when a man entered and asked if she was a sister. When she said she was indeed one of the sisters, he asked if she would do him a favor. He handed her two bank envelopes and said he wanted her to give them to the right people to help *Dear Neighbor Ministries*. He said he was making this gift in honor of the late Sister Kevin Dye, CSJ (1908-2000).

When Sister Mary Clare asked the man for his name, all he would say is, "I'm just a helper." He then turned and left for his car. He was dressed in cutoff jeans, a sport shirt and ball cap. She thinks he might have been in his late 50's or early 60's.



Sister Mary Clare gave the money to Sister Rose Helen Burger, CSJ, who, with Sister Pam Young, CSJ, counted out the two stacks of fifty dollar bills. There were 175 bills, and the grand total was \$8,750.00.

We may never know more about this generous donor or his relationship with Sister Kevin Dye, but he should know that he will remain in the prayers of the congregation for the humble manner in which he helped serve the *dear neighbor*.

In Mt. 6 we are reminded, "when giving, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so your gift may be secret. And your father who sees it will repay you." ●

– Pat O'Donnell

To make a secure online gift, or to learn about how to include the congregation in your will or estate plans, please, visit us at csjoseph.org and click on Make A Gift.

‘The End of the Story’

It's about focusing on Christ

by Pat Bergen, CSJ

Years ago I was asked to present the Stations of the Cross to a class of three-year-olds! I asked what they saw in the picture. They said something about Jesus. I asked, “Who wants to follow Jesus?” They all raised their hands and said, “I do. I do.” We sang a song and skipped to the next station. When we got to the fourteenth station, the children told me it was all over. “Love is dead. They are putting Jesus in the ground!” When asked if they wanted to hear the rest of the story, they seemed surprised that there was more to the story. When we went up around the altar, I continued, “Just when it looked like Love was dead, when it seemed that it was all over, guess what God did? God raised Jesus up into our hearts and into the whole universe!” “Wow” was their response as they clapped. Then one boy said, “Do my Mom and Dad know the end of the story?”

*T*he question is, “Does the way I live reveal to the children that I know the rest of the story?” Words, actions and decisions convey our beliefs. If we truly believe that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life, we will gaze with benevolence. We will speak with

encouragement and blessing. We will touch with reverence. And, with grace, Christ’s love and life will pour forth from us, connecting us with others so that all “may have abundant life.” What is this abundance of life of which the Gospel speaks? It is the fullness of being – the Christ – to which we are all called!



The opening hymn of St. John's Gospel begins: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." The "Word" of which John speaks is the fullness of being, which expresses God. God has been pouring God's self out, revealing more and more of who God is and how God is throughout the entire unfolding of history. Christ was in the beginning. Everything that came to be has life through Christ, and all of history is moving toward the fullness of being, which is Christ. Christ is the beginning and the end. Christ is at the core of each of us and the whole universe. This is to say, the whole universe is oriented to Christ! No wonder St. Paul says in his letter to the Romans, "The whole of creation is eagerly waiting for the revelation of the sons and daughters of God. ... all creation is groaning in one great act of giving birth." All of creation is in labor waiting for us to wake up and realize the fullness of who we are called to be – Christ!

Jesus was totally open and receptive, and so in him the fullness of Divinity was able to be revealed in human history. With the birth of Jesus, an explosion of insight began to make its way into human history, moving beyond former limitations to a new consciousness – the Christic consciousness. Throughout his life, Jesus showed the way to this transformation of consciousness – the journey into the fullness of Christ, to which all of us are called.

Jesus spent his life proclaiming the "kingdom of God (the kin-dom of God), the reign of God." This level of being is the realm of God, where

all are one. To awaken to this consciousness is to awaken to the reality that the "breath of God" is sustaining all that is. Therefore, everything belongs to and participates in God and God participates in all that is. This is Good News for the universe! Everyone and everything is really one and Holy! In responding to the invitation to follow Jesus, the disciples learned how to move into this consciousness, from a "me-centered life" to a sense of self that includes the whole cosmos – a sense of self that is one with God and one with all that is, was or ever will be.

Jesus, rooted in this awareness, saw only beloved heirs of God. Compassion flowed through him to awaken the love of God everywhere. His consciousness of self included everyone and everything. On the cross, rooted in love, he dipped deep into the very heart of God – Infinite, All-inclusive Love. He looked out and saw beloved heirs of God who did not yet know who they really were. Compassion and forgiveness flowed through him to quench a thirsting world. As this happened, Jesus died to one life (that of the historical Jesus) and rose as the Christ into the whole of existence. To follow Jesus is to be on this path moving from the Jesus of history to the Christ "whose being fills the universe in all its parts." (Eph.)

The way to this transformation is through "death" to "resurrection." We move from an awareness of self, as an independent historical body, to the Christ-consciousness through the process of "letting go" of our

limited, independent self – who we think we are and want to be. Often this feels like dying! Each time we enter this "dying" process, we are invited to receive a self which is much larger than we thought we were. The wonderful insight is that there is only one Christ. And we all belong! There are no outsiders. This is the field of consciousness which gives the future reason to hope!

May we rise to this Christic consciousness, loving our neighbor and all creation as ourselves, so that the children will see that we do, indeed, know the "end of the story." ●



Sister Pat Bergen, CSJ, is a member of the congregation's leadership team, a spiritual director and a retreat master. She holds a BA degree in Philosophy and Education, a MA degree in Pastoral Studies, and a Doctorate of Ministry.



'A Congregation Without Walls'

Serves a Global Neighborhood

by Carol Crepeau, CSJ

Today the water of the English Channel is flat and grey. The tide is out; seagulls flutter and soar between land and sky sounding the same on the Normandy beaches of France as they sound on the Chicago beaches of the United States. As I stand on the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc this early morning balancing between hundreds of bomb craters with the remnants of Nazi WW II bunkers and big guns at my back, I am struck by the reality of Jesus' words – that all may be one – as I have never been struck before. The effects of war have no nationality.

My companions are a family from Toronto now living in Paris; a Sister of St. Joseph from Brentwood, N.Y.; and our guide, Eva, a woman from Berlin. Eva is an expert on the allied invasion of Normandy telling the story of the Nazis and the Allies with factual detail. This German woman, whose father was a conscripted Nazi soldier, guides to the beaches of Normandy because she is, in her words, a woman of truth, of connections, of peace. Leaving Omaha Beach and Pointe du Hoc, we went to pray at both the American and German cemeteries. My mother's youngest brother is buried in France.

The Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph is historically and inspirationally connected to France.

Four hundred years ago, our founder, Jean-Pierre Medaille, SJ, was born in the city of Carcassonne, France. He, together with six women from small, isolated villages in the environs of Le Puy, France, established a

new form of religious community; these women would live a non-cloistered life. The Sisters of St Joseph, formally recognized by the church in 1650, is, from its origins a "religious community without walls." From its birth we were called to live in "any neighborhood," to do all that women can do, and to work, to minister, wherever the *dear neighbor* is present. We have just celebrated not only the 400th birthday of Father Medaille, we are also celebrating the 175th anniversary of the Sisters of St Joseph coming to the United States.

Since the founding of the Sisters of St. Joseph, there have been significant changes, developments, evolutions and transformations (examples: wars, United Nations, moon landing, ending apartheid, industrialization of Europe, U.S. and now China, global warming). They continue today in our earth community and, yes, in the cosmos. Hubble telescope is sending us countless photos of new planets in galaxies we never knew existed. Our times invite us to live the words of Jesus,

“that all may be one” with global hearts and minds. Imagine! Perhaps our neighbor is no longer the people who live in the same small geographic area with us. Rather, perhaps we are challenged to experience through technology, communication, scientific discovery and theological reflection that the dear neighbor given to us by God is all of creation.

Barry Ushry, in his book *Seeing Systems*, expresses the challenge of global living is these words:

*We suffer from spatial blindness
We see our part of the system but
not the whole;
We see what is happening with us
but not what is happening elsewhere;
We don't see what others' worlds are
like, the issues they are dealing with,
the stresses they are experiencing;
We don't see how our world impacts
theirs and how theirs impacts ours;
We don't see how all the parts
influence one another.*

How do we respond to Ushry's statement, “We suffer from spatial blindness”? We respond with lives that are essentially lived in small neighborhoods (micro-universes) and lived in global neighborhoods (macro-universes) at the same time. We know and believe that where one member of the community of St. Joseph is present all are present. Jean-Pierre Medaille and the early sisters were committed to not only doing all that is possible to bring neighbor to neighbor and neighbor to God, but being a presence that is unifying love.

Today the Sisters minister in Asia, Africa, North and South America and Europe; at a handicapped children's hospital in Japan, at a girls' hostel in Tanzania, as witnesses to peace in Mexico, with

the poor in Peru and Nicaragua, and with pilgrims in France. Through technology we share experiences and we are global advocates of peace, justice and unity.

The global reach of our congregation's mission is tangible in the United States, as well. The United Nations Millennium Goals provide us with a blueprint for active global citizenship. We believe we live the imperative of Jesus, “that all may be one” by advocating respect for global resources; for working to end human trafficking; for respecting life at all stages of human development; supporting education in inner cities as well as universities; working for health care and for prison reform, especially as it affects women; for leading faith-communities; for praying for those in need. Today the words of Jean-Pierre Medaille speak in ways that we could never have dreamed or imagined when he spoke them in 17th century France; “the sisters will be engaged in any work that women are capable of doing.”

Let me tell you a dear story about living globally. For many years the neighborhood of the Sisters of St. Joseph has been global. We live and work in 57 countries. Oftentimes the sisters and associates exchange gifts from one country to another. One Christmas a small community in France sent a package to a community of sisters and orphans in the Congo. The package contained many small gifts, among them a treasure of French gastronomy called a *saucisson*. This long sausage is a mottled red color; at either end is a twist of casing resembling a wick. A few months after Christmas a thank you note arrived in France. “Thank you so very much for your gift of sweets, pencils, light bulbs

and notebooks. We regret to tell you that we tried and tried to light the red candle that you sent but it just wouldn't light.” Living in the global community isn't all grim!

Watching world events broadcast on CNN from the “local” news desk based in Abu Dhabi, with correspondents broadcasting from all over Europe and the Middle East, is one aspect of the global reality of one earth community.

An oil spill on the U.S. Gulf Coast, a German guide in Normandy, the future marriage of a prince, the Vatican visitation of U.S. women religious, the birth of a planet, a sausage in Africa – this naming of these so few experiences of our *dear neighbor* around the world, around the cosmos – is descriptive of the mandate to respond to Jesus' invitation “that all may be one.” To deny the reality of the global universe community is to deny the reality of God's ongoing creation. ●



Sister Carol Crepeau, CSJ, is ministering as the director of the Centre International St. Joseph in LePuy, France. The center is a place of pilgrimage for sisters and associates from all of the 57 countries where Sisters of St. Joseph minister.



The miracle of enough

Why the marketplace needs the sharing economy

by Grace Sbrissa, CSJ

One of our strongest human desires is to make a difference, to “do good”! We want to contribute to the common good. And we want everyone to have at least the basics to live.

Yet, there is a cloud over our society that just seems to linger. It is evident in our newscasts, unemployment reports, numbers of homeless and in more and more of our conversations. We yearn for a sense of community, a sense of, “We’re all in this together.”

When times are difficult and jobs and opportunities seem scarce, we turn our attention toward preserving what we have left. We focus on our own security and success, at times not even noticing our neighbor’s plight.

Current media and political strategies focus on “the economy.” It’s all about exchanging goods and services. “I pay you this and you will give me that. I will do this for you, and you will do that for me.” The desired effect is that I come away from the exchange with a little more, that I will “profit” by the exchange. Doesn’t it give you

at least a small thrill when you go shopping and, having spent \$150, look at the sales slip and see, “You have saved \$124”? Insignificant as it may seem, this is a small indication of the marketplace at work.

Our livelihood depends on marketplace transactions. We have to make a profit in order to have enough to live on and prosper. Getting ahead is essential to planning for our future.

This mindset encourages constant comparison and striving to get ahead, oblivious that it leaves someone else behind. For some, discouragement in the present economy is largely a feeling of having failed because we are unable to achieve a better lifestyle or even maintain our previous one.

While we are immersed in this dominant worldview, there is another economy operating in our culture. It is a concept called the “sharing economy.” The sharing economy satisfies basic needs — whether these are the needs of family, community or nation (the common good).

Simply stated, the sharing economy contributes to the benefit of others whose basic needs are wanting. We see it in families and among friends, in co-ops, and when we share our goods, time and talents to benefit others for whom we have genuine concern.

On a much larger scale, volunteers like “Doctors Without Borders” make the sharing economy a powerful force for the common good of people in war and disaster areas. Likewise, the many people honored as heroes each year transform life for some of the world’s poorest of the poor by providing something as basic as shoes or a water well. The volunteers and sisters working in our ministries also make the sharing economy a living, breathing phenomenon.

So, the market economy and the sharing economy coexist in our society. One dominates, and the other is largely unnoticed. Of course, each economy having its own focus produces totally different consequences.

The marketplace economy generates competition that sometimes results in underpaying workers, sometimes in market domination — and sometimes even in war. Think about oil, diamonds, and gold and other precious

metals that are critical to technology — especially when mined and drilled in third world countries or unstable parts of the world, exploiting them.

In Mark’s Gospel (Mk. 6), which tells us of the “miracle in the wilderness,” we have a strong example of the difference between the sharing and market mentalities.

Jesus was tired and longing for time away with his friends, his close disciples. They headed for the mountain, but people followed! Recognizing their thirst for his message, Jesus continued to speak into the evening. Noticing that they were getting tired and hungry, the disciples demanded that Jesus send them to their homes and the villages to get something to eat. But Jesus responded, “You give them to eat!”



While the disciples agonized about how much they had and how much it would cost to feed the masses, Jesus acted. He determined the food on hand, organized the crowd, offered a blessing, and distributed the loaves and fish. “All had enough and more left over.” It was the miracle of enough! This is the outcome of a sharing economy! This is the transformational mentality, which will provide for the common good!

But how are we to influence a transformation of the dominant mentality so that all have enough? We must come to realize that there is a different way to think about the world. The market mentality is

fundamentally unnatural. It is an invented mindset that separates the roles of providing and nurturing.

What is missing is the more fundamental behavior of the sharing economy, giving directly to satisfy needs — the needs of family, of society, of humanity as a whole, that is, the common good. The strengths of the sharing economy come from the underlying values of nurturing and mothering. We can restore these to our consciousness and keep them prominent in our thinking and behavior.

For example, parents' free labor in the home (childcare, teaching, preparing meals, and so on), volunteers in society and other support can be seen as gifts to society from those practicing a sharing economy.

Currently even those parts of society which depend largely on some contributions from the sharing economy — health care, education, social services and families — do not always realize the fundamental value they receive from it. What can we do to restore humanity to this mindset?

Let's re-examine the metaphors that drive our decisions. Restore the "mother image" as the human image and the sharing economy as the human way! Mother Earth is not just a metaphor. Nature actually functions in the sharing economy, not the market. Nature reflects God. Her produce is God's gift for the common good. If we recognize this nurturing aspect of nature, we recognize the sharing economy present in nature.

We need to create viable projects that validate the sharing mindset, support projects and legislation that encourage the sharing economy and work for legislative systems that contribute to interdependence rather than to corporate or personal profit alone. But we have to be fully conscious that we are not there yet.

Similarly, we need to expose projects that subvert the sharing culture, like those that exploit the environment, globalization and militarization. We can engage as a volunteer in projects which promote the common good — projects such as literacy, the arts, and child development, all for common good.

It is important to recognize, however, that the market mentality seeks to discount gift giving in innumerable ways. Giving freely — whether it is a free sandwich or babysitting, assisting in times of economic need, or sending a helicopter to pick up flood victims whose country cannot pay for it — is often suspect.

When we view all as having been given by God, we can see gifts freely given as invitations for us to give freely. In order to become dominant in our culture's consciousness, a sharing economy must become open, encouraged and taught. Educate all children to be nurturing! Encourage emotions like compassion and empathy.

Let us recognize sharing in all the different aspects of life. We can link it to the peace movement, the environmental movement and the struggle against racism. We need to encourage a spirituality based on the

biblical feminine qualities of God versus rote fundamentalism. And we need to see all aspects of life and creation as part of ourselves, as gift meant for all.

In our goals for our Congregation, our Generous Promises, we commit to witness to God's love transforming us and our world.

We promise to surrender ourselves and resources for systemic change. The shift in consciousness from a market economy to a sharing culture calls for such a commitment from us and from our entire society. Let us be mutually accountable to each other to influence such a transformation in our world. ●



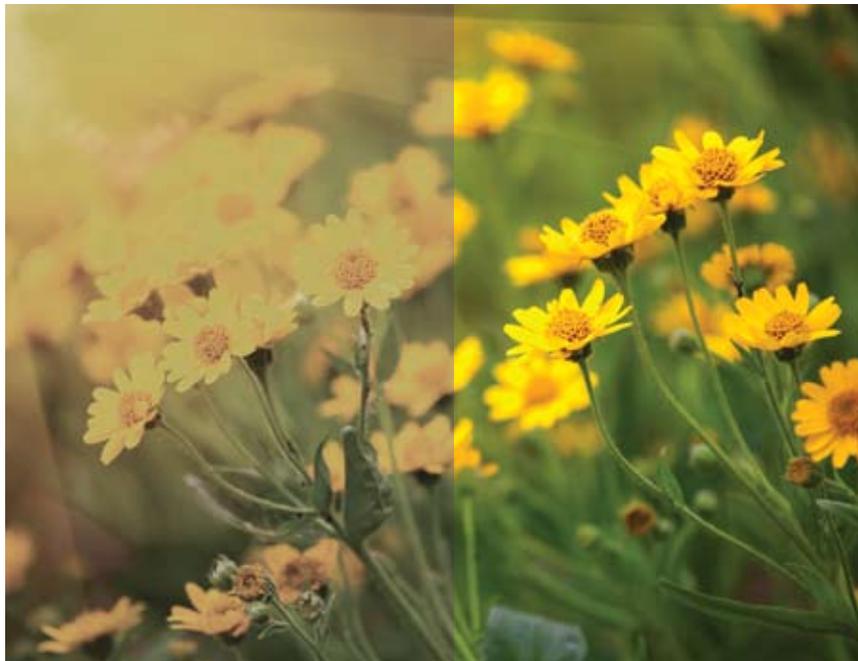
Grace Sbrissa, CSJ, ministers as a Financial Management Consultant for Religious Congregations. She is a member of the CSJ Investment Committee, and a Trustee of the CSJ Charitable Trust.

Seeing with New Eyes

by Mary Clark, CSJ

I recently had my second cataract removed. It is such a simple procedure these days and, yet, the transformation was nothing short of miraculous!

The first thing I noticed was how vibrant the colors were – reds, blues, greens and yellows – all so incredibly bright I almost felt like I was living in a Technicolor movie. “How come?” I asked myself; how come you never realized how dull they were before the surgery?” I decided that it was because that’s what I had become used to.



How often does that happen to each of us? Sometimes, we take for granted the love of family and friends until one becomes ill or dies, and then we realize the huge void they have left in our lives. Then, I thought of the recent fires in California that wiped out the neighborhood where my sister lives and, yet, the flames never touched her house. How humbling it was for her to finally get home after five days. She saw destruction everywhere and, then, her home standing solitary guard among the skeletal ruins.

Each month a small group of us of meets for spiritual direction. We are an interesting assortment of women, coming from a variety of backgrounds, but tightly bound by our desire to pray together and discern where God might have been present in our lives during the past few weeks.

Recently one of the women in the group declared she had filed for bankruptcy. There was an audible gulp from all of us ... visions of destitution and fear overrode all other emotions as she told her story.

“I have seen that there is a new way to live. I was and still am scared of the future, but right now it is absolutely the right thing to do,” she explained. As we sat listening and praying with her, we each found ourselves caught up in a drama that is repeated every day with thousands of families. And, yet, here, because of her strong faith, was a woman whose life has been transformed by what most would call

a terrible situation. She simply doesn’t see it that way. “I’m learning to depend on God and what God provides, and less on what I think I need,” she said.

I am not sure which of us is seeing more clearly these days. I only know that I have been touched by God in ways I never thought possible. ●

Mary Clark, CSJ, is director of St. Joseph Center, a small ecumenical retreat center located in the hills of West Virginia.

Inviting transforming love into daily life

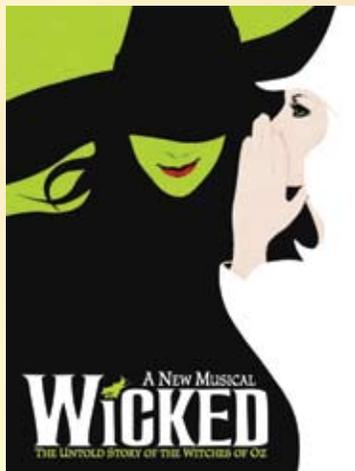
by Jean Anne McGrath, CSJ



Although my days in high school glee club are long passed, I remember the lyrics to a song based on the then-popular Christopher Movement: "It is far better to light one single candle than to stumble in the dark." In 1988, President George H.W. Bush challenged the nation to be one of "a thousand points of light" that could transform the world. The contagious spark of a single flame transforming the darkness is a powerful image.

In this day of instant communication and information overload, infomercials invite us to be “transformed.” Pills, potions and gadgets promise to erase our wrinkles, reduce our waistlines, organize our closets, and add herculean strength. If only life transformations were that quick and easy. The relentless pace of our lives too often speaks of survival rather than transformation.

Inspiration, though, is all around us if we are attentive to it. The popular Broadway musical, “WICKED,” is based on the theme of transformation. Two strangers, Elphaba and Glinda (future main characters in the famous “Wizard of Oz” story) become friends, to the utter amazement of both. “For Good,” one of the most touching songs in the production, describes the personal transformation that occurs in their lives because of their relationship: “Because I knew you, I have been changed for the better, I have been changed for good.”



The words of that song could well be the mantra of the ministries of the Congregation of St. Joseph. Our mission statement is both clear and challenging. Loosely paraphrased, sisters, associates and the thousands with whom we minister each day are called to live and work to bring about the transforming love that unites neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God.

The transformation we witness and experience in our everyday ministries may be very dramatic – a last minute reversal of a death sentence through the efforts of our sisters who are working to abolish the death

penalty. Or it can be quite small – a random act of kindness that transforms an otherwise gloomy day. The ministries of the congregation have the capacity to transform individual lives and social systems, and reflect the experience of God’s goodness and limitless love.

Four years ago, the Congregation of St. Joseph transformed itself when seven individual communities became one. Among the multiple blessings of the new congregation is a heightened awareness of the myriad ways in which our ministries touch and transform lives. Our work encompasses large health systems, spirituality centers, schools and smaller ministries that address the diverse and most pressing needs of society. Ministries in which our sisters and associates work have the potential to rectify injustice and significantly affect social consciousness. But change often occurs because of an individual encounter that transforms our perspective on life experience.

Like the single candle.

Testimonials to these transforming moments are awe-inspiring. A client at a food pantry in Brookfield, Ill., expressed her heartfelt gratitude to Sister Margaret Halligan and Sister Thomas Agnes King. “You have been so kind to me. All I asked for were towels for my kids, but you knew I needed more. You gave me your time and you listened to me. You will never know how much more you gave me today.”

The parent of a fifth-grader in one of our schools shared his story with other chaperones waiting to accompany students on a field trip on a cold and rainy day: “Last year I was hours from death when I got the call for my liver transplant. That call, the skills of the doctors, the prayers of this school community and the generosity of an unknown donor transformed my life and the lives of my wife and children. Thank you for inviting so many people to pray for me. They will never know the difference it made.”

An international consultant to the U.N., who is also a professor of economics in Great Britain, and his wife were able to adopt a beautiful baby girl from the U.S. They learned about the Sisters of St. Joseph Adoption Program in Kansas City through an adoption facility in Maine and an attorney in California. Alexandria Catherine Elizabeth Victoria's mother chronicled the amazing transformation the little girl has made in the couple's life in her book to her daughter, "The Book of Life: You are the greatest joy that ever came into our lives." Imagine if all



It was through the Sisters of St. Joseph Adoption Program in Kansas City, Mo., that little Alexandria Catherine Elizabeth Victoria found her way across the sea to London and her new family, Professor Beravale and his wife.

international relationships were based not on competition and greed, but on the transforming power of love to soften hearts and encourage limitless human potential.

In New Orleans, a client's doctor referred him to our People Program for help for his feelings of depression. "Spending time here is better than any pill," he told a staff member. "Your time with me has provided the best therapy I have ever had."

Experience verifies that transformation often happens at unexpected times and in unexpected places. Unfortunately, the hectic pace of most of our days can numb our sensitivity to the opportunities for transformation. The lines at the grocery store are too long, so we don't appreciate the smile of the baby in the cart ahead of ours. The lengthy "to do" list blinds us to the colors of the season's changes. The endless noise of strange ring tones and our rush to meet deadlines or plane schedules dims our anticipation of long-awaited reunions with loved ones. The crash of a laptop means I won't get to write the letter to my senator calling for positive action on an important issue.

Scripture, of course, offers wonderful stories of transformation. Imagine Zacchaeus's surprise when Jesus told him: "Tonight, I would like to have dinner in your home." Imagine the stunned and often judgmental witnesses to Mary Magdalene's encounter with Jesus: "You have done the loving thing. I do not condemn you." Because of friends who literally brought the paralyzed man through the roof to experience the healing power of Jesus, he was transformed and cured. "Today your faith has made you whole."

At the end of the play "WICKED," Elphaba sings again about the transforming experience of being loved unconditionally: "So much of me is made of what I learned from you. You'll be with me like a handprint on my heart. Because I knew you, I have been changed for good."

The Congregation of St. Joseph and each of you who partner with us in our ministries have an unlimited capacity to empower others and witness similar transformations. As a congregation and as individuals, we have known the transforming love of a God who delights in surprises, in challenges, and in leaving "handprints on the heart." ●



Sister Jean Anne McGrath, CSJ, is an educator who serves as the principal at St. John Fisher School in Chicago.

Let Your Light...

Every new day invites us into the possibility of kindness ... openly, quietly, boldly, tenderly, eagerly. Every day, indeed, every moment, someone is offering a hand of compassion to another ... and that changes lives. At our request, several people shared simple and noble stories of seeing God's light in others.

Sister Joan McCabe, CSJ, notices simple acts of kindness every day at our Center in Nazareth:

Day after day in the computer lab I see computer-experienced sisters helping neophytes learn the intricacies of adjusting to a new computer and accessories.

Also, at the end of each day, I see a sister cut out the crossword puzzle from the local newspaper and leave it at the door of a friend.

Associate Pat McCormack shares an example of giving that is a way of life for a friend:

Doris Harper is always doing some kindness for her neighbors. Both she and her husband, Lewis, helped a family at Christmas who most people didn't even know was struggling. Lewis is now deceased, but Doris continues to help in any way possible. She has a truck and helps neighbors when they need to move large items, and she takes neighbors to the grocery store and appointments. She is such a good example of one who helps with no expectations.

Employee Jenni Piper tells about one woman's generosity to sisters at our Nazareth Center:

Susan Kavanaugh spent over four years creating a large art piece titled, "The Hours." It is her personal reflection on awakening to the divine in the everyday through the monastic liturgy of the hours prayed morning, noon, evening and night. This work, along with other pieces from a local art group, was on display at the Transformations Spirituality Center. At the close of the exhibit, Susan donated "The Hours" to CSJs living at our Nazareth center saying, "It looks better there than on my wall – and it reflects the atmosphere and ministry of Nazareth. Perhaps it will invite those who pass by to pause and reflect on their own prayer life."

Sister Judi Keehnen, CSJ, relates a simple kindness of a total stranger:

My sister, her children and grandchildren and I went to the Cincinnati Museum Center. I went with my niece-in-law to get her tickets. As we returned to the family I tripped on the stand for the rope and fell. A couple came to my aid to help me stand up. I thanked them and went to my family, where I discovered that we had two extra tickets. I went over to the ticket line and saw a family with five children. As I neared the parent to offer the tickets, the mother turned and, at that moment, I realized it was the lady who helped me earlier! She whispered in my ear, "Thank you so much. My husband is losing his job next week, this will really help."

Associate Joan Krebs is grateful for the unselfish acts of a co-worker:

Sue Imhoff is an Associate and also works for Ministry of the Arts in LaGrange Park. Sometimes, when she packs orders for people who live near her, on her own accord, she'll make a personal delivery thus eliminating shipping costs for the recipients of her thoughtfulness. Each time this happens, I'm deeply touched by her concern for this dear neighbor.

Employee Kit Lambertz is inspired by a volunteer in Wichita:

Ron Goens is a retired police officer who lives across the street from the Dear Neighbor Ministries office. He assists Sister Ann Catherine Burger, CSJ, in loading meals and drives her to the families awaiting their meals, as well as bread and baked goods received as donations. Ron unloads thousands of pounds of food for staff to give out to neighbors. When we receive a special gift of fresh fruits, vegetables, eggs or milk, which require special distribution, Ron's our guy! He also assists with the center's recycling program and transports furniture to Hilltop when needed. We would be lost without Ron, our dearest of 'dear neighbors.'

If you would like to share a brief account of witnessing someone letting Christ's light shine through an act of God's love in the world, please send your story to bbrewster@csjoseph.org.



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