IN THIS ISSUE

Serving a Multi-Cultural Community
St. Patrick, Norristown

Our mission: to evangelize, to catechize, and to teach

Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
IMMACULATA, PENNSYLVANIA
It is with great joy that I welcome you to this edition of *On Mission*.

Our IHM spirituality is grounded in the writings and work of St. Alphonsus Liguori. In his own life, St. Alphonsus taught us that offering ourselves to God each day required a dynamic between prayer and action. This edition of *On Mission* gives us a small but powerful glimpse of some of the ways our sisters carry out this mandate in their daily lives.

Within these pages, you will experience how the concept of the Alphonsian mission permeates every aspect of a sister’s life. In essence, each IHM knows that relationships are the key to proclaiming the Gospel message.

Relationships are formed in a variety of ways. In South Philadelphia, Sister Kathleen White’s “walking ministry” allows her to seek out ways to be of help to others. In addition to planned spiritual programs, Sister’s presence to the elderly parishioners conveys to them that they are vital members of the parish and that their spiritual needs are an important aspect of parish ministry.

The five sisters who minister at St. Patrick Parish in Norristown work intentionally in forming a myriad of relationships to “bring the transforming love of the Triune God to those around them.” At St. Patrick’s, you will find the sisters working in collaboration with other members of the parish to meet the needs of a culturally diverse community.

For Jesus, the Gospel message was proclaimed through the use of stories. Sister Irene Lorretta, an IHM master storyteller, uses her creativity to fuel her passion for the ministry of Catholic education. For Sister Irene, being involved in the lives of children and teachers allows our God to work through her to “form, inform, and transform” the minds, hearts, and souls of the people she encounters.

Our sisters who live in Camilla Hall are fortunate to experience the leadership of the administrator, Sister Anne Veronica. Sister is a charismatic leader who creates an environment that nurtures the notion that we are never finished when it comes to fostering the mission. The sisters in Camilla are fully aware that even the smallest action can have a powerful effect in advancing the mission. Everything matters when it comes to showing others the boundless love of our God.

Thank you for sharing in the IHM mission of proclaiming the Gospel message in the spirit of Jesus the Redeemer. We are inspired and energized by our collaboration with you in radiating joyful service that offers compassion to all God’s people through our mission to evangelize, to catechize, and to teach.

With abundant gratitude,

S. Mary Ellen Tennity IHM, General Superior
Recently when I came across the verse from Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see,” I was reminded of a poster that I had hanging in my classroom for years that stated, “Hope is believing in things unseen.” Our world is so much in need of hope today. Many of us are fearful of the political schisms, disheartened by Church scandals and perhaps even numbed by personal heartaches. However, we are called not only to trust that all will work out in the end but to hope creatively. This hope can be called compassionate waiting. It is hope that calls us to patiently practice loving-kindness with others, ourselves and even our God.

Winter reminds us of those times when all we can do is wait. Some may call it limbo space, but I like to think of it as a thin place—a term borrowed from Celtic spirituality referring to a space between heaven and earth where we encounter God. It is those times in our lives when we consciously know that all appointments, engagements, and commitments are on hold. Yet, life happens around us. The beauty of this experience is that our hearts focus inward. We are embraced by a compassionate presence that assures us that all will be well. Yet God’s plan remains hidden.

Sometimes when we look outside our window at a bleak winter landscape we can’t imagine that life is germinating below the cold rock-hard soil. Yet our many years of experiencing the miracle of the seasons gives us hope that the snow will melt. The crocus will bud its head and with that one small sign our winter blues begin to melt away. We experience a heightened appreciation for all nature around us. Likewise, in the bleak times of our lives we become more attuned to God’s grace in our lives. It may come in a phone call or text from someone offering prayer and support. Perhaps it is experienced as an emerging strength to be that compassionate presence to another while we ourselves struggle not to despair.

Through the dreariness of winter days what gives you hope? When you are discouraged by life’s occurrences what gives you confident assurance that God is working in hidden ways? During times of felt desolation, may we look for little signs of God’s enduring presence that are even more resilient than the crocuses that withstand an unwelcomed snowfall after the tease of spring’s arrival. Like the writer of the Song of Songs (2:10-12) may we patiently wait to hear our God beckon to us, “Come with me…Look! The winter is past. The rain is over and gone. Flowers are appearing…the season for singing has come.”
Joy Makes The Difference

ST. PATRICK PARISH, NORRISTOWN, PA

“People from all walks of life — every age, race, color, background, economic status and language gather for Mass each weekend to share in the great love of Christ…”

Father Gus Puleo, Pastor

St. Patrick, the first church established in Norristown, PA, continues to thrive more than 180 years after its founding. It is a welcoming and culturally diverse community. According to Father Gus Puleo, pastor, “People from all walks of life — every age, race, color, background, economic status and language gather for Mass each weekend to share in the great love of Christ …[They] then strive to bring God to families, neighbors, Norristown and even to the rest of the world.” So, whether this diverse community is celebrating the Irish Festival, Mexican Independence Day or Soul Food Sunday, they all come together as a faith community to share in the joy of the occasion.

Five Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary work hand in hand with Father Gus to “bring the transforming love of [the] Triune God to those around [them].” He readily acknowledges that he would not be able to do all the things that this unique parish demands without the help of the sisters.

The IHMs have been working at St. Patrick since the school first opened in 1875. Although the last sisters left the elementary school in 1991 and the school closed soon after, the building still abounds with life. Throughout the day and into the evening, there are programs designed to accommodate the diverse schedules and varied languages of the parishioners. Many speak Spanish, so the Mass schedule, PREP, and RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) are planned with the bilingual needs of the people in mind. The IHMs play a large role in teaching and administering these programs.

▲ Sister Ann McAlpin
WELCOMING INTO THE FOLD

Sister Ann is the Director of Parish Services. She has been working at St. Patrick for seven years. Sister taught for many years in South America and when returning to the States, she asked to work in a parish.
where her bilingual skills would be put to good use. St. Patrick was the perfect fit. Sister Ann and her team teach RCIA classes weekly, one in English and another in Spanish, from September to Easter until the group receives the sacraments and are accepted into the Catholic Church. There is often a small number of candidates who cannot make the evening sessions, so Ann meets them in the morning. This flexibility is a hallmark of the parish.

In addition to RCIA, Ann presents Baptism talks once a month on Saturday. “These talks are required for the parents and the godparents of a child being presented for baptism,” she explains. “The parents and the godparents are expected to become involved in the faith life of this child. They become familiar with the Rite of Baptism so that they can participate meaningfully in the sacrament. Because St. Patrick has a large number of baptisms, they are scheduled twice monthly. Last year, 245 babies and children joined the St. Patrick community.

The Quinceañera is a coming of age celebration, both religious and cultural, for young Hispanic women. “It is a privilege,” emphasizes Sister Ann, “to support these young parishioners as they prepare for this special day marking their journey from childhood to maturity. In class, we discuss Christian values and ways the girls can live out their Baptism as they grow into Catholic adult women.”

“St. Pat’s is a great place to work,” she says, “It is the welcoming spirit that makes it so rewarding.

Sister Marie Horstmann ▼

EDUCATING THE CHURCH’S FUTURE

Sister Marie, Director of Religious Education, has been working at St. Patrick for four years. Speaking of her experience she says, “It is a joy to work here. The sense of community is so present.” Sister’s main responsibility is PREP (Parish Religious Education Program).

When Marie arrived four years ago, there were 174 students registered. By the time the classes began, the number had swelled to 300. Currently, there are 475 students enrolled in PREP. The classes are offered in English and Spanish.

Many of the families come from other areas – Ambler, King of Prussia, Conshohocken – because they want their children to receive instruction in Spanish.

Another attractive feature is the fact that the classes are not divided by grade level. “There are four levels,” she says. “Students are placed in the class that is appropriate to their level of faith formation. Many children enter the program when classes begin in September and have not been baptized. Since baptism is a prerequisite for PREP, these children and their families are given immediate sacramental instruction so they can receive the sacrament of Baptism in November.”

Managing this large diverse program is a very challenging undertaking. Currently, there are 28 sections of PREP. She works with 33 catechists and 10 helpers. Three times a year, she presents workshops that address the personal, spiritual and professional formation of the catechists. In addition to these workshops, Marie meets with the catechists every six weeks. With so many classes and teachers, Sister Marie
has many opportunities to teach the children since teacher absence inevitably occurs. Marie loves this opportunity to work directly with the students, and fortunately, because she is bilingual, she can teach any class. Marie considers the Spanish she learned in Chile and Peru a great gift in her current ministry. You can hear the enthusiasm when she says, “Just to be able to serve the people and walk with them is a joy!”

**Sister Rosemary DePaul ▼ FORMING CHURCH LEADERS**

Like Sister Marie, Sister Rosemary is deeply involved in Faith Formation. She, however, works with the adult parishioners. Three times weekly, she meets with the parents of the PREP students. First they read and discuss the Gospel for the following Sunday in an effort to make Mass attendance more meaningful. They then discuss the same themes that their children are learning in their PREP classes. “Most of the attendees are women,” she says, “but occasionally a father of a student will participate.”

Rosemary also teaches two Bible Study classes weekly, one in the evening and one in the morning. These classes are taught in Spanish and are well attended. Sister sings, plays the guitar and prays with the people. Her simplicity and joy makes them feel comfortable and relaxed.

Another of Rosemary’s tasks is to moderate the Missionary Disciples, a special ministry group trained at the St. Charles Borromeo Seminary (Phila.) to minister in the parish. The ultimate goal of the group is to evangelize parish members.

With Sister’s support, the Disciples lead prayer groups and visit the homes of all of the children making sacraments. As they become more involved with the people, they are assuming leadership in the parish under Sister’s guidance.

When she is not teaching classes, Rosemary is working with the seminarians assigned to the parish, visiting homes and taking communion to those in several local nursing facilities.

“I feel blessed to be able to use my bilingual skills these past two years at St. Patrick. I love working with the adult population and getting out into the homes. I know that many of the people are in trauma because of the immigration crisis,” she says. “I try to go to them with tenderness and warmth. They respond with the same feelings.”
Sister Maryann Weidner ▲  
COMING HOME

Sister Maryann teaches English as a Second Language (ESL). Most of the students are young Spanish women who are thrilled to have the opportunity to learn English. Sister does everything she can to make the class accessible including allowing them to bring their babies. “Some days,” she says, “there are as many as five babies, ages 1 to 5 attending the class.”

Maryann spent six years in Chile but that was many years ago. Although she is still bilingual, she notes “My students and I are teaching each other. From me, the women learn English; working with them, I brush up on my Spanish.”

Sister Maryann came to minister at St. Patrick just this year, but she has actually “come home.” St. Patrick was her childhood parish, and her classroom is now located in what was her first-grade classroom.

She is happy to be working in this joy-filled environment, and like the other sisters, she reiterates, “I love what I am doing.”

Sister Eileen McGuigan ▼  
MOVING IN

Joining the pastoral team part-time this year, Sister Eileen is currently a Eucharistic Minister one day a week visiting the shut-ins and parishioners in nursing homes. Sister is transitioning from her Congregational position as Directress of Sisters in Temporary Profession. Next September, in addition to her duties as Eucharistic Minister, she will assume home and hospital visitation to English-speaking families of the parish.

Each of the five Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary has an essential ministry in this large, diverse parish. Each works to give every parishioner a sense of belonging. This is critical because, as Father Gus points out, “People are afraid. They live in the shadows. They look over their shoulders.”

All who labor in the vineyard of St. Patrick strive to create an environment of love and acceptance. The sisters serve this community with Love, Creative Hope, and Fidelity – the IHM charism in action.
In the Spotlight

Our sisters on mission --
a little background, the promptings of grace, and the spirit that keeps them moving

Sister Kathleen White
(Sister M. James Ellen)
Pastoral Minister
St. Monica Parish, Philadelphia, PA

If ever there was a city girl/sister, it has to be Sister Kathleen. Ministering in Philadelphia at St Clement, St. John the Baptist, St. Anthony of Padua, Annunciation, St. Joachim, Holy Name of Jesus, and now St. Monica Parish, Kathleen thrives on the streets of the city. As the youngest of 16, Kathleen grew up in Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fishtown. She knows the city, loves the city, and walks the city streets of South Philadelphia making sure she covers all the bases of her all-encompassing ministry.

WOMB TO TOMB MINISTRY
According to Kathleen, St. Monica Parish has a very unique elder care program. “Bonney Dos Santos, our social worker, and I strive to meet the needs of our elderly parishioners every day. Because of this program,” she boasts, “many can stay in their homes and receive assistance. I address their spiritual needs with Communion calls, visits, and pairing each person with someone in the elementary school community via our Prayer Partner Program. At one end of the spectrum, I am responsible for Pre-Jordan meetings, sacramental preparation meetings, and PREP. At the other end, I organize bereavement groups. Working together with a team of volunteers who are always at the ready, makes and keeps the concept of ‘total parish’ alive and well.”

FEET ON THE STREET
Sister Kathleen considers her ministry a “walking” ministry. Since she doesn’t drive, she literally pounds the pavement around the parish. Officially there is no “block collection,” but Kathleen, along with the priests and deacons, does...
parish visitation in the evening going house to house to assess ways in which the parish can be of assistance. “As a young sister,” she says,” I had the privilege of meeting many IHMs involved in the inner city summer programs. I learned so much about our IHM charism and the need to “keep your feet on the street.” After 15 years at St. Monica Parish, she wouldn’t have it any other way.

And neither would the people with whom she works. Deacon Leonard De Masi confirms Sisters’s “feet on the street” ministry saying, “Sister does not drive and yet can be seen in every area of our parish on any given day. We affectionately call her the ‘energizer bunny’. Our pastor, Father Joseph Kelley, often says, ‘When Sister Kathleen came to St. Monica, we hit the lottery big time’. We are blessed to have Sister . . . in our little corner of South Philly.”

PULLING IT TOGETHER

Wherever there is a meeting, you can find Sister Kathleen’s touch. She is well known for creating a welcoming environment and peaceful ambiance. Candles, cloth, trinkets, and prayercards dot the retreat/workshop space. She can visually pull a theme together with ease and grace. Just as easily, she can pull her family together. Because Kathleen’s many relatives are spread across the United States, she has taken it upon herself to keep everyone up to date on happenings at the ‘White House.’ “I really like passing on our family history and all the current family news,” she admits. “I am famous for passing out a trivia puzzle or worksheet at a family reunion.”

“I learned early on in my religious life – from teaching in school and working in a parish setting – the importance of little things: a smile, a card, a ‘thank you,’ or ‘how are you?’” Sister Kathleen can’t stress enough, “Be open to the grace of each day and be aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your work. God is in charge.”

“I am who I am,” Kathleen says, “because of the faith of my parents and family. They loved Holy Name of Jesus Parish and were very involved. All my siblings attended Holy Name School and Catholic High Schools. I attended John W. Hallahan High School. My parents helped many missionaries, especially those from Ireland, and we had religious magazines as part of our reading: St. Anthony Messenger, Sacred Heart Messenger and Maryknoll Magazine. As children we were immersed in the faith.”
Since Sister Irene Loretta entered the IHM Congregation some 60 years ago, she has been on 12 missions and has left her distinctive, indelible mark on each one. Now at St. Matthew School, she proudly acknowledges her present ministry, “I advance the mission of Catholic Education at St. Matthew School with the title of vice-principal. That title could hoodwink you in that I believe I am more of a storyteller than an administrator, and I thank our Principal, Sister John Magdalen, for the liberty to be so.” Anyone who knows Sister Irene knows she is a storyteller par excellence – especially when telling stories to children. By her own admission, her storytelling may “twist, stretch, or belie the truth.” As far as she is concerned, “The end justifies the means,” is a valid motto.

Telling stories, true and not-so-true, is just one of her exciting tasks. She proudly puts forth her job description: “Being Jesus Christ to the children; encouraging, supporting, and thanking teachers and staff; giving Tylenol with a salute every day at 4:00 PM to Principal Sister John Magdalen; teaching students who are competing in various contests/examinations; assisting lunch moderators; coordinating Terra Nova testing; monitoring and regulating security clearances.”

How does all this make her feel? With smiling eyes and a broad grin, she punctuates every word, “Winner of the Mega Millions Jackpot Lottery!!” For Sister Irene being involved in education is “the power to form, inform, and transform the minds, hearts, and souls of myriads of people at every dimension of life - the social, intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual. NO OTHER PROFESSION/MINISTRY CAN MAKE THAT CLAIM!”

Every day is an exciting day for Sister Irene. There has never been a boring, dull, or unhappy one in all her golden + years as a teacher, principal, IHM Councilor for Education, or vice-principal. She not only enjoys but thrives on “being surrounded by love and
goodness all day; creating her own work environment; being honored, humbled, and trusted by God to lead souls from the ‘grandeur of God to the God of grandeur;’ feeling the touch, hearing the voice, and seeing the face of God in the simplicity, joyfulness, enthusiasm, and honesty of children.”

“I enjoy… feeling the touch, hearing the voice, and seeing the face of God in the simplicity, joyfulness, enthusiasm, and honesty of children.”

HOOT AND SALUTE

Where did all this excitement and passion for education come from? Sister has an immediate response, “There has been a litany of people who impacted my life for good and for them I am eternally grateful. Sister Vincent Mary, IHM, is one of those giants and for and to her I will hoot, root, toot, and salute the rest of my days. What inspired me profoundly was that she never talked to me about holiness of life. She showed me how and why to be holy. This she did by her simplicity of life, her fidelity to prayer and to her vows, her wisdom in wedding vocation with ministry in the way she loved, championed, and taught children. I thank God often for her presence in my life as my friend and teacher, and as a happy, holy sister.

PHILLIES AND PINOCHLE

Sister Irene describes herself as a “four score plus loyalist” when it comes to rooting for the Phillies. “My most memorable moment,” she says, “occurred after the 1950 Whiz Kids won the World Series. I had the honor of shaking the hand of the star left-fielder, Del Ennis. I went around for days greeting everyone with, ‘Shake the hand of the hand of the one who shook the hand of Del Ennis’.”

Sister Irene is not only a die-hard Phillies fan, but she is an avid pinochle player as well. In fact, she proclaims, “I am a champion pinochle player who doesn’t cheat.” She plays with anyone willing to match her skills, but fondly remembers those “three sharks in heaven waiting for me to join them.”

UNWITTINGLY WITTY

Humor always finds Sister or she can unwittingly create it. She recounts with vivid accuracy, “On January 21, 1988, I arrived for active duty at the front hall of the Motherhouse at Immaculata with one garment bag, one piece of luggage, and one 5.5 foot helium tank for inflating balloons. It was Mother Marie Genevieve’s (General Superior of the Congregation at the time) facial and verbal welcome that filled the hall with laughter with the quip, ‘Where do you intend to launch the missile?’ Sequel: She became its best customer.”

ADVICE IN 3s

Sister Irene’s words of wisdom are wrapped up in song: You’ve got to accentuate the positive. Eliminate the negative. Latch on to the affirmative. Don’t mess with Mister In-Between… or… remember the words of Pope St. John XXIII: See everything, Overlook a great deal. Correct a little…. or … Let your light shine. Take your pick!

Here’s the last word – just to let everyone know: Sister Irene “relishes” raw hamburger!!
Since 2009, Sister Anne Veronica Burrows has held the awesome responsibility of Administrator of Camilla Hall Nursing Home. Looking back on her vocational journey, Anne might well say, “God writes straight with crooked lines.” Her early educational years were at St. Raymond in Oak Lane, St. Christopher in Somerton and then Saint Hubert High School in Northeast Philly. Prayer and service were fostered in her home. She describes her mom as a prayerful, self-sacrificing woman who passed on to her children a great devotion to Our Lady. Her dad, active in the Knights of Columbus, often invited her to accompany him on service outings. One of her favorite outings with him was visiting the residents in Byberry State Hospital.

Her “crooked line” to Camilla ministry may have begun in those visits but was further etched in Holy Redeemer Hospital where her mother worked. The Vocation Directress of the Holy Redeemer Sisters asked Mrs. Burrows if one of her daughters could volunteer in the vocation office. Anne volunteered and there she became aware of a call to religious life. However, she believed her call was more to a teaching ministry and this lead her to enter the IHM Congregation in 1966 - where minister in education she did in various roles for twenty-five years!

Her path of education ministry was also part of the “crooked line.” Her background as a math teacher helped prepare her to serve as Congregational Treasurer for 12 years and then transition to Finance Director for Camilla Hall for three years. When asked to “round out” her financial skills with some Long-Term Care background, she asked to take “a few courses” at St. Joseph University. She fell in love with the program and the work and the “few courses” evolved into a master’s degree in Long Term Care. When the administrator’s role opened, it became a natural fit for Anne – the girl who did not think her calling was to the health-care field.
The crooked lines converged into the description of her present reality. “My goal is to ensure that Camilla Hall is an outstanding health care facility and a safe, warm and loving convent home. My duties are, in general, to oversee the operations, programs, employees, and facility at Camilla Hall. In this capacity, I work with many of the committees integral to the above: Camilla Hall Advisory Board, Person Centered Care Task Forces, Continuing Care Planning, Heads of Staff Group, Work Place Safety Committee, and the Leadership Advisory Team.”

In order to share her gifts more broadly, Anne volunteers as a consultant to the National Religious Retirement Office. In this capacity, she works with other religious congregations in eldercare and long-range planning for the retirement needs of their congregations. She finds this sharing immensely rewarding.

While each day begins with an agenda, it is invariably adjusted (written with different lines) as the challenges and joys unfold in the midst of a community of sisters—many of whom are moving along a continuum of cognitive decline.

“When life at Camilla does not follow our best plans, there is an ease in smiling and acknowledging that this is, after all, Camilla Hall, where we are at various stages of physical, spiritual and cognitive wholeness and holiness, doing our best to live our IHM Charism and be a Powerhouse of Prayer for the Church and the world.”

Of course, the Lord always provides opportunities to laugh at ourselves and with others. Anne remembers one incident with a smile. A sister whom she had encouraged to move down the hallway to “ease the congestion in the hallway” looked at Anne and answered in all seriousness, “Look! So I’m standing here and you’re standing there. What’s the difference between your congestion and my congestion? I’ll stay where I am, thank you!”

Those moments of smiles and grace encourage her to step aside and enjoy some of her own hobbies and interests. She enjoys college basketball (especially Villanova), traveling with friends and visiting varied places of interest: historic Gettysburg, the Corning Museum, the Women’s Rights National Museum, the shrine of the North American Martyrs, and the Trappist Monastery in Kentucky.

Karen Duckworth, S. Anne, and John Buck consult about up-coming events that will involve food service. The Camilla residents praise the work of the kitchen staff!

Living God’s plan as HE unfolds it is what Anne has done and continues to do day by day. What a story God has written for us all with her ministry!

When asked, “What are your present duties and how do you feel about what you do?” Sister Anne responds, “Most days I love most of what I do!”

“The souls of the just are in the hand of God.

Sister Mary Rosina Burns
11.16.18
Sister Marita Helen Harrington
10.28.18
Sister Marie Honora Fraties
10.26.18
S. M. Joan Carroll (S. Ronald Maureen)
10.7.18
S. M. Francis Joseph Loughran
9.30.18

In her learned wisdom, she advises: “Life or ministry can seem overwhelming when considering the big picture. However, we only have to live life or be involved in ministry one day at a time. God will give us the graces we need for today to unfold according to His plan—and tomorrow, He will do the same, and tomorrow .... Don’t be overwhelmed. Place your hand in God’s and live His plan together.”

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Living God’s plan as HE unfolds
The formal beginning of our IHM journey began on our Entrance Day, September 10th, 2016. Upon entering, we spent 11 months in the Postulate, a time of gradual transition into religious life. During this time, we studied at Immaculata University, participated in many service and outreach opportunities, and joined in the sisters’ daily life of prayer and community living, including residing for three months at Our Lady of the Assumption convent to experience life on a mission. The postulate concluded with our preparation for Reception, our formal entrance into religious life.

After our reception of the IHM Rule and habit, we began our Canonical Year of Novitiate, a time to deepen our spirituality and knowledge of the IHM charism. During this year, we were faced with the sudden illness and death of our beloved Directress, S. Mary D. Ellis. Even with all the difficulty and sadness, when we look back now, we can still see how God carried us through the struggles; we could feel the loving prayers and support of our entire IHM community, and especially our Novitiate community, whose love and strength gave us hope and courage. As we continued our curriculum for Canonical year, studying our Rule of life and deepening our prayer life, God’s grace made us ready to move into our Senior Year of Novitiate.

Our second year of Novitiate has brought about many new and exciting opportunities. We are once again studying at Immaculata to prepare ourselves for what lies ahead. Additionally, this fall has given us the opportunity to observe in one of our schools –

*S. Elizabeth Anne* at St. Pius X, Broomall and

*S. Mary Christine* at St. Aloysius Academy, Bryn Mawr.

This experience has been enriching for both of us. In January we will leave the Motherhouse for our twelve-week Student Teaching/Mission Living Experience. I (S. Elizabeth Anne) will go to St. Francis deSales School and Convent (Phila.) and I (S. Mary Christine) will go to Our Lady of Lourdes Regional School and live at Queen of Peace Convent in Coal Township. This experience will provide both of us the opportunity to experience what it is like to live on the mission and be involved in an active ministry. In mid-April we will return to the Motherhouse to prepare for First Profession in August.

Looking back over these past years of initial formation, we can only be filled with a deep sense of gratitude for “all that has been.” God’s hand has guided each of us in His own way on the journey. We have no doubt that He will continue to do so and be with us every step of the way. As we excitingly anticipate professing vows as Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we trust in God’s unfailing Divine Providence for “all that will be” as we rejoice in exclaiming, “Praise, Love, Thanksgiving, our God to Thee!”

It is with great gratitude that Sister Elizabeth Anne and Sister Mary Christine praise God for all that has been and for all that will be!
Taking “The Call” Everywhere!

by Sister Marianne Therese Lallone

“Y our life must be a continual act of love.” These words of our founder, Father Gillet, remind us of our baptismal call and our life’s goal. Growing in the love of God and following God’s plan for our lives is a lifelong journey. In our role as vocation ministers, Sister Rose Bernadette and I are blessed to be able to help young people discover the path of life and love that God has planned for them.

Spreading the good news about vocations takes us and many other IHM sisters to wherever young people of faith are gathered. We have already shared with you some of our vocation activities with younger children and teens. In addition to elementary schools, high schools, PREP and youth groups, we also take the message of God’s call to young adult groups and college campuses.

Recent statistics show that the average age for discerning a religious vocation is 19 and the average age for entrance to religious life is 28 (CARA/USCCB Report “New Sisters and Brothers Professing Perpetual Vows in Religious Life: The Profession Class of 2017”). With this in mind, we have given increased effort to promoting vocations among young adults. Of course, there is the natural connection with the students at Immaculata University. Student leaders are invited to visit our IHM Motherhouse at the beginning of each school year, and freshmen and new students are invited for a tour as part of Immaculata’s Heritage Week activities in November. We also work with Sister Paula Jameson and Sister Cathy Nally, Immaculata faculty, to invite students to “Macs and Cheese” nights where students enjoy pizza and conversation with our sisters and novices. These nights create a wonderful bond between the students and sisters!

Beyond Immaculata, we visit many other college campuses to speak to students in Newman Centers and at Campus Ministry events. A highlight of vocation ministry to college students is the opportunity to guide young people during “Busy Persons’ Retreats” where students can meet one-on-one with a sister to listen together to the voice of God’s Spirit in their lives. We also meet young adults at various “Theology on Tap” nights in a casual, but faith-filled atmosphere. All of these opportunities often lead to young women contacting the vocation office for a visit or to participate in an IHM discernment retreat.

Throughout the year, we offer “Sisters’ Nights” at our Motherhouse and at Camilla Hall. These “Come and See” events allow young women to spend some time with our sisters and novices in an informal setting as we share a meal, enjoy an interactive activity, engage in light conversation, and pray Night Prayer together. In offering these events, we hope that young women will come to know our sisters better and be encouraged and inspired to begin discerning with us if they are experiencing a call to religious life.

Helping young people discover God’s call for their lives is a blessing and a privilege. With each encounter, we desire to echo the words of Father Gillet: “May your nourishment in this world be always to do the Will of God.”
Companions in Prayer and Ministry

by Sister Francis Helen Murphy

Blessed Sacrament and Sister Regina Stupak

Norfolk, Virginia, is the location for these IHM Companions who gather on the first Sunday of the month at 3:00 p.m. with Sister Regina Stupak for prayer, reflection, faith sharing and Vespers with the local IHM community. A highlight for these members is their yearly Pot Luck dinner held at the Blessed Sacrament Parish social hall to conclude their year together as IHM Companions. There are 12 faith-filled and faithful members who have been associated with our sisters for seventeen years.

St. John Bosco / St. David and Sister Joy Campbell

This group of Companions began in St. John Bosco Parish, Horsham, PA, where Sister Joy Campbell was missioned. When Sister Joy moved to St. David Parish, Willow Grove, PA, the Companions moved with her. These Companions meet on the third Tuesday of each month at 9:30 a.m. in the convent. Each gathering begins with coffee or tea, sweet treats and socialization. There is a combined membership of 15 enthusiastic, supportive women who absorb Sister Joy’s spiritual enthusiasm through Community prayer traditions, chaplet of Mercy, current videos of Catholic speakers and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Immaculata, Somerville, NJ

Beverly Gaffney is the present contact Companion for the members

For twenty-one years, these Companions have gathered in the convent of Immaculata Faculty House, Somerville, NJ. These members gather on the third Thursday of the month in the convent chapel to pray together, discuss an agreed upon spiritual book and support one another and the sisters through prayer. These twelve members are steadfast IHM Companions “all down the years.” With faith sharing gleaned from their readings and spiritual gifts derived from retreats or parish missions, these Companions never cease developing their faith life and love of God.

Interested in becoming a Companion in Prayer and Ministry?

Contact S. Francis Helen Murphy at Villa Maria House of Studies, Malvern, PA 610-647-2160 Ext. 1925 or ihmcompanions@gmail.com

In Memoriam

St. Pius X, Broomall Companion

Geraldine Hreha 12/2018

Our Mother of Perpetual Help Companions (Camilla Hall)

Irene Beitel 11/2018
Mary Jane McBratnie 7/2018
Sister Helen David Brancato, whose art work often features the plight of the poor and marginalized, and myself, Sister Rosemary DePaul, having lived among the poor in South America, were invited by the Congregation to represent our IHM sisters at the canonization of Archbishop Oscar Romero. Both of us felt so privileged and grateful for the opportunity to join the Salvadoran people in this historic moment. We began the journey not really knowing what to expect but would soon meet our fellow pilgrims in Rome and join them in walking the paths of some of the greatest heroes of our Catholic Faith. Awesome seems to be an overused word in our day. However, in describing our pilgrimage, no other expression seems to capture the experience quite as well.

The word “tour” quickly changed to “pilgrimage” and even that word came to mean “sacred journey.” Our hotel in Rome was in the shadow of the dome in St. Peter’s Square. The grandeur of the Vatican would overwhelm yet enfold us in its majestic beauty. Uniting in joy, enthusiasm and pride, the over 80,000 pilgrims at the canonization ceremony dramatically embodied the oneness of our Catholic heritage. Throughout the morning, there were moments of exhilaration on hearing the names of the seven new saints proclaimed and then profound silence as we participated as one living body in the Eucharist. The unique call to holiness exemplified in the lives of all who were canonized that day, especially Oscar Romero, was also mirrored in the lives of so many participants. Such an experience reminded us of the universality of the Church’s mission while Oscar Romero’s life, words and blood gave testimony to the church as enduring forever in its people:

As a shepherd, I am obliged by divine mandate to give my life for those I love – for all Salvadorans, even for those who may be going to kill me. . . . Martyrdom is a grace of God that I do not believe I deserve. . . .

A bishop will die, but God’s Church, which is the people, will never perish.

Our sacred journey continued as we traveled through the scenic countryside to the hometown of another “humble giant” of our Catholic tradition. St. Padre Pio, a Capuchin friar whose healing power is renowned in Italy and throughout the world, lived his entire life in this small village of San Giovanni Rotondo.

Assisi was our next destination taking us northward through the breath-taking agricultural and mountainous regions of the Apennines. We imagined ourselves in the group of Francis’ followers and intentionally “left behind” anything that would hinder our complete immersion in his life and spirit. We visited Francis’ birthplace, viewed the magnificent frescoes depicting his life and his tomb in the Basilica dedicated to him. We were truly captivated by the atmosphere that has not changed since St. Francis began his ministry in the early 13th century.

Each evening, we recounted the graces gathered throughout the day. Friendships were formed, experiences relived and gratitude expressed for so many blessings. All returned home carrying the Good News that the Body of Christ, our One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, is alive and well! St. Oscar, St. Padre Pio, St. Francis and all who have served the poor, pray for us. ¡Pax et Bonum!
The Catholic school system is a spiritual apostolate built upon the foundation stones of dedicated, self-sacrificing service.

Her name embodies her life: a motherly heart, a deep love for Mary and a woman of peace. That was Mother Maria Pacis Dougherty, eleventh Mother General.

Elizabeth Dougherty entered Villa Maria Novitiate at the age of seventeen. After profession, S. Maria Pacis began a long mission commitment in both North and South America. On St. Valentine Day, 1930, not quite ten years professed, S. Maria Pacis sailed for Peru. For over twenty years, she shared her vision of loving service with young boys, especially at Escuela Inmaculado Corazon which she founded in 1944. So highly were her name and ministry regarded that on May 19, 1951, she was awarded Peru’s highest civilian award, “Orden del Sol” (Order of the Sun) at the Peruvian Embassy in Washington, DC.

Within a week of her election as Mother General in 1957, plans for the expansion of Colegio San Antonio, Peru, were drawn up. In 1962 Noviciado Inmaculado Corazon de Maria in Las Condes, Chile began the formation of native vocations. A junior college/media complex and convent at LaPlanicie in Peru was dedicated in 1964.

Groundbreaking ceremonies for Camilla Hall were held in March, 1958 and now as a pontifical Congregation, Mother was advised to “broaden your horizons.” Schools were established in Connecticut, Georgia, the Carolinas, Florida, California, and New Jersey. Mother herself was elected chairperson of the Eastern region of CMSW (Congress of Major Superiors of Women) in 1961. Ground for Villa Maria House of Studies, Immaculata, was broken in 1964.

In 1978, she retired to Camilla Hall where she daily visited the sick and retired sisters. Mother died on September 27, 1985. Her beloved South American people recall her with fond gratitude, “Madre muy simpatica.”

Burial: Immaculata Cemetery, Immaculata

Content taken from
*We Walk on Their Shoulders*
by Sister Maria Corona Crumback, IHM
Not exactly ancient history, but it is history dating as far back as the late 19th century when the IHM Congregation came from Monroe, Michigan to the Susquehanna, Reading, and Philadelphia areas at the invitation of St. John Neumann.

Sister Helene Thomas Connolly now has the awesome and exciting task of preserving the IHM past while maintaining new information of value. This includes documents, letters, photographs, audio and video recordings. Information must be accessible and understandable. Sister Helene will have to tap into her analytical and organizational skills to make sure that the record of IHM life in North and South America is preserved for years to come.

When the Office of Mission Advancement calls to say Thank You for your generous donation to the Annual Appeal, you will now hear (if you haven’t already) the pleasant voice of Sister Marian Bernadette Chuk. But behind that soft voice is Sister’s lovely smile that travels right though the phone to you. She enjoys “meeting” you and promising you our prayerful support for whatever requests you may have.

Besides her phone ministry, Sister Bernadette makes sure that every meeting held at Villa Maria House of Studies is accompanied by coffee, tea, and whatever is appropriate for the time of day: breakfast, lunch, or in-between. Her joyful spirit accompanies her everywhere.

Sister is a native of Bethlehem, PA. That means only one thing: she is our “shining star” all year round!

At the time of Gesu parish closing in North Philadelphia, the Archdiocese requested that the Jesuits and the IHM sisters keep Gesu School open — not as a parish-supported institution, but as an independent school. Gesu became Philadelphia’s first Catholic school of its kind, blazing the way for the Catholic mission schools that would follow 20 years later.

Now, celebrating 25 years as an independent Catholic elementary school, Pennsylvania State Representative Donna Bullock (3rd from right) presents the proclamation to (from left to right): President and CEO Bryan Carter, Vice President of Development Robert Weinstein, Principal Sr. Ellen Convey, IHM, Vice Principal/Chaplain Rev. Neil Ver’Schneider, S.J., and Vice Principal Alana Lee.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL AT GESU SCHOOL!
Our database was developed internally from relatives, friends, former students, and associates of the IHM Congregation. The office neither buys nor sells lists of names; however, we are always happy to receive new names from you, our readers. Please feel free to send us the names of those who might enjoy receiving our publication three times a year.