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IHM SISTERS – *On Mission*

A publication of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Malvern, PA

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



St. Peter School & Parish, Reading, PA

Serving in our First IHM Established Mission in the Philadelphia Diocese



In This Issue ...

As You Go 3
Recognizing God's presence in your life

On Mission at the Border 4-7
Three IHM Congregations come together in ministry

Spotlight 8-11
Sisters Anna Musi and Margaret Pavluchuk on serving at St. Peter Parish, Reading

Powerhouse Presence 12-14
'On the go' with the Camilla Hall Transportation Department

175th Anniversary Mass of Thanksgiving/Fideli Corde Awards 15
Celebrating in person!

A Legacy of Grace 16-17
A look at our IHM history through the years

Dwelling Now in Light 18
Remembering our deceased sisters

Snapshots 19
Meet the Villa Maria House of Studies' Secretarial Team

It is an *amazing story*... the story of the founding of the IHM Congregation. It begins when a young Redemptorist priest from Belgium, Father Louis Florent Gillet, arrives in Monroe, Michigan. His desire was to open a school to teach the spiritually and educationally abandoned immigrants on the Michigan frontier. As he searched for a religious community to staff the school, his prayer led him to ask a small group of women to form a religious community to serve the needs of the newly-arrived forgotten poor. It is an *amazing story* with some unusual twists and turns – a story that continues today.

Within these pages you will readily see the connection between the original founding IHM story and the work of the IHM Congregation today. While the nuances of the immigration issues of 1845 and those of today may look different, the response of the IHM Congregation is the same: to reach out in love to those in need.

This past summer when the Leadership Teams from the three IHM Congregations requested volunteers to partner with Catholic Charities to minister to refugees seeking asylum in the U.S., 30 IHM sisters joined together to live the gospel message by offering welcome and compassion to all of God's people. Ask any one of them and they will tell you that it was an *amazing adventure* that transformed their lives.

About 150 years ago, another Redemptorist priest, St. John Neumann, then Bishop of Philadelphia, asked the IHM Congregation to serve the immigrants from Ireland, Germany, Poland, and Italy who resided in the city of Reading, PA. This first mission of the IHM sisters in the Philadelphia Diocese, St. Peter School, continues that story of welcome by educating students who represent four continents. Ask Sister Anna Musi, Principal, or Sister Margaret Pavluchuk, Director of Religious Education, and they will tell you that each day is an *amazing adventure* that has transformed their lives and the lives of their dedicated faculties and staff.

On November 13, 2021, another Redemptorist priest, Bishop Bruce Lewandowski, in his homily at our IHM 175th Anniversary Mass of Thanksgiving, reminded every IHM sister of her call to put her well-being in connection with the well-being of others. He recognized that this call is an *amazing story* that continues through the lives of the recipients of the Fideli Corde (Faithful Heart) Award who exemplify the IHM charism graces of love, creative hope, and fidelity in their life and work. Ask any of the award recipients and they will tell you that they have been a part of an *amazing story* that has transformed their lives.

Every IHM Sister knows that this *amazing story* is God's work. Thank you for joining with us to enlarge our hearts to offer a place of welcome to those around us. Your prayers, encouragement and support are an integral part of our *amazing IHM adventure* that continues to this very day.

Sister Mary Ellen Tennity, IHM
General Superior

Take the Word of God with you

As You Go

Do you remember the game, “Where’s Waldo?” For those who don’t, the object of the game was to find as many small, identically dressed figures named Waldo as you could. This was not an easy task because the Waldos blended into all the details of the puzzle, so you had to pay close attention to each section. Waldo was “all over the place.”

Not to trivialize God’s presence, but to employ an analogy, God, too, is “all over the place.” God is omnipresent. Like looking for Waldo, we have to focus on what is around us, what is happening to us or to others, to recognize God’s presence. The beauties of nature, relationships which support us, prayer, scripture reading, and quiet reflection can all reveal something about God to us – God’s love, God’s mercy, God’s forgiveness, God’s comfort. Through Jesus, God has given us seven specific ways in which to nurture divine life in us. We call them the SACRAMENTS.

A sacrament is an outward sign of an interior action, the imparting of grace. In his spiritual treatise, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, Jean-Pierre de Caussade offers an insight into what he calls the “sacrament of the present moment.” Every moment of our lives holds the presence of God and is an outward sign of God at work in us and through us. The present moment holds the opportunity for us to learn about who God is and who we are. The ordinary experiences of our lives - the joys and sufferings, the successes and failures, the long-lasting relationships and the short-lived, can all teach us about God and ourselves. The key to finding that knowledge is the attentiveness with which we live our lives. How can I recognize the presence and power of God in my life? Take time to savor the apple you are eating, relish the relaxation of a hot bath or cold shower, notice the expression on your colleague’s face, listen carefully during a conversation, be grateful for the kindness of others. In other words, pay attention to the present moment.

Psalm 46 reminds us to “Be still and know that I am God” (v.10). We can help ourselves to be more conscious of God’s presence in several ways. In the morning, begin with a short prayer to start off your day remembering that God is your partner. Take mini-breaks during the day for deep breathing or for a prayer for someone else. Give yourself time at night to reflect on the day and ask, “Where was God today? What made me feel close to God? What distracted me from conscious living?” At the end of your prayer hear God say, “You are precious in my eyes and I love you” (Is. 43:4).



Sister Mariann Guiniven is secretary and receptionist at the IHM Literacy Center at St. Francis de Sales Parish in West Philadelphia.

A Mission of Mercy at the Border

This past summer, sisters from the three IHM Congregations joined together to volunteer at our nation's borders. The sisters partnered with Catholic Charities and were on the front lines ministering to refugees seeking residence in the U.S. Some ministered in San Antonio, Texas; others served in El Centro, California, spending anywhere from two weeks to one month living out their mission of serving, promoting the values of the gospel, and offering compassion to God's people.

ON MISSION... San Antonio, TX

Sister Constance Touey and Sister Jeannette Lucey represented the Immaculata Congregation in San Antonio, Texas. For over 2,000 boys, San Antonio was their temporary home until they were reunited with loved ones in the U.S. through the help of the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, and their individual case managers.

The boys' living quarters consisted of a large warehouse organized into 'pods.' Each pod was staffed by a group of volunteers. Sisters Constance and Jeannette were assigned to a group of boys in Pod 23A who arrived from Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala after

fleeing from the violence and poverty in those countries. "Many of the countries where the boys came from were run by gangs and cartels, so their lives were constantly in danger," said Sister Jeannette. "One boy's parents escaped to the U.S. when he was only four months old. His grandmother raised him. When he was 13, there was so much violence in his country that his grandmother told him to escape and go to the U.S. to be reunited with his parents."



Sisters Constance and Jeannette received many donations to take with them on their journey.

A LONG JOURNEY

In San Antonio, many of the boys arrived tired, hungry, and in need of rest. One of the sisters' main responsibilities was making sure that

the boys' basic physical needs were met. Ministering to over 2,000 boys under one roof was hectic at times. "It's like musical chairs," said Sister Jeannette. "Whenever they were waiting for something, like a mental health check, or to make a phone call, or checking on their status for finding family, they moved from chair to chair. But, through it all, the boys were always well taken care of with many people working around the clock to help them find their family members."

WE ARE FAMILY

From the beginning, Sisters Constance and Jeannette made it clear that their pod was a family. Shortly after the boys arrived, Sister Constance spoke to them in Spanish giving them a pep talk. "Sister gathered the boys around and told them that God is our Father," recalled Sister Jeannette. "We are all brothers here in this pod. We must work and play together like brothers. We must share and help one another so that as brothers we become a family away from home."

Daily prayer became an integral part of the boys' time in San Antonio. The sisters prayed the Our Father with them and prayed to Our Lady of Guadalupe. They read Bible stories, distributed rosaries, and talked about God's love for them.

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They constantly reminded them that although they were in the U.S. alone, they were family.

The boys also attended classes. Teachers were on site with flash cards and tablets to teach them the alphabet and how to count. They taught them basic phrases such as “What is your first name?” and “How old are you?” and how to respond in English.

CREATIVE MINDS

The Sisters recognized that the boys needed a creative and fun way to fill their days. So, they scoured the aisles of Walmart and purchased craft items, games, and puzzles to keep them busy. Among the most popular items were yarn, letter beads, and colored paper. “One boy showed me bracelets he made that went all the way up his arm. The bracelets had the names of his brothers and sisters – one for every

sibling. He planned to give these as presents to each of them when he saw them again,” said Sister Constance.

The boys also crafted beautiful flowers and animal shapes from paper and gave their creations to the Sisters. “They can create so much out of so little, and they can please themselves with anything,” remarked Sister Constance.

One day, she received a special gift from one of the boys in her pod. “For several days, one boy was working on folding and bending paper. We watched something take shape as he presented us with the most intricate swan crafted out of paper! Later, he taught a whole group how to make a swan. The boys are so patient. All they do is wait. They are happy and grateful for whatever is given to them,” she added.



The Sisters show off the creative handiwork from their group of boys.

GOING HOME

One of the happiest moments was when a group of boys were to be reunited with their families. “There was a huge eruption of shouts and whistles that broke out,” shared Sister Jeannette. “Everybody jumped



The boys made “I remember” bracelets for both Sisters when the time had come to say goodbye to the group who had become like family.

to their cots as the Department of Homeland Security led a procession of at least 40 boys outside to board a bus to a location in the U.S.”

As the Sisters’ time in San Antonio drew to a close, they reflected on the challenges they faced. There were physical challenges such as being on their feet for long periods of time and coping with adverse weather conditions. Volunteering took a toll on them emotionally as they saw the pain and sorrow on the faces of the boys who had not yet located their families. But, perhaps the most difficult part was saying goodbye to the ‘muchachos of Pod 23A’ who had become their family.

“It was time to say adios. Our 14 days had ended,” said Sister Jeannette. “We gathered the group together and Sister Constance prayed with them. We reminded them to remain a family in their pod, to stay strong and hopeful. We told them that although we are leaving, we will carry them in our hearts. It brought tears to us all. They presented each of us with a bracelet and several boys ran after us saying, *Manana es El Dia de la Madre (Tomorrow is Mother’s Day). You are our mothers.* The boys cried, and we cried too!”

ON MISSION... El Centro, CA

IHM sisters from Monroe, Immaculata, and Scranton volunteered in El Centro, California, a temporary respite center for hundreds of immigrants crossing the U.S./Mexican border. In this remote desert area the sisters ministered to those seeking asylum in search of a better life for themselves and their families.

“El Centro was a ‘stop along the way,’” said Sister Margie Langer, who volunteered in El Centro and kept a diary of her ministry there. “In El Centro, travelers received a place to rest with beds, showers, and food. Many found clean clothes that they needed for the days ahead as they boarded planes to different destinations within the U.S.”

The men, women, and children who arrived in El Centro were released from Border Control, screened for COVID, and ready to be housed in the Catholic Charities Center until they could reach their families in the U.S. “Catholic Charities provided these travelers with a sense

of dignity and a loving interaction reminding them of a love so much bigger than what can be imagined,” said Sister Margie.

REWARDING WORK

The sisters volunteering in El Centro had two main responsibilities – helping with the intake process of immigrants arriving in El Centro and driving them to the airport to board flights across the U.S. to be reunited with their families.

Given the large number of immigrants arriving daily, the intake process was an arduous task. As families arrived, the sisters took note of personal items each family needed and sorted through bags of clothing, shoes, toys, and baby supplies. They created a makeshift store to help families find their correct items and sizes. They prepared snack bags for families waiting in airports before boarding their flights. They traveled to the location of those quarantined due to COVID, delivering meals and bringing games to help pass the time until their quarantine period ended.



Sister Margie Langer (left) and Sister Mary Elaine Anderson (right) helped organize clothing and supplies.

“The behind-the-scenes work was physical and went on for long hours each day,” remarked Sister Margie. “However, we IHMs are organized and like a challenge! There was such great joy when a young man found the shoes he needed, a dad found shorts he liked, or a little girl found a doll or a pink backpack,” she said. “In the endless hours of folding and sorting, we stayed sane by praying for each person who would wear the shirt or the pair

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Three branches of the IHM Congregation united to serve at the border.

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of pants – that God would protect him or her and help guide his or her journey. The works of mercy – feeding the hungry and clothing the poor – are the quiet work that went on each day in El Centro.”

DIVINELY GUIDED

Once individuals contacted their families and were ready to meet them, they were driven to the airport. Each day, the sisters drove through the rough and rocky terrain of El Centro to airports in California and Arizona hundreds of miles away. With the help of Google Translator, they communicated with the travelers, explaining the ticketing and screening process and making sure they boarded the correct flight. “It was a process with many moveable parts that sometimes felt chaotic and other times felt miraculous,” said Sister Margie. “God was definitely the unseen guide of this good work!”

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Some of the most memorable moments came from building a rapport with the families they encountered. “We’ve had the

privilege to hear many stories directly from the immigrants while accompanying or staying with them at the airport,” remarked Sister Margie. “It is heartbreaking to listen to the struggles they encountered along the way. It takes great courage and deep faith for families to leave their homes and extended families to cross the border into the U.S.”

When it was time to say goodbye to the families at the airport, the moment was bittersweet. “I felt as if I was saying goodbye to family and indeed I was,” said Sister. “A member of the human family to which we all belong was moving onward, on their own, trusting in God’s guidance. I wanted to know what happened in their story but that must be entrusted to God.”

Although their time in El Centro was busy and tiring, it was also rewarding. “Relationships truly are an important part of our experience at the border. We were involved in doing God’s work by offering respect and dignity. I learned so much about our deepest human desires and yearnings,” shared Sister Margie. “In the midst of it all, God’s hands were definitely present, and He was our unseen guide. I am ever



Sister Christine Cunningham cared for many families in need at the border.

so grateful for the experience and for the opportunity to have joined with other Congregations working together as one.”



The sisters accompanied many families to the airport to be reunited with loved ones.

In the Spotlight

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

Sister Anna J. Musi

Principal

Sister M. Margaret Pavluchuk

Director of Religious Education

*St. Peter School & Parish
Reading, PA*

If you walk through the doors of St. Peter School in Reading, PA you will feel a welcoming presence. It must have been what St. John Neuman, (the Bishop of Philadelphia at that time) envisioned as he led the IHM sisters to establish their first mission in the Philadelphia Diocese at St. Peter's over a century and a half ago. Today, **Sister Anna Musi, Principal**, and **Sister Margaret Pavluchuk, Director of Religious Education**, help keep the IHM mission alive at St. Peter's.

A PLACE OF WELCOME

"My focus is to be faithful to the reason why our IHM mission was first established here – to be a place of welcome – especially as we serve our immigrant community," says Sister Anna. As a multicultural school dedicated to the ministry of education, Sister hopes to develop the gifts and talents of each student. The school's motto of 'Jesus is the Center, and Mary is the model' is

their guiding principle in developing Christian values of respect, service, and hospitality towards all.

In the 19th century, St. Peter School welcomed immigrants from Ireland and Germany as well as Poland and Italy. Today, the school is home to over 200 children from kindergarten through eighth grade, representing



Sister Anna and her students celebrate Multicultural Day.

four continents. "The school continues to embrace immigrant children and their families especially those coming from Mexico and Central and South America," adds Sister Anna. Thanks to their staff, many of whom are bilingual, they can communicate with students and their families in Spanish. "Our mission is to give these students the academic tools they will need to succeed in the United States and to form good Catholic leaders in an ever-growing Hispanic church."

COMING HOME

Sister Anna is no stranger to St. Peter School. In fact, it's where her ministry began. In 1993, her first mission assignment was teaching eighth grade at the school. After eight years, her ministry led her to Chile and Peru, then back to the United States to serve in Philadelphia before arriving at St. Peter's in 2009 as principal. Returning to the place she called



The students at St. Peter School joyfully await the Christmas season.

home years before was a smooth transition. “I had many connections with the people here in Reading,” she says, “and close ties with the benefactors who graciously support our school.”

THE IHM INFLUENCE

It was Sister Anna’s own educational experience that led her to want to become an IHM in the first place. “My vocation gradually unfolded through many experiences and encounters with sisters who inspired me in my younger years,” remarks Sister Anna. During her high school years, she credits Sister Regina Edward with helping to instill a love for the Spanish language and a missionary heart. “She took me to Immaculata University to be a part of a Spanish high school competition and gave me a tour of the school, helping me take the first step in my IHM journey,” she says. “At Immaculata, I was inspired by the daily outreach, care, concern, and prayer life of the sisters. It was there that I met my sponsor, Sister Loretta Maria, who quietly encouraged

me and made me aware of discernment opportunities offered by the IHMs. She persistently kept up that practice even after I graduated.” At the age of 25, Sister Anna took the first official step in her IHM journey. Her vocation continued to be nurtured through the love and care of many sisters such as Sister Kathleen Dolores who mentored and guided her along the way and continues to remain an integral part of her life. “To this day, I continue to live with wonderful sisters who are quietly faithful to daily ministerial needs.

PAYING IT FORWARD

The encouragement she received on her own spiritual journey is what motivates Sister Anna to share that same welcoming and loving spirit with others.

“What is most unique about my ministry is the faithfulness and devotion of each faculty member to the mission of the school. This is the reason why we have such a loving and caring atmosphere and can tend to the many needs that present themselves each day,” she says. Because the school is such a small, tight-knit community, everyone does their fair share to communicate and engage with each other. “This incredible team approach has enabled us to do so much outreach,” Sister adds. Among the many blessings of her ministry at St. Peter School are the generous benefactors who enable them to make tuition affordable, especially for parents of large families.

THE LITTLE THINGS

Sister Anna has learned to celebrate the little things. “I feel a great satisfaction with so many small achievements that can happen in a day – such as a little child reading a book, a teacher achieving a



Sister spends time with the children enrolled in St. Peter’s After School Program.

“My focus is to be faithful to the reason why our IHM mission was first established here, to be a place of welcome...”

breakthrough with a challenging student, or the school being able to provide tuition assistance to a needy family.” It’s also Sister’s joy to celebrate the academic achievements of her students whether in math, spelling, science, or art. She fondly recalls the time that the school celebrated an athletic achievement when the boys’ basketball team won the State Championship. “The coaches made t-shirts that said – ‘No gym – no problem.’ In some ways, it truly captures how we are able to confront and overcome so many challenges as a school community.”

THE PARISH COMMUNITY

Serving alongside Sister Anna at St. Peter Parish is Sister Margaret Pavluchuk, Director of Religious Education, a position that she fulfills joyfully with great respect for the rich history that surrounds her.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

“Ministering where our first mission in the Philadelphia diocese was founded is really a privilege,” says Sister Margaret. “Our first sisters set the tone for all of us in their pioneering spirit. I can feel the history as I walk the halls of the school. It is so humbling to know that we have served the city of Reading since 1859. The city is not just a backdrop for our ministry here, it IS the ministry.”

HEART AND SOUL

Sister Margaret’s role in parish ministry puts her in touch with the families who are the heart and soul of the St. Peter community. “In the parish, I meet with parents who want to have their children baptized. I love meeting them and helping them begin the sacramental life of their child. I also prepare students to receive the sacraments of Penance, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation. Working with the Religious Education students is such a joy! We have a beautiful working relationship between the school and the parish.”

In addition to preparing for the sacraments, each week the students attend Mass. Sister Margaret coordinates selecting lectors, writing the petitions, and choosing songs. Confession is also offered four times a year even amidst the challenges of COVID-19. “During the pandemic, we had 18 prayer services around the cross in order to social distance,” she adds. Aside from her religious education

duties, Sister Margaret helps with the school’s mission opportunities, coordinates the parish RCIA program and annual Vacation Bible School, serves as the Safe Environment Coordinator, and has the added blessing of helping with the First Friday communion calls. “I have the privilege and honor of visiting our beloved elders and bringing them the Eucharist,” she says. “I become attached to them and mourn their loss when they go home to God.”

PAST AND PRESENT

For the beloved IHM sisters who have passed, Sister says, “I often go to our cemetery where our first sisters are buried. Their original gravestones are worn, and you can hardly see their names, but their missionary spirit lives on in every IHM sister.”

She fondly remembers her first call to religious life which stemmed from a deep desire to serve God and his people. She credits her parents’ influence of teaching her to love God and to be generous with others, showing her how to live life for others and not just herself. The sisters in Camilla Hall have been



Vacation Bible School is just one of many programs Sister Margaret organizes for the children of St. Peter Parish.



Sister Margaret and the IHM Junior Companions take to the street to visit other religious communities in the parish and learn about their charism and history.

a special inspiration to her. “They are so mission minded, and after spending their lives in service, they now serve each other in that same generous IHM spirit.”

Since entering the convent in 1976, Sister has served in many places domestically and abroad including ministering in Peru and Chile. “The sisters with whom I lived and served were my guides as I navigated new lands, languages and cultures,” she says. “The Peruvian and Chilean people helped me open my heart. I felt as if I was on a continual road to Emmaus and my eyes were constantly being opened.”

Speaking Spanish has proved to be invaluable in her role at St. Peter Parish as she serves the Hispanic community. However, she is quick to admit that language humbles her. “I always have someone check my Spanish before I send something out. Once I was sending out a letter regarding a ‘make up’ meeting for Confirmation, but instead, I used the word for facial makeup. No doubt the parents would have thought I was inviting them to a Mary Kay party instead of a sacramental meeting. Thankfully, we caught my error in the nick of time and

we all had a good laugh.” She describes ministering to the Hispanic community as a ‘great joy.’ “Their acceptance, humor and zest for life have kept me going! Their concept of faith, family, and friendship are gifts. I am truly blessed to be at St. Peter’s.”

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AFTER HOURS

Aside from her work at the parish, Sister makes time for what she enjoys most. Cooking is one of her favorite pastimes as well as collecting cookbooks. She likes to read and enjoys walking in nature particularly on the scenic trails in Berks County, PA. She has many causes close to her heart and volunteers with organizations such as Project Rachel for those finding healing after abortion; FREE (Freedom and Restoration for Everyone Enslaved), a nonprofit to end human trafficking; and Great Decisions, a special interest group discussing current issues and global events. “All of these groups are life-giving for me,” adds Sister Margaret.

A WELCOMING PRESENCE

“At St. Peter Parish, our ministry and mission are unique in that we still serve the immigrant church,” she says. “Although our parishioners come from different countries of origin than when we first settled here, they are a welcome presence, and they reflect the changing face of our society. At the school and parish, I find a beautiful acceptance of our parishioners where they are educationally, economically, spiritually, and physically. At St. Peter’s, we always say – ‘Welcome everybody!’”

Like Sister Anna, this is Sister’s second time at St. Peter’s (she previously taught second grade). When I see children from every country and culture coming to our school, I often imagine John Neuman and Mother Theresa Maxis at the end of the block smiling. How thrilled they must be seeing the Alphonsian spirit of mission alive and well.”

Powerhouse Presence

CAMILLA HALL

Camilla Hall Transportation Department... *'On the Go' in Loving Service*

Jesus was an itinerant preacher and the miles/steps he counted would amaze any of us today. After he left Nazareth, his journeys took him to Bethany, the Judean desert, Cana, Capernaum, Jerusalem, Bethsaida, and many towns along the way. Boy, could Jesus and his disciples have used the Camilla Hall Transportation Department!

A SCHEDULING PUZZLE

Scheduling one's own medical appointments can take hours, but if you are also doing this for a loved one, it can feel like a full-time job. Imagine the task of doing this for the over 200 resident sisters in Camilla Hall!

Since late 2019, **Sister Mary Jane McDonnell** has been doing that unimaginable task full-time. However, Sister enjoys her work because, "It is a new and exciting day - every day! I never know what the day will bring until I unlock the door in the morning. Making the Trip List 'work' is like working on a giant puzzle." Although she enjoys



Sister Mary Jane (back) and Sister Helen (front) put all the puzzle pieces together to ensure that the sisters transportation needs are met.

the challenge, making sure there are drivers and companions for all the trips sometimes seems like some puzzle pieces may not fit.

Making all the pieces of the puzzle fit together and 'work' is possible because Sister Mary Jane is so organized and utilizes technology to keep excellent records. She has

a great staff to help her, consisting of two part-time office assistants, three van drivers, six sister drivers, and five sisters who serve as companions.

Sister Helen Theresa Smythe

spends about an hour each morning reviewing requests from floor nurses who need medical appointments for the sisters in their care. Helen then proceeds to schedule the appointment, and once confirmed, she enters it on a 'transportation calendar.' When needed, Sister Kathleen Egan also assists in the transportation office.

Following their initial scheduling, Sister Mary Jane checks to see if the doctor is in the accepted insurance network, contacts a driver for transport, enters the details in a computer file for each transport day, and confirms with the floor nurse that the appointment and transport is set. (Of course, the department also handles the seeming endless re-scheduling necessitated from the medical office or from the patient's inability to keep an appointment.)

If a sister is wheelchair-bound, then one of three van drivers (Alvin Walton, Michael Plunkett, or Tom McLean) are scheduled. They transport the sister – with a companion – in one of two large vans or in the mini-van. Should there be a need for more than three vans at one time, (and yes, it happens), a wonderful partnership with Mercy Trinity Health is Sister Mary Jane’s back up. Thankfully, the on-site Mercy Life personnel can obtain the needed transport through their network.

THE TRAVEL TRIO

Alvin Walton, who retired from positions in the automotive industry and from a project with the Army Corps of Engineers, says, “I was looking for something to occupy my time” when he saw an ad in a newspaper for a driver at Camilla. That was 21 years ago, and his time has been well filled; but more important he has filled Camilla with skill and care. What he enjoys most is caring for the sisters who need help, and he only regrets “that there is never enough time to accomplish all I think is necessary.”



Alvin Walton has been serving the sisters at Camilla Hall for over two decades.



Michael Plunkett escorts a sister to her destination with great care.

Michael Plunkett, who worked in Food Service at Camilla in 2001, joined the Transportation Department in 2015 and has found his perfect place. He says, “When I first started, I knew I had found an incredible comfort level with the sisters. The sisters are so grateful for the smallest action, and I just ask them to pray for me.” Michael says of his role, “I never take the responsibilities and importance of my job for granted.” And no one in Camilla could take Michael or any of these dedicated gentlemen for granted because, as Sister Maureen Margaret Illescas Aicardi, a van companion, says, “I am privileged to ride with these men who show great respect, patience, kindness and concern for our sisters. They are like ‘big brothers’ to the sisters.”

Rounding out the van driver trio is **Tom McLean** who knew the IHMs from his years at Saint Laurence School. In 2020, Tom had retired and asked Sister John Evelyn if there were any job openings at Camilla. Tom says one thing that makes his job enjoyable is “When the sisters

and I engage in a funny conversation that makes us both laugh.” In fact, Tom is enjoying Camilla so much he is now working in Food Service too.

These three men not only transport the sisters with a ready heart but also assure that the vans, as well as 15 plus cars, are fueled, cleaned, and ready to go every day!

“The sisters are so grateful for the smallest action, and I just ask them to pray for me.”

- Michael Plunkett



Tom McLean is all smiles as he assists the sisters on their outings.

the sister to Camilla and called the office. The doctor's receptionist apologized for not letting us know he would not be in that building for another two weeks!"

Despite the inherent challenges of time, traffic, wrong turns, detours, and even offices neglecting to give exact addresses, Sister Mary sums up what each of them feels about this ministry as she says, "The best part is getting to know the sisters." The joy and gratitude we receive from the sisters, the knowledge that they share, and their IHM supportive presence, not only with the sisters

but also with so many others in the various offices, makes the challenges well worth it. And the sisters who are transported echo what Sister Mary Praskac says, "How very appreciative I am for the kind and generous service they graciously give."

FRAMED IN SERVICE

You would think medical trips would be all that the Transportation Department could handle. But oh no! Does a sister need a hearing aid or watch battery? Is there a package to be mailed? Are there shoes or glasses to be repaired? How can Christmas gifts for doctors be delivered? These too all fall under the loving ministry of the Camilla Transportation Department. The puzzle pieces are many, but this team uses them all to create a beautiful picture of loving service.

THE SPECTACULAR SIX

If a sister can be transported by car, **Sisters Kathleen Egan, Mary Flynn, Patricia Hughes, Mary James McCaffrey, Marian Leo Morris, and Bernard Agnes Smith** are busy, dedicated drivers. Each one was involved in education before coming to serve at Camilla, but they have become students of MapQuest and masters in using the GPS in order to drive to a 'million' places. Sister Kathleen, who came on board in 2020 says, "In my first two months, I had visited 32 different offices!" Sister Marian, a veteran since 2015, can amazingly claim, "I have driven 181 sisters on over 1200 trips!" Sister Pat remembers one of her trips where "I was on the job three days and I could not find the doctor in any building. Upset and embarrassed, I returned with



The dedicated drivers at Camilla Hall hold the 'key' to providing caring, compassionate, and efficient transportation services for the residents. Pictured from left to right, back row: S. Mary Flynn, S. Bernard Agnes Smith, S. Kathleen Egan. Front row: S. Marian Leo Morris, S. Mary James McCaffrey, S. Patricia Hughes.

175TH ANNIVERSARY MASS OF THANKSGIVING & FIDELI CORDE AWARDS

On November 13, 2021, the Congregation celebrated its 175th Anniversary Mass of Thanksgiving in person ... *FINALLY!* During this time, the Fideli Corde award recipients were recognized. Each exemplifies the IHM charism of love, creative hope, and fidelity in his/her life and work.

Award Recipients: *Robert & Phyllis Bellopede, the late Catherine Iannitti, Michael Plunkett, Jane Robinson, Ana Maria Tomassini*



Ana Maria Tomassini



Jane Robinson



Michael Plunkett



*Richard & Vincent Iannitti
(Sons of the late Catherine Iannitti)*



Robert & Phyllis Bellopede



A stringband celebration!



Celebrating Our IHM Legacy of Grace • 175 Years

1845



Founding of the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Sisters of Providence) at Monroe, Michigan by Mother Theresa Maxis Duchemin and Rev. Louis Florent Gillet, CSsR. Mother Theresa, Charlotte Schaaff, and Therese Renault become the first members of the new Congregation.

1846

Forty students are welcomed to classes with the sisters at St. Mary's Young Ladies' Academy.

1847

The title of the Congregation is changed from Sisters of Providence to Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

1858

First mission in Pennsylvania opens at St. Joseph's in Susquehanna County.

1859

Mother Theresa Maxis leaves Monroe for St. Joseph's in Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania and Monroe, Michigan IHMs separate.

The first IHM mission in the Philadelphia diocese is opened at St. Peter's in Reading, Pennsylvania.

1864

Reading, Pennsylvania becomes the center for the new Motherhouse of all the Pennsylvania missions.

1872

Transfer of the Motherhouse, Novitiate, and Academy from Reading to West Chester, Pennsylvania.



1892

Mother Teresa Maxis dies at Villa Maria, West Chester, Pennsylvania, and Rev. Louis Florent Gillet dies at Royal Abbey of Notre Dame of Hautescombe.

1908

Ground is broken for Villa Maria Academy Frazer, Pennsylvania. This becomes Villa Maria (later Immaculata) College in 1920.

1918

About 400 IHM sisters serve in general and emergency hospitals and in private homes during the influenza pandemic. Nine sisters died giving service at this time.

1922

First Immaculata IHM sisters arrive in Peru marking the beginning of IHM service outside the United States.



1925

Villa Maria Academy High School for Girls opens at Green Tree Malvern, PA. (The foundation actually dates from 1872.)

1937

Ground is broken for a new retreat house at Stone Harbor, NJ.



1940

Villa Maria Academy opens in Santiago, Chile.

1950

St. Aloysius Academy is transferred from West Chester to the Wootton Estate in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.

1955

Constitutions (Rule Book) of the Congregation receives the Decree of Praise. It is now a Pontifical Congregation.

1960

Blessing of the cornerstone of Camilla Hall Nursing Home.

1966

The IHM Motherhouse in West Chester moves to Villa Maria House of Studies, Immaculata, Pennsylvania.



1989

Two IHM Centers for Literacy are opened in Philadelphia followed by the IHM Family Literacy Center (2002) in Coatesville, Pennsylvania.

1991

The Congregation establishes a House of Prayer in Nesquehoning, Pennsylvania.

1993

The IHM Spirituality Center on the grounds of the Motherhouse opens for day and overnight retreats.



1997

When the last boarding students leave St. Aloysius Academy in Bryn Mawr, the Wootton mansion becomes available for faculty and parish retreats and conferences.



2002

Immaculata College celebrates its status as Immaculata University.

2012

Groundbreaking begins for construction of new South and West Wings at Camilla Hall.



2013

The Congregation receives the Pope Paul VI Award for Catechetical Leadership highlighting significant contributions to the field of catechesis on archdiocesan, national, and international levels.

2019

The Congregation shares plans to build a smaller, more efficient Villa Maria by the Sea at Stone Harbor, New Jersey.



2020

This year marks the 175th Anniversary of the Congregation. Praise, Love, Thanksgiving Our God to Thee!



Dwelling now in light, yet ever near



Sister Marie Lorraine Bruno
12.29.21



S. Maureen Lawrence McDermott
11.17.21



S. Mary Lorraine Holzman
11.17.21



S. Marita Patrick Devlin
11.15.21



S. Marita Donald Toland
11.5.21



S. M. Claire Hutchinson
11.2.21
(*S. M. Agnes Cecilia*)



S. Maria Antonieta Garcia
Nicoletti
10.31.21



S. Regina Celeste Senior
10.29.21



S. Dorothy M. Mayer
10.17.21
(*S. Mary Annunciata*)



S. Mary Cyril Meehan
10.16.21



S. M. Elizabeth Ann Lemnah
10.11.21
(*S. M. Gerald Joseph*)



S. Anita Dolores Malloy
10.6.21



S. Maria Carmen Quiroz
10.1.21



S. Ann M. McCurdy
9.30.21
(*S. M. St. Kevin*)

IHM SNAPSHOTS



teachers,” she says. In assisting with the IHM 175th celebration, Sister enjoyed the added blessing of reaching out to many of the sisters’ friends and family. “There are many other tasks associated with my ministry,” she says. “I am blessed to have the assistance of Sister Christine Cunningham to help me handle the workflow.”

The Secretarial Department at Villa Maria House of Studies is also home to Sister Christine Cunningham. “Tiny tasks done joyfully are its own reward, and I am grateful to be here to do them,” says Sister Christine. Sister maintains the IHM database annually updating the status of each sister noting where they live and serve. She also updates the IHM Directory and is often ‘out and about’ as she travels locally taking care of the Congregation’s banking needs. “Each morning, I pray that my service will glorify God and create a joyful environment for those I serve.” One of her most sacred tasks is gathering a sister’s documents upon her passing, writing a brief summary of the sister’s life, and ensuring that the documents are placed in the Congregational Archives. “I see the places where a sister has been, the countless lives she’s touched, and the untold hours she has served as a faithful IHM sister. I have grown more and more in awe of our sisters’ journeys to heaven, and I call on them often to intercede for me.”



Sister Kathleen Doyle is a quiet presence in the busy Secretarial Department at Villa Maria House of Studies. Sister initially joined the team to help enter the sisters’ retreat information into the computer. “I started with very few computer skills, but I soon learned a lot through the help of some very patient sisters,” says Sister Kathleen. Sister helps with whatever administrative needs arise each day. “In our department, there are times when communication is done the ‘old way’ such as stuffing, sealing, and stamping envelopes by hand,” she adds. But Sister doesn’t mind. Whether it’s copying, counting, alphabetizing, checking items sent to the Archives, or freeing the occasional paper jam, Sister is quick to add, “I enjoy all of it!”

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Mission Statement

Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Immaculata, Pennsylvania, proclaim the Gospel message in the spirit of Jesus the Redeemer.

Strengthened by a life of vowed consecration, nurtured by prayer and the Eucharist, and sustained by community living, we radiate joyful service and promote Gospel values, offering compassion to all God's people through our mission to evangelize, to catechize, and to teach.

Contributors to this issue

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Sister Mariann Guiniven
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Sister Jeannine M. Norton



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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 publications three times a year.