

REFLECTIONS

&
Connections



STORIES OF MISSION
& MINISTRY



CSA

Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
Promoting Justice, Building Community

"I was in prison..."

– Matthew 25:36

Just a mile down County Road K from St. Agnes Convent in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, is Taycheedah Correctional Institution (TCI), the women's prison for the State of Wisconsin. <http://www.wi-doc.com/taycheed.htm>. Currently there are 747 inmates, 100 more than last year at this time. These women are part of the 2.6 million incarcerated Americans despite the fact that there has been a 41% decrease in violent crime since 1990. The United States prison population by far exceeds that of other nations. Per 100,000 adult population, the U.S. imprisons 753 whereas the United Kingdom has 153, and South Korea 97. In 1980, 10% of the prison population was made up of non-violent drug offenders. In 2012, that rate is at 25%. In the last decade, the total number of prison inmates has increased by 15%, whereas the number of people in *private* federal prisons has increased 120%. Since 1980, California has built one college campus and 21 prisons. A college student costs the state \$8,667 whereas a prisoner costs the state \$45,006 a year.

Some people in Wisconsin are saying enough is enough and have started the "11X15 Campaign". This is a call to reduce Wisconsin's prison population by half – to 11,000 – by the end of 2015. To learn more or to get involved, go to: <http://prayforjusticeinwi.org/> For every dollar spent for treatment, \$1.93 is spent for incarceration. And think of the benefit for the individual.

Data from <http://www.onlinecriminaljusticedegree.com/no-justice-for-all/>

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Sharing Memories

Gifts from the Past, Gratitude from the Present

When Elaine Seidl and her siblings attended grade school in Menominee, Michigan, in the 1930s, the Sisters of St. Agnes taught them about joy and compassion, impressing upon them a deep spiritual inspiration that continues to guide her today.

“The Sisters of St. Agnes are fun, loving, and deeply spiritual,” shared Elaine, who has supported the congregation financially for many years. “They are on a mission to educate and rehabilitate single mothers so that they can provide for their families here in the United States and in Latin America. They serve people with dignity, teaching them self-reliance, so that they can give back to the communities where they live, building stronger communities which are spiritually changed and charged.”

Widowed at a young age, Elaine and her children found comfort from an unexpected visitor.

“My sister, Sister Judine, came to visit and brought along Sister Verda, my second grade teacher!” she remembered. “They both gave us so much love and support during that sad time in our lives. Sister Verda brought back many good memories for me, including the dress that my mother made for me on my first day of school and the songs that we sang while riding in the back of an open pickup truck on the way to a school picnic. She brought so much joy to us.”

Many years later, Elaine continues to support the congregation. “I have worked with several other orders, but none can hold a candle to CSA!”



Elaine Seidl, long-time
CSA supporter

“There is no pain or sorrow
which comes to us that has
not first passed through the *heart*
of God.”

– Meister Eckhart

*T*he river birch with its salmon-colored shaggy bark is very hardy – able to withstand frost and wind, and to thrive well in damp riverside soil. About the only thing it cannot tolerate is shade. Shedding its bark is a natural developmental characteristic – the peeling of paper-thin layers makes room for new growth to happen. If the peeling is premature, the tree will become “wounded” and fail to grow.

Sometimes along our journey of life, we come to an awareness that we need to be healed from our inner wounding that resides deep in our soul space. This healing is always a challenge, a process, and a sacred adventure! Much like the

river birch trees, we, too, have layers of old wounds that need to be peeled away, each in its own time.

To set out on this inner quest, we (unlike the river birch) learn to befriend the shade – our shadow self, who truly is our teacher – inviting us to name our fears, doubts, pains, and illusions. In so doing, we gently peel off layers placing all into God’s loving embrace.

With each inner “pilgrimage”, we gather courage and integrity to go ever deeper to enter our wounding with grace and faith. We then let grief have its way with us, allowing our tears to bless us as they carry away our hurts.



Sister Patrice Rog

St. Lawrence Seminary

St. Lawrence Seminary High School sits high upon a hill in the center of the community of Mount Calvary located ten miles from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. It is home to 187 young men from around the world. Represented are students from Korea, Vietnam, Ghana, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. They are all Catholic and attending a college prep high school that is a seminary.

Sister Patrice Rog, a member of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes, is the Campus Minister and teacher of junior class Morality. “Working at St. Lawrence is a wonderful integration of all of my previous ministries,” said Sister Patrice. “I have been a teacher, librarian, principal, spiritual director, retreat facilitator, and a former college and middle school campus minister. As there are only six women faculty members, I hope I am bringing a feminine touch to these young men as they build their faith life. I strive to make the gospel message alive to them.”

St. Lawrence is committed to developing leadership skills as well. The staff is very dedicated to the growth and development of character of the students. Included in the curriculum is a ministry component; by senior year they contribute 20 hours of community service. Some of the projects they work with include housing rehab in the Milwaukee area, Special Olympics, and Villa Loretto working with the elderly.





There is
No Time for
Dancing

Sister Celia is a member of CSA living and working in Managua, Nicaragua. “I am a nurse working in a small clinic serving men and women who have little or no education and income. We do not have a physician on staff; the responsibility is great for the care I can offer. I view my role as not only offering medical care but emotional support as well. I listen to people, respond when I can and smile; it is very important for their well being. Part of my role is to work with women who are pregnant educating them in regard to nutrition and breastfeeding,” shared Sister Celia.

“My commute to work begins at 5:45 a.m. I transfer three times to different buses. The neighborhood

is very dangerous and when I leave at night I cannot wait for the bus alone. This is where the most people in need of care live. For me as a religious it is where I want to be, serving the poorest of the poor.”

“In my free time I used to enjoy being part of a dance troupe. We danced the traditional Nicaraguan dances. Now my life is too busy and there is no time to dance. On Saturdays I study English and sometimes visit my family or other CSA members. I live with five other members of CSA. We all have busy work schedules. Through our praying together and sharing we encourage one another and this gives me hope.”

Many Hats, *One Mission*

In the midst of juggling her many responsibilities as Director of the Office of Religious and Chancellor of the Diocese of Phoenix, Sister Jean Steffes centers on community and spiritual renewal. Inspiring and guiding leaders in the community and the church, she brings CSA's mission alive through her direction and example.

"There are 45 congregations of women religious in the diocese whose motherhouses are located elsewhere," she explained. "Throughout the year, we offer opportunities to build a spirit of community."

Sister Jean also works with diocesan personnel who advocate for anti-poverty programs, economic development, and community outreach for the church. In addition, she assists with archdiocesan reports, archives, and prison ministry.

"Although I wear many different hats, I always focus on the people whom we serve and on supporting the many services for those in need throughout the diocese," she revealed. "Extending hospitality to all is central to our mission."

Along with her work for the diocese, she serves on the board of trustees for Marian University in Fond du Lac. Sister Jean balances the dual need to ensure that CSA's mission is core to all decisions and the university's goal to offer a faith-based education for the students, many of whom are the first in their family to attend college.

"Marian graduates bring so much to the communities where they live through their social consciousness, global perspective, and commitment to professional service," she noted. "Marian's mission of service underlies that outreach and is an important part of CSA's heritage."



Sister Jean Steffes at a celebration honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe

There's No Place Like Home – CSA Associates Reach Out to Homeless

643,067 people did not sleep in their own beds last night – because they don't have one.

Helping to provide hot meals and daily necessities to homeless people in Madison, Wisconsin, CSA associate and volunteer Katie Healy witnesses the daily struggles facing many. "We pray we will find an indoor spot before it gets too cold and snowy," she explained. "Without shelter or electricity, it's a challenge."

67,000 homeless people are veterans – those who served our country.

Wisconsin AMVETS Auxiliary President and associate Ann Palm chose to help homeless veterans, along with her husband, Ron, also an associate, as an annual project. "We believe in the CSA mission as something that we live every day," they shared. Crisscrossing the state, they promote awareness by providing service at shelters, hospitals, and transitional housing.

238,110 homeless are families – parents and children struggling to survive.

As volunteers with Family Promise of Green County, Wisconsin, associates Kris Wisnefske, Sybil Teehan, and Pat Gregory help to host and feed homeless families for a week on a rotating basis. Along with Sister Florence Magnan, they prepare meals and offer friendship and support to families. "Serving our neighbors in need is very positive and rewarding," shared Sybil. "It brings us so much closer in friendship and understanding."

404,957 homeless individuals seek food and shelter – friends and neighbors in need.

Reaching out to the homeless, associates actively embrace and live the mission of CSA, a blessing to the congregation and to those whose lives are changed through their ministries.



Ron and Ann Palm



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Fond du Lac, WI 54937

Ways to connect with CSA:

CSA web site:

<http://www.csasisters.org/>

What's Happening at the UN:

<http://whatshappeningattheun.blogspot.com/>

(in the front page of our web site)

Some Call Me Sis:

<http://somecallmesis.blogspot.com/>

(in the front page of our web site)

Streams 'N Stirrings, Sister Jean:

(in the front page of our web site)

Vocation E-Newsletter

(in the front page of our web site)



<http://www.facebook.com/sasisters?sk=wall>

(in the front page of our web site)



[http://www.youtube.com/user/](http://www.youtube.com/user/TheCSAChannel1)

TheCSAChannel1

(in the front page of our web site)

CSA STATEMENT OF MISSION

WE, THE SISTERS OF ST. AGNES, are committed to transformation of the world, the church, and ourselves through promoting:

- systemic change for the quality of life;
- justice for the economically poor;
- furtherance of the role of women in church and society;
- mutuality, inclusivity, and collaboration.