

REFLECTIONS

&  
*Connections*

AUGUST 2015

STORIES OF MISSION  
& MINISTRY

DORIS KLEIN, CSA



**CSA**

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

# Dear Friends,



**I**t is summer time and all is green and fresh and blooming. In his recent letter, *Laudato Si'* (LS), Pope Francis takes a line from St. Francis' *Canticle of Creation* in the opening paragraph. "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs." Love for creation and the necessity of respecting creation's role in providing for all inhabitants of Earth led to this letter. Subtitled, "On Care for our Common Home," Francis draws on sources sacred and secular to remind us of how easily we can forget that "...we ourselves are dust of the earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters." (LS,2) The letter calls for sustainable development so that all on

Earth can thrive, especially the poor. Decrying the over-rapid pace of life and work today, Francis calls us to slow down so that we can pay attention to the common good.

The letter states that, "...a fragile world, entrusted by God to human care, challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing and limiting our power." (LS,78) Through the grace of God, we in CSA continue to work for care of this planet we call home. CSA is committed to simplicity of life-style, to re-cycling, to driving fuel-efficient vehicles and to socially responsible investment of our funds. At present, we are installing solar panels to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and enhance our participation in renewable sources of energy.

We invite you to join with us as we work towards what Pope Francis calls "a bold cultural revolution" (LS,114) devoted to promoting the common good. The encyclical asks all of us to consider what kind of world we wish to leave behind for those who come after us. "A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress." (LS,194) How we care for one another and how we care for creation are intrinsically linked as we attempt to respond to that question in our daily lives.

We give thanks to God for the beauty of creation and our own invitation to enhance that beauty and preserve it for future generations. Together let us praise God who continually calls us to "...become co-creators with Christ of that new world in which truth, justice, peace and love prevail." (CSA Constitutions 12)

With praise and thanks to God our Creator,

Sister Jean Steffes, CSA  
General Superior

## Contents



- 3 Advocate for the Poor
- 4 Praised Be You, O God!
- 5 Solar Panels for CSA
- 6 CSA Associates Share the Gift of Music in Ministry
- 7 Sister Mary Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award
- 7 Invisible Women of New York
- 8 Sister Nancy Chow, Encourager and Believer
- 8 In Memoriam – Walking with God

# Advocate for the Poor

*One of the stories from the newly released book “Called to Serve, Ministry Stories of the Sisters of St. Agnes in Latin America and Russia”*

BY SISTER EMILY SCHUG, CSA

I was living and working in Rosita, Nicaragua, when a very pregnant Indian woman came up the path to the convent. When I opened the door I recognized her as the wife of the Delegate of the Word at Fruta de Pan. This village would be an hour’s walk for a strong man, and I wondered how this hot and tired woman could be standing at our door in this condition.

In a tone of desperation she said, “What can I do? They won’t see me at the hospital. The receptionist said I needed an information card. I don’t have the card with me and I can’t walk back to my village to get it.”

I assured her, “I will try to help you. Come with me,” and we returned to the hospital where I asked the receptionist, “Why have you turned this woman away? You have all her information on file.”

The receptionist said that she did have the woman’s information, but since she did not have her card, she

was violating hospital policy. I then spoke to the doctor who agreed to see her immediately. As I left, I knew in my heart that this was a case of discrimination against this poor Sumo Maygna woman. I was happy and relieved for I knew that the child she was carrying would have a better chance to live. She had shared with me that two of her previous children had died in childbirth.



L to R: Signing books at the “Book Debut Party” were Sisters Celia Fernández, Dulce María Rodríguez, and Anabel Torres



# Praised Be You, O

# God!

BY SISTER SALLY ANN BRICKNER, OSF  
COORDINATOR OF JUSTICE, PEACE  
AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Eagerly and hopefully, the Sisters of St. Agnes and their associates welcomed Pope Francis' encyclical on care of creation on June 18, 2015. He opened his letter with the words "Praised be," used by St. Francis in his famous poem, the *Canticle of the Creatures*. How fitting that Pope Francis would find inspiration from his patron, St. Francis of Assisi, whom John Paul II had proclaimed as the Patron of Ecology!

In his letter, Pope Francis urges care for creation because it is God's gift and the common home of earth's inhabitants. Throughout their history, the Sisters of St. Agnes have shown their appreciation of and reverence for creation.

The beautiful natural setting of the motherhouse in Fond du Lac manifests their appreciation for the beauty of Earth. In the hermitages that were built on the eastern ledge of the city, retreatants are able to contemplate nature's wonders and its healing



Spring waters cascade toward Lake Winnebago.

power. The beauty of creation reflects God's own beauty and heals wounded souls. Praised be You, O God!

The spark that ignited God's creation more than 13 billion years ago gave humankind the gifts of earth, air, water, and fire which require reverent care. Farmers who lease land from the congregation are required to use best practices in tilling the soil. CSA continues to restore its woodlands that help purify the air and restore natural habitats. The recent installation of solar panels harnesses the energy of the sun to provide electricity, thus reducing reliance on fossil fuels. These actions and many more exemplify reverence for earth, air, and water. Praised be You, O God!

*Note: A link to Pope Francis' encyclical can be found on the Vatican Website: <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/index.html>*



## Solar Panels for CSA

L to R: Sisters Anita Henning, Jean Steffes, Anne Jude Van Lanen, and Susan Seebly

BY VALERIE GRACZYK, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes has had a longtime commitment to the conservation of the land entrusted to their care. Over the years they have cared for the soil, tended the woods and preserved the integrity of the springs. In the spirit of concern for the environment and global sustainability the solar panel project was begun.

During the past year a committee met to set direction and to take steps for installing solar energy panels at the motherhouse. The work of the committee included the approval of stand-alone solar panels and a grant application which was approved by Focus on Energy of the State of Wisconsin. The City of Fond du Lac also approved the project at a recent city council meeting. A blessing of the land was held on Memorial Day and the installation of the panels is slated for completion in August 2015.

Benefits of the 880 solar panels will include the generating of 247,000 KW of electricity, enough to power 32 average homes for one year. The project will supply 50% of the electrical needs of the motherhouse.

Sister Susan Seebly, chairperson of the Solar Panel Committee explained, "The benefits from this project are a reflection of the community's social justice commitment to sustainability of Earth's resources, concern for those whose faith life and human dignity are being threatened by climate change, as well as good stewardship of congregational resources."



# CSA Associates Share the Gift

## *of Music* in Ministry

BY CAROL BRAUN, DIRECTOR OF ASSOCIATE RELATIONSHIP

“*M*usic is the language of our soul and the soul is the residence of our spirituality,” says Jack Talbot, one of many talented associates involved in music ministry in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Jack is involved in campus music ministry at Marian University, the Jesuit Retreat House in Oshkosh, and liturgical gatherings with the Sisters of St Agnes. He plays piano, Celtic harp, and organ. “Music ministry draws us together; it is prayer and deep access to mission, vision and purpose. It’s God-Speak and therefore, soul-speak,” Jack states avidly.

Joanna Schohl is not only a choir director but also plays the flute on special occasions with a group of associates, sisters, and others involved in music ministry at Holy Family Parish, St. Francis Home and with the Sisters of St. Agnes. Associates involved in the choir are Marie Trebec pianist, Jean Kramer and Kelly Kollmann guitarists, while Nancy Fox, Ruth Kollmann, Darlene Perizzo, Carol Pizon, and Julie Van Vleet sing.

“It seems to me that music by nature is not an individual matter but rather calls forth the deepest feelings from the community. Our music ministry is not to provide ‘entertainment’ but to create a deeper experience of the Divine,” says Joanna.

“We have several Sisters of St. Agnes in our choir who have reminded us that music has been a significant part of CSA history. Because of their encouragement and witness, Joanna and I were two of six choir members who made their first commitment together as CSA Associates in 2009. It has been a joy for all of us to carry on the CSA tradition of music,” added Marie. “Sharing music together with these wonderful people for many years has gifted us all with a deep sense of family. The sense of oneness we experience as a group and with the worshipping community as we pray together is the greatest gift.”

# Sister Mary Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award

BY SISTER MARY NOEL BROWN, CSA  
EXECUTIVE LEADER OF SPONSORSHIP

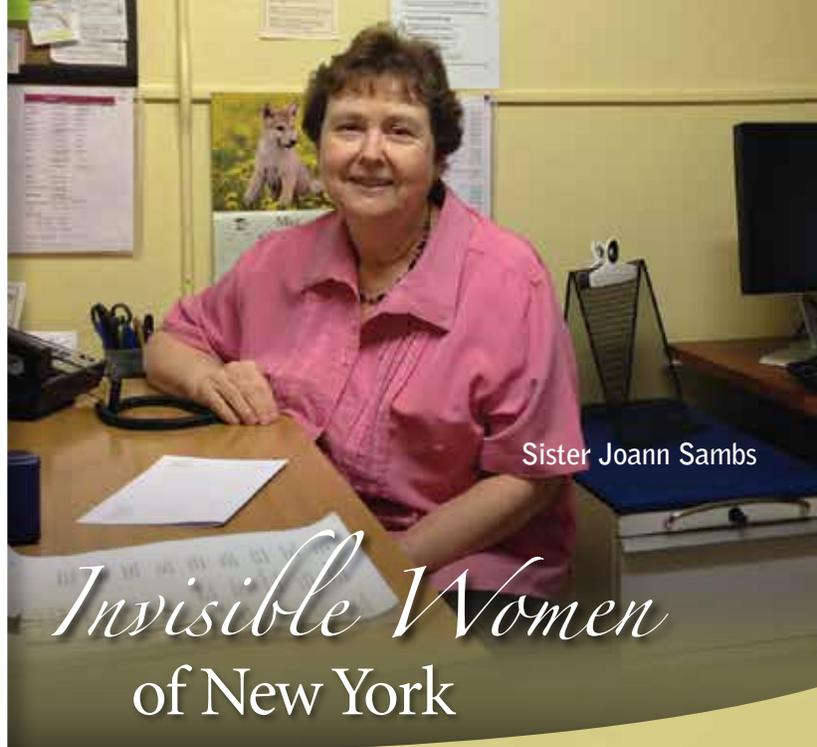
It was a celebratory evening in Washington, DC, when Sister Mary Mollison, CSA, was honored for her extraordinary contributions to the Catholic health ministry. Family, ministry colleagues, and members of the Congregation of St. Agnes lauded Sister Mary as she received the Catholic Health Association's (CHA) 2015 *Lifetime Achievement Award* at the association's annual assembly.

Widely recognized for her expertise in sponsorship, governance, healthcare, and mergers, Sister Mary has guided many religious congregations as they discerned their future or considered a new form of sponsorship. She believes strongly in the baptismal call of the laity to ministry and is guided by our call to keep alive and further the mission of the Gospel, of Jesus.

Sister Mary was honored as a visionary and highly influential leader who has inspired and mentored countless colleagues in leadership, governance, and sponsorship in the United States and beyond. A registered nurse, Sister Mary was a primary catalyst in creating and strengthening Agnesian HealthCare in Fond du Lac. She served in leadership and was general superior of her congregation; was president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious; was the first chair of Catholic Health Ministries, the public juridic person and sponsor of Trinity Health; served in governance and as board chair of both Trinity Health in Livonia, MI, and the Hospital Sisters Health System in Springfield, IL; and was interim president of Marian University, her alma mater, on two occasions. Sister Mary currently serves as vice-president of spirituality and care transitions at Agnesian HealthCare.



Sister Carol Keehan, CHA president, and Alan Yordy, CHA board chair, flank Sister Mary.



Sister Joann Sambs

## Invisible Women of New York

BY VALERIE GRACZYK, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

New York is home to Times Square, Central Park, Broadway shows, the Statue of Liberty, and homeless women. It is now the home of Sister Joann Sambs, former general superior of the congregation, administrator of *The Dwelling Place*, a 15-bed shelter for homeless women in Manhattan.

"I am bringing all that I have learned and experienced in my past positions to this role. I spend my days overseeing staff, serving as president of the board, handling finances, fundraising, public relations, and providing a safe and comfortable environment for the women residents. I feel very honored to be part of the 38-year success story of *The Dwelling Place* which has led thousands of women from homelessness to home," said Sister Joann.

"Every day in my ministry I believe that I am living the CSA mission: promoting justice for the economically poor, furthering the role of women in society, and restoring human dignity. I am humbled by our women residents who face the trauma of homelessness with such courage and determination," continued Sister Joann.

"In addition to providing for our residents, each Wednesday evening we invite former residents, elderly neighbors, and homeless women from the neighborhood to join us for dinner. We average 45-50 women a week who come together for a nutritious meal and a sense of family. As one former resident stated, "It's not the food. It's not the shelter. It's the love. There's so much love."

To learn more about "The Dwelling Place" go to <http://thedwellingplaceofny.org>



# CSA

Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes  
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## Ways to connect with CSA:

CSA web site:

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

What's Happening at the UN:

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

(in the front page of our web site)

Streams 'N Stirrings, Sister Jean:

(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)

## Sister Nancy Chow Encourager and Believer

BY VALERIE GRACZYK, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Sister Nancy Chow, a native of Nicaragua, has lived and ministered in Arizona as a social worker for the past 28 years. She currently is working in a federally funded program which provides tutoring for homeless high school students enrolled at PIMA Vocational High School in Tucson. Smiling, Sister Nancy remarked, "I believe it is never too late for a person to create a better life for oneself."

"Due to varying circumstances of their lives, these students are actually 'homeless,' although they may be living with relatives or friends or just 'couch sit,'" continued Sister Nancy. "This program is for students ages 16 to 21 who agree to a contract that enforces a set of strict rules, including attendance, dress code, and no drug use. Our campus is closed, which means students cannot leave the building during the day. The program is a diploma-based degree, not GED. It begins in July and goes for an entire year in six-week segments. We enroll 112 students a year under Title I federal funding. Students also earn a minimum wage working for area businesses for two hours during the last period of the day."

"It's very rewarding to see the students graduate. I am also happy to know that the majority of the graduates go on to the community college. My hope for the students is that they will also rebuild their family relationships. I encourage them and believe in them," concluded Sister Nancy.



## In Memoriam... Walking with God



Sister Joellen Flynn  
(formerly Rita  
Monica Flynn)  
May 6, 2015

Sister Joellen was  
born in Escanaba,  
Michigan. She

made her first profession of vows on August 15, 1945. She received a B.A. in Education from Marian College, Fond du Lac, in 1953 and her M.A. degree in English from Loyola University, Chicago, in 1963. For many years Sister Joellen served as an elementary teacher and as a principal in Kansas, New York, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin, and later ministered as teacher and teacher aide in Mississippi. Her most recent years of active service were devoted to pastoral ministries in Mississippi.

For full obituary go to [www.csasisters.org](http://www.csasisters.org).  
Memorials can be sent to the CSA Development  
Office or through the website.