

# REFLECTIONS & *Connections*

MAY 2016



STORIES OF MISSION  
& MINISTRY



**CSA**

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

# Dear Friends,



**M**ercy is a quality that has long intrigued me since my high school and college days. Studying Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* brought me into contact with a passage that has never left my consciousness. The scene is one in which a lender (Shylock) seeks "justice" by demanding immediate repayment of a loan. If the loan was not repaid, the lender was granted the right to "a pound of flesh" from the borrower. The borrower (Antonio) acceded to this; the lender then demanded that the pound of flesh would include Antonio's heart. Quite a request. An excerpt from the trial during this play regarding the justice of the repayment shows the power of poetry to give insight into the virtue of mercy:

"The quality of mercy is not strained; it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice blest; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes. 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes the throned monarch better than his crown... It is an attribute to God himself; and earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice... Though justice be thy plea, consider this, that in the course of justice, none of us should see salvation: we do pray for mercy; and that same prayer doth teach us all to render the deeds of mercy."

In the Christian world-view justice must be informed by mercy for life to be livable.

Constant in our faith life are the *corporal and spiritual works of mercy*. They are presented by the gospel and the church as essential to the living of our faith. The *corporal works of mercy* call us to respond to the physical needs that are not being met in our society and culture: feed the hungry; give drink to the thirsty; clothe the naked; shelter the homeless; visit the sick; visit the imprisoned; bury the dead. The call is basic and profound. Together with others, we make a response. The *spiritual works of mercy* likewise rely on a network of people for their actualization: instruct the ignorant; counsel the doubtful; admonish sinners; bear wrongs patiently; forgive offenses willingly; comfort the afflicted; pray for the living and the dead. Together we can respond; alone we founder.

During this year of mercy, we join Pope Francis in entrusting "...the life of the Church, all humanity, and the entire cosmos to the Lordship of Christ, asking him to pour out his mercy upon us like the morning dew, so that everyone may work together to build a brighter future."

With gratitude,  
Sister Jean Steffes, CSA  
General Superior

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# Joyful Service in Feeding the Hungry

BY CAROL BRAUN, DIRECTOR OF ASSOCIATE RELATIONSHIP

Offering nourishment for body and soul, Alabama associates Eileen Harden, Teresa Micucci Gill, and Heide Lomangino have given their time, culinary talents, and their hearts to the women of McKemie Place in Mobile for the past 8 years.

Founded in 2007, McKemie Place is the only overnight shelter for single, homeless women in all of Mobile, Washington, and Baldwin Counties of Alabama. McKemie Place is a safe haven for homeless women seeking refuge. It offers an uplifting environment that provides support, empowerment, and hope as the women seek to rebound from challenges and crises in their lives. In 2015, 488 women were helped through hard times to get their lives back together.

With the assistance of dedicated volunteers like the CSA associates who prepare, bring, and serve the evening meals, McKemie Place is able to provide dinner each evening to their guests. Eileen, Teresa, and Heide prepare a menu each month with two questions in mind: "Would we serve this meal to Jesus?" and "Is it a healthy nutritious meal?"

In addition to their volunteer work at McKemie Place, Heide, Teresa, and Eileen are very active in ministries at their parishes. They are dedicated to joyful service with a spirit of generosity and humility. Heide states, "I am privileged to engage in corporal and spiritual works of mercy at McKemie Place, my church and as a Spiritual Advisor with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul." She continued, "Being an associate has enriched my life in so many ways...we all need friendship among those who follow Christ."



L to R: Wendy Harden Mouner,  
Eileen Harden, Midge Harden,  
Teresa Micucci Gill, Heide Lomangino



L to R: Associates Eileen Harden,  
Teresa Micucci Gill,  
and Heide Lomangino

Group practicing  
Centering Prayer.



# Centering Prayer

## Sister Ann Koerner, Ministry

BY VALERIE GRACZYK, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Imagine sitting in silence each week with five other people and praying. The style of prayer is called “Centering” prayer and this group has been meeting every Thursday since 2004. Sister Ann Koerner is the facilitator.

“I read the book *Open Mind, Open Heart* by Thomas Keating, a Trappist,” shared Sister Ann.

“The method of prayer is based on Christian belief in the indwelling of the Trinity and welcomes all denominations. It is praying without words, and allowing your thoughts to float away. Thomas Keating’s vision was to share the silence that he had experienced for so many years in the monastery with others. The prayer has caught on and there is a strong lay movement in the Christian world. As

founder, Keating recommends 20 minutes twice a day of centering prayer.”

“At home, I pray in the morning before leaving for work and in the evening after dinner. I have a prayer room in my home that provides a quiet atmosphere,” continued Sister Ann. “The four prayer guidelines are simple; the impact of the silence is experienced outside of the prayer time.”

Sister Ann Koerner was trained by Contemplative Outreach and teaches the prayer to others and facilitates retreats. She is the chapter coordinator for Southeast Wisconsin.

Some of the benefits of Centering Prayer: Anita Bodamer, “The day to day practice sets me in the mold that carries me throughout the day and influences what I think, say and do. I cannot see my life without it. It gives me purpose and focus.”

Reverend Raymond Gurney: “Being able to pray in a nonverbal mindful manner, not petitions, just listening.”

Bonnie Pendzick: “It is a peaceful activity, letting God be God.”

Lynn Holland: “This practice is going to the well and receiving spiritual drink.”

To learn more about Centering Prayer go to [www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org)

## Jubilee Announcement

On Sunday, June 26, 2016, CSA members and associates will be celebrating their Jubilees at 2:30 p.m. at Holy Family Church in Fond du Lac, WI. To view profiles of the Jubilarians please go to [www.csasisters.org](http://www.csasisters.org) and click on Jubilarians.



L to R: Lexi Brost,  
Halle Castonia,  
Sister Edie Crews

# Busy Students *Retreat*

BY SISTER EDIE CREWS, CSA VOCATION DIRECTOR

In colleges across the nation, campus ministry centers and Newman Centers are offering students a retreat opportunity. Titled *Busy Students Retreat* they provide a student a chance to step back, reflect and take time away, for an hour a day.

As the Vocation Director for the Sisters of St. Agnes, I have worked with young adults in various ways. This time I was fortunate to be a part of the *Busy Students Retreat* staff. St. Joseph College in Rensselaer, Indiana, hosted a *Busy Students Retreat* with Director Father Vince Wirtner, CPPS. My role was to lead a group of five women students. The retreat began with Sunday liturgy. Then using scripture readings, prayers, and psalms, I met with each participant for a half hour each day. It was amazing how sincere and in-tune they were with their daily struggles. These women came from all walks of life and I saw how God was leading them to a more reflective life. The students seemed to come away from the time together more calm and said that they wanted to make this a part of their life.

Kayla W., a retreatant, stated, “It was so good to take the time to reflect with Sister Edie. I saw glimpses of how I could be more reflective in my daily life. I liked the prayers that she used with me. The daily readings really spoke to me.”

Busy Students Retreats are providing a positive impact on students’ lives. The students seem to yearn for an opportunity to unplug, let go and be in the presence of God and to listen to what God is saying to them.



Sister Susan Kolb prepares briefs and counsels migrants in Arizona.



Sister Peg Spindler enjoys a moment with Mom and children at Sojourner Truth House.

*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

— Proverbs 31: 8-9

# The Supreme Work of Mercy

## *Ending Poverty*

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

*W*orking to end poverty is at the heart of mercy. Perhaps that is the reason Pope Francis desires “a poor church and a church for the poor.” It is why the Sisters of St. Agnes have committed themselves to respond to the church’s call to hear the cry of the poor through direct service among persons living in poverty and through advocacy to change unjust economic systems.

Sisters assist those needing medical care, job training, shelter, or counseling. For example, in Indiana, Sister Peg Spindler and Sister Kathleen Ries help mothers at Sojourner Truth House gain job skills and find housing for their families; in New York City Sister Joann Sams directs Dwelling Place, a shelter for homeless women; in Arizona Sister Susan Kolb provides legal assistance to migrants; in Mississippi Sister Lael Niblick animates faith development while Sister Mary Christine Fellerhoff designs programs tailored to individual needs; in Wisconsin Agnesian HealthCare serves the uninsured and underinsured; and in Nicaragua Sister

Anabel Torres coordinates a center that provides training of community leaders in health, education, and development. So many more examples could be cited!

In addition to service among those living in poverty, CSA Sisters advocate to change economic systems that keep people in poverty. They work to raise the minimum wage so that more people will be lifted out of poverty. They support raising the *Child Tax Credit* and *Earned Income Tax Credit* that directly benefit the poor. They promote programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) so that children are less likely to suffer hunger. They contribute to organizations such as NETWORK’s *Nuns on the Bus* and *Bread for the World* that lift up the voices of people who are poor.

“Poverty is the worst form of violence,” said M.K. Gandhi. That is why Sisters engage in the supreme work of mercy — to bring an end to poverty in all its forms.

# English

## as a Second Language

BY VALERIE GRACZYK,  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Over the past 12 years Sister Marise Meis has taught English to students at the Rosita extension of University of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua (URACCAN.) “I teach two nights a week for 90 minutes a class,” shared Sister Marise. “Over the years I have taught English to students in Business Administration, Public Accounting and Auditing, and other majors. This is a small campus but the students are very proud of it. Recently I had to run an errand and go to the university during the day, painting one of the classrooms where some students were studying agriculture, and another group were fixing up plant displays in the yard. They feel ownership for their little university and have fun while they attend. Currently I have a mother and her 16-year-old daughter in my class who share the same major. I admire my students. So many of them work and raise a family while attending school to become more knowledgeable.”

“Some of the students I taught at Saint Rose of Lima High School,” continued Sister Marise. “While they cannot easily converse in English they are able to use it when English speaking people come to Rosita on the medical and parish trips from Holy Family Parish in Fond du Lac, WI. One of my students commented, “It is good to learn another language and be able to have a simple conversation with visitors.”



L to R: Tasha Schuh and Sister Anita Henning

## Leadership of Women

BY SISTER ANITA HENNING, CSA  
GENERAL COUNCILOR

During the month of March we celebrated the life of Mother Agnes Hazotte, one of the founders of CSA. Mother Agnes was a tremendous leader. Her leadership was especially felt in the Fond du Lac area. In her honor we have also celebrated the leadership of women in a special way during this month.

The *Women's Leadership Breakfast* has hosted a number of speakers over the years that emphasize the various ways the women show leadership. From TV anchors, directors of organizations that fight poverty, business entrepreneurs, to this year's speaker, Tasha Schuh, all have shown that women have a gift to offer our world and make it a better place.

In our congregation's *Statement of Mission*, we say, “We are committed to transformation of the world, the Church and ourselves through promoting . . . furtherance of the role of women in Church and society.” The Leadership Breakfast raises up the role of women and celebrates it.

This year 170 women attended the event. Tasha Schuh, a quadriplegic since age 16 and a well-known motivational speaker, challenged all of us there to consider how our attitude affects our lives, to see that even a little thing can be huge, to have hope, and to believe that the best is yet to come. Donations from this event support Marian University Working Families Grant. This grant assists working, single parents (mostly women) in their pursuit of a higher education degree. Nine other businesses in the city helped to sponsor the event. I believe that Mother Agnes would be proud of what CSA has accomplished with God's help, and what the women leaders of the Fond du Lac area are doing.



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320 County Road K  
Fond du Lac, WI 54937

## Ways to connect with CSA:

CSA web site:

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

Adelante Mujer/Advance Woman

<http://www.womanadvance.com/>

(in the front page of our web site)

Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation

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

(in the front page of our web site)

Just Saying

<http://csajustsaying.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/TheCSAChannel)

**TheCSAChannel**

(in the front page of our web site)



Dawn Vandenberg  
(sitting) and Evelyn  
Schaefer, Ph.D.

# Drum Circle/Community Building

BY VALERIE GRACZYK, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

“Each of us has rhythm! For me it has been amazing to witness what happens when a group of people come together in a drum circle,” says Dawn Vandenberg, Director of Spiritual Care Services at Agnesian HealthCare.

Five years ago, Vandenberg attended a workshop called *Health Rhythms* where she learned to facilitate drumming circles. After the Agnesian HealthCare Foundation donated several drums and percussion instruments, she began her ministry of facilitating drum circles throughout Agnesian HealthCare.

Dawn has facilitated drum circles for St. Agnes Hospital Outpatient Behavioral Health Services patients, many of whom struggle with depression, mental illness, or addictions. In addition, with the assistance of Chaplain Pam Werth, the ministry has been expanded to include St. Francis Terrace and Agnesian HealthCare’s Adult Day Services. Particularly when working with those who are recovering from drug or alcohol addiction, Dawn has recognized the spiritual connection that happens when people pick up a drum and begin to find their own unique rhythm. Drumming can help participants find healing as they reconnect with their own spirituality. As a circle is formed and drumming begins, there is a hodge-podge of sound which the facilitator learns not to control, but allows space for participants to find their own rhythm.

“Drumming is fun! One of its many benefits is the way it allows people to connect with others while creating a sense of wholeness among the participants,” said Dr. Evelyn Schaefer, a licensed psychologist at Agnesian HealthCare and a co-facilitator of some of the circles.

Research conducted at the Royal College of Music’s Centre for Performance Science in London has shown drumming can reduce stress, strengthen the immune system, enhance creativity, and improve mood. Anyone is welcome to experience the benefits of drumming at the Community Drumming Circle held in the Chapel of St. Agnes Hospital the first Tuesday of every month from 7p.m.—9 p.m. Admission is free and instruments are provided.