

NOVEMBER 2018

REFLECTIONS
&
Connections

The quiet
November Night
whispers
Hints of Hope and Prayers of Peace

Doris Klein, CSA

STORIES OF MISSION
& MINISTRY



CSA

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

Dear Friends,



“The anchor of all my dreams is the collective wisdom of humankind as a whole.”

– Nelson Mandela

In the past several years, the Sisters of St. Agnes as well as many other congregations in the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) have been developing processes of communal discernment and contemplative dialogue within our community and with partners in mission. Our desire is to find ways to live more grateful and fruitful lives as well as to slow down and take the time to appreciate the tremendous gifts of collective wisdom in which we share. Only by truly listening to one another and by growing in recognition of the gifts of each and all can we begin to build a future full of hope. As the theme of our 2018 leadership conference so clearly stated, all are called to the presence of love; in this way we actualize the power of communion. With all humanity, we are called to *“live into and decidedly influence a new evolutionary stage of consciousness: communion – in every fiber of our beings.”*

– Constance FitzGerald, OCD

The call may be daunting; however, community gives us the power and strength required to face our future with honesty and hope. Words from the recent LCWR presidential address give clarity: *“There is nothing more important, more radical, more necessary for us than to lean into our apostolic call to nurture and foster community wherever we find it, wherever we are, with whatever means we have. . . Nature itself is challenging the fierce individualism of our culture, an individualism that is in the air we breathe . . . Every disaster this year, natural or social, has reminded us that we need each other. . . Collectively, we have come to learn that the biggest challenges can only be faced in community.”*

– Theresa Maya, CCVI

The only way to be people of hope is by building community and sharing wisdom. What better way to close than with words from our own CSA Constitutions: *“The love of Christ has gathered us together, and it is this love that binds us to one another and forms us into an apostolic community, striving to bear one another’s burdens and do God’s will. We envision community to be a sign of the presence of Christ among us and a source of great apostolic power.”* (39)

In the peace and love of Christ,

Sister Jean Steffes, CSA
General Superior

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Editorial Board Members:

Sister Jeremy Quinn, Sister Jean Perry,
Sister Susan Treis, Sister Cyndi Nienhaus
and Suzanne Flood.

ON THE COVER:

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A Ministry of the Heart, *CORE El Centro*

BY VALERIE GRACZYK

“All of us are on a healing journey,” shared Sister Madeline Gianforte, Executive Director and Co-Founder of CORE El Centro. CORE is a natural healing center located on the near south side of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, providing a holistic approach to the healthcare needs of people who for the most part have no health insurance or other means to pay for their medical treatment.

Sister Madeline stated, “In my 17 years at CORE I haven’t had a day I didn’t want to come to work. I get up in the morning knowing I get to live my passion. We have an amazing staff of women who are committed to wholistic healing, including Sister Patricia Bogenschuetz, Director of Development.”

Sister Madeline described the growth of CORE since the beginning days as, “exciting!” She continued, “We have grown from a staff of two to now 24 employees. Our first year we served 60 clients and this year we have already served over 5,000. As we look to the future, we are being asked to replicate this model in other communities. We know this works. People have become well, have found their passion and are wanting to give back to community.”

Sister Pat shared, “One of the joys of my work as Development Director is to invite people to be part of our mission. It is all about building relationships and offering people a chance to make a difference.” In addition to major grants that have helped CORE to move toward financial sustainability, a recent gift enabled CORE to begin an endowment fund. Housed at the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, this fund will provide consistent revenue and insure that the mission of CORE will reach far into the future.

To read more about Core El Centro go to www.core-elcentro.org.



L to R: Sister Madeline Gianforte
and staff member



CSA Associates Express

Love in Action

BY CAROL BRAUN, DIRECTOR OF ASSOCIATE RELATIONSHIP

“We, CSA-USA Associates, are a community of women and men called by the Spirit to embody the charism, mission and spirituality of the Sisters of St. Agnes. We express love in being, presence, and action through spiritual growth, hospitality, and courageous initiatives for justice and peace.” (Vision Statement)

Associates of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes gathered in June 2018 to celebrate their newly created identity statement stated above and to support each other in ongoing development of the associate relationship. The gathering offered an opportunity for associates to creatively express their values, spirituality, and dreams for the future of the associate relationship. Friendships and community identity were strengthened, and meaningful relationships were built as associates shared in prayer, song, conversation and, as always, laughter.

One of the associates’ core values is “concern and service to the most vulnerable among us.” As visible witnesses to this value, associates and sisters together expressed “love in action” by collecting over two hundred books for homeless students in our schools and over two hundred food items for the local food pantry.

Following the gathering, the associates re-committed themselves to expressing love in being, presence, and action with renewed energy and enthusiasm, working hand in hand to create a flourishing CSA associate community.



Food and Book Collection



Sister Francis Sánchez
with student

Celebrating 50 Years of Catholic Education

BY VALERIE GRACZYK

Faculty, students, and friends of Santa Rosa School in Rosita, Nicaragua, recently celebrated the school's 50th anniversary of Catholic education in the town. The week-long event included a presentation of certificates to former principals, a celebration meal, bulletin board displays, songs, dances, poetry, a parade and sporting events.

It was in 1967 that the Sisters of St. Agnes responded to an urgent plea from the Capuchin priest at Santa Rosa parish for sisters who could teach in the school. The pastor believed it was imperative that he provide the opportunity for a Catholic education to the children in the area. Within a very short time three Sisters of St. Agnes were sent to open the school.

Currently, 600 elementary and high school students receive a religious-based education at Santa Rosa School. Sister Francis Sánchez, CSA, the principal for the past 7 years, leads a staff of thirty-two teachers and aides. Over the past fifty years, thirty-three sisters, assisting 12 different pastors, have served the children and parish of Santa Rosa.

In her remarks, Sister Francis shared, "Many of our graduates have become teachers in both the public and parochial school system. Other graduates have become professionals and leaders in their communities. The values that have been taught for the past fifty years continue today. The values of respect, responsibility, desire to serve others and to become leaders themselves, are part of the legacy of CSA. As we look to the future we believe lay leaders will carry on the religious and social values we have instilled in the past generations."

In Memoriam... Walking with God



Sister Vivian Schmidtberger, CSA

July 5, 2018

Sister Vivian Schmidtberger, formerly Sister Catherine Siena, was born in Victoria, Kansas, on May 10, 1929, to a family which included eight girls and four boys. After entering St. Agnes Convent in 1949, she made her profession of vows on August 15, 1951. She received a BS in Education from Marian College of Fond du Lac, and a master's degree in Christian Spirituality from Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. Sister Vivian taught in elementary schools in Indiana and Wisconsin followed by ten years as a missionary in Nicaragua and Ecuador. When she returned to the U.S. she taught bilingual education classes for nine years in the Milwaukee public school system. After re-entering the congregation, she returned to Nicaragua in 1984 serving in Belén, Rivas. She also devoted seven years to the formation of Nicaraguan women preparing to enter the congregation. For her last missionary experience Sister Vivian spent seventeen years in La Ceiba, Honduras, after which she retired to Nazareth Court and Center.

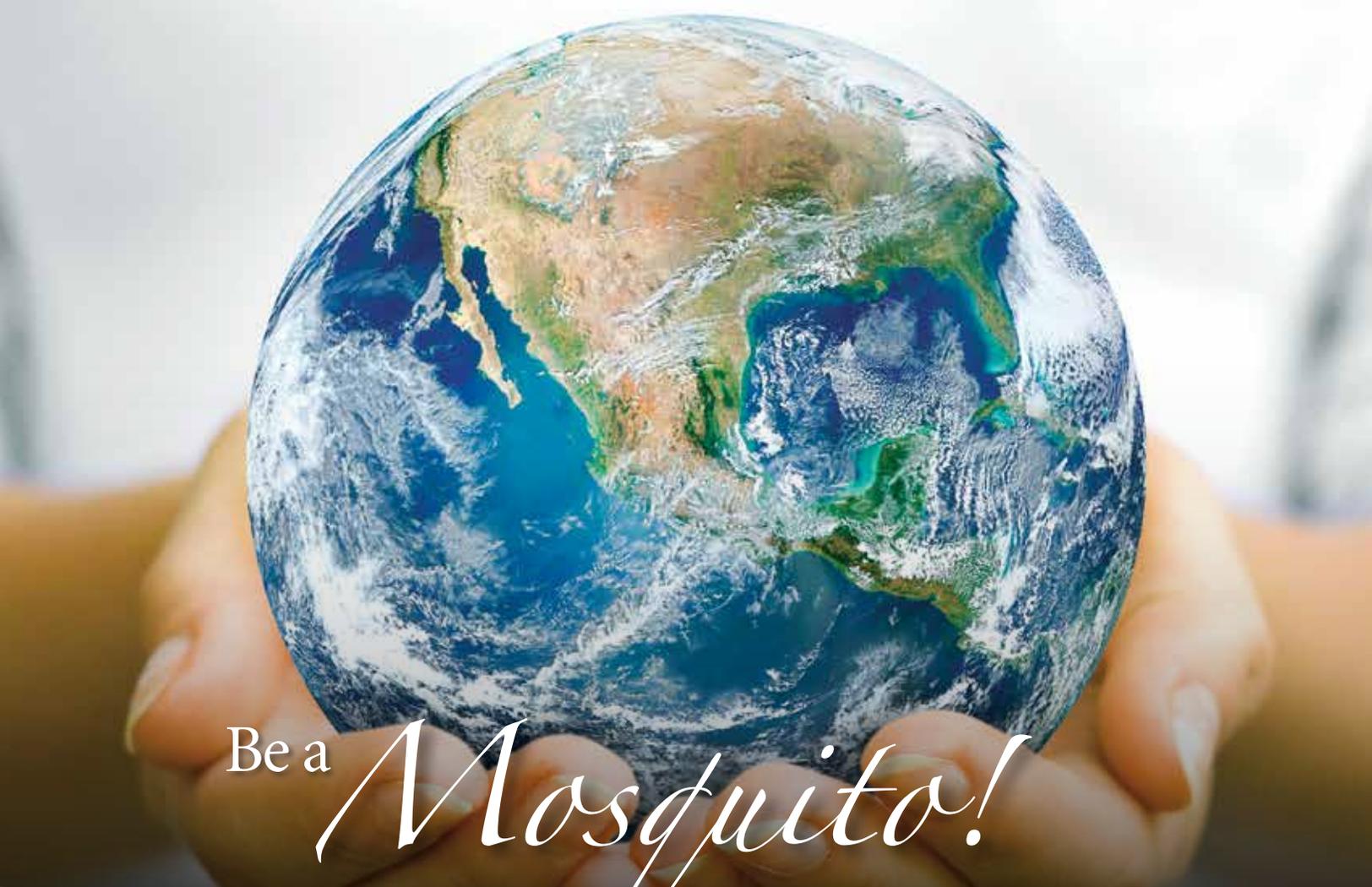


Sister Rita Little, CSA

August 29, 2018

Sister Rita Little, formerly Sister Mary Robert, was born in West Allis, Wisconsin, on September 5, 1926. Her mother died when Rita and her two sisters were under the age of five. Their father and the three girls moved to the home of their aunt who raised the children. Rita entered St. Agnes Convent in 1941 and made her profession of vows as Sister Mary Robert on August 15, 1945. She received a BS in Education from Marian College of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and an MEd in Administration and Supervision from Marquette University, Milwaukee. She was a teacher in parish schools in Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin for 15 years, a teaching principal in Wisconsin for 12 years, and a school administrator in Kansas, New York, and Wisconsin for 15 years. Sister Rita also served in the Marian College education department for two years and as local coordinator of St. Agnes Convent from 1990-1994. After retiring from formal roles in education, she was a part of the Foster Grandparent Program at Evans School, Fond du Lac.

For full obituaries go to www.csasisters.org. Memorials can be sent to the CSA Development Office or through the website.



Be a *Mosquito!*

BY SISTER RUTH BATTAGLIA, COORDINATOR OF JUSTICE, PEACE, AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION

As we learn more and more about climate change, we know that it has drastic effects: melting ice, drying out already-arid areas, causing weather extremes and disrupting the delicate balance of the oceans. These in turn harm life and livelihoods especially among the poor. While the actions of some countries, industries, and individuals in protecting the environment are commendable, scientists generally agree that it is not enough to contain, much less reverse, the negative effects of climate change.

In July of this year the Vatican held an international conference marking the third anniversary of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* on care for our common home. In his welcome address Pope Francis stated, “The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet’s capacity that

our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world’ (*Laudato Si'*, 161). There is a real danger that we will leave future generations only rubble, deserts and refuse.”

The Vatican Conference extended an urgent call to economic and religious institutions, governments, organizations, and individuals to work together to save the planet and the life it sustains. This perhaps requires moving out of your comfort zone to double your efforts to recycle, reuse, reduce; to become active in a group that is working to protect the environment; to use media to make your voice heard; and to communicate your values with your local and national government leaders. If you think that your efforts are too small and insignificant, imagine yourself entering your bedroom to be buzzed by a mosquito. Be a mosquito for climate change!



Sister Monica Justinger
with a Wyngate resident.

Good Will

Ambassador

BY SISTER ANITA HENNING, CSA

What is a Good Will Ambassador at a senior living facility? It's someone who does a little of everything. In her role of ambassador at Wyngate Senior Living in Circleville, Ohio, Sister Monica Justinger connects the facility and its residents to the community. She responds to the families of the residents and the elderly of the neighborhood while also maintaining contact with local charitable organizations, churches, senior center, medical community and other groups in the area.

Sister Monica's passion is to create opportunities for the elderly to participate as part of the community. There is a soup kitchen in the city where residents help. When one of the churches with a bell choir is performing, she takes residents to the concert. Some residents frost cupcakes and take them to the senior center. Sister Monica drove residents to the home of a local family for a front row seat

for viewing the city's fireworks. She acts as a sounding board for the families of elderly residents.

Sister Monica takes seriously the philosophy of the good will ambassador organization by being a good neighbor. It means sometimes taking a meal to an elderly neighbor and allowing time for listening. It means having a dinner once a month for the families. It means encouraging the various churches in town to have worship services at the facility.

Since Sister Monica worked as Director of Nursing at Wyngate for many years, her rapport with the medical profession enables her to act as a liaison for offering suggestions to the physicians and for providing resources for families. She also provides a monthly wellness clinic to those living in the independent living section of the facility.

Above all, the residents are the essence of Sister Monica's ministry. She is there to help make their lives richer and fulfilling. She indeed is a good will ambassador.



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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)

Streams 'N Stirrings

<http://csa-vocations.blogspot.com/>

(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)

Lasting a Lifetime

BY JENNY LUKOMSKI, CSA ARCHIVIST

One of the things I enjoy most about my work as the CSA archivist is that I get to learn something new nearly every day. This summer I received a phone call from a man in North Carolina searching for the name of a sister who cared for him at Holy Family Orphanage in Marquette, Michigan. This man was a refugee from Cuba who had been part of Operation Pedro Pan, a nationwide program that provided homes to 14,000 Cuban youths considered at



Sister Esther Busse

risk from the Castro regime. From 1961 to 1963, Holy Family took in 60 of these children. The man said one of the sisters had made a rosary for him, which he still uses today. Not knowing her name, he prays for her by describing her physical appearance. With assistance from Sister Jeremy Quinn, I was able to identify her as Sister Esther Busse (formerly Sister Kevin). The man was so grateful to be able to finally put a name to his memories. He was only in the orphanage for a year before moving on to a foster home, but Sister Esther made an impact on him that has lasted a lifetime.