

# REFLECTIONS & *Connections*

FEBRUARY 2020

*Sitting:* Associate Kay Bircher, Sister Mary Rose Obholz, Associates Janie Peck, Pat Belongie

*Standing:* Sister Kathy Cook, Associate Carol Braun, Sister Susan Kolb, Associate Kelly Robe, Sister Christi Ann Laudolff, Associates Wanda Roehl, Mary Beth Nienhaus, Kathleen Gammon



STORIES OF MISSION  
& MINISTRY



**CSA**

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

# Dear Friends,



The year 2020 brings us the gift of an extra day. Time is such a fluid commodity, and as such often passes into memory before we become aware of its passing. As part of our spiritual journey, we are often encouraged to be present to the present moment. And yet, time is always fleeting. Even with the promise of an extra day, we recognize that we cannot hold on to the moments we are given. What are we to do with this reality? Pope Francis gave us a beautiful set of phrases with which we can frame our lives. In a reflection written when proclaiming a year to celebrate consecrated life, he stated:

*Look to the past with gratitude...*

*Live the present with passion...*

*Embrace the future with hope...*

During 2020, the Sisters of St. Agnes look to the past with gratitude on the 150 years since our community moved from Barton to Fond du Lac. Ministries in healthcare and education have created a legacy of healing, learning, and sharing of gifts that endures. In the present, our sisters serve in a host of social, spiritual, pastoral, educational and healing ministries – in full-time, part-time and volunteer roles – to partner with others in responding to the needs of those people whose faith life or human dignity is in any way threatened. Looking to the future while serving in locations across the United States and in Nicaragua, the community continues to trust in God who accompanies us every step of the way as we commit ourselves to witness of life, care of creation, and communal discernment.

Even though we know we have been gifted with a past, present, and future, in the presence of God time seems to stand still leading us to a recognition of a reality larger than that in which we find ourselves. How fitting then to close this reflection with words we pray regularly in our morning prayers: “God, creator of unfailing light, give that same light to those who call to you. May our lips praise you, our lives proclaim your goodness, our work give you honor, and our voices celebrate you forever.” Whether we have the gift of an extra day or not, we have a past, present, and future for which we can be eternally grateful.

In the peace and love of Christ,  
Sister Jean Steffes, CSA  
General Superior

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

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# Sisters Recognized



Sister Cyndi Nienhaus

On Sunday, November 24, 2019, **Sister Cynthia Nienhaus** was inducted as part of the inaugural membership of the Archdiocesan Order of Catechists at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist.

By publicly acknowledging their roles as catechists in the Catholic Church, the 32 members of the Order vowed to

- Continue living in accord with the dignity

and calling of a catechist, witnessing to the Catholic faith in word and deed.

- Pray daily for catechists throughout the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, for the fruitfulness of their ministries and the faithfulness of their lives.
- Join with the other members of this Order of Catechists in mutual support, and ongoing formation, and to meet at least three times a year.



Sister Guadalupe Aguilar Benci

**Sister Guadalupe Aguilar Benci** completed her coursework and research for pre-school/kindergarten education. On November 8, 2019, she completed defense of her Monograph and passed with “flying colors”. Sister Guadalupe is now a fully licensed preschool/kindergarten teacher in Nicaragua where she will continue in the ministry of education.

On October 25, 2019, **Sister Dulce María Rodríguez López** received her Diploma in *Laudato Si'* and Sustainable Development from the Universidad Centroamericana.



Sister Dulce María Rodríguez López

Sister Dulce and 20 other professionals strengthened their knowledge on climate change, agroecology, and resilience through the lens of the “Care of the Common Home” as referenced in Pope Francis’s encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. Sister Dulce

attended as a representative of CANTERA - a center in Managua for promoting education, growth and development among the people.



Associate Esther Hicks, Sister Diane Bauknecht, URACCAN Representatives Ivonne McLean and Dr. Ivania Lopez, Associate Mary Gorske

In December 2019, **Sister Diane Bauknecht**, Executive Director of Adelante Mujer, along with Associates **Esther Hicks** and

**Mary Gorske**, members of the Adelante Mujer board, accepted a plaque of special recognition from University of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua (URACCAN) in honor of the “unconditional support” that Adelante Mujer has provided to medical students in Nicaragua over the past ten years.



# Crossing the *Threshold*

*T*hresholds are sacred places marking the end of one thing and the beginning of another. Walking through a doorway for the first time often demands courage, trust, and a mindset of discovery. These were the qualities six associates took with them on a pilgrimage to visit several Sisters of St. Agnes working with immigrants, asylum seekers, and migrants on the Arizona border.

They began their experience in Bisbee where they met with Sisters Susan Kolb, Christi Ann Laudolff, Mary Rose Obholz, and Kathy Cook who staff the non-profit organization *We Are One Family/Somos La Misma Familia*. As a group, these four sisters each specialize in various services for the border community, such as immigration law assistance, holistic health, and spiritual direction. They nurture justice and reconciliation



Left to Right: Associates Kelly Robe, Janie Peck, Carol Braun, Wanda Roehl, Pat Belongie, Mary Beth Nienhaus at Casa Alitas, a respite center in Tucson, Arizona.





Sister Mary Rose leads a small group discussion for associates and local friends in her home in Bisbee, Arizona.

among all people, especially those whose faith life and human dignity are threatened. During this time, the associates were given a chance to cross the border in Mexico, see the tents where asylum seekers await their turn to enter the US, listen to the story of a refugee whose daughter was still awaiting trial, participate in a prayer walk, and visit with the Mexican Consulate.

After four days in the Bisbee area, the associates journeyed to a Federal Courthouse in Tucson to watch the streamlined deportation procedure that provided a twenty-second court trial for each person. “The process left us perplexed and ashamed ... what a dehumanizing process,” said Associate Mary Beth Nienhaus. While still reeling from what they had seen, they met with Sisters Eileen Mahony and Nancy Chow for dinner. They found hope in Sister Nancy’s stories of joys and challenges working with the Pima Vocational High School which offers students a second chance to get a real high school diploma while receiving employment skills training. Their hearts were again filled with hope the next two days as they toured St. Elizabeth Health Center, a comprehensive medical clinic serving low-income communities where Sister Eileen works as a nurse practitioner, and when they were able to

work with 42 just-arrived asylum seekers at Casa Alitas, the Tucson-based respite center.

Associate Kelly Robe reflected on staying positive even when you can’t take direct action to fix injustice, “Part of social justice work is listening to people. Standing in solidarity with others. Being a witness to suffering and injustice and allowing it to transform us from the inside out. ... For those of us who feel called to be light bearers, we must stay light-filled.”

Carol Braun, Director of Associate Relationship, knows that each associate on the pilgrimage has crossed a threshold into a new understanding of self and the world:

“We are emboldened by our experiences to leave our comfort zones and to listen to the inner voice calling us forward. ... My wish is that this pilgrimage with its gifts and learnings will empower us, and those with whom we have shared our story, to be people of reconciliation and hope.”

***Want to learn more about this experience?***  
*Invite the associates to present to your small group or organization by sending an email to [csaadm@csasisters.org](mailto:csaadm@csasisters.org).*



Associates Mary Beth Nienhaus, Pat Belongie, and Wanda Roehl packed toiletries into bags for asylum seekers at Casa Alitas.

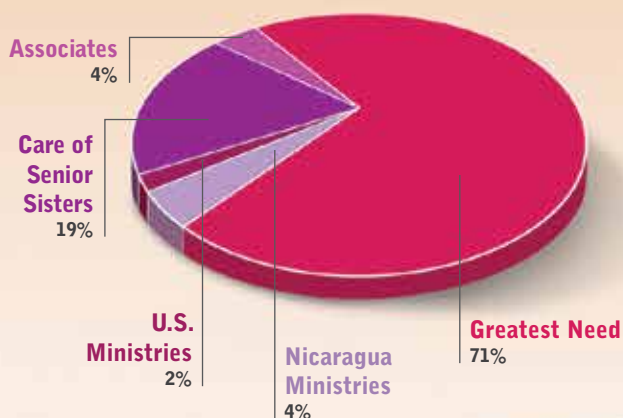
# Annual Report

Now Available

Your donations, both large and small, are what allow CSA to continue participating in the mission of Christ by joyful service in the Church, always aware that we, too, are among the needy and are enriched by those we serve. All donations go to funding the ministry of your choice.



Donation Designations from  
October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019



The full annual report is now available at  
[www.csasisters.org/donate](http://www.csasisters.org/donate)

Total Giving: **\$466,423**

## Praying for Peaceful and *Just Elections*

BY SISTERS JULIE ANN KRAHL, MARILYN BEVER, RUTH BATTAGLIA

CSA's Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee (JPIC) invites you to join us every Tuesday from now until the 2020 elections in prayer for a peaceful and just US election process. We suggest a simple five minutes of individual contemplative silence at whatever time you choose. Our intention is to participate with the Spirit's action and presence in our lives and in our country. We send forth our united prayerful energy.

We invite you to share with us insightful suggestions and your experience of participating by emailing Sister Marilyn Bever at [marilynbever@gmail.com](mailto:marilynbever@gmail.com). We also offer a weekly reminder email which is sent every Monday evening; you may request reminders by emailing Sister Marilyn.

These elections are critical; thank you for joining in Tuesday Prayers.



# *In Memoriam...Walking with God*



**Sister Rebecca Endres, CSA**  
**October 26, 2019**

Sister Rebecca Endres, CSA, (Mary Bernadette), was born on the family farm in Waunakee, WI, on August 16, 1927, one of twelve

children, including eight girls and four boys. Mary entered St. Agnes Convent on August 29, 1942, and made her profession of vows in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes on August 15, 1946. She received a BS in Education from Marian College of Fond du Lac, and a Master's in Religious Education from St. Meinrad College, IN. She ministered as elementary school teacher, principal, volunteer, and religious education director. She is fondly remembered by those she served, especially in her last ministry of 30 years as a pastoral care volunteer at St. Agnes Hospital and Cancer Center. Retiring to Nazareth Court and Center in 2016, Sister Rebecca died peacefully on October 26, 2019.



**Sister Rose Walters, CSA**  
**December 15, 2019**

Sister Rose Walters, CSA, formerly Sister Thomas More, was born in Catherine, KS, on October 11, 1933, to a family of four sisters and six brothers. Rose entered St. Agnes Convent, Fond du

Lac, WI, in 1952, and made her profession of vows in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes on August 15, 1955. She received a BS in Education from Marian College of Fond du Lac, WI; earned her MS in Education at Fort Hays State University, Hays, KS; and was certified in Pastoral Ministry and Clinical Pastoral Education by St. Louis University, St. Louis, MO. Sister Rose was an elementary school teacher for 25 years in WI, OH, and IN. She served as assistant principal in Fort Wayne, IN; parish administrator in New Almelo, KS; and pastoral minister in Hays, KS. She also served in campus ministry at Kansas State University and as a pastoral minister in Salina, KS. After returning to Fond du Lac in 2014, Sister Rose was engaged in numerous volunteer activities especially among the poor or marginalized.

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



## *Women's Leadership Breakfast*

**THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 7:00 – 8:30 A.M.**

**HOTEL RETLAW IN FOND DU LAC, WI**

**TICKETS AND INFO: [CSASISTERS.ORG/BREAKFAST](http://CSASISTERS.ORG/BREAKFAST)**

Speaker Katie Gordon will explore how Foundresses can serve as an inspiration and model of sustainable activism for both ends of the “Nuns and Nones” spectrum.





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# Welcome New Staff

THE MOTHERHOUSE RECENTLY WELCOMED TWO NEW FACES TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF



**Carol Burczyk**, Chaplain/Spiritual Care Coordinator for Nazareth Court/Center, was hired in early December. Burczyk will be ministering to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the sister residents at Nazareth Court/Center and St. Francis Home. She brings 18 years

of experience in pastoral ministry, a Bachelor's degree in Religious Studies, and a Masters degree in Lay Ministry from Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee. Her 'mentor in ministry' was her brother, Father Vic Capriolo, former pastor of Holy Family Parish, Fond du Lac who died in a tragic bike accident several years ago.



**Mary Christopherson**, Video and Digital Media Specialist, came on board in mid-October. As part of the Mission Advancement Team, Christopherson will be responsible for producing high-quality print, digital, and video content regarding

topics such as vocational discernment, current ministry activities, contemplation and reflection, and special events. Christopherson holds a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design and Japanese from Carthage College. Her portfolio includes work in digital animation, websites, and even book covers.