

REFLECTIONS & *Connections*

MARCH 2022

STORIES OF MISSION
& MINISTRY



CSA

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

Dear Friends,



Recently I came upon a reflection by Claire King that opened with the following: “Do you ever catch yourself, as I do, saying, ‘God is good’ with a sigh of relief after news that a prayer was answered and a favorable outcome obtained? Whenever I do that, I stop and remind myself that

God is always good. It’s my perception of God that changes.” As I took time to reflect on that statement, I reminded myself how easy it can be for perception to become more real than reality.

We live in a time in which it is most important for us to stay as grounded in reality as best we can. Even though we may have different perceptions from one another, mutual respect can flourish when we are willing to recognize that perception truly is not reality.

The best way for me to stay grounded in reality is to remain immersed in the teachings of the Gospel and in the words of our CSA Statement of Mission. Perspectives and perceptions are helpful only when they do not conflict with such core values. For me, this is the Gospel or a gospel-based mission statement. For others it might be the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International

Standards on Freedom of Religion or Belief, or the Golden Rule.

When faced with a conflictual or polarizing situation, if I can stay true to the teachings of the Beatitudes, I am more able to ground myself in the reality in which I am immersed and the teaching that keeps me in a belief system that corresponds to my deepest values. Likewise, when stressed, disappointed, or frightened by forces beyond my control within current circumstances, I can turn to our CSA mission which reminds me that I have been called by God to a role of service. This makes me aware that we in CSA “are among the needy and are enriched by those we serve.” Further, following in the footsteps of Father Rehrl, Mother Agnes, and Father Francis, I am reminded that we are called “to respond to live with wholeheartedness and joy, to manifest unassuming simplicity in all our relationships, and to receive with genuine hospitality all who come to us.”

Indeed, God is good. Even when it may seem difficult to imagine, God is good. Though it may require taking the long view or a long time, the truth is God is good. May we always recognize this constant in the midst of our daily lives.

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 Patricia Hayes, Sister Cyndi
Nienhaus, Dusty Krikau,
and Suzanne Flood.*

ON THE COVER:

*Abbey Vizelka, Land Project Coordinator for Glacial Lakes Conservancy,
and Sister Susan Seebly, CSA, walk along the southern edge of the
motherhouse grounds in Fond du Lac, WI.*

Recognition for *Sister Eileen*

This fall, Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona recognized Sister Eileen Mahony's 35 years of service with the Jack Cotter Leadership Award. Jack Cotter was CEO of Catholic Community Services for more than thirty years, and according to the award announcement, he "was a leader, like Sister Eileen, and like Sister he exemplified the role of leader as a servant to others. Catholic Community Services is proud to add the name of Sister Eileen Mahony to our honor wall of the recipients of the Jack Cotter Leadership Award."

In 1985, Sister Eileen returned to the US after serving as Director of the Clínica Santa Inés in Nicaragua for 11 years. At that time, she became the first paid, full-time medical provider for St. Elizabeth of Hungary Clinic, a program of Catholic Community Services in Tucson, Arizona. She served in that role, providing healthcare to uninsured and underinsured citizens, migrants, and immigrants, for 35 years during which time she made many return trips to Nicaragua to aid that community as well.

Over the past three years, she also served as a volunteer for Casa Alitas, where she provided healthcare screening to asylum seekers at the southern border. During Sister Eileen's time there from late 2018-2021, Casa Alitas welcomed and served more than 35,000 asylum-seekers.

Sister Eileen was grateful for the recognition, but her comments reflect her heart for service, which provides its own reward for her: "It has been a privilege to be able to serve the most needy in the community of Tucson for 35 years and to be part of the welcome team for those seeking asylum in our country."

Read stories from Sister Eileen's time at Casa Alitas
www.csasisters.org/news-events/tucson.cfm



Richard Koo, CCS Board of Directors President, presents Sister Eileen Mahony, CSA, with the Jack Cotter Leadership Award.



Protecting *Earth* in Perpetuity

In 2017, the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes voted to begin the process of preserving their property for future generations as a way of living out the congregation's *Care for Earth: Home of All Living Creatures* corporate stance as well as our membership in the *Laudato Si' Action Platform*.

On January 10, 2022, CSA signed the Conservation Easement Document, in partnership with Glacial Lakes Conservancy (GLC), protecting 237 acres of Earth in perpetuity. CSA



Nazareth Heights
Prairie and Spiritual
Retreat area



Jennifer Rutten, Executive Director of Glacial Lakes Conservancy, identifies a bird for Sister Josephine Goebel.

land, with its buildings, forests, prairies, wetlands, farm fields, cemetery, nature trails, and three stream channels running down the Niagara Escarpment will be protected from commercial development for all time.

While the sisters will continue to serve as caretakers of the land, GLC is entrusted with upholding the provisions of the easement. In recent months, sisters in Fond du Lac have partnered with staff from GLC to identify 19 wintering bird species on the property, from hawks to nuthatches to waxwings. These nature walks have also showcased the scenic vistas and wildlife habitats that are protected as part of the conservation easement.

A formal recognition of this milestone will occur on Earth Day, April 22, 2022. A small private ceremony with local officials, environmentalists, and other partners will be live streamed to the CSA YouTube channel at 1 p.m. CST. The general public is then invited to attend an outdoor ribbon cutting at 2 p.m. near the main entrance of the CSA property at 320 County Road K. The outdoor property will remain open to anyone who wishes to tour the grounds until dusk (access to restrooms will be available until 4:30 p.m.).

Considering a conservancy?

Keep in mind, the process is lengthy and detailed to ensure that the goals of the landowner are reflected in the Conservation Easement. Each land protection agreement between a land trust and landowner is unique and made according to the goals of the landowner, the mission and capacity of the land trust, and the special features of the land. If you know it is in your long-term plans, don't wait to get started.



Pray With a Sister *During Lent*

Praying with another person can provide much needed comfort and companionship. With that in mind, the Sisters of St. Agnes offer time each week of Lent when individuals may call and request a prayer companion.

The general public is invited to call 920-907-2300 from 1-4 p.m. Central Time on Wednesdays during Lent to join with a sister in prayer. Upon calling, your name and number will be collected, and a sister will call you back momentarily to pray with you privately. Lent begins on March 2 and ends on April 14.

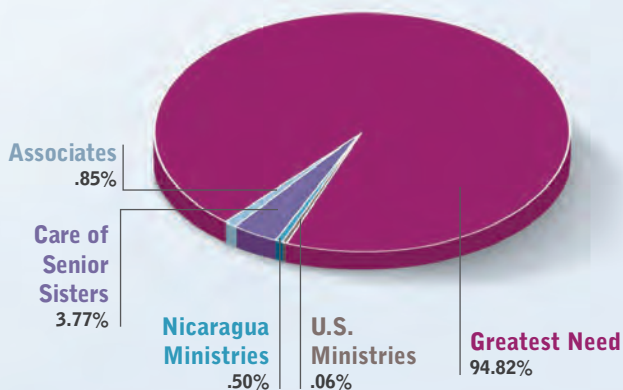
Prayer requests of all varieties, large and small, are welcome and personal information will be kept confidential.

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. The full annual report is now available at www.csasisters.org/donate.

Donation Designations from
October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021

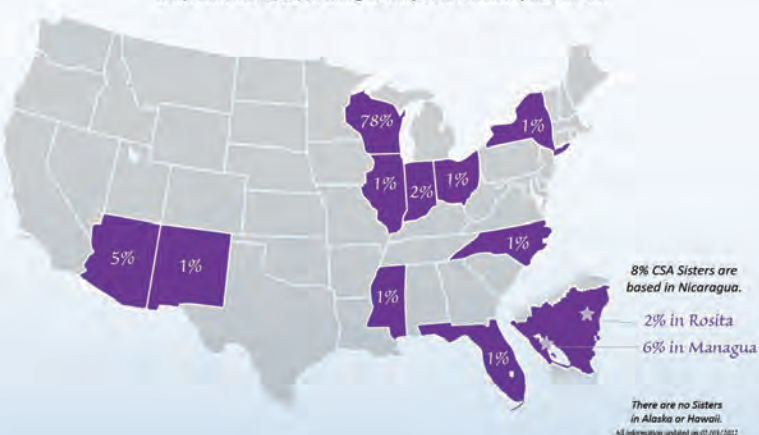


The full annual report is now available at
www.csasisters.org/donate

Total Giving: **\$1,690,468**

152 Sisters of St. Agnes

We, the Sisters of St. Agnes, participate 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.



In Memoriam...



Sister Loretta Meidl, CSA

October 27, 2021

Sister Loretta Meidl, CSA, formerly Sister Eva, died peacefully, October 27, 2021, at St. Francis Home, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Loretta was born in Ladysmith, Wisconsin, on March 15, 1925. She entered St. Agnes Convent in Fond du Lac and professed her vows as Sister Eva on August 15, 1944. Sister Loretta served as a homemaker in CSA convents in Wisconsin, Kansas, Minnesota, and Ohio; worked in food service at St. Clare Hospital, Monroe, Wisconsin; and provided childcare at Holy Family Orphanage in Marquette, Michigan. Later, as a certified teacher/library aide, she ministered in elementary schools in New York, Ohio, and Wisconsin. In addition, her study of Spanish in Mexico prepared Sister Loretta to serve the Spanish community at St. Louis and St. Patrick Parish in Fond du Lac. She also volunteered as a foster grandparent before moving to Nazareth Court and Center. There she assisted in the sacristy and accompanied sisters who were sick or near death. When her own health declined, Sister Loretta was admitted to St. Francis Home where she received loving care until her death.



Sister Caryl Hartjes, CSA

October 31, 2021

Sister Caryl Hartjes, CSA, formerly Sister Theodine, died peacefully October 31, 2021, at Nazareth Center, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Caryl was born in Appleton, Wisconsin, on June 22, 1935. After graduating from St. Agnes School of Nursing, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, she entered St. Agnes Convent in 1957 and made her profession of vows as Sister Theodine on August 15, 1959. Her B.S. in Nursing from Marian College in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, her Masters in Theological Studies from Maryknoll School of Theology, and her study of Spanish prepared Caryl for ministries of healing, advocacy, and peaceful protest for the poor and vulnerable. Caryl's ministries included nursing at St. Agnes Hospital, Fond du Lac; St. Anthony Hospital, Hays, Kansas; Our Lady Queen of Angels Parish, New York City; and Clínica Sta. Inés, Waspam, Nicaragua. Other ministries included community organizer, family health programs, CSA regional leadership, HIV/AIDS ministry, and hospice care. In May 2018, Sister Caryl joined the

Walking with God

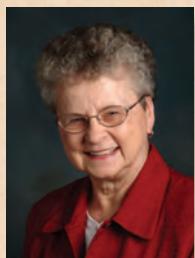
sisters at Nazareth Court and Center in Fond du Lac where, until her death, she inspired all by her passion for life, and love for God's beautiful creation.



Sister Mary Alice Walters, CSA
November 4, 2021

Sister Mary Alice Walters, CSA, baptized Elizabeth, was born on June 21, 1928, in Hays, Kansas. Elizabeth entered St. Agnes Convent, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, in 1943 and made her profession of vows as Sister Mary Alice on August 15, 1947. Her

desire to be a teacher was fulfilled as she became a lifelong learner and educator. She earned a B.S. in Education from Marian College, and an M.A. from Mary Manse College, Toledo, Ohio. Sister Mary Alice taught in elementary schools in Wisconsin and Kansas and became an effective principal in Hortonville, Fond du Lac, Butler, Wisconsin, and Hays, Kansas. Later, she was appointed local coordinator for the elderly and infirm sisters at Nazareth Heights in Fond du Lac. Her final thirteen years in active ministry were spent at St. Stephen Parish, Milwaukee, as teacher and coordinator of religious education, volunteer visitor to the homebound, substitute catechist, and loving presence to the staff and parishioners. In May 2021, Sister Mary Alice was unexpectedly diagnosed with terminal cancer, and moved to Nazareth Center in Fond du Lac where she received care and support until the time of her death on November 4, 2021.



Sister Joan Fisher, CSA
January 11, 2022

Sister Joan Fisher, CSA, was born in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, on September 1, 1932, to Charles and Harriet (Landreman) Fisher. Joan entered St. Agnes Convent in 1951 and on August 15, 1953, made her profession of vows as Sister Peter Damian.

She earned a B.S. in Education from Marian College, Fond du Lac, an M.S. in Education from St. Francis College, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and an M.S. in Administration from Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa. Sister Joan, a dedicated educator, ministered as a teacher and principal in Wisconsin, Kansas, and New Mexico. She returned to Fond du Lac in 2003, where she supervised student teachers for Marian College. In 2008, she joined the sisters at Nazareth Court and Center. As her health declined, Sister Joan was admitted to St. Francis Home and received loving care until her death on January 11, 2022.



Sister Mary Menke, CSA
January 27, 2022

Sister Mary Menke, CSA, formerly known as Sister Doreen, was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on October 15, 1946. After graduating from Messmer High School in Milwaukee, Mary chose to enter St. Agnes Convent in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin,

making her profession of vows in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes as Sister Doreen on August 15, 1967. She received a B.S. in Education from Marian College in Fond du Lac and enhanced this degree with theological studies throughout her years as an educator. Sister Mary was a gifted teacher of primary children in parish schools in Rosemount, Minnesota; Oshkosh and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and in Yonkers and East Harlem, New York. After retiring from full-time teaching, she volunteered as a tutor in the Adult Literacy Program at the Dominican Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 2018, Sister Mary joined the community of CSA sisters at Nazareth Court and Center where she received the care and support needed until her death on January 27, 2022.



Sister Mary Louise Pfannenstiel, CSA
February 1, 2022

Sister Mary Louise Pfannenstiel, CSA, formerly known as Sister Theodore, died unexpectedly and peacefully February 1, 2022, at St. Agnes Hospital, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Mary Louise was born in Hays, Kansas, on September 20, 1937.

In September 1951, she entered St. Agnes Convent in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and made her profession of vows in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes on August 15, 1956. Sister Mary Louise received a B.S. in Elementary Education from Marian College, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, an M.S. in Elementary Education from St. Francis College, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and a Certificate in Library Science from Marian College. From 1958 to 1989 she served as teacher, librarian, and learning center coordinator in elementary schools in Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, and Kansas. Returning to Hays, Kansas in 1989, Sister Mary Louise cared for her father while also volunteering at St. Joseph School. In October 2013, she joined the community of CSA sisters at Nazareth Court and Center where she remained actively engaged in the life and mission of her CSA community until her unexpected death.



320 County Road K
Fond du Lac, WI 54937

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Or call 920-907-2300

Welcome New Staff

CSA is pleased to welcome Sister Patricia Bogenschuetz, CSA, back to the motherhouse in the role of regional coordinator and Jeff Atkinson to the role of maintenance supervisor. In January of 2021, Pat retired from her position as Development Director for CORE El Centro in Milwaukee and then “un-retired” in December, as she returned to a CSA position she held once before. “It is an honor to serve our sisters as a regional coordinator. It was the ‘serving the sisters’ part of the CSA’s regional coordinator service description that captured my heart. I cherished this ministry when



**Sister Patricia
Bogenschuetz, CSA**

I did it 25 years ago, and I look forward to helping our sisters in whatever way I can.”

Jeff Atkinson has had years of experience in maintenance working for the City of Fond du Lac and, most recently, as maintenance supervisor in a long-term care facility. Jeff is an avid outdoorsman, a member of local conservation clubs, and the owner/operator of WindWalkers Pheasantry in Mt. Calvary where he and his family raise more than 20,000 pheasants. “I enjoy working where I can be helpful and among my elders; I am glad to be part of the CSA team.”



Jeff Atkinson