

REFLECTIONS
&
Connections

AUGUST 2023

STORIES OF MISSION
& MINISTRY



CSA

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

Dear Friends,

Celebrating Journeys of Gratitude and Grace, the theme of Jubilee 2023, expresses so well the spirit prevalent at our recent CSA Days and each day forward. The June gathering of our sisters and associates provided the opportunity to strengthen the bond that unites us and to explore our unfolding future with gratitude, grace, and hope.

Jubilee is a time of rejoicing and giving thanks for sisters and associates who have responded to the call to further God's Mission and have done so faithfully for many years. We, and many others, have been blessed by their lifetime service and witness to the Divine Love. In this issue of *Reflections and Connections*, we honor our Jubilarians including Sister Dennis, one of our centenarians. Their presence, wisdom, and spirit inspire us each day.

Marian University, a CSA sponsored ministry since 1936, is also highlighted in this issue. Marian holds a special place in our hearts, since it is the Alma Mater of most of our sisters and that of many students who used their education and values from Marian to make a difference in this world.

As we continue our CSA journey, we give thanks to you and all our Partners in Mission. We are grateful to be recognized for our efforts to be good stewards of God's creation, which you can read about in the



Pictured L to R: Sisters Sharon Pollnow, General Superior; Lael Niblick, General Councilor; Madeline Gianforte, General Councilor; and Peg Spindler, General Vicar

coming pages. We are also delighted to welcome two new staff people to help us on the way, Kyle Schwibinger and Jane Waller, who are introduced in this issue.

Grounded in the Mystery of the Divine, we are bonded and strengthened by our vision and love, and continue to have graced encounters that reflect the goodness and love of an amazing Creator God.

CSA General Council

COVER IMAGE:

"Celebrating Journeys of Gratitude and Grace"
Jubilee Artwork by Sister Doris Klein, CSA

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Editorial Board Members:

Sister Jeremy Quinn, Sister Jean Perry,
Dusty Krikau, and Mary Christopherson

Sister Dennis Joins the Centenarian Club



Sister Dennis O'Connor with her family on her 100th birthday

2023 marked a particularly auspicious year for Sister Dennis O'Connor. Born May 15, 1923, and professed in 1943, she had the joy of celebrating her 100th birthday and her 80th Jubilee this summer.

Sister Dennis was born in Milwaukee and was taught by the Sisters of St. Agnes at St. Florian's School. She moved into the convent at 15 and made her first profession at age 20. She quickly became an asset to sisters throughout the country as a homemaker. She made meals, drove sisters who could not drive, and did the many tasks necessary to ensure that households where she served were well kept and happy homes. She was never given much time to sit still, moving 13 times in 43 years with numerous moves back and forth throughout Pennsylvania, New York, Indiana, and Wisconsin. She settled in Fond du Lac in 1986, but her moving adventures weren't quite finished.

After living in the staff area of Nazareth Heights for eight years, she discovered that it was time to move

again as the sisters living there were all relocated to the newly built Nazareth Court & Center. True to her homemaker-spirit, she partnered with another sister to pack all the boxes for the other sisters and ultimately moved herself out last. Since that move in 1998, she has finally had a chance to stay in one place!



Sister Sharon Pollnow pins a corsage on Sister Dennis O'Connor on her 80th Jubilee

On the occasion of her 80th Jubilee, Sister Dennis took a moment to reflect on her experiences and offer insight to those who continue to carry CSA's charism: "I am deeply grateful for my 80 years as a Sister of St. Agnes. Day after day I trusted in God and was faithful to prayer and community life. If people needed me, they knew they could call upon me. I never said 'no' to a request for help. My advice to you who wish to live CSA's mission today: 'You are all God's people and God's servants. Use your own common sense. Follow your heart and it will take you where you should be.'"

CSA Jubilarians 2023

Each year, CSA celebrates the anniversary of religious profession of sisters and the first commitment of associates.

On June 25, 2023, CSA sisters, associates, families, and friends honored the 10 sister Jubilarians and 11 associate Jubilarians during a joyous Eucharistic Mass held at Holy Family Church in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Close family and friends joined together for the event with Rev. Carl Diederichs presiding. Sister Dianne Bergant, CSA, gave the reflection.

The Jubilee Mass, which was livestreamed, can be viewed at www.csasisters.org/jubilee. Individual profiles for each sister and associate celebrating Jubilee can also be found there along with the option to donate to the congregation in their honor.

SISTERS

80 YEARS (1943) ▶
Sister Dennis O'Connor



70 YEARS (1953)
Sisters Julia Pfeifer, Luigi Frigo, Mark Plescher, Mary Catherine Grief, and Mary Elise Leiker



60 YEARS (1963)
Sisters Barbara DeBoo, Marilyn Winkel, and Susan Stucki



40 YEARS (1983) ▶
Sister Edie Crews

ASSOCIATES

25 YEARS (1998)
15 YEARS (2008) ▶
L to R: Mary Ann Steffes (25), Barb Ricklefs (15), Carol Pizon (15), Cindy Harnish (15), Patricia Gregory (15), Joan Schilke (15), and Mary Pat Waldmann (15).

Not pictured: Ann Umbreit (15), Ellen Mercer (25), Caroline Coughlin Lampereur (15), and James McCann (15).





Pictured above (left to right): Katherine Vergos, president of SSM Health St. Agnes Hospital; Kerry Strupp, Marian University's director of the Working Families Grant; and Michelle Majewski, president of Marian University.

Supporting Marian University's *Working Families*

On May 9, 2023, SSM Health Greater Fond du Lac gave a \$50,000 gift to Marian's Working Families Grant program. The Marian University Working Families Grant (WFG) Program provides tuition, along with stipends for rent, childcare, and food to economically disadvantaged single parents and is co-sponsored by the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes and an anonymous donor.

"We're proud to be a part of this tremendous program, which has benefited so many families over the years," Katherine Vergos, president of SSM Health St. Agnes Hospital says. "It is important to us to support the communities we serve in so many ways, and to help provide individuals and families with the resources they need to live healthier and more productive lives."

Kerry Strupp, Director of the WFG program, expressed her gratitude for the donation, stating, "This not only helps our students, but it helps their children, too. We're very blessed to have partners like SSM Health and their generous donation."

The WFG program blossomed from a simple seed of an idea from Sister Deb Walter in 1996 and was ultimately supported by the entire congregation. The Education Grant for Women and Children program, as it was originally called, initially began in response to changes in welfare programs that almost entirely eliminated opportunities for economically disadvantaged women to pursue higher education. The groundwork laid by this program grew into a partnership with an anonymous donor, resulting in what is now the Working Families Grant program.

Participants in the Working Families Grant Program are literally working hard every day. Eligible recipients are single parents who have primary placement of their children. The grant provides stipends for monthly rent and childcare, monthly grocery gift cards, tuition assistance, budget/credit counseling, academic counseling, career counseling and workshops on life skills. Students are expected to be full time, maintain a 2.5 GPA, and complete 20 hours of community service per semester.



On July 27, 2023, Catholic Climate Covenant announced the winners of the first ever U.S. Laudato Si' Champion awards. Of the 13 winners in 10 categories, the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes was honored to receive the award in the "Religious Order" category. Among their observations, the judges noted that,

"...like many communities of women religious, the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes has a longstanding commitment to conservation and care for the creation, which has intensified since the publication of Laudato Si'.

"The Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes' corporate commitment to future generations aligns with Pope Francis' call for the church and the world to address the threats posed by climate change. Their efforts serve as an inspiration to individuals and organizations alike, showcasing the power of sustainable practices.

"The U.S. Laudato Si' Champion award is a recognition of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes' contributions to environmental conservation and their commitment to preserving our common home for generations to come."

The congregation was nominated for the award by Carol Burczyk, who serves as Chaplain and Local Coordinator at Nazareth Court and Center. In her nomination, she highlighted the congregation's leadership on sustainability among religious communities in living out Laudato Si' and the 880-solar panel installation that represents CSA's corporate commitment to future generations.

Sister Peg Spindler accepted the award on behalf of the congregation. In her remarks, Sister Peg shared that "this award reassures us that we are on the right path, and we hope that by being recognized in such a public way, our work will reach new audiences who will be inspired to do more for Earth."

In addition to the public recognition, the congregation will also receive a hand-painted St. Francis statue and a gift of fruit trees for planting farmers to help feed families supported by Catholic Relief Services. Read about the inspiring work of all the award winners or watch the full video at catholicclimatecovenant.org

Season of Creation is Sept. 1-Oct. 4.

Join us for a ticketed event on September 9, 2023, in support of Glacial Lakes Conservancy. Tickets and info at www.glaciallakes.org



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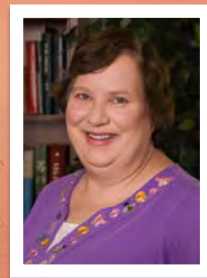
Welcome *New Staff*



CSA is pleased to welcome Kyle Schwibinger as Maintenance and Land Steward and Jane Waller as Housekeeper for the CSA Motherhouse.

Kyle works with the maintenance team to do general repairs and upkeep of the property. Additionally, in his role as CSA's Land Steward, he monitors and manages the land held in conservation easement with Glacial Lakes Conservancy. Born and raised in Plymouth, Wisconsin, Kyle recently completed his bachelor's degree in environmental science and management at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He loves to spend his free time hunting, fishing,

and camping in the north woods of Wisconsin. Since joining CSA's staff, Kyle has enjoyed working with the land, seeing what it has to offer and what he can offer to it.



Originally from Fond du Lac, Jane comes to CSA after serving as a switchboard operator at Aurora Health Care for the past 15 years. Her skills managing more than 700 callers per day are now being used to prioritize housekeeping tasks to ensure a peaceful and tidy

environment for the sisters at the motherhouse. When she is not cleaning, Jane spends time crafting, volunteering at her church, and playing her flute.