

MAY 2024

REFLECTIONS  
&  
*Connections*

STORIES OF MISSION  
& MINISTRY



**CSA**

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

# Dear Friends,

Holy Week and Easter 2024 provided us with the realization that we could identify with much of what Jesus' disciples had experienced as they witnessed his suffering and death. We have asked many of the same questions and have felt similar emotions, perhaps more intensely because of our wounded world today. Many of us seek to reconcile a God of Love with the existence of evil and suffering and question God's lack of direct intervention.

The Resurrected Christ asked the disciples, and is asking us, to see anew. The disciples who walked the road to Emmaus with the Resurrected Jesus at first failed to recognize him. It was as they shared their hearts and shared a meal with Jesus that their hearts burned within them and they regained hope.

Jesus reminds us that He is Risen. The Divine intimately knows our story and chooses to walk with us. We are asked to accept and believe that we are loved unconditionally and that at the end God will transform everything.



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

We are called to be love for the world, to show mercy and compassion—to reveal the Risen Christ and instill hope. We are grateful for you, companions with us on the journey. Let us continue to be Love for the world.

With Caring and Grateful Hearts,

*Sisters Sharon Pollnow, Peg Spindler, Madeline Gianforte, and Lael Niblick*

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

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(L to R): Sister Eileen Mahony, Associate Karen Ablar, Associate Patti Reese, Sister Patrice Rog

## Welcoming *New Associates*

**O**n April 21, 2024, CSA welcomed Patti Reese and Karen Ablar into associate relationship. The formal commitment took place in the motherhouse chapel, surrounded by Sisters, Associates, family, and friends.

As part of the associate discernment process, each woman was assigned a mentor. Patti worked with Sister Patrice Rog and Karen worked with Sister Eileen Mahony. During the past year, Patti and Karen met with their respective CSA mentors to discuss and reflect on the spirituality, charism, mission, and history of CSA and associate relationship. This process helped them discern their call to live an associate way of life integrating the mission and charism of CSA and to reflect on how they might nurture and expand their connection with associates and sisters.

Associate Patti Reese said, “Thanks to the discernment process, I have moved from having a religion to having

a personal relationship with the Lord and I look forward to sharing my experience, strength, and hope as I join this group in serving Jesus. As Pope Francis reminds us, ‘Our life spreads light when it is given in service. The secret of joy is living to serve.’”

Associate Karen Ablar reflected similarly, “The discernment process allowed me to continue to deepen my relationship with God and to fully respond to my baptismal call and to daily saying ‘yes’ to what calls me. The associate relationship will allow me to join with other CSA associates and sisters to continue to live out the mission, charism, and spirituality of CSA.”

To find out more about what it means to enter into an associate relationship with CSA, contact Kelly Robe at [krobe@csasisters.org](mailto:krobe@csasisters.org)

# *My Spiritual Legacy*

*By Dena Rose Kryzanowski*

*A*n individual's 'legacy' may be their life stories, lessons learned, values and beliefs, or hopes and dreams for loved ones. Legacies are valuable and often priceless when shared with others, especially those we love. The Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes took a unique opportunity to pilot a project to share the spiritual legacy of a few of its senior sisters.

CSA learned of a special research project conducted by the Mayo Clinic titled "Hear My Voice," which was a chaplain-led spiritual legacy pilot study for patients with advanced diseases. CSA reached out to

Katherine M. Piderman, BCC, PhD, who worked with patients as part of her role as chaplain at Mayo Clinic in Rochester. She was involved in the development and implementation of the Mayo Clinic's project. With Katherine's help, the "Hear My Voice" spiritual legacy research project was adapted for CSA's women religious and was titled "My Spiritual Legacy."

Eight CSA members who are certified spiritual directors were paired with eight of the congregation's senior members to conduct interviews. The interviewers used carefully crafted questions to help the senior sisters

share their personal life stories reflective of their own spiritual journeys. The interviews gave the sisters an opportunity to share thoughts and stories that were precious to them and may not have otherwise been shared.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then edited for accuracy. From this text, a narrative was written and transformed into a booklet complete with photographs chosen by the sister who was interviewed. The booklet was then given to the sister, and copies were given to her to share with those she chose.

**The goals of the “My Spiritual Legacy” project were:**

1. To provide an opportunity for a sister to reflect on her spiritual journey as a consecrated woman and to share it with a trusted interviewer.
2. To develop a printed spiritual legacy document for the sister to keep for herself and share with others as she desires.
3. To bolster meaning, dignity, hope, and agency—the benefits reported by those interviewed in the Mayo Clinic study.



Sister Ann Koerner served as one of the interviewers for the project.

Those involved in the “My Spiritual Legacy” project completed evaluations of the experience and overwhelmingly reported that the goals were met. CSA is planning to extend the project to other members of the Congregation in the future.

**We all have a legacy to share. Some questions that you may reflect on to begin contemplating your spiritual legacy are:**

- Who was the first person who taught you about faith?
- Are there others you consider spiritual mentors in your life?
- Are there any spiritual practices that have been meaningful to you?
- What practices give you the most hope or comfort?
- How does your spirituality guide you as you look toward the future?

**Maybe you would like to write your very own “My Spiritual Legacy” document to share with your loved ones!**

# Marian University's *18th President*



The Marian University Board of Trustees and Marian University's sponsor, the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes, are pleased to announce that Aaron Sadoff has been appointed the 18th president of Marian University. He will succeed Dr. Michelle Majewski, who retired after 37 years of service to the university, including four years as president.

President-elect Sadoff comes from the Fond du Lac Area Foundation, where he was executive director since 2022, supporting community growth and philanthropy through managing 540 funds with over \$68 million in assets. Sadoff, a native of Fond du Lac, is excited to expand his role at Marian. He served as a Marian Board of Trustees member and he is a two-time alumnus. He received his Master's in Educational Leadership from Marian in 2001 and his Superintendent Licensure Certificate through Marian's Educational Doctoral program in 2011. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Education and History from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"I love Marian University, its core mission to serve, and the Fond du Lac community," said Sadoff.

"There are significant challenges in higher education and incredible opportunities. Working together, I believe we can transform Fond du Lac into a university town, where Marian University not only continues to provide a world-class education, but is a thriving hub of culture and entertainment, providing a community environment based on Catholic ideals focused on service, community, and learning."

Sadoff is an Army Gulf War veteran, who served as a Cavalry Scout from 1990-92. He and his wife of 29 years, Kelly, have three adult children, Paige, Lilly, and Ethan. Prior to his work at the Fond du Lac Area Foundation, he served as the Superintendent of the North Fond du Lac School District for 13 years and as a principal and educator in Wisconsin for 12 years. He is active on numerous non-profit boards and has presented twice at TEDx events on Happiness and the Power of Positive Psychology.

Dr. Majewski will continue with Marian University in a transitional role until the start date for Mr. Sadoff on June 1, 2024.



## Reflection at *Breakfast*

March 7 was the annual Breakfast with Women sponsored by CSA. The theme was Energizing Spirits, with Sister Sharon Pollnow leading the group in an opening prayer and Sister Rhea Emmer giving an inspirational presentation around the themes of spirituality and the phases of our spiritual journey. This was followed by a panel discussion with Sisters Sue Seeb, Patrice Rog, Jomarie Zielke, and Jean Hinderer.

The room crackled with lively conversations as we paired up to discuss what the central question of our lives was right now and why it was important. Our conversations could be described as looking in the mirror as we shared our searches for meaning in life.

My favorite analogies of life were the death and rebirth stories—the seasons change and so do we, and we were encouraged to be comfortable with the uncomfortable in life, trusting our unique journeys as we navigate. We each have an inner hospice worker to remind us we are not alone, and an inner midwife who says stay open and breathe. Each time we are reborn, we claim our new sense of self—not with arrogance, but with an increased

capacity to love, with wisdom and the ability to discern.

The panel shared some of their personal journeys. We heard the wisdom of the sisters saying to believe that you are loved, and to love yourself since who you are, is who you are. Growth can be like peeling an onion, and discovering the many layers can make you cry. Finding out about yourself and others requires vulnerability. Recognize the things in life that pull you from loving. Increase your capacity to love those around you.

We were connected once again at the end of this experience with a powerful blessing as attendees repeatedly sang the healing mantra “May All I Do Today.” We sang while we received and sent out our blessings, and we were once again reminded we are one.

Visit the CSA website to watch the recording or explore the many resources—retreats, spiritual companionship, meditations, Sisters and Seekers gatherings—offered during the event!



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