

REFLECTIONS

AUGUST 2025

&  
*Connections*

STORIES OF MISSION  
& MINISTRY

*CSA*

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

Doris Klein, CSA



# Dear Friends,

*Whether it's the sun piercing through storm clouds or dancing on the leaves of a tree, the images can remind us of God's faithfulness. Whether the joy and jubilee of life lifts us up or the sad sordid hubris of life gets us down, there is something underneath that bolsters our spirits, gives us strength, shows us a way, helps us keep believing no matter what. That something is God's ever faithful love—tender and fierce, gentle yet strong, specific to each of us yet all-encompassing. Despite the storms, both natural and human-made, that swirl around us, we reach out to each other somehow knowing that God is among us, that God works in and through us and for us each and every minute of every day. We understand that when we experience a sisterly hug of support in community. We know that when we hear from each of you. Thank you for believing in God's faithfulness with us!*

Ps. 117:2 ...the faithfulness of God endures forever.

*With grateful hearts,*

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

CSA General Council



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

## ON THE COVER:

### "Faithfulness"

With gratitude and joy we honor those celebrating Jubilee and the many ways they have each shared their light and love in faithful service. We join in this celebration recalling the multiple ways they have mirrored God's faithfulness to so many over these past years, inspiring and encouraging those they companioned.

With gratitude we celebrate God's faithfulness and theirs as they continue to share their beauty, wisdom and presence in our world today.

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

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# Congratulations, Jubilarians!

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

On Sunday, June 22, 2025, CSA sisters, associates, families, and friends honored the 13 sister Jubilarians and 5 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](http://www.csasisters.org/jubilee)

Collectively the 18 jubilarians represent 930 years of service. Individual profiles for each sister and associate celebrating Jubilee can also be found on the website along with the option to donate to the congregation in their honor.

## SISTERS



### 75 YEARS (1950)

Sister Helen Sander



### 70 YEARS (1955)

(L to R) Sisters Helen Gallitz, Jeannine Funk, Jean Braun, Leanne Sitter, Jean Perry



### 60 YEARS (1965)

(L to R) Sisters Jean Salchert, Barbara Gause, Leona Armstrong, Eileen Mahony, Patricia Weidman, Michaelleen Frahm



### 50 YEARS (1975)

Sister Alice Ann Pfeifer

## ASSOCIATES



Pictured (L to R): Kerry Strupp, Diane Smith, Alice Negratti

### 25 YEARS (2000)

Diane Smith, Nancy Schmitz

### 15 YEARS (2009)

Alice Negratti, Kerry Strupp, Pam McNulty

## Reflect

How have your personal milestone celebrations impacted your relationship with the divine?

## Connect

Consider the people who celebrated your milestones with you throughout your life. How have you stayed connected with them?





Sister Sharon Pollnow engages with two students during a “Sit with a Sister” session.

## *Educating* Beyond the Classroom

*S*t. Mary's Springs Academy (SMSA) was established by the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes in 1909 as a boarding and day school for girls. As the school has transformed through the years into its current PreK-12 system, the sisters have remained connected, even after giving up day-to-day administration in 1970. Sisters have been regular volunteers on the Board of Directors, in classrooms, and even in the nurse's office. Recently, relationships have brought educational opportunities for students at the motherhouse.

In January, nearly 150 SMSA students, grades 9-11, participated in a two-day event learning about the history of CSA and SMSA and culminating in “Sit with a Sister” sessions allowing students to engage in meaningful conversation with sisters in groups of five students. CSA has also organized social justice roundtable discussions for the students, an interfaith panel, and invited senior girls to the Breakfast with Women event in March.

Mary Gentile, Senior Theology instructor at St. Mary's Springs, reflected “Collaborating with CSA has added depth and richness to my students' learning experiences. The interfaith panel, social justice roundtable discussions, and women's breakfast have all been unique opportunities to apply the concepts and ideas that we have explored and processed in a classroom setting in relevant and practical ways. The intergenerational interactions are particularly valuable - students have the opportunity both to give and to receive perspectives and wisdom specific to their age group.”

Many of the current students have parents who were taught and inspired by sisters. While the classroom relationship has changed, their children are now getting similar opportunities to see the CSA charism and mission in person.



## Associate Home Circle Charism *Initiatives*

*In June of 2024, associates reflected on what they believed to be the greatest needs in our world, aware that charism happens when critical needs are met in the present. Three areas of need clearly emerged: inequality, economic justice for the poor, and respectful conversation. Since then, associate home circles have been working on an initiative related to one of these areas of need.*

**C**on behalf of the associate office home circle, Associate Director Kelly Robe and Assistant Director Kathy Koepsell handed out Subway gift cards and an informational packet of local food resources to people experiencing homelessness in Fond du Lac. While one person declined the gift card due to lack of transportation, most accepted these cards with diverse responses: saying ‘God bless you,’ staring at the gift card for a long time, nodding, or murmuring thank you.

Kelly and Kathy both expressed that it was difficult to witness homelessness is a real lifestyle for many in Fond du Lac. Some people carried their possessions with them in backpacks, bags, or foldable shopping carts.

Some carried nothing with them and stayed in a shelter, tent, or their car in the evenings. “It creates a hole in my heart to see people in our community and country without a place to live or carrying signs asking for food. These are the faces I see at night when I have trouble sleeping,” said Kathy.

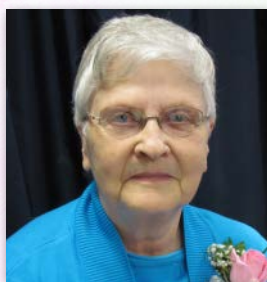
Kelly was humbled by the interactions; “All frivolous things fall away in the presence of people lacking basic physical needs. Everything is grace and gift. Other countries like Finland have adopted a ‘Housing First’ principle, stating people have a right to decent housing and to useful social services. It’s a radically inclusive policy compared to the United States, one of the wealthiest nations in the world.”

**If your church, workplace, or other group organizes a drive for clothing, food, water, or hygiene supplies, consider sharing your love and gifts with those less fortunate and more vulnerable.**



# *In Memoriam...*

## Walking with God



### **Sister Mary Catherine Grief, CSA**

Sister Mary Catherine Grief, baptized Mary Martha, was born in Oak Park, Illinois, on September 5, 1931. Having met the Sisters of St. Agnes at Immaculate Conception High School, Elmhurst, Illinois, she responded to a childhood desire by entering St. Agnes Convent in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Mary pronounced vows as Sister Catherine Labouré on August 15, 1953. She earned a BS in Nursing/Nursing Education from Marian College, Fond du Lac, and an MS in Nursing from Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Well-prepared for a life-time ministry of nursing and teaching, she lived in many settings caring for the physical, social, and spiritual needs as nurse, instructor, director, or pastoral

minister in Wisconsin, Kansas, and California. In 1981 Sister accepted a position as youth minister at Sacred Heart Parish in Colby, Kansas. For the next thirty years she found great joy in pastoral ministry, social work, and hospice care in parishes, prisons, and social service agencies in Kansas, North Carolina, and Florida. Beloved among these experiences were the seventeen years she served as Coordinator of Ministry to the Sick and Homebound at St. Joseph Parish, Hays, Kansas.

Sister Mary Catherine returned to Fond du Lac in 2011, lived at the CSA motherhouse, and volunteered at St. Francis Home. In April 2019, Sister joined the CSA retirement community at Nazareth Court and Center. As her health declined, she became a resident of St. Francis Home where she received loving care until her death on May 19, 2025.



### **Sister Barbara Jean Rosswurm, CSA**

Sister Barbara Jean Rosswurm, CSA, formerly known as Sister Glenn Marie, died peacefully June 5, 2025, at St. Agnes Hospital, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Barbara Jean was born on August 2, 1937, in New Haven, Indiana, where she lived with her parents, Glenn and Lucille Rosswurm and eight siblings. Inspired by the Sisters of St. Agnes, her teachers at St. John Elementary School, she entered St. Agnes Convent, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, after eighth grade and graduated from St. Agnes High School. On August 15, 1956, Barbara Jean professed her vows as Sister Glenn Marie in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes.

She earned a BS in Education from Marian College, Fond du Lac, and throughout her life received further certificates in apostolic spirituality and religious education. Her first assignment was to serve as house parent for children at Holy Family Orphanage, Marquette, Michigan. There she demonstrated her love and compassion for children. As a teacher, Sister taught in Catholic schools and religious education programs in New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin parishes. In 1973, she began full-time ministry as director of religious education in Kansas, Indiana, and Florida parishes. She was honored for initiating a program for teaching developmentally disadvantaged children in parishes where she served.

After retirement from full-time ministry, Sister Barbara Jean remained in Florida as a volunteer, touching the lives of so many in outreach programs of the parish and diocese. In January 2018, Sister returned to Fond du Lac to join her community of sisters at Nazareth Court and Center where she faithfully participated in the life of the community and received loving care until the time of her death.





### **Sister Marise Meis, CSA**

Sister Marise Meis, CSA, baptized Mary Agnes, was born September 23, 1939, in Russell, Kansas, the second oldest of a family of eight children. Inspired by the Sisters of St. Agnes who taught her in Hays, Kansas, she entered St. Agnes Convent with her older sister, Shirley (later known as Sister Mary Rose). After completing her high school and formation years at the convent, Mary made her first profession of vows as Sister Marise on August 15, 1959, in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes, and began her life of ministry as an elementary school teacher in Wisconsin and New York. While in New York, desiring to address the needs of the children and families there, Sister Marise studied and became proficient in

speaking Spanish. In 1965, she responded to a call for volunteers for the Congregation's missions in Latin America, and began a fifty-seven-year ministry as a beloved elementary, high school, and university teacher, as well as catechist and parish minister in Managua, Rosita, Puerto Cabezas in Nicaragua, and for a brief time, in Honduras and Ecuador. Sister Marise was also the contact person for Holy Family Parish in Fond du Lac, a sister-parish to St. Rose of Lima Parish in Rosita, Nicaragua. She served as CSA Regional Coordinator for the sisters in Latin America and was a member of the formation team assisting Nicaraguan women preparing to enter the congregation. In 2022, Sister Marise's health needs required a return to Fond du Lac to receive care at Nazareth Court and Center and at St. Francis Home, where she died peacefully July 3, 2025.



### **Sister Marie Kees, CSA**

Sister Marie Kees, CSA, formerly Sister Michael Ann, died July 6, 2025. Marie was born to Michael and Clara (Popp) Kees in St. John, Wisconsin on August 22, 1928. After his first wife, Theresa, died leaving three small children, Michael married Clara and together they added ten girls and four boys to their family. Although at an early age Marie had felt a call to religious life, entering the convent was delayed as she, at fourteen years of age and the oldest daughter at home, assumed the responsibilities and care for the household and younger siblings when her mother Clara died. Six years later, with the blessing of her father, Marie entered St. Agnes Convent in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, completed her high school

education, and professed her vows on August 15, 1954, as Sister Michael Ann. She prepared for a long and fruitful ministry by earning a B.S. in Elementary Education from Marian College, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and an M.S. in Education from Marygrove College, Detroit, Michigan. Throughout her life, she also received certification for religious education, administration, and in areas of spirituality, pastoral care and ministry to the elderly. Sister Marie's presence and warm personality were experienced by people wherever she served: Wisconsin (Beloit, Two Rivers, Lomira, Watertown, Fond du Lac, and Madison), Michigan (Houghton), and Minnesota (Rosemount). In 2011 Sister Marie moved from Madison to the CSA motherhouse in Fond du Lac to live and serve among the sisters there until 2019 when she retired to Nazareth Court and Center. In 2025, as her health declined, she became a resident for a brief time at St. Francis Home where she died peacefully on July 6, 2025.



### **Sister Clare Lawlor, CSA**

Clare was born September 14, 1950, to Walter and Irene Lawlor, in White Plains, New York. She met the Sisters of St. Agnes at Sacred Heart School, Yonkers, New York, and through her older sister, Sister Gilmory Lawlor, CSA. Desiring to become an educator, activist, or Peace Corps volunteer. Clare enrolled at Marian College, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Inspired by sisters there advocating for peace and justice, Clare entered the convent and professed vows as a Sister of St. Agnes in 1972. She completed a B.S. in Education and became a gifted, creative teacher. Clare left the classroom to study at the Illinois School of Professional Psychology, where she earned a doctorate in psychology (PsyD). As a licensed clinical psychologist, she

worked with children and adolescents at residential treatment facilities in Illinois, taught for ten years as professor at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology and ten years as a tenured full professor at Lewis University's Psychology Department, Romeoville, Illinois. During this time, Clare's activism was demonstrated by providing foster care for four children and in traveling several times with "Nuns on the Bus" tours, making visible religious women's promotion of Catholic social justice principles. Returning to Fond du Lac in 2015, Sister Clare was employed by Behavioral Outpatient Department at Agnesian HealthCare, assisted at Catholic Charities Respite Center, McAllen, Texas, and volunteered at St. Vincent de Paul, Katharine Drexel Shelter, and CSA's Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Committee. Sister Clare's efforts were cut short by serious health issues which required a move to Nazareth Court and Center in March 2025 where she received the support of her sisters and the devoted care of the nursing staff until her peaceful death on July 9, 2025.





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## Sowing Seeds of Hope and Healing

# Pilgrimage

During the Season of Creation (Sept. 1-Oct. 4), we join with our interfaith family in prayer and action for our common home.

Pope Francis designated the 2025 Holy Year as a time to renew ourselves as "Pilgrims of Hope." Please join CSA for a one-day pilgrimage in Fond du Lac exploring spaces and places that invite us to greater communion with the natural world on October 4, 2025.

The Sowing Seeds of Hope and Healing Pilgrimage will begin at 8:30 a.m., at the CSA motherhouse and conclude in the same location at 5 p.m. Space is limited to 60 participants. Visit **[www.csasisters.org/pilgrimage](https://www.csasisters.org/pilgrimage)** for full details and sign-up information.

Let's walk together as Pilgrims of Hope, celebrating our faith and commitment to care for creation.