

REFLECTIONS

&
Connections

NOVEMBER 2013

STORIES OF MISSION
& MINISTRY



CSA

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

Role Model for

Children

The first thing you notice about Sister Deydamia de Fátima Ruiz is her high energy and her laughter. She bubbles over with enthusiasm for life. Her ministry is teaching at Colegio Parroquial Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, a school in Managua. “My hope is to be a role model for the children,” shared Sister Fátima.

“When I was a young girl I joined a group called the “Children of Our Lady” which was started by Sister Inmaculada Leiva, a member of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes. We were very active and I met many of the sisters. I saw how they lived and worked,” she continued.

“There was one sister in particular that was my role model. I recognized her unconditional love for the poor. She really witnessed and lived what it meant to be one with the poor, rather than just serving the poor. Her name was Sister Maureen Courtney. She worked for the common good. She motivated me and because of her work I chose to join CSA.”



Sister Deydamia de Fátima Ruiz

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Volunteer Ministry Brings Joy to Parents of *Newborns*

Gently weaving, hooking, and pulling the soft yarn to create perfect patterns of colorful creations, Sisters Carol Geels and Mary Christopher Esler bring joy to parents of newborns, children, and all who reap the rewards of their creative ministry. As volunteers, these sisters crochet caps for newborns, which are given to parents at Monroe Clinic and St. Agnes Hospital, CSA sponsored ministries located in Wisconsin.

“My grandmother taught me to crochet when I was 11 years old,” shared Sister Mary Christopher, who ministered as a nurse and occupational therapist for nearly four decades and volunteers with a community group, knitting toys and crocheting blankets for newborns at a crisis pregnancy center. “I like variety. I find the new patterns challenging, while the familiar ones are relaxing and rhythmic.”

“Word gets around that I crochet baby caps, and I get personal requests,” revealed Sister Carol, who spent more than 50 years in education ministry. “I have pictures of beautiful babies nestled in their mothers’ arms wearing the cap I made. It’s a blessing to lift others’ spirits.”

Although both sisters keep active through their volunteer work, their true enjoyment is derived from the mutual blessings that come from their service to others. As do many of the sisters, they spend their “retirement” years praying for others and volunteering.

“Who would have thought that a skill we learned so long ago could bring such joy to others,” concluded Sister Carol.



Sister Mary Christopher Esler and Sister Carol Geels crochet caps for newborns.

MAGNANIMITY *God's DNA!*

Webster defines magnanimity as: loftiness of spirit enabling one to bear trouble calmly, to disdain meanness and pettiness, and to display a noble generosity. Others write that magnanimity literally means a great-souled individual, one of expansive spirit who is unperturbed by minor grievances.

At this time of harvest in the northern hemisphere, it may be fitting to lean back into our summer memories and recall the magnanimous moments we experienced. Did they give us a listening heart? A supportive presence? Prayerful comfort? A smile accompanied with healing humor? Financial generosity? A thimble full of tears? A sacred story? Words of encouragement?

The gathering up of these precious moments is the “treasure in the field” that we take into our embrace and know that each one has held deep within it God’s DNA! In magnanimous moments, God moves with laser-like energy to fill up our spirits with the grace of courage, integrity, and hope – because then we become aware that our hearts have been entered by people, and we are never the same.

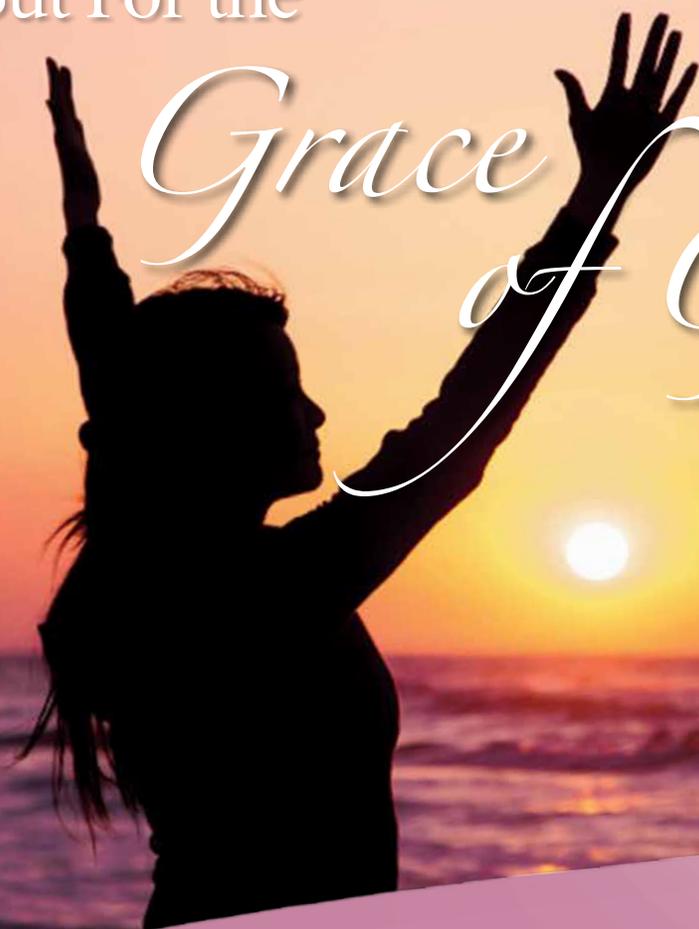
“Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some people move our souls to dance. They awaken us to a new understanding with the passing whisper of their wisdom. Some people make the sky more beautiful to gaze upon. They stay in our lives for awhile, leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never, ever the same.”

– Flavia Weedn

There But For the

Grace of God

Go I...



“You have no idea how often I’ve said that on the way home. Life can be cruel. I’ve been fortunate to have been loved all my life – most of these women have not.” Ruth Kohlmann volunteers at Taycheedah Correctional Institution, where over 800 female offenders are housed in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Along with five other people, Ruth teaches



Ruth Kohlmann

Basic Catholic Beliefs. When asked what draws her to this ministry, Ruth shared, “To begin with, I was talked into it, but now I do it because I enjoy watching the women grow in their faith.” Her biggest challenge? Not being able to give them a hug. “Sometimes you just know they have had the kind of day where a hug would help...” Ruth, an associate of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes, has been volunteering at Taycheedah since 2002.

Another CSA associate, Pam McNulty, lives in a Milwaukee suburb. She used the same phrase

that Ruth did – There but for the grace of God- to describe her relationship with a young woman she corresponds with and visits at Taycheedah. Pam said, “Amy was a young woman who had just given birth at (Taycheedah). I, too, had known the grip of addiction and now walk in recovery with my God one day at a time. So my feelings were that of compassion.” She wrote to Amy, wanting to let her know she wasn’t alone. “To my surprise, she wrote back and as time went on, I began to visit her...the first time, I couldn’t hold back my tears. I wanted Amy to know I would be available for support as she went through this difficult time. Her determination to make the best of a bad situation was one of the first life lessons I received from this young woman. I went into this thinking I could do something for her... but have instead found a true friendship. I feel God orchestrated our connection and am forever grateful.”



Pam McNulty

Far to the south, Associate Kathleen Gammon volunteers at the Cochise County Jail and in an Arizona state prison. She says, “I have learned much about the human spirit from this ministry. The gifts of compassion and understanding often overwhelm me. During our prayers for the people, we pray for one another, for their families, for a compassionate judge, for justice, for the strength to endure their confinement... and the strength to continue their path towards a compassionate and merciful God.”



Kathleen Gammon

There but for the grace of God...

CSA associates are women and men who formalize their call to the mission of Jesus and the CSA Statement of Mission and demonstrate their commitment in their daily lives.

In Memoriam... Walking with God



Sister Judine Ebsch
September 3, 2013

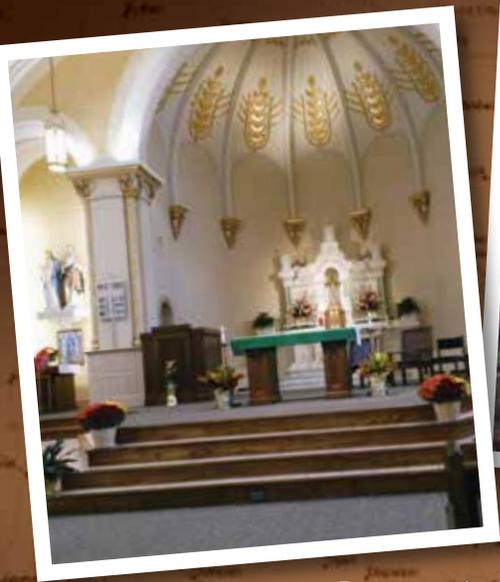
A native of Manitowoc, WI, Sister Judine’s ministries included: Holy Family Orphan’s Home in Marquette, MI; Henry Boyle Catholic Home, Nazareth Heights Infirmiry, and the Central Wisconsin Cancer Center in Fond du Lac; and Pastoral Care in Monroe, WI. She also served for a time at St. Agnes Hospital, Fond du Lac. She was a housekeeper, nurse aide, and sacristan at various places during her life. She also wrote beautiful poetry.



Sister Francis Rose Dinkel
September 4, 2013

Sister Francis Rose was born in Victoria, KS, one of fifteen children. She was a teacher for 35 years in Kansas and Wisconsin. After her retirement she ministered as homemaker at St. Mary’s Decatur, IN; later she worked in parish ministry at St. Michaels, AZ, and at Thomas More Prep-Marian High School in Hays, KS. She was skilled in crafts and restoring and upholstering furniture.

*For full obituaries go to www.csasisters.org.
Memorials can be sent to the CSA Development Office or through the website.*



Reunions have been hosted by schools and parishes where the Sisters of St. Agnes have ministered, including Decatur, IN; Defiance, OH; Elmhurst, IL; Yonkers, NY; and Crown Point, IN.

Places We Have

Loved...

Reunions Rekindle Relationships

Standing before the crowd, microphone cradled in her steady grasp, the elderly woman thanked the Sisters of St. Agnes for all they did for her and her family – decades of educating and inspiring through their ministry and lives.

From Indiana to New York, several recent reunions hosted by parishes and schools have rekindled relationships and reconnected the sisters with the people in communities where they served. Sisters who taught, administered, and shared their faith and dedication with

multiple generations shared memories and stories with former students and co-workers.

“Every time that we attend a reunion, I see how much love there is for the sisters,” shared Terry Letvinchuck, CSA Development Ministry Director. “But I also see how much love the sisters have for the people whom they serve. It’s been such a mutual blessing, and we are looking forward to future reunions in other schools and parishes where the sisters have or had a presence.”

Intercultural Communicator

Sister Paulette Shaw

Sister Paulette Shaw's volunteer ministry is one of serving as an intercultural communicator with foreign missionaries in the Diocese of Tucson, AZ. "My ministry evolved gradually. I have a talent for learning and comprehending foreign languages. At any given time I assist four or five priests in enhancing their pronunciation of the English language," said Sister Paulette. "Each priest has been referred to me with a need to be better understood by parishioners or people they are working with. My goal is to facilitate accent reduction, intonation, and flow of speech. The goal of the foreign speaker is to be understood by the listener."

As a hospital chaplain Father Isaac Fynn finds himself talking to staff and families on a daily basis. "I am from Ghana and grew up speaking six different languages. My native language does not have the vowel sounds and consonants like the English language. I have lived and worked in the U.S. for the past fifteen years. I am grateful to be working with Sister Paulette. She is easy to work with; she encourages me; I respect her. The work of accent reduction takes time and a great deal of patience on both of our parts, but I know it is worth it for those I serve," said Father Fynn.



Sister Paulette Shaw is shown with Father Isaac Ato Fynn from Ghana Diocese. He is a chaplain at St. Joseph Hospital in Tucson.

In each of the communities where the Sisters of St. Agnes have lived and ministered, there are two commonalities: a legacy of lives transformed and a love for the sisters who served there with compassion and selflessness. If anyone is interested in helping to organize a reunion in an area where the sisters have or had ministries, please contact Terry at tletvinchuck@csasisters.org or by calling 920-907-2311.



CSA

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Ways to connect with CSA:

CSA web site:

<http://www.csasisters.org/>

What's Happening at the UN:

<http://whatshappeningattheun.blogspot.com/>

(in the front page of our web site)

Streams 'N Stirrings, Sister Jean:

(in the front page of our web site)

Vocation E-Newsletter

(in the front page of our web site)



<http://www.facebook.com/sasisters?sk=wall>

(in the front page of our web site)



[http://www.youtube.com/user/](http://www.youtube.com/user/TheCSAChannel1)

TheCSAChannel1

(in the front page of our web site)

Partnering for a Just Peace

Sister Sally Ann Brickner, OSF

Have you ever met people who share the same passion as you? Have you ever encountered an organization devoted to goals that you also espouse? Such opportunities may engender a spirit of joy and a sense of empowerment. You no longer feel alone in the world. You have met new partners, people with whom you share a common heart.

Sister Sally Ann Brickner, OSF, was attracted to the position of Justice Peace and Ecology Coordinator for the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes because the Sisters are firmly committed to and actively working for justice and peace. Their statements on peace and nonviolence (2002) and on the role of women in church and society (1989, 2007) reflect the values that guide their actions. Their corporate stances against the death penalty (2006) and the trafficking of women and children (2007) foster human dignity.

“The values of the Sisters of St. Agnes and the Associates are reflective of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” says Sister Sally Ann Brickner. “They are values that I cherish and to which I have been committed as a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross (Green Bay). I feel deeply privileged to serve as the Justice, Peace and Ecology Coordinator for the Congregation.”



Sr. Sally Ann Brickner

Prior to accepting her appointment with CSA Sister Sally Ann was a faculty member and administrator at St. Norbert College, and directed the Peace and Justice Center. She served on her religious community's Leadership Team and as the Justice and Peace Coordinator. Among her many actions promoting justice and peace she served with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Colombia, SA.