

# VISION

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF NEW YORK

*Living Lives of Love*

Volume 20, Issue 2 • Spring 2016

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SISTERS  
of CHARITY  
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## Letter from Leadership

Dear Friends,

"As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be." These words came to my mind as I reviewed this issue of VISION. The need for mercy, charity, and innovation was present to us as an early Congregation and seems to be ever more present to us now. Our response now is as crucial as the early responses were.

The head covering, indeed the hair-styles and the very faces of those being the instruments and initiators have changed but the work has continued. Our large and small sponsored ministries and the individual ministries of sisters today carry out the Gospel Call. The Spiritual and Corporal works of Mercy are incarnate in the lives of our Sisters and Associates, ministry collaborators, and the mission of the institutions sponsored by the Sisters of Charity. We still touch the young, the old, and those on the margins.

As you read these articles, I hope you are inspired and energized. In the lives of the others, may you sense your own unique opportunity to participate in this ongoing mission and vision of charity with us, now and into the future. What innovative response can you make to a need before your eyes? Where can you link your gifts and talents to continue our work and maybe help us experience a new way of serving?

May the women and men of charity of this generation be as attuned to the signs of their times as those who went before us were to the needs of their day. "As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen."

Peace,



Mary Ann Daly, SC  
Leadership Team Member



VISION enables the Sisters of Charity of New York to make a cohesive statement about how we reveal God's love in our lives and the many and varied ways in which we respond to the signs of the times.



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# A Journey with Mercy

*By Claire Regan, SC*

In my ministry to the people of New Orleans, I have come to meet mothers who have lost their children to violence. In a weekly support group they share the stories of the loss, but more importantly of their struggle to find healing. A strong faith is characteristic of each of these mothers and time and again I am deeply touched by the action of God in their lives.

Pope Francis has declared this a Year of Mercy and from his Proclamation this quotation stirs me to write: "When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive." (No. 3)

The story of Marguerite exemplifies some of the power of mercy and its gift as a grace. Marguerite's daughter was killed at age 19 in the company of a young man who was the target of a shooting. The young man survived the bullet wounds, but the girl did not. It was a sudden and unexpected tragedy which rocked Marguerite's soul to its foundations. She is a faithful Methodist and her daughter accompanied her to church before the time she set off for college. Marguerite was proud of her daughter, who was attending her alma mater. Marguerite had served many years as a nurse at Charity Hospital and was trained and worked under the Daughters of Charity here in New Orleans. She has all the love that a good mother and devoted nurse can have.

The police apprehended the two young men accused in the murder of her child. Marguerite worked alongside the district attorney's office in pursuing the matter of the crime, which after almost two years finally came to trial. She saw with God's grace that these were two young men whose lives would be forever marked by this crime. She also considered that they had had limited means and opportunities in their lives to better themselves. On the day the trial was to commence, the district attorney asked Marguerite's permission to offer a final plea deal to the young men. She looked at them with all her love and the power of forgiveness welled up inside her. This was her chance and their last chance to express the love and mercy of God and to bring light into the darkness of the situation. Marguerite said "Yes"

to a 25-year sentence. One of the men was ready to sign the papers, pen in hand, when the other defendant brusquely and angrily talked him out of the deal and said that they should go to trial. Marguerite sadly shook her head, aware that in that instant the fate of the young men was to be changed beyond anything she could mend.

Pope Francis comments on Psalm 136: "To repeat continually 'For His mercy endures forever' as the psalm does, seems to break through the dimensions of space and time, inserting everything into the eternal mystery of love. It is as if to say that not only in history, but for all eternity man will always be under the merciful gaze of the Father." (No. 7)

Yes, in that moment, Marguerite set her merciful gaze upon these two young men, yet it was not to be returned. Her heart broke for two reasons: their future would be sealed by the verdict of the court and she would have to endure the pain of the trial. She would have to witness the story retold in graphic detail over the course of the next week and two days. The men were found guilty and sentenced to 40 years to life with no parole.

Marguerite realizes that she has been fortunate to see justice in the matter of her daughter's murder. Many of the mothers cannot hold the same hope in coming to terms with their loss. She continues to come faithfully to group each week because she knows the power of witness and strength which her story offers to other mothers. She knows she has been richly blessed by God during this journey to healing and she wishes to extend that

healing grace beyond herself. Marguerite lives the truth found in this quotation from Pope Francis' proclamation: "From the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God, the great river of mercy wells up and overflows unceasingly. It is a spring that will never run dry, no matter how many people draw from it." (No. 25)

Ministering with the mothers, I have become more aware of God's many blessings to me and have come to see that the greatest blessing of all is God's love. It is healing, nurturing, all inclusive, unbounded, and expansive as it is the very nature of God.





On the first day of class, residents at St. Vincent's Manor in Staten Island learn the basics of tapping, swiping, and social networking by challenging each other in Tic Tac Toe.

A student volunteer from Fordham Prep tutors a young boy at POTS' Family Club.



## Good News Abounds at Sisters of Charity Sponsored Ministries

*By Regina Bechtle, SC  
with additional reporting by Sisters Carol Barnes,  
Donna Dodge, and Karen Helfenstein,  
Ms. Vanessa Reilly, and Mr. Jack Marth*

**R**ou'd never know it from the headlines in the paper or the ticker on the evening news, but there's plenty of good news to celebrate, especially in our SCNY-sponsored ministries. From the largest institution to the smallest program, exciting things are happening. Each ministry uniquely and creatively lives the mission of Charity. Here's a sample, with more to come in the next issue.

### SISTERS OF CHARITY HOUSING

Our Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation, a ministry begun in 1986, provides affordable and supportive housing for over 800 residents at 11 sites: seven in Staten Island, one in Rockland County, and three in Manhattan. There's lots of life and energy in the efforts to build community and collaboration (and we're only describing a few of the sites below).

**Staten Island, New York Sisters of Charity Housing** is always looking for ways to foster the sense of community in its independent-living senior residences. In the six Staten Island sites, for example, there is both blessing and challenge in the rich diversity of the residents, since there are often language barriers between seniors who might otherwise be great friends and support systems for one another. Residents speak Russian, Italian, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Farsi, to name just a few languages.

Executive Director Sr. Donna Dodge had the idea that residents could learn about and communicate with each other even if they didn't speak the same language. This winter, she received a grant from the Northfield Local Development Corporation to purchase iPads and to hire a consultant to teach basic iPad skills at the senior residences. (Read more about Sr. Donna at <http://cny.org/stories/For-Sister-of-Charity-Dignity-Comes-With-a-Sense-of-Place,12244>.)

The pilot program began at St. Vincent's Manor and St. Elizabeth's Manor in the spring of 2016. As Sister Donna reports, residents are learning that language is indeed no barrier. They are enjoying discovering technology skills for the first time, using specially selected translation and cultural apps to communicate with one another and share their backgrounds, and taking selfies. Sister Donna continues to fine tune the program and will expand this creative venture to additional residences over the spring and summer months. Read more at <https://sistersofcharityhousing.org/>. *Good news, indeed! Alleluia!*

**Seton Village (Rockland County, New York)** The current complex of three buildings, attractively set in a wooded residential area of Nanuet, can accommodate 106 residents, 55 and over. Sister Eileen P. Walsh, Resident Services Director, knows every person, their story, and their unique needs.

With encouragement from the Town of Clarkstown and in response to the great shortage of affordable housing in the area, planning has begun for an additional 94 one- and two-bedroom units to be built on vacant land adjacent to the current Seton Village. In collaboration with The New York Foundling,



20 units will be set aside for people with developmental disabilities who are able to live independently. The Foundling will also provide supportive services. As with all of the other 11 housing facilities sponsored by the Congregation, funding will come from outside sources: State and Federal funds, tax credits for investors, etc. Read more at <https://sistersof-charityhousing.org/seton-village/>. *Good news, indeed! Alleluia!*

### POTS (PART OF THE SOLUTION)

POTS (<http://www.potsbronx.org/>) describes itself as a “One-Stop Shop” whose mission is to help low-income persons and families “move from crisis to stability, and ultimately self-sufficiency.” In 1982, Sr. Jane Iannucelli, Fr. Ned Murphy, SJ, and Tim Boon began to serve hot soup to those in desperate poverty in a storefront located on Webster Avenue in the Fordham section of the Bronx. Since then POTS has expanded to offer multiple services: a Community Dining program that serves hundreds of hot meals each day, a clothing program, a food pantry serving over 600 families several times a month, medical care, pastoral counseling, psychotherapy, free legal services, and more. In a year, POTS serves more than 25,000 people, including 8,000 children.

Jack Marth, POTS Director of Programs and a SCNY Associate, helped develop a new program that POTS calls **The Family Club**. The POTS Family

Club is meant to educate families on nutrition and health, assist in advancing the academic performance of school-aged children, provide families with an opportunity to spend time together in a safe and supportive environment to foster family interaction and stability, and help families access other programs and resources.

An average of twenty-four families participate in the weekly evening sessions. Volunteer chefs help the mothers, fathers, and guardians prepare a meal. The adults learn about nutrition and learn skills to cook healthful meals for their families. While this is going on, the school-aged children are working with volunteer tutors (many from local schools like the College of Mount Saint Vincent, Fordham Prep and University, and Manhattan College). Once the meal is prepared, adults, their children, and the tutors sit down together to enjoy the meal the adults have prepared.

At other times during the week, the adults are also working with POTS social workers and case managers to develop case plans with short-term and long-term goals that will help advance family stability and self-sufficiency. This intensive engagement has helped many families meet goals, such as access to health care, obtaining work or getting a better job, admission to job training programs, earning a GED, and increased savings. *Good news, indeed! Alleluia!*



The Family Club at POTS meets on Wednesdays and Sundays in the fall and spring. The program welcomes volunteer tutors and volunteer chefs. Please contact POTS at [serve@potsbronx.org](mailto:serve@potsbronx.org) if you would like to help.

*Thank you*

### THE NEW YORK FOUNDLING

Simply staying abreast of The New York Foundling programs in all five boroughs ([www.nyfoundling.org](http://www.nyfoundling.org)) of New York City, its surrounding counties, and Puerto Rico could well be a full-time job. Young people in crisis, adolescents whose lives have gone off track, families breaking apart—these are only a few examples of the 27,000 children and families in need whom The Foundling serves each year. The Foundling is recognized nationally and beyond as a leader in innovative, successful, evidence-based programs in foster care, preventive services, and juvenile justice, to name but a few areas.

Here are some highlights from the Foundling’s website and Donor Impact Booklet 2015.

» **Mott Haven Academy Charter School** in the South Bronx (featured on February 12, 2016, on PBS Channel 13’s MetroFocus) received a 5-year charter renewal. Its pre-K through 5th grade scholars, many of whom are in the foster care system, regularly outperform children in New York City’s public schools. Mott Haven Academy plans to expand into middle school grades by September 2018.

*Continued, see page 14*

# Profile

## Sister Rita Meaney

### *For All God's People*

By Maryellen Blumlein, SC

Pope Francis has declared this the Year of Mercy and directed us to show mercy to all of God's creation. How wonderful when a person performs acts of kindness and mercy as part of their daily lives. Such is the case with one Sister of Charity who spent a major part of her ministerial life as a compassionate childcare worker and family advocate. Many Sisters of Charity have been involved in ministry to children, through healthcare, education, social services, and childcare. This is one sister's story—meet Sister Rita Meaney.

September 8, 1944 brought Sr. Rita Meaney to the community of the Sisters of Charity, where she began her ministry with four years in elementary education. After this she was transferred to St. Agatha's Home in Nanuet where she became a childcare worker, and the rest is history. She spent 15 wonderful years with the children of St. Agatha's, where she learned from some outstanding teachers—Sisters Cecilia Schneider and Joanne Ward, to name a few. Sister Rita observed both of them and was able to combine their techniques with her

own. In so doing she served the children at St. Agatha's with compassion and love.

In 1966, after completing her MSW, Sr. Rita was transferred to St. Joseph's Hall in Brooklyn as administrator. St. Joseph's Hall's history began in 1847 when Sr. Mary Constantia Hull was appointed superior of St. Paul's Orphanage. Her extraordinary efforts were instrumental in establishing an Industrial School at St. Paul's and the opening, in 1873, of St. Joseph's Hall on Willoughby Avenue. Sister Mary Constantia gave over forty years to the loving care of Brooklyn's orphaned children. Over the course of the next hundred years the Sisters of Charity continued the important work for the care and concern of the children and their families.

When Sr. Rita arrived she continued the Head Start Program and the two daycare programs begun by Sr. Cecilia Schneider. Education was a top priority for all of the girls in St. Joseph's. Some children went out to St. John the Baptist School while others attended the excellent public elementary school right there in St. Joseph's. The high-school-age girls attended Bishop McDonnell or one of the public schools in the area. St. Joseph's Hall continued to serve the needs of the surrounding area and the changing society.

As time went on, and convinced that the challenges faced by children and their families had changed, Sr. Rita and the Sisters of Charity were faced with the daunting task of closing St. Joseph's Hall. However, under Sr. Rita's capable direction and the umbrella of the Catholic Child Care Society of the Brooklyn Diocese, the children and their families continued to receive the much needed services. Sister Rita was deeply committed to the leadership role of volunteer agencies taken in the 1990s and beyond in the development of the services necessary for troubled children and families. The agency became known as St. Joseph Services for Children and Families and Sr. Rita became



From left: Bishop Francis Mugavero of Brooklyn, Gov. Hugh Carey, Howard Golden, Brooklyn Borough President, and Carmine Magazuno, Associate Director of St. Joseph Services for Children



# CHARITY SISTERS OF CHARITY NEW YORK HERITAGE

## SISTER MARY BASILIA MC CANN 1801<sup>?</sup>–1870

*By Mary E. Mc Cormick, SC*

There's much we do not know about the early life of Roseann Mc Cann: the date and place of her birth, her childhood, her education. Piecing together clues from the early records of the sisters, it's possible that she and her family, of Irish heritage, were settled somewhere in the Emmitsburg area, and that she received catechetical instruction from the sisters. Margaret George, one of the founding members of the community, wrote that Roseann had been prepared for her First Holy Communion by Mother Seton herself, probably in 1817. We know she worked as a bookkeeper at Mount Saint Mary's, the college and seminary located near Emmitsburg, before she petitioned to enter the community in 1828. In February 1830 she was received as a novice and given the name Sister Mary Basilia.

In her early years she was missioned to several places: Baltimore and Frederick in Maryland, and Martinsburg, West Virginia, where she was named Sister-Servant. In 1841 she was sent to New York to Rose Hill (later Fordham), the new seminary Bishop Hughes opened in New York. Basilia and a small local community of sisters were responsible for the physical maintenance of the seminary. They oversaw the cooking and cleaning, staffed the infirmary, and were the maternal presence for the young men pursuing their vocations as diocesan priests. (There she met a frequent visitor, James Roosevelt Bayley, nephew of Mother Seton. Bayley later became a Catholic and was ordained by Bishop Hughes in 1844.)

In 1846 Basilia was missioned to the hospital in St. Louis. She was there when the break between Emmitsburg and New York occurred, in December of that momentous year. It was not until July 1847, though, that Basilia decided to cast her lot with the New York community, and she was probably the last of the original 33 sisters to be accepted by Bishop Hughes. When she arrived back in New York she was missioned to St. Paul's, Brooklyn.

Bishops all over the United States and Canada were eager to have religious communities to serve the needs of their people. Bishop Walsh of Halifax, a friend of Bishop Hughes, was no exception. In 1849, when the New York community

was still struggling to make a go of it, Bishop Hughes persuaded the New York Council to send four sisters to Halifax, Nova Scotia, to begin the works of education and child care they had organized so well in New York. Basilia was named Sister Servant, responsible for the local community, as well as for the establishment of the free school and orphanage. Two hundred girls had registered for the school by the time the sisters arrived.

As with other endeavors, the beginning years were challenging. Another community had been invited to start an Academy, which adversely impacted one of the usual sources of revenue for the sisters' other works. There was attrition in the numbers of sisters who had come from New York, and from the young women, sent to the Mount for novitiate, who did not persevere.

Then, in 1855, the New York Council made several decisions that influenced the future of the Halifax enterprise. They decided to start a separate Motherhouse and novitiate in Halifax for local young women who felt called to religious life. The New York sisters would remain for three years to form the new community, after which they would be free to return to New York or become members of what would become the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul of Halifax.

Sister Basilia chose to return to New York in 1858. She was sent to New Jersey to serve in an orphanage in Jersey City, and remained there until her death on October 27, 1870. Her body was returned to New York and was buried in the cemetery on the hill at Mount Saint Vincent.

No picture of Basilia survives. She was described by a Halifax sister as "tall and erect, dark complexion, penetrating black eyes, bright, cheerful disposition."

She had started as a Sister of Charity of St. Joseph's, Emmitsburg, became a Sister of Charity of New York, and was named first Mother of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax. Despite all the changes, she remained a faithful daughter of Elizabeth Seton, who had once claimed that she was a citizen of the world. Basilia, no doubt, would have echoed that sentiment.



“Wouldn’t it be great if we ...” has been the beginning to countless programs in the 200-year history of the Sisters of Charity of New York, programs that have responded to needs both big and small. As our mission continues to grow through our sponsored works, we witness the very same creativity and passion—charism, as we call it—in the hearts of our partners in ministry. The Princess Project, the inspiration of Kylee McGrane and Margaret McAndrew, two College of Mount Saint Vincent (CMSV) students, began with that very question and the answer was purely magical.

Kylee and Margaret (Maggie) will complete their third year in the Seton Service and Leadership Program in May. Started by the Sisters of Charity in 2011, the program offers four-year full room and board scholarships to ten students who have an outstanding academic profile, demonstrate community service, and possess leadership skills. (See Vision, Autumn 2012, page 9). One of the main goals addressed by Sr. Mary Lou McGrath, the Sisters of Charity coordinator for the program, and the Office of Campus Ministry is to help students gain an understanding of the Vincentian-Setonian spirit of service and to help them embrace active leadership roles on and off campus.

Kylee and Maggie met in freshman year and became fast friends. Involved in parish service at an early age, Maggie participated in many service missions with her family, primarily serving the underprivileged and homeless communities. At CMSV she was a tutor as well as head of volunteers for Park Ledge, an after-school program for low income families, where she spent time with the children doing crafts and helping with homework.

In high school, Kylee was active in several service projects. After transferring schools in her junior year because of bullying, she began advocating on an anti-bullying platform. In her freshman year at CMSV she also worked with the homeless communities, but her primary service project was an anti-bullying after-school program with a neighborhood Catholic elementary school.

# The Princess Project



Kylee (left) and Maggie have shown a natural gift for working with children. Children welcome their visits with great enthusiasm, as do their parents and caretakers.

After their sophomore year, when their service projects organically dissolved, they were searching for a new project to which they could devote their talents. While watching *Frozen* with her family during the 2014 winter break, Kylee suddenly thought: “Wouldn’t it be great if we could visit kids in the hospital dressed as princesses?” She shared the idea with Maggie, who enthusiastically agreed.

St. Vincent de Paul, who mastered the art of organization, would be proud of these two bright and determined young women. From the very beginning, their approach was well thought out and organized. They devised a plan to raise funds for the purchase of authentic, theme-park-quality costumes: they initiated a Go Fund Me page where family and friends could contribute to their cause, they held bake sales, and they sold tee shirts. Maggie’s mother, a member of the board at Our Lady of Victory in West Haven, CT, recognized the potential in the program and encouraged Kylee and Maggie to create an executive board. Professor Jonathan Rosenberg, instructor of business and economics at CMSV, oversees this student service club and has been a valuable source for the project.

With the help of family, friends, supporters, and top-quality costumes, the two students were transformed into Elsa (Kylee) and Anna (Maggie), princesses from the animated feature *Frozen*. After researching and approaching several children’s hospitals in the area, they were welcomed by Cohen Children’s Medical Center in New Hyde Park (Long Island), NY, to make their debut





# Princess Project

in April 2014. The hospital provided an extensive packet of materials giving guidelines and expectations for the visit. Cohen, as well as all other hospitals, briefs volunteers every time they visit.

When the day came to walk into a hospital in their princess costumes, Kylee and Maggie had typical jitters. Maggie recalls, “I was so nervous. I had the monumental task of portraying this character that children love so much. I wanted to give them the very best impression of her, so that the children would feel like they were actually meeting a character from the movie. Once we got to the hospital we were met by a little girl belting out a song from Frozen. Kylee and I were totally enamored and my nervousness washed away. I felt the love coming from her and realized this is not about me, not about my comfort level, but about the kids. It’s always about the kids.”

Kylee adds, “I was extremely nervous the first day. I still get nervous before every visit. The things that we see can be really difficult to process. Knowing that we are well prepared logistically calms me down. We don’t go into the hospitals to create a spectacle. We go to make new best friends and when you really think about it, there’s nothing scary about sitting on the floor having a tea party with a four-year-old. There’s no reason to be nervous when all a child wants is to hear you sing their favorite song. And there’s nothing better than getting tons of hugs from such amazing kids.”



**From left:** Maggie, Kylee, and Miss New York USA, Serena Bucaj, visited Cohen’s Children’s Medical Center and Montefiore Hospital.

Since that first visit two years ago, 15 “princesses” have signed on to the project and an additional 13 volunteers contribute in various capacities, such as fund raising. New princesses must raise \$300 to purchase their own costumes. Utilizing the materials collected from the hospitals, Kylee and Maggie train all new princesses for one semester and require them to accompany an experienced princess on visits before donning their own costumes.

In addition to the Cohen Children’s Medical Center, the Princess Project has visited more than a dozen hospitals and schools in the New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania areas. They also attend private parties for children with medical conditions.

Kylee and Maggie have used the Princess Project to incorporate

all of the service work they have done. In Spring 2016 they held a toiletry drive (stressing feminine products) for distribution on a Midnight Run (the Campus Ministry project serving New York City homeless). They recently initiated a “Wear Your Crown” seminar for young women in which they stress the importance of supporting other women and finding their passion through service work.

With a presence on FaceBook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and their own website, the Princess Project has been well documented. Thirty colleges have reached



Kylee, Maggie, fifteen other princesses or fantasy characters, and volunteers from the Princess Project visited St. Ephrem School in Brooklyn for the Swish for Kids Basketball Classic.

*Continued, see page 15, bottom*

# Our Sisters of Charity and the Gangs of New York

By Maureen McKew

As seen on [www.archny.org](http://www.archny.org)  
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About a year ago, I told you about the time Billy the Kid entered a bank in the Old West for the purpose of robbing it. Inside was a Sister of Charity. Billy took one look, tipped his hat, and walked back out. Anyone who has ever encountered a Sister of Charity would not be surprised by this. However, you might be surprised to learn that Sisters of Charity of New York took on an even greater challenge than Billy the Kid: the infamous gangs of 19th century New York. If you are in lower Manhattan, be sure to visit the Chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary on State Street for a wonderful exhibit titled “How the Sisters of Charity Tamed the Gangs of New York.” The exhibit will be on until August. The Chapel is on the site of a home of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, founder of the Sisters of Charity. The Sisters of Charity of New York trace their roots to the community she established over 200 years ago in Emmitsburg, Maryland, for the sake of helping poor people.

Now, how did the Sisters defeat the gangs? By opening orphanages and schools to house and educate the immigrant children, many of whom were homeless and alone. Their families perhaps died on the coffin ships bringing the famine Irish to New York in the 1840s and 1850s or succumbed to one of the diseases that raged through the notorious Five Points slum. Some female orphans found work as domestic servants in the homes of the wealthy. The boys were not employable, so many fell into crime.

When you visit the exhibit, you’ll see the number of schools, orphanages and hospitals the Sisters of Charity opened in New York City and upstate. They started the New York Foundling Hospital with just \$5.00. They established and ran the majority of the Catholic parochial schools. Their famous and sorely missed St. Vincent’s Hospital in Greenwich Village cared for the survivors of RMS Titanic in April of 1912.

Until the 1970s, New Yorkers could spot the Sisters, who

dressed in distinctive habits that were actually the garb of 19th century widows like Elizabeth Seton. Many of the youngsters they educated went on to careers, business, politics, the law, medicine, priesthood, religious life, and various trades. And these students never forgot their teachers. When the Sisters boarded the old Fifth Avenue Coach Line, for example, many a bus driver would put his hand over the fare box. The clergy and teaching brothers did not receive the same privilege.

Because the Sisters have for the past 40 years dressed in modern clothes, they are difficult to pick out. But they are here and also in Latin America. Their monuments in New York are all around, not so much in buildings, but in the descendants of their students, including those 19th century street urchins they enabled to escape from poverty and crime.

By the way, while you are at the Sisters’ exhibit, be sure to take a look at the history of Watson House, founded by Charlotte Grace O’Brien, a woman cut from the same fine cloth as Mother Seton, to care for young immigrant girls.

**Ed Note:** Maureen McKew was taught by the Sisters of Charity at St. Ignatius Loyola. Her eighth grade teacher, Sr. Maria Monica Cassidy, told her that she might be able to make a living as a writer. She did.

Ms. McKew is the director of communications for the Archdiocesan Catechetical Office, as well as director of the New York Catholic Bible School Program. Her teachers at St. Ignatius would be proud, especially Sr. Maria Monica.

Our Lady of the Rosary welcomes visitors to this exhibit on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 1-4 pm or by appointment. Directions to the church and regular Mass times are listed on the church’s website at [www.spcolr.org](http://www.spcolr.org).

**Above images:** Five of the twelve panels in the exhibit now on display at the Seton Shrine at Our Lady of the Rosary in lower Manhattan.



# Why I Study Women Religious

By Thomas Rzeznik, Ph.D,  
Associate Professor of History, Seton Hall University

Adapted by Regina Bechtle, SC



“I hadn’t planned to study nuns,” confessed Thomas Rzeznik, Ph.D. Dr. Rzeznik, Associate Professor of History at Seton Hall University, is one of many scholars whose research interests have led them to the archives of communities of women religious. There they have found fascinating stories waiting to be teased out from boxes of carefully preserved records.



Sister Catherine Sherry, SC, early in her career at St. Vincent's Hospital. A chemist, microbiologist, and hematologist, she would later serve as Director of Laboratories.

Rzeznik's early research on wealthy Catholics in Philadelphia brought him to the Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, the religious order founded by St. Katharine Drexel, one of the wealthiest women of her day. “She used her inheritance of a banking fortune to support missionary outreach to blacks and Native Americans,” he writes in a recent article,\* “sponsoring churches and schools throughout the American South and West and sustaining the work of her religious community.”

Her trust fund required that, even as a religious, she continue to control her own assets. Rzeznik concluded, “As a result, she was distinguished not only by her wealth, but by the autonomy it afforded her. She retained her personal identity, set her own philanthropic agenda, executed and scrutinized contracts, and conducted her business affairs with an acumen that rivaled her economic equals.”

Drexel was not unique, Rzeznik realized. Studying her life, he says, “made me more mindful of the corporate activities of women religious and their role in building, sustaining, and managing the institutional life of the church.” Communities of women religious extended the Catholic Church's presence as they reached out to serve people on the margins, and in doing so, “they advanced a new vision of what the church might be.”

Rzeznik's research has led him to “appreciate how women religious did more than simply staff Catholic institutions. Rather, they supplied those institutions with their animating spirit and inner dynamism.” That insight has been clarified and confirmed in his current work on the history of St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City, in pursuit of which he has made numerous research trips across the Hudson River to the Archives of the Sisters of Charity at Mount Saint Vincent.

He writes, “Founded by the Sisters of Charity in 1848, St. Vincent's stood at the vanguard of Catholic healthcare for more than one hundred and fifty years. It's especially noteworthy for its commitment to providing care for the poor and marginalized, from immigrants and orphans to the early patients of the AIDS crisis. It was the physical manifestation of the order's mission and charism.”

\*This column appeared in the History of Women Religious section of the Spring 2016 *American Catholic Studies Newsletter*. Reprinted with permission.



# Chef Jean

## *Chef Jean Recommends ...*

### **Lemon Raspberry Sponge Cake with White Chocolate Shards**

The recipe is presented without re-sizing, providing 8 servings  
(As seen at ohsweetday.com)

#### **Ingredients**

4 oz. white chocolate chopped  
3 large eggs, room temperature,  
separated  
½ cup granulated sugar divided  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
1 ½ teaspoons lemon juice  
1 tablespoon lemon zest  
½ cup cake flour sifted  
1 ½ cups whipping cream  
2 tablespoons icing sugar  
¼ cup good quality berry jam  
2 cups fresh raspberries



#### **Preparation**

To prepare white chocolate shards, place the chopped chocolate in the top of a double boiler set over hot water and allow to melt, stirring occasionally.

Pour the melted chocolate onto a large parchment paper. Use an offset spatula to spread it in a thin and even layer. Place another sheet of same-sized parchment paper on top and gently press to release the air bubbles.

Starting with one short end, roll the parchment paper tightly into a tube about one inch wide. Chill in the refrigerator until set, at least 2 hours, or a few days before the cake is made. Remove the tube from the refrigerator. Unroll the tube in one quick motion to create the chocolate shards. If necessary, gently break the pieces to a desired size. Refrigerate the shards until ready to use.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line the bottom of an 8-inch cake pan with parchment paper. Set aside.

In a bowl of a standing mixer with a whisk attachment, beat egg whites on medium speed until foamy. Add 2 tablespoons sugar and continue beating until stiff peaks form. Scrape the meringue into another bowl. Set aside.

In the same mixing bowl, beat egg yolks and ¼ cup sugar on high speed until thick and light in color, about 5 minutes. Add vanilla, lemon juice and zest. Mix for another minute.

Sift flour and the remaining 2 tablespoons sugar over top of egg yolk mixture, followed by folding in half of the meringue.

Fold the rest of the meringue into the batter until just incorporated. Pour the batter into the prepared pans and smooth the top.

Bake for 25 minutes or until the cake is golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Remove the cake from the oven and let cool in pan for 5 minutes. Run a thin knife around the cake edge and place the cake on a wire rack to cool completely.

Beat whipping cream with icing sugar until the mixture holds stiff peaks. Place into the fridge to chill.

To assemble the cake, cut cake in half horizontally. Place one cake layer on the serving plate and spread with the jam. Gently spread the whipped cream on top. Top with another cake layer.

Frost the top and sides of cake with the remaining whipping cream. Press white chocolate shards around the sides and pile raspberries on top. Refrigerate until ready to serve, preferably within 3 hours.

#### **Profile: Sister Rita Meaney, SC**

*Continued from p. 6*

the Executive Director. St. Joseph Services for Children was located at the former St. Joseph's Hall on Willoughby Avenue, Brooklyn.

In declaring Sr. Rita their 1995 Woman of Distinction, the Soroptimists International of Brooklyn declared that "St. Joseph Services for Children has not only grown but thrived under Sr. Rita's direction. St. Joseph Services offers community-based programs in the prevention of child abuse and neglect; encourages independent living skills among adolescents; targets the special needs of foster care children with AIDS and other diseases; and provides such vital services as healthcare, psychological counseling, and educational and vocational guidance."

In 1995, Sr. Rita retired from her position, but still desiring

to continue her ministry with children, she worked as a volunteer in the Adoption Department of The New York Foundling

The Board of Directors of the Catholic Child Care Society made the decision to close St. Joseph's Services for Children and Families on June 30, 2001. Sister Rita wrote a letter to the Community of the Sisters of Charity which concluded, "It is difficult to witness the end of an important piece of community history. It is important, however, to move on with gratitude on an individual level for the opportunity to have served, and with pride as a congregation for years of commitment on the part of so many." Throughout her 72 years as a Sister of Charity, Sr. Rita Meaney has served God's people with compassion and mercy. She continues, in her retirement, to serve the people of God through prayer and witness.



# RESPONDING TO God's Call

## *Sister Doris Pagano, SC*

*By Maryellen Blumlein, SC*

Sister Doris Ann Pagano entered the Sisters of Charity of New York in September 1956. For her first ten years of ministry, she worked in elementary schools. Then, upon coming to know Sr. Teresita Regina Austin, the Mission Coordinator for the Sisters of Charity at that time, Sr. Doris received a strong call to become a missionary. In 1970 she began her preparation for responding to God's will to do missionary work.

Sister Doris spent one year studying in Cochabamba, Bolivia before going to El Novillero, Santa Lucia, in Guatemala. There she worked for 11 years in parish ministry and spirituality with the Guatemalan people. In 1985 Sr. Doris returned to Guatemala, spending two years in San Antonio, San Marcos, and the next nine years in San Cristobal Cucho, San Marcos. There Sr. Doris was a Pastoral Minister, working among the people, helping them with both spiritual and material needs. People met and prayed together and were able to seek help from Sr. Doris and each other to face the trials of their daily lives. They also ritualized and celebrated the good things in their lives.

Upon her return to New York in 1996, Sr. Doris trained to be a chaplain and spent the next 13 years ministering to clients in the Cabrini Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation. In addition to bringing Holy Communion to the clients, she brought them the gospel message through her words and actions. Clients, as well as their families, always had a concerned and actively listening presence in Sr. Doris.



**From left:** Sisters Elizabeth Gilmore, SHCJ, Doris Pagano, and Kathleen Byrnes while on mission in Guatemala.

Today, Sr. Doris Pagano is retired and living in Kittay House in the Bronx with the other Sisters of Charity who moved to this retirement home in November, 2014. Since then they have built community among themselves and with the aides who serve their medical and personal needs. The sisters and the staff have come to know each other and share the joys and challenges which they all face in their lives.

In case you are wondering how the beginning of this story is related to the presence of the sisters at Kittay House, wonder no longer.

Sister Doris continues her spiritual ministry with the other sisters with whom she lives. On Friday afternoons a group of sisters gather to read and share about the upcoming Sunday gospel. Sister Doris actively participates in the planning of liturgies, and during Lent 2016 she organized and led the Stations of the Cross each week.

Throughout their lives the sisters have shared their love of God through their prayer and ministry. In their retirement they continue to serve God through their prayer, service, and witness to the gospel. Sister Doris Pagano—teacher, missionary, pastoral minister, chaplain, spiritual guide—follows what Pope Francis has asked all of us to do in this Year of Mercy: be kind and merciful to all those whom you meet. Whether it was in the mountains of Guatemala or now in her home in the Bronx, New York, Sr. Doris continues to provide opportunities for others to deepen their own spiritual lives as she uses her many gifts and talents.



**Above and right:** The New York Foundling's new lobby pays tribute to Elizabeth Seton and the Sisters of Charity.

- » Two pilot programs seek to tackle the digital divide: **Digital Literacy** provides technology access and training to foster children and their caregivers; **Technology Workforce Development** is a collaborative effort of social services nonprofits, educational institutions, and private companies to bring technology education and employment opportunities to foster youth across New York City.
- » The **Transition to Adulthood** program provides housing and social support for 18–25-year-olds who “age out” of the foster care system by connecting them with community partners.
- » The **Crisis Nursery**, in its 34th year of operation, offers 24/7 respite care for small children whose parents are experiencing unimaginable challenges.
- » The Foundling's **Child Abuse Prevention Program** has educated over half a million school-aged children on ways to recognize, resist, and report child abuse.
- » The **Developmental Disabilities Division** serves approximately 270 adults, most in housing with 24/7 supervision.
- » Its on-site charitable business partner, **COFFEED**, has donated over \$50,000 to The Foundling since it opened in February 2015.

The Foundling's President/CEO, Bill Bacaglini, was recently appointed by Mayor de Blasio to the NYC Children's Cabinet Advisory Board, a policy initiative to support children's health and well-being across 24 City agencies.

As its programs adapt to changing needs, The Foundling is committed to keeping its mission front and center. The iconic cradle (which was displayed at Ellis Island in the LCWR exhibit, *Women & Spirit*) now graces the library of the Foundling's large office in Queens. Renovations in the 16th Street building include these reminders of the story of compassionate care that is its living legacy.

- » A **Mission Wall** with the theme “Impelled by God's Love” features images of Sisters Mary Irene Fitzgibbon, Teresa

Vincent McCrystal, and Ann Aloysia Collins and the Foundling's core values.

- » In the **main lobby** are a portrait in tiles of Elizabeth Seton, images of the orphan train, of sisters and staff carrying children from the 68th Street building to the Third Avenue building, and of the legendary Sr. Marilda Joseph. To come, says Sr. Carol Barnes, Mission Integration Director, will be a display case with copies of letters once pinned to abandoned babies.



- » A **Reflection Room** will offer staff a quiet space to reconnect with the mission. The room will feature Sr. Irene's desk, recently moved back from the Congregation's Archives, a Kindle with digital versions of the Bible in English and Hebrew and the Koran, and furnishings that foster meditative stillness.
- » Several **Conference Rooms** in the building are each named after a Sister of Charity significant to the Foundling and the mission of Charity: St. Elizabeth Seton, Sr. M. Irene Fitzgibbon, and Sr. Cecilia Schneider.

Administrators and staff of The Foundling give new meaning to the phrase from the original Rule of the Sisters of Charity: to provide “every temporal and spiritual service in their power” to those in need. *Good news, indeed! Alleluia!*

Our 2015 Assembly's “Call to Mission” challenges the Congregation to “ignite and sustain our gospel mission with those who are living in poverty and on the margins, ... to do everything in our power to respond prophetically to the signs of the times, ... to collaborate with others in direct service, systemic change, and advocacy.” We celebrate our sponsored ministries and our dedicated colleagues with whom and through whom “Our God is doing new things ... do you not perceive it?”

Read more about all of the Sisters of Charity sponsored ministries at <http://www.scny.org/ministries>



# Vision Jornada

Cecilia Harriendorf, SC

For four-and-a-half glorious days in February, Nueva Santa Caterina Ixtahuacán hosted a “Vision Jornada,” bringing needed attention to the indigenous people of the Sololá and Quetzaltenango regions of Guatemala.

The Jornada (a Spanish word meaning a time of work and celebration), was sponsored by The Hope Alliance, which is headquartered in Park City, Utah. This nonprofit has been sponsoring Medical and Vision trips worldwide since 1999. It was a member of the internationally known Lions Club in Xela who approached Family-to-Family representative Adela Tambriz about the possible use of our clinic and

complex facilities. She and Doctor José Miguel were delighted to be a part of such an important activity. In addition, Sisters of Charity Marie Tolle and Ceil Harriendorf were on hand to welcome the volunteers, provide translations, and visit with patients who were waiting to be seen.

The Vision Team consisted of 21 individuals: two eye doctors, volunteers who have been trained to conduct basic eye examinations, computer personnel to record patient information, and support staff. At the conclusion of their work week, the Vision Team had seen 1605 patients, distributed over 2,000 pairs of recycled eyeglasses, and identified over

100 candidates for cataract surgery. The Hope Alliance said, “everyone loved the Santa Caterina Community” and we “look forward to many more Jornadas in Guatemala.” So do we!

The Sisters of Charity have supported the people of Guatemala for the past 45 years. Our efforts rarely make headlines, but they always make a significant difference in the lives of the people we have been privileged to serve.

If we haven’t said it lately—thank you. And on behalf of the 1605 Guatemalans who are seeing things a lot more clearly because we were in the right spot, at the right moment—gracias y muchas bendiciones.

## Princess Project

*Continued from page 9*



**Left:** Seton Scholars Maggie McAndrew (left) and Kylee McGrane met with Sr. Jane Iannucelli at the SC Center.

unit as well as children with AIDS, was not only impressed by the entrepreneurship and insight shown by these young women, she was truly touched by their spirit and their sense of mission: “When you bring joy to the heart of a sick child, you also bring healing. Kylee and Maggie are unbelievable advocates for children’s health.”

The College of Mount Saint Vincent is understandably proud of Kylee and Maggie and of the Princess Project, and the Sisters of Charity take special pride in having played a role in their development as servant leaders on and off campus.

out to Kylee and Maggie to start their own Princess Projects.

In an effort to grow the program, Kylee and Maggie are creating a not-for-profit organization and will officially change the name to Moment of Magic Foundation. They are also planning to add a super-hero program next year. All donations and funds collected by the program are used to defray any costs incurred. A visit to their website ([theprincessprojectnyc.org](http://theprincessprojectnyc.org)) will inform and enchant at the same time.

In April, Kylee and Maggie stopped by the Sisters of Charity center and talked with Sr. Jane Iannucelli about their project. Sister Jane, who has worked with children in a burn

## SHARE YOUR STORY

The Sisters of Charity of New York celebrate 200 years of service in 2017. In preparation of this milestone we want to hear from you, our former Catholic School students, nursing students, employees, partners in ministry, etc. We are actively seeking 200 compelling stories telling how the Congregation has influenced your life. Email your story to [emiranda@scny.org](mailto:emiranda@scny.org) or drop us a note in the envelope found inside this issue. *Thank you!*

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## Save the Dates



### Third Annual Fall Luncheon



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*In support of our ministries  
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