

VISION

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF NEW YORK

Living Lives of Love

Volume 20, Issue 3 • Summer 2016

Sr. Constance
Brennan

Page 3

All in the
Family

Page 5

2016 Charity
in the City

Page 10

LEFSA
Celebrates
Thirty Years

Page 11

NACAR
Turns Twenty

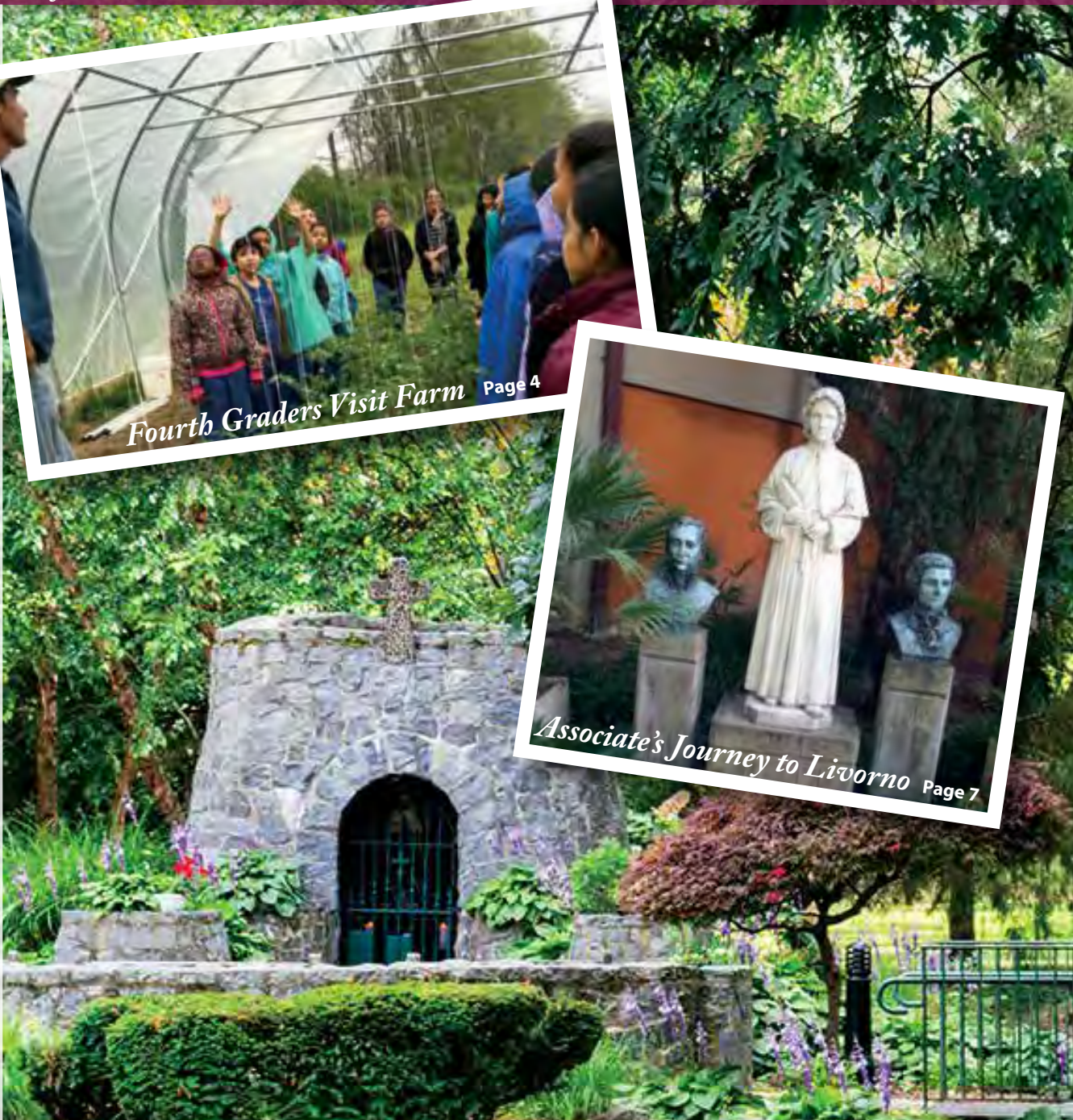
Page 12



Fourth Graders Visit Farm Page 4



Associate's Journey to Livorno Page 7



SISTERS
of CHARITY
NEW YORK

*More Good News
At SC-Sponsored Ministries*

Letter from Leadership

Dear Friends,

There's a song that says, "Summertime, and the living is easy!" Isn't this a time of the year that we often take for vacation, retreat, or even a trip outside of our neighborhood, or better yet, out of our comfort zone? These activities renew, refresh, and teach us new lessons for life that are kept in our memory banks to hold and to cherish.

This edition of VISION breaks open places for us that perhaps we have not traveled to yet. It invites us to take part in a pilgrimage to Livorno where Elizabeth Seton's life was forever changed and where she suffered, grieved, and began her conversion to Catholicism.



We are taken to our humble beginnings in the city parks, streets, and homeless shelters where the greatest need is to listen, to pray, or just "be" with someone in despair and hopelessness. This is where Life Experience and Faith Sharing Associates (LEFSA) was born.

The path and birth of the Associate movement in North America are filled with the courage and faith of its founders. The expansion of inter-congregational Associate relationships paved a new way for support, collaboration, and most especially for living our founding charisms.

The children from St. Athanasius School in the South Bronx will take us on their exploration to Sisters Hill Farm in Stanfordville, NY. Their learnings and comments on this experience are precious—the things we often take for granted!

May you open up your hearts for an adventurous summer trip, or better still, go and visit where your heart leads you. Only then will your horizon move.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Byrnes, SC".

Kathleen Byrnes, SC
Leadership Team Member

COVER PHOTOS

Top: Farmer Dave explained how tomatoes are grown in a high tunnel to fourth graders from St. Athanasius. He found the kids to be "a very enthusiastic, engaged and fun loving group!"

Bottom: Associate Lisa Shay visited Livorno, Italy, where St. Elizabeth Seton first learned about Catholicism.



Do You Share Your VISION?

When you finish reading your copy of VISION, we'd appreciate it if you would consider passing it along and help us spread the word about our work and history. Drop it off in your church vestibule, your local Catholic school, doctor's office or other waiting room, laundromat, community or senior center, or any other place you see a stack of magazines. You never know who might pick it up—perhaps a former student, friend, or colleague. Thank you!

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.



SISTERS
of CHARITY
NEW YORK

ADVISORY BOARD

Regina Bechtle, SC
Maryellen Blumlein, SC
Anne Marie Gardiner
Mary E. Mc Cormick, SC
M. Ellen McGovern, SC
Patricia McGowan, SC
Dominica Rocchio, SC

EDITOR

Elena Miranda

ASSISTANT TO EDITOR

Margaret Comaskey, SC Associate

Articles without attribution are by the editor.

Article contributions to this publication are welcome. All submissions are subject to editorial and space constraints. See rear cover for our mailing address and contact information.

©2016 Sisters of Charity of New York
Articles or material may be reproduced with permission.

RESPONDING TO God's Call

Sister Constance Brennan, SC

By Maryellen Blumlein, SC



two dramatic performances during this past year, attends many talks, plays Trivial Pursuit, helps other residents, and works in the store in Kittay for a few hours each week.

Among her many friends at Kittay is a Jewish woman who was not familiar with the Old Testament. Sister Connie, who has always loved teaching and talking about the Old Testament, meets with this friend regularly and they have discussions on the books of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Sister Connie has been interviewed by newspaper, television, and radio reporters and has been appointed to the Residents Board. She loves reading, watching the news, receiving visitors, socializing, and having more time to spend in prayer and reflection, and—we can't forget—cats. For someone who is supposed to be retired, Sr. Connie is certainly very active. She enjoys life at Kittay and continues to serve God's people as she has done for the past sixty years.

Sister Connie Brennan is well known as a dynamic teacher and librarian who was able to make academic subjects and stories come alive. In addition, she and the sisters with whom she lived for many years in St. Joseph's Convent in Yonkers spent their Saturdays and Sundays teaching in religious education programs, known then as CCD. They also ran a "Santa's Workshop" in December to help parents in the parish and neighborhood provide Christmas presents for their children.

Throughout her life as a Sister of Charity, Sr. Connie was actively involved with various committees and task forces, but there are other sides of her life that are not known to everyone. She is an author of stories for children, an oral storyteller, a media specialist, and a reviewer of children's books for the Catholic Library Association. With other Sisters of Charity, she has coordinated slide presentations and written prayers for the Congregation. She is an excellent public speaker who has trained many students in the art of forensics. Sister Connie spent 49 years in education, on all levels, before becoming the Archivist for the Congregation, a position she held from 2007 until 2014.

And what, you may ask, is Sr. Constance Brennan doing now? Don't think for a minute that she is sitting quietly in her room at Kittay House. No, Sr. Connie is involved in many activities offered in this retirement home. She participated in



Sister Connie donned the traditional Sisters of Charity habit to portray Elizabeth Ann Seton for the children at the Elizabeth Seton Pediatric Center. Yankee the cat also made an appearance to help Elizabeth tell the children the story of her life.



Saint Athanasius Fourth Graders Visit Sisters Hill Farm

By Regina Bechtle, SC
& Mary Ann Garisto, SC

For many New Yorkers, major traffic jams and impending rain made a recent Friday the 13th live up to its unlucky reputation. But on that same May day, 24 energetic fourth graders from St. Athanasius School in the South Bronx didn't seem to mind that they had been riding a bus for more than five hours en route to Sisters Hill Farm in Stanfordville, NY. When they finally arrived at their destination, they sprinted out of the bus to run, jump, and roll in the lush grass—a treat for many of them who usually see only concrete sidewalks in their surroundings.

At the Community Supported Agriculture farm sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of New York (<http://www.scny.org/ministries/sisters-hill-farm/>), it was beginning to rain, but that made no difference. The students were eager to enjoy their brief time in the country. After a snack of juice and cookies donated by the Ritz Carlton Hotel Central Park (see VISION, Winter 2016, p. 7) they were ready to enter into the adventures planned by Sr. Mary Ann Garisto, the farm's Director, and Farmer Dave Hambleton.

By then the rain was heavy and steady, so Farmer Dave switched to Plan B (indoor sites) for his tour of the farm. In the Greenhouse, filled with seedlings ready to be planted, and the new "hoop house," where tomatoes were being grown, he spoke about the challenges of growing food without using chemical fertilizers and pesticides, as well as

the meaning of farming sustainably. The barn, filled with farm equipment, was a big hit with the students, who were thrilled to be able to sit on the tractors and mowers.

A goal of the day was to see how food is grown—a new world for students whose usual contact with the food they eat is the supermarket or bodega. The children, well prepared by their teacher, Ms. Yvonne Estrada, asked many insightful questions.

Plans for the day included play time, since many of the students have little opportunity to play outdoors. Even the rain couldn't stop the potato sack races. The excited students raced, fell, tumbled,

laughed a lot, and got very wet, but they had a great time.

Sister Mary Ann, a former biology teacher, ended the day with a lesson on how to grow a plant. Each student filled a large paper cup with soil, planted some bean and radish seeds in it, and proudly took it home with full instructions on how to care for it.

Though the day had been shortened, the students left, tired but with big smiles and much gratitude for the time spent at Sisters Hill Farm. Sister Mary Ann and Farmer Dave were glad for the opportunity to engage city kids in a hands-on encounter with God's beautiful creation. *Continued, see p. 6*



Farmer Dave explained how seeds are planted in the greenhouse and later transplanted out in the field. Each student was given a cup to fill with potting soil and bean and radish seeds, which they brought back with them to watch them grow in their classroom.

All in the Family

By Mary E. Mc Cormick, SC

The recent death on April 30, 2016, of Fr. Daniel Berrigan, SJ, recalled for many his extraordinary life, especially his years as a peace activist during the days of the Vietnam War and its aftermath. He and his brother Phil, among others, were willing to risk everything, even their freedom, to demonstrate their opposition to a war that took the lives of 58,000 American service men and women, and untold numbers of Vietnamese.

Sisters of Charity had reason to recall another Berrigan, their aunt, Sr. Maria Josephine, whose Vincentian heart beat with love for all those her welcoming arms embraced in her 92 years of life, 55 of them as a member of the community.

Bridget Berrigan, born in Iowa in March, 1868, was a child of the soil, as were her Irish farmer parents. She loved to work in the family garden, planting and harvesting the vegetables; in later years she would yield another kind of harvest: students who would forever be changed by the way she taught them.

Her mother's early death kept Bridget locked into the role of housekeeper for her father and siblings for a number of years. During this time she became a country school teacher and taught in a one-room schoolhouse: all ages, all grades, including the "winter boys" whose work on their family farms allowed them time only in the winter months to attend classes.

She knew even then that the passion of her life would be to open young minds and hearts through the portal of education. She was a natural-born teacher, acknowledged as such by her students and peers.

In 1905 she entered the community, received the name Sr. Maria Josephine, and pronounced her vows two years later. Sent out on mission first to St. Stephen's, she electrified the students and the faculty with her wit, her skill—she could teach anybody anything—her wisdom, and her love. Much later she was sent to All Saints Academy at a time when its neighborhood was in transition. She provided secondary-school



Sr. Maria Josephine Berrigan

education for a growing number of African-American students who found in her a mentor who demanded from them their very best efforts. There, as in all the schools where she was missioned, the story was the same. She had the gift of being able to instill self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment in everyone, faculty and students alike.

Her love for persons caught in the grip of poverty was legend. She went into the homes of poor families to help and to heal. She spoke the encouraging word to tired mothers; she empathized with the struggling fathers; but above all she kept special watch over the children. All this was done quietly, serenely, in a way that was respectful of everyone she encountered.

When she grew more fragile and was missioned to St. Agatha's Home, Nanuet, she accepted the position of tutor and continued working her magic with the children who lived there. Her last years were spent at the Convent of Mary the Queen where she died in 1960.

She lived to see her nephew Daniel ordained a Jesuit in 1952 and sent out on various missions, including that of professor of New Testament studies in LeMoyne College, Syracuse, where he taught from 1957 to 1963. It was during this time that he was one of the many speakers invited by Mother Loretto Bernard to address the community.

Daniel Berrigan inherited a zeal for justice that came from both the Irish and German sides of his family. "From the age of six Daniel was obsessed by the suffering of the world," his mother once recalled.

Poet and prophet, he was remembered as a "fierce, mischievous visionary," and a priest "who taught the sacrament of resistance." He was one of the first Catholic priests who went to prison for peace activism, protesting government policies in word and deed. In later years he ministered to people with AIDS in New York City.

His funeral Mass at St. Francis Xavier Church was attended by over 800 people.

Fourth Graders Visit Farm

Continued from p. 4

The idea for collaboration grew from a conversation with St. Athanasius' principal, Ms. Marianne Kraft. Passionate about providing her students with a quality education and committed to the charism of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Ms. Kraft has carried on, for 27 years, the proud legacy of the school which the Sisters of Charity began in 1913.

After the trip Marianne wrote, "No video or pictures can replace the actual experience of touching, seeing, or smelling growing plants. Last week when we had strawberries for breakfast, the students recalled the berries at the Farm."

Ms. Estrada's students also shared what they had learned on their trip:

Areanna R.: "Tomatoes are planted indoors because the rain can be so powerful that it can break the plant."

Kassandra A.: "Tomatoes are green when they are growing. Then they turn red. I thought they were always red!"

Mariah R.: "Some farmers put a covering over the plants so animals don't eat them."

Haily O.: "I learned that pesticides are NOT used here to keep the bugs away. A farmer's job involves a lot of building!"

Gabrielle H.: "I learned that you don't have to use pesticides to protect crops."

Jacob R.: "I learned that some plants don't need as much water as others. Some plants need to be in a cold place like a cooler to stay fresh."

Maria P.: "I thought you just put the seeds on top of the soil. Instead, you have to dig in the soil and then put in the seed in order for it to grow."

Special thanks to the Sisters of Charity Ministry Fund for a grant that paid for bus transportation; to Sr. Regina Bechtle who submitted the grant; to Sr. Mary Ann Garisto, farm Director, and Ms. Maria Cristina Ventresca, Director of School Operations, who coordinated

logistics; to Sr. Mary Ann and Farmer Dave, who planned and carried out a memorable learning experience; and to Ms. Kraft, Ms. Estrada, and the eager fourth graders of St. Athanasius and their parents, who made this collaboration so worthwhile.

SHARE YOUR STORY

The Sisters of Charity of New York celebrate 200 years of service in 2017. In preparation for this milestone we want to hear from you, our former Catholic School students, nursing students, employees, partners in ministry, etc. We are actively seeking to publish 200 compelling stories on our website and in Vision telling how the Congregation has influenced your life. E-mail us at extcomm@scny.org or drop us a note in the envelope found inside this issue. *Thank you!*

Sister of Charity Presents Paper at Theology Conference

On June 3, 2016, Sr. Eileen Fagan presented a paper at the annual conference of the College Theology Society, which was held at Rockhurst University in Kansas City, MO. The paper's title is *Liturgy and Empowerment: Rooted in a Table of Justice*. In religious rituals, tables are the most central symbols and have great theological significance. What is the theological significance of our Eucharistic table? What does this table reveal about us as disciples of Jesus? What does our worshipping table call us to embrace as people of God?

The paper proposed that only a table of right relationships will empower people to break down walls of exclusion, social and economic status, and religious intolerance, and reveal a God who welcomes and invites all to his saving power of love and justice. This proposal was demonstrated in four parts. Part one's purpose is to overcome the recurring divide between justice and liturgy by recalling what we mean by justice and clarify what is meant by liturgy. Too often, our liturgy is seen as a private affair with our God without any connection to the worshipping community and the suffering world at large. Part two looked at Jesus' ministry, which revolved around table fellowship. It is rare when Jesus is not conducting his ministry and teaching around tables open to all. Part three considered our tables today and those

absent from them. Here Sr. Eileen presented the poverty and immigration issues in our society today and pointed out that the voices of our poor and immigrants are missing from our various tables: government tables, immigration office tables, neighborhood community tables, parish tables, and in some cases, our worshipping tables. Finally, part four showed that a table of right relationships, which bears the marks of hospitality and solidarity, is a table of justice. In this part Sister Eileen utilized Pope Francis' theology of a merciful church. This is a church, as the Pope reminds us, that is called to accompany others, especially those on the peripheries, those who are looked upon as outsiders, rivals, statistics, or burdens.

In concluding, our liturgical table is symbolic of God breaking down walls of division in order to bring about personal, social, and environmental reconciliation. But those walls are broken down when we have right relationships among us, when all God's people, especially our poor and immigrants, can sit at the same table. Only tables of hospitality and solidarity will be open to all people regardless of one's status. At these tables no one is seen as excess baggage. Each and every member is welcome to share their hopes, dreams, and beliefs in a future for all families of the world.

Regina Bechtle, SC

My Pilgrimage to Livorno

By Lisa Shay, SC Associate

On the feast of Corpus Christi I visited the parish of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Livorno. I have found tremendous inspiration from Elizabeth's life, and since she arrived in Baltimore on the Feast of Corpus Christi, I felt called to visit Livorno on that same feast day. Although Elizabeth spent fewer than six months there, Livorno is deeply significant in her life. It is where her husband was buried and where she began her conversion to Catholicism, amidst the overwhelming hospitality of the Filicchi family, brothers Filippo and Antonio.

Sister Regina Bechtle put me in touch with the pastor, Don Gino, and his translator, Lara Bellagotti. Lara was away, but Don Gino offered to show me around. I had no idea what to expect, but I thought I would see an old church that had been re-dedicated to Elizabeth after her canonization, with perhaps a plaque and a statue to commemorate her. I was completely unprepared for the welcome I received and the memorial I found! Although I told Don Gino I would arrive for 11 o'clock liturgy, I didn't specify my arrival time. When I walked up to the door at 10:20, he was there waiting for me! He speaks little English (and I speak even less Italian), so a parishioner, Marco Conte and his 22-year-old daughter Chiara had been commissioned as translators.

From the outside, it is a plain orange building, recognizable as a church by its bell tower. Inside is a warm, welcoming worship space well suited to modern liturgy and a loving tribute to Elizabeth. The walls are covered with murals commemorating her life, particularly events in Livorno: her arrival, release from the lazaretto where they had been quarantined due to William's illness, grief at his death, the beginnings of conversion, and a tribute to her legacy—the Sisters and Daughters of Charity in the United States and this church.

The church is Don Gino's life's work. Fifty years ago he had the vision of establishing it in a nearly empty lot occupied by a Quonset hut. He commissioned an architect to design a post-Vatican II worship space with every detail carefully thought out. It is a small lot, so the parish hall is underneath, with a kitchen and a combination social area and theater named Teatro Filicchi. There is a covered ramp leading up to the church door to give

people time to deliberately transition from the hustle and bustle of daily life into a more prayerful, contemplative state of mind. Don Gino commissioned all the artwork, designed a garden in the courtyard, and on the bicentennial of Elizabeth's visit, had the graves of Antonio Filicchi and William Seton moved there. The parish's only pastor will retire this fall, as he just turned 80. Fortunately he will remain in the area.

During and after liturgy, I learned that the hospitality of the Filicchis lives on in this parish! I felt welcomed by the parish and afterward Marco and Chiara brought me to lunch in their home, where I met Marco's wife, Antonella, her mother, and their other daughter, Eleonora. After a delicious meal with wonderful company, Marco, Don Gino, and Chiara drove me all around Livorno. Don Gino may be the world's expert on Elizabeth—he knew on which floor of which building she lived, in which lazaretto she was imprisoned (noting that the plaque on the church of San Jacopo was incorrect; he read the port logs), and all the places she visited, most of which are still visible today.

This was an amazing trip filled with God's grace and the love of a welcoming faith community. My appreciation and understanding of Elizabeth's life has been immeasurably deepened!



A mural depicting Elizabeth's stay in Livorno (chronologically from right to left) and on the far left the legacy of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, with portraits of Pope John XXIII who beatified her and Paul VI who canonized her and representations of the White House in Emmitsburg, the basilica now in Emmitsburg, the Sisters of Charity in their original habits and transitional dress worn after Vatican II, and the Daughters of Charity. On the far left is Don Gino holding a model of this building. Lisa Shay is shown here on the bottom left.



Team members at LEFSA sing praise to God for their blessings and for their new offices.



Good News Abounds at Sisters of Charity Sponsored Ministries *Part 2*

By Regina Bechtle, SC

*with additional reporting by Karen Helfenstein, SC,
and Ms. Sarra Young*

Summer heat and humidity got you down? Tired of news that deflates your spirit? Need a boost? We guarantee that reading about the ministries sponsored by the Sisters of Charity will lift your heart and rekindle your hope. As our Sisters, Associates, and colleagues in ministry carry on the work of Charity, they embody the values of compassion and excellence that have marked our service for 200 years and more. Here's a sample of recent good news.

LIFE EXPERIENCE AND FAITH SHARING ASSOCIATES (LEFSA)

LEFSA (<https://scny-lefsa.org/>), our ministry to homeless persons, will mark its 30th anniversary this year with a gala celebration on September 22, 2016 (watch www.scny.org for more details). Recently LEFSA received a special anniversary gift: expanded office space, thanks to a generous donation that will assist with rental costs.

Among the advantages of the move for the seven-member LEFSA team is "location, location." The newly renovated space at 1991A Lexington Avenue in Manhattan is on the first floor of Seton House, a multifamily residence for 16 formerly homeless families. Since Seton House is part of the Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation, all kinds of synergy are possible. LEFSA's website comments enthusiastically, "We are truly blessed to share space with a fellow sponsored work of the Sisters of Charity and an organization whose goals and values are so aligned with ours."

LEFSA moved to its new home on June 16, 2016. Director Karolina May, Operations Manager James Addison, and the rest of the team would welcome your visit (after they have time to unpack).

Founded in 1986 by Sr. Dorothy Gallant, SC, and Sr. Teresa Skehan, RSM, LEFSA is a unique city-wide program that creates faith communities with homeless persons in shelters, drop-in centers, and other settings. LEFSA team members (some of whom were once homeless themselves) serve more than 3,000 homeless and formerly homeless people each year. They also model a way out of poverty and homelessness for participants, showing them that with God's help, miracles are indeed possible.

Faith-based interdenominational community gatherings—the heart of LEFSA's ministry—are supplemented with practical resources including referrals for services in housing, education, employment, drug rehabilitation, and health care. A team member, James Butler, helps people to understand their eligibility for different kinds of housing and assists them with the application process. Tools for advocacy, social analysis of systemic problems, leadership training, and retreat days for homeless persons are conducted regularly. At monthly groups for women and men, attendees "together ... empower one another to realize our inherent dignity and value as children of God. We learn that our voice matters and that we are never alone. ... We come to see that there is always hope, and we discover the tools we need to make positive changes and reclaim control of our lives." (<https://scny-lefsa.org/events/>)

No doubt about it—LEFSA changes lives, the lives of hundreds who have moved out of homelessness, the lives of thousands who are still homeless yet know they are not abandoned, and the lives of those who serve them in the spirit of Charity.

Elizabeth Seton PEDIATRIC CENTER

Changing lives, one child at a time

Construction is moving ahead on the new ventilator expansion at the Elizabeth Seton Pediatric Center (ESPC) (www.setonpediatric.org) in Yonkers, a nationally recognized long-term care facility for children with complex medical diagnoses. By mid-2017, 32 ventilator-dependent children, many of whom currently live in facilities outside of New York, will be able to receive services at the hands of experts in the field who can provide them with the highest quality of care, and be closer to their families in New York who love them. The addition will make ESPC the largest provider of pediatric ventilator care in New York State.

ESPC is proud of its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold Certification, a prestigious third-party verification for green buildings. ESPC, the only LEED Gold Certified “green” pediatric facility in the country, believes that its green design creates the healthiest environment for its children and allows the Pediatric Center to operate most efficiently.

JOHN A. COLEMAN SCHOOL

The John A. Coleman School (JAC) (www.colemanschool.org), with campuses in White Plains and Yonkers, is approved and funded by the New York State Departments of Education and Health, as well as local municipalities and school districts. It



Marla Volpe, Lead Speech Language Pathologist at the Yonkers campus of the John A. Coleman School, with Coleman School student Lucyann

offers the highest quality of early childhood and special education services in center-based and community settings to children from over 40 school districts in Westchester, Putnam, and the Bronx. The White Plains campus serves 145 children in 12 classrooms; the Yonkers campus serves the 137 residents of the Elizabeth Seton Pediatric Center in 15 classrooms.

The Coleman School has been recognized for the last nine consecutive years as a School of Excellence by the National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET) and is known for its comprehensive evaluations, early intervention services, and inclusive nursery school, Children's Place, reaching over 1,000 children and their families each year.

CHILDREN'S REHABILITATION CENTER



Physical therapist Mariam Magda with Children's Rehabilitation Center patient Jessica

Located in White Plains, the Children's Rehabilitation Center (CRC) (www.childrensrehabcenter.org) is an outpatient pediatric diagnostic and treatment center that provides comprehensive medical and rehabilitative services to children with complex physical and developmental disabilities. Each year it treats nearly 4,000 children, from birth to 21 years of age. The CRC also offers clinical specialties such as orthopedics, physiatry, ophthalmology, neurology, neonatology, audiology, and urology; psychological and social work services; as well as Care at Home case management services, a brace/orthotic clinic, and an adaptive equipment clinic.

In March the CRC completed renovations on their Naomi and Isaac Kaplan Family Foundation Therapeutic Aquatic

Continued, see page 10, bottom

Charity in the City 2016

By Mary Lou McGrath, SC, & LeeAnn Brathwaite, SC Associate



Elizabeth Seton told her spiritual daughters, “Do your best and leave the rest to our dear God.”

With those words in our hearts and minds, Charity in the City 2016 began on June 26th. Seven young ladies, rising seniors at Saint Raymond Academy in the Bronx, joined us for a week of giving service while living in community. The College of Mount Saint Vincent offered us hospitality in the residence halls, for which we are always very grateful.

Our week was filled with activities that made the mission and ministries of the Sisters of Charity of New York come alive for us:

- » We visited the Veterans Administration Hospital dialysis unit, bringing lap robes to the men and women, listening to their stories, and praying with them.
- » We learned a lot about community farming at Sisters Hill Farm, thanks to Sr. Mary Ann Garisto, Farmer Dave, and the resident interns. Some of the food goes to the Sharing Community in a poor section of Yonkers, where we helped serve meals to over 200 people.
- » We joined Matt Shields of Campus Ministry at CMSV for the Midnight Run. We made over 100 sandwiches with the Sisters at Mount Saint Vincent Convent and at three

Above left: The Charity in the City team visited the Veteran’s Hospital in the Bronx. Back row from left: Petrina Ramsaroor, Liliana Tran, Andrea Portal, Nivia Reyes, Tatianna Pittman, and Sr. Mary Lou. Front kneeling: Destiny Ferguson and Leiby Soto.
Above: The team helped weed leeks at Sisters Hill Farm.

stops in Manhattan, food, clothes, and other necessities were given to those in need.

- » Visiting the Congregation’s archives with Sr. Maryellen Blumlein gave us a strong sense of gospel mission and the history, spirit, and ministries of the Sisters of Charity in New York.
- » Sharing a meal with the retired Sisters at Mount Saint Vincent Convent and visiting the Sisters at Kittay House gave us a real sense of the spirit of the Sisters of Charity.
- » We reflected in faith on our experience and renewed our passion for serving God’s poor, our brothers and sisters.

The relationship begun with these young women will continue into the future, especially as we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Sisters of Charity in New York. With grateful hearts we thank all those who supported us during this time, especially those whose prayers were with us.

SC Good News Abounds Part 2

Continued from p. 9

Center. Aquatic therapy is a vital part of the specialized care that the CRC provides to more than 400 children each year.

Today, some may wonder, “As the number of Sisters grows fewer, how will their good works continue?” Sister Karen Helfenstein, the Congregation’s Director of Sponsorship Services, has a ready reply: “Look around you and see that

children live in safe homes, elderly people have affordable housing, the sick are healed, the hungry are fed, the homeless have the word of God revealed to them, new immigrants find community and relief of some of their burdens, and blessed are we who eat of the fruit of the fields of our farm. God is indeed doing new things today!”

LEFSA — *Providing Hope & Empowerment for Thirty Years*

By Anne Marie Gardiner

Having a milestone anniversary is always cause for celebration, and celebrating 30 years for an organization is an even better reason. In 1986, Sr. Dorothy Gallant, a Sister of Charity of New York, and Sr. Teresa Skehan, a Religious Sister of Mercy, literally started walking the streets in some of the toughest neighborhoods in Manhattan. They had sandwiches to distribute, but more importantly, they offered their gift of listening—hearing the needs of those sleeping on the street, in the parks, in the shelters. The sisters knew there were organizations that could provide information on shelters, food pantries, and other social services, but they recognized a different need: the need to listen to, to pray with, or just to “be” with someone in such despair and hopelessness, treating each one with respect and dignity. That is how “Life Experience and Faith Sharing Associates” (LEFSA) was born.

These sisters had no strategic plan, no budget, no executive board. They saw a need and went about making it happen. Over the years, they rented small “office” spaces in apartment buildings, churches,

or halls, whatever could be fashioned into something that was inexpensive and serviceable.

Fast forward 30 years and today, LEFSA has grown to include an executive director, Karolina May, who with



a team of seven, continues the ministry that Sisters Dorothy and Teresa began. LEFSA follows a Base Christian Community Model. This model allows for faith-based community gatherings within city-sponsored shelters, as well as a weekly street ministry. The gatherings are interdenominational, voluntary in nature, and based on an empowerment model. Participants help to plan and assist in facilitating the gatherings.

These gatherings provide a forum

wherein people who are homeless come together to share life and faith experiences, talk about problems related to homelessness, and work within a supportive faith community toward emerging from their situation. LEFSA now serves approximately 3,000 New Yorkers in shelters and on the streets each year.

Although Sr. Dorothy and Sr. Teresa have both gone home to God, we can only imagine how pleased they would be to see such growth and success. Through the generosity of one supporter, LEFSA moved into their permanent home this summer. This timely gift arrived when office space was available in a Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation (www.sistersofcharity-housing.org) building. This organization promotes social justice by providing affordable supportive housing for some of the city's most vulnerable residents.

Help us celebrate with LEFSA this September at an event we will be hosting on September 22, 2016 at Helen Mills Event Space and Theater. For more information, please visit LEFSA's website at www.scny-lefsa.org.

Book Review: Prominent Theologian Cites Congregation's Contributions to Local Church

Since the Second Vatican Council, the image of the Church as the people of God has been part of Catholic self-understanding. But what practical difference has it made? How have Church structures changed—or have they—so that adult Catholics can live their baptismal call to be prophetic disciples?

In *Prophetic Obedience: Ecclesiology for a Dialogical Church* (Orbis Books, 2016) Bradford Hinze explores these questions as he develops a theology of prophetic discipleship. He illustrates it with concrete examples of groups that took to heart (“received,” in theology-speak) the Council's vision of the people of God, empowered by the Spirit to see and respond to the signs of the times.

Dr. Hinze, professor of theology at Fordham and current president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, draws his examples from the Archdiocese of New York: parish and pastoral councils, consultative groups of priests and religious, and community-based movements such as the

Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, among others. In most of them, Sisters of Charity were involved as leaders and/or supporters in the decades after the Council.

Women's religious communities, Dr. Hinze believes, led the way in implementing Vatican II's teaching on the people of God. From the many congregations in the Archdiocese, he highlights the Sisters of Charity of New York. Drawing on our written and lived history, he documents our efforts at renewal even before the Council mandated it.

He cites leaders like Mother Loretto Bernard Beagan and Sister Margaret Dowling who opened us to new currents of thinking and new ways of ministering. He reminds us of the Chapters and Assemblies that grappled with questions of identity and mission. He recognizes the hard work of revamping structures that laid the foundation for fostering members' diverse gifts, encouraging broad participation, and cultivating communal processes of dialogue and discernment.

Continued, see page 13, bottom left

NACAR Celebrates Twenty Years

The Story of a Movement

By Ellen Rose O'Connell, SC

*H*ow do you tell the story of a movement? How do you explain a network like the North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR)? It had its beginning in the mystery of call, the struggle of a new movement to find like-minded believers and gifted Associates and Religious who desired to share their gifts.

Born at a time when Associates were a new entity in religious life, the organization grew out of a yearly gathering at Bon Secours Retreat House in Marriottsville, MD, called together by Rosemarie Jazinski, CBS, and Peter Foley. Those who came were exploring the place of Associates in the life of religious congregations. Associate leaders led workshops on issues of formation, ministry involvement, spirituality, and the place of Associates working among and beyond Religious members, fueled by a love of the founding charism and the founder of the Congregation.

During the early years, those who attended the yearly conferences had wonderful mentors. For three years lay theologian Monika Hellwig shared her wisdom and theological groundedness about discipleship. She taught us that the Church doesn't exist to perpetuate itself but to further the reign of God. She urged us to live now as though God reigned and no one had power over us, to live in a moving horizon: I do what I see and then the horizon moves. Other speakers who inspired and informed the conferences were Maria Reikelman, MM; Anne Harmon, SC; lay theologians Elizabeth Dryer and Edwina Gateley; and prophetic Joan Chittister, OSB.

NACAR's horizon moved in 1996. The yearly conference had grown so big that the over 300 attendees could no longer fit at Bon Secours. It was a strained time for Associate communities. Those involved in the movement had few places to receive support from each other, to listen to the growth that was happening across North America to Associate groups. In addition, lacking a voice, there was no network. There was no way to communicate the growth, no way to experience the energy of the Associate community.

The planners of the conference in 1996 were two Associates, Jean Sonnenberg, BSA, and Peggy Cekoric, SC Associate, and two Religious, Julie Scanlon, SC, and Ellen O'Connell, SC. We decided that it was time to address the issues. After a discussion by the conference, we asked those who attended



Associates and Sisters from SCNY in an early NACAR meeting.

for permission to become a permanent conference. The people said yes and the North American Conference of Associates and Religious began to exist.

In short order we published a quarterly journal, *The Associate*, edited by Jean Sonnenberg, to share ideas and spirituality. We also started to gather a Board of Directors containing an equal number of women and men, Associates and Religious, to steer the direction of NACAR and plan future national conferences. In order to improve communication and networking in the Associate movement, we established geographic regions across the United States and Canada. These groups began to meet locally to address their concerns and to provide a place for Associates and Religious to contemplate the steady growth of Associates and their presence in furthering the mission and ministry of religious congregations of men and women.

The desire to estimate the growth and influence of the Associate movement led to a national study undertaken in 2000 and completed in 2002 under the auspices of The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate based in Georgetown. Besides counting the numbers of Associates—25,000 plus another 300 in formation—it provided important information about the reasons for the steady growth of the movement. Presently NACAR is engaged in a follow-up study to be released in September 2016.

As we look back at the history of NACAR, we realize that none of this would have happened without the many Associates who come to religious congregations seeking a deeper spirituality and a desire to join with others in the mission of Jesus; nor would it have happened without the numbers of vowed Religious who welcomed the new life that Associates could bring to religious life and the mission. They have shared their knowledge; they have gathered the funds; they worked and continue to work side by side with Associates to bring about the reign of God in our time.



The College of Mount Saint Vincent held its 104th Commencement Ceremony on Saturday, May 21, 2016 on the River Lawn of the College's campus. Among the 432 students who received their undergraduate and graduate degrees from the College, five were Seton Service Scholars.

Where do the graduates go from here? Michelle Anne dela Paz will be an Administrative Officer at U.S. Naval Research Laboratory, Anthony Gentile is pursuing graduate studies in education



at CMSV, Joseph Senisi will be training in sales with the Brooklyn Cyclones, and Catherine Reiss and Katherine Dalton are both preparing for the nursing board exam.

The Sisters of Charity are proud to

From left: Michelle dela Paz, Catherine Reiss, Anthony Gentile, Kathryn Dalton, and Joseph Senisi

have played a role in their education and wish them all God's blessings and as they continue their journey.

Book Review

Continued from p. 11

In his brief survey of the Congregation, Dr. Hinze mentions the contributions of Sisters Nora Cunningham and Muriel Long (South Bronx Pastoral Center), Sr. Rosalie Kaley (Office of Parish Councils/Pastoral Synod), and the Sisters, priests, and laity of St. Athanasius parish (South Bronx People for Change, SEBCO). Many other persons and places could be cited in the rich story of those who ministered to and with the people of God in New York.

Dr. Hinze's 5½ page summary of the Congregation concludes: "The Sisters of Charity became important advocates of the people of God theology not only as a result of their own process of discernment and decision making, but also by promoting these methods in the local church at parish and archdiocesan level."

As the Congregation begins its third century, Dr. Hinze's recognition of our efforts in the turbulent post-Council decades is both heartening and challenging. Then as now, our mission continues: to reveal God's love as prophetic disciples in our Church, our world, our common home on Earth.

*Regina Bechtle, SC
& Dominica Rocchio, SC*

Associates Meet for Reflection & Prayer



From left: Sr. Mary Ann Daly, Margaret Comaskey, Maureen Russell, Laura Leadbetter, Sr. Ellen Rose O'Connell, and Lynne White

Since January, Associates and candidates have been attending an "Associates Afternoon" at the Coordinator's office in Rosary Hall on the College of Mount Saint Vincent campus. On the last Friday afternoon of the month they gathered for a talk or presentation, followed by discussion and sharing and refreshments.

The topics were varied. Sister Ellen Rose O'Connell spoke about Pope Francis' book on the Church of Mercy. Other speakers described the history of the Associates movement in the Church; Sr. Mary Ann Daly traced the history and origins of the many

congregations that make up the Sisters of Charity Federation. There were talks on literary connections with some of our own Sisters of Charity (by Sr. Anne Denise Brennan), and, of course, some stories from the lives of Elizabeth Seton and Louise de Marillac (by Sr. Mary Mc Cormick).

We hope that the meetings will continue in the spring, perhaps on a different day or time. Other events are planned for the fall, including Associates Day on September 10th and a retreat day.

Margaret Comaskey

C.N.A. & Sister of Charity Honored at Ceremony

By Sarra Young



On June 15, 2016, Claudette McIntosh, C.N.A., received the first annual St. Elizabeth Seton Children's Foundation Certified Nursing Assistant Mission Award in Recognition of Compassion in Action in Honor of Sr. Mary Kay Finneran, SC, during a ceremony held at the Elizabeth Seton Pediatric Center.

The St. Elizabeth Seton Children's Foundation established this award this year to be given annually to a C.N.A. who demonstrates through his or her commitment and service to our residents and families the mission of St. Elizabeth Seton. The award's namesake, Sr. Mary Kay Finneran, has been a Sister of Charity for sixty years. She has served on the Sisters of Charity Leadership Team, as Administrator of the Convent of Mary the Queen, as a teacher, and as a nurse since 1964.

As a registered nurse she served at St. Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan, was a missionary nurse in Puno, Peru, and worked in Atlanta, GA, for 24 years as a hospital nurse. She also worked as a high school campus minister and as Coordinator of Member Services at the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Today, Sr. Mary Kay serves as coordinator for Elizabeth's Place at Jewish Home LifeCare and is on the Global Poverty Task Force. She is also a founding trustee of the Children's Rehabilitation Center's Board, where she acted as treasurer between 2010 and 2013, and still serves today.

"You are such a vital part of the team," Sr. Mary Kay said as she described the role of the C.N.A. "You're the ones who are so connected to the children every single day," she said. "You are the hands of God as you touch these children and care for them," she continued, "so as you get up each morning, before you start rushing and doing all this stuff, just look at those hands that will be blessed, thank God for them and know that you're not doing it alone."

Claudette McIntosh has worked as a C.N.A. at the Pediatric Center since November of 2003. "I love the job that I do," she said as she accepted the award. "All of these children [at the Pediatric Center] are my grandchildren." Ms. McIntosh also acknowledged the support of her co-workers during her speech. "To all of you staff, I just want to thank you because I could

not have done this without you. We work hard together. We did this together. I thank God for this award."

not have done this without you. We work hard together. We did this together. I thank God for this award."

YEAR of MERCY

By Mary Ann Daly, SC

If mercy = forgiveness + compassion, one of the first tasks of those of us who seek to become mercy in this jubilee year is to examine our pattern of forgiving. Whom do we

refuse to forgive? Is it someone from the distant past who hurt us as a child or adolescent? A parent, other relative, teacher, spiritual leader, role model? If the damage is great, both the need and the difficulty of forgiving is even greater. If forgiveness seems impossible, maybe we first need to pray for the grace to someday be able to forgive or to intercede for God's forgiveness for the person who harmed us.

Some of the things we may not have forgiven are lesser slights that we hold close to our hearts and which harm us more than those against whom we hold the grudge. It could be an invitation not given or one not accepted, a negative comment made, a perceived injustice or lack of fairness. Letting go of these in an act of mercy can free us and lighten our spirits.

Sometimes it is ourselves in need of mercy. Have we ever said or thought, "I'll never forgive myself for that." For years we carry guilt and pain rather than seek God's forgiveness and finally also forgive ourselves. Nothing is unforgivable.

Pope Francis says that God does not forgive with a decree, but with a caress. That is what mercy is. During this year may we be mercy for the other and for ourselves and seek mercy from our God.

After 48 Years, Sr. Michelle McKeon Bids Farewell to Saints Peter & Paul School



When Sister Michelle McKeon began her ministry as a teacher in 1968 at Saints Peter and Paul, little did she know it was the beginning of a 48-year relationship that would see her assume the position of Assistant Principal for eight years (1981–1989) and Principal for twenty-seven years (1989–2016). With enrollment significantly down, Saints Peter and Paul is slated to become a regional school in the Northwest and South Bronx region in September. For this reason Sr. Michelle decided it was time to resign. She plans to pen a reflection about her 48 years at the school. When asked about her years at the school she said, “After 104 years of ministry at SSPP school and parish, the Sisters of Charity have instilled the charism of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton through its legacy, history, students, lay faculty, numerous Sisters, and, above all, its faithful alumni.” May this South Bronx oasis be forever blessed!”

Hamilton & Elizabeth Seton

You probably know that *Hamilton*, the hit Broadway show by Lin-Manuel Miranda, won the 2016 Tony Award for Best Musical, along with awards in ten other categories. But you may not know that the nation’s first Secretary of the Treasury moved in some of the same circles as our own Elizabeth Seton:

- » Alexander Hamilton was on the board of directors of the new Bank of New York (at Wall and William Streets) in 1784. The bank’s first cashier was William Seton, Sr., later to be Elizabeth’s father-in-law.
- » Elizabeth Bayley married William Magee Seton in 1794. They lived for four years at 27 Wall Street, in the most fashionable part of town. Just down the block stood Alexander Hamilton’s home and law office at 56 and 57 Wall Street.
- » Hamilton died on July 12, 1804, after being fatally injured in a duel with Aaron Burr. In a letter, Elizabeth mentions hearing the “tolling of the Bells” at the “melancholy event.”

Regina Bechtle, SC

With Love and Appreciation We Remember...

Please visit our website at www.scny.org/news for complete biographies of our Sisters



Sister Rose Maureen Dormer, SC

Entered: 1945 + Date of Death: 5/10/16 + Age: 91

Sister Rose Maureen began ministry in the field of elementary education as teacher, then principal before she transitioning to guidance counseling. As a guidance counselor, she served on both elementary and high school levels. Sister Rose Maureen will long be remembered by her students and their parents for the love of learning that she imparted in the classroom, and her compassion and kindness as a counselor.



Sister Teresa Kelly, SC (Sister Marilda John)

Entered: 1957 + Date of Death: 5/18/16 + Age: 81

Sister Teresa worked at the New York Foundling for forty-eight years. She served as a teacher and supervisor of a Montessori nursery before becoming founder and director of Blaine Hall, a short-term residential program for children 4 to 10 years of age with difficulties. She worked in the Blaine Hall program for over thirty years. Sister Teresa was mentor, friend, confidant, and surrogate mother to the countless number of children whom she dearly loved. They will long remember the kind, gentle, and generous Sister who always cared for and about them.



Sister Anne Mary Regan, SC

Entered: 1936 + Date of Death: 5/25/16 + Age: 104½

The oldest member of the Congregation, Sr. Anne Mary served in the field of nursing for seventy-one years in various capacities, from nurse to administrator. She served in St. Joseph’s Hospital, Yonkers, St. Vincent’s Hospital, Manhattan, and St. Vincent’s Hospital, Westchester. Sister Anne Mary was an avid Yankees fan and thoroughly enjoyed attending and watching as many games as possible. She was also known for dancing the Charleston into her 100th year. She was honored several times by Saint Vincent’s Hospital, Westchester, and, in 2008, a residence for women was named in her honor.



Sister Mary Kilmartin, SC (Sister Grace Michael)

Entered: 1950 + Date of Death: 5/29/16 + Age: 83

Sister Mary’s ministry in education spanned fifty-six years. An alum of Cathedral High School, Sr. Mary returned to her alma mater where she would spend thirty-two years as teacher (1967–1974), Dean of Students (1974–1982), Dean of Academics (1892–1983) and Principal (1983–1999). In 1999 Sr. Mary served as Associate Superintendent of Schools in the Archdiocese of New York.

Sisters of Charity Center
6301 Riverdale Avenue
Bronx, NY 10471-1093
718.549.9200
Fax 718.884.3013
www.scny.org



SISTERS
of CHARITY
NEW YORK



Like us on Facebook®
Sisters of Charity, New York



Follow us on Twitter®
Sisters of Charity @scny1

Sisters of Charity 200th Anniversary Calendar

August 13, 2017, marks the 200th Anniversary of the arrival of the three sisters sent by Elizabeth Seton to her native city. During the bicentennial year, the Sisters of Charity of New York invite you, our charity family, to share in our joy and in our celebrations. It will be an exciting year, with more events to be added as the year goes on. With gratitude in our hearts we look forward to celebrating this milestone year with you and hope you'll mark your calendars and plan to join us.



- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| January 8 | Vespers, Chapel at Mount Saint Vincent* |
| April 29 | Luncheon, The Staaten Restaurant, Staten Island |
| May 18 | Gala at the Lighthouse, Chelsea Piers, NYC |
| June 3 | Performance of <i>How the Nuns of New York Tamed the Gangs of New York</i> , Sheen Center, NYC |
| June 10 | Picnic at Seton Village, Nanuet, 11 am – 3 pm |
| July 8 | LEFSA Picnic, Central Park, 10 am – 2 pm |
| August 13 | Virtual Retreat begins (website) |
| October 3 | Stop Bus Tour of historic upstate SC missions, Luncheon (date/time to be determined) |
| October 8 | Blessing of Sister Margaret Beaudette's sculptures, Saint Patrick's Cathedral |
| December 9 | Closing Mass and renewal of vows/commitments, Saint Patrick's Old Cathedral* |

*Congregation Event

Sponsored Ministries will be hosting additional events.