



## Seven Days in February: Assembly 2007

by Chris Haggerty and  
Sr. Eileen McGrory

Significant events seem to take place in four year cycles. Perhaps that's why the Sisters of Charity of New York hold their Assemblies quadrennially.

Their seven-day-long Assembly 2007 officially opened in the evening of Friday, February 16. As they did four years ago, Sisters and Associates traveled over the river and through some woods to reach the meeting site: the Xavier Retreat and Conference Center in Convent Station (Morristown), NJ. Fortunately for the traveling delegates, they were spared the 19 inches of snow that accompanied the start of Assembly 2003.

Xavier Center is on the grounds of the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth and offers resources that are not available at or near Mount Saint Vincent in the Bronx. The Center is named after Sr. Mary Xavier Mehegan, a New York Sister of Charity who in 1859 was assigned to head up the new community of Sisters that Bishop Bayley of Newark wished to establish. James Roosevelt Bayley was a nephew of Mother Seton's and was named the first bishop of the new diocese of Newark when it was established in 1853.

Approximately 170 Sisters and 10 Associates participated in Assembly 2007. Among the

*(continued on page 5)*

**In this issue:**

- Assembly 2007
- Golf Tournament
- Public Policy Day
- New Feature:  
Ask the Sisters



*Sr. Dorothy Metz (center), the current President of the Congregation, poses with four predecessors: from left, Sr. Carol Barnes (1987 – 1995), Sr. Margaret Dowling (1971 – 1979), Sr. Agnes Connolly (1979 – 1987) and Sr. Elizabeth Vermaelen (1995 – 2003).*



# Letter from the President

Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends,

As I listened to the reading from the Gospel of Matthew 18: 21-35 at Mass recently, I reflected once again on the meaning of forgiveness. Matthew first tells us that when Peter asked Jesus how many times he must forgive his brother, he was told seventy-seven times. To make his point even clearer, Jesus tells us about a king who forgave someone who owed him a large debt. Subsequently the king found out that this servant had someone thrown in jail who owed him a small amount. Matthew concludes by urging each of us to forgive others from our heart. Theoretically, isn't this what we all wish to do? In reality, are we like the king or the unforgiving servant?

If Matthew were writing today I think he would be telling us about Rose Morat, a 101-year-old woman, who was on her way to church in Queens, NY when a mugger punched her to the ground. He then stole her pocketbook, which contained \$33. Rose suffered a fractured cheekbone and spent three days in the hospital. People were outraged that anyone would attack such a vulnerable person. Rose, however, spoke only of forgiveness. "I'm not bitter, but I think he did a terrible thing. I feel sorry for him. He must be sick." Rose had her own priorities straight. Her spiritual journey clearly has brought her closer to understanding forgiveness as a way of life. Surely during her 101 years, her life has been shaped by her relationship with God, who is always loving and forgiving.

Hopefully this man will be apprehended and others will not live in fear of becoming his next victim. Forgiveness, however, is separate from the issue of justice. Forgiveness needs to be viewed in the context of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. It frees the one who has been injured from carrying around anger and bitterness. "You are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God has come to rest on you" (1Peter 4:14).

Let us pray for this spirit in each of us.

Sincerely in Christ,

Sr. Dorothy Metz, SC  
President

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



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*Article contributions to this publication are welcome, however all submissions are subject to editorial and space constraints. See back page for our mailing address.*

# On the Ball for Charity!

by Bill Hurley

Believe me, there is a lot happening in the Congregation today. New or long-established ministries for the poor are not just holding their own, they are increasing their services. Sisters are working with immigrants, helping those in shelters, caring for the needs of women, and providing a home to women and children. Both our Guatemalan and Bahamian missionaries are building our Church for tomorrow. A formation program is starting in Guatemala and the Sr. Barbara Ford Center for Peace-Building is becoming a reality. Then we add to this the fact that all our retirement facilities have required major renovations for additional housing space and programs for this and the next generation of retired Sisters.

To meet this growth, our development needs are ever growing – but so has the generosity of our benefactors! It is now time for the Sisters of Charity of New York to sponsor their own special events for their own needs. Today, we are looking at two activities and ask you to consider ways you can help us make these ventures successful.

On October 15, 2007, we will sponsor our first golf tournament. Hopefully, this will become an annual event providing funds for the needs of our senior Sisters. To do this, we need sponsors, foursomes and prizes. Perhaps you like to golf and would be interested in participating. Perhaps you could assist us in securing prizes for our players. Anything you think appropriate for a golfer would be appreciated.

Examples of prizes we'd like to provide include:

- electronic items, such as TVs, digital recorders, PDAs, palm pilots, etc.
- tickets to sporting events or a show
- a vacation package using donated miles and use of vacation homes or time shares.



In the late fall, our Charity Response Team, which serves our small ministries in service to New York's poor, will sponsor a Reception/Auction event in Manhattan. We hope to be able to offer prizes such as:

- art work
- vacations
- sporting memorabilia or tickets to a game
- theatre tickets
- dinner at a popular restaurant.

Our goal with both of these events is to receive as many donations or sponsorships as possible. This will translate directly into more funds for our senior Sisters' needs or our ministries serving the poor. All donations to these events are tax deductible to the donor. I hope you can help. ■

*Bill Hurley has been Director of Development for 11 years and an Associate for nine years. Bill is a "Certified Fundraising Executive" (CFRE), and serves on the Board of the National Catholic Development Conference.*

## Happy Birthday, St. Athanasius!

April marked the halfway point in the centennial celebration for St. Athanasius in the south Bronx. The parish opened its year-long celebration on October 22, 2006 with a Mass at which the main celebrant was Auxiliary Bishop Josu Iriondo, Vicar of the South Bronx and Vicar for Hispanic Affairs for the Archdiocese of New York.

During that day's ceremonies, Sr. Trudé Collins was crowned Centennial Queen. She has lived and worked in the parish for 46 years. Sister is one of the most effective community leaders in the area. She currently is the Director of Community Outreach in the Hunt's Point area. For 34 years, she was the Director of SISDA, the Simpson Street Development Association. In recognition of her contributions, a brand-new apartment building is being named in her honor. The "Sr. Thomas, SC" (Sr. Trudé's religious name) house provides 105 units of affordable housing for low-income and formerly homeless families.

St. Athanasius was founded in 1907 to serve what at that time was described as "a wilderness." The first Sisters of Charity arrived in 1913 to staff the school. Two Sisters are still active in the parish. In addition to Sr. Trudé, Sr. Jeanne Atkinson, SC has worked there for 41 years.



*Bishop Iriondo chuckled as Sr. Trudé was crowned Centennial Queen.*

On October 21st, Cardinal Edward Egan will be the chief celebrant at the Mass that closes out the centennial at St. Athanasius. If you're a former parishioner interested in learning more about anniversary events, contact the parish rectory at 718-328-2558. ■

# Catholic Legislative Action

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by Sr. Claire E. Regan

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This spring, seven Sisters of Charity of New York were among the thousand-plus concerned Catholics from throughout the state who participated in the New York State Catholic Bishops' annual Public Policy Day in Albany. Each year, the Bishops frame a set of issues for which legislative lobbying is timely and crucial. Many of these issues are vital to our identity as Catholics as well as part of our Catholic social justice tradition.

Sisters Lorraine Cooper, Theresa Courtney, Jane Iannucelli, Eileen Kelly, Winifred Lyons, Rita Nowatzki, and I met with our individual Assembly members and State Senators on March 13th to voice our concerns on several issues. Our priority was the passage of legislation that would oppose human trafficking and oppose embryonic stem cell research and human cloning. NY's Governor Eliot Spitzer has proposed a \$2.1 billion "Stem Cell and Innovation Fund" which would include funding for embryo research and cloning.

The Sisters spoke in support of ethical, successful adult stem cell research but could not condone the destruction of embryonic human life for research purposes. Church teaching also supports the study and use of



umbilical stem cells in research. Both adult and umbilical stem cells have shown great potential in the search for cures for various illnesses.

Legislation is pending which would penalize those who traffic in women and men to profit from their debasement in sexual or labor servitude. Sisters sought to obtain social services and immigration assistance for those who are victimized by this crime. The Sisters of Charity have written letters to New York State's Governor, Senate Majority Leader, and Assembly Speaker in support of this legislation.

Other vital parts of the day included Sisters' presence in the Senate and Assembly chambers and at committee meetings during deliberations. Participants wore large red badges that said "Catholic Voter" so that our presence as a bloc would be seen. We celebrated Eucharist in the convention hall as an empowered faith community before setting out on our scheduled lobbying visits.

Overall, it was an energizing and hopeful day. All agreed that it was very rewarding to experience the workings of the legislative process firsthand and exciting to put into action the richness of Catholic social teaching. ■

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## Caring for Healthcare

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by Sr. Claire E. Regan

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As in every budget year – and this year proved to be no exception – there has been a crisis in continued funding of Medicaid and of hospitals and nursing homes in particular.

Governor Spitzer cited Medicaid costs as his number one priority during his campaign. In working through his budget plan, he has hit Medicaid hard.

While the governor is looking to reduce costs by promoting lesser-cost home care and community care options,

there needs to be ample planning for transition to such a scenario without putting our hospitals and nursing homes at risk. The Sisters of Charity of New York have seen firsthand the problems experienced by our Catholic hospitals. We spoke passionately about the healthcare crisis to our legislators. ■

*Sr. Claire E. Regan has been the Justice Effectiveness & Corporate Responsibility Coordinator for the Congregation for eight years. Before that, she spent many years working with the poor and homeless of East Harlem. Sister served on the Board of the NYC Coalition Against Hunger for five years and is a member of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility.*



## Assembly 2007 *(continued from page 1)*

Sisters, 156 were delegates and attended all the sessions; others attended as many sessions as they could.

Four past Presidents were there as delegates – Sisters Margaret Dowling, Agnes Connolly, Carol Barnes and Elizabeth Vermaelen – as well as the Congregation’s current President, Sr. Dorothy Metz.

If there had been a prize for the longest commute, it would have gone to the six Sisters who came up from the missions in Guatemala: Sisters Immaculata Burke, Gloria De Arteaga, Eileen Judge, Mary Meyler, Virginia Searing, and Marie Tolle.

The most senior attendee was Sr. Margaret Dowling who entered the Congregation 73 years ago. The “rookie” was Sr. Cecilia Harriendorf, who entered five years ago.

President Sr. Dorothy Metz welcomed all by echoing the call of the SCNY Constitution to renew the Congregation’s life, to meet its grace, to write the direction for the next four years, and to issue norms and policies. Morning prayer included the truth that “There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”\* This Congregation actually discovered that in the 1800s – they have always cared about the poor.

*\* From Turning to One Another, by Margaret J. Wheatley  
© 2002 Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.*

Each full day’s schedule started at 7:30am with an optional prayer/stretching session. Most closed with a social at



*The members of the Assembly Steering Committee on the dais. At the left, Sisters Mary Kay Finneran, Dorothy Metz, Margaret Donegan and Claire E. Regan. Sr. Regina Bechtle is at the podium. Seen beyond her is Sr. Carmelita Murphy, OP, facilitator.*

7pm. In between, prayer, reflections, presentations, small and large group discussions, rituals, and Mass filled the days. Sr. Carmelita Murphy, OP, served as Facilitator for the process.

Michael Crosby, O.F.M. Cap was the keynote speaker on Saturday, the first full day. He spoke on Liturgy, the role of both Scripture and Tradition, and the prophetic role of religious in today’s world. Using Isaiah 6, Fr. Crosby pointed out that every prophetic call promises rejection.



*Sr. Jean Flannelly checks out one of the exhibits in the Story Room. These posters, created by Sr. Margaret Beaudette and Sr. Margaret Donegan, covered Congregational events from the days of Mother Seton through current times. This one displays photos of Sisters meeting their grace in their ministries today.*

Becoming a prophetic community is the challenge of the Congregation. As you may remember, the early days of this Congregation involved rejection. When Elizabeth Seton became a Catholic in 1805, she was ostracized by her own New York social circle. When 33 Sisters opted in 1846 to stay in New York rather than return to Emmitsburg, they were considered “renegades” by the Sisters in Maryland. In a quiet “story room,” exhibits reminded the Sisters of their history of meeting their grace in the hope that comes only in exile.

The first part of Sunday’s agenda was devoted to Sponsorship. As a rule, sponsored institutions do not receive money from us, except for a few that get seed money and occasional grants. Sponsorship is more a guiding spirit that pervades every aspect of a ministry.

*(continued on page 6)*

## Assembly 2007 *(continued from page 5)*

Several lay colleagues from sponsored health ministries addressed Assembly 2007. Bernadette Kingham-Bez, Senior Vice President for Communications and Marketing at Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centers, reported how the Sponsorship Day last fall established connections among all SCNY sponsored works. She recalled how a prayer by Sr. Jane Iannucelli at a doctors' meeting elevated the whole experience to a spiritual level, way beyond pure business. Brian L. Fitzsimmons, Ph.D., FACHE, the Executive Director of St. Vincent's Westchester, reminded us that, unlike other groups, we state that we are *especially* for the poor, and people appreciate the qualities of kindness, vibrancy and compassion that they find in the Sisters. Patricia A. Tursi, Chief Executive Officer at The Elizabeth Seton Pediatric Center, detailed how ESPC tries to move forward the Mission and the Charism of Charity among staff, which includes visiting the Shrine Church on the Battery and recalling the Seton motto, "Hazard, Yet Forward." Bonnie Burke, VP, Long Term Care/Nursing Home Administrator at Saint Joseph's Medical Center in Yonkers, cited the role of Catholic Healthcare in challenging the culture of death. Sr. Margaret M. O'Brien noted that outsiders often perceive how the Congregation's values are reflected in their sponsored works better than the Sisters do. The Sisters have worked hard for almost two centuries to make a difference, and it's gratifying that others notice and appreciate the effort.



*Associate Sandy Figueroa presenting the US Bishops immigration pastoral. That's Sr. Robert Marie Fimbel in the veil and white blouse to the right.*



*The Sisters celebrated Shrove Tuesday, including Sr. Eileen McGrory, Secretary of the Congregation. Sister's mask contains traditional Mardi Gras colors: purple represents justice; green, faith; gold, power – all appropriate hues for the Sisters. That's Sr. Alberta Carey reading the paper in the rear.*

On Monday, Sr. Claire E. Regan, Justice Effectiveness & Corporate Responsibility Coordinator for the Congregation, introduced the Immigrant Matters Committee. SC Associate Sandy Figueroa gave a PowerPoint presentation on the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' letter, "Welcoming the Strangers Among Us: Unity and Diversity." Sr. Maria Goetschalckx, a Sister of Charity of Seton Hill (Greensburg, PA) who is an immigration lawyer, detailed immigration problems and laws. Lively brainstorming after the presentations produced many suggestions for some possible ways to aid immigrants today.

On each of the seven days, there was much food for thought. Dozens of speakers gave presentations or reflections during Assembly, including:

- Sisters Ann Citarella, Anne Denise Brennan, Gloria De Arteaga, Mary Meyler, Mary Ann Daly, and Nora Cunningham on vocations in the past and now, especially candidates in Guatemala today.
- Sisters Mary Ann Garisto and Regina Murphy on the Congregation's Land Use Policy which results in decisions based on our values rather than simply economics.



- Sisters Virginia Searing and Mary Meyler on the Sister Barbara Ford Center for Peace-Building being constructed in Guatemala.
- Sr. Margaret McEntee, Campus Minister and Religion teacher at Notre Dame High School in Manhattan, about collaboration in education.
- Sr. Margaret Ellen Burke on how seed money from the Congregation, as well as donations from individual Sisters, enabled her and Sr. Nora Cunningham to establish the Center of Renewal and Education (CORE) in Harriman, NY, to minister to Spanish-speaking people.
- Pat Davies, who works at CORE, on how she realized that through her Baptism she had a right and a responsibility to serve. Pat now is a Spiritual Director and Eucharistic Minister.
- Associate Peggy Cekoric who referred to the Gospel of the day and challenged all to ask: “Who is Jesus for *me*? Who is Jesus for *us*? Who does Jesus say that *I* am? Who does Jesus say that *we* are?”

In response to a request from the Election Committee, the current Council members spoke on what their roles entail. Congregational elections were two months after Assembly.

Proposals from Assembly 2003 were discussed including Supportive Housing, Earth Charter, Retirement, the role

of women in the Church, Federation Connections and ways for others to be connected to the Congregation.

Assembly coincided with the start of Lent. On Ash Wednesday, an alms collection was taken up which enabled grants of \$500 each to ten ministries that serve the disadvantaged, including the Congregation’s missions in The Bahamas and Guatemala.

On Thursday the 22nd, after days of discussion and reflection, the Congregation voted on several governance matters. The system was simple but effective – Sisters raised color cards indicating support (green), support with hesitation (yellow) or non-support (red). One color was raised at a time, and every vote was counted. The final tally on every issue was read aloud to the delegates. The voting resulted in the adoption of policies on driving and land use, the issuance of a Direction Statement for the next four years, and revisions or additions to documents of the Congregation.

The delegates dispersed renewed, not fatigued, by their work at Assembly 2007. That spirit will carry them through to Assembly 2011. “Hazard, yet forward!” as Elizabeth Seton would have urged. ■

*Chris Haggerty is the Director of External Communications for the Congregation. Sr. Eileen McGrory is the Secretary of the Congregation.*



*The Congregation voted on several governance matters.*



# A Sister Reflects on Assembly

by Theresa Capria, SC

I never cease to be amazed when I experience a synchronicity of events.

A few days after I was asked to share some reflections on Assembly 2007, I attended the first Mass said after the renovation of the sanctuary in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at Mount Saint Vincent.

The pink wall that had been erected as a kind of poor man's reredo\* between the altar and the rear wall was gone, as was all the "stuff" that had been stored behind it. The original dark green marble on the rear wall could be seen once again.

*\* A reredo is the wall or screen that rises behind the high altar of a church, forming a background for it.*

The Tabernacle was returned to the center, directly under the 1873 painting *Crucifixion* by Brumidi which was illuminated with new lights. The beautiful marble floor in front of the side altars had been restored. New carpet was laid under the altar. The stark beauty, simplicity and open space spoke volumes to me. Almost immediately, I found myself back at Assembly 2007 making all sorts of connections with the issues and questions raised then.

The wall is down. It is a new time. Issues which are often stuffed under the table were brought to light, especially

concerning Church. How can we engage in dialogue rather than confrontation not only with our Church but also regarding social justice issues such as immigration? How can we, alone and together, speak the truth with love?

The marble is no longer covered. The essence is free to shine again. What is the essence of religious life, free of all the baggage it has acquired over time? What are the signs of these times? What does it mean to be prophets and mystics today? Can we allow a new generation to shape the future of religious life?

The renovation of the sanctuary required many people with different talents. In collaboration with each other and with our colleagues we can do so much more. It is the key to continuity.

The central focus of the entire sanctuary is the crucified Jesus who rose from the dead and remains with us, especially in the Eucharist. Through Christ we will be able to live out the invitation of Micah as highlighted in the keynote address at Assembly: "to love tenderly, act justly and walk humbly with our God".

Rooted on this firm foundation, Assembly 2007 is alive and well. I am certain that Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac and Elizabeth Seton rejoice with us. ■

*Sr. Theresa Capria was a delegate to Assembly 2007. She is a former member of the Leadership Team and currently is Assistant Director of Campus Ministry at the College of Mount Saint Vincent.*

Photo by Jessica Williams, CMSV staff



*It took just six weeks to renovate the sanctuary area of the Chapel. The first Mass after work was completed was on "Accepted Students Day" at the College.*

*The Sisters of Charity assumed the cost of this project with funds raised by their Development Office. At a later date, we hope to do joint fundraising with the College to attend to the Sacristy, Side Chapel and main body of the Chapel.*

## A Work in Progress

The Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at Mount Saint Vincent was dedicated on December 13, 1859. Over the years, it has undergone renovations big and small. The major changes were:

- 1874:** the nave was doubled to its current length
- 1897:** stained glass windows, bas-relief Stations of the Cross, the Sanctuary Dome and electricity were added
- 1936:** alumnae siblings donated 2 marble angels for the altar
- 1947:** new pews and floor were installed
- 1983:** a new altar was consecrated, windows were re-leaded, art works were cleaned, and shrines to Elizabeth Seton and Vincent de Paul filled alcoves that formerly held confessionals.



# An Associate Reflects on Assembly

by **Peggy B. Cekoric, SC Associate**

What a joy to be a part of women's governance at work! Beginning with a welcome, each day was filled with prayer, liturgy, process, table discussion, clarifications, and – on the last day – the affirmation of direction.

We began with God's promise of a "single heart" and a "new spirit," which emboldened us for the days to come. We heard about "right relationships in a time of exile," becoming a prophetic community, the "we" reality of sponsorship, and the "interconnectedness of all creation."

The passion in the reports of the Open Space was palpable; and in the discussion on liturgy we experienced a reverence in both word and action.

Throughout the week we were truly "on fire with our God."

*we were truly  
"on fire with  
our God."*

In making the sign of the cross on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday, we joined not only with those at our table and throughout the room but also with our Sisters and Associates praying for us in the retirement houses and homes – it truly became a holy encounter!

Directory and Policy changes, Council recommendations, an explanation of the discernment process and the call to leadership filled the last day and a half. Watching the voting process on Thursday morning was nothing less than awe-inspiring.

This non-delegate left Xavier Center that day with greater love and admiration for all in our Congregation and with a grateful heart for my spiritual journey as an Associate of the Sisters of Charity of New York. ■

*Peggy Cekoric will celebrate her 15th anniversary as an Associate of the Sisters of Charity on Pentecost Sunday – May 27th.*

# Collaboration Works!

by **Sr. Ann Citarella**

Vocation Directors from the Archdiocese of New York work to create meaningful experiences for women and men exploring religious life. Directors from over 40 different congregations collaborate to create ways to connect with those seeking to discover:

- **if** God is calling them to religious life
- **how** best that call can be lived.

Many young people desire to talk about their future life goals. For some, it is important to learn what it means to be a vowed religious in today's Church.

Vocation Directors provide opportunities for prayer and conversation about religious life, such as:

- weekend retreats for women in discernment
- an online retreat called "**S.T.O.P.**" for women and men who **Seek The Other Possibility** of God's call in their lives



- workshops on Vocations for teachers and catechists
- visits to parishes, schools, and colleges.

This collaborative ministry provides women and men of the Archdiocese of New York with a resource to make connections and to consider where God might be leading them.

If you or someone you know would like more information about vocations, please contact: Office of New Membership / Sisters of Charity / 6301 Riverdale Ave. / Bronx, NY 10471 **or** [anncitarella@optonline.net](mailto:anncitarella@optonline.net) ■

*Sr. Ann Citarella is Vocation Director for the Sisters of Charity of New York. In this ministry, she is in contact with women considering Religious Life as their response to God's call. Sr. Ann collaborates with Vocation Directors from Federation, Archdiocesan and National offices.*

# Honors and Happenings

Assembly wasn't the only exciting event in February. Fifteen of our Sisters celebrated significant anniversaries in the Congregation that month.

**75 Years:** Sr. Mary De Sales Collins, Sr. M. Esther Regan and Sr. Maria Michaela Pisacano. (Sr. Michaela entered on April 2nd.)

**70 Years:** Sr. Mary Ellis

**65 Years:** Sr. Anne T. Golden and Sr. Mary McCorken

**60 Years:** Sr. Claire Marian Barton, Sr. Anna Marian Lascell, Sr. Margaret Beaudette, Sr. Rita Elizabeth Moon, Sr. Marian Helen Collins, Sr. Clare Regan, Sr. Jane Maria Hoehn, Sr. Helen Scoltock and Sr. Paula Marie Spaight.

Congratulations, Sisters! Your many years of devoted service are deeply appreciated. You're an inspiration to all.

February 2nd was not only the feast of the Purification, it also marked the 150th anniversary of the Sisters of Charity of New York taking formal possession of the Fonhill estate in the northwest Bronx. They renamed the property Mount Saint Vincent. The creation of Central Park had necessitated the move from the Manhattan site of the first motherhouse.

**Sr. Kathleen Hanrahan** was honored on February 13th on her retirement from St. Joseph's Medical Center. Hospital staffers, volunteers and fellow Sisters enjoyed the party in the hospital Solarium. Michael J. Spicer, President and CEO at SJMC, spoke of Sister's contributions and noted her excellence as a Patient Service Representative.



*Sr. Kathleen takes the cake...but only for a moment. She cut and gladly shared it with all who came to her retirement party.*

**Sr. Mary De Sales Collins** was honored on March 6th, for her 50 years of service to The New York Foundling and her 75th anniversary as a Sister of Charity. Sr. De Sales is beloved by the thousands of children and families who met her during her years of service at St. Agatha's (in Rockland County), and in the Maternity Residence, the Adoptions Department and, most recently, in the Records Information Department at The Foundling.



*Sr. Mary with William F. Baccaglino, Jr., Executive Director at The New York Foundling*

Sister was cited for being "a woman who has brought care and compassion to the lives of countless babies, children and parents. By inspiring all the children she cared for to believe in themselves, she celebrated their lives. And today we celebrate her."

## Fair Trade

As you may remember, Sisters Mary Liegey and Margaret Farrara cook up jellies and sell them to support the Congregation's missions in Guatemala. Last year, they raised \$5,384! Congratulations, thanks and continued success to the two lead Sisters and their team of helpers at the Mount Saint Vincent Convent and in the Development Office.



Some of the "crafty" Sisters from Mary the Queen Convent offered their wares for sale at the Bedford Fair and raised \$3,102 for the retired Sisters! The beautiful handmade articles by Sisters Xavier Miriam Folser, Margaret Mary Hannon, Marie Ligouri Leyer, Mary Martin Meehan, and Paula Marie Spaight sold quickly in this upper Westchester County community. Sisters Marie Morris, Josephine Rog and Catherine Smith delivered the goods and manned the booth at the fair which was held in St. Patrick's Parish.



**Sr. Mary Ann Daly** has been appointed Executive Director of the Sisters of Charity Federation. In her new role, Sister serves as liaison to various organizations and committees in the Charity Family for the Federation. She also assists the Executive Committee in fulfilling the tasks assigned by the members at the



*Sr. Mary Ann Daly*

annual meeting. She represents and speaks on behalf of the Federation, and directs the ongoing administration of the Federation including staff supervision.

The Federation is comprised of approximately 4,000 women religious in 12 independent congregations in the US and Canada and in the five U.S. provinces of the Daughters of Charity, who seek to like the charism of Charity, rooted in Saints Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac and Elizabeth Ann Seton.

**The Elizabeth Seton Pediatric Center (ESPC)** celebrated its second anniversary as an independent healthcare organization on March 8th. The Pediatric Center was established in 1988 by the Sisters of Charity as an affiliate of The New York Foundling to provide specialized residential and rehabilitative services to medically fragile children with complex clinical conditions and disabilities. Over time, ESPC evolved into a 136-bed healthcare organization independently incorporated with its own distinct mission and leadership. Two years ago, it was officially renamed in honor of Saint Elizabeth Seton, founder of the Sisters of Charity.

Sr. Kathleen Aucoin serves as the Director of Pastoral Care and Director of Mission Integration at the ESPC.

**Sr. Kathleen Aucoin's** sculptures were featured for three weeks in March in the Chapel Gallery at Mariandale Retreat Center in Ossining, NY. Of her pieces, Sister Kathleen says they "are all a product of prayer and experience.... When a person looks at one of my statues, I hope that they are drawn to the God they cannot see, but can feel, experience in the art before them."

Sister Kathleen pursues her art in her spare time, when she's not working at the Elizabeth Seton Pediatric Center. You can see examples of her artwork online at [www.kathleenaucoin.com](http://www.kathleenaucoin.com)



*Sr. Kathleen Aucoin at her exhibit with Sr. Margaret Beaudette, who is also a sculptor. On the table is Sr. Kathleen's work "The Good Shepherd: You Are With Me."*



## Happy Birthday, Vision!

It was 10 years ago that this newsletter *Vision* debuted with the spring issue.

Back in 1997, Sr. Elizabeth Vermaelen was the President of the Sisters of Charity

of New York. In her letter to readers, she explained how *Vision* would combine the best elements of two earlier Congregational publications to "reflect more accurately... who we are in today's world and how we continue to reflect our mission and charism in new ways!"

We try to do that still.

The main articles in the inaugural issue focused on the traditional ministries – education, healthcare and child care – and on Sisters working in those areas in the 1800s and in 1997. Then, as now, *Vision* was 16 pages of Sisters and their associates trying to make the world a better place. ■



# Images of Faith: Reflecting on Charity & Service

by Sr. Joy Pellegrino

As you may remember, Bridge Building is the program that takes juniors and seniors from St. Raymond Academy and/or St. Barnabas High School (both in the Bronx) each month to work with Sisters of Charity of New York in their various ministries.

During a recent *theological reflection process*, (follow-up sessions to site visits), the young women of the Bridge Building Program were invited to explore their faith experiences through the lens of both Sacred Scripture and art.

The Sacred Scripture was Luke 8:22-25, *Jesus Calms a Storm*. The art was the image of Jesus in the boat, seen here. The task for the young reflectors was to place themselves relative to the boat and Jesus as they pondered: “Where is my faith?”

As an over-arching theme, faith was explored as a relationship with God, grounded in love and trust involving one’s total being. The resulting good actions, which flow from strong convictions, are intended to serve God and the human family. How did they perceive this relationship in light of the challenges presented by their volunteer experiences? What sustained them during times of doubt and struggle? Simply put: “What makes them keep coming back?”

An examination of their drawings sheds some light on the question: “Where is your faith?” How a student positioned herself in the boat with Jesus is pivotal. It serves as an indicator of faith in Jesus and in His ability to protect and save her. Did the young woman depict herself clinging to Jesus? Or cowering in the corner? Was she sitting behind or in front of Him? Or was she even *in* the boat at all – all assist in answering the question.



A sampling of their responses is revelatory:

■ *I'm behind Jesus in the boat saying: 'Help me to trust in you more'. Without this faith, it would not be possible for me to do difficult things without crumbling or feeling defeated.... Seeing the women at the homeless shelter (where Sr. Dorothy Gallant ministers), I drew strength from their strength. My faith allowed me to serve them and to speak with them – and not try to hide or run away.... It helped my faith to grow, and made me appreciate life more.... Jesus will always be by my side through everything.*

■ *I put myself up in the clouds because a cloud is not always clear. We as God's people sometimes find it hard to see the light. In the cloud I felt confused, and that's why Jesus is here to guide us.... My faith in Jesus makes me able to go places I never would have thought of going. The site that impacted me the most was Little Sisters of the Assumption (where the Bridge Builders work with Sr. Charlotte Raftery) because I was able to help many immigrants with the language. If I didn't have faith I wouldn't be able to do these things because I would have a closed mind and dark heart.*

■ *I put myself in the back because of fear. I don't know how to swim and the idea of sinking isn't too appealing. But I know that as long as Jesus leads the way, He'll protect me. I know He'll guide me along the right path.... My faith helped me at POTS (the soup kitchen Sr. Jane Iannucelli helped establish)... to look at each hungry person as human, that I may never know where they are at and not to judge them.*

May the faith of these young women continue to inspire us as they demonstrate by image, word and action: “We are ambassadors of Christ, as if God were appealing through us.” (2 Cor. 5:20). ■

*Sr. Joy Pellegrino is a clinical art therapist and a spiritual director. She serves as the Director of the Bridge Building Program, a curriculum of faith formation designed to help high school students experience the spirit of charity through site visits and theological reflection sessions.*



# St. Vincent's Hospital, Staten Island

by Chris Haggerty

In 1902, Sr. Louis Gonzaga was seeking a place with “tonic air and country atmosphere” as a convalescence site for tuberculosis patients. She found what she was looking for on Staten Island, and St. Vincent's Hospital of Richmond opened on November 26, 1903. The first patient was a trauma victim, establishing the hospital's reputation for excellent emergency care.

Over the years, the hospital grew into a sprawling medical campus with a Level One Trauma Center. It was renowned for its care of women and children and delivered over 3,000 babies yearly. It became part of the St. Vincent Catholic Medical Centers (SVCMC) system which unfortunately declared bankruptcy in July 2005. In order to regain fiscal viability, SVCMC had to sell the Staten Island hospital, along with six other facilities.

On January 1, 2007, St. Vincent's Hospital merged with Bayonne Medical Center to form a new healthcare system – the Richmond University Medical Center (RUMC).

A month before the transfer, “Appreciate St. Vincent's Day” was held at the Staten Island campus. Sr. Jane Ianucelli, who is vice chairman of – and the Congregation's representative to – the SVCMC's board, was there along with Sr. Sheila Brosnan, the Vice President of Mission at the hospital.

At the December 1st ceremony, long-time staffers spoke of what St. Vincent's had meant to them. They told of coming for a job and finding a home; of the struggles and rewards

of working in a hospital; of changing times, but ongoing spirit and mission.

Allen Weissglass, Chairman of the Board, who, like Sr. Carol Barnes, was born at St. Vincent's, said it was the Sisters themselves who made him proud to be on the Board. He spoke of Sr. Loretta Bernard Beagan who always put patient care above all else, especially when she was on the Board. On behalf of all Staten Island, he thanked all the Sisters who had served there over 103 years.

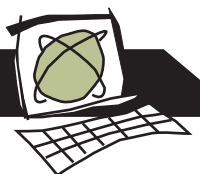
Joseph Motta, MD, FACS, President of the Medical Staff, predicted that the Sisters will be able to see the continuity of their mission of compassion to the people of Staten Island in the new RUMC.

Charlene Falletta, the Administrative Director in the Lab, shared her fancy that in patient units late at night, you can still hear the rustling of a nun's habit and you might see “the small figure of Sr. Danny (Sr. Mary Daniel McLaughlin) checking each room to make sure our patients are safe until morning.”

While there's sadness about the loss of the Staten Island facility, there is good news: St. Vincent Catholic Medical Centers filed its reorganization plan this past February 12th and is poised to emerge from bankruptcy as a financially sound healthcare system. It even plans to erect a new hospital in Greenwich Village, across the street from its current location.

On Staten Island, Staff, Physicians and the Community are enthusiastic about their new beginnings as Richmond University Medical Center. ■

## WEB REVIEW



How do you separate the wheat from the chaff when you're online? Recommendations from trusted sources, such as the *VISION* staff, help. Here's a good site to add to your Favorites list, especially if you're traveling this summer.

If you're looking for a church while away from home, **MASS TIMES** is a great resource. It contains listings for 108,328 Catholic churches in 201 countries. There's no guarantee that all the listings are current, but each includes addresses, maps and phone numbers of churches in an area so you can call to confirm service times. Don't leave home without looking at [www.masstimes.org](http://www.masstimes.org)

■ Patrice Athanasidy, SC Associate

## Did You Know...

...that the Catholic Church is the world's largest religious body? The 2007 edition of the *Pontifical Yearbook* states that as of year-end 2005, the latest date for which data is available, there were 1.115 billion Catholics worldwide, an increase of 1.5% from the previous year.

In the US, the Catholic Church is the largest denomination with over 67 million members. The Archdiocese of New York is home to:

- 2.5 million-plus Catholics
- 3, 542 sisters in 97 congregations (9 of them contemplative) and 4 associations of the faithful
- 386 brothers, mostly in seven orders
- 1,120 religious order priests.



In this issue of *Vision*, we're introducing a new feature called **Ask the Sisters**. It's where we'll address questions that we occasionally get from readers about the Congregation in particular or Catholic issues in general.

**Q:** As I read about the Golden Jubilarians in the fall issue, I found myself wondering how religious names were assigned and when and why many Sisters went back to their birth names.

**C. M. in Yonkers, NY**

**A:** Among the Sisters of Charity of New York, the adoption of a religious name became a tradition more than a formal rule. The early members of the Congregation retained their birth names: Elizabeth Seton and Elizabeth Boyle, for example.

In our Congregation, a young woman would be given her habit and receive her religious name six months after entering. Before that point, each postulant would have submitted three preferred potentials for her religious name. Any possi-

bility had to include a variation of "Mary" or one of her titles. Aside from the obvious, this might be Marie, Miriam, Marian, Regina, De Lourdes, Grace, and Rosaire. Quite often, the religious name included a parent's given name, too (e.g., Sr. Mary Thomas). If another Sister already had the name you wanted, it was eliminated from consideration. If all your suggestions were ineligible, you were assigned a religious name, to which hopefully you could relate.

The Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965 emphasized that religious life was a further living out of the baptismal commitment. With this theological understanding, our General Chapter of 1966-67 initiated many changes in our Congregation, including the return to the use of birth names among many – but not all – of our Sisters.

**Sr. Rita King (formerly Sr. Rita Regina)**  
**Archivist of the Congregation**

Do you have a question that you want to Ask the Sisters? Send it in. You'll find our mailing and email addresses on the back cover. ■

*Here's a question for you*

When we write about Sisters in VISION, do you think it would be a good idea to include their former religious names, along with their birth names? Might that make it easier for you to recognize your old teacher? Let us know.

## It's a Grand Old Name

by **Chris Haggerty**

When it comes to names, Mary was the most popular one for baby girls for 90% of the first 62 years of the 20th century. This trend is reflected among the given names of the Sisters of Charity of New York.

As you read above, for many years our Sisters had a form of Mary in their religious names. Yet even after most reverted to their birth names after Vatican II, almost half of today's Sisters still are known as Mary or a variation, thanks to their parents.

In 1906, George M. Cohan wrote the music and lyrics to *Forty-Five Minutes From Broadway*. One of the enduring songs from that musical was "Mary's A Grand Old Name." In this early Broadway hit, the simple housemaid Mary

explains how she got her name and tells why she is happy to have it.

The famous refrain goes:

*For it was Mary, Mary,  
Plain as any name can be...  
And there is something there  
That sounds so square,  
It's a grand old name.*

What's in a name? If you're lucky enough to be named Mary, you're in good company.

What could be better than having the same name as the Blessed Mother? ■

*Chris Haggerty is the Director of External Communications for the Congregation.*

## *In Memoriam*

### **Sr. Eileen Theresa Feore • Educator / Pastoral Care / Administrator • 1/21/1926 – 2/26/2007**

Religious name: Sr. James Maureen • Entered: 1944 • Final vows: 1949

Eileen Theresa Feore was taught by Sisters of Charity at St. Barnabas (grades 1-12) in her native Bronx. She earned a BA in Education, a MS in School Administration and certification as a Chaplain. Her 35-year ministry in education spanned 12 schools in six counties including St. Gabriel's in Queens where she was Asst. Principal, and St. Patrick's in Bedford where she was Principal. As an administrator, Sr. Eileen served as Director of Volunteers at The New York Foundling, in Pastoral Care at St. Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan, and as an administrator at a Congregation retreat house and retirement home. She was 81 when she died and had served faithfully for 62 years.

### **Sr. Eileen Hance • Educator / Health Care / Pastoral Care • 2/10/1925 – 3/6/2007**

Religious name: Sr. Regina Eileen • Entered: 1944 • Final vows: 1950

Dorothy Elizabeth Hance, born in Brooklyn and educated by the Sisters of Charity, worked briefly as a nurse's aide before entering the Congregation. She earned a BA in English and a MS in Elementary Education. Sr. Eileen taught for 36 years at five grade schools in the Bronx, Manhattan and Nanuet. In 1982, she felt called to pastoral care and volunteered at Calvary Hospital in the Bronx, then was chaplain at Bronx Lebanon Hospital. Despite Parkinson's Disease in her later years, Sister always tried to present a pleasant and positive outlook. We are grateful for Sr. Eileen's 82 years of life and 62 years of faithful and loving service.

### **Sr. Miriam Laboure Hart • Educator / Administrator / Coiffeuse • 10/29/1913 – 3/16/2007**

Religious name: Sr. Miriam Laboure • Entered: 1937 • Final vows: 1943

Rose Margaret Hart of Manhattan had Sisters of Charity as teachers in grades 1-12. She earned a BA in History. Affectionately called Sister "Lab," she spent most her teaching ministry in NYC, except for six years in The Bahamas where she was headmistress at St. Anselm's. Sister served as principal at St. Anthony's and St. Gabriel's in the Bronx, and at St. Brigid's in Manhattan. When she was 64, she studied at the Wilford Academy and became hairdresser to the stars: senior citizens, including her fellow Sisters. Sr. Laboure also served the Congregation as Activities Coordinator and assistant to the administrator at retirement convents. She easily moved from one ministry to another, knowing that each was a way to love God and others. We are grateful that for 69 of her 93 years, "Lab" was a Sister of Charity of New York.

### **Sr. Catherine McCabe • Educator • 3/22/27 – 3/25/2007**

Religious name: Sr. Miriam Ignatius • Entered: 1946 • Final vows: 1950

Catherine McCabe of Manhattan had the Sisters of Charity as teachers at Incarnation School and Cathedral High School. She earned a BS in English and an MA in Reading. Sister taught in nine elementary schools in the Archdiocese over 50 years. Her longest ministry was 26 years at St. Margaret of Cortona in the Bronx. Sr. Catherine's specialty was reading and much of her ministry was with 2nd graders. Think of the hundreds of youngsters she prepared for First Communion! We are grateful for her 80 years of life and 61 years as a Sister of Charity.

### **Sr. Maria Michaela Pisacano • Educator / Administrator / Artist • 8/19/07 – 3/28/2007**

Religious name: Sr. Maria Michaela • Entered: 1932 • Final vows: 1939

Anna Rita Pisacano was born in NYC to Italian immigrant parents. Her elementary school was Elizabeth Seton Academy in Yonkers. Sr. Michaela earned a BA in Mathematics and taught at nine schools in Manhattan and Westchester over 43 years. She also served as Director of Purchasing at St. Agatha's Home in Nanuet for seven years and was Store Manager at Elizabeth Seton College in Yonkers for six years. In her retirement, Sister became a stained glass artist and also enjoyed working with personal computers. Sr. Michaela was 99 when she died and had served the Congregation faithfully for 75 years.

### **Sr. Marie Kieran Devery • Administrator • 6/18/21 – 3/29/2007**

Religious name: Sr. Marie Kieran • Entered: 1953 • Final vows: 1961

Julia Devery, a native of Manhattan, was educated by the Sisters of Charity at St. John the Evangelist Elementary School, Cathedral High School and Holy Cross Business School. For 44 years, she worked at St. Vincent's Medical Center: four years as head of personnel and housekeeping on Staten Island, followed by 40 years in administration in Manhattan. As Secretary to the Board of Trustees at St. Vincent's, she never missed a meeting and her minutes were so complete that no corrections were ever needed! In 1998, Sister Kieran was honored by Saint Vincent's Manhattan with the Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Award in recognition for her outstanding contributions. We are grateful for Sister's 85 years of life and 54 years of dedicated service.

# SEASONALITIES

## Calendar

### May

- 6: Sr. Dorothy Metz will be among the 800 Superiors General attending the Union of International Superiors General in Rome. The theme of the five-day Plenary Convocation of religious women is "Challenged to weave a new spirituality which generates hope and life for all."
- 8: In 1777, Elizabeth Seton was just three-years old when her mother died.
- 14: In 1810, Elizabeth Seton was confirmed by Archbishop John Carroll at St. Peter's, Barclay St., NY.

### June

- 7: The four-day meeting of the Sisters of Charity Federation convenes in Nazareth, KY.
- 9: In 1808, Elizabeth and her five children left New York to begin a girls' school in Baltimore. She never returned to her native city.
- 21: In 1863, Mother Elizabeth Boyle, first Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity of New York, died at age 72.

### July

- 1: Transfer of leadership in the Congregation is marked with a liturgy and celebration. The newly-elected President and Council take office.
- 16: The five-day 2007 Congregation Retreat for Sisters, Associates, former members and colleagues convenes at the Passionist Spiritual Center in the Bronx. This is the 4th annual time of prayer with stories and themes from Charity charism.
- 31: In 1809, Elizabeth Seton established the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg, MD.

## Reflection

**As her new community struggled through hardships of every sort,  
Elizabeth Seton encouraged them to draw strength from their vocation.  
Now, as then, Charity impels us to nothing less than a share in the mission of Jesus.**

*"Courage, Sisters of Charity –  
your admirable name must excite in you every preparation to do justice to your Vocation."*

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