

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF NEW YORK

VOL. 23, ISSUE 3 *Now in Our Third Century of Living Lives of Love* SUMMER 2019



*Transfer of Leadership*

*Vision*



## From the President

Dear Friends,

On Saturday, June 29th, a beautiful ceremony marking Transfer of Leadership took place in the newly renovated Chapel of the Immaculate Conception. At one point in the ceremony, those gathered asked the new Leadership Team: “Will you pledge yourself to the service of the Congregation, to foster life and to promote the mission of Charity that God has entrusted to us?” Instead of responding, “I will!” there were several seconds of silence from the team. Perhaps this was because we didn’t have the booklets in front of us or because we failed to hear the question. A more likely explanation might be that the enormity of the responsibility struck us, as well as the fact that we would be walking in the footsteps of exceptional leaders who have preceded us. Eventually, each of us responded, “I will!!!”

Among the exceptional leaders preceding us is our outgoing Leadership Team: Sr. Jane Iannucelli (President), Sr. Margaret O’Brien (Assistant to President), and Councilors, Sisters Sheila Brosnan, Kathleen Byrnes, and Mary Ann Daly.

During the past four years, they have fostered the life of the Congregation with compassion, vision, and joy. They have also been extremely helpful and gracious to the new team as they oriented us to our responsibilities. I want to thank them and wish them much deserved relaxation during the coming months.

On a personal note, being elected President of the Sisters of Charity is truly an honor as well as a humbling experience. Reflecting on the giftedness and vision of the Sisters who have previously served in this role gives me great pause. However, on the day of my election, someone handed me a quote from one of our founders that read, “Remember that it is the most holy will of God which put you where you are and that it is for the accomplishment of His will that you must work there.” (St. Louise de Marillac) I find this very comforting. We can all take comfort in the fact that God indeed has a unique plan for each of us.

The coming years will be particularly challenging for religious congregations as we continue to age without the benefit of younger sisters to replace us. This challenge brings with it an ever-increasing need to trust in God’s plan for us and to find creative ways to continue our mission as Sisters of Charity and to keep the flame of charity rising within each of us and within our Church and our world. It will be an exciting time for our Congregation. I am confident that each Sister, Associate, Companion, and colleague in ministry will respond to this challenge with complete trust in our loving God, and that our benefactors and friends will continue to support and pray for us.

Blessings,



Sr. Donna Dodge, SC



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



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**Cover photo:** Sr. Regina Bechtle, at the podium, and new Leadership Team (from left) Sr. Claire Regan, Councilor; Sisters Dorothy Metz and Dominica Rocchio, Assistants to the President; Sr. Donna Dodge, President; Sisters Margaret O’Brien, Sheila Brosnan, and Margaret Egan, Councilors



## Sisters of Charity Federation Assembly of the Whole Chicago, June 2019

*By Anne Marie Gardiner*

**M**ost of us wear many hats. I am a wife and mother, and I am a Seton Associate of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth in New Jersey. And I also wear the hat of Director of Development for the Sisters of Charity of New York. It may be confusing to some, but it became quite clear to me that I was “part of the whole” while attending the Sisters of Charity Federation Assembly of the Whole. The theme of the historic Assembly, held in Chicago from June 13 to 16, was “Weaving Together Unstoppable Charity.”

To be among over 500 Sisters of Charity, Associates, and colleagues from all over the country and world was energizing. The keynote speaker, Sr. Peggy O’Neill of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, spoke of her ministry in El Salvador. Sister has been in that country for over 30 years and has experienced wars and great violence, but she has also witnessed the love of God through the people she serves.

Through table discussions, liturgies, and the banquet, I was filled with hope and joy. I witnessed our charism in action.

Sister Mary Sujita Kallupurakkathu, a Sister of Notre Dame who shared her reflections about this Assembly, summarized it beautifully saying, “Solidarity is another name for Charity.” In our family of the Sisters of Charity, we are not on



**Top:** The fourteen member organizations of the Sisters of Charity Federation participated in the Assembly of the Whole. Photo by Sr. Carol Wentworth, OLM. **Above:** Anne Marie Gardiner (left) with Sr. Marie Sorensen, SC-Halifax.

**Above from left:** Associate Sue Porcelli, Sisters Elaine Owens, Regina Bechtle, Barbara Srozenski, and Donna Dodge attended the Assembly. Sister Elaine returned after four wonderful days at the Assembly and went home to God two days later.

this journey alone. There is a future for our mission, and our numbers are strong.

So was I conflicted about spending time between New York and New Jersey? Not at all! Because we are “one in Spirit,” I was quite at home and right where I wanted to be. We are “unstoppable!”

**Below:** Eight Associates and twenty-eight Sisters joined fellow Federation members for four days of prayer, reflection, conversation, and collaboration at the Assembly of the Whole.







## Transfer of Leadership

By Mary Mc Cormick, SC

**L**et us welcome this morning with the flame of Charity rising anew!"

With these words, the Sisters of Charity of New York began their celebration of the transfer of leadership to the Sisters elected during Assembly 2019.

The day chosen for the transfer ceremony to take place, June 29th, was a typical summer day: hot and humid but beautiful nevertheless. Sisters, Associates, Companions, family, friends, and colleagues gathered at the doors of the newly-renovated Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at Mount Saint Vincent. The beauty of the worship space that enabled light and air to create a breathtaking atmosphere of peace and serenity delighted all.

Morning prayer started with a procession led by Nicole Quaranto who, representing "Charity Rising," held aloft the



**From left:** The Prayer of Intercession was read by past presidents Sr. Carol Barnes (1987–1995) and Sr. Elizabeth Vermaelen (1995–2003).



**Photos on page 4, clockwise from top left:** Representing "Charity Rising," Associate Nicole Quaranto led the procession; 2015–2019 Leadership Team: Sisters Mary Ann Daly, Kathleen Byrnes, Jane Iannucelli, Margaret O'Brien, and Sheila Brosnan; Sister Eileen McGrory and Arleen Ketchum read the names of the Major Superiors; new president, Sr. Donna Dodge; as president, Sr. Jane passed the candle to the Congregation's new president, Sr. Donna Dodge.

cauldron of fire used during the 2019 Assembly. The choir led the opening hymn, *The God of All Grace*. Subsequent prayer included hymns, psalms, a scripture reading, and a reflection given by Sr. Mary Mc Cormick.

The transfer ceremony began with the reading of the names of Elizabeth Seton and the twenty-four Sisters who have served as the Major Superiors of the Congregation.

Invited to the altar, the 2015–2019 leadership team, Sisters Jane Iannucelli, Margaret O'Brien, Mary Ann Daly, Sheila Brosnan, and Kathleen Byrnes, received the thanks of the assembled community for the gift of their service.

The new President and Council, Sisters Donna Dodge, Dorothy Metz, Dominica Rocchio, Sheila Brosnan, Margaret O'Brien, Margaret Egan, and Claire Regan, also invited to the altar, received candles from the outgoing leadership as a symbol of their call to lead and inspire the Congregation in



**Above from left:** Sisters Dorothy Metz, Donna Dodge, and Dominica Rocchio; **below:** Sisters Margaret O'Brien and Sheila Brosnan.



All in the Chapel stood and raised their hands to bless the new Leadership Team.

the mission of charity. As Sr. Donna Dodge, the new President, accepted the challenge of her role, all those in the Chapel stood and raised their hands in blessing on the new administration.

All joyfully sang *The Magnificat*, a traditional hymn sung at times of Congregational celebration.

Former Presidents Sisters Elizabeth Vermaelen and Carol Barnes led the Prayers of Intercession.

The ritual ended with the hymn *Sing a New Church*, with several verses composed by Sr. Regina Bechtle.

A festive meal provided the opportunity to greet the new Council and celebrate a new chapter in the Congregation's ongoing history.



New Councilors Sisters Claire Regan (left) and Margaret Egan are new to Sisters of Charity leadership. Reflecting on her new role, Sr. Margaret said, "What makes things so hopeful is the tremendous number of supportive wishes and promises of prayer from our Sisters and acquaintances and then the words of Elizabeth Seton which are the essence of all—"Just do your best and leave the rest to our dear God." Sister Claire, who recently completed her move back to New York, says, "I am looking forward to engaging one-on-one with my Sisters, to hear their perspectives, experiences and sense of the broader matters that join us in the mission of Charity Rising. I am hopeful that my most recent nine years serving in New Orleans will inform that mission in new and exciting directions."



## Sister Donna Dodge, President Regina Bechtle, SC



Sister Donna Dodge, SC, is the new President of the Sisters of Charity. To this position, Sr. Donna brings rich and varied ministry experiences.

Her early ministry was in education, teaching at Visitation, Bronx, St. Joseph, and St. Mary, both in Yonkers. When she left education, she began and co-directed the Sisters of Charity Planning

and Research Office (PRO). She went on to serve as Assistant to the President and Director of Planning at the College of Mount Saint Vincent, as Executive Assistant to the President and then Vice President for Mission and Planning at Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Conn., and as Community Outreach Director for Catholic Charities in Bridgeport, Conn. After a term as Assistant to the President of the Sisters of Charity, 2007–2011, she became Executive Director and CEO of the Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation. This ministry oversees and coordinates a growing number of housing projects which the Congregation sponsors in Manhattan, Rockland County, and Staten Island, offering affordable and supportive housing to seniors, persons with disabilities, and families in need.

Sister Donna entered the Congregation in 1966, as change was sweeping society, church, and religious life;

flexibility and adaptation to change have been a constant in her life. She is a woman of creativity, vision, persistence, and humor, among many other talents. She has a fondness for puns and quips. Her sharp and ready wit has eased many a tense moment. She is also a model of ecological reverence—she won't even kill a fly or mosquito. She has an affinity for naming all with which she relates; she named her car, a Forester, Redwood.

The influence of several wise mentors and outstanding colleagues has enriched Sr. Donna's life, a fact she gratefully acknowledges.

Sister Donna is a graduate of St. Rita and Holy Cross Schools, and Cardinal Spellman High School, all in the Bronx. She holds a BA in Psychology from the College of Mount Saint Vincent, an MA in Religious Studies from Fordham University, and an Ed.D in Higher Education Administration from Teachers' College, Columbia University.

## Sister Dorothy Metz, Assistant to President Patricia McGowan, SC

Being a member of the Sisters of Charity Leadership Team is not a new role for Sr. Dorothy Metz, SC. From 2003 to 2011 she was President of the Congregation and during the previous eight years she was a Regional Coordinator.

In her early years of ministry, Sr. Dorothy taught at St. Peter, Staten Island, St. Anthony and St. Gabriel, both in the Bronx, St. Peter, Yonkers, and was Principal at St. Francis of Assisi, Mt. Kisco. She spent fifteen years at St. Barnabas High School in the Bronx, serving as teacher, department chair, campus minister, and the first director of development. In her role as development director she was remembered as "a leader who was looking into the future."

That focus on future trends that would impact religious life continued during her years in congregation Leadership. She served on many congregation committees, such as the Global Implementation Team. She was deeply involved in the



early days of the Community Supported Agriculture Farm in Stanfordville, N.Y., and the Barbara Ford Peacebuilding Center in Guatemala.

In addition to her congregational commitments, she was elected Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the Archdiocesan Committee of Women Religious (ACWR) in 1998. Today Sr.

Dorothy is Chair of the Board of the Elizabeth Seton Children's Foundation.

When once asked to identify the most pressing needs of the Church she responded: "The Church needs to reach out to all people in order to form relationships with them and to empower them with the Gospel message, so that peace and justice may prevail."

That commitment to the future of the Congregation and its mission to serve those most in need continues as she assumes her new responsibilities.

An avid genealogist, she has traced her ancestors back to the early 1800s.

Sister Dorothy entered the Congregation in 1956; her religious name was Sr. Thomas Loretta. She attended St. Raymond School in the Bronx, and St. Lawrence Academy in Manhattan; she earned a BA in Mathematics from the College of Mount Saint Vincent and an MA in Theology and Liberal Arts from Manhattanville.

## Sister Dominica Rocchio, Assistant to President

Sister Dominica Rocchio, SC, Assistant to the President, has extensive leadership experience in both congregational and educational settings, having served as Councilor from 2007 to 2015.

Sister Dominica has specialized in secondary education and educational administration. She taught at St. Barnabas High School in the Bronx, at the Academy of the Resurrection in Rye, and at Cathedral High School, All Saints Branch, in Manhattan. She was Dean of Students at St. Joseph By-the-Sea High School on Staten Island and at St. Gabriel High School in New Rochelle, where she also was principal from 1975 to 1980. For the next 12 years, Sr. Dominica was Associate Superintendent of Secondary Schools for the Archdiocese of New York. She then crossed the Hudson River and became Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Newark for 15 years; during 12 of those years, she

also was Secretary for Education for the Archdiocese.

Sister Dominica is nationally known, having served on the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Public Policy and Catholic Schools, as Consultant to the USCCB Committee on Education, and as a Director on the board of the National Catholic Educational Association.

She says with more than a touch of irony, "When I entered in 1962, all I ever wanted to be was a teacher. Guess what? I've spent most of my life in administration!" Blessed with a prodigious memory, an eye for detail, and a gift for storytelling, Sr. Dominica is the ideal resource person when questions arise about the Sisters of Charity, the Church local and universal, or the breaking news of the day.

Sister Dominica holds a BS in English, an MA in Religious Education, and an Ed.D in Educational Administration from Fordham University, as well as



an MA in English from Manhattan College. She was awarded an honorary doctorate from Seton Hall University and also completed a year of study at Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Mass.

Sister Dominica entered the Congregation in 1962; her religious name was Sr. Regina Seton. She is a graduate of St. Jean Baptiste High School and Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, both in Manhattan.

*Regina Bechtle, SC*

## Sister Sheila Brosnan, Councilor



Elected to a second four-year term, Sister Sheila Brosnan, SC, returns to the Leadership Team as a Councilor. Before her election in 2015, she served as VP for Mission Integration at Archcare for five years. She previously served as Regional Coordinator for the Congregation from 1995 to 2003.

Education was Sister Sheila's first ministry. She taught at three schools: St. Charles Borromeo in Brooklyn, Our

Lady of Mercy in Port Chester, and St. Joseph By-the-Sea in Staten Island.

Her first foreign mission came in 1971 when she served as a pastoral worker in Santiago, Chile until 1974. Her return to the states brought her back to the education ministry for one year before returning to school to study nursing.

After her training, Sister Sheila served in Novillero, Guatemala, both as a nurse and a missionary from 1978 until 1985. During her time in Guatemala, she not only utilized her Spanish speaking skills, she learned Quiché, one of the indigenous languages of the region. Upon her return to the States, Sister Sheila served as a nursing supervisor at Little Sisters of Assumption from 1985 to 1987, and St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Centers from 1987 to 1990, both in Manhattan. She then served as Pastoral Associate at St. Francis Xavier Church in Manhattan until elected to Sisters of Charity Leadership in 1995.

After two terms in Leadership, Sister Sheila served as Senior Vice President for Mission at St. Vincent Catholic Medical Center in Staten Island until 2007, then studied at the Jesuit School of Theology before serving in the same role for the next two years at St. Vincent's in Manhattan.

Sister Sheila enjoys swimming, and whenever possible, she can be found at the local pool every Saturday morning.

A native Staten Islander, Sister Sheila attended Our Lady Help of Christians and St. Peter High School in that borough. She earned a BA in Spanish from the College of Mount Saint Vincent, an MA in Spanish from Hunter College, a BSN in Nursing from the State University of New York, and an MA in Religious Studies from Fordham University.

Sister Sheila entered the Sisters of Charity in 1959; her religious name was Sister Denis Marie.



## Sister Margaret Egan, Councilor Patricia McGowan, SC



Sister Margaret Egan's lifelong devotion to education began as a teacher at Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scarsdale, St. Raymond, Bronx, and Elizabeth Seton Academy, Yonkers. She has devoted 48 of 60 years in education to the College of Mount Saint Vincent (CMSV) as professor, Chair of the Teacher Education Department, Dean of Students, and Vice President for Student Development.

During her time in office, Sr. Margaret developed the Master's Program in Education and enrolled the department in the National Honor Society in Education. She was also President of the New York Association of Colleges for Teacher Educators (NYACTE) and received the Teacher of the Year Award from the New York State Association of Teacher Educators.

At her CMSV farewell party in May, fellow faculty members remembered her as a "special part of our lives" and "someone who inspires all of us to be better." These sentiments have been echoed by many former students: "I credit Sister with so many of the skills I have used in my 29 years of teaching; I was blessed to have her as a professor; I thank you for your leadership and friendship; I can't imagine the Mount without you."

Sister Margaret also serves on the Board of Trustees of her alma mater, Cathedral High School in New York City, is a volunteer at the Safe House

for women sponsored by the LifeWay Network, and is a frequent visitor to the Sisters in our various retirement homes.

However, her talents do not lie in the academic field alone. She is a talented photographer and an accomplished musician, playing the guitar, violin, drums, harmonica, and even the lost art of the "spoons."

By all appearances, whatever work she has undertaken, her "consistent and untiring attention to details has resulted in a positive outcome," according to Arlene Moliterno, Ph.D., a former CMSV colleague.

Sister Margaret entered the Congregation in 1956; her religious name was Sr. James Carmel. She attended Holy Name and Cathedral High Schools, both in Manhattan. She earned a BA in History from the College of Mount Saint Vincent, an M.Ed in Reading from Boston College, and an Ed.D in Reading/Education from Yeshiva University.

## Sister Margaret O'Brien, Councilor

Sister Margaret O'Brien, SC, brings vast leadership experience to her newly elected role as Councilor. She has served as Congregation Treasurer since 2012, was Regional Coordinator on the Council from 2003 to 2011, and most recently served as the Assistant to the President.

During her fifty-nine years as a Sister of Charity, Sr. Margaret has ministered in several capacities. Her first ministry was in education, where she taught at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Scarsdale, and St. Brigid in Manhattan, before serving as a librarian at St. Brigid for eight years. She then served in school administration at St. Joseph in Yonkers, and as Principal at St. Paul in Manhattan, before theological studies brought her to California in the late 1980s.

She elected to attend the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley. Upon completion of her studies, Sr. Margaret

remained in California to accept a position in the Hayward Public School District. It would offer her an opportunity to serve a diverse student population. She served as teacher and librarian during her eleven years.

Returning to New York at the end of her sabbatical in 1999, Sr. Margaret had full intention of returning to education. However, it was not to be as she was appointed by the Congregation Leadership to serve as Senior Vice President for Mission at St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical on Staten Island.

She returned to the Bronx in 2003 when she was elected to serve in Sisters of Charity Leadership as Regional Coordinator.

In her spare time, she enjoys cooking, music, reading, and solving puzzles.

Sister Margaret is a graduate of Our Lady of Angels and St. Barnabas High School, both in the Bronx. She holds



a BA in English from the College of Mount Saint Vincent, an MS in Library Service from Columbia University, and a CTS from the Jesuit School in Berkeley, Calif. She entered the Sisters of Charity in 1960; her religious name was Sr. Mary Elizabeth.



## Sister Claire Regan, Councilor Mary Mc Cormick, SC

Sister Claire is serving in congregational leadership as a first-term Councilor.

Her first ministry was as Assistant Administrator at St. Joseph's Hospital, Yonkers. For the next five years, she served as a client advocate at Little Sisters of the Assumption Home Health services. When Elizabeth Seton Housing opened in Manhattan as a permanent residence for families, she was asked to become its first director, serving in that capacity until 1997. Following that mission, Sister Claire's ministries involved endeavors in the areas of justice, peace, and corporate responsibility. From 1997 to 1999, she was a program assistant at the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility in New York; she was named congregational Justice Effectiveness Coordinator, the result of one of three future-oriented directions chosen by Assembly 1999.

Before her election as Councilor,

Sister Claire was a staff member at the Federation-sponsored House of Charity, located in New Orleans, Louisiana. Beginning in 2010, Sister Claire and members of several Federation congregations created an inter-congregational place of welcome and service. They planned programs involving young adults, and students from colleges and universities including the College of Mount Saint Vincent, who volunteered time to help in the rebuilding and refurbishing of homes destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Her local community also invited young adults to join them for periods of prayer and vocational discernment.

One of Sister Claire's favorite activities, which she is sure to miss, is taking part in Mardi Gras celebrations in her adopted city, NOLA.

Sister Claire entered the Sisters of Charity in 1982. She attended the Bronx



High School of Science, earned a BA in Economics from Fordham University, and an MM in Hospital and Health Service Administration at J.L. Kellogg graduate school of Management. She received a certificate in Bereavement Counseling in 1988; recently, she completed a program in Vincentian Spiritual Direction.

### Thoughts on Leadership by a Local Community Member

Electing the Leadership Team for the Congregation presents a special challenge. The Sister elected to the role of president is unique in that she retains her persona as an individual throughout her term of office. This is in contrast to the election to serve on the Council, a position which has potential to blur each Sister's individuality as we, the members, often refer to them in the collective.

Regardless of the role, to leave one's name on the slate for election is an example of selfless risk-taking. If elected, the Sister is often required to leave a ministry she loves or a local community where she experiences support and affirmation.

Sisters Margaret O'Brien and Sheila Brosnan, both members of the incoming Leadership Team—and members of my local community—hold some things in common. Both come from a family constellation which nurtured and supported them in their formative years. Both have the value of experience since they served in previous leadership teams. Both are Irish!

Where they differ is in temperament and personality.

*Remember that it is  
the most holy will of God  
which put you where you are  
and that it is  
for the accomplishment  
of His will  
that you must work there.*

St. Louise de Marillac

Shaped by a Post-Vatican II novitiate, each lives out mission in a climate of diversity.

Initially, they were assigned to ministries in education. For Sister Margaret, it was a perfect fit. As teacher, librarian, mentor, and principal, she has devoted her life to the demands of each ministry.

Sister Sheila navigated through several diverse ministries: education, health care, and missionary service in Chile and Guatemala. This example of diversity is in keeping with her tendency to be more of an extrovert.

Both Sisters Sheila and Margaret are perfect examples of the unity in diversity, which characterizes each member of the Council. Their love for the Congregation and the Sisters is unquestioned. All Leadership Team members demonstrate a readiness to serve, regardless of the demands of their roles. It is of the utmost importance that we see each Council member in light of her uniqueness, variety of service already rendered and, most significantly, the role they continue to play in the future of the Congregation.

By Miriam Kevin Phillips, SC



**A**t Assembly 2019 held March 26–31, 2019, congregation delegates elected a new President, four Sisters as Councilors, and affirmed two sisters as Assitants to the President, comprising the Leadership to serve the Sisters of Charity of New York for the four-year term beginning July 2019. A historical perspective of the election process employed by the Congregation in the earliest years is the foundation for the evolution of the current democratic mandate.

At the beginning of the community of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph in Emmitsburg, an election was held on August 18, 1809; Elizabeth Seton was unanimously chosen first Mother, and Rose White was appointed her Assistant. At that time, the rules adopted by the Community directed that three Councilors were selected to form the first official “leadership” of the Community. During Assembly meetings dating from 1812 and until 1931, elections occurred solely to choose the Congregation’s Mother and Council.

The earliest procedures to elect leadership dictated that those occupying the three principal offices of the Community must be at least 28 years of age, have ten years vocation, and possess the same qualifications required for the Mother:

The qualities requisite to be elected Mother are: first, to be at least thirty-five years of age and to have twelve years vocation; secondly, to be of a strength equal to the burden; thirdly, to have been admitted to the vows on the last profession day; fourthly, to be endowed with a mind mature, discreet, and vigilant, but equally docile, mild, and peaceable; fifthly, to live an exemplary life, especially by the practice of poverty in dress, food, and the rest; by a remarkable purity and detachment from all creatures; by a prompt obedience to the Superior and a punctual observance of the Rules; by a sincere union, charity, and forbearance to her Sisters; and in fine, by a great fidelity to meditation and other spiritual exercises, accompanied with an equal affection and application to the exterior functions of charity toward the poor, particularly the lowest as most repugnant to nature. (*Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings*, Vol. IIIb, Appendix, pp. 541ff.)

After the Community’s constitutions were approved, the first officers were elected according to the specified procedures. Archbishop John Carroll wrote to Mother Seton early in 1812, “[Rev.] M. Dubois informs me that the election of the officers of the house will be made immediately; and no doubt, with that spirit of charity and humility and entire submission to its event, and with that preparation by prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which will insure constant tranquility and

regularity. May you receive many and lasting blessings from the Giver of every good gift.” (Archbishop Carroll to Mother Seton, January 20, 1812, SCNY Archives)

From the earliest days of the Community’s history, a sense of the importance of participation and consultation was present. In January 1812, Sr. Rose White noted in her journal: “[The Constitutions and Rules] modified to suit this country...were read to the Sisters assembled for this purpose...We were at liberty to adopt these or not, free to retire if we wished from the Community. All were invited to remain, notwithstanding bad health and other infirmities. Each was invited to raise her hand, if she was willing to adopt the rules.”

When Elizabeth Seton died before completing her term as Mother, Father Dubois wrote the news to the Sisters on mission and gave the procedure to be followed for replacing her. An excerpt from his letter of January 6, 1821, to Sr. Rose White, who was Sister Servant in New York, notes:

By a resolution of the Council taken two days previous to her death...it has been determined that all our Sisters abroad should write to me by the first mail after the receipt of this my letter to let me know their wish respecting the two Sisters which, by the Constitution, we are to represent to the general assembly of the sisters for election to succeed our departed Mother.... it

has not yet been determined whether our Sisters of the distant establishments should have a vote in the election and by what means that vote should be obtained...but the Council, wishing to consult the wishes of our dear Sisters abroad, have adopted this temporary measure until experience has enabled us to adopt a constitutional rule. They are not to communicate their vote to one another, not even to yourself....

In August 1824, Rose White was re-elected for another three-year term. At the end of this term, in July 1827, Sr. Augustine Decount was elected to replace her. The practice in both the Emmitsburg community during the first years and at Mount Saint Vincent until 1933, offered a list sisters’ names eligible for the office of Mother prepared by the Superior General and Council, to be presented to the Community before the election.

At a second meeting, the Mother and officers were encouraged to freely discuss the qualities of each candidate in a manner to acknowledge both positive and less suitable characteristics. This procedure would elicit the name(s) of one or two sisters to be proposed to the General Assembly. This open discussion was, however, done secretly to prevent discussion amongst the other sisters.

*Continued, see page 14, top right*

## *A Brief History of the Election Process in the New York Community*

*By Mindy Gordon  
Archivist*





## Welcoming Vocations: January in Quiché to June in Sololá

By Nora Cunningham, SC

January 4, 2019, Quiché, Guatemala

“Are you being courageous?” Louise de Marillac asked; and Luisa Cristina Francisco answered in her desire to share a life of faith in community and mission with the Sisters of Charity of New York. In the entrance ceremony, which followed the homily of the Mass, Luisa signed her name in the Ritual Book as a sign of her promise to live religious life as a postulant. Sister Jane Iannucelli then placed a medal of St. Elizabeth Seton on her and presented her with a Bible and the Mission Statement of the Sisters of Charity.

Luisa’s family made the long trip from San Pedro Soloma in Huehuetenango to support Luisa in her decision. Sisters Jane and Mary Ann Daly, along with the Sisters of Quiché and Sololá, promised their prayerful accompaniment. The festivities continued with a delicious meal prepared by the Barbara Ford Peacebuilding Center.

Luisa comes to the Congregation as a teacher of the very young and loves this calling. She continues in her postulant program of study, prayer, community life, and ministry. Luisa enjoyed her trip in March for Assembly and New York with all its sights, but especially meaningful was meeting “the sisters, who inspired and encouraged me in my vocation.”

June 1, 2019 Sololá, Guatemala

“The old things have passed away; behold new things have come,” St. Paul told the Corinthians. His words resonated in the heart of Sr. Rosa Florinda Tzul Say as she made her decision to transfer to the Sisters of Charity of New York. She freely pronounced her vowed commitment to live celibate chastity: “to continue loving God and neighbor with joy”; poverty: “in loving service and solidarity with those most in need”; obedience: “in order to cultivate an attitude of attentive listening in discernment of the values of God’s Reign, according to the Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul of New York.” Sister Mary Ann Daly received her vows with delight and presented her with the Congregation symbol. She publicly confirmed Sr. Rosita as part of the Congregation to the applause of her family from Totonicapán and the entire congregation.

*Continued, see page 15, bottom left*



**Top:** Luisa (left) and Sr. Margarita read from scripture. **Above:** Sr. Mary Ann, Luisa, and Sr. Nora Cunningham at the entrance ceremony.

**Top:** Sr. Rosa enters the church for the commitment ceremony. **Above:** Sr. Mary Ann Daly presents the Congregation symbol to Sr. Rosa. Photos by Nelson Estrada



The New York Foundling celebrated its 150th anniversary with a host of events which included a Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, a Reunion Day at NYU's Kimmel Center, and a Block Party Festival in Chelsea on June 6-8, 2019. The weekend was a great way for

The Foundling to commemorate a century and a half of providing children, families and individuals with developmental disabilities with a dedicated support system.

The Mass, held on June 6, was celebrated by His Eminence, Cardinal Timothy Dolan. Along with the attendance of Monsignor Kevin Sullivan, many Foundling alums, Orphan Train descendants, Trustees, and Foundling staff members



were involved with curating the ceremony as they participated in the procession, readings, and various other roles. The Sisters of Charity President Sr. Jane Iannucelli and President-elect Sr. Donna Dodge paid tribute to Foundling foundress, Sr. Mary Irene

Fitzgibbon, by carrying the New York Foundling banner. Cardinal Dolan shared before hundreds of attendees, "The Foundling has always been a place of miracles." He added, "The New York Foundling, since its inception in 1869, has always been an outlet for people in need to count on."

*Courtesy of The New York Foundling*



**Above:** Sisters Donna Dodge, left, and Sr. Jane Iannucelli carried the New York Foundling banner; above center: Sr. Carol Barnes, Director of Mission Integration at the NYF, and Sr. Charlotte Raftery, volunteer at the NYF; above right: Cardinal Dolan with Sisters Donna Dodge and Jane Iannucelli.



**Above:** From right, next to Sr. Jane, are direct descendants of Sr. Mary Irene Fitzgibbon: Alice O'Brien, Jean DiGuglielmo, Neil Drohan, and their spouses, Maura Drohan and Tony DiGuglielmo.



**Left:** Panel at the reunion; at the podium, Valerie Russo; sitting from left to right: Sr. Carol Barnes, Jill Gentile, and Carmen Jirau-Rivera.



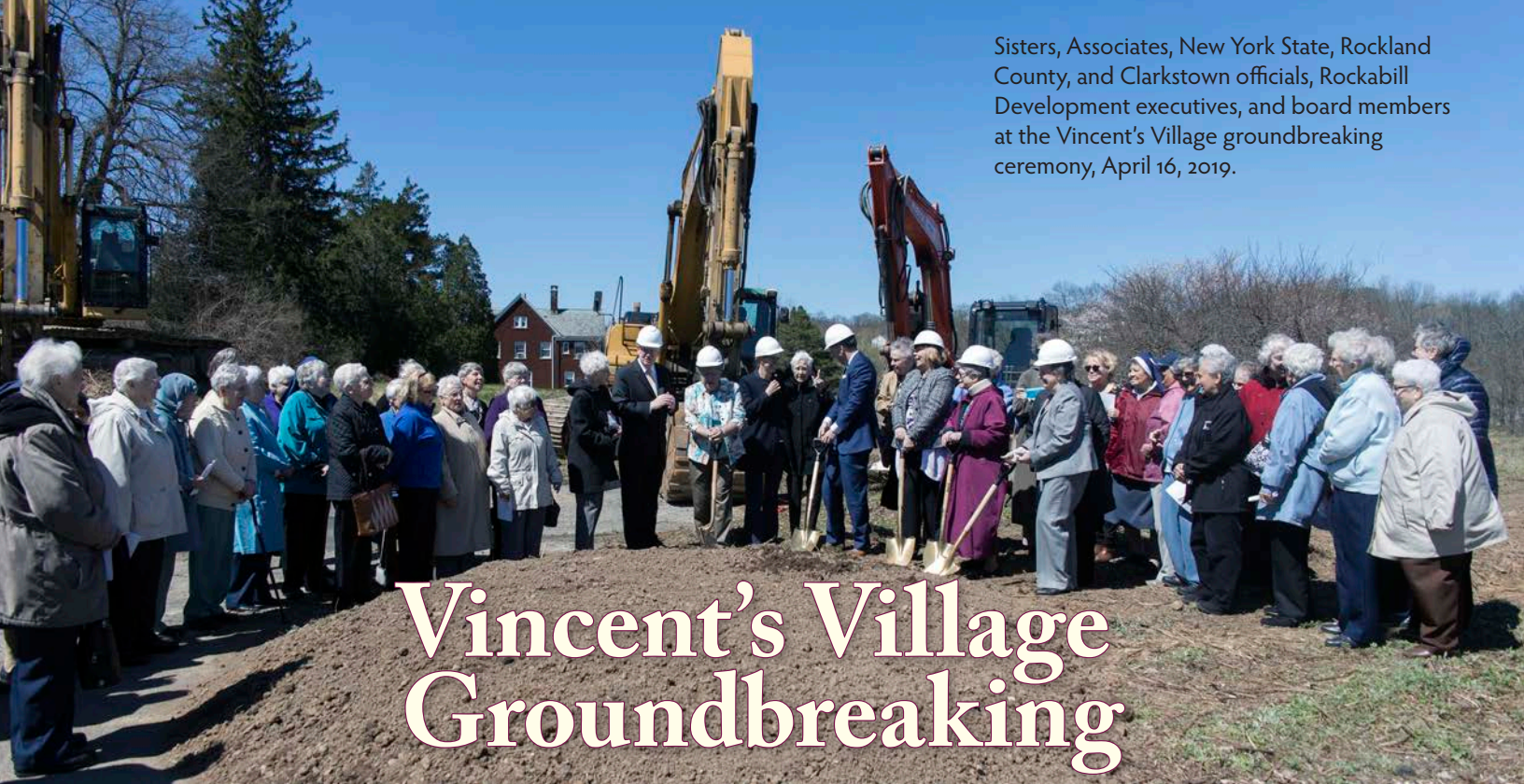
**Right:** Mary Griffin brought the shoes her mother wore when she arrived from the New York Foundling on the Orphan Train.



NYF Executive Director Bill Baccaglini with Orphan Train descendants at the block party.



Sisters, Associates, New York State, Rockland County, and Clarkstown officials, Rockabill Development executives, and board members at the Vincent's Village groundbreaking ceremony, April 16, 2019.



# Vincent's Village Groundbreaking

*Redouble your courage and fidelity and use well what God places in your path.*

St. Vincent de Paul

Using well what God places in their path, the Sisters of Charity are partnering with New York State Homes and Community Renewal, Rockabill Development, and local Rockland County officials to provide housing for seniors in Nanuet, N.Y., just steps away from Seton Village. The \$42 million project honors St. Vincent de Paul, who devoted his life to those most in need. Groundbreaking for the project was held on April 16, 2019.

Vincent's Village is a new construction development for the creation of senior supportive housing in Nanuet, New York. The project will consist of five buildings totaling 93 units of affordable housing. Three of the buildings are residences while the other two offer community space for the residents. The project received funding through the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI) to provide support and case management services for 45 apartments, as well as subsidy funding from the New York State Housing Finance Agency. Rockabill Development, of Hoboken, N.J., was brought in to form the joint venture between the Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation and their development partner to develop the site. Rockabill brings expertise in affordable housing development, as well as provision of construction guarantees to the project.

Sister Donna Dodge, Executive Director of Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation (SCHDC) and President-elect said, "The Sisters have been dedicated to the ministry of providing affordable housing to New Yorkers since 1986. We are thrilled to realize a long-held dream to develop housing on the site for Vincent's

Village. The site is adjacent to Seton Village and was once part of the campus of St. Agatha Home for Children. St. Agatha Home was established in 1884 to nurture and care for children. How fitting it is to be able to provide a loving home for seniors on this very site."

During the ceremony, Sister Donna acknowledged the tremendous impact of two women on this project: Sr. Eileen Walsh, Seton Village Resident Services Director, and Ann Marie Smith, Chair of the Rockland County Regional Board. It was Sr. Eileen's dream when building Seton Village to one day add additional senior housing on the property. That dream is coming true. Ann Marie Smith's skill and patience were exceptional in navigating between the various offices and agencies within the Town of Clarkstown and Rockland County to assist in obtaining the necessary building permits.

Sister Jane Iannucelli, President of the Sisters of Charity at the time of the groundbreaking, said, "The need for senior housing in Rockland County is increasing. Through Vincent's Village, the Congregation is responding to that need. Our partnerships in Clarkstown and the County are helping make this project a reality. Sister Donna and the team at Rockabill have been meticulous in providing expertise in the development of Vincent's Village.

As Executive Director and CEO of the Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation, Sr. Donna developed this project from conception to the groundbreaking and initial construction. As President of the Congregation, she will now oversee the progress with the new SCHDC Executive Director, Matthew Janeczko. The target date for completion is 2021.

St. Vincent de Paul is surely smiling about his new village.

*By Rockabill Development and Elena Miranda*





## *Celebrating Our Twentieth Anniversary*

Since the planting of the first seedling in 1999, Sisters Hill Farm has provided over one million pounds of fresh produce to its members and to various charities. Our farm is a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) not-for-profit farm, meaning it is a farming model in which community members pledge support to the farm at the beginning of the season. In return, they pick up a share of the harvest every week. In this way, the growers and members provide mutual support in their food production, thereby creating a real community farm.

The CSA model restores the lost connection between people and agriculture by providing an opportunity for members to connect to the growing process of their food. We have built a loyal and growing membership over the last 20 years, as well as having had the opportunity of donating to local food pantries and neighbors who may not otherwise have access to fresh produce.

Many events are planned for this anniversary year including picnics, hikes, a talent show, and other community-based activities. Visit our website at [www.sistershillfarm.org](http://www.sistershillfarm.org) for a complete list of dates for planned activities. We hope you'll come to visit!

*By Anne Marie Gardiner*

## *Mary Jerome Ely Hall Residents Celebrate Thirty Years*

Mary Jerome Ely Hall, located on the grounds of Mount Saint Vincent, was dedicated on April 28, 1989. This past spring, Sisters in residence at Ely Hall gathered to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of this treasured residence.

In total, Mother Mary Jerome Ely served 24 years in office; she was elected to a three-year term in 1849, then re-elected. After her first two terms, she was at St. Peter, Barclay Street. She was re-elected in 1861 and served until 1870. She was again re-elected in 1876 and remained as Superior General until her death in 1885.

Mother Mary Jerome was perhaps the one most responsible for the growth of the New York community. When she was first elected, there were 47 Sisters serving eight missions. When she died April 28, 1885, there were 800 Sisters serving 80 missions.

Ely Hall was built to provide housing for Sisters. The land, previously used as a fruit orchard, was available for development. Typical building permit obstacles were encountered with the City of New York, but in God's providence, the building was completed, providing comfortable living quarters for our Sisters.

*Elizabeth Vermaelen, SC*

## *Election Process—A History* *Cont'd from page 10*

After the Congregation moved from McGown's Pass in Manhattan to allow for the construction of Central Park, the new motherhouse was built at Mount Saint Vincent in the Bronx. In December 1846, about half of the Sisters on mission in New York chose to remain in New York City and form an independent community. On December 31, 1846, the first election of community superiors was held in the chapel of the Prince Street asylum. Bishop Hughes and Reverend John Loughlin, his secretary, signed the certificate noting election for a period of three years: Mother Superior, Sr. Elizabeth Boyle, long-time friend and associate of Elizabeth Seton, and three Councilors, Mother's Assistant Sr. Mary Angela Hughes; Treasurer, Sr. Williamanna Hickey; and Procurator, Sister Mary Jerome Ely.

Concerning the election, Bishop Hughes had made only one stipulation: that no relative of his should be chosen at this time for the office of Mother. That his sister, Angela Hughes was indeed Mother Superior from 1855 until 1861, ironically, realized his concern.

Mother Seton's successors were also referred to as "Mother." The New York Community continued the practice after it became independent from Emmitsburg in 1846. After the Vatican II era, when many Sisters began to use their baptismal names, Sr. Evelyn Schneider became the leader of the Community in 1966 and chose to be known as "Sister Evelyn." Sister Margaret Dowling began to use the term "President" as congregation leader in 1971.

Based upon canonical approval received in December 1932, the First General Chapter was held at Mount Saint Vincent on July 1–2, 1933. At that time, there were 199 delegates. At Assembly 2019, 78 delegates were chosen to vote in the election. Congratulations and blessings to the new Leadership Team, 2019–2023.



Party organizers (from left) Sisters Eileen McGrory, Elizabeth Vermaelen, and Elizabeth Judge



## *With Love and Appreciation We Remember...*

Visit our website at [www.scny.org/news](http://www.scny.org/news) for complete biographies

### **Sister M. Patrice Murphy, SC**

Entered: 1950 + Date of Death: April 18, 2019 + Age: 86



Sister Patrice spent 48 of her 55 years of active ministry in the field of nursing. At St. Vincent Hospital, she ministered as a senior staff nurse, head nurse, Supervisor of Nursing Services; instructor in the School of Nursing, supervisor and instructor in Psychiatry, and Director of the School of Nursing. For 10 years, Sr. Patrice coordinated the Supportive Care Hospice Program of St. Vincent Hospital and, from the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, was a pioneer in ministering to the needs and concerns of those dying from the illness. She was the recipient of several awards given in recognition of her leadership in this field. Sister Patrice also served at St. Vincent Hospital, Staten Island, the Convent of Mary the Queen, and as Development Director for the Congregation.

### **Sister Dorothy Emanuel, SC** (*Sister Dorothy Maria*)

Entered: 1946 + Date of Death: April 19, 2019 + Age: 90

Sister Dorothy began her 34 years in education on the elementary level. She taught in St. John the Baptist, Brooklyn, SS. Peter and Paul, Bronx, and St. Sylvia in Tivoli, N.Y. She then moved to the high school level and beyond, teaching religion and math at St. Gabriel in New Rochelle, math at York Catholic in Pennsylvania, and Cathedral High School and Grace Institute, both in Manhattan. Sister Dorothy served for ten years on the administrative team at Mary the Ocean Star in Ventnor, N.J. In between her Ventnor services, Sr. Dorothy managed the finances for Mount Saint Vincent Convent and served as Assistant to the Registrar at College of Mount Saint Vincent. When the convent in Ventnor closed in 2001, she returned to congregation service at Mount Saint Vincent Convent.



### **Sister Marita Regina Bronner, SC**

Entered: 1943 + Date of Death: June 8, 2019 + Age: 94



Sister Marita Regina spent 51 years of her religious life in the ministry of education, twenty-eight as a classroom teacher and twenty-three as a principal. As an elementary school teacher, she served at Visitation, Bronx; St. Agatha Home, Nanuet; St. Patrick, Manhattan; Blessed Sacrament, Staten Island; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Shrub Oak, and SS. Peter and Paul in the Bronx. Her 23 years as principal were devoted to SS. Peter and Paul. Altogether Sr. Regina served there for 27 years where her contributions to education were highly valued. When Sr. Regina left the field of education, she offered her talents and energy to her sisters in retirement at Convent of Mary the Queen, Yonkers, and St. Patrick Villa, Nanuet.

### **Sister Elaine Owens, SC** (*Sister Marie Ella*)

Entered: 1958 + Date of Death: June 18, 2019 + Age: 78



Sister Elaine spent 28 years in education; she taught at Resurrection in Rye, Holy Name, and St. Brigid in Manhattan, where she was also the principal. In 1978, she became Director of Elementary Education for the Congregation. She joined the Parish School Planning Office in the Archdiocese of New York in 1987. She later served as a chemical dependency counselor, clinical coordinator, and director at the International Center for the Disabled. This was followed by three years at New York Foundling, where she served as Director of Spiritual Development. She also served two terms in Congregation Leadership. Most recently she served as Administrator at Mount Saint Vincent Convent then Family Representative for our retired sisters at Kittay Senior Apartments.

### **New Vocations in Guatemala** *Cont'd from page 11*

The parish of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe in Novillero provided much of the "alegría" in the beautiful celebration of the liturgy and the meal and entertainment that followed.

Sister Rosa comes to this new time in her life bringing with her many years of living religious life and experience in ministry as teacher, catechist, and pastoral worker.

Currently she is on mission in Novillero, sharing her gifts in her ministry there.

### **CONGRATULATIONS — FELICIDADES**

Luisa Cristina  
& Hermana Rosa Florinda

## **ANNUAL FALL LUNCHEON**

*At Xaviars X2O on the Hudson*

**Wednesday, September 18, 2019**

**11:30 am to 3:00 pm**

**71 Water Grant Street, Yonkers, NY**

**Call Anne Marie Gardiner or Rosana Fernandez**

**718.879.5262**

**E-mail: [amgardiner@scny.org](mailto:amgardiner@scny.org)  
or [rfernandez@scny.org](mailto:rfernandez@scny.org)**





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## *Spring Benefit 2019 Honors Servant Leaders*

**T**he Sisters of Charity Annual Spring Benefit was held on Thursday, May 19, at the Lighthouse on Pier 61. Close to 400 of our benefactors, friends, family, and staff enjoyed a beautiful evening complemented by a spectacular river view, great food, and lively music.

Our 2019 honorees, Marianne DiTommaso and Steve Korf, accepted their awards with words spoken from the heart. Both Marianne and Steve have worked with the Sisters for many years and are truly worthy of the Fire of Charity Award and Grace Strazzire Humanitarian Award that they received, respectively.

"Throughout the years, the Sisters have always been my cheerleaders, providing me with encouragement, support, and guidance," said Marianne. "They have been there for our programs and for me—sponsoring and encouraging our new housing development, providing advocacy and support in dealing with community opposition to our supportive housing buildings, providing ongoing spiritual guidance and comfort to our residents and staff, especially during times of

grief, AND, as a source of great inspiration and friendship for me personally."

Steve followed, sharing, "There are five words that come to mind when I was asked to describe the Sisters: gratitude, respectful, authentic, compassionate, and empathic. Plain and simple, the Sisters do not judge. They accept that we are all on our own journey, and they only seek to understand and to help us on our way."

Honoring the close of Sr. Jane Iannucelli's eight years as President of the Sisters of Charity, Sr. Margaret O'Brien, Assistant to Sr. Jane, presented her with a floral bouquet and warm words of gratitude and respect.

The evening would not be complete without our own Sr. Margaret Egan joining the Guss Hayes Band on stage to play the drums. Sister always "rocks the house" and gets everyone on the dance floor.

May 14, 2020, is next year's Spring Benefit. Mark your calendars now to join us for great food, fun, and fellowship.

*By Anne Marie Gardiner*