

Vision

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF NEW YORK

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*Prayer: The Heart
of Our Life of Charity*

From the President

Dear Friends,

Although according to our Church calendar we have entered into Ordinary Time, this time for me has been Extraordinary. The thoughts I'm sharing are related to some of the articles contained within, and will give you a glimpse of why I believe this is so.

On January 1st through 9th I had the opportunity with a few others on the Leadership Team to visit our Sisters and ministries in Guatemala. It truly was an extraordinary experience and a privilege to welcome Sister Louisa into the Novitiate and Sisters Manuela and Margarita into temporary profession. As they shared their reasons for journeying with us as Sisters of Charity, I was renewed in my own initial commitment and was reminded not to forget God's original call in my life.

The prayer service based on both Mayan and Christian tradition, which preceded our visit and meeting at the Barbara Ford Peacebuilding Center, reminded me of how various forms of prayer can enrich our encounter with God in new and refreshing ways.

One afternoon in Guatemala, over a dozen of our Associates from neighboring villages traveled great distances to have lunch with the Leadership Team. They shared their reasons for becoming Associates and articulated their hopes for the future. As I read the enclosed article highlighting some of our young Associates in the U.S., I was struck by the similarities that exist between both groups despite miles of separation and differences in cultures. They are truly extraordinary men and women who energize and inspire us as they strive to reflect God's love in their lives. We are blessed to have them.

And let us not forget the extraordinary Sisters in our Congregation. Once in a while, and probably not often enough, we pause to celebrate and recognize their contributions. In this issue, we congratulate Sr. Janet Baxendale and Sr. Nancy Kellar for the national awards they recently received, and we thank Sr. Mary Mc Cormick for facilitating an international gathering of Vincentian leaders in Rome.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Vision*.

Let us continue to be challenged to recognize the extraordinary in the ordinary, and God in it all!

Blessings,



Sr. Donna Dodge, SC



Below: Sr. Virginia Searing, Director of the Barbara Ford Peacebuilding Center, welcomed members of the Leadership Team.



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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“Magnificat” — January 4, 2020, Quiché, Guatemala

By Nora Cunningham, SC

My soul magnifies the Lord...resounded in song twice on January 4, 2020!

For the first time, it was for Luisa Cristina Francisco as she became Sister Luisa Cristina, a novice, receiving the Constitution of the Sisters of Charity of New York from Sr. Donna Dodge, President of the Congregation. For the next two years she will be studying this sacred document in the Formation House in Guatemala.

Sister Luisa chose songs and readings that reflected her desires and response to God’s call to religious life: My thoughts are of you, my God, my strength, my joy, my hope. You have given me life and love. This beautiful entrance song was played by her family of musicians. The readings she selected were from the writings of Saints Vincent, Louise, and Elizabeth, and the Gospel of Mark 1:16–20—the call of Jesus to his disciples. Sister Sheila Brosnan gave an inspiring reflection on vocation.

As part of the service, after her commitment and acceptance into the Congregation, the community of Sisters, family, and friends promised prayerful support and presence to the new novice. The joyful celebration continued during lunch at the Barbara Ford Peacebuilding Center.

The second time the *Magnificat* was sung in the Cathedral in Santa Cruz del Quiché, Guatemala, was for Sisters Manuela Quiché and Margarita Tax Álvarez as they pronounced their temporary vows. It was the feast of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and the Liturgy of the Epiphany. The presider was Padre Abraham Quiché, the brother of Sr. Manuela. The voiced vows were individually written from the heart of each one’s prayer.



Top left: Sr. Donna, center, led the procession with Sr. Margarita, left, and Sr. Manuela; top right: Guatemala SC Vocation Director Sr. Nora Cunningham, left, with presider Padre Quiché as the Sisters profess temporary vows; above: Sr. Luisa with Sisters Donna and Gloria De Arteaga as she received the Sisters of Charity Constitution.

Sister Manuela knelt humbly before the altar asking for the light that will illumine her way so that she would be able to work with love to continue the mission of Jesus as did St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

Sister Margarita prayed to the God of her heart—present within her from Baptism—and spoke of her longing to love and follow God’s desire for her with joy. “With this call inspire me to be light in your service, responding with generosity to your desires and the needs of those who are poor.”

Continued, see page 14, bottom



Sr. Elizabeth Vermaelen carries the “flame of charity” during Assembly prayers.

Prayer: The Heart of Our Life of Charity

By Regina Bechtle, SC

As Sisters of Charity, we are privileged to share in the mission of Jesus: to reveal God’s love for all in need, especially those living in poverty. That mission impels us. But aren’t vowed religious supposed to be people of prayer? As noted author Sandra Schneiders, IHM, writes, at the heart of religious life is the quest for God. So what about prayer? When do Sisters pray? How? Does prayer matter?

Sisters of Charity answer the call to be women of deep prayer, to be contemplative in the midst of a life of service to our neighbors. Our Constitution states clearly, “Our central faith experience is the awareness of God’s presence, love and redemptive activity in every aspect of our lives.” (Prayer 4.1)

From St. Vincent de Paul we learn that we are to “leave God for God”—to sharpen our eyes to find Christ in the person at the door, on the phone, sitting next to us on the bus, or at the breakfast table. Startling as it may sound, Christ is as truly present in that person or event as He is on the altar. Read more about our

spirituality of active contemplation at www.scny.org/about-us/our-spirituality/

Many Sisters who entered before Vatican II learned “prayers of custom.” In addition to regular morning, noon, mid afternoon, and evening prayers, there were other prayers to be memo-

*It is a habit
of lifting the heart
to God*

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

rized and said before the activities of each day—getting out of bed, putting on the habit, walking to Chapel, blessing ourselves with holy water, meeting visitors, going to assigned duties. When the tower bell at Mount Saint Vincent sounded the hour, novices stopped to pray a litany known as the Tower Prayer. As Sisters passed each other in the hall, one greeted the other with “Praised be Jesus and Mary,” and heard the response, “Today and forever, Amen.”

Today our prayer takes many forms, personally and communally. With the whole Church we participate regularly in the Eucharist, other liturgical prayer, and the sacraments.

Each local community commits itself to find times and ways to pray in common. Some use the Divine Office, also known as the Liturgy of the Hours, consisting of daily psalms, readings, and prayers similar to those said by priests and monastic communities. Others share *Lectio Divina*, a way of reading, listening to, pondering, and sharing reflections on the Scriptures of the day. Some groups listen to and share thoughts on a section from a timely article, a message from Pope Francis, or the Congregation’s website. Others sit together in silence or in song to give praise to God and God’s creation. The Sisters at Mount Saint Vincent Convent and other groups meet daily to pray the Rosary in common.

Published worship aids such as *Give Us This Day*, *Magnificat*, and *Living With Christ* provide helpful prayer formats. Often communal prayer includes intercessions for people in our families, ministries, or in the news, as well as prayers of thanks for the gifts of the day. In their prayer together or alone, many Sisters include music and images. Websites such as YouTube® and www.karmatube.org offer many inspirational videos that evoke wonder, awe, and grateful prayer. The lay and vowed members of our Companions in Charity commit to join in prayer at the same day and time each week, wherever they are.

The original Vincentian Rule adopted by Mother Seton noted that the Sisters had “no other chapel than the parish churches, no cloister but public streets or hospital rooms...” (Rule of 1812, Article I, #II). In this spirit, many Sisters, Associates, and Companions participate in Mass and prayer events in their local parishes, where some serve as lectors, Eucharistic ministers, hospital visitors, and bereavement ministers.

Continued, see page 12, bottom right



Left: Sr. Mary Mc Cormick served as facilitator of the meetings in Rome. Top left: Sr. Mary (center) also participated in panel discussions; top right: Sr. Grace Hartzog, SC- Seton Hill, Executive Director of the Sisters of Charity Federation, during a prayer service.

As a result, he began to respond to the urgent needs he discovered. His approach was to care for the person as a whole: spiritually, emotionally, physically, and materially. Born from that small mustard seed in 1617, the Vincentian Family has today become a large tree, made up of more than 150 branches—lay associations and congregations of consecrated life—with approximately two million members in more than 150 countries. The family is also comprised of men and women who, although they do not formally belong to a particular branch, are inspired by Vincent de Paul's example of service on behalf of those living in poverty.

At the beginning of its fifth century of existence, the members of the Vincentian Family look toward the future, aware of the urgent need for a closer synergy with all the realities that flow from the seed that was planted by the founder.

The four-day program began on Wednesday, January 8, 2020, with a papal audience. The formal work sessions, which began on that afternoon, were directed by those who served as reference points on the international level: Father Tomaž Mavric, CM (President of the Executive Committee of the Vincentian Family and Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission); Father Joseph Agostino, CM (International Coordinator of the Office of the Vincentian Family); and Father Robert Maloney, CM (Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission from 1992 to 2004, who traced the history of the Family and offered a general overview). Sister Mary Mc Cormick, SC, served as facilitator for the extraordinary meeting.

The Sisters of Charity of New York await the recommendations of the Vincentian Family with much anticipation and hope for greater collaboration between the branches of the Family, and we look forward to a detailed report from Sr. Mary Mc Cormick.

Photos and information courtesy of FamVin.info

Vincentian Family Meets in Rome to Find Common Path

From January 8 to 12, 2020, for the first time in the history of the Vincentian Family, those responsible for more than 150 entities and institutions that compose the Family and represent more than two million people, met in Rome. Among those in Rome was our own Sr. Mary Mc Cormick.

Superiors and Presidents of the more than 150 branches that comprise the Vincentian Family came together at the Patristic Institute Augustinianum (Via Paolo VI, 25), where they discussed and laid the foundations for a common path.

The Vincentian Family was born from two intense lived experiences of St. Vincent de Paul in 1617 in France. In the town of Folleville, St. Vincent discovered the spiritual poverty of the rural population, and in the city of Châtillon, he discovered great material poverty. Those two events marked the beginning of his personal conversion.



Seeds of Hope

New program at the Seton Shrine responds to Pope Francis' appeal

By Carolyn Shields

I was raised Catholic but faded away over time, but [because of *Seeds of Hope*], I have so much more faith and hope in God,” shared James, a participant in one of the Seton Shrine’s *Seeds of Hope* retreats.

The Seton Shrine created the *Seeds of Hope* program in response to a direct exhortation from Pope Francis.

In 2017, Pope Francis recognized a need for the Church—particularly shrines—to actively engage with those on the margins of society: “In the shrine, the doors are wide open to the sick, the disabled, and above all, the marginalized, refugees, and migrants.”

Whether in Crotona or the country borough of Emmitsburg, Pope Francis acknowledged the physical and spiritual needs of many and challenged the Church to alleviate what it could. *Seeds of Hope* enables the Seton Shrine to offer free special day retreats and communal events to those who would otherwise not be able to attend.

The vision for *Seeds of Hope* was cast by Sr. Anne Marie Lamoureux, DC, who felt a yearning to more deeply fulfill her vow of service to the poor after leaving Brooklyn for Emmitsburg in 2011.

The retreats often include a personalized tour of the Shrine, homecooked meals, and time for reflection. Special attention is given toward making participants feel seen and loved: those who struggle with mobility are accompanied by volunteers, the visually impaired are ushered to the front, and the hard of hearing are given listening devices.

“We could never do this without our volunteers,” Sr. Anne Marie was quick to share. At the last communal event, they had a near one-to-one ratio of volunteers to participants. On ways to help, Sr. Anne Marie added, “The retreats are almost

entirely subsidized, with transportation, meals, and fees largely covered by the Seton Shrine. Sometimes we bring people from the city so we have to pay for transportation and that’s a biggie. Transportation is expensive and costs upwards of two thousand dollars for one bus. Financially we could certainly use help.”

This service to the poor has its roots in the work Elizabeth Ann Seton carried out during her life.

Sister Regina Bechtle, SC, Chair of the Shrine’s Mission & Heritage Committee, shared, “As a young matron in New York, Elizabeth Seton visited immigrant women and children living in poverty. Today, Sisters and Daughters of Charity and their colleagues continue to be impelled by that same passion: to meet and to serve Jesus Christ in every person, especially those living in poverty.”

James, a participant, echoed this, adding, “What Mother Seton did to turn around so many lives and to find that people are still carrying on her mission here is quite a blessing.”

“I have been on three or four retreats and love the peace and calm at the Shrine,” Margie, another participant shared. “You

can be at ease here and not worry about the struggles of the day or what’s happening in the world.”

A common theme among participants’ feedback is their love for meeting new people.

“We want to pull down any barriers between those who are marginalized and those who are not...it’s very important that we form community and see how we can help and learn from one another, be enriched by each other, and know that we are not alone,” Sr. Anne Marie explained. She added with a smile, “Oh, and I love the hugs. I give a lot of hugs.”

To date, *Seeds of Hope* has held eight retreats and multiple “follow up” communal events that continue building the

*When all the wintry
storms of time are
past we shall enjoy the
delights of an
eternal spring.*

Mother Seton



Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton's Library Card

By Mindy Gordon, Archivist

As a young girl and teenager, Elizabeth Ann Bayley was guided in study by the tutelage of her father, Richard Bayley, Sr., a prominent physician in New York City. Elizabeth's schoolbooks, a chronology of readings dating from 1791, include handwritten excerpts from volumes of history, devotional materials, poetry, plays, manuscripts, and other readings. After her marriage to William Seton in 1794, Elizabeth Seton continued her readings, evidenced in part by the record of loans in her name from the New York Society Library.

The subscription library, New York City's oldest library and cultural institution, had 57 female members who borrowed books in their own name in the early 19th Century. Between 1800 and 1806, 92 titles were borrowed using Elizabeth Ann Bayley's account. As Elizabeth was in Italy from May 1803 to April 1804, it is likely that books were borrowed at that time by other family members.

A sense of Elizabeth's literary interests may be gleaned from the library's record of volumes borrowed during 1800–1803 and 1805–1806. Book titles reveal a combination of fiction and nonfiction, travel writings, historical studies, and memoirs. It is noteworthy that the popular novels Elizabeth may have read were written by women; several of these titles are also mentioned by Jane Austen in her novels.

A selection of titles borrowed from the Library is:

The Arabian Nights Entertainments. Consisting of One Thousand and One Stories, printed for C.D. Piguenit
Historical Account of the Most Celebrated Voyages, Travels and Discoveries, from the time of Columbus to the Present Period,
 by William Mayor, LLD
The Adventures of Numa Pompilius, Second King of Rome, by Florian
The Mysteries of Udolfo, by Ann Radcliffe
Cecilia, by Fanny Burney
The History of America, by William Robertson
The History of Scotland during the Reigns of Queen Mary and King James VI, by William Robertson
Travels through Turkey in Asia, the Holy Land, Arabia, Egypt and other parts of the world, by Charles Thompson
Travels into Norway, Denmark and Russia in the years 1788, 1789, 1790 and 1791

LEFSA Operations Manager Visits Bronx School to Collect Donations for Homeless



James Addison visited Our Lady of Refuge School in the Bronx.

On Wednesday, January 8, 2020, James Addison, Operations Manager for Life Experience and Faith Sharing Associates (LEFSA) visited Our Lady of Refuge School in the Bronx to thank the Student Council for organizing a toiletry drive for LEFSA. At an afternoon assembly attended by grades 6–8, Mr. Addison shared the good work of LEFSA and explained how the 410 toiletry items donated by the students and their families would help those served by LEFSA.

Mr. Addison shared his journey with the students and emphasized the importance of being of service to others. At the end of his presentation he graciously answered their questions.

Mr. Addison was invited to the school by Maureen Reiser, who teaches eighth grade at Our Lady of Refuge and is an Associate with the Sisters of Charity.

Meeting Our Young Associates

By Maryellen Blumlein, SC
& Patricia McGowan, SC

The concept of opening the Associate Program to young people came to fruition several years ago. Being connected to the College of Mount Saint Vincent (CMSV), of course, provided “fertile ground” for interested young men and women. Some young people who are not graduates of the Mount have also sought relationship as an Associate when they came to know the Sisters of Charity through volunteer programs or work experiences.

Stephanie Rodway, a 2017 graduate of CMSV, began the formation program during her senior year and made her Associate Commitment in September 2017. Currently in her third year at New York Medical College, she will receive her Ph.D. in Physical Therapy in May 2020. For the past two and a half years, Stephanie has lived in a local Sisters of Charity community. She shares community, prayer, and meals with Sisters Mary Lou and Maryellen and another young Associate, Nicole Quaranto. The community is both faith-filled and alive, and thankful for Steph’s and Nicole’s presence.

When Stephanie began her four years at the Mount, she was part of the Seton Service and Leadership Program. She was involved in service projects, needed to keep her grades up, and was involved in the life of the college. Through experiences at the Mount, Stephanie came to know several of the Sisters and Campus Ministers well and witnessed their selfless service. She says “Through many service projects over my four years, I saw how Sr. Mary Lou and others were invested in the care and nurturing of those who are poor in the surrounding community and beyond. I wanted to surround myself with role models like these, so I decided to become an Associate.”

She believes the charism of charity is the selfless act of giving, both material things—food and clothing—and abstract ideas—love and hope. She sees the Sisters as living out the charism with gospel values and the love of Jesus ever-present in their actions and their lives. “In society, where loving others can often be forgotten about, the Sisters of Charity prove that with faith, hope, some hard work—as well as a positive attitude—love can spread near and far. This, to me, is the charism of charity.”

As a physical therapy student, Stephanie has had many opportunities to help those who need treatment. She is hoping to work with those who suffer neurological disorders and



From left: Sr. Kathleen Sullivan, Courtney Cahill, Sr. Marie Tolle, and Stephanie Rodway

disabilities, and through the healing power of touch to help them recover as much as possible. One of Steph’s favorite quotations of Elizabeth Seton is, “Faith lifts the staggering soul on one side, hope supports it on the other, experience says it must be and love says it will be.” She truly believes that, through their charism, the Sisters of Charity of New York live out the message of God’s love to the fullest.

Courtney Cahill, a 2014 CMSV graduate, was involved in service activities throughout her academic life. Several years ago, Courtney decided to pursue the Associate formation program and made her commitment in September of 2017.

Courtney first met the Sisters of Charity when she enrolled at the College. Because she is outgoing and engaging, she came to know many Sisters and faculty members. Sisters Mary Lou, Rita King, and Kathleen Sullivan became special friends and mentors. It is through them and through her various ministry experiences that Courtney came to know the charism of charity. She remains close friends with these three sisters, with other sisters, and with Associates she has met along her journey.

In 2014, Courtney became very ill. Her family, friends, teachers, and the Sisters of Charity prayed for her return to health. “Through that experience, I learned of God’s love and concern for me. I came out of my illness through the power of prayer; people cared for me and I was free to be the me that God created me to be,” she said. When Courtney returned to CMSV, she resumed all of her activities and service projects. She had a firsthand experience of people being there for others, and she wanted to give back. She had experienced the charism of charity, and it was something she wanted to learn more about and become a part of.

Courtney views the charism of charity as a gift of love, presence, relationship, and service. Every time that she can

reach out and help another, she feels God's love flowing between her and the other person. She sees the charism alive and active in the Sisters of Charity and Associates. She feels the support of others in the "charity family," and has learned both how to support others and allow them to support her.

Courtney presently works for a blood bank. Her ministry is that of presence and outreach. She believes that she carries on the charism through her concern, support, and care for people who come to donate blood. She also visits local schools to explain about the blood bank, and spread the word of the importance of adults donating blood. "In my position, I am able to be present to people who have chosen to give blood, and also console those who may have been rejected. It's amazing how far a smile can go," says Courtney.

Courtney plans to study for a degree in social work. She is good with people and is a good listener, and this is where she feels God is calling her. In this way, she will bring the charism of charity to others. Her present job is service-oriented, but she can be of greater service in the field of social work. As an Associate, she knows the value of spreading and carrying on the charism.



Nizarys Vargas was a student at St. Barnabas High School when her grandmother died. During her grandmother's funeral she became fascinated with the work of the funeral director and began to think of becoming a mortician herself. She loved science, and after taking a Forensic Science course was fascinated by the chapter on the mortuary business. She also saw how comforting the funeral staff was to her family during their time of sorrow. So Nizarys attended a mortuary school after she graduated from the CMSV in 2011 and she has been working in her chosen field ever since.

In 2011, as part of a Charity in the City program run by Sr. Mary Lou McGrath, she was introduced to many of the

ministries of the Sisters of Charity. As a result of the program, Nizarys found a place where she could be herself, a place where young people could bring hope and comfort to others. At the end of the two weeks her group met with some of the Associates. "Why don't we have younger Associates?" her group asked; "Is there an age restriction?" Thus in 2015 Sr. Mary Lou McGrath began introducing young people into the Associate program.

Nizarys believes that being an Associate has helped her discover new ways to help others, perhaps ways that she never would have discovered on her own. Being an Associate has also strengthened her belief that young people today are looking for ways to find God, ways to help each other.

Not surprisingly, as a child of the digital age, one way she tries to do this is through the internet. She admits that she is a big fan of Twitter. And it is when she is connecting with young people on the internet that she understands how this younger generation is looking for a place where they can belong. As she follows the news and trends they write about, she learns many new things that she says she would have never found out on her own. It was through one of those tweets that she learned about young women who were being trafficked in Georgia.

And she learns about their faith: "I like talking about faith and I enjoy living it." Through her online communications, she has learned that other young people do, too.

With her busy work schedule Nizarys cannot volunteer as often as she would like, but she still visits the Elizabeth Seton Children's Center when time permits. Sister Elaine Owens (deceased June 2019), who had an enormous influence on her life and whom Nizarys still refers to as "My Nun," introduced her to this particular ministry and she believes that her presence there makes a difference in the children's lives. Making a difference seems to be a mantra in Nizarys' life.

Now she is ready, she says, to venture into new places where she can continue to make a difference. Very soon she hopes to go to graduate school for a nursing degree, focusing on pediatrics: "I love children; they need to be listened to and cared for."

Owen Smith is busy about many things, but maybe not the things one might expect a 23-year-old to be about nowadays. Along with being a Sisters of Charity Associate, this 2018 CMSV graduate is a Vincentian Lay Volunteer, a member of the Lay Missionaries of St. Egidio, a Graduate Assistant in the CMSV Campus Ministry Office, and a graduate student.

Why would a 23-year-old man today be involved in so many charitable works? "Because the Vincentian charism has become very important in my life. The spirit with which we do something is just as important as the doing of it."

For the past five years he has joined the other young Sisters of Charity Associates who believe, as he does, that there is

Continued, see page 15, bottom

Two Sisters of Charity Honored for Contributions to the Church

On October 25, 2019, the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions in Washington, D.C., issued the following statement:

On the 50th anniversary of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, it was indeed appropriate that the members recognize someone who has given decades of service to her archdiocesan commission and to the FDLC. From 1976 to 2001, **Sr. Janet Baxendale** served as Executive Secretary of the Liturgical Commission of the Archdiocese and as Director of the Archdiocesan Liturgy Office. She still serves as chair of the Commission on Art and Architecture for the Archdiocese of New York.

In 1995 and in 1997, she coordinated the liturgies for the visit of Pope John Paul II to New York and in 2008, she served on the Committee for Texts for the visit of Pope Benedict XVI. Her gifts have also been shared with the wider Church of the United States. From 1993 to 2010 and again from 2013 to the



present, Sr. Janet has been appointed as a consultant to the Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship (formerly Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy). From 2001 to 2005, she was a member of the Task Group on Liturgy with Children and from 1996 to 1999 she was a member of the BCL Task Group which prepared Built of Living Stones.



The Caritas in Veritate Papal Award for Leadership in Evangelization was presented to **Sr. Nancy Kellar** at the CiV Papal Award Ceremony on October 26, 2019, at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C.

Papal Leadership Awards and the Ambassadorship for Charity and Truth are a public recognition and honor given to distinguished members dedicated to serving the needs of the global community, the poor, and the Church. The awards are the highest form of honor and recognition that Caritas in Veritate CiV (a confederation Evangelization and Human Progress) bestows on dignitaries and distinguished personalities worldwide.

In 1971, after teaching in elementary and high schools, Sr. Nancy began full-time ministry in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. A founding member of the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton House of Prayer in Scarsdale, where she

remains an active member, she played key roles in the Charismatic Renewal in the Archdiocese of New York and at the national level. Later she moved to Rome where she served as the first woman director of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Office (ICCRS), and was honored for her work in planning events for the Jubilee 2000 Year. She soon became widely known as a gifted, engaging speaker. In her 54 years of ministry, she has visited 48 of the 50 states, eight provinces of Canada, and 63 countries on every continent but Antarctica.

In speaking of the award, Sr. Nancy said, "The most important part of the celebration was the opportunity to acknowledge the grace of God in the three calls of the Holy Spirit in my life: the call to religious life with the Sisters of Charity, the call to Charismatic Renewal with the gifts for a ministry of evangelization that has taken me around the

Ever the teacher, from 1993 to 2015, she was an Adjunct Professor of Liturgy at St. Joseph Seminary, Dunwoodie, Yonkers, N.Y., and from 1977 to 2013 was a Professor of Liturgy in the Institute of Religious Studies (Master's Program) at St. Joseph Seminary.

Sister Janet was unable to be present to receive the award; her successor in the Archdiocesan Liturgy Office, Fr. Matthew Ernest, accepted the award on her behalf. He remarked:

"Sister Janet is such an exemplary model of what it means to be a liturgist who ensures that the Church 'prays without ceasing.' Her generosity in handing on the Church's liturgical theology and traditions to the next generation is something that I have been privileged to witness firsthand. I know that in this room, I am not alone in feeling a deep sense of gratitude to her for all that she has contributed to the Church's liturgical life both in New York and throughout the United States."



Sr. Nancy with Henry Cappello, right, President, Caritas in Veritate CiV

world, and the call throughout my life to embrace suffering and the loss of loved ones." Sister Nancy also acknowledged Sisters Marjorie Walsh and Pauline Cinquini, who shared in the ministry with her until their deaths.

Accompanying Sr. Nancy to the award ceremony were Sisters Mary McCormick, Dorothy Metz, and Sheila Brosnan.

Three times little Clara Sousa contracted rheumatic fever during her childhood, and three times the Sisters of Charity of New York nursed her back to health.

Clara was born on October 14, 1934, to Portuguese immigrants Joseph Sousa and Mary Stella. Two weeks later Mary died, leaving Joseph, a groundskeeper, alone and in charge of three children. Due to their extreme poverty during the Great Depression, Clara was separated from her older siblings and sent to live under the care of the Sisters at the New York Foundling Hospital.

It is not known at precisely what age Clara first met the Sisters, but it was sometime between two weeks and 17 months of age. What is known is that at 17 months, Clara was in desperate physical condition. Meanwhile, two women of Italian descent, who would later change Clara's life, spent a day cleaning houses.

Maria Rosa, a housecleaner, was described as a lovely little woman, perpetually dressed in black. One day, she told her friend Maria Lucadamo of the deplorable conditions of some of the foster homes she cleaned. Maria accompanied her friend to see for herself, and her eyes were opened.

In one house, a young girl living in a dreary basement threw herself around Maria's legs and begged her to take her away. This so moved Maria that she asked her husband, Gabriel, if they could take in a foster child.

The Lucadamos already had four children, and two children had died earlier of influenza. Gabriel was a barber and earned a meager income, barely sufficient to provide for his own family, living in the Bronx. Despite their hardships, Gabriel agreed to take in a foster child.

Maria found Clara at the Foundling Hospital on St. Joseph's Day, March 19, 1935. She chose the sickest child there. Little Clara was bald, unable to stand or walk, and suffered from malnutrition and a distended stomach. Maria's two daughters accompanied her to the Foundling that day. They begged her to choose a different child, thinking that Clara would surely soon die. But Maria, a deeply religious woman, knew that Clara needed her the most. In her take-charge Italian manner, Maria nursed Clara back to health, and Clara was quickly assimilated into the Lucadamo household.

Clara was never eligible for adoption because her father, Joseph, refused to sign a release. It was his way of letting Clara know he loved her and would not let her go. Clara is one of the very few children to go through the Foundling system who remained a ward of theirs through the age of 18.

During the first 18 years of her life, Clara contracted rheumatic fever three times, and each time returned to the Sisters, who nursed her back to health. The loving care Clara received from the Sisters of Charity saved her from an illness that killed many children in those days.

The day Clara turned 18 "Daddy Sousa" picked her up and for the first time, took her to his home. She remembered her father driving extraordinarily slowly so that everyone in the area would see his daughter seated in the passenger seat beside him. Clara was his pride and joy. When they arrived at the house, Clara recalled her father showing her letters tacked to the back of the front door: the letters he refused to sign that would have allowed her to be adopted.

Clara returned to live with Maria Lucadamo and eventually graduated with honors from Theodore Roosevelt High School on Fordham Road. She lived with Maria until her marriage in 1957 to Patrick Fox, her husband for the next 49 years. They had two children, Kevin and Patricia. A doctor advised Clara not to have any more because of her rheumatic-fever-damaged heart valves. Clara raised her children while working full-time jobs, including stints as a secretary, office manager, and administrative assistant at the Long Island Jewish hospital.

Clara's family grew through her husband. Patrick was an Irish immigrant and a New York City policeman. New York's Finest and her husband's Irish relatives adopted Clara. She hosted many visitors from Ireland and Australia, and became Aunt Clara to many nieces and nephews on her husband's side of the family.

When Clara was 60 years old, she had major open-heart surgery to install two mechanical valves to replace the ones that were damaged by the rheumatic fever she had

as a child. Once again, Clara Sousa defied the odds and came out on top. She was absolutely convinced that she had a guardian angel with her throughout her life, and there would be no convincing her otherwise.

Clara died on April 7, 2017.



Fostered in Love

*The Story of Clara Sousa,
A New York Foundling
Foster Child*

By Lauren Fox



St. Vincent's Featured in Podcast Series by America Media

America Media launched *Plague: Untold Stories of AIDS & the Catholic Church*, a six-episode podcast series, on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2019. Reported by journalist Michael O'Loughlin, who has covered the Catholic Church and LGBT issues for more than a decade, the series explores both the lights and the shadows in the history of the Catholic Church's response to the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s.

"For those of us who are too young to remember, the scope of that suffering can be difficult to comprehend," O'Loughlin wrote in a story for *America* on the secret history of Catholic caregivers during the epidemic. "More than a few Catholic priests, sisters and brothers, and lay people confronted the stigma by responding pastorally to the H.I.V. and AIDS epidemic."

Plague captures the stories of ordinary people responding to suffering in extraordinary fashion, as O'Loughlin talks with those who worked on the frontlines of the AIDS crisis, those whose lives were upended by it, and those who believe there are still lessons from that time going unheeded.

The first episode premiered on December 1, 2019, with subsequent episodes released weekly. Episodes include:

- Episode One: *Anger and Faith*
- Episode Two: *St. Vincent's Hospital In New York*. No hospital is more associated with the AIDS crisis than the former St. Vincent's Medical Center run by the Sisters of Charity. Featured voices include Dr. Ramon Torres, the young

gay physician hired by the Sisters to lead the AIDS clinic; Gerri Wells, an ACT UP protester; and Sr. Karen Helfenstein, SC, who served as St. Vincent's Vice President for Mission.

- Episode Three: *Visiting the Sick*
- Episode Four: *A Church in the Castro*
- Episode Five: *Bethany Place*
- Episode Six: *Finale*

The series finale looks at examples of AIDS ministry today.

The six episodes are available on Apple podcasts at "Plague: Untold Stories of AIDS & the Catholic Church." Alternatively, you may listen at <http://plague.libsyn.com>

Courtesy of America Media



Seeds of Hope

Continued from page 6

relationships that were formed on the retreats. Approximately 214 people have participated, all of whom receive free admission to the Shrine's programs.

Sister Regina Bechtle added, "Through the *Seeds of Hope* program at the Seton Shrine, participants [and volunteers] share stories, food, laughter, tears, and prayer. At day's end, all, young and old, find that they have made new soul-friends, that they belong to one another in a new way. All, regardless of income, education or neighborhood meet one another as God's beloved children. Can't you just imagine the joy of Elizabeth, Vincent and Louise as God's dream comes true for a moment, here in this sacred place?"

To learn more about the *Seeds of Hope* initiative or to become a partner, please call 301-447-7083 or email at: SeedofHope@setonshrine.org.

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sisters@scny.org

Prayer: The Heart...

Continued from page 4

Laity and religious who work at the Sisters of Charity Center gather to pray at times of celebration (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, feast days) or need (peace in the world, national elections, natural disasters, mass shootings, and other tragedies).

Daily prayer in our House of Formation in Guatemala includes the psalms and readings of the Liturgy of the Hours. Our Sisters in Guatemala also weave the rich spirituality of Mayan culture into their prayer. By acknowledging the four directions and using flowers, soil, and other symbols of creation, they remind us to show reverence for our God who creates and re-creates all things and blesses us with earth's abundance to tend and share.

"We must pray literally without ceasing...in every occurrence of our lives," said St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, "you know I mean that prayer of the heart which is independent of place or situation. It is a habit of lifting up the heart to God, as in a constant communication with him." Elizabeth also teaches us to be attentive to "the grace of the moment," to be careful to "meet our grace" in every circumstance. This both/and spirituality, this active contemplation and contemplative action, shapes the rhythm of our lives and grounds all that we do.

During Catholic Schools Week, we read or hear many references to St. Elizabeth Seton as the founder or initiator of the Catholic parochial school system. May I humbly set the record straight: she really wasn't.

Sister Rose White's Journal of the first days in Emmitsburg names February 22, 1810, as the day when "three new scholars" were received for the school in the White House, which was still being constructed. Two boarders had already come with the Sisters from Baltimore in July.

Sister Betty Ann McNeil, DC, a Seton scholar, names this—Saint Joseph's Free School—as "the first free Catholic school for girls staffed by religious women in the country."¹

Sister Betty Ann notes: "Although a pioneer Catholic educator of the early 19th century, Elizabeth Seton was neither the first to establish a Catholic school nor the founder of the parochial school system in the United States.... Since Saint Joseph's was neither supported nor sponsored by a parish, it was a private Catholic school, not parochial."²

Even the history on the U.S. Bishops' website is inaccurate. It states: "Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton founded the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph, set up a school for poor children in Emmitsburg, Maryland, in 1809, and made the creation of parochial schools a lifetime cause."³ In fact, it was 1810 when Elizabeth began an academy and free school for girls. It was "governed, financed, administered, and staffed by the Sisters of Charity...independent of the parish."

Sister Betty Ann clearly states, "Elizabeth Seton and her Sisters of Charity were pioneers in Catholic education but not the founders of the parochial school system."⁴ Parochial schools didn't begin to flourish until after 1852 when the First Plenary Council of Baltimore urged that every parish in the United States open a school.

The Seton Shrine website says it gracefully and clearly: in 1810, Mother Seton "began St. Joseph's Academy and Free School, planting the seeds of Catholic education in the United States."⁵

On the same website,⁶ in a reflection in January 2019, writer Elizabeth Scalia names St. Elizabeth Ann as "an educational innovator who, through the founding of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph in 1808, deeply influenced Catholic elementary education in America at a time when Catholics were not

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton — Founder of the First American Catholic Parochial School? Not Quite...

By Regina Bechtle, SC



always looked upon with kindness." Scalia explains, "Her religious community, founded upon the spiritual teachings of St. Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, created schools, colleges, and orphanages throughout the East Coast, always giving preference to the poor and materially disadvantaged."

Elizabeth's legacy of educational innovation flourishes today as Sisters of Charity and their colleagues continue to teach, model, and mentor, within and beyond traditional classrooms: at New York Foundling's Mott Haven Academy Charter School, at Casa de Esperanza and other English language and general education (GED) programs, at Elizabeth Seton Children's unique classrooms, with Sisters Hill Farm apprentices, in leadership formation for young people in Guatemala, and at the College of Mount Saint Vincent—in short, in ways and settings that Elizabeth could never have imagined, but is surely applauding from her vantage point in heaven.

Sculpture: *St. Elizabeth Seton and Children*
by Margaret Beaudette, SC

1. Betty Ann McNeil, DC, "Historical Perspectives on Elizabeth Seton and Education: 'School Is My Chief Business,'" *Catholic Education*, March 2006: 284–306, p. 298. Lay Catholics at St. Mary's parish, Philadelphia, opened a school with a scholarship program in 1782. Soon after, in 1789, German Catholics in Philadelphia opened one of the first parochial schools in the country for immigrant children of Holy Trinity Parish Lay School, considered the first parochial school in the United States.
2. McNeil, 285–286.
3. <http://www.usccb.org/about/public-affairs/backgrounders/history-catholic-church-united-states.cfm>
4. McNeil, 286
5. <https://setonshrine.org/elizabeth-ann-seton/>
6. <https://setonshrine.org/category/news-reflections/>

SAVE THE DATE
2020 SPRING BENEFIT
Thursday, May 14

The Lighthouse at Chelsea Piers
6–9 PM
Info: sisters@scny.org

With Love and Appreciation We Remember...

Visit www.scny.org for complete biographies

Sister Thérèse Maria Dunne, SC

Entered: 1953 + Date of Death: October 5, 2019 + Age: 85

Sister Thérèse served forty-four years in education. Twenty of those years were in schools in Haverstraw, Manhattan, Staten Island, New Rochelle, and York, Pa. For the next twenty-four years Sister Thérèse used her computer skills in educational support services as an Educational Coordinator in the Data Systems Center of the Archdiocese of New York, Yonkers. Sister Thérèse's students regarded her as an excellent teacher of Mathematics. She had the ability to reach the reluctant math student as well as those who struggled with the subject. Sister taught with compassion and put her students' needs first.



Sister Elizabeth Carmela Engelhardt, SC

Entered: 1952 + Date of Death: October 6, 2019 + Age: 98

Sister Elizabeth's first ministries were at Grace Institute and St. Patrick Villa. She later taught first and second grades in schools in Westchester and the Bronx. Her work experience as a typist and a switchboard operator before entering the Sisters of Charity served her well in her 30 years in the offices of The New York Foundling in Manhattan. In retirement at St. Patrick Villa she volunteered at St. Agatha Home. Sister Elizabeth enjoyed the varied ministries in which she was involved and helped to create a vibrant, prayerful community life wherever she was missioned.



Sister Edith Mercedes Belmonte, SC

Entered: 1952 + Date of Death: October 17, 2019 + Age: 85

Sister Edith received degrees in science from the College of Mount Saint Vincent and Catholic University and she taught science on all levels for eighteen years. She received her RN in 1973 and served in many roles in a number of health care institutions in New York. Sister Edith retired as Administrator of St. Patrick Villa in 2009 to live at Seton Village. She believed that she was a visible representative of the teaching and healing presence of the Lord to children in school, nursing students, patients and staff in hospitals, and nursing homes.



Sister Ann Rose Connell, SC *(Sister John Marita)*

Entered: 1955 + Date of Death: October 30, 2019 + Age: 84

Sister Ann Rose spent 27 years of her ministry in elementary schools in the Bronx, Staten Island, Manhattan, and Rye. From 1980 to 2003 she served in Religious Education and Guidance in schools in Westchester. She loved parish work and helping to bring the love of God to the children and parishioners where she coordinated Religious Education and other parish programs. After retiring she volunteered her services at the Convent of Mary the Queen. She enjoyed driving the Sisters and especially delighted in listening to those whom she visited.



Sister Helen Fleming, SC *(Sister David Marie)*

Entered: 1946 + Date of Death: November 18, 2019 + Age: 95

Sister Helen spent most of her ministry assignments teaching French, beginning at Cathedral High School, Elizabeth Seton Academy, and the College of Mount Saint Vincent, and was much loved by all her students as "Sweetie." She gave her students a deep appreciation for the French language and culture. Sister Helen was Chair of the Modern Language Department at St. Gabriel High School and Assistant to the President for Special Affairs at the College of Mount Saint Vincent. Her students will long remember her exuberance and passion for the French language and culture.



Sister Joan Anderson, SC *(Sister Mary Arthur)*

Entered: 1952 + Date of Death: November 27, 2019 + Age: 86

Sister Joan's first ministries were as a teacher and group mother in Nanuet and a teacher in schools in New York City. She taught at St. Francis in Nassau, the Bahamas, for three years in the 1960s and returned in 1969, as a teacher, pastoral worker, and administrator of Our Lady School for 22 years. Sister Joan helped establish and administer Nazareth Center to care for vulnerable children. She retired in 2007, the last Sister of Charity to serve in the Bahamas. While living at Mount Saint Vincent Convent, she assisted with sisters' finances, at the reception desk, and organizing fundraisers.



"Magnificat" — January 4, 2020

Quiché, Guatemala

Continued from page 3

Sister Donna Dodge received their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience with much joy. Their parents brought the symbol of the Sisters of Charity to be blessed by the priest and then presented them to Sr. Donna to give to each Sister.

Enthusiastic applause echoed throughout the Cathedral as the ceremony concluded and the Liturgy ensued. Before the final blessing special thanks were offered by Sr. Margarita in Spanish and Sr. Manuela in Quiché.

After a long line of people offered congratulations to each Sister, a celebrative supper followed with music and dance. "Our spirits rejoiced in our God."

Sister Marion Hunt, SC (Sister Michael Mary)

Entered: 1944 + Date of Death: December 14, 2019 + Age: 96



Sister Marion began her ministry in education in 1946, in schools in the Bronx, Mount Kisco, and Manhattan. In 1962, she began teaching at the College of Mount Saint Vincent and retired in 1993 as a Professor of Philosophy. After retirement she continued to enrich the college by developing the Center for Professional Ethics.

During her years as teacher and chair of the Philosophy Department, Sr. Marion inspired students and faculty members by her ability to present complex and challenging concepts in a style and language that made them completely comprehensible.

Sister Alice Maureen Darragh, SC

Entered: 1953 + Date of Death: January 12, 2020 + Age: 86



Sister Alice's forty-four years of ministry in education spanned elementary and high school classrooms in Westchester, Manhattan, and the Bronx. She served in school administration in the Bronx and Florida, New York. Sister Alice applied her degrees in Business Education and Commercial Education in the classroom and in helping to bring high school students in the Bronx and Manhattan

and the staff at the Sisters of Charity Center into the computer age. Sister Alice retired to St. Patrick Villa in 2011, where she hoped "a positive and joyous manner will mark my autumn years."

Meet Our Young Associates *Continued from page 5*

an unbelievable hope, that their lives will make a difference.

During this past summer Owen made his second trip to Ethiopia as a member of a Vincentian lay group to help prepare a class of 50 Ethiopian youths, ages 9–15, for the Ethiopian National College exam. Since only two to three percent of all students gain admittance to the free college system, the pressure on them is high. They did well and he is proud of them, but he is also proud that he helped them in one small way to deal with all of the stresses they face daily. How? Among other things, he taught them to sing Bob Marley's *Don't worry about a Thing* in English. As a middle-class American, Smith admits he was sometimes in awe of these students who have so little, are so marginalized, but gave him so much.

While he is constantly busy about helping others, perhaps that Marley song reveals a lot about Smith's outlook on life. He admits he is not as driven now as he was during his Connecticut high school years. Back then he planned his life in one- or five-year increments, but no longer. When he recently quit his job in the business world, he did it because he did not want to be stressed out about things that he no longer believes are important. Tongue in cheek, he attributes his ability to ignore stress to growing up as the middle child between two sisters!

Smith always knew he wanted to live in New York City because the energy and the diversity of its people had always excited him. When he came to CMSV as a Seton Service and Leadership Program scholar, he embraced its possibilities of community service and working with like-minded young people. Little by little he realized that the things he wanted

to do in life were in lockstep with the Sisters' charism. Today he works with the other Campus Ministry personnel trying to foster that same zeal in current students. And his hope is almost palpable when he sees the students move beyond what he calls their "first level of engagement," saying things such as "that was fun going on the Midnight Run" to "now, it's not just fun." Now they understand that people who are out on the city streets at midnight, looking for help with immediate needs must be desperate, and the students can make a difference.

Smith smiles when others remind him that at this age, he should have at least part of his life planned. "I guess I am in the 'figuring-it-out' stage rather than the planning stage right now." He is trying to be open to the different ways God is calling him and is hoping he can influence the young people he meets every day to do the same.

When Smith tutors at a school in the South Bronx once a month with members of the St. Egidio Community, then in the evening distributes sandwiches in Grand

Central Station and stays for hours to talk with the homeless who "live" in the station, it is obvious that he does have one essential part of his life figured out.

When people ask him what he wants to do with his life, he answers without hesitation, "I am not sure of the 'hows,' but I know I am called to serve the poor."

After more than 200 years of service in New York and beyond, the number of Sisters of Charity is diminishing. Associates and partners in ministry have the ability to carry on with "any service in their power," and keep the charism of charity alive. The Sisters are most grateful for their dedication and service.





Sisters of Charity Center
6301 Riverdale Avenue
Bronx, NY 10471-1093
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Right: Sr. Carol Barnes, Director of Mission Integration at The Foundling, Pat Kiernan, NY1 morning anchor, and Sr. Margaret O'Brien.



Above right (l to r): Bill Baccaglioni, CEO of The Foundling, Sr. Donna Dodge, and Robert King, Foundling Board Chairman; left (l to r): Sisters Sheila Finucane, Mary Ellen O'Boyle, Karen Helfenstein, Vivienne Joyce, Donna Dodge, Kathleen McHugh, Dorothy Metz, Margaret Egan, Charlotte Raftery, Andrea Dixon, and Eileen P. Walsh.

On Wednesday, October 2, 2019, at New York City's famed Plaza Hotel, **The New York Foundling**—one of the city's oldest and largest social service providers—hosted its 150th Anniversary Gala celebrating a storied legacy of helping children, adults and families to create transformational change in their own lives. The culmination of a year-long celebration of this prestigious milestone, the gala honored The

Foundling's historic beginnings, commemorated the long-lasting impact of the organization's work with children, adults, and families over the past 150 years, and celebrated the life-changing services provided by the organization today. Sister Donna Dodge and several Sisters who currently serve at the Foundling attended the festive event, as well as Sisters who served in the past.

Photos and information courtesy of The New York Foundling