

VOICES

OF CHARITY

SPRING 2020

A publication of the SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF LEAVENWORTH



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SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF LEAVENWORTH

Chapter 2016 Directional Statement

*“...we are called
ever to renew and recreate
our works and our witness
uniting justice and charity in our lives
as servants of the poor.”*

SCL Constitution, Norm 6

We, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, affirm our call to communion and mission as women of the Church. In the spirit of our heritage, we continue to seek the path of charity and justice in our day.

Impelled by our baptismal commitment, we claim as our own the prophetic mission of Jesus and our call to discipleship.

In collaboration with those who also embrace Gospel values, we affirm our evolving charism and re-envision our ministry and sponsored works to sustain our mission.

Mindful of the fragility of the earth and of the suffering of God's people, especially the exploited and marginalized, we commit ourselves to address these critical needs and their systemic causes.

ON THE COVER

Sister Frances Marie Grady, SCL artist, in her studio in Maggie Valley, N.C.

Photo by Carol Viau



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From the Community Director



Sister Constance
Phelps

As I write, it is Palm Sunday 2020. Entering Holy Week, we reflect on the Paschal Mystery as we read the Gospel narratives of the Passion of Jesus. Simultaneously, we reflect on the Paschal Mystery now manifested in our lives.

This year, we observe the Triduum culminating in the great feast of Easter in ways never imagined. We remember we are together as we reflect, pray and live through changes occurring within our personal lives, our Community, our nation and on the global stage. We have the opportunity to experience Holy Week with a different perspective. Let us pray for the grace to do so.

It is appropriate that this issue of *Voices of Charity* focuses on our Sister artists. Art has a unique role in times of uncertainty; for the voice of the artist speaking in wood, ceramics, watercolor, oil, captures its own vision and has the potential of meaning-making in confusing times. Artists invite us to reflect with different eyes, ears and perspectives.

Many in this issue shared the meaning, the understanding and the significance of the Vincentian charism. From these stories, it is clear that the charism is not static. It is expressed in many cultures and a variety of ways. The reader will see that from small beginnings that the gift of the charism, writ large within the Gospel of charity, has become a world-wide reality that we are encountering and embracing in our own day. Ours is the responsibility of living into new expressions and understandings. The essence remains the same and finds its home with the most vulnerable in society – those the charism calls us to serve. We must be open to different ways and possibilities for that charism to evolve in today's milieu.

This is a time of challenge and grace. Let us embrace both as we celebrate this season of Easter.

Sister Constance Phelps
SCL Community Director



Heart of the Matter

SCL history

gifted with artists

From the early days of the history of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCLs), visual art had an important place in the education of young people and a valued role in the beautification of special spaces.

Sister Julia Gilmore writes in *We Came North* that “drawing, painting, and all types of needlework were taught free of charge” at St. Mary’s Academy for Young Ladies. She also notes that **Mother Xavier Ross**, foundress, taught English, French and art among her many duties. From the very beginning of the Community in Leavenworth, Kan., art was part of the comprehensive curriculum introduced in the schools.

In their ministries in education, healthcare and care of orphans, individual SCLs demonstrated artistic talents. The place of art in the history of the SCL Community is best understood through the stories of these gifted women intertwined with the development of the art department at Saint Mary College (today’s University of Saint Mary) and appreciation of art by the Sisters. Over time, art became recognized and accepted as a ministry in and of itself.

Early artists

A music teacher of many instruments, **Sister Mary Aloys Dietz** (1848-1928) was also an artist of exceptional abilities. Many of her works adorned walls of St. Mary’s Academy.

Sister Mary Genevieve Buckley (1871-1957) was an artist who taught art most of her life. When Saint Mary College implemented its four-year curriculum in 1930, she was art instructor. Her extant works include her rendition of Hoffman’s “The Rich Young Man.” Sister’s copy hangs in the main hall of the Mother House. She also often refinished statues. A year prior to her death, Sister was still at the easel.

Following her 1916 entry into the SCL Community, **Sister Theresa Fagan** (1886-1965) taught in high schools. She had the opportunity to study art in Italy, a connection that possibly led to the production of art for the new SCL Mother House by another artist. In 1939, she



Sister Mary Genevieve Buckley painted this oil on canvas, “The Rich Young Man,” a copy of Hoffman’s masterpiece, around 1900. It was one of her earlier pieces.

began teaching art and Spanish at Saint Mary College. In *Emerging Frontiers*, Sister Marie Brinkman writes that the college art department matured under Sister Theresa’s leadership (1939 to 1963). Most of this time, she was head of the art department.

In the early 1920s, two women joined the SCL Community who became artists of significance through their work in different media.



This is one of two bas-reliefs by Sister Mary Bernardine Hon given to the SCL Community at the time of its centennial (1958). Carved of Peruvian mahogany, this art depicts Mother Xavier Ross, foundress, planting a sapling with her co-founders in the background.



‘Artist in true form’

Sister Mary Bernardine Hon

(1904-1980) entered in 1923 and was an SCL for 57 years. She was artist in residence at Saint Mary College from 1966 to 1981. Sister worked out of her “Chop Shop” studio on the ground floor of Mead Hall. In this location – a former milk cellar

where cross-patterned butter patties were made – she did her major work as a wood sculptor and stored the wood she collected from the college and Mother House campuses. It was said that her skillful use of tools, respect for and understanding of material brought out contrasting qualities from one block of wood.

Described as a true artist, Sister Mary Bernardine had respect for the audience. She left room for observers to fill in as much meaning as they were able and to put something of themselves into the work of art. Somewhat reclusive and introverted, she preferred to work alone. Sisters Frances Marie Grady and Pam Hinkle, both artists today, recall working with Sister Mary Bernardine. “She was an artist in true form,” says Sister Frances Marie. Sister Pam points to her deep spirituality.



Sister Mary Bernardine Hon with the crucifix in Mount Olivet Cemetery for which she cast the body of Jesus.

Her noteworthy work includes mahogany bas-reliefs in the main hall of the Mother House, madonnas and other statues of the Blessed Mother, and stations of the cross. Applying her creative talents to different media, Sister Mary Bernardine used a special technique to cast the corpus for the cross in Mount Olivet Cemetery. She made 125 crucifixes for dorm rooms in Maria Hall at Saint Mary College. She also dabbled in pottery, ceramics, leather, brass, puppet-making, crocheting, needlework and oil painting.

A note in Sister Mary Bernardine’s archival file says that she “works with the passion of one who loves what she’s doing.” An article in the Winter 1964-1965 *SCL Relay* magazine credits the inspiration for Sister’s work to an inscription hewn in wood: “May the glorious beauty of the Lord Our God be with us and guide the work of our hands.”



Above: Sister Mary Jane Wilson teaching in a classroom.



Right: Sister Mary Jane working with fabric art.

Gifted weaver

Working in a different medium, **Sister Mary Jane Wilson** (1905-1992) was a gifted weaver of fine fabrics. She joined the Community in 1924 and was first a child care worker in St. Joseph Home, Helena, Mont. She went on to teach elementary school and high school. In 1974, she was artist in residence at Saint Mary College. She had a “Serendipity Shop” where she conducted art and craft classes in weaving and in making collages with glass.

Like other SCL artists, she had the ability to shape humble materials into art. As supervisor of the occupational therapy department at St. Vincent’s Hospital, Billings, Mont., Sister Mary Jane transformed the look of the space to resemble a studio.

Befitting her were the words of Proverbs 31:13: “She is always busy with wool and with flax, she does her work with eager hands.”

Expression of religious feeling

As a child, **Sister Marion Berry** (1918-1996) could copy and draw accurate pictures of birds. She began carving in soap when she was 6 or 7 and later made airplanes from balsa wood while babysitting her siblings. She took art classes in high school. She entered the SCLs in 1938.



Sister Marion Berry

A healthcare professional by training, Sister Marion did wood carving with soft balsa wood as a recreation project. She created multiple sets of stations of the cross, including one hanging on the wall in the ground floor hallway leading from the Mother House to Ross Hall. Sister believed that art allowed her to express deep religious feeling in a tangible way.

Sister Marion had an eye to see the potential in pieces of wood. She read about and studied different art techniques on her own. As assistant administrator at St. Francis Hospital, Topeka, Kan., she did extensive design work for the chapel in the new building. This included the new stained glass windows, art in back of the altar, stations of the cross and large, carved wooden crosses for the doors.



Sister Mary Cecilia Carig with students.

Talents applied in schools

Also entering the Community in 1938, **Sister Mary Cecilia Carig** (1919-2016) had the reputation of being a gift to any faculty because of her artistic talent. She taught grade school, then high school art, English and drafting. She was also a principal. Sister taught art education during Saint Mary College summer sessions.

She often used her artistic skills to help prepare new schools for opening. Sister Mary Cecilia had a knack for decorating classrooms, assisting with drama presentations and making banners for liturgies. She held a master's degree in art with studies in graphic art and drafting. Like many other SCL artists, she did graphics for the SCL Community, including creating a formal emblem for the printing of the updated SCL Constitution in 1983.

The 'art of teaching'

Of her art, **Sister Mary Rebecca Conner** (1924-2009) wrote:

My work is intended to bring joy or involvement for a time... The years of work, practice, and study are rewarded in the sharing of the product with friends and finding that this joy lives on in the heart. So my art is now meant primarily to involve the viewer and to bring life by stimulating the creativity of thought or action which is fundamental to all of us. If my work does that, even for a short moment, I am happy... Creative work is never finished.

Notes from archival file, September 2001

Sister Mary Rebecca entered the SCLs in 1946, taught high school and then joined the Saint Mary College art department as an instructor in 1960. She became department chair and retired as professor emerita in 1995. Her favorite medium was always the one that she was teaching at the time. "My art is the art of teaching," she said.

She considered herself a teacher first, an artist second.

She taught drawing, art education, painting and photography. Sister Mary Rebecca introduced Saturday Experiences in Art for grade school children that engaged them in print making, plaster relief sculpture and other media. High school students learned drawing.

A trip to Tokyo as a foreign exchange student and time in the Southwest in the United States influenced Sister's painting. Her works have a sense of discipline and order while demonstrating her reverence for nature, spirituality, playfulness and hope.

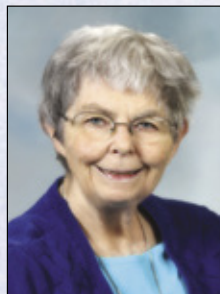


Sister Mary Rebecca Conner



Preference for watercolors

At a young age, **Sister Rita Marie Anderson** (1930-2017) took up painting and drawing. She entered the Community in 1948. During retreats, she was known to set up her easel near flowerbeds and paint away. She primarily worked with watercolors. Sister began her SCL ministry as an elementary school teacher. She went on to specialize in learning disabilities and worked for a number of years for the public schools in Topeka, Kan.



Sister Rita Marie Anderson

Sister Carmen Echevarria (1930-2014) was of the opinion that "A teacher of art should do art. And I want to exhibit regularly; it helps me keep creating." Sister joined the SCLs in 1950. She spent 33 years in the classroom: 11 in grade schools; 11 in high schools; and 11 at Saint Mary College. She later did pastoral ministry in parishes and was a retreat director for a spiritual life center. She saw a strong relationship between art and spirituality.

Sister Carmen preferred watercolors and drawing for her own work. During a grant-funded summer project, she painted eight hours a day for two months in Montana and New Mexico. This allowed her to produce 90 works



Sister Carmen Echevarria

that she exhibited in 1971. Over the years, she had other opportunities to study folk art in Mexico and serve as an artist in residence in Butte, Mont.

Demonstration of love of art

Sister Frances Marie Grady believes that another way the SCL Community has shown its respect for art is the acquisition of different works and the incorporation of art into its buildings over the years. She references the beautiful marble statue of the Sacred Heart that welcomes visitors inside the main entrance to the Mother House (see photo, page 24). In fact, the main floor of the Mother House is home to a number of pieces of art.

Mother Mary Francesca O'Shea, who served as Mother General from 1938 to 1950, had a strong interest in fine arts. While on a Holy Year pilgrimage to Europe in 1950, she purchased a mosaic of Fra Angelico's "The Annunciation." Mother Mary Francesca wrote, "I thought it was fitting to have something beautiful in the Mother House in remembrance of this trip to Europe. Something the Sisters could enjoy." The mosaic remains in the Madonna Parlor at the Mother House. She also purchased a copy of the Book of Kells while in Dublin, reported to be the only copy in Kansas and surrounding states at the time.

The Community received donations of fine art. Of special note is the collection of works contributed by Sir John and Mary Craig, parents of Sister Maureen Craig. The Craigs also gifted the University of Saint Mary with a Scripture collection that includes 2,000 cataloged items available for viewing and research in the LeBeau Special Collections of the Keleher Learning Commons.

When Annunciation Chapel underwent renovation in the early 1980s, the Community enlisted the artistic talents of

the sister of an SCL to create the reredos behind the main altar. Sister Mary Teresita Kelly, OP, a Dominican, did the stone carving of the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary. The artist was the sister of Sister Marie Kelly, SCL.

Sister Sue Miller lent her artistic talents to renovations at Saint Mary College when she served as academic dean and at the Mother House and for the new Marillac Center retreat and spirituality center while she was Community Director. In 2013, Sisters Marie Damian Glatt and Jean Martin Dawson undertook a comprehensive inventory of art in the Mother House, Ross Hall, Cantwell Hall Offices and the University of Saint Mary. Following Sister Marie Damian's death in January 2016, Sister Jean Martin continued and completed the inventory in 2017. During this recent span of time, the Community ensured that art by SCLs and SCL Associates was incorporated into the interior design of the new Ross Hall skilled nursing facility that opened in 2015.



This painting of the Blessed Mother and Child by Sister Mary Rebecca Conner hangs in the Cenacle (small prayer room) in Annunciation Chapel.

Sources: Archival files; histories of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth; and interviews.

Spotlight on *today's SCL artists*

While a number of living SCLs and Associates have special talents with art and various crafts, there are four Sisters whose names recur as artists of special note for different reasons.

Sister Frances Marie Grady



Photo by Carol Viau

When she did a drawing of a classmate in eighth-grade, and everyone liked the work, **Sister Frances Marie** professed that she was going to be an artist. Going a step further, she looked at a work by Vincent Van Gogh and said, "I could do that." That certitude and encouragement by her mom led to her life-long passion for doing art.

Sister Frances Marie entered the SCLs in 1954. She taught art for 25 years at all levels of education. At Bishop Ward High School in Kansas City, Kan., she was president of the Wyandotte County Art Association and involved in art shows in the area.

In graduate school, Sister did a full-size sculpture in plaster. She enjoyed the work, but she found that this medium took too many tools and materials. She's also done acrylics and print making. For the last 15 to 20 years, she has focused on watercolors.

When she thinks about art as ministry, Sister Frances Marie believes that the ministry is in the sharing, the showing and the giving her art away. She explains, "The process of creative experience is completed when it is shared."

In recent years, Sister Frances Marie incorporated art into her various positions with spirituality and retreat centers. She has offered art retreats and taught art classes. Retired from retreat ministry, she continues to do spiritual direction. And she paints every day that she can. She says that old techniques are coming back to her, and she's learning new ones.

Sister Pam Hinkle

From her childhood, **Sister Pam** enjoyed art projects and showed artistic talent. She joined the SCLs in 1967 and taught high school art before serving in other ministries. After earning a master's in social gerontology, she transitioned to housing for the elderly and administration of the SCL Ross Hall skilled nursing facility. Wanting to return to direct patient care, she became a physician assistant and served at a federally qualified health center in New Mexico then returned to the Midwest to work with Dukes and Saint Vincent Clinics for 10 years.



Over this span of time, Sister continued to do art. However, in 2008, she asked SCL leadership if she could take up art as her full-time ministry. A short time later, her mother experienced life-changing health issues that involved Sister Pam as her caregiver. Going forward, Sister was able to embrace both roles – caregiver and artist.

Sister Pam also sought a way to earn funds for the Community through her creativity. She loves doing graphics, and she has sculpted stone and worked with metal and wood. In recent years, she has focused on working with clay and creating ceramic items including blessing bowls, madonnas, angels and simple, decorative receptacles for cremated remains.

Making each piece is what she likes to do most. She's also discovered gains beyond the financial from selling her works at parish and other events. "I am so impressed with the faith and spirituality of the people I encounter," she says.

"I express my own spirituality when I create the work, and I experience the spirituality of the people who encounter my work. The art ministry goes both ways," she believes.



Sister Rita Smith

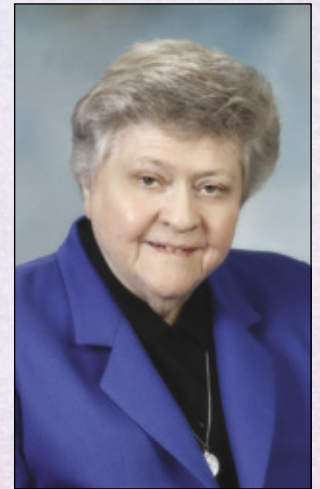
Growing up in Kansas City, Mo., **Sister Rita** had the opportunity to attend summer and Saturday classes at the Nelson Art Gallery. In high school at Bishop Hogan, Sister Mary Ernest Marsh continued to cultivate the teenager's artistic talents. Upon graduation, Sister Rita took art courses at St. Teresa's College (Avila University). She learned about making frescoes from an instructor who had studied them in Florence, Italy.

When Sister Rita entered the SCLs in 1958, she believes that her college credits in art led Community leadership to think of her as an artist. As a result, when she began teaching, Sister Rita was assigned the art classes. She pursued further studies in art and even began a master in arts program. However, she was diverted to graduate studies in education administration directed toward becoming a high school principal.

Sister Rita continued to teach art at the high school level, but administration soon absorbed her time and energy. She served 20 years as a high school principal and 14 years as administrator of the SCL Mother House.

She loved getting young people enthusiastic about art and encouraging them in their creative talents. She enjoyed teaching students about shades and contours and introducing them to oils and watercolors. She also believed in purchasing quality paper for their projects.

Watercolors remain Sister Rita's favorite medium. Since living on the Mother House campus, she has taken up photography. She has also offered watercolor classes for the Sisters. Sister Rita has always made it a practice to give her art away. Beyond that, she believes that if a person can appreciate art, that is a gift in and of itself.



Tools of the artist.

Photo by Carol Viau

Hermana Esther Vilela Gutiérrez

Hermana Esther does not think of art as ministry. The ministry for her is teaching art to women who come to St. Vincent de Paul Pastoral Center in Piura, Peru. These adults are learning to make and sell items – covers for blenders, hand-embroidered items, flowers fashioned from recycled plastic bottles.

Hermana enjoys seeing the women use their creativity. Hermana Esther and another instructor, Fanny Zapata, teach them one thing, and they come back with something much better. The goal is to bring out their skills and give affirmation to the women, many of whom have been mistreated.

"Everyone has an artist within herself/himself," Hermana believes. "I want to affirm that they can do creative things."

As an Hermana de la Caridad since 1987 in Peru, Hermana Esther's primary ministry has been teaching high school religion. She learned embroidery and knitting from her grandmother. There are artists in her family among her siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews.

Hermana likes making cloth flowers, cross-stitching and working with ribbon to create art. Her favorite artistic pastime is punching, piercing holes in metal to design art. She says the creation of these objects helps her appreciate life as she uses her God-given talents.



Art of a *different sort*

With creative direction by Sister Ann Barton and the involvement of many SCLs at the Mother House and Ross Hall, liturgical settings take shape that enhance the environment of Ross Chapel throughout the Church year. The entire process is imbued with deep spirituality.

The process begins with identifying the theme of the season. For example, for Lent 2020 the focus was on mercy. The next step is to search the Internet for the appropriate season's liturgical decoration for Catholic churches. Research for Lent this year yielded photographs that generated ideas for the SCL team. A shopping trip followed as did cutting tall, bronzed grasses and configuring many paper crosses for the symbolic presentation.

The background music for the planning and installation was the antiphon: "In your Mercy, Lord, remind us how you love us."



Sister Ann Barton



The many crosses decked the wreath and represented the community of believers and worshippers gathered around the message of mercy. The grasses extended from the wreath to give the illusion of a circling motion reminiscent of the continuing consecration of bread and wine at the altar and the re-consecration of believers as members of the Body of Christ.

Large pots – some empty, others filled with weeds – formed another dimension of the liturgical setting. These begged the question

of emptiness and readiness to be filled with the graces of the season or to deal with the "weeds" of life and beg for the light to find answers.

Artistic. Inspirational. Simple. Focused. These liturgical settings have roots in spirituality and foster spirituality.

The team working with Sister Ann this Lent included Sisters Mary Arthel Cline, Julia Golkoski, Rita McGinnis, Ruth Reischman, Jean Marian Rilingier and Sheila Taylor.



This liturgical setting in Ross Chapel celebrated the Feast of the Annunciation this year.



Re-Markings

Hospitality with a purpose

*“Teach me to show great gentleness toward all
and to imitate your goodness in welcoming all.”*

--St. Louise de Marillac

These words of St. Louise de Marillac could serve as the mission statement of the SCL Mead Intentional Community, Leavenworth, Kan. In August 2018, four SCLs began living together with the intention of fostering hospitality.

Since then, Sisters Mary Rachel Flynn, Judith Jackson, Vickie Perkins and Kathleen Wood have come to understand and value hospitality more as a sense of being with and connecting individuals than developing projects to engage people. They recognize there will always be hosted gatherings and planned activities. More frequently, there will be chance encounters, conscious decisions and daily interactions that allow opportunities to build bridges and make connections.

Sister Mary Rachel shares a reflection that conveys this intentionality:

“Hospitality . . . it’s more than an invitation.

*It is the creation of an inviting, trustworthy space –
an atmosphere as much as a place.*

It shapes the experience to follow.

*It creates the intention, the spirit,
and the boundaries for what is possible.*

... When in doubt, practice hospitality.”

— “Grounding Virtues,” The Civil Conversations Project,
On Being (onbeing.org)

The four SCLs arrived at this understanding of hospitality through prayer, discussion and personal experiences. They have discovered that they interact within different circles that may overlap. Sisters Judith and Kathleen are both on the staff of Marillac Center, the SCL retreat and spirituality center. A spirit of hospitality undergirds their ministries as it does Sister Vickie’s responsibilities as executive director of the Leavenworth Interfaith Community of Hope that serves persons who



Left to right around the table in the Mead Community, Sisters Mary Rachel Flynn, Judith Jackson, Kathleen Wood and Vickie Perkins.

are homeless. Three of the four Sisters are participating in the mission orientation program for new faculty and staff of the University of Saint Mary.

Beyond this are committees on which they serve and programs in which they are involved. There’s also the joy of being with one another. “We couldn’t be a house of hospitality without hospitality with one another,” Sister Mary Rachel adds.

Each day, the Sisters conclude their evening meal with conversation focused on the questions: “In whom did you see the face of Christ today?” and “Did you have a Vincentian encounter?” It may be as simple as engaging with the young man who helped carry items up the stairs when the elevator wasn’t working. Or extending the offer to a college commuter student to use the convent as a place to study and have lunch, if needed. Or sponsoring Come & See Candidates on their journeys toward becoming SCL Associates.

The goal is that these encounters model the Vincentian charism with the ripple effect of creating sacred circles of connection.

The conclusion? “When in doubt, practice hospitality.”

Music ministry multi-faceted

Sister Sheila Taylor considers music a unifying element that brings people together. Whether it's singing the national anthem at a sports event or "Happy Birthday" at a party, music touches the heart and soul.

"It has the ability to bring tears to our eyes, lull us to sleep, or inspire us to tap our feet or dance," she says.

Different dimensions of music have also been the unifying element in Sister Sheila's own life. She has taught music, written and given workshops about it, practiced music therapy, led choirs and provided accompaniment in many venues. Music is a way of life for Sister Sheila, and it's her ministry.

College sets her course

She took piano lessons from age 4 but pursued other interests and extra-curricular activities during high school. As a student at Saint Mary College, Leavenworth, the young woman felt drawn to return to the keyboard. Her instructors encouraged her to pursue a music degree.

"From then on, music consumed my life," Sister Sheila recalls, "and also influenced my spirituality and subsequently led me to a religious vocation."

As much as she loved playing piano and organ, and studying music history and theory, Sister Sheila had an aversion to performing publicly. As a college sophomore, she learned about the developing field of music therapy. The idea of using music to help people feel better appealed to her. She earned her undergraduate degree in music education with the plan to do advanced studies in music therapy. After working two years, Sister Sheila enrolled at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. Impressed with her music background at Saint Mary College, her KU professors and

advisors suggested she work toward earning master's degrees in both music therapy and music education.

Teacher, published author

In the midst of her studies, Sister Sheila entered the SCL Community. She was able to complete her master's degrees and then apply her knowledge of music and the psychology of music in her first ministry assignment as an elementary school teacher. Over the next 30 years, Sister Sheila used music creatively to connect children and prayer. At St. Peter's School, Kansas City, Mo., where she served 16 years, Sister engaged students in active participation in the Mass through liturgical movement, use of color, music, drama and speaking.

After giving workshops about children's liturgies, Sister Sheila recognized that other teachers were hungry for ideas and ways to help students learn to love the liturgy. With encouragement from other SCLs and teachers, she compiled her collection of seasonal Masses and prayer services along with clear directions into a book. She titled it *Kaleidoscope of Liturgies for Elementary Grades*. Sister sent the text to five publishers and within a week received a call from Sadlier. The publishing company expressed interest in purchasing her book and invited the SCL to be part of writing a new series titled *Celebrating Our Seasons and Saints*.



Sister Sheila's creative work with children's liturgies led to the publication of helpful materials for other teachers.



Sister Sheila Taylor at a familiar location with her harp in Ross Chapel.

Photo by Don Brent

'Creating heaven on earth'

Following her teaching ministry, Sister Sheila began taking harp lessons and enrolled in a course of study titled "Music for Healing and Transition." The two-year program supplemented her graduate degree with specialization in music for persons who are sick and dying. With this and additional certification, Sister Sheila began doing music therapy with the harp in hospital and hospice settings.

Today, she juggles a variety of music ministry roles. She plans liturgies, works with the Mother House choir, and plays background harp music as therapy and for prayer experiences. She continues her ministry with Kansas City Hospice & Palliative Care.

Sister Sheila cites an East Indian principle that states, "It is the responsibility of the musician to create heaven on earth; to create balance, peace and harmony." She directs her music ministry and her creative energies to striving to accomplish this.



SCLs name new communications director

Bryon McLaughlin joined the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCLs) as the Community's new director of communications on Feb. 3.

Of his new position, Bryon says, "This job represents the convergence of several roles that I enjoy and find challenging: communications, management and archival record-keeping. Most importantly, I appreciate and respect the mission of the Sisters, and I look forward to sharing their stories and helping perpetuate their spirit."

Bryon has almost 25 years' experience in communications with expertise in publications, social media, website content management and video production. He served as communications coordinator and executive editor for the Church of the Nazarene USA/Canada Regional Office. He was the founding and executive editor of *Grace & Peace Magazine*, distributed to 15,000 congregational leaders across the region. Much of his work with the Church of the Nazarene focused on justice issues, multicultural ministry and missions/outreach. Bryon and his team received national awards, including two Telly awards for video, and also an award from the Associated Church Press for "Best New Print Publication." He also served as an assistant archivist and helped develop a book and materials on Church history.

Most recently, Bryon worked as supervisor of quality control and training within the National Benefits Center with offices in Lee's Summit, Mo., and Overland Park, Kan. His work there supported the mining of data to facilitate the process of immigrants becoming citizens. Bryon earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Southern Nazarene University, Bethany, Okla. His studies concentrated on religion, history and communications.

Bryon resides in Lee's Summit, Mo., with his wife Judy. The couple has four adult children. When he's not busy with work, Bryon enjoys reading mystery and crime novels (and appreciates suggestions for further reading).

The new SCL communications director fills the role held for several years by Therese Horvat, who has semi-retired.



Re-Markings

OF SPECIAL NOTE

In this section, *Voices of Charity* highlights Sisters, Associates and friends who have earned special honors or been in the news.

Unprecedented time of COVID-19

As this Spring 2020 edition of *Voices of Charity* went into production, the world continued to live with the challenges of coronavirus (COVID-19). The often repeated word “unprecedented” best describes our current reality.

We pray for those who suffer illness and hardships. We pray for the growing list of those who are most vulnerable. We pray for caregivers and health professionals. We pray for leaders across the span of governments and organizations. We pray and trust in Divine Providence for “the good that is yet to be” as we rely on the resilience of the human spirit sustained by the Holy Spirit.

Fund honors legacy of Sister Michel

In 1967, **Sister Michel Pantenburg**, then administrator of St. Mary’s Hospital, Grand Junction, Colo., established the St. Mary’s Hospital Foundation to help fund critical healthcare services, ensure that the community’s needs were met, and build for the future. Sister Michel died in 2016, but her legacy of advancing the growth of healthcare and of philanthropy continues. In 2019, the Fleming family established the Sister Michel Patient Compassion Fund at St. Mary’s. The fund supports transportation needs, short-term lodging assistance, prescription medication assistance, newborn car seats, clothing, meal cards and in-home medical equipment.



Board service acclaimed

Sister Barbara Aldrich received the “Board Member of the Year” award in Grand Junction, Colo., at the Community Impact Council “INSPIRE” Breakfast on March 10.

The SCL merited recognition for her service since 2015 as a member of the board of MarillacHealth, a federally qualified health center. The nomination stated that Sister Barbara “has provided wisdom, perspective and the courage of conviction that has helped keep Marillac rooted in its values while moving forward to meet the needs of its patients and adjusting to the continuous challenges of providing affordable and accessible healthcare services to the residents of Mesa County.”

Sister Barbara is vice president, mission integration, St. Mary’s Medical Center, Grand Junction.



Shane Haas, MarillacHealth board chair; Sister Barbara Aldrich, board member and honoree; and Kay Ramachandran, MarillacHealth CEO. *Photo submitted*

USM Alumni Council recognizes Sister Susan

The spotlight was on **Sister Susan Rieke** on Sunday, Nov. 17, during the annual fall luncheon of the KC Alumni Council of the University of Saint Mary (USM). Professor, scholar, poet and advocate for the humanities, Sister Susan retired from USM in May 2017. She served as the university’s first McGilliey Chair for Liberal Studies. After her retirement, she continued as an adjunct professor teaching in the English program.

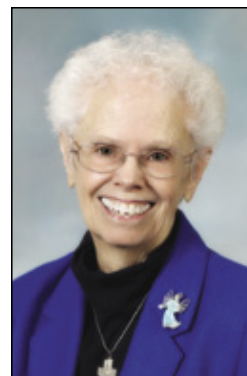


Left to right, Dr. Judy Vogelsang and Sisters Diane Steele, Susan Rieke and Rosie Kolich. *Photo by Bill Staggs*

Mayor’s award to Sister Vickie

Sister Vickie Perkins

received the Mayor’s Award for Community Service during the Feb. 25 meeting of the Leavenworth City Commission. The city of Leavenworth



initiated this award in 2019 to recognize individuals for outstanding service to the community. The award acknowledged Sister Vickie’s contributions in education and in diverse leadership roles. She is currently executive director of the Leavenworth Interfaith Community of Hope. She developed a collaborative network of churches to support this resource that serves persons who are homeless and in need of assistance.

Honoree exemplifies Vincentian charism

Richard Sack takes to heart the Gospel invitation to serve others. Because of this, he volunteers in prisons, in his church and in other settings in the Leavenworth, Kan., community where he lives.

Without realizing it, by his good works and acts of charity Richard exemplifies the spirit of the 17th century saint to whom the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCLs) trace their roots. Because of this, the Community presented Richard with the inaugural Vincentian Charism Award, named for St. Vincent de Paul.

Sister Constance Phelps, SCL Community Director, acknowledged Richard's service during a ceremony on Founders' Day, Nov. 11, at the Mother House. Calling him a deserving recipient of the award, she said, "Like Vincent, Richard reaches out to those who are vulnerable and on the fringes of society. He sees needs, responds to them and engages others to work with him."

Monday is his prison day. Richard serves as a spiritual guide at the U.S. Penitentiary, Leavenworth. In the afternoon, he and his wife Erin facilitate a self-help group in the maximum-security section of the Lansing Correctional Facility.

With his Christian faith so foundational to his life and actions, Richard has been a very active member of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Leavenworth, since 1969. He is an elder. He has been chair of the worship department, taught Sunday school and vacation Bible school, and is in the choir and the bell choir. He has been a counselor at the church camp, worked with youth and participated in the men's fellowship group.



Sister Constance Phelps, SCL Community Director, presents Richard Sack with the inaugural Vincentian Charism Award.

Richard's other volunteer work involves helping individuals – those who are elderly or who can't afford to pay for home repairs. He may construct a ramp at someone's house or complete a small fix-it job. Over a nine-month period, he volunteered as project manager for the inside construction of the new building of the Leavenworth Interfaith Community of Hope. He continues to help when called upon for repair and touch-up jobs at the facility.

He does this because he has the skills and because he believes in the Gospel message of loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself. It's as simple as that and as all encompassing.

Linda Martin, an SCL Associate, nominated Richard for the Vincentian Charism Award. She says of the honoree, "He lives his humble servant's life unknowingly embodying the Vincentian charism – and the world is a better place for it."

Congratulations 2020 SCL Jubilarians

80 years

Sister Celine Kobe

75 years

Sister Mary Eleanor Schram

70 years

Sister Rosalie Curtin

Sister Irene Hanley

Sister Ann Marita Loosen

Sister Mary Elizabeth Strecker

Sister Therese Zimmerman

60 years

Sister Bonnie Ann Bachle

Sister Nancy Bauman

Sister Ruth Ann Hehn

Sister Eileen Hurley

Sister Jane Jackson

Sister Virginia Jakobe

Sister Frances Juiliano

Sister Mary Jo McDonald

Sister Suzanne Retherford

Sister Irene Skeeahan

Sister Mary Lex Smith

Sister Charlotte White

50 years

Sister Noreen Walter

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If we've overlooked an item of importance, please email (bmclaughlin@scls.org) or mail information to Communications, Cantwell Hall, 4200 South 4th Street, Leavenworth, KS 66048-5054.



Formation for Life



WHAT IS THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY
AND WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

*“Called to bear the love of God ...
this divine fire ... everywhere.”*

— St. Vincent de Paul

International family with deep roots

The spark that St. Vincent de Paul kindled in 1617 in France has radiated across centuries and finds itself embodied and emboldened today in what is called the Vincentian Family Movement. True to the charism (spirit) of St. Vincent, this international movement champions service of God in the person of those who are poor, both in the preaching of the Gospel (mission) and working to alleviate poverty (charity).¹

Father Robert P. Maloney, CM, author and former superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, has written extensively about Vincent and his charism. (See Book Review section, page 22.) Father Maloney describes the Vincentian Family as “a loose, voluntary international organization of religious institutes, associations and groups which follow the charism of Vincent de Paul in the service of the impoverished.”² He notes that even in Vincent’s lifetime, the family became international, and it was collaborative and revolutionary from the outset. “Vincent dared to do what others had tried, but failed, to do,” Father Maloney writes.³

In the 1600s, Vincent organized laywomen of noble birth to serve those living in poverty. He established a missionary order of priests to preach and minister to the impoverished across the French countryside. Vincent and St. Louise de Marillac founded a community of women religious to serve the poor in the streets of Paris. His good works, spirituality and

commitment to collaboration and service to the poor influenced the creation of other groups across the span of centuries and continents. (See chronological chart, page 18.) The Vincentian Family began to grow and evolve.

Vincent at one time said that simplicity was the virtue he liked best. With continued growth of ministries, striving for simplicity became both a challenge and an opportunity. A movement of this magnitude requires an organizational structure that allows for flexibility and continuity.

Modern leaders convened for the first meeting of the Vincentian Family Executive Committee in June 1995. A group of International Vincentian Family Leaders began to meet annually. Pentecost Sunday 2015 brought establishment of the International Vincentian Family Office (VFO) in Philadelphia.

Today, the movement encompasses an estimated 2 million people – laypersons, religious and priests – in 160 branches across the world (including the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and the Charity Federation). The spirituality of St. Vincent and service on behalf of those living in poverty continue to propel this movement forward and to



Each branch of the Vincentian Family represented at the January 2020 meeting in Rome received a relic of St. Vincent de Paul.

energize new initiatives in response to opportunities to serve.

In his wisdom, Vincent cautioned that this takes time and openness to the Spirit.

Yes, that was the beginning of your Family. As it wasn’t then what it is now, there’s reason to believe that it’s still not what it will be when God has perfected it as He wants it; for don’t think that Families are formed all at once. Saint Benedict, Saint Augustine, Saint Dominic, and all those great servants of God whose Families are so flourishing, never dreamed of doing what they actually accomplished; but God acted through them. (Conferences, Volume 9, p. 194)⁴

¹ “The Vincentian Family Movement: The Incarnation of the Vincentian Charism,” Father Joe Agostino, CM, April 26, 2019.

² “A ‘Daring Prudence’: Vincent de Paul and the Founding of a Collaborative Family,” Father Robert P. Maloney, CM, Oct. 29, 2019.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.



Leadership perspectives on today's

Three leaders representing three different components of the Vincentian Family share their perspectives on the dynamics of this worldwide movement today.

During separate interviews, reflections came from Father Joe Agostino, CM, Vincentian priest and international coordinator of the Vincentian Family Office; Sister Grace Hartzog, SC, member of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, and executive director, Charity Federation; and Sister Eileen Haynes, SCL, Councilor, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. All are members of the Vincentian Family Executive Committee.



Explain your understanding of the Vincentian charism.

Sister Grace: Vincent taught that the charity of Christ urges us on and takes us where we need to go to serve those who are poor. At the recent Vincentian Family Leaders' meeting in Rome, we heard the universal music of the hymn "Ubi caritas," translated "Where God is, there is love."

Sister Eileen: The charism calls us to be contemplatives in action by seeing and experiencing Christ in those who live in poverty and serving them.

Father Joe: Vincent called us to organized charity. He believed the poor can be better served by collaboration and the application of all of our gifts. The charism has remained constant since Vincent's time. Variety comes from the ways we interpret and live it in our historic context.

Has the concept of the Vincentian Family been one you "grew up with" in religious life?

Sister Eileen: This is an evolving dynamic for the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. As a young Sister in formation, I remember learning about Vincent de Paul. As a religious Community, we joined the Charity Federation in 1995. This was around the same time we began hearing

about the Vincentian Family. As SCLs, we're still learning how to lean into this as we grow in our understanding that we're better together as part of a larger whole.

Father Joe: Vincent's vision in 17th century France began the movement that led to a new international dynamism – the joint efforts of men and women, ordained and lay, to combat the forces of poverty both in individual lives as well as in societal structures that perpetuate it. In the mid-1990s, we began to apply the name "Vincentian Family" to this movement. Today, our members remain independent, but they are united around the common purpose espoused by Vincent.

Sister Grace: Since Elizabeth Ann Seton took St. Vincent de Paul's rule for our Constitution, formation for the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill is rooted in the Vincentian charism.

What is the significance of being part of the Vincentian Family?

Sister Grace: The significance of this relationship is the collaboration of the branches in support of our shared commitment to solidarity with those who are poor and marginalized; and to collaborative efforts toward systemic change locally and globally. Energized by the Charity Federation mission

and vision, our call is rooted in our commitment that we never do alone what we can do better together. Our desire is to deepen our relationships and inter-connectedness among Federation congregations and within the Vincentian Family and



Father Joe Agostino, CM, with friends in Hong Kong during one of his international trips to visit branches and members of the Vincentian Family.

Vincentian Family Movement



Sister Grace Hartzog, SC, welcomes participants to the 2019 Charity Federation Assembly of the Whole in Chicago.

beyond. In our individual congregations, we embrace this call as a frame of reference as we engage in direction-setting. Acting as a whole, we celebrate our call to live into our shared future in a spirit of contemplation and prophetic action.

Father Joe: What strikes me is the vastness and expansiveness of the large and growing number of people who want to walk together into living the Vincentian charism. We see this in creative responses to serving those who are poor; in the adoption of collaborative initiatives such as our efforts to eliminate homelessness worldwide; and in interest in formation in the Vincentian charism and spirituality.

Sister Eileen: The foundation for all that we do is Christ. Belonging to the Vincentian Family is broadening our understanding of community as multicultural, global and of different generations, and as including those who belong to churches and those who may not identify with organized religion yet live the Vincentian charism through their spirit and actions. As a family, we are blessed to see God's face through those who live in poverty and at the same time to share God's love with others. We are called to serve in collaboration as well.

What excites you about being part of the Vincentian Family?

Sister Eileen: I find the increased involvement of the laity, especially young people, encouraging. Vincent started with the laity when he founded the Confraternities of Charity (Ladies of Charity). The Vincentian Family Movement is becoming more and more grassroots-oriented. We are a joy-filled family, and we share that joy with others.

Sister Grace: At the recent leadership meeting in Rome, a group of 50 of us gathered to go to our audience with Pope Francis. I felt an immediate spirit of welcome shared by everyone. It was as if we were members of a family gathered for a reunion. This gives me great hope for the future.

Father Joe: I sense renewed enthusiasm, revival of the Vincentian tradition, new energy and increased interest in Vincent's methodology and his vision. We experienced this when 11,000 people participated in the symposium marking the 400th anniversary of the Vincentian charism. It was incredible to look out on the sea of Vincentians gathered in Rome. To sustain and support this evolving movement, we need to clarify further what Vincentian spirituality means and provide formation in systemic change and collaboration – two tenets that were important to Vincent. We also need to plan for leadership formation to propel this forward and sustain our mission of charity.



Prayer of the Vincentian Family

Lord Jesus, you who willed
to become poor,
give us eyes and a heart directed
toward the poor;
help us to recognize you in them;
in their thirst, their hunger, their
loneliness, and their misfortune.

Enkindle within our Vincentian
Family unity, simplicity, humility
and the fire of love
that burned in St. Vincent de Paul.

Strengthen us, so that, faithful to
the practice of these virtues,
we may contemplate you and
serve you in the person of the
poor, and may one day be united
with you and them in the Kingdom.

Amen.

*Source: International Vincentian
Family Office*

At the January Vincentian Family gathering in Rome, Sister Eileen Haynes, SCL, with Vincentian Volunteers from Peru, Rosario del Pilar Valdivieso Morales (center) and Nancy Tatiana Ordinola Juarez (right).



Evolution of the Vincentian Family Movement

1617	The birth of the Vincentian charism (spirit) in France.
1617	Formation of the first organized charity established by Vincent – the Confraternities of Charity (the Ladies of Charity that later became the International Association of Charities – AIC).
1625	Official foundation of the Congregation of the Mission – priests and brothers dedicated to lives of prayer, community and service.
1633	Foundation of the Daughters of Charity by Vincent and Louise de Marillac – non-cloistered women religious dedicated to serving the sick poor.
1700s and 1800s	Establishment of other religious communities in the spirit of Vincent.
1833	Founding of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Paris.
1847	Beginning of the formation of Vincentian youth groups in response to the Blessed Mother's appearance to St. Catherine Labouré (Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, 1830).
1800s and 1900s	Expansion of the Vincentian Family with numerous communities established in the United States, Central and South America, Africa and Asia; 1858, founding of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth; 1965, establishment of the group that evolved into the Charity Federation.
1995	First meeting of the Vincentian Family Executive Committee (VFEC) in Paris.
2010	Beginning of an anti-poverty initiative in Haiti to mark the 350th anniversary of the deaths of Sts. Vincent and Louise.
Pentecost Sunday 2015	Establishment of the International Vincentian Family Office in Philadelphia as the vehicle through which the aspirations of the VFEC are carried out globally.
2017	Observance of the 400th anniversary of the birth of the Vincentian charism; establishment of a global initiative against homelessness.
2020	Historic meeting in Rome of superiors and presidents representing 97 of the branches of the Vincentian Family; purpose: to study the future of the charism.

Web of new possibilities for Vincentian charism



Sister Constance Phelps reviews notes for her keynote presentation.

In her keynote address to the January 2020 gathering of the Vincentian Family in Rome, Sister Constance Phelps, SCL Community Director, invited participants “to work creatively together to design a web from threads of the different branches that provides vision, witness and energy for transformation – a web that is strong and flexible enough to embrace change.”

Sister Constance spoke to superiors general and presidents representing 97 branches of the Vincentian Family. Two hundred leaders from around the world came together from Jan. 8 to 12 to reflect, discuss and consider ways that they can collaborate and move into the future.

Acknowledging that change is today’s evolving way of life, the SCL Community Director urged those gathered to form partnerships, to network and to “imagine a web with threads of new possibilities, new ways in which the mission

and charism may be fostered, new ways of interacting.” Making visible Gospel values today, she continued, will require courage, standing together and hope.

“We are called to share the possibilities for the future of our Vincentian charism. We must continue to bring all voices, women and men, all perspectives, all experiences into dialogue within the prevailing traditions of our branches. We must weave these threads, extracted from the various branches of the Vincentian Family, bringing them together in the common web of charism,” she said in her presentation titled, “Weaving Our Web: An Imaginative Challenge for the Future.”

The theme of the gathering was “FamVin2020: The Vincentian Family Moving Forward.” The program began on Jan. 8 with an audience with Pope Francis.

Sister Eileen Haynes, who is on the Vincentian Family Executive Committee and a member of the meeting planning committee, and Hermana Clorinda Timaná Martinez, Director of SCL Latin American Missions, attended the gathering. Also participating were two Vincentian Volunteers from Peru, Nancy Tatiana Ordinola Juarez and Rosario del Pilar Valdivieso Morales.



Mementos from recent gathering in Rome

Leaders of branches of the Vincentian Family attending the January meeting in Rome received mementos commemorating the historic gathering. The SCL Community displayed these items in the Mother House and Ross Hall. The display case included (pictured left to right) a relic of St. Vincent de Paul that leaders of branches and communities within the Vincentian Family received during the meeting; a group photo of the participants with Pope Francis; and a bound volume of documents from the October 2017 400th anniversary symposium. During the January meeting, participants prayed the Vincentian Family Prayer (pictured at the bottom of the case).



Peruvian connection with Vincentian Family

Within the SCL Community, the Vincentian charism definitely has an international dimension.

While in Kansas for meetings in January, four members of the Hermanas de la Caridad in Peru shared their thoughts about the Vincentian Family – what it means, why it is important.

This included Hermanas Susana Córdova Castillo, Laura Rumiche Morales, Clorinda Timaná Martinez and Esther Vilela Gutiérrez.



At the Mother House for the Winter Leaven Assembly, Hermanas de la Caridad shared their perspectives on the Vincentian Family. Left to right, Hermanas Laura Rumiche Morales, Susana Córdova Castillo, Esther Vilela Gutiérrez and Clorinda Timaná Martinez.

What do you understand the Vincentian family to be?

Hermana Laura: This is a group of people who have captured the charism of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac. They want to follow in the footsteps of St. Vincent and continue Christ's mission of announcing the Good News of God's love to the poor.

Hermana Susana: The Vincentian Family sees the needs of the world and works together to respond to the needs of the time.

How have you grown in your understanding of the Vincentian charism?

Hermana Susana: In giving, we receive. In our dining room in Chuschi, we provide meals for older adults. They teach me how to be attentive to people by the greetings and love they extend.

Hermana Clorinda: In my work at Santa Rosa Parish in Piura, the people who are poor teach me to love each day.

Hermana Laura: I see that people who are poor trust deeply in God's Providence. Even though they are poor, they share their wisdom and the material goods they have. I am evangelized by them.

How do you live, model and share the Vincentian charism with those with whom you serve and work?

Hermana Esther: At the school where I teach, some students may not be doing so well; they may be rebellious. Society tends to put them on the margin. Instead, we need to look at what's behind the problem and try to listen and help them. This is an invitation to meet Christ in them.

Hermana Laura: We strive to listen to our patients. One woman came to St. Vincent de Paul Pastoral Center for treatment of pain in her shoulder. When we talked with her we learned she has two sons in jail, one of whom is sick and requires medications. She washes clothes to be able to pay for

his medicine. Listening to her express her feelings and worries helped her to heal.

Hermana Susana: It is not just what you are giving to the people. It is the way you respond to them.

Hermana Clorinda: I live the Vincentian charism by loving the people and renewing my spirit in community. Pope Francis gives us strong statements that support the idea of meeting the other person as an encounter with Christ in our daily lives.

Describe the Vincentian Volunteer program that has developed in Piura.

Hermana Laura: Starting in 2012, we had a group of young people doing their physical therapy practicum. Ten to 12 continued to meet weekly and to discuss where they found Christ in service to others. We provided formation monthly sharing information and the spirituality of St. Vincent and Mother Xavier. The group was attracted to care of the sick and wanted to share their gifts in service to others. They began to go out to visit people in their homes and to help with cleaning and repairs. Over the last five years, a Vincentian priest has given workshops and retreats three times a year. Five years ago, we also learned about the International Association of Charities – AIC. Even longer ago, we had a group of women who visited the sick and elderly in the parishes of Santa Rosa and Santa Julia.

Now we are integrating these groups of young people and adults and continuing Vincentian formation with them on a monthly basis. We had a consecration ceremony for 30 Vincentian Volunteers in August 2019. They continue to serve – preparing food and taking meals to the poor Venezuelans in our community; visiting children in hospitals and providing them with coloring books and crayons and telling them about Jesus; serving lunch to addicts. It is a blessing to share and spread the Vincentian charism.

See inside back cover for brief reflections on the Vincentian charism by Sisters and SCL Associates.

Celebrating the spirit of collaboration

Collaboration is the keyword of the 14 member congregations of the Sisters of Charity Federation to which the SCL Community belongs. In January 2020, one affiliated initiative of the Federation called attention to the 10-year anniversary of another in a celebration of charity.

In a blog compiled by Sister Tracy Kemme, SC (Sister of Charity of Cincinnati), members of the Future of Charity acknowledged the significance of the House of Charity, New Orleans. The Future of Charity is a group of recently vowed members and women in formation with religious congregations that belong to the Charity Federation. Marking its 10th anniversary in January, the House of Charity is a collaborative initiative of the Charity Federation. It seeks to witness religious life to a new generation of young adults, serve persons who are poor in their rebuilding efforts in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, and offer opportunities for vocational discernment and volunteer service, especially to young adults.

Sister Tracy writes in the blog posted Jan. 12, "We dedicate this post to our visionary sisters who dreamed up the House of Charity and have sustained it over a decade, impacting countless young adults, the city of New Orleans, and the Charity Federation – including, in a very special way, those who are newer members of our congregations."

She explains that the Future of Charity has its roots at the House of Charity. She adds, "The same sisters who dreamed up the House of Charity also dreamed of connecting newer members across the Federation, and they eventually did, at the House of Charity in 2014."

Sister Tracy acknowledges the House of Charity staff at that time who welcomed Future of Charity members with open arms. They included Sisters Renee Rose, DC (Province of St. Louise); Monica Gundler, SC (Cincinnati); Claire Regan, SC (New York); and Mary Lex Smith, SCL. Ever since this initial meeting in New Orleans, the Future of Charity members have returned to the House of Charity annually. This past November, the group experienced the hospitality of the House of Charity's current community – Sister Monica with Sisters Peg Johnson and Vicki Lichtenauer, SCLs.



Happy people celebrating the Future of Charity and the House of Charity – both initiatives affiliated with the Charity Federation.

Content from the Future of Charity blogspot and the Charity Federation website. See related article, page 26.

Three SCLs shared the following reflections on their Future of Charity/ House of Charity ties:

The House of Charity is a wonderful example of collaboration among the Charity Federation congregations. It weaves hospitality, community, prayer and service together for those who stay there. Whether I am visiting with the Future of Charity or a service trip, I feel the positive energy and hope that emerges from the group experience, impelling all to continue building the Kingdom here on earth.



— Sister Réjane Cytacki

I have had the opportunity to be present to the Future of Charity as the SCL vocation director and also for the past two and a half years as a core community member living at the House of Charity. There is nothing as exciting as welcoming women from across the Charity Federation to come and spend time together. We pray, play, dream, serve and support one another. In this busy world, it is so hard to carve out time to be together. I am always impressed with the number of women who prioritize time away from their daily responsibilities to be together. The goal is to leave New Orleans reinvigorated and ready to go forth as a light of the Gospel, living the values of St. Vincent. We hope that this tradition can carry on well into the future.



— Sister Vicki Lichtenauer

The first word that comes to mind about the House of Charity is joy. It is a bright and cheerful space that contains so much joyful witness to what is possible when we come together. As we live religious life in the 21st century, the House of Charity embodies our call to greater collaboration and accompaniment of one another. Gathering there with other young and new members was a time of sharing the journey with hope and courage. We also expanded the circle of Charity beyond those of us in the living room by having a video call with young and new members in the South Korean province of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. Our global reality, our connection to the charism and our desire to love God with our whole hearts were all affirmed at the House of Charity.



— Sister Melissa Camardo



Book Review

Living into the hopes of the Vincentian charism

Maloney, CM, Father Robert P.

A New Century Dawns:

Hopes for the Vincentian Family.

National Council of the United States

Society of St. Vincent de Paul:

St. Louis, Mo., 2017.



by Sister Mary Pat
Lenahan
SCL Candidate/
Novitiate Director

*“Hope is the thing with
feathers that perches
in the soul, and sings
the tune without the words –
and never stops – at all –”*

— Emily Dickinson

It seems most appropriate that this book about hope for the future of the Vincentian Family begins with this quote from Emily Dickinson as references throughout this text provide a context of hope and possibility. Repeatedly, the reader is reminded that, just as Vincent's hope and vision crossed and removed boundaries, so we, too, are called to stretch and respond to the many challenges in our world today with courage, collaboration, communication and creativity.

No small dreams

As this new century dawns, the author lays forth some specific hopes of his own. Father Robert P. Maloney, CM, says that we are called to focus on the needs of the world's poor and most vulnerable. We must clearly define who we are and what we are about in our mission. He expresses hope that the Vincentian

Family can come together to focus on a particular mission. He identifies the need for all members to be formed and educated well for the mission. Father Maloney envisions that the Vincentian Family will continue to create ways to speak to the critical issues of the United Nations with a clear and united voice.

Next, he hopes that the Family will continue to develop a vibrant spirituality of community. He projects the need for a national and international advancement office for planning and continued support. Finally, he hopes that the Vincentian Family will continue to develop the powerful potential of the International Miraculous Medal Association. These are no small dreams. They are large enough to be on par with the vision and hopes of Vincent's charism of love and service to all, especially those who are poor and most vulnerable.

Background, context of charism

Father Maloney provides background on the early beginnings of Vincent's vision as well as on the early foundations of his organization to carry out these Gospel mandates according to the Vincentian charism. The author also provides background on Vincent's character, relationships and desire to unite contemplation and prayer with charity





and love for his neighbor as he worked unceasingly to alleviate the plight of the poor and the suffering in Paris. We, who are members of the Vincentian Family, continue today to respond both to the immediate and critical needs of those who are poor and most vulnerable. We stand in solidarity to work for systemic change and seek justice with mercy. Through our lives and actions today, we strive to witness and work for peace.

Within the context of the Vincentian charism and the critical collaboration and involvement with lay members, Father Maloney cites Priscilla and Aquila from the New Testament as key examples of this communal relationship and as disciples spreading the Good News. The early Church was primarily influenced by lay leadership as team players within a multicultural missionary mandate. These lay leaders attempted to follow and teach the foundational tenets of Jesus as principles of the social teaching and life of the Church. These principles focused on the inherent dignity of the human person and respect for all life. Community was and continues to be important as members seek to protect and assist those most vulnerable. In a spirit of solidarity, stewardship, subsidiarity and human equality, members continue to work for the common good as they value communication and listening.

They continue to draw from Scripture, Church history, papal teaching, and theological thought and study from past and contemporary voices. Underlying all intent and efforts are a deep and abiding faith and prayer in relationship with God. This solid base assists believers in sharing a sense of stewardship that leads them to work toward systemic and just change to benefit all, especially the most vulnerable. Continuing in life-long education and learning, hopefully, they introduce themselves, other individuals and the community to greater awareness and wisdom.

Pillars of wisdom

The author sets forth Seven Pillars of Wisdom which include:

- Maintaining deep respect for each person and a sense of social justice.
- Being an active member in the human community.
- Adopting and acting upon a global vision.
- Walking with those who are poor and most vulnerable.
- Embracing the future full of faith and hope.
- Being a healthy participant in today's information society.
- Exercising the ability and energy to pass on the Vincentian heritage and legacy.

Following these pillars of wisdom, Father Maloney focuses on the founders of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Blessed Frederic Ozanam

and Sister Rosalie Rendu, DC, and how the same call to holiness is extended to each of us each day.

Finally, the author indicates that in order for the Vincentian Family to remain healthy and viable, its members need to be faithful to daily prayer, maintain spiritual bonds through communal support, and stay grounded in the Vincentian charism through humility, simplicity and charity as the charity of Christ urges us onward.

In conclusion, Father Maloney raises some implications for us today. His points include being mobile to meet the needs of those in need, moving forward with initiatives, being open and welcoming, seeking the meaning of life, affirming feminine values, and caring for and protecting life and creation. In the epilogue, the author urges us to listen, live simplicity, seek self-denial by witnessing clear values, unite in solidarity with those who are suffering, and live peacefully and joyfully.

I recommend this book to all but especially to all members of the Vincentian Family who seek to live the Vincentian charism through our visions and dreams in our lives, in our communities, and in our ministries of service. Father Maloney reminds us of our history, our legacy and our challenge. As Langston Hughes writes, "Hold fast to dreams for if dreams die life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly. Hold fast to dreams for when dreams go life is a barren field frozen with snow."



Acting for justice, making a difference

Among the many awards she has received over the years, one recognizes Sister Jane Albert Mehrens for her generous and creative leadership in education and service to others. This well-deserved accolade summarizes her 32 years as an elementary school teacher and her 25 years in social services.

Her desire to help people in need and her heartfelt concern translated into action characterize the days within these spans of time and constitute Sister Jane Albert's legacy of charity. In the process, she has trusted the Spirit to direct her life and ministries.

The native of Butte, Mont., traces her leaning toward social justice to her father. He was a politically active alderman who reached out to persons in need. He died before Sister Jane Albert had begun to work more overtly on behalf of just causes.

Her first entrée was as a teacher at St. Ann's School, Prairie Village, Kan. As the student council moderator, Sister facilitated making students more aware of the needs of persons who were poor and ways to help.

Following her teaching ministry, Sister Jane Albert became coordinator of Leavenworth Catholic Social Services and Emergency Assistance. Over 10 years, she was directly involved in service. Among accomplishments, Sister founded several transitional housing sites for persons who were homeless. Reville House for veterans was one site opened in collaboration with the Dwight D. Eisenhower VA Medical Center and the city of Leavenworth. This initiative earned the partners the National Award for Innovative Collaboration. During this time, Sister also received individual recognition as Advocate of the Year by the Alliance Against Family Violence.

Her mother's declining health took Sister Jane Albert to Denver where she was caregiver until her mother died in mid-2001. Sister then worked part-time as a case manager with Catholic Charities. When that job ended, she learned of an opening with the Alliance Against Family Violence back in Leavenworth.

For the next 12 years, Sister Jane Albert dedicated her heart and soul as outreach coordinator of this agency that served victims of domestic violence. The Alliance had programs targeted toward prevention and for at-risk teens and their parents. It offered a shelter and a sexual assault center. Sister raised funds, conducted programs, and helped women and children in situations of abuse. She retired from the Alliance in 2014.

As a high school student in Butte, Sister Jane Albert had been impressed with the joyful spirit of the SCLs. When she entered the Community in August 1955, she didn't have a particular ministry in mind. She believed that being an SCL was what God wanted for her wherever and however she served.

Teaching and coaching youth in various sports became her first passion. From 1989 when she joined Catholic Social Services in Leavenworth and going forward, Sister Jane Albert always asked, "How will this or that project affect the lives of persons who are poor?"

For those she helped and with whom she served, Robert Frost expresses it well in his poem, "The Road Not Taken" when he writes, "... And that has made all the difference."

The Sacred Heart statue in the entryway of the Mother House has a special place in Sister Jane Albert's life as an SCL.





SCL Associates

Good people.
Good life.
Good works.



Akin to Ulysses in the poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson, George Steger, SCL Associate, can say of his life, “I am a part of all that I have met.”

Six years with the Jesuits for junior high and high school took the redneck out of him. Twenty-six years with the Army evoked his spirit of adventure. Fifty-three years of marriage to a wonderful woman transformed him. Twenty-six years at the University of Saint Mary influenced his spirituality and sensitivity. His long-time association with the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth inspired him to value compassion, virtue, charity and service.

Retired from the military and from teaching and a widower of 10 years, George’s philosophy of life is both simple and complex. “Don’t try to change the world. Do what’s in front of you,” he believes. “Don’t say you are something if you are not. Life is not so much about me; it’s about other people.”

As he strives for humility, George is drawn to the model of love and service exemplified by members of the SCL Community, several of whom he considers his best friends. Since the early 1990s, George, a group of SCLs and Associates, and others have volunteered weekly in the Lansing Correctional Facility. Every Wednesday evening, they meet with inmates in the maximum, medium and minimum security facilities to reflect upon the Scriptures and each participant’s spiritual journey.

Of this experience, George says, “I feel obliged to continue doing this.

These men are among the least of our brethren. Jesus said that serving them is what we are supposed to do.”

Forging new paths

This deep commitment comes from the man who grew up fatherless and “kind of wild” and who was frequently in the principal’s office as a youth. That combination of factors led his mother to send George to St. John’s Jesuit Boys School in Shreveport, La., for seventh- through 12th-grades. Among a plethora of challenging subjects, he took metaphysics and Latin. He also spent a lot of time in “penance hall.” But gradually as he received a great education, he began to mature into St. John’s goal of being a scholar and a gentleman. His senior year in high school, George converted to Catholicism.

At Springhill College, Mobile, Ala., he earned a bachelor’s degree in English – simply because he liked the subject matter. More importantly, he met Mary Jo, his future wife.

George’s next stop was Fort Benning, Ga., where he joined the Army as an infantry officer. While in paratrooper school, he and Mary Jo married. Several tours of duty overseas required learning new languages and cultures. George mastered German, Polish and Russian and earned his master’s degree in Russian history. In 1981, George, Mary Jo and their five children moved to Leavenworth where he retired from the Army in 1983 as a full colonel.

Anticipating retirement, George sought teaching opportunities at Saint Mary College (today’s University of Saint Mary). At the time, there were few men faculty at the all girls’ college. George partnered with Sister Mary Lenore Martin in the history department and taught in the prison system and in a program in Kansas City, Kan. By 1985, he became faculty on the Leavenworth campus. Sister Mary Lenore taught American history, and George covered all other history and political science courses. In time, he chaired the department.

A chance encounter in Kansas City introduced him to Larry Starr, an entrepreneur with an interest in international affairs. Larry funded what became the Starr Center for Peace and Justice at the college, a program that George directed. He left Saint Mary to care for Mary Jo who was battling breast cancer. She died in 2010.

Journey continues

During Mary Jo’s illness, George used his spare time to begin researching what evolved into two novels with a third book in the works. He has combined his love of medieval history with a sense of spirituality and adventure to produce the *Sebastian’s Way* series: *The Pathfinder* (published in 2014), *The Paladin* (2017) and *The Torchbearer* that he is now writing. With Sebastian, George’s goal is to emphasize that one of the most difficult things in life is to be different from others. His tenet is that those who have the courage to be different can find a way to make constructive changes, even those involving war and peace.

In addition to research and writing, George travels to visit his children and grandchildren who live across the United States. He remains faithful to the Wednesday prison ministry and also mentors inmates as they prepare to return to society.

He and Mary Jo became SCL Associates in February 1999. It’s an association that George credits with showing him the way to a good life and God’s will.



Beyond All Borders

Nuns Build volunteer experience

From Nov. 18 to 21, seven volunteers from the SCL Community participated in the 12th annual Nuns Build that engaged sisters and associates in helping to rebuild New Orleans, 15 years after the devastation wreaked by Hurricane Katrina.

Volunteers included Sisters Margaret Finch and Lin Sayatovic; SCL Associates Lisa Cherry, Denise Kagie, Susan Nyp and Megan Trout; and John Shively, coordinator, SCL Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation. SCLs Sisters Peg Johnson and Vicki Lichtenauer, members of the House of Charity core community, welcomed the group and provided hospitality.

The volunteers shared their perspectives on the experience – why they went and what it meant to them.

Why did you volunteer?

Lisa: I've wanted to participate in Nuns Build and volunteer at the House of Charity for a while. Last year was the first year it worked out for me. It was a "dream come true" to be able to participate.

Sister Lin: I love to build and work on things. For my sabbatical, I have been visiting SCLs and learning about their ministries. This was an opportunity to see what Sisters Peg and Vicki are doing through the House of Charity.

Susan: When Terri Butel (director, SCL Associates) asked me if I was able to participate in Nuns Build, I didn't hesitate to say yes. I have worked with Habitat for Humanity for many years, and I really value the mission. To be able to join the Sisters in this endeavor was exciting. When I shared my plan with family members, they asked why I was going to New Orleans in November. I told them I was seeking spiritual sustenance. That was the deeper reason I said yes.

Denise: God's been nudging me to do something in the spirit of the Vincentian charism.

What did you do?

Sister Margaret: This was my third time participating in Nuns Build. This time I learned how to cut window ledges with a miter saw, which was truly interesting. I had a good instructor who was an AmeriCorps volunteer. I installed window sills, puttying the nail holes and caulking each one before painting them.

John: I spent my time mainly sanding and painting. The house we worked on was nearing completion, so what we were doing was less structural and more cosmetic such as caulking, painting, installing trim and window aprons, and cleaning. We did a lot of work and also ate a lot of food. Most evenings it seems like some group or another had prepared dinner for us, so there was time to break bread together. The House of Charity and the community of New Orleans were so hospitable.

Susan: Our group worked on a new build where we measured and cut floor trim, painted, scraped misguided plaster off the windows, and did some much needed clean up. We reinstalled vinyl flooring, and I was also able to do some landscaping that involved moving large amounts of sand to cover the front lawn. We were an amazing team.

Sister Lin: I'm a good caulker, so I caulked windows and doorways, anything that needed caulking.

Denise: I'd never done any hands-on rebuilding or remodeling. So this was definitely out of my comfort zone. I did whatever was needed. I swept floors, helped measure baseboard, removed baseboard, and learned to use a nail gun.



A large contingent representing the SCL Community volunteered at Nuns Build in November 2019. Seated, left to right, Megan Trout and Lisa Cherry; standing, left to right, Denise Kagie, Susan Nyp, John Shively, Sister Vicki Lichtenauer (member of the core community at the House of Charity); and Sisters Lin Sayatovic and Margaret Finch. Missing from the photo, Sister Peg Johnson, member of the House of Charity core community.

eye-opening, rewarding

What about the experience mattered most to you?

Sister Margaret: So many in New Orleans are still trying to recover from Hurricane Katrina after 15 years. Knowing that I was contributing to building an affordable house for a family was worth all the hard work. The first year I worked with Nuns Build, we were repairing the home of an elderly man. It was a wonderful experience seeing him every day and knowing how grateful he was for everything that was being done. His spirit was wonderful.

Megan: It was incredible to see the need that still exists for rebuilding, especially in the Lower Ninth Ward where Katrina did the most damage. Seeing the deserted lots and abandoned homes was something that is hard to understand, no matter how much you might have seen on TV. Aside from being able to work in the Lower Ninth Ward, it was inspiring to be part of the Nuns Build community. The gratitude the people of New Orleans have for folks who continue to show up and try to make a difference is humbling.

Denise: I was so impressed with the story of the man who took things into his own hands after Hurricane Katrina when people had almost nothing. He built a grocery store so they would have a place to shop; then he got washers and dryers donated for a laundry. He had a restaurant in the same building and was planning to put in a barbershop. This was so impressive.

John: The opportunity to do something that would benefit people directly was really important to me. Sometimes in justice work, it is hard to see measurable benefits or tangible outcomes. Here though, at the end of the day, you could clearly see how you, and those with whom you worked, had made progress.



Her third time as a Nuns Build volunteer, Sister Margaret Finch learned to operate a new tool.

Other thoughts

Megan: I absolutely 100 percent encourage anyone to take the opportunity to volunteer. It is a great way to see a different ministry being carried out by the SCLs and the larger Charity Federation community. It is also an amazing opportunity to challenge oneself physically and spiritually.

Lisa: It was great meeting other people who care about helping others. Words for those thinking about volunteering: Go for it! Giving back can change your life and how you feel about the world. I'm so blessed to have been able to be part of Nuns Build.

John: It is incredible to me how much need there still is from a storm that happened 15 years ago. It was a really eye-opening experience, especially the compounding injustices residents faced in the aftermath of the storm – price gouging, dishonest contractors, and people who still had subpar living conditions if they had homes at all.

Sister Lin: It was a really rewarding and beautiful experience. I would encourage anyone to volunteer. I'm planning to return to Nuns Build.

Susan: I treasure being part of the Vincentian charism and working with Nuns Build. I found my spiritual sustenance.



Sister Margaret Finch



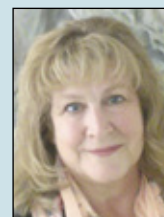
Sister Lin Sayatovic



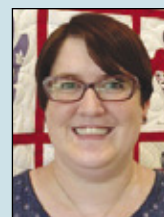
Lisa Cherry, SCLA



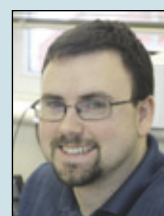
Denise Kagie, SCLA



Susan Nyp, SCLA



Megan Trout, SCLA



John Shively



Workshop series focuses on justice issues



Starting in November 2019, the SCL Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) began hosting JPIC Topics Workshops on a variety of issues that reflect and encompass the office's work.

John Shively, coordinator of the SCL JPIC office, says, "The hope is to provide opportunities to learn, reflect and share with each other in our pursuit of 'Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation' as a community."

Sessions are open to Sisters and SCL Associates and hosted at the SCL Mother House, Leavenworth.

They are also live streamed and recorded. To date, topics have included Medicaid expansion, tips for communicating with elected officials, and the 2020 census. Future plans include presentations on advocacy for a living wage, human trafficking, immigration reform and racism. Some topics may be more hands-on, such as discussing issues being addressed by the SCL Interest Groups. Other topics may focus on Catholic Social Teaching and the historic involvement of the Church in certain social movements.

Video acknowledges SCL service with Denver Archdiocesan Housing



Sister Mary Loretto Lyons

A video posted in November 2019 recognizes 50 years of service rendered by Denver's Archdiocesan Housing agency and highlights the role of SCLs instrumental in this history. Michael Farley, founding board member, acknowledges Sister Mary Lucy Downey, the agency's first employee, who identified other SCLs to serve in this ministry. Sister Lucy was executive director of Archdiocesan Housing for over 20 years. She died on Dec. 20, 1992.

Sister Mary Loretto Lyons, who retired after 35 years with the agency, says that Sister Lucy had one rule: love the people. Beyond providing affordable housing, the agency continues to provide supportive services for residents. The original vision for 300 units has grown over 50 years to include 29 properties with more than 1,700 units. Of this opportunity to help people do better in life, Sister Mary Loretto says, "It's just something that's in your soul."

Editor's note: In December 2019, the Sisters of Charity Care of Creation Interest Group/Committee issued the "Climate in Crisis" statement in collaboration with the Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison. The statement appeared in the Fall 2019 edition of *Voices of Charity* and was distributed to other outlets. Upon receipt of the statement, the *Kansas City Star* requested an op-ed or commentary relevant to the message of the statement. The following guest commentary by Sister Réjane Cytacki appeared in the Feb. 9, 2020 newspaper. Sister Réjane is chair of the Care of Creation Interest Group and executive director of the Eco-Justice Center, Racine, Wis.

We are called by a higher power to be good shepherds of Earth's environment

by Sister Réjane Cytacki



We live at a critical moment of history. Call it global warming, climate change or climate crisis. "Crisis" was the term chosen by the 22 members of the Care of Creation Committee of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCLs). Words can barely express the enormity and complexity of the changes our globe is experiencing.

I have watched the fires of Australia on multiple media channels. I recently listened to a National Public Radio podcast about the melting of the permafrost in Alaska. The organic matter, once frozen, is thawing, decomposing, and releasing CO₂ back into the atmosphere in increasingly larger amounts. Scientists fear it eventually could surpass all of humanity's fossil fuel burning since the Industrial Revolution. Can you imagine?

These and many other dramatic environmental events are humanity's wake-up call to replace the burning fossil fuels with renewable energy sources. Denying these changes gambles with the lives and health of all living creatures. At times, I feel anger, sadness and despair. It is in such times that I focus on the activities of our SCL Care of Creation Committee and the Eco-Justice Center in Racine, Wis., where I serve as executive director.

What actions? On a larger scale, the SCL Care of Creation Committee has

composed a Climate Crisis Position Statement to pressure electric utilities, the biggest industrial polluters and our elected officials to recognize the truth of the earth's environmental crisis. Truth is one of the names and characteristics of God. Truth is the same for everybody. All 22 members of the Care of Creation Committee of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth believe it is true that we are in the midst of a human-generated climate crisis. The Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica of Atchison agree and have joined us in calling for immediate action and prayers to address the crisis.

The statement says that for too long we have been sold the mythic vision of an ideal world brought by scientific advancements. Well, with CO₂ running at over 400 parts per million and rising, it's far from ideal. Industries that devastate the planet in the name of progress should be required to stop it immediately and to repair the damage they have done.

The statement also says we must do this for the benefit of all future generations, especially the vulnerable poor who are most affected by deteriorating climate conditions. That means our government officials must stop denying the truth and act boldly with climate-friendly regulations and laws. Local, state and national elected

officials are receiving copies of the statement with personal appeals.

Finally, the statement recognizes that the earth is our common home, and that we, in essence, all live in the same earthly neighborhood. Justice demands that our nation collaborate with all other nations to protect the earth's peoples and creatures.

On a smaller scale at the Eco-Justice Center, we strengthen our local economy by growing our own food. It's healthier, and it greatly reduces the fossil fuel used in transporting food long distances.

We also work to protect and restore our local green spaces. By increasing native habitats, our local ecosystems and natural water filtration and retention systems are strengthened. It is through such activities that my original negative emotions are transformed into hope because I find a community of people just as passionate as I am joining together to begin to repair, renew and heal our planet and ourselves.

We now live in a new ecological age. Please join us Sisters of Charity and Benedictine Sisters and our lay Associates and Oblates in praying for all God's people to awaken to the sacredness of nature. Let us join with nature's creating spirit to heal the earth and preserve the grandeur of our common home.



Ministries

SCLs vital to faculty/staff orientation

What's not to like about a mission orientation program titled, "Lunch with Vinnie and Mother Xavier"?

In fact, participants in the fall 2019 session at the University of Saint Mary (USM), Leavenworth, Kan., liked the program so much, they asked for more. The result? A spring 2020 calendar of gatherings that continued to introduce new faculty and staff to the heritage of St. Vincent de Paul; the story of Mother Xavier Ross, foundress of the SCL Community; and the Sisters themselves.

As a professor in the USM behavioral and social science department, Nancy King, SCLA, assumed responsibility for coordinating the faculty and staff mission orientation. The program is in its fifth year. Nancy retired from the university in May 2019, but she retained this important role.

To respond to the participants' request for opportunities to get to the know the Sisters, Nancy drew on a model she had used in her class on aging. Enlisting the support of Sister Mary Rachel Flynn, Nancy invited SCLs to meet with new faculty and staff during the second semester for the Sister experience. Twenty-four SCLs attended the initial meeting and continued to meet in small groups with faculty and staff until COVID-19 altered schedules.

Nancy explains, "We asked the Sisters to share their insights about the USM mission, especially focusing on Mother Xavier, St. Vincent de Paul and the university's connection to the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. Our goal is to educate our new faculty and staff about our mission, why we do what we do, and the values that guide us."

Following the initial meeting, Sisters and new faculty and staff planned to meet three times during the semester in small groups. Interspersed with these sessions were panel presentations by long-time faculty and students and a tour of the campus, including a visit to Mount Olivet Cemetery, the burial site for SCLs dating to the founders.

No tests, no papers requested or required. Mainly an opportunity to soak in the heritage, understand the mission, and commit to its values.



Nancy King (left) and Sister Mary Rachel Flynn welcome participants and explain plans for the expanded mission orientation program.



Meeting for the first time, clockwise from left, Hayden Parks, Sister Jean Lind, Marcus Payne and Liana Roberts.



"Getting to know you" was the theme of the first gathering of SCLs and new faculty and staff. Sister Mary Geraldine Yelich (left) visits with Ashley Van Camp and Kay Voigt (on sofa) and Opetai Tuiava (right).

Learning Commons the place to be at USM

The Keleher Learning Commons (KLC) is a hopping, happening place on the Leavenworth campus of the University of Saint Mary (USM). From the student-run coffee shop to the help desk to the hammocks; from the think tank study rooms to the active learning center, it's become the vibrant student hub it was intended to be.

The former De Paul Library building underwent a major transformation that took research, time, innovation, investment and courage to step into the future to respond to student needs and to support student success. Danielle Dion, vice president for Keleher Learning Commons and student development, calls the results "groundbreaking for a small independent college." She has spoken nationally about the learning commons and looks forward to USM hosting the meeting of the Kansas Independent College Association in 2021.

The renovated space is a premier center for student engagement, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and student development. In addition to study and collaboration areas, the commons houses USM's student success and leadership development offices, scholarly and career services, the LeBeau Special Collections, University Archives and other student-focused programs.

Special features include:

- An active learning classroom equipped with furniture and technology by a grant from Steelcase Education. This program empowers educators from different disciplines to implement active learning strategies by leveraging flexible classroom space.

- Learning resources enhanced to include technology (laptops, video equipment, etc.) available for checkout; special collections for research; and over 200,000 academic e-books and 40,000 print volumes.
- Spiro's Cup coffee shop operated in collaboration with the USM business department and staffed by student interns who learn the ins and outs of running a small business.

"With new study spaces, technology, furniture and a fresh new look, the commons has quickly become a favorite campus amenity among students," USM President Sister Diane Steele explains. "It is now clearly the center of integrated learning at Saint Mary. We sincerely thank our generous donors and friends for making this dream space a reality."

The Keleher Learning Commons is named in honor of Archbishop Emeritus James P. Keleher, a lifelong supporter of Catholic education. The archbishop participated in the ceremony to bless the transformed facility on Nov. 10.



In the Learning Commons, hammocks add to the inviting environment for studying and relaxing.



University launches doctor of occupational therapy program

The University of Saint Mary (USM) has launched its new doctor of occupational therapy program. The degree program, which the Higher Learning Commission approved in December, will develop professionals focused on helping patients perform daily activities and maintain their independence.

The doctoral program has applied for accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. Student applications are open through Oct. 15, 2020 for June 2021 enrollment.

USM occupational therapy is a three-year program comprised of 117 credit hours. The curriculum includes an unparalleled 26 weeks of clinical field experiences – six weeks more than the industry standard.

**To learn more,
visit stmary.edu/OT.**

Connections with alums continue commitment to success

Cristo Rey Kansas City's commitment to prepare its graduates for success in college and in life extends well beyond students receiving their high school diplomas. In her important role as the school's first alumni coordinator, Sister Linda Roth stays connected with graduates and offers support and assistance as needed.

Sister Linda assumed these responsibilities a few months after the first class graduated in 2010; she continues to break new ground. She outreaches alumni in Kansas City area colleges with the goal of meeting with each one at least once a year. Her office has emergency funds available to assist with buying books or addressing other needs.

She explains that this moral and/or financial support can bring great relief to alumni who come from households that face socio-economic challenges. In most cases, they are the first generation in their families to attend college.

Jonna Garcia, a 2014 alum, attests to the value of this support. During her college years, she

experienced a few rough patches. Sister Linda was there for her. Today, Jonna is a Cristo Rey employee, dividing her time between working with Sister Linda and the school's college counseling office. She coordinates an open gym for alumni and other events with Sister Linda. They had planned to host a family day and a 10-year reunion, but postponed both events due to COVID-19.

Sister Linda uses several means of communication to stay connected with alumni across the country whether they are in college, careers or the military. She reaches out to the young adults via social media, calls, texts and email. At Cristo Rey, she highlights graduates on bulletin

board displays. This spring, the school showcased an exhibit by Jasmine Ali, alum and Kansas City artist.

Another first is the development of the Alumni Advisory Committee. Sister Linda brainstorms with this group about ways to keep alumni engaged. Members of the committee also want to give back to Cristo Rey. They have formed a scholarship committee and are drawing up guidelines.

Sister Linda was a member of the SCL Council when the Community decided to sponsor and open the new work-study Cristo Rey High School in Kansas City, Mo. Part of leadership's discernment was to raise the question: "Why are we doing this at this stage in our Community's life and history?"

The answers grow increasingly apparent each year. Cristo Rey alumni are on boards of directors of non-profits, including two who serve on the school's own board. Bilingual grads are valued candidates for positions in healthcare. They are entering careers they might not have ventured into without their preparation at Cristo Rey. Speaking from her own experience, Jonna observes, "We are breaking stereotypes."

Sister Linda agrees, "Our grads are beating the odds, becoming successful and making the world a better place."

For all these reasons and more, Sister Linda concludes, "Sponsoring Cristo Rey is one of the best things our SCL Community ever did."



During one of her visits to the University of Saint Mary, Sister Linda meets with Nabetse Acosta (left) and Anett Amaya. The two Cristo Rey alumni appreciate that Sister Linda is interested in what they are doing, listens to them and is available to help, if needed. "She reminds me that Cristo Rey is there for me," Anett says. "I have that community to rely on."



Blessings! ¡Bendiciones!

Spirit, words, action define Vincentian charism

“ What stands out to me about the Vincentian charism is that we have the opportunity to be bridges between those who have more and those who have less. In a position of administration, I have several times been able to identify a specific person or family in need and match them to a donor or friend who could meet that need. I don't have the means myself, but I work with and know folks on both sides of that bridge. Sometimes it happened without much effort on my part; I was in the right place at the right time and amazing things happened. I also resonate with the charism of simplicity – trying to monitor my own consumerism in hopes that doing this will have a positive impact on the needs of others.



Sister Elizabeth
Youngs

“ The Vincentian charism is being grateful I have the ability to do for those sharing my path. In a humble quiet way, I offer support as they face times of overwhelming stress. As much as possible, I offer support to the whole person – body, mind and spirit. In other words, the Vincentian charism means treating others as Jesus would with love.



Joyce Rauth-
Fears, SCLA

“ My image of the Vincentian charism is the collaboration of men and women bringing their unique God-given gifts in a spirit of love and joy to serve with and for the poor.



Sister Therese
Steiner



“ The Vincentian charism has become a practical guide with which to define my life. While there is much to be said for contemplation, meditation and careful thought, the practice of DOING is key. Without action, the charism fails. The challenge has become to continuously question my own privilege and ask for help when I need it. The charism is not static, but fluid and mobile and ever-changing, and always with the fundamental definition of helping those who can't help themselves.



Laura
Alexander,
SCLA

“ I strive to reach out with love, respect and concern as I encounter people on my daily journey. Through teaching, visiting or just being present, I hope that I can bring the love of Christ to others as Vincent did. Our SCL Associates in Billings, Mont., gather to live their Vincentian mission monthly making sandwiches for the Rescue Mission, preparing Saturday brunches for St. Vincent de Paul Charity Office guests, visiting the homes of the poor through the office to assess needs, and seeking other means of reaching out to those who struggle daily with life's many issues. How truly Vincentian these Associates have become!



Sister Eileen
Hurley



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