

# VOICES

## OF CHARITY

SUMMER 2020

A publication of the SISTERS OF CHARITY  
OF LEAVENWORTH

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a light pink blazer and a patterned scarf, is speaking at a wooden podium. A microphone is in front of her. In the background, a white statue of a woman in a long dress is visible against a yellow wall.

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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 Noreen Walter is marking her golden jubilee as a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth.

*Photo by Ann Conner*



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## *From the* Community Director



Sister Constance  
Phelps

Recently I reflected on the refrain from the song “When God Opens the Eyes” by the monks at Weston Priory.

*When God opens the eyes of our eyes,  
and the ears of our ears are unsealed,  
then we will be a people fully awake,  
a people who may listen deeply,  
a people who may listen deeply.*

These words stay with me during the events of these last few months. I use them as a mantra to enter into the silence of listening, deep listening. In that silence, I attempt to comprehend and process the magnitude of the realities created by the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and social/racial injustice. As I listen, I am keenly aware of the fear that encompasses both. A fear blinds a person’s eyes to seeing possibilities; a fear closes one’s ears to the truth and distorts humanness; a fear makes tongues mute – unable to speak truth to self, to each other and to those who misuse power.

In this issue of *Voices of Charity*, we read of Sisters and Associates who continue, during this time of challenges, to meet, speak and plan responses to others’ needs. They use their education, skills, gifts and talents generously. For some, the realities they face and the decisions they must make are daunting. In their ministries and lives, they must prepare for endless waves of change and transformation. We read of those in education, healthcare, volunteer service, intercultural ministry, and those who address the violation of human dignity. They serve with dedication, commitment and fearlessness. They are keenly aware that what was is no longer.

We live in an unpredictable and unhealthy environment, yet one ripe with possibilities and hope. We must reflect on this current reality with open eyes and ears, with questions and responses.

Who are we called to be in this moment in history? What is our call for healing and understanding? What are your questions that come to you in the silence? Is this the time for all of us to respond to the Gospel message in whatever way, with whatever skills and talents, to demonstrate in our words, our actions and our lives what it means to love one another?

*Let us now see a little differently.  
Let us listen a little more closely.*

Sister Constance Phelps  
SCL Community Director





## CELEBRATION OF

# Charity

Congratulations to Sister Noreen Walter who is marking her 50th anniversary as a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL) this year.

In the article that follows, Sister Noreen reflects on the graces of her vocation, family, friends, Community and ministry.

### **Sister Noreen Walter**

## **Grace abounds over 50 years as an SCL**

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." This might be a good introduction to my reflection on 50 years as we are in the midst of a pandemic, and I have received word that we will not celebrate my jubilee in July 2020 as originally planned. When I entered religious life, who would have thought that this would be the case? But here we are!

However, I believe that my opening quote is much better taken from the hymn, "Beside a Stream of Living Water":

*Beside a stream of living water, stands a tree of God's blest people,*

*Its roots run deep, from those before us.*

*By grace, it grows by grace, the love of God abounding.*

*So many rings, a living history, some are thin from years of struggle,*

*some circle wide from times of plenty.*

*By grace, it grows by grace, the love of God abounding.*

Therefore, I say, "By grace, we grow by grace, the love of God abounding."



### **The grace of a vocation**

My 50 years as a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth are a story of grace and the love of God abounding. It all began on Oct. 30, 1947, when I was born in Inglewood, Calif., to Albert and Lucy Walter. I was the second daughter, the first being Carol Lou, now known as Sister Lucy. I grew up in Westchester, Calif., and in the shadow of Visitation Parish. Both of my parents were involved with our church – my dad was a head usher, and mom a room mother and driver for the SCLs. Visitation was the only grade school staffed by SCLs in the state of California.

In the first-grade, I raised my hand when the teacher asked who wanted to be a Sister when they grew up. And the idea of becoming a Sister never really left me.

My father died from cancer when I was a freshman in high school. We became a single parent family when this wasn't a very common experience. For the first time, my mother began to work outside the home. After Lucy left for college, I was pretty much on my own. Following high school, I worked a year as a secretary. It was at this time that I also did a lot of driving for the Sisters at Visitation who were not yet driving cars themselves. This gave me the opportunity to see the Sisters in a different light.

Since I was still considering a religious vocation, I decided to go to Saint Mary College, Leavenworth, Kan., for a closer look. These were the years after Vatican II, and there was much turmoil in religious life. As I was considering entering the SCL Community, many of the women I had looked up to and who had taught me were choosing to leave religious



life. I decided to complete college and see where I would be by the time of my graduation.

Saint Mary College was another time of grace for me. I made life-long friends who have continued to support me throughout my life. This year was to be our 50th year college reunion, but due to the pandemic, this gathering was also cancelled.

After graduating from Saint Mary, I made the decision to enter the SCL Community since the idea of religious life had never left me. My sister, Sister Lucy, had joined the SCLs in 1965.

### **The grace of ministry and Community life**

With a major in business and a minor in secondary education, I taught for 14 years in high schools, primarily teaching business courses and religion classes at Billings Central, Pius X, Immaculata and Butte Central. During the summers, I attended Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, and earned a master's degree in pastoral studies. I worked in pastoral ministry in East Helena, Mont., for three years and one year as tribunal secretary for the Diocese of Helena.

In 1990, I was appointed SCL vocation director and worked in vocation ministry for 11 years. I was also the director of SCL Associates for nine of those years.

In 2003, I became director of the then new Marillac Center, the retreat and spirituality center of the SCL Community. This ministry seemed very fitting for me

as I used both my business skills to set up the center and my pastoral skills to plan and give retreats. Another "ministry" I have been involved in for the past eight years is serving as a WW (formerly Weight Watchers) coach/leader. WW describes its purpose as inspiring "healthy habits for real life – for people, families, communities, the world – for everyone." This has also been a blessing for me over these years.

### **The grace of family and Community**

One of the other graces during my 50 years as an SCL was the grace of our dear mother Mama Lucy. At age 80, she moved to Leavenworth from Los Angeles. She lived in her own home for 15 years. It was a grace to be able to care for her without being away from the Community and to continue my ministry at Marillac Center.

During these 50 years, I have been blessed with the grace of Community life and sharing religious life with my sister, Sister Lucy. This has supported me in my vocation and growth in my personal life. Opportunities abounded from attending theology classes and workshops to being part of the Vincentian Spiritual Directors program and participating in the Vincentian Family Encounter in Paris in 2019. These have all been blessings of grace in my life.

Yes, the tree that was planted by a running stream over 50 years ago has roots that run deep, the many rings are a living history, and by grace, it has grown by grace, the love of God abounding.

## **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





## Re-Markings

# SCL employees acknowledged for care, flexibility, willingness to help

SCL employees have more than risen to the occasion during the COVID-19 pandemic as they united in their efforts to provide continuous care and safekeeping for Sisters living in the Motherhouse and Ross Hall.

Beverly Armstrong, RN, BSN, MSG, Ross Hall administrator, says, “When I think of the SCL employees, what comes to mind is bravery – the quality or state of having or showing mental or moral strength to face danger, fear or difficulty. That is what all of the SCL employees have displayed.”

Whether working in housekeeping, nursing, maintenance, food service or other departments, employees have taken it upon themselves or volunteered for any task, even though it was not part of their routine job duties. They have been creative in finding solutions to problems that arise.

While quarantined to their individual rooms for several weeks, the SCLs in the Motherhouse and Ross Hall experienced the positive attitudes and willingness to help demonstrated by staff. Of the SCL employees, Sister Lucy Walter, coordinator of the Motherhouse and Ross Hall, says, “The Sisters are so very, very grateful for the well thought out measures to keep them safe and protected and for being surrounded by such loving, caring people.”

One employee’s remark to Sister Lucy captures what influences that spirit. The housekeeper told Sister Lucy, “This is not just a job for me.



Standing outside the SCL skilled nursing facility, Beverly Armstrong, administrator, believes wholeheartedly that the message of this sign applies to all SCL employees serving Sisters in Ross Hall and the Motherhouse.

It is a mission, and being here to help the Sisters is special.”

Sister Lucy describes the planning and organization to safeguard the Sisters and staff as absolutely unbelievable and meticulous. She adds that the coordinating group and employees were mindful of helping temper the isolation with televised programs and spiritual opportunities, a book cart, happy

hours and pop-up celebrations. Leadership of the SCL Community, nursing, the Motherhouse and Ross Hall met frequently to chart the course and make necessary adjustments. They used guidelines provided by the local and state health departments, the Mid-America Regional Council, the Kansas Metro Healthcare Coalition and other agencies.

## REFLECTIONS ON SOCIAL ISOLATION

# ‘Nothing is so bad that there isn’t some good in it.’

As did people across the world, Sisters and SCL Associates experienced the uncertainties and changed lifestyles spurred by the sudden onset, rapid spread and prevalence of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. For much of the United States, mid-March marked the beginning of stay-at-home orders that evolved into quarantines of vulnerable populations. By early-to-mid-June, even amidst concerns about a recurrence of the virus and messages stressing vigilance and precautionary measures, Americans were seeking some semblance of life as previously known.

The following reflections shed light on ways some Sisters and Associates viewed or used their time while staying at home or quarantined.

“The most amazing thing happened when our county was shut down: All those colored blocks [of things to do] on my calendar just disappeared! That felt like the freedom of retreat, but it was mixed with the empty feeling of losing connections. There are six of us in our house, so we were not as isolated as some, but I think all of us miss “our people” – friends and family and those with whom we worked and worshiped. I look forward to the freedom of mingling again, but I have to confess that part of me has adapted very well to an unhurried life and unscheduled time. Shared prayer has a different rhythm. Creation’s beauty is brighter. Gratitude to our Creator spills over.



Sister Charlotte White

“During the quarantine to our individual rooms in Ross Hall, I had the opportunity to pray more. I also had time to catch up on unfinished knitting and crocheting projects. I actually think I was able to rest more than I have during my whole life. I talked by phone with nieces and nephews I hadn’t heard from in a while and became better acquainted with them. While I missed seeing and mingling with people, I found this time very peaceful. Nothing is so bad that there isn’t some good in it. I especially appreciated when the tabernacle was [temporarily] relocated to behind the altar in the chapel, and we could see it on televisions in our rooms.



Sister Mary Julitta Doerhoff

“This time of social distancing and isolation has brought us online Masses and ‘Zooming’ prayer groups in addition to our private prayers, including a daily rosary and meditation time. We have pursued projects – Drew writing an 18-page Childhood Remembrance and Joanne tackling thought-provoking reading, such as Graham Greene’s novel, *The Power and the Glory*. We each have our favorite daily readings, such as *Faith Walk*, *Laudate*, the *Magnificat*, the *Ignatian Examen*, and Father Richard Rohr’s message. More than anything, the quiet and reduced activity have led us to reflect upon our many blessings – plenty of food, excellent healthcare, a safe place to live – the basic things that many people lack, causing great injustice. Because we have limited family contact, we have confronted our longing for community with others, especially those whose values are the same as ours.



Drew and Joanne Bodner, SCL Associates

“Social distancing and isolation enabled a three-hour phone visit with my sister in Montana – the first call of that duration in at least 25 years. The isolation gave the time to pause longer, reflect with greater presence and, most of all, to laugh a lot over funny, poignant and cute stories then share them with family and friends.



Sister Renée Washut



“ In the dining room in Chuschi [Peru] during this time of emergency, we continue to support not only the older adults but also the young adults because the restaurants are closed due to this pandemic. I am grateful for the supportive assistance of the Hermanas in the dining room so that we can help others and those who need it most. Since she is not at school, Hermana Liduvina [Dominguez Córdova] is growing vegetables and sharing them with the dining room, making rich salads from the effort of her work in the garden.



**Hermana  
Susana  
Córdova  
Castillo**

“ Teleworking is a challenge. Meetings and meeting prep continue as before COVID-19. They're virtual now. The uniqueness of this period for me has been the ever-present experience that what seems to be right for today may not be so tomorrow. Each day gifts me with a deeper understanding of living in the 'middle space.' I attempt to live in the present moment, to accept the grief and trauma that each day brings as well as the day's graces. Taking the opportunity for conversations with Sisters, friends and co-workers is all part of those graces.



**Sister Phyllis  
Stowell**

“ There were times I got restless when we couldn't leave our Motherhouse rooms during the quarantine. But I tried to stay positive through the whole experience. It helped to make a schedule for myself. I included time for reading, praying, preparing for the spiritual direction I did by Zoom and enjoying entertainment accessed through my iPad. I also connected by phone with my family. The nurses and staff have been great. I was happy when things gradually started loosening up, and we could leave our rooms, go to Mass and walk outside more.



**Sister Mary Pat  
Johnson**

“ Beginning March 16, I started working from home for five weeks. The days were largely spent on Google Hangouts with numerous meetings mostly related to COVID-19. I broke up the time on the computer with three walks a day. I was able to witness the glory of the emerging spring and the sound of birdsong. It was a welcome contrast to the very serious reality of the pandemic.



**Sister Barbara  
Aldrich**

“ Truthfully, our lives have not really changed. Mark's role as a home healthcare nurse has kept him busy. Jan is a house supervisor, overseeing patient placement and staffing at St. Vincent Healthcare [Billings, Mont]. Mark spends more time socializing and emotionally supporting his home healthcare patients as some of them have struggled with the social isolation and fear of the unknown. Jan has felt blessed to be able to continue to serve others. Mark is thankful for his nightly devotion as it has helped him maintain balance at a time when we are bombarded with negative news.



**Mark and Jan Cassel,  
SCL Associates**

“ My thoughts about the pandemic social distancing have been mixed. I am one who relates to my fellow humans with a hug, a kiss or a handshake. Abstaining from friendly contact has been most difficult in this time of respecting others' space; I have slipped a couple of times which opened my eyes to the reality of my recklessness. I have gained deeper respect for people who are not as healthy as me, and I have recognized the subtle and significant difficulties others are experiencing. My prayer has been that we return to a level of human closeness and contact soon. Virtual interactions, while being a new and positive way to interact with the world, are no replacement for sharing Christ's authentic relatability and love with humanity. We cannot rush health/wellness from the daily impact of a deadly virus. Waiting, praying, waiting have become the daily exercise.



**Dana  
Glade-Yaussy,  
SCL Associate**

“ I am on the board of an organization that advocates for the residents of nursing homes and have an inside track as to the impact – short- and long-term – of COVID. In my isolation, I was able to identify ways to help both residents and staff. From managing a group making over 300 pieces of art for residents, participating in a secret parade to say thanks or purchasing lunch for the staff, I found ways to support the residents and staff that I might not have considered if busy working. What was in my heart was able to surface into action, because I was quiet enough to listen and had the time to act.



**Carolyn Parmer,  
SCL Associate**

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**Reflections on social isolation**  
*continued from page 7*

“ The first two months of quarantine in Ross Hall, I enjoyed having the extra time to myself. Each day, I woke up thinking, ‘I have a whole day ahead to do what I want.’ I read and enjoyed the challenge of being introduced to Zoom videoconferencing for hosting our book club session. This opened a new door for me. Until restrictions somewhat relaxed, I missed not being able to attend Mass in person or to receive Communion. About the third month, I realized I was missing the chance to socialize. We have everything we need and have received very fine care. But for an extrovert like me who is used to talking things through with others, it was difficult not to have these types of exchange.



Sister Rosalie Curtin

“ In the midst of the coronavirus and in spite of mounting positive cases and deaths in Illinois, I’ve been blessed with peace during the stay-at-home order. I balanced quiet days of prayer, meditation and reading with calls to family and friends sequestered alone – some not by choice but by painful circumstance. Using my iPad, I’ve stayed connected with others – sharing information, consolation and sometimes the respite of humor in the midst of fear and sadness. Through grace-filled days, I’ve shared my blessings, and in so doing I’ve spent the days at home by myself but not lonely. God is good, and I am not alone.



Rose Naputano, SCL Associate

## SCL begins new role to serve Latino community in Missoula



Sister María (left) with Father Ed Hislop (second from left) and parishioners at Blessed Trinity Catholic Community, Missoula, Mont.

In her new role, Sister María de los M. Orozco looks forward to helping further shape the ministry to serve Latinos in the Missoula Deanery of the Diocese of Helena, Mont. On Jan. 15, she began her new position as coordinator for ministry among and with the Latino community in the Catholic parishes of the deanery.

What excites her is meeting with people to get to know them and to determine their needs. Given the times, Sister María has encountered challenges doing this. But she’s up for the challenges and ready to serve.

It was winter when she moved to Missoula – not the ideal time to take to the streets to connect with individuals and families. Seasonal workers likely migrated to other locations with plans to return for jobs in warmer weather. Sister visited stores and restaurants frequented by Latino residents only to discover their reluctance to speak Spanish. She attributes this to fears stemming from the deportation of a man that occurred within the past few years. In March, Sister María returned to the Midwest to accompany a dear friend on her hospice journey. Then the coronavirus took hold of the country.

In spite of these circumstances, Sister María remains optimistic and upbeat about the work ahead of her. She has enjoyed exploring and learning about Missoula from Sister Mary Jo Quinn with whom she lives. Sister Mary Jo is pastoral assistant and liturgy coordinator of Blessed Trinity Catholic Community, Missoula, and Spirit of Christ Mission, Lolo, Mont.

The scope of Sister María’s new ministry is broad and encompasses addressing social, spiritual, liturgical, catechetical and communal needs of the growing Latino community in and around Missoula. Spanish-speaking Catholics in Bozeman (three hours away) have also expressed interest in catechist training to prepare children for the sacraments.

Charged with developing and overseeing a deanery-wide inclusive ministry with and among the Latino community, Sister María believes that identifying leaders and adopting a team approach are foundational to these efforts. “I know there are talents among the Latino people in the Missoula area,” Sister María says. “We need to discover them and then work together to prepare people for service.”



## Two tales of twisting paths and similar callings

*“It is wisdom to pause, to look back and see by what straight or twisting paths we have arrived at the place we find ourselves.”*

— Mother Xavier Ross

These words of Mother Xavier, foundress of the SCL Community, provide an interesting framework when tracing the parallel, yet different paths taken by Sisters Susan Wood and Diane Steele in their lives and ministries. The two SCLs have several things in common. Both were English majors at Saint Mary College, Leavenworth. Both taught high school and college as young SCLs. Each went on to earn a doctorate in theology. Both currently serve in senior administrative roles in academic institutions. Their paths diverge in what led Sisters Susan and Diane to pursue theology degrees and the direction their lives subsequently took.

### SISTER SUSAN WOOD

#### Producing theologian, academic dean

Sister Susan entered the SCL Community after her freshman year at Saint Mary College. At the end of her novitiate, she declared plans to major in English, only to have Sister Mary Louise Sullivan, the academic dean ask, “And what else?”

“French,” popped out of Sister Susan’s mouth – even though she had only one year of elementary college French to her credit. In her first teaching assignment at Hayden High School, Topeka, Kan., Sister Susan taught English and French, eventually trading English for religion classes at the request of the principal.

In 1973, the same year she began work toward her master’s in French, a retreat experience convinced her to study theology. She expressed this on an interest form submitted to the Community over the next several years. While she awaited approval, she earned her master’s in French

over four summers, taught the language at Saint Mary College, and took theology and philosophy classes on the side.

With the blessing of the SCL Community, Sister Susan began doctoral studies in theology at Marquette University, Milwaukee, in 1981, and completed her degree in five years. She returned to teach this discipline at Saint Mary College. Over time, she asked to pursue a different job with the goal of becoming a producing theologian.

In the second year of her job search, things fell into place quickly for a position at Saint John’s University, Collegeville, Minn. Sister Susan calls this opportunity “the best thing that ever happened to me. I grew and blossomed and loved it.” She was at Saint John’s for 13 years



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## Two tales of twisting paths

*continued from page 9*

as professor and associate dean of the school of theology. She was invited to return to Marquette where she served as chair of the theology department for eight of her 14 years there.

Sister Susan had begun publishing while teaching theology at Saint Mary. It was at Saint John's and Marquette that she came into her own as a theologian with expertise in ecclesiology. She has published books and articles, been involved in international ecumenical dialogue, done consultations, given presentations, and received recognition for her scholarly work. In 2014, Sister served as president of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

A new opportunity developed for Sister Susan when the president of Regis College, Toronto, Canada, invited her to consider applying for the position of academic dean. She reviewed the college's strategic plan, became excited about the mission of the school, and thought, "I can do this." She says, "The job description



Sister Susan discusses "Ecumenism Today: How Far We've Traveled and the Road Ahead."

fit me like a glove." She began her new job in July 2019.

As dean, she is responsible for everything academic; she oversees the faculty, the library, the registrar and the curriculum. In addition, Sister Susan teaches one course a year. She is directing the self-study for the college's reaccreditation visit by the Association of Theological Schools. She enjoys that she continues to work directly with students not only teaching, but also directing papers, serving on examination committees, and advising. She says, "I've never stopped teaching English!" Her French also comes in handy since Canada is officially a bilingual country.

"I never planned to be an administrator. It just happened," Sister Susan explains. "I do it because

I can and because the work supports the mission of the institution."

With her responsibilities and the adaptations required due to the coronavirus, Sister Susan hasn't had much free time for doing theology. When she finalizes and submits the reaccreditation report, she anticipates more balance and mental space for her theological pursuits.

That said, she has presented a paper for the Baptist-Roman Catholic dialogue at a meeting in Warsaw, Poland, and contributed to a published roundtable on authority in the Anglican and Episcopalian communions. She has extended the offer to a former student to co-author a new book, and she has two articles she plans to develop for publication. Sister Susan clearly remains an active and productive theologian.

## SISTER DIANE STEELE

### College president informed by theology

Growing up in landlocked Butte, Mont., Sister Diane dreamed of being an oceanographer. Next she considered medicine. By the seventh- and eighth-grades, she became fascinated with the Sisters who taught her. Sister Charles Marie Beeby, an influential person in her life, nominated Sister Diane for a Jubilee Scholarship at Saint Mary College.

Awarded with this full-ride recognition and sight unseen, she travelled to Leavenworth with the intention of a concentration in science and math. That changed when she found Sister Marie Brinkman's mind fascinating and realized that students who took enough of Sister Marie's classes ended up as English majors. Sister Diane graduated with this major and a minor in secondary education. A few months after graduation, she joined the SCLs.

Sister Diane taught high school English for seven years at Bishop Hogan High School in the urban core of Kansas City, Mo., and two years in Billings, Mont. It was in the urban core that Sister Diane's eyes and heart opened to the plight of low-income students and the importance of education in



Photo by Marketing, University of Saint Mary

their lives – an experience that remains pivotal to her ministry today.

While teaching, Sister Diane received a call from Sister Kathleen Stefani, then SCL Community Director. Sister Kathleen shared that the Community needed another theologian or philosopher. So began Sister Diane's entrée into theological studies. She completed her master's at the University of Notre Dame and taught in the theology department at Saint Mary College. In 2000, she earned her doctorate at Notre Dame, and returned to teach at Saint Mary. She knew the college was experiencing difficult times and that there were too many theologians among faculty. As the new one on the block, Sister Diane started applying for a job at Weston School of Theology, Cambridge, Mass., with plans to be a producing theologian.

In 2001, those plans turned on a dime when the SCL received another call – this one to meet with Community Director Sister Sue Miller. Sister Sue asked Sister Diane to assume responsibilities as president of Saint Mary. This was on a Saturday. Sister Diane recalls, "I told her I didn't know what presidents did all day. She told me I would figure it out. I told her I had no clothes fit for an executive position. She said she would fix that."

Sister Diane was aware that Saint Mary faced serious financial challenges at the time. Her pride told her she shouldn't take the position; she didn't want to fail. She sought counsel with her colleagues and good friends at the college. Sister Diane talked; she deliberated; she prayed. She says, "I knew I needed to try." Having grown up in a family that owned and operated a small business, she had some sense of the financial challenges that lay ahead.



Sister Diane assists a student leading up to the graduation ceremony.

*Photo by Marketing, University of Saint Mary*

The following Monday, a student died from injuries sustained in an off-campus car accident – a deep loss and traumatizing experience for the Saint Mary family. The next day, Sister Diane met for an interview with the college's Board of Trustees. She clearly told them what she didn't know and that she didn't know what she didn't know! With a vote of confidence by the board, Sister Diane was named the seventh president of then Saint Mary College and was inaugurated on Sept. 12, 2001.

So began her journey to learn higher education. In helping her make this transition, Sister Diane credits Sandra Van Hoose, then academic dean and an SCL Associate, as an invaluable resource. She also acknowledges Sister Barbara Aldrich who offered advice from her work as an administrator. To the new instant president fell the task of getting the ship upright and growing the college, renamed the University of Saint Mary (USM) in 2005. Sister Diane's leadership has had proven results in subsequent years.

USM's strategic decision in 2006 to focus on preparation for health careers and the addition of doctoral programs in this field have served the university well. The new focus and programs help sustain USM's commitment to students from low-income households.

Watching students grow, learn and break the cycle of poverty because of their education at USM is what heartens Sister Diane most. She has no regrets about forgoing theology as her ministry. She has simplified her theology and explains that it informs her way of praying, thinking and decision-making.

Today, Sister Diane can say, "The president's role fits me."

## Conclusion

Two SCLs. Two doctors in theological studies. Two administrators in higher education. Two parallel, yet different journeys to arrive at the good places where Sisters Susan Wood and Diane Steele find themselves today.



# Wealth of experience enriches volunteer service

Following her term as an SCL Community Councilor, Sister Eileen Hurley enjoyed a wonderful year on sabbatical. She read, visited, went on retreat, cleaned and organized. And she prayed about what she was going to do next, asking God, “What do you want me to do with the rest of my life?”

The Spirit drew Sister Eileen to Billings, Mont., where she met with Bishop Michael Warfel, pastors and Steve Loveless, president, Montana Region of SCL Health. Sister expressed her willingness to do volunteer service. Doors opened to many opportunities that draw upon her experience, talents and interests.

For example, Sister Eileen is available to provide support to the spiritual care team at St. Vincent Healthcare, Billings. She meets monthly with Tracy Neary, SCLA, vice president, mission integration, Montana Region. Sister is a Eucharistic minister to hospitalized Catholics. Through the No One Dies Alone program, she volunteers to be with persons who would otherwise be alone at the hospital as they are dying.

“I don’t coordinate or organize anything,” Sister Eileen adds. “I am there as a support.”

In addition, she has conducted days of prayer for the Great Falls-Billings Diocese; for Marillac Center, the retreat and spirituality center of the SCLs; and for a group of SCL Associates. Sister has offered catechetical workshops, been a presenter for an adult education program, and facilitated staff and ministry renewal programs for parishes and pastoral councils.

Sister Eileen says the pace and the work are very relaxing. “Only when I have to prepare new materials do I work hard,” she explains.

Even then, Sister Eileen is clearly in her element. Following the Second Vatican Council, she served in the rapidly developing field of parish/pastoral ministry. Sister taught religious education, coordinated youth ministry and did sacramental preparation. She was part of a team that did sacramental formation for adults in parishes – developing materials and conducting workshops. In another team ministry, she added music and liturgy to her repertoire.



Sister Eileen facilitates a day of prayer for Montana SCL Associates.

Sister Eileen’s mantra through her years of ministry has been, “Start where the people are.” She applied this belief when she assisted with the start-up of a new parish in the Kansas City-St. Joseph, Mo., Diocese. Sister served 20 years with the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings. She was a parish life administrator for three years serving three rural parishes and for six years in Billings. For 11 years, Sister Eileen was diocesan director of lay ministry. “I absolutely loved meeting the people. I learned a lot and was personally enriched,” she says.

Similarly during her six years as an SCL Councilor, Sister Eileen felt gifted to interact with the Sisters. This role was different than anything she had done previously, and she believes she “grew into it.” While in this SCL leadership role, Sister also appreciated working with the Charity Federation and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

She brings the diversity and the wealth of all of this experience to the volunteer service she currently does in Billings. Sister Eileen connects regularly with SCL Associates in the area and participates in their service projects. She serves on the newly structured SCL Health Montana Board of Directors and chairs the Quality Committee for Holy Rosary Healthcare, Miles City, Mont. She is also a member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

“What I’m doing is so satisfying,” Sister Eileen says. “I have more time to pray and to listen. I get to be a presence to the people wherever and whenever called upon. Life continues to be a wonderful journey.”



# Time with Peruvian people treasured

Before the SCL Community issued the call for Sisters to serve in the Latin American missions, Sister Regina Deitchman was interested in this ministry. She had read about the missionary movement in the Church encouraged by St. Pope John XXIII. She was eager to help spread the faith.

In 1970, Sister Regina gratefully received the call that extended to 44 years in Peru. The SCL served in many different towns and villages where the people won her heart.

## **Varied duties, assignments**

Sister Regina began her missionary work in Peru following an intense Spanish course at the Maryknoll Language Program in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Her first assignment was Talara. Among her duties, she taught English in the school and engaged youth in the Legion of Mary. While working in a parish and visiting homes, she saw the lasting good effects of the newly introduced charismatic movement.

Next in Chalaco, Sister was part of a ministerial team that visited nearby villages in the Andes and sought to involve lay people in the local Church. When Sister Regina arrived in Chalaco in 1974, the farmers were still using oxen to plow their fields and scythes to cut their wheat. People carried water from nearby streams for cooking and home use.

In 1987 with Sister Donna Jean Henson, Sister Regina opened the house in Negritos for postulants, Peruvian women interested in becoming Hermanas de la Caridad. She was Director of the SCL Latin



Sister Regina with Peruvian art in background.

American Missions from 1989 to 1995 living in Piura and then Talara. During this time, one of the houses in Piura occupied by SCLs sustained a bombing of the entryway attributed to the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path). This revolutionary group of terrorists rained violence on Peru over the course of many years. Fortunately, the Sisters escaped injury from the bombing.

Sister returned to Chalaco for parish ministry. She then served three years in Chuschi, also high in the Andes, and another year in Piura. She concluded her missionary service in Chalaco, continuing to visit people in their homes and take Communion to them. In addition, she helped with liturgy courses.

Intermittently through the years, Sister Regina returned to the states for a renewal program and her golden jubilee or because of health issues. When people asked if she ever planned to stay stateside, her reply was “What would I do if I came back to the U.S. permanently?”

The real reason was that Sister Regina liked serving in Peru. She says, “I really liked being with the Sisters and the Peruvian people. I loved the work and the environment.”

## **Simple approach to life**

She describes the Peruvians as very forthcoming. When they greet you with, “Hello. How are you?” they mean what they are saying and asking. “There’s a friendliness about them that’s real,” Sister Regina explains. “They are really interested in you as a person.”

Going to Peru following 24 years of ministry in the U.S. where she considered herself very work-oriented, Sister Regina believes she learned important lessons from the Peruvian people. “I wanted to be more like them in their simple approach to life,” she says.

When she eventually retired to the SCL Motherhouse in 2014, Sister Regina experienced a few difficult months of adjustment to being away from the ministry and the people she loved and served for 44 years. She was grateful to receive the assignment as sacristan in Ross Chapel – a role that keeps her busy every day. She also likes to walk, read and play cards, and she is an avid sports fan. Sister does Sudoku puzzles, an activity she enjoys even though people tease that she cheats.

In spite of these friendly accusations, Sister says, “It’s a wonderful thing to be living with this wonderful group of women.” An SCL since 1946, Sister Regina is happy to have given her life to God.



# Approaching, celebrating 99 years worth of blessings

Bonnie Herminghaus, SCL Associate, is pretty amazing.

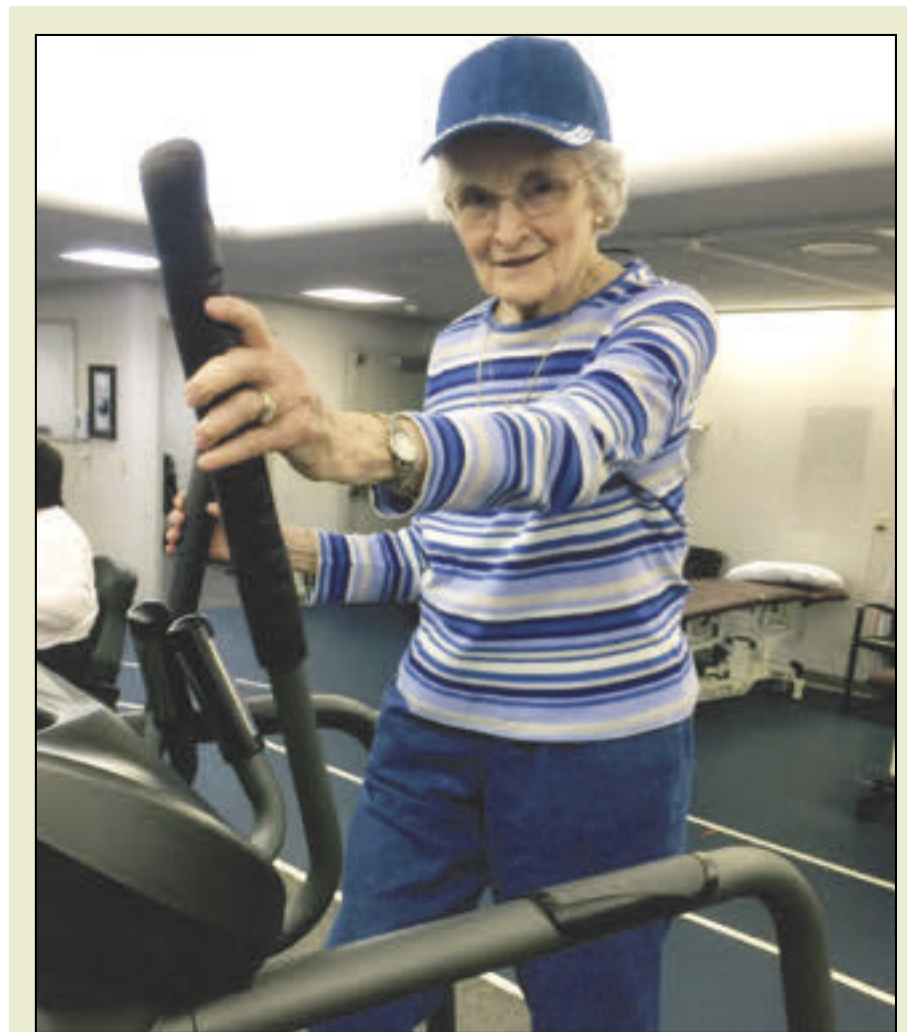
She remembers the names of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth who taught her when she attended Fratt Elementary School, Billings, Mont., from fifth- through eighth-grades. She also can call by name those SCLs whom she met during her long tenure with St. Vincent Hospital – first as a student in nursing school, then as an employed registered nurse and finally as a volunteer for 30 years at the Billings facility.

Bonnie will celebrate her 99th birthday on Aug. 30, 2020, and she doesn't miss a lick! She remains joyful, witty and active; she peppers her remarks with frequent little laughs. Up until the pandemic stay-at-home orders, she attended exercise class three times weekly; she also walked the track and was able to “do most of the machines.”

This spring, an SCL communication featured an archival photo from the summer polio clinic of the “crippled children's wing” – as it was then called at St. Vincent Hospital. Bonnie took delight in seeing the image in which she appeared, a student nurse at the time.

## **First a nurse, then wife and mother**

Born in 1921, Bonnie grew up in Judith Gap, Mont., where her father farmed wheat. Dust bowl weather combined with health issues from the First World War led her dad to give up farming and move the



Almost 99 years old, Bonnie remains active and involved.

family to Billings when Bonnie was 10. Following high school, she attended nursing school at St. Vincent Hospital. The Sisters subsequently sent Bonnie and another nurse to The Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, for supervisory training. Bonnie worked three plus years at St. Vincent's as an obstetrics

supervisor. Her salary was \$110 a month, and she loved what she was doing.

When a physician group recruited her to work as an office nurse, she seized the opportunity for weekends off and the proximity of home and work. An added benefit developed. The medical practice occupied



Bonnie's association with the SCLs goes back many years. She recalls working as a nurse at the summer camp for victims of polio sponsored by St. Vincent Hospital. Bonnie is the first nurse from the left.

*Photo from SCL Archives*

the top three floors of a large department store. When Bonnie went downstairs to shop for needed supplies in the pharmacy-like section of the store, she noticed and then met a "nice looking young man." Richard Herminghaus was merchandise manager and eventually became a vice president of the company.

"I might as well confess it all," Bonnie reminisces. The doctors were hosting a dinner-dance, and Bonnie's beau was out-of-town. She asked Richard to be her date. In turn, he invited her out for New Year's Eve. The couple married in 1947.

Bonnie left nursing to raise their four children – all of whom were born at St. Vincent Hospital and attended Fratt Elementary and Billings Central. She and Richard were married 59 years before his death in 2006. Today, Bonnie has five grandchildren and six greats.

### **Almost 30 years a volunteer and SCL Associate**

St. Vincent Hospital and the SCLs were never far from her heart. She began volunteering at the hospital in 1988 and a few years later became an SCL Associate. Sisters Ann

McGloin (deceased) and Marie Carmel Dunning were instrumental in Bonnie becoming an Associate. Bonnie will mark her 30th anniversary as an Associate in 2021.

Over almost 30 years of volunteer service at St. Vincent, Bonnie met many SCLs and made new friends. She liked everything about the volunteer experience. She was a Eucharistic minister and served in the spiritual care office, the surgical waiting room and the hospital chapel.

Sister Marion Berry was in charge of the chapel when Bonnie began volunteering. Sister trained Bonnie and her friends to be Eucharistic ministers and to set up for Mass. The group included Edith Allen, Sue Hart, Mary Hawkins, Zoe Kilbourne, Kay Latta and Mary Webb, all of whom were SCL Associates. Bonnie has outlived them all. Among their chapel duties, the volunteers took turns setting up for Mass seven days a week and greeting those attending. Bonnie, Zoe and Sue also learned to operate the camera to televise the liturgy to patient rooms. Bonnie and her dear friend Kay continued volunteering after the other SCL Associates left; the pair worked together in the chapel until 2017.

Of her involvement with the SCL Community, Bonnie says that she came to love and appreciate the Sisters. "They have such a depth to them and are so loving, kind and helpful," she explains.

Approaching her 99th birthday, she says, "I have had a wonderful life. I've been very lucky and, yes, very blessed."



Bonnie (left) with her dear friend Kay Latta. Bonnie and Kay, both SCL Associates, volunteered at St. Vincent Hospital/Healthcare for many years. Kay died in August 2018.





## Beyond All Borders

# A new 'Report from Occupied Territory'

by John Shively



Coordinator, SCL Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation

In 1966, James Baldwin wrote his famous essay, "A Report from Occupied Territory." In it, he recounts the story of a salesman from Harlem, a young father of two, who was accused of committing a crime for asking the police why they were beating up a child on the side of the street. For that simple inquiry, the police beat and arrested the man and took him to the station where they beat him again. The man escaped with his life, but he was hospitalized and lost an eye from the battering he received.

While Baldwin's insightful essay focuses on police brutality in Harlem, his larger aim is to look at America as a whole. He writes:

I have witnessed and endured the brutality of the police many more times than once – but, of course, I cannot prove it. I cannot prove it because the Police Department investigates itself, quite as though it were answerable only to itself. But it cannot be allowed to be answerable only to itself. It must be made to answer to the community which pays it, and which it is legally sworn to protect, and if American Negroes are not a part of the American

community, then all of the American professions are a fraud.

Whenever I try to talk with my White peers about racism in our country today, I am often confronted with arguments about ways conditions have generally improved for Black Americans. So goes a typical argument: "It's no longer socially acceptable for people to use racial slurs, people of color can build wealth, and we even had a Black president!" The problem is that such indicators do not reflect an absence of racism, but that its expressions are more subtle and covert, because such attitudes are socially unacceptable. As a result, these subdued forms of racism go underground and make it harder for us to identify and deal with them. The myth of progress convinces us that things have improved. But this myth is particularly pernicious in the way it lulls us into believing things have changed for the better when they have not. America still has not really wrestled with its original sin of slavery and racism, and particularly with the ways structural racism is often built into policing institutions.

I think about the recent death of George Floyd on a Minneapolis sidewalk. Police officers watched one of their coworkers kill a Black man who pleaded for his life with onlookers present. I wonder if, in some ways, the only difference between now and 1966 is that the incident is on camera for the whole world to see. In 1968, prominent segregationist and former Alabama Governor George Wallace was running for President when he quipped, "When the looting starts, the shooting starts." President Donald Trump tweeted these same words recently as the protesters took over Minneapolis' third police precinct.

This is not to say that progress has been lacking since the 1960s. But it is clear that in America's desire to create a post-racial society – perhaps much like our approach to the COVID-19 virus – we grew weary of the actual work and talked ourselves into believing racism was simply over, or at least conquered.

I think about the response of police toward protesters in Minneapolis, as opposed to police response in other parts of the country. The protesters in Minneapolis were not openly armed, and yet the police met them with

...we need to act to make sure  
that killings like this become  
a thing of the past.

tear gas, rubber bullets and pepper spray. By contrast, weeks ago, armed protesters entered government buildings, in places like Michigan, with no resistance, few arrests, and a generally reserved response by law enforcement.

Though I do not condone violence, I was hardly shocked when violence erupted in Minneapolis after police met a peaceful protest with force. Aggressive policing of protests is a tactic often used to escalate tensions in hopes that protesters will respond in kind, thus justifying the level of police response while portraying protesters as violent and unreasonable.

In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “In the final analysis, a riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it that America has failed to hear?” America has failed to hear the cry of people of color as their communities are overpoliced and routinely subjected to unreasonable violence by those sworn to protect them.

I think about the strong concerns raised about looting, yet there hasn’t been enough anger expressed over the violence inflicted on an unarmed man in handcuffs who meets death while three officers sit on top of him, one with his knee on his neck,

while the man begs for respite and finally dies – all in front of witnesses in broad daylight. As Louis Hyman, professor of history at Cornell, stated in 2016, “Riots occur because these police killings just keep happening, no matter how many peaceful marches happen. It is, in every sense, maddening.”

In recent months, several other killings of young Black people have stirred a great sense of injustice around the country. Twenty-five-year-old Ahmaud Arbery was shot near Brunswick, Georgia, while jogging past three White men who claimed to be making a “citizen’s arrest” with no more suspicion than the color of Mr. Arbery’s skin. The men responsible were not arrested until video of the incident was made public, and an outcry demanded they be held accountable.

On March 13, Breonna Taylor was fatally shot by police in Louisville, Ky., as they served a “no knock” warrant on her apartment. As the police forced entry without announcing themselves, Ms. Taylor’s boyfriend shot at law enforcement, believing them to be intruders. Her family has filed a wrongful death lawsuit, after

it was revealed the police already had a wanted suspect in custody.

I think about the continued injustice of being Black in America, and my heart breaks. It breaks my heart because this is not a new injustice, but one that is built into the fabric of American institutions. It breaks my heart because so many White people have remained silent for far too long – and that includes me. It is time for every one of us to do the hard work of dismantling and reconstructing the systems that perpetuate racism in America.

For now, we should hold accountable the officers responsible for George Floyd’s death. We owe our prayers to Mr. Floyd, his family, the City of Minneapolis, and all those who experience racism and discrimination. Then we need to act to make sure that killings like this become a thing of the past.

When James Baldwin writes we are in “occupied territory,” he reveals an important truth. But an even deeper truth is that God’s Spirit occupies this territory. As co-laborers with God, we must ALL – as the Spirit gives utterance – consider our role in overcoming racism in all its various forms and sources. May we be up to the task!

# Leavenworth Community of Hope responds to needs during pandemic



Staff and guests give chair square-dancing a whirl during quarantine at Leavenworth Interfaith Community of Hope. Sister Vickie Perkins is pictured at left (striped blouse) and Sister Pat Johannsen (second from right).

As people worldwide learned about the challenges of COVID-19, particularly among vulnerable populations, staff and volunteers at the Leavenworth Interfaith Community of Hope (LICH) were living this reality.

In mid-March when Kansas implemented stay-at-home orders, LICH converted its night shelter to a 24/7 operation to provide housing for persons who were homeless. Twenty guests sheltered initially; several found other housing or left because of difficulties with confinement. By mid-June, six remained around-the-clock. By that time also, the night shelter resumed taking other guests from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Throughout this time, LICH's Welcome Central maintained many of its services to help people connect with needed resources and to provide transportation. Staff disbursed funds from a grant received to provide assistance with rent and utilities. As restrictions relaxed, the team distributed take-out sack lunches for persons who normally ate in the day shelter. This practice continued even when the day shelter opened access to a limited number of people at a time.

Sister Vickie Perkins, LICH executive director, expresses deep appreciation for the generosity of

individuals and the surrounding community. "It's been amazing how incredibly supportive people have been," she explains. "They have provided food and contributions to allow us to serve three meals a day. Some have donated their entire economic stimulus checks to us."

Volunteers continued to staff the night shelter. Sister Vickie hired a part-time employee to help accommodate a portion of the expanded schedule; otherwise LICH staff covered all shifts and services.

Linda Martin, director of operations and an SCL Associate, says the experience was difficult for the quarantined guests. To help fill their time, staff members were creative in developing activities, and guests willingly assisted with light chores.

Sister Vickie credits James Fricke of the Leavenworth County Health Department and Kim Buchanan of Leavenworth County Emergency Management for their guidance and extraordinary helpfulness. She acknowledges volunteers and LICH staff – Felicia Bagley, Paula Cathey, Peg Del Debbio, Sister Pat Johannsen and Linda Martin – and workers who check guests in and out.

"Watching our staff respond to this changing situation has been incredible," Sister Vickie adds. "They agreed that this was what we had to do; our guests needed a place to be. Staff, volunteers, donors – everyone has done what St. Vincent would do."



# Sewing machines headed for Haiti

From Haiti, Sister Claudette Prevot, community director of the Sisters of St. Anthony of Fondwa, shares a success story from the vocational school operated by her community.

Magaline is a single mother of three children and a graduate of our vocational school. After being trained in sewing, she started a business making clothing. This has enabled her to feed her children and manage her family. She is very happy for this.

Magaline is one of 300 Haitians who completed studies at the vocational school since 2015. Chances are she learned her trade using one of the treadle machines donated to the Fondwa religious community in 2014 through the coordinated efforts of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.

More recently, the goodwill of several individuals resulted in the donation and refurbishing of seven additional treadle and six electric sewing machines that will go to Fondwa, once travel restrictions lift. Sister Ann Barton is the organizer of the sewing machine project.

In August 2019, Sister Ann distributed the request for donated treadle machines throughout parishes in the Leavenworth region. She received a great response. Initially, Sister avoided accepting electric machines due the uncertainty of electrical power at the vocational school. However, when the “surprise gift” of identical Singer electric models materialized, Sister Ann accepted them on behalf of the Sisters of St. Anthony of Fondwa.

Staff of the SCL transportation department picked up the sewing machines when called upon in rain, snow or sunshine. Parishioners of St. Francis de Sales Parish, Lansing, Kan., led the way donating four of the treadle models. Members of Sacred Heart, St. Casimir and St. Ignatius Parishes in Leavenworth provided the additional three. The oldest Singer treadle was produced in 1911 but looked and worked as good as new. That 109-year-old will spend its last days serving in Haiti!

Between acquisition of the machines and the end of April 2020, Jeff DeHerrera, lead operator/painter in the SCL maintenance department, refurbished and refinished the machines. Ray Krueger, maintenance supervisor, constructed crates for shipping. Ray also coordinated with Heart to Heart International located in Lenexa, Kansas. Heart to Heart is generously willing to do the shipping for this project as part of one of the organization’s routine trips to Haiti. At the present time, the sewing machines are being stored in the Heart to Heart warehouse until the port reopens in Haiti.

Training through the vocational school in Fondwa is helping prepare young people for economic independence. This systemic change in Haiti is occurring with the help of many friends in the Leavenworth area, the commitment of the Sisters of St. Anthony of Fondwa and the diligence of the students.



Jeff DeHerrera, maintenance, with the “flock” of sewing machines he refurbished and refinished.



Produced in 1911, this Singer treadle is good as new.



Partially crated, this machine will be put to good use on arrival in Haiti.



Expression of gratitude  
at Saint Joseph  
Hospital, Denver.

Photo by Marketing and  
Communications, Saint  
Joseph Hospital



# Hospitals respond to challenges

As Catholic healthcare facilities navigated through the outbreak of COVID-19, respect for the dignity of each person and concern for the common good were foundational to ethical decision-making and the provision of spiritual care.

As the hospitals where they work prepared for and served patients with the virus in spring 2020, Sister Jennifer Gordon and Tracy Neary, SCL Associate, had important roles in helping guide planning and coordinated responses. Their efforts affected and supported a broad range of people – from employees to patients, from volunteers to clergy –

as everyone sought to work through the unknowns and challenges of the pandemic and continue to provide quality, compassionate care.

Sister Jennifer is vice president, mission integration, Saint Joseph Hospital, Denver, and Tracy is vice president, mission integration, SCL Health Montana Region encompassing Holy Rosary Healthcare, Miles City; St. James Healthcare, Butte; and St. Vincent Healthcare, Billings.

## Ethical issues and Crisis Standards of Care

In the early stages of the pandemic, both vice presidents had roles in the development of Crisis Standards of Care at the state level. The standards are agreed upon clinical criteria for allocating resources and maximizing benefit when supplies and equipment, such as ventilators, are scarce. Due to manageable COVID patient volumes and sufficient resources, neither Colorado nor Montana found it necessary to implement these standards. However, if required, all SCL Health care sites had the framework for making consistent ethical decisions.

The language of the existing Colorado standards was more current and aligned with the *Ethical and Religious Directives of Catholic Health Care Services*. Montana's standards needed significant updating. This presented Tracy with the opportunity to inject a Catholic influence into the document. "We brought the face of the human person more to the

forefront in the algorithms used for triage," she explains.

The two mission integration leaders worked closely with their respective leadership teams and with the mission team of SCL Health that provided expert advice and resources. Each hospital and the health system had its own incident command team to address the very fluid situation surrounding the virus. Speaking in general terms of the healthcare industry, Sister Jennifer says, "I've never seen us as a group move so quickly and creatively to address critical needs. Necessity really is the mother of invention."

This was especially true when responding to the worldwide shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), including masks, gowns, gloves and face shields. Following industry guidelines, Saint Joseph repurposed and sterilized N95 masks for re-use by the same employee/clinician over multiple shifts. Montana and Colorado hospitals reassigned staff to sew masks for use internally and for distribution to the broader communities.

Stopping elective surgeries was a cautionary measure to counter spread of the virus. This freed more personal protective equipment for staff on units treating COVID patients. However, fewer procedures required less staff and raised concerns regarding appropriate and just allocation of human resources. When possible and based on skill sets, the hospitals invited staff to other assignments



St. Vincent Healthcare staff members transition from their usual jobs to assist at the COVID testing tent.

Photo by Mission Integration,  
SCL Health Montana Region





Employees at Saint Joseph Hospital, Denver, pitch in to fill the need for masks.

*Photo by Marketing and Communications, Saint Joseph Hospital*

# posed by pandemic

and provided training as needed. For example, some administered COVID screening and tests; nurses and other clinicians learned new skills to assist with critically ill patients.

Across SCL Health, employees – including senior leaders – were asked to use seven days of paid time off between mid-March through the end of May to help manage budgets. Those previously not flexing their hours to adjust to patient volumes were asked to do so. Employees could use paid time off benefits or take time off without pay. The health system's Values-Based Discernment and Decision-Making process guided the development of principles leading to these and other decisions – again, to help balance the good of individuals and the larger community. To support staff experiencing financial stress due to working fewer hours, SCL Health created the COVID-19 Associate Relief Fund, transitioning each care site's Humanitarian Fund from offering primarily loans to offering grants instead.

## Spiritual care

As a safety measure and in an effort to preserve personal protective equipment for direct clinical care, spiritual care team members had to sometimes forgo visits in patient rooms during the height of the pandemic. This led to the more intentional use of technology, both for chaplains to interact directly with patients and their families, and to assist patients in

connecting with their loved ones. The health system provided the spiritual care departments with iPads to facilitate these virtual visits. For a while, spiritual care staff offered additional daily prayers and reflections over the public address system and via closed-circuit television.

From approximately mid-March through mid-June, clergy from the community were also restricted from visiting patients in the hospitals. Spiritual care team members were hyper-vigilant to identify levels of support patients might need. On-site chaplains or nursing staff arranged telephone or video connections between patients and their ministers. Like Catholics in many dioceses around the country, patients had limited access to Holy Communion and could participate in Mass only via television. Hospitals with employed priest chaplains – like St. Vincent Healthcare and Saint Joseph Hospital – worked to provide as much sacramental ministry as possible, observing guidelines of the healthcare facilities, county, state and local dioceses.

Spiritual care teams also stepped up their support of employees feeling the stress and pressures of the changed environment. Tracy increased hours of on-call staff to be attentive to employees working nights and weekends. At St. Vincent Healthcare, a chaplain with a heart for the emergency department was available several nights to pray with staff at the change of shifts.



Paper bags and masks replace paper piles on desks.

*Photo by Mission Integration, SCL Health Montana Region*

These gestures begin to address what Sister Jennifer and Tracy anticipate will be ongoing emotional and behavioral health issues facing the country and world after the initial phase of the pandemic. Fears of the unknown, concerns about infecting others, patients dying without loved ones present, anxiety about the economy – all add up.

Tracy says, "There's been no crystal ball when it comes to COVID-19."

But she and Sister Jennifer both believe that the lens of Catholic healthcare helped them and their hospitals navigate these challenging times in good faith and with concern for human dignity and the common good.





# July 30

## UN World Day Against Trafficking in Persons

"Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. Every year, thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers, in their own countries and abroad. Almost every country in the world is affected by trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination for victims. ...

"Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines Trafficking in Persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs."

Source: United Nations website, [un.org](https://www.un.org)

# Addressing human trafficking at



Photographer Lisa Kristine spent 18 months on the front lines of several countries documenting the work of women religious rescuing and supporting survivors of human trafficking (as pictured above and on page 24). Talitha Kum, a global project against trafficking (see next page), marked its 10th anniversary with an exhibition of Lisa's photos titled "Nuns Healing Hearts."

*Photo by Lisa Kristine*

Pope Francis has said that without doubt, trafficking is a crime against humanity because it violates human dignity and freedom. The Holy Father has publicly acknowledged the work of women religious and others committed to stopping trafficking and assisting victims.

Internationally and nationally, there are networks of women religious engaged in service, prevention and advocacy against human trafficking.

# the international, national and local levels



## Talitha Kum

“Talitha Kum” is the name chosen for the global network of persons in consecrated life committed to working against trafficking of people. In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus spoke these words to a young girl who appeared to have died. Jesus said, “*Talitha kum*. Little girl, I say to you, arise!” and the 12-year-old stood up and walked (Mark 5:41-42).

The seeds for Talitha Kum date to the late 1990s and the early 2000s when the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) committed to the value of joining forces and resources to develop an integrated network against trafficking. This led to the production of materials and a training program in collaboration with the International Order for Migration. From these efforts, regional networks began to form or solidify on different continents.

Representatives of these networks convened for a global meeting in 2009 – the year to which Talitha Kum traces its official start as the International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking, a project of UISG with a designated office and coordinator. Today, Sister Gabriella Bottani, SMC, serves in this role. Talitha Kum continues to promote courses for the training of new local networks. In addition, it encourages networking and collaboration with other organizations working against trafficking in persons. Networks affiliated with Talitha Kum exist in 92 countries across five continents.



Sister Gabriella Bottani, SMC,  
coordinator,  
Talitha Kum

Visit <https://www.talithakum.info/>  
for more information and resources.



## U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking

The mission of the U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT) is to serve as “a collaborative, faith-based national network that offers education, supports access to survivor services, and engages in advocacy in an effort to eradicate modern-day slavery.” Its goals are to provide information, prevent assault on human dignity, and assist survivors to live fulfilling lives. USCSAHT is the U.S. representative to Talitha Kum.

From USCSAHT’s website: “U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking came together in 2013 through the efforts of the founder of the Bakhita Initiative, Sister Margaret Nacke, CSJ, with the assistance of Sister Ann Scholz, SSND, associate director for social mission of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). Both of these sisters continue to serve as members of the USCSAHT Core Group.”

USCSAHT’s signature communication, “Stop Trafficking, the Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter,” dates to August 2003. The newsletter began under the sponsorship of the Sisters of the Divine Savior (Salvatorians) and Capacitar International, Inc., an international network of empowerment and solidarity. Sister Jean Shafer, SDS, was editor from 2003 through November 2019. Sister Maryann Mueller, CSSF, is the new editor of the monthly newsletter.

Jennifer Reyes Lay is USCSAHT executive director. Members and co-sponsors of USCSAHT today include over 100 congregations of Catholic women religious, coalitions working against human trafficking and individuals who share the organization’s mission. The SCL Community is a USCSAHT member.



Jennifer Reyes Lay, executive  
director,  
USCSAHT

Visit <https://www.sistersagainsttrafficking.org/>  
for more information and resources.



Photo by Lisa Kristine

# Addressing human trafficking at

CONTINUED



Sister Michael  
Delores Allegri



Sister Ann  
Barton



Sister Melissa  
Camardo



Sister Carol  
Depner

## SCL Community engaged in anti-trafficking efforts

How do you wrap your brain around a human rights issue as massive as human trafficking? And how do you effect change that has lasting impact?

Since its first meeting in March 2018, the SCL Human Trafficking Interest Group has taken a three-pronged approach:

- ▶ Learning about the issue.
- ▶ Collaborating with other organizations and individuals committed to advocacy, prevention and victim assistance.
- ▶ Seizing opportunities to do prevention and heighten awareness both across the SCL Community and in local communities where Sisters and Associates live and work.

“We’ve learned a lot by educating ourselves,” says Sister Carol Depner who co-chairs the interest group with Sister Michael Delores Allegri.

Depending on where members of the interest group live, this education

has included participation in a workshop for doctors, nurses and other staff at Saint Joseph Hospital, Denver, on recognition of victims of human trafficking; attendance at an event coordinated by the Archdiocese of New Orleans and the Marianite Sisters and the invitation to share resources distributed; hosting Sister Jeanne Christensen, RSM, for a presentation live streamed from the SCL Motherhouse; viewing a webinar sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on the Church’s concern about trafficking; and distributing the “Stop Trafficking Newsletter” and other resource materials. More recently, the interest group is placing regular notices in the *Daily News* emails to raise awareness among Sisters and SCL Associates about trafficking.

The interest group is all about information-sharing. For example, Sister Vicki Lichtenauer volunteers to drive women who are sex traffic survivors to support meetings in New

Orleans. The women have shared valuable and practical do’s and don’ts on ways to assist victims and to avoid violence. Sister Vicki passed this firsthand information along to the interest group.

Sister Phyllis Stowell, SCL Councilor who is liaison to the interest group, introduced the members and then the broader Community, SCL employees and others to the Blue Campaign. This is a national public awareness campaign on trafficking sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security.

At the SCL Motherhouse, in the Leavenworth community and beyond, Sisters Ann Barton and Diane Hurley have been very active. They visited managers at area hotels to inquire about policies they enforce related to trafficking. They placed information cards with helpline phone numbers in rest stop restrooms along I-70. They have interacted with a Leavenworth pastor who shares their interest in working against this human rights



# the international, national and local levels



Sister Diane  
Hurley



Sister Vicki  
Lichtenauer



John Shively



Sister Phyllis  
Stowell

violation. They stay in communication with staff of Veronica's Voice, an anti-trafficking agency in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Sisters Ann and Diane are also connected with the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking (CCOAH) associated with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The two SCLs are involved with a CCOAH-sponsored postcard campaign to urge Sysco Corporation, the largest seafood distributor in the U.S., to assure its customers that its food processing chain – from fishing vessels to final packaging – never involves handling by workers who are trafficked. The campaign has already sent 20,000 postcards with more on the way.

Sister Melissa Camardo served over four years as a companion in one of LifeWay Network's houses in the New York metro area. In this ministry, she lived in community with other sisters and with women survivors of labor

and sex trafficking who receive safe housing and other supports to help rebuild their lives. In early March, Sister Melissa spoke to 800 students in grades six to 12 at Our Lady of Mercy School for Young Women, her alma mater in Rochester, N.Y. Sister gave the keynote for the school's annual mission month. Her talk focused on human trafficking and how to prevent it through social media safety and also ways the students' fundraising would help the lives of women served at LifeWay Network.

John Shively, coordinator of the SCL Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation, provides staff support to the interest group. Complementing and supplementing the work of the group, this year the SCL Community donated systemic change and charity budget funds to four agencies or organizations involved with addressing human trafficking.

Sisters Carol and Michael Delores joined the interest group to learn

more about this issue and to apply their learnings to work they do. Sister Carol volunteers in the emergency department at Denver's Saint Joseph Hospital and at Father Woody's Haven of Hope that serves persons who are homeless. She feels better prepared to recognize persons who may be trafficked and ways to reach out to them.

Sister Michael Delores, who has served many years as a foster parent, knows that youth who age out of the foster system are prime targets for trafficking. She's searching for answers to what foster parents and case workers can do to help prevent this.

When Sister Vicki receives feedback that a Sister or SCL Associate shared information with a family member or friend, this feedback means one more person may become an advocate against trafficking in persons. It also means that one more woman or child may be helped to avoid or escape trafficking.



## Book Review

# Novel unsettling in its probe of trafficking

Olmi, Véronique.

*Bakhita: A Novel of the Saint of Sudan*,  
trans. Hunter, Adriana.  
Other Press: New York, 2017.



by Sister Mary Pat  
Lenahan  
SCL Candidate/  
Novitiate Director

This book's introductory pages include a quote from *If This Is a Man* by Primo Levi. It states, "They will take away our name; and if we want to keep it, we will have to find in ourselves the strength to do so, to manage somehow so that behind the name something of us, of us as we were, still remains." This quote indicates the importance that naming has to one's identity, a theme illustrated in *Bakhita: A Novel of the Saint of Sudan*, a fictionalized account based on the true story of the former slave who became a saint.

Even though Bakhita is given another name, she continues to have the strength and perseverance to recognize and appreciate who she truly is and of what she is capable. Throughout the book by Véronique Olmi, these themes of naming, having the strength to be true to who she is, and seeking to remember her past recur as critical threads weaving together Bakhita's life and experiences.

This text is not an "ordinary" biographical read. In poetic and descriptive language and with vivid imagery, the author poignantly captures the beautiful and exotic physical environment. She starkly and graphically juxtaposes the inhumanity of the horrible and evil violence inflicted on others for

monetary profit. This buying and selling of human beings through slavery and human trafficking depict deplorable actions at their worst.

### Life and experiences

When Bakhita is five-years-old, her sister, Kishmet, 14, is taken by slave traders; two years later, Bakhita is abducted. Ironically, she is given the name Bakhita which means "lucky one." Besides the abuse and torture she endures from her captors, she is internally tortured by her failure to remember her birth name, given by her family of origin. When she meets Binah, another child sold into slavery, the simple gesture of holding onto each other's hand and the power of human touch become other themes as the children declare, "I won't let go your hand" (p. 37).

Another recurring theme is Bakhita's remembrance that her mother often referred to her as "gentle and good" (p. 84). She desires and seeks to find her sister, Kishmet, who had been taken and who was married, and already had a baby of her own. These children were stripped of everything and beaten down in every way. They were kept naked with little covering, "wearing only a wrap at the waist" (p. 102), further indicating their



This is another opportunity for the reader to encounter herself/himself and to examine what part each of us plays in a world that allows human trafficking and what we are doing about it in our everyday choices.

shame of being bought, sold and tortured as slaves.

Bakhita is eventually cut, disfigured, tattooed and adorned, to be displayed to others as proof of her masters' wealth and powerful standing. She is objectified, utilized as a slave, and used as just another piece of property. When the victims are tattooed, they are cut. The cuts are then filled with salt, inflicting unspeakable pain and agony. Bakhita endured over 100 cuts (p. 115). In addition to her physical abuse, the movement from place to place as she is sold and resold is extremely difficult and dangerous. After many hardships, Bakhita is taken to Italy, where she meets Stephano Massarioto, who will greatly influence her personally and spiritually and be a significant instrument in her decision to convert to Catholicism and eventually to become a vowed woman religious.

### Chains of bondage

There are many twists and turns in this book as it highlights Bakhita's life and experiences. Even as a woman religious, she is sought out, stared at and treated as an oddity due to her skin color, language and African origins. She is used, misused and misunderstood. Throughout it

all, her deep faith, strength, courage, ability to forgive, her love of God, and perseverance keep her true to herself. Relationships are discouraged, but she continues to deeply love several people throughout her life.

Bakhita's amazing life extends to 78 years. This book is captivating in its content, unsettling the reader's mind, heart and soul. I wept with Bakhita in her pain and suffering, and I celebrated the precious moments of her appreciation of the beauty of creation in the stars, trees, birds and other animals that roamed in her world. I was touched by her longing and joy as she remembered her mother, her twin, her sister, her father and other loving relationships she encountered along her journey. I also celebrated with her in her deep love of God and her uncompromising belief in God's boundless love for her in spite of her many sufferings. Such deep and abiding love enabled her to let go of the internal chains of bondage, so that she could forgive her persecutors, even though her external chains bound her as an exploited woman sold and resold as a slave for profit.

I would highly recommend this book, *Bakhita: A Novel of the Saint of Sudan* on many levels. The novel chronicles her life. It succeeds in

seizing the reader's heart, revealing the atrocities and sufferings of the body, heart, spirit and soul in the travesty of human trafficking. Many readers, no doubt, have read a lot about the reality and tragedy of slavery and human trafficking. However, this is not an objective, intellectual record of events and consequences. It is an insightful, spiritual reading of a woman's journey of life, faith and sainthood. Bakhita was named patroness of Sudan in 1995 and proclaimed a saint by the Church in 2000 by St. John Paul II (p. 362).

Pulled into Bakhita's world, the reader cannot help but be confronted by one's own reality of "white privilege" due to the color of one's skin, opportunities for education, and the unfolding events of one's life. This is another opportunity for the reader to encounter herself/himself and to examine what part each of us plays in a world that allows human trafficking and what we are doing about it in our everyday choices.

This is not an easy read. It is unsettling and provocative. However, it is well worth the time and decision to encounter Bakhita and her loving God in her transformation from unjust pain and suffering into spiritual growth and sainthood.





## Formation for Life

# Vincentian values have lasting value

Before he attended the University of Saint Mary (USM), Greg Fiorentino had never heard of St. Vincent de Paul or the word “charism.” After four years and several service opportunities, the recent graduate of the class of 2020 has a Vincentian slant on life that he hopes to carry into the future.

Originally from Wichita Falls, Texas, Greg came to the Leavenworth campus on an athletic scholarship. The university’s religious affiliation was an added plus for the lifelong Catholic. USM proved a good fit for him.

His freshman year, Greg joined the Vincentian Leaders group and began to learn about the 17th century saint. Greg was a Vincentian Leader through his junior year and enjoyed the activities and events sponsored by the group. Its purpose is to expose students to spirituality and introduce them to Vincentian values.

In May 2018, Greg had the opportunity to participate in a focus group panel at the invitation of FamVin in Philadelphia. He and other young adults brainstormed about ways to share the Vincentian charism with youth. They developed a theme that crystallized the spirit and intent of the charism: “See. Serve. Grow.” This resonated with Greg in that it encompassed learning, helping and working toward systemic change.

Stressed by his final semester in 2020, Greg was ready to hit the refresh button at a different pace. This spring, Greg participated in the USM mission trip to the House of



Greg (center in gray shirt) works with other University of Saint Mary students to build a raised garden bed for an elderly woman in New Orleans.

Charity, New Orleans. With other students, he volunteered doing clean-up and chores at Hotel Hope, a homeless shelter for women and children. He helped with painting a mural and constructing a wall for an Internet café at Burnell Cotlon’s Lower 9th Ward Market. In the process, Greg learned about the hardships people face such as the harsh realities of homelessness or working multiple jobs yet not being able to provide for their families.

“I hope to spend the rest of my life helping where I can to make a difference with injustices that exist,” Greg says. “I want to put effort into seeing problems and being part of the solutions to fix them systemically.”

As a soccer coach since age 15, Greg noticed how helping youth make small changes often led to major growth. He came to USM with the intention of earning credentials to be a high school soccer coach and history teacher. Pushing himself to do something different, he switched his major to biology with an eye toward a health career. Greg is now enrolled in the three-year doctor of physical therapy program at the University of Kansas Medical Center. Just as he worked with young soccer players to effect change in their lives, his goal is to help patients take incremental steps toward recovery.

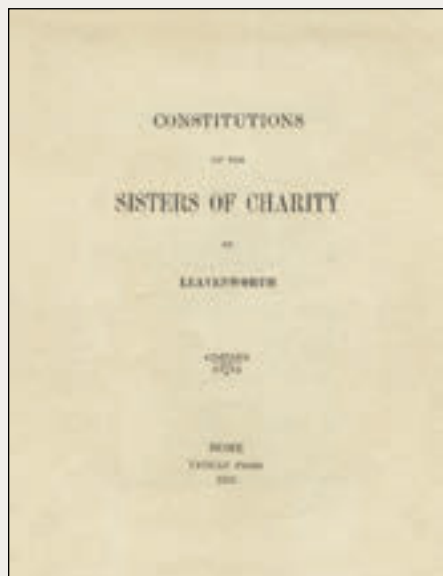
Greg hopes to make differences in his profession and his life that have lasting value.



# Blessings! ¡Bendiciones!

105th ANNIVERSARY YEAR

## *Constitutions* a lasting, living document



January 2020 marked the 105th anniversary of the *Constitutions* of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCLs) and approval of the Community as a religious congregation of pontifical right, accountable to the pope.

The *Constitutions* describe and provide rules for ways the Community lives its distinctive identity in the spirit of its founders. The document defines the nature, purpose and character of the Community; it addresses matters pertaining to election of leaders, chapters and formation.

From its founding in 1858, the SCL Community was a congregation of diocesan right, operating under the auspices of the bishop of the Diocese of Leavenworth, Kan. Through the years, there was discussion of seeking pontifical right to broaden the scope of responsibility and accountability.

Within days of her July 29, 1913 installation as Mother General, Mother Mary Berchmans Cannan informed the Sisters of plans to seek papal approbation from Rome. In succeeding months, she sought counsel from bishops, priests and the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, who had earlier completed this process. SCL leaders also

received a copy of the *Rule* of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax, Nova Scotia, to use as a sample. With these and other guidelines, the Community revised its *Rules and Codes* to conform to Canon Law and submitted its proposed *Constitutions* to Rome in 1914.

In January 1915, Church authorities in Rome granted the requisite approvals. These came from the Commission of Consultors and the prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Religious. This culminated on Jan. 25, 1915, when Pope Benedict XV issued a decree of praise for the Community, approving the temporary SCL *Constitutions* for seven years.

The seven-year probationary period gave the Sisters time to live with the rules of their *Constitutions*; identify changes to be made; and re-submit with changes for final approval. Still under the leadership of Mother Mary Berchmans, the Community received final approval from Pope Pius XI dated Dec. 31, 1921. In subsequent years, the *Constitutions* have undergone additional revisions. The small book remains a foundational and guiding document for individual Sisters and the entire Community.



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