

# VOICES OF CHARITY




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## Welcome Back to *Voices of Charity*

After a brief hiatus, we are pleased to return with a new edition of *Voices of Charity*, a publication of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCLs). We are catching up on some important developments and celebrations of the past two years. As we do this, we are reviewing opportunities to resume more regular communications. Our goal is to share highlights of the ministries, initiatives, and news of the SCLs and SCL Associates with you. Thank you for your understanding and continued interest.

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#### ON THE COVER:

The Community Council of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth elected at the 2022 Chapter: (clockwise from upper right) Sister Eileen Haynes, Community Director; Sister Rosemary Kolich, Councilor; Sister Melissa Camardo, First Councilor; and Sister Nancy Svetlecic, Councilor.

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Sister Eileen Haynes,  
Community Director  
Sister Melissa Camardo,  
First Councilor  
Sister Nancy Svetleic, Councilor  
Sister Rosemary Kolich, Councilor  
Sister Jean Anne Panisko,  
Community Treasurer

## Voices of Charity published by the

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Cantwell Hall  
4200 South 4th Street  
Leavenworth, KS 66048-5054  
www.scls.org

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## FROM THE Community Director

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Sister Eileen  
Haynes, SCL

Mother Xavier Ross reminds us that “God is lavish of His favors with us.” Indeed, life offers us an abundance of opportunities to experience God’s love in our daily lives.

Our Chapter 2022 Directional Statement is one of these opportunities. It calls us to recognize and embrace God’s grace *NOW*, so that in turn we may “give freely of ourselves and goods for the sake of the Kingdom.” (*SCL Constitution*)

This Fall 2022 issue of *Voices of Charity* provides the foundation for reflecting upon graces that have been showered upon us through the many relationships that have been formed and strengthened throughout our lives. These graces have led us to respond intentionally in unison for the sake of God’s desires not only for ourselves but for all of God’s people and creation. This is the “stuff” of transformation.

We continue to wrap our minds and hearts around integral ecology, desiring to understand fully the significance of interrelationships. Each of us is invited to respond to the “call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis.” (*Laudato Si*)

It is with deep gratitude and joy that we recognize specific Sisters, Associates, and partners in ministry who made the choice to embrace God’s desires for them. They share with us how their lives have been shaped through relationships with family, friends, co-workers, and others on their life’s journey. We celebrate with our Jubilarians as well as with our Associates on the 35th anniversary of their formal association with the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.

May each of us take time to pause and reflect upon the persons and events in our lives that helped to shape the persons we are today as “Gospel-centered women [and men] rooted in Christ, called to love and serve in these times and places, and to stand and pray with those who suffer, who grieve, who hope.” (Chapter 2022 Directional Statement)

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sister Eileen Haynes, SCL".

Sister Eileen Haynes  
SCL Community Director

# Chapter 2022



## Chapter 2022 Sets Direction, Elects New Leadership

Every six years, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth meet in Chapter to set direction for the Community and to elect leaders who help facilitate positive steps toward actualizing the Directional Statement. Considerable prayer, discernment, and discussion precede the meetings as does the election of delegates from across the SCL Community.

Like so many gatherings over the past two years, some elements of Chapter 2022 were different this year due to prevailing concerns related to COVID-19. For the first time in history, instead of the SCL Mother House, an off-campus hotel was the venue for the sessions, Feb. 17 to 25, 2022. Sisters not attending the Chapter were able, as observers, to view presentations via live streaming.

With the theme, “Now, with God’s grace,” the spirit of this 19th Chapter evoked deep thinking and a bold vision to step into the future using the lens of integral ecology. The articles and images that follow in this special Chapter 2022 section reflect the gathering, its outcomes and the renewed hope it inspired.

- The Chapter 2022 Directional Statement is a high-level summation of the direction and spirit that will engage the SCL Community and Community Officers over the next six years.
- Delegates elected Sister Eileen Haynes, Community Director; Sister Melissa Camardo, First Councilor; and Councilors Sisters Nancy Svetlecic and Rosemary Kolich.
- Sister Jean Anne Panisko is continuing her appointed role as SCL Community Treasurer.
- Hermana Esther Vilela Gutiérrez remains Director of Latin American Missions.
- The Chapter acknowledged and celebrated the leadership of the Officers who served from 2016-2022, and Hermana Clorinda Timaná Martínez, Director of Latin American Missions from 2014-2021. 🐦



# Words, Wisdom, Dialogue Shared

## SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### Chapter Planning Committee

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Co-chair

Sister Rita McGinnis,  
Co-chair

Sister Eileen Haynes,  
SCL Council Liaison

Sister Kathy Atkins

Sister Bernadette Helfert

Sister Nancy Svetleic

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Sister Linda Roth

### Recording Secretary

Sister Margaret Ellen  
Johnson

### Translator of Written Materials

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Henson

### Writing Committee

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Sister Mary Cecile Breen

Sister Rosemary Kolich

Sister Susan Rieke



Dialogue was an important component of Chapter 2022 led by facilitators trained for their roles.



At the SCL Mother House, Sisters unable to attend Chapter remained connected via visuals in Ross Chapel and through live streaming.



Sisters Susan Wood (left) and Catherine Ann Bones.



Sister Eileen Haynes (left) is sworn in as the new SCL Community Director by Sister Linda Roth, Chapter secretary.



Tellers tally votes at the February Chapter. Left to right, Sisters Michael Delores Allegri, Carolyn Gloege, and Ann Schumacher.



SISTERS OF CHARITY  
OF LEAVENWORTH

## Chapter 2022 Directional Statement

NOW, WITH GOD'S GRACE, we are called in these days

“...to give freely of ourselves and our goods  
for the sake of the Kingdom...” (*SCL Constitution*, Norm 14)

In the spirit and charism of Vincent, Louise, Xavier, and our founding Sisters, we step into our future with a renewed sense of mission.

Through the lens of integral ecology, we will:

- tend to the care of marginalized people and the fragile earth;
- use spiritual and tangible resources to meet the critical needs of God's people and earth;
- broaden collaboration with local and global groups working to achieve systemic change;
- explore our relationship with sponsored works;
- clarify the structure of our governance model.

As Gospel-centered, ecclesial women rooted in Christ, we are called to love and serve in these times and in these places and to stand and pray with those who suffer, who grieve, who hope.

NOW, WITH GOD'S GRACE.

# New SCL Community Council Anticipates Opportunities, Challenges Ahead

During their 19th Community Chapter in February 2022, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCLs) elected members of their Community Council. Sister Eileen Haynes and three new Councilors assumed responsibilities on July 20. The 2022 Chapter theme, “Now, with God’s grace,” will guide their leadership, and a commitment to integral ecology will influence efforts of the Community over the next six years.



### **Sister Eileen Haynes Community Director**

Elected as Community Director, Sister Eileen served two consecutive terms on the SCL Council, beginning in 2010. Her prior ministries focused on education, spirituality, eco-justice, and social justice. She taught in

the U.S. and Peru and held administrative positions as a school principal and as the director of a diocesan house of prayer, a high school admissions department, and a degree completion program. Sister Eileen is a former member of the National Board of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and a past SCL liaison to the non-governmental organization (NGO) for the Sisters of Charity Federation at the UN. Currently, she is a member of the Vincentian Family Executive Committee.

### **Sister Eileen reflects on the 2022 Directional Statement:**

*Our SCL Chapter 2022 Directional Statement clearly calls us to step into our future with a renewed sense of mission through the lens of integral ecology. This Directional Statement is rich with wisdom expressing who we are while at the same time challenging us to a prophetic transformation, both individually and collectively.*

*As Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, we are walking a path that has yet to be formed. Although this, at times, feels daunting, I hope we capitalize on our passion for ensuring our charism is carried forth in the best way*

*possible, and that we allow ourselves to celebrate the abundance of gifts that each of us brings to our prayers and conversations. Taking the time to know one another is crucial. God’s guidance will always be present for the sake of the mission that we have been entrusted.*

*We must continue to plumb the depths of collaboration – with our SCL Associates, employees, our sponsored ministries, other religious congregations, current partners in our ministries, and persons we have yet to meet. Curiosity, creativity, contemplative listening, and the patience that is required to allow God’s desires to unfold are some of the key characteristics that we will want to embrace.*

*This is absolutely an exciting period within our communal history and world. **Now, with God’s grace!***



### **Sister Melissa Camardo First Councilor**

Sister Melissa has served in ministry roles with the Vincentian Family and the Sisters of Charity Federation. She was convener of the 2021 North American Vincentian Family Gathering, and is a national core team member of

Giving Voice, a peer-led organization for younger women religious. Previously, she was director of development for LifeWay Network, a safe housing and education program in Queens, N.Y., and vice president of mission and sponsorship for Saint Joseph Hospital in Denver.



Currently, Sister Melissa is a member of Leaven Ministries, the sponsor of SCL Health.

### **Sister Melissa shares thoughts about her new role:**

*Serving on the Council at this time in our history is a privilege, and I look forward to working together as a team and as a whole Community to deepen our relationships and empower action on behalf of the mission.*

*I am particularly energized by the Chapter 2022 Directional Statement to broaden collaboration with local and global groups working to achieve systemic change. This is a clear opportunity to continue living the charism of charity on the side of those who are marginalized and bring to it all that we are learning about integral ecology.*



### **Sister Nancy Svetleic Councilor**

Sister Nancy, a licensed therapist, was in private practice for the past eight years in Redondo Beach, Calif. Her clients included young adults and seniors in areas of relationship, addictions, grief/loss, depression, anxiety, and transitions. Previously, she practiced for Bridges in El Monte, Calif., and was a mental health counselor and residential program coordinator for ISIS Center in San Diego. Sister Nancy has experience in marriage and family therapy, and working with a marginalized, homeless population in a residential setting. Much earlier in ministry, she served in parishes as a pastoral counselor, and in secondary education.

### **Sister Nancy anticipates dialogue, collaboration:**

*When I look at the Directional Statement, I am aware that collaboration is key to our movement into the future. We can no longer do the work of the gospel alone or in isolation from others. Collaboration involves building relationships of trust in conversation with many. This must begin with our own SCL Community. The common life challenges us to open, honest, authentic communication, which must then reach beyond ourselves and into larger communities. We must engage in dialogue that is*

*purposeful and practical to address the needs of the poor and marginalized. It is my hope that these conversations will produce not only motivation, but action toward systemic change and relief from the violence and prejudices of our time. In our Directional Statement, we are charged to live charity and service to all in need. With God's grace, let us continue.*



### **Sister Rosemary Kolich Councilor**

Sister Rosemary has served as a professor of English at the University of Saint Mary in Leavenworth since 1997. She became chair of the language and literature program in 2015. She was installed as the Sister Mary Janet McGilley Endowed Chair in Liberal Arts in 2021. Prior to her work at the university, Sister Rosemary taught English and journalism for 17 years in Catholic high schools in Kansas City, Mo., Leavenworth, and Billings, Mont. She holds a master's in English from the Bread Loaf School of English at Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vt., and a PhD in English from Saint Louis University.

### **Sister Rosemary focuses on trust in Divine Providence:**

*I am energized by the Chapter 2022 Directional Statement and the challenges it presents. I long to find even more caring and creative ways to carry out our mission to the vulnerable, especially women and children, and to deepen our charism and presence in the world. We have yet to imagine these ways, which I believe we can and will discover as we move forward in a spirit of collaboration and teamwork with one another and with the larger community – collaboration calling for much thinking and imagining and conversing, and a deep reliance on and trust in God.*

*Mother Xavier Ross and our early pioneer Sisters had a deep trust in the Providence of God. May we draw inspiration from them and move into our future with a similar faith, strength, courage, and hope. ☕*

# New Leaders Blessed and Welcomed

On July 17, during Mass, a special ceremony and receptions that followed, Sisters and SCL Associates had the opportunity to bless, congratulate, and express good wishes to members of the new SCL Community Council.



This visual in the Mother House Dining Room celebrates those who served from 2016-2022 and the new Community Council.



Sister Rosemary Kolich receives a blessing from other members of the new SCL Community Council and the Community.



In a ceremony built around the theme that the waters of a river keep flowing and changing with the passage of time, Sister Constance Phelps, past Community Director, passes a pitcher to be filled symbolically over the next six years by Sister Eileen Haynes and other new Council members. The silver pitcher is a gift that was presented to Mother Xavier Ross and the pioneer Sisters by the people of Nashville, Tenn.



Sister Mary Laura Huddleston (right) extends congratulations to Councilor Sister Nancy Svetlecic.

# Community Acknowledges 2016-2022 Officers

The SCL Community recognized the leadership of the 2016-2022 Community Officers during the February Chapter and at a special Mass of Thanksgiving on Wednesday, June 22.

On June 22, the 2016-2022 SCL Community Officers were honored during a special Mass for their service: left to right, Sisters Jean Anne Panisko, Amy Willcott, Constance Phelps, Phyllis Stowell, and Eileen Haynes.



The 2016-2022 leadership included Sister Constance Phelps, Community Director; Sister Eileen Haynes, First Councilor; Councilors Sisters Amy Willcott and Phyllis Stowell; Sister Jean Anne Panisko, SCL Community Treasurer; and Hermanas Clorinda Timaná Martínez (through February 2021) and Esther Vilela Gutiérrez (current), Directors of Latin American Missions.

Over the last six years, the Officers worked to advance the SCL charism and mission despite challenges posed by COVID-19 and increasing social and political tensions across the United States. Collaboration, response to need, and compassion characterized their term of office and accomplishments, among them the following highlights:

- Continued partnership with the Sisters of Charity Federation, including support of the Assembly of the Whole in Chicago, the House of Charity in New Orleans, the collaborative Initial Formation Program, and Federation Interest Groups.
- Ongoing collaboration with the Vincentian Family, especially with the 13 Houses Campaign global initiative on homelessness and with formation opportunities.
- Continued support and involvement with the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), especially Region 13.
- Engagement with sponsored ministries – Cristo Rey Kansas City High School, the San Vicente de Paul Pastoral Center, and the University of Saint Mary.
- Initiation of an annual Vincentian Charism Award to recognize individuals who live and embody the Vincentian spirit and exhibit humble service to the poor.
- Implementation of important protocols and protective measures to safeguard the SCL Community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Expansion of the Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation and the formation of Interest Groups (i.e., Care of Creation, Human Trafficking, Immigration, and Racial Justice) to probe critical issues and identify opportunities to address them.
- Exploration of various models of governance to enhance Community decision-making.
- Accompaniment of the 59 Sisters as they completed their earthly journeys over the past six years and of SCLs who faced other life transitions. 🐾



# CELEBRATION OF *Charity*

Recognizing that the adoption of protective measures against COVID-19 led to the postponement of many gatherings and celebrations, we dedicate this section of the magazine to those who have marked major milestones since our last publication.

This includes reflections by Sisters Mary Jo Quinn and Kathy Atkins, golden jubilarians for 2021 and 2022 respectively; lists acknowledging other SCLs observing special jubilees during those two years; and articles about recipients of Vincentian Charism Awards since 2020. COVID may have caused us to miss timely public coverage of these honorees, but we take time now to celebrate their lives and ministries.



**Sister Mary Jo Quinn**  
**2021 Golden Jubilarian**

## A Life in Music for 50 Years

“My life goes on in endless song . . . How can I keep from singing?” So goes the theme song of a music convention my mother and I attended in the early ‘90s. For these past 50 years, this has been my theme song, and my mother is always with me, singing. One of my earliest memories is of playing on the floor of our parish convent, where my grandmother was the cook, while my mother was singing a funeral at the church (Immaculate Conception, Butte, Mont.).

When the Second Vatican Council called the whole Church to sing, my mother was the first cantor/song leader in our parish. Eventually, I followed my mother into music ministry, beginning with piano lessons from her at age 7, then learning to play the “pump” organ for daily Mass, and then playing the pipe organ by eighth-grade.

My growing-up years in the post-war ‘50s and ‘60s were typical of the time: I am the oldest child of six, formed in faith by parents and grandparents, Catholic grade school and high school in Butte, and regularly surrounded by close cousins, aunts, and uncles. Butte was our constant environment. Every Sunday, I sat in nearly the same pew with my father, grandmother, and younger siblings. Usually, my mother was at a different Mass, singing.

My first home was in a brand new working-class neighborhood where I encountered lots of playmates with many siblings who didn’t go to the Catholic school, whose parents were miners and other laborers, and whose ethnicity and race were different than my own. We were all the same in the neighborhood, though, and my parents encouraged my friendship with all of them.

The idea of “being a Sister” floated in and out of my life, from grade school on. When I headed to Saint Mary College (SMC), Leavenworth, Kan.,





wonderful collaboration at Saint Mary and in the Diocese of Helena, working together to offer parish formation in liturgy and music. During those years, I also became active in the National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) as an “expert” on small, rural music ministry. Being from Butte, “the City” of Montana, I never did quite get my arms around the “rural” part of that description! I also served on two NPM boards. Through membership and

as a freshman in 1967, I was, once again, following my mother, who had graduated from SMC in music in 1940. But she had graduated in voice, and I played the piano.

I always felt at home at SMC and had wonderful opportunities there. My Sister-teachers and the student-Sisters became my good friends. When graduation neared, I wanted to continue the community life that I had witnessed, so I began the process of applying to the SCL Community.

In my first years as an SCL, I taught music, grade school, junior high band, and high school, and played organ and guitar wherever I was. In 1975, I returned to Butte to teach at Butte Central – many of my students were the younger siblings of my own classmates. My own family had moved away in 1972, and while I was “going home,” it was not the same without them, even though I would be living in the same convent where I had played with the pots and pans! At the high school, the priest-principal, Father McCoy, was pleased to have the daughter of his former neighbor (my mother) on the faculty. I was also the director of the choir in my home parish with my former piano teacher as the organist.

In those years, I started a graduate program in Church music and liturgy and began a new path at Carroll College, where I was the first campus minister and functioned as director of liturgy and music for the campus student community. I studied organ more formally with Joe Munzenrider and got acquainted with several different organs in Helena, Mont. One day, while I was practicing at Saint Mary Parish, Father Ed Hislop offered me a position as director of music and liturgy.

My work with Father Ed was the beginning of a

leadership positions in NPM, I had new colleagues throughout the country, all of us sharing in a new generation of liturgical growth. I was honored to be named *Pastoral Musician of the Year* by NPM in 2011.

After a sabbatical in Washington, D.C., I moved to the Kansas City area in 2002 for parish positions in music and liturgy. In 2005, I returned to the Northwest, to Portland, Ore., and began a ministry with OCP (Oregon Catholic Press). As workshop manager, I placed OCP artists in parish events and presented workshops on my own around the country. My colleagues in NPM became my customers for products – OCP missals, music, workshops – that I had already used for many years. As I ended my years at OCP, I was asked to accompany a tour group on a pilgrimage to Lourdes in France.

When Father Ed offered me a position at another parish located in Missoula, I eagerly accepted. It was time to return “home” again to the place that had fostered my religious life and to the people who were part of that same fabric. In this parish, Blessed Trinity, and again in the diocese, I have been challenged by involvement in Family Promise and the work of the Missoula Interfaith Collaborative (MIC), supporting projects that aim to lift people from homelessness. I have found new skills in the community organizing work of MIC, and supporting the local faith community in understanding contemporary justice issues. Every day, I hear and see the words of St. Vincent: “Your cloister shall be the city streets and your chapel the parish church.” With my mother, who is now with God, “How can I keep from singing?” 🕊



**Sister Kathy Atkins**  
**2022 Golden Jubilarian**

## Teaching and Community Sources of Joy

I was born on Feb. 24, 1950, at Camp (now Fort) Campbell, Ky., the second of eight children. My dad, an Army officer, was stationed there. Like typical military families, we moved around, and we also shared a love of country. I remember flying back from France in fifth-grade and hearing the stewardess welcome us home. I still get teary-eyed when I think about it.

In seventh-grade, we moved to Fort Leavenworth. The SCLs taught my religious education classes and had an immediate impact on me. In ninth-grade, I faced a tough decision. The fort had no secondary school, so my parents planned on my attending Leavenworth High School, which was tuition-free. I wanted to go to Immaculata High School and held my ground all summer. A day before classes started, my parents gave in.

I had never felt connected to a place while growing up. All that changed with Immaculata. The community life was incredible. I attended every football and basketball game! I put down roots. It was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Three SCLs at the school had a large influence on me: Sister Mary Elizabeth Kelly, who served as principal; Sister Rita Magrath, who worked in the office; and Sister Carol Hinds, who taught English (she later left the Community). During high school, I often drove the SCLs to Fort Leavenworth to help teach religious education classes. During our car rides, I envisioned myself being an SCL.

One Sunday, Sister Rita took a group of us to Saint Mary College. I told my mom I loved it and planned to go there. I had read every book there was on Clara Barton, so I expected to study nursing, but I enrolled in math education. I wanted to teach.

In my sophomore year, I looked into entering the SCL Community, but Sister Mary Clarence (Madelon) Burns, the vocation director, said to first finish college. Prior to graduation, I received an acceptance letter from the Community. My mom cried with joy when I shared the news. I admonished her not to tell anyone, but she told everyone! My dad only said that I should do what made me happy, but parish friends related how proud he was.

I entered the SCL Community in 1972. Later, during second semester, I taught a couple of classes at St. Pius X High School in Kansas City, Mo., which affirmed my calling.

After my Novice year, I went to Hayden High School in Topeka, Kan., for three years. My maternal grandfather, who was a math teacher and principal, visited me, along with my sister, who was a math teacher at Assumption Grade School. (I lived above the school at the time.) He was so proud to have two granddaughters teaching math.

## Congratulations

### 2021 SCL Jubilarians

#### 75 Years

Sister Regina Deitchman  
Sister Mary Bridget Mullen  
(now deceased)  
Sister Eileen Sheehy  
(now deceased)  
Sister Mary Willoughby  
(now deceased)  
Sister Mary Rita Winter

#### 70 Years

Sister Ann Barton  
Sister Marie Carmel Dunning  
(now deceased)  
Sister Dorothy Henscheid  
Sister Ruth Reischman  
Sister Anita Sullivan

#### 60 Years

Sister Susan Chase  
Sister Carol Depner  
Sister Paula Rose Jauernig  
Sister Barbara Kushan  
Sister Jean Anne Panisko

#### 50 Years

Sister Mary Jo Quinn

#### 25 Years

Sister Victoria Ann Lichtenauer

### 2022 SCL Jubilarians

#### 75 Years

Sister Mary Rosaleen Driscoll  
Sister Kevin Marie Flynn  
Sister Mary Laura Huddleston  
Sister Mary O'Rourke  
Sister Mary Monica Peterson  
Sister Mary Francine Stubbs

#### 70 Years

Sister Mary Ann Bartolac  
Sister Letitia Lenherr  
Sister Jean Lind  
Sister Mary Lou Mendel

#### 60 Years

Sister Michael Delores Allegri  
Sister Virginia Louise Bartolac  
Sister Karen Guth  
Sister Elizabeth Skalicky

#### 50 Years

Sister Kathy Atkins

I then taught for eight years in two high schools in Montana. My younger sister was entering her senior year in Leavenworth, and I had never seen her compete in varsity volleyball. Fortunately, Sister Rita McGinnis had



a job for me at Bishop Ward High School in Kansas City, Kan. I started in 1985 and stayed for 25 years. I was also able to attend my sister's volleyball games!

Early on at Bishop Ward, I served as sponsor of the cheerleaders and pep club. I also took tickets at football and basketball games, which introduced me to all the parents. I taught computer programming along with math, so Sister Rita asked me to build the master schedule on computer, which had always been done off-site. During my last 10 years, I split time between teaching and office duties. By then, I added report cards and attendance to my scheduling work. Bishop Ward had some outstanding administrators who allowed me to work on several rewarding projects.

In 1997, I fulfilled two life-long dreams: I attended a Notre Dame football game (sat in the student section) and a University of Kansas basketball game (sat in the front row). In 1999, I returned to Notre Dame to see the team play Kansas. I have also toured Arrowhead Stadium, where the Kansas City Chiefs play. I tell people now I can die in peace.

In 2010, I resigned from Bishop Ward and took a position teaching math at nearby Resurrection Grade School. I have now served Wyandotte County for 37 years, and have so enjoyed teaching many of the children of my former students.

In 2014, my parents' health was failing (they both succumbed to cancer by mid-year), so I requested a room at the Mother House to be nearby. I found the love, support, and comfort of my SCL Sisters to be a balm during my grief. Community life has always meant so much to me, and I soon decided to make this living arrangement permanent. I love transporting Sisters to appointments, and spending time with my siblings' families – I now have 55 nieces, nephews, and greats.

As I look back on my life thus far, all the people with whom I have worked and shared community life have formed me into the person I am today, and I am grateful. I fell in love with the SCLs and with teaching, and here we are 50 years later! 🐣



# Award Recognizes Vincentian Spirit

On the occasion of the 160th anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCLs) and the beginning of the fifth century of the Vincentian charism, leadership of the Community established a special award.

The award honors the works and witness begun by Mother Xavier and the founding SCLs, rooted in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul. The SCLs presented the inaugural Vincentian Charism Award in 2019 to Richard Sack, Leavenworth. Based on nominations submitted by Sisters and SCL Associates and the recommendations of a committee, awards went to Irene Caudillo, 2020, president and CEO of El Centro; Kathy Dean, 2021, volunteer with Uplift; and this year to Eric Basye, executive director, CLDI.

## 2020 AWARDEE • IRENE CAUDILLO

### Advocate for Underserved, Champion of Diversity

As the second recipient of the Vincentian Charism Award, Irene Caudillo's interest in helping others started early. Her parents made sure she and her eight siblings understood the importance of Catholic social teaching and contributing to their community in Kansas City, Mo., where Irene grew up. Her father stressed often that "all we have is our ability to give."

Throughout her career, Irene has devoted her life to helping and mentoring children, youth, adults, and families in a variety of service-related positions. Since 2013, she has served as president and CEO of El Centro, a non-profit agency based in Kansas City, Kan., whose mission is "strengthening communities and improving the lives of Latinos and others through educational, social, and economic opportunities." Like St. Vincent de Paul, for whom the award is named, Irene "quietly



Irene Caudillo (center left) is pictured with (front row, left to right) Sisters Therese Bangert, Helen Therese Mack, Amy Willcott, Charlotte White, and (back row, left to right) Sisters Mary Barbara Wieseler, Rosemary Kolich, and Linda Roth.

tackles whatever needs arise and gathers the people needed to address those needs," observed the SCLs who nominated her for the award.

"We are pleased to acknowledge Irene, whose life and work exemplify the spirit, service, and charism of St. Vincent de Paul," said Sister Constance Phelps, SCL Community Director at the time Irene received the award. "She has been a lifelong advocate for the underserved, a voice for the voiceless, and a champion



for diversity, especially on behalf of the community she serves.”

Sister Linda Roth, among those who submitted Irene’s nomination, says that she strives to help those within the Latinx community find “their voice and their place at the table,” where important decisions are made. Irene says, “Much of the important work we do at El Centro is advocacy – working to challenge systems that keep people down, especially the undocumented. Underserved people and their families need access to affordable housing, hospital care, workplace benefits, and in-state tuition, so their children have a pathway to education. While we advocate, we also mentor and train, so people learn to speak and advocate for themselves, which helps create stable and growing communities.” Irene is also

committed to training, coaching, and cultivating new leaders to extend her organization’s reach into the community. She explains, “I believe in bringing people up and giving them opportunities – to be in my seat one day, because I won’t be here forever.”

Much of Irene’s day involves fund-raising and representing El Centro in the community. She has strong relations with many community leaders and organizations. Her efforts with local police have helped steady relations between law enforcement and immigrants on the path to citizenship, encouraging each group to understand the challenges of the other.

Irene is involved with several boards and currently serves as a trustee at the University of Saint Mary. Her family is also active in Christ the King Parish, Kansas City, Kan. 🐦

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## 2021 AWARDEE • KATHY DEAN

# Her Passion: Serving the Homeless

Kathy Dean, recipient of the 2021 Vincentian Charism Award, cannot remember a time when she was not a giver. She recalls that as a child, she always took money to place in the collection plate at church. One particular time, she was sitting by a little girl who didn’t have anything to donate. Kathy shared her pennies so both girls gave 5 cents.

Years later, after marrying her husband, Leo, and raising their two daughters, Kathy worked for Black and Veatch, a large engineering firm in Kansas City. One day, she saw a television ad for Uplift, a charitable organization that uses commercial vans and volunteers to deliver needed items to persons who are homeless. The ad showed a steaming bowl of food being offered to cold, hungry people with arms out-stretched. Kathy could not get the homeless or Uplift out of her mind.

After talking with Leo, Kathy decided to quit her day job in 2004 and become an Uplift volunteer. The transition required the Deans to become a one income household, but they felt the cause merited the sacrifice.

On her first night on duty, Kathy boarded a van loaded with food, clothing, blankets, and other items. The vehicle travelled to parks, under bridges, and to



Kathy offers comfort to a person facing a difficult time.

camp, carrying out Uplift’s mission “to take care and compassion to the homeless.”

Kathy transitioned from being an Uplift volunteer to a driver. After three years, she accepted a position on the board. Three years later, she was elected president and served for another 12 years, before stepping down from her leadership role. Kathy says that the three most important things in her life are faith, family, and Uplift. “My passion and my heart are on the streets of Kansas City.”

Rolly and Karen Dessert, SCL Associates who nominated Kathy for the Vincentian Charism Award, commented that, “If St. Vincent de Paul were alive today in Kansas City, he would be working with Kathy Dean at Uplift.” They added, “When Kathy pulls up to a stop, the homeless who know her are excited to see her. Her interactions are marked by hugs, smiles, and words of encouragement.”

Kathy says, “The thing that makes Uplift so special is that we don’t judge those we serve. We give people food and other items to survive, but more than this, we give them our time, attention, and respect.”

COVID-19 affected Kathy’s involvement and Uplift’s work. She adds, “I’m 70, and I have to be careful, but I’m not finished yet. There are many people in need, and their numbers keep rising.” 🐦

## 2022 AWARDEE • ERIC BASYE

# Available for and Responsive to God’s Call



Eric Basye

When Eric Basye was a freshman in college, he set his sights on achieving the American dream of success and prestige, possibly as a physician or veterinarian. But he sensed that God had other plans in mind that pointed toward the path of ministry.

By his senior year, Eric remained reluctant about his earlier spiritual awakening.

He did change course direction and decided to pursue a master’s in social work. However, God’s persistence prevailed. Eric accepted the call and attended a multi-denominational seminary. He believes this decision changed the trajectory of his life and led to an amazing journey.

In nominating Eric, who is the recipient of the 2022 Vincentian Charism Award, Sisters Katherine Franchett and Bernadette Helfert write, “He is constantly stretching himself to be available for God’s calling in his life and that of his family.” The two SCLs have witnessed Eric’s faith and service in action in Billings, Mont., where he has been executive director of Community Leadership and Development, Inc. (CLDI), since February 2011.

Established almost 40 years ago, CLDI takes a gospel-centered, holistic approach to transform and empower struggling communities, in particular, the low-income South Side neighborhood of Billings, Mont. With intentionality, Eric, his wife and four children live in that community. He prays while walking the South Side streets.

In his role at CLDI, Eric has overseen several initiatives that affect the well-being of Billings’ residents and future

generations. He began an internship program that gives young adults the opportunity to live out their faith by working with persons experiencing poverty. Under Eric’s leadership, CLDI established the Hannah House, a faith-based recovery home for women with addictions and their children. In 2020, CLDI opened Rail//Line Coffee in the South Side to provide job skills and leadership development training. By 2023, CLDI will own and operate 100 rental units that provide affordable housing.

Similar to St. Vincent, Eric believes the gospel is spoken by word and by deed. The four values of CLDI, developed under his leadership, bear this out. Those values are gospel response; Imago Dei (image of God); integrity; and relationally based. Sisters Katherine and Bernadette note, “Eric has spent the last 20 years serving the poor through the lens of Imago Dei. He has labored to holistically identify the needs of marginalized communities from a gospel perspective, desiring that all will have the opportunity to experience the love of God and flourish.”

Prior to his work in Billings, Eric was with an urban home repair camp where church youth groups rehabbed homes in the inner city of Memphis, Tenn. Over the years, he has started faith communities made up of house churches. He is leaving CLDI at the end of this year and joining a group that does strategic planning with Christian organizations across the country. Eric and his family plan to remain in Billings.

While he admits to feeling inadequate to receive the Vincentian Charism Award, Eric finds it very humbling and affirming of his call to be a faithful servant. 🐦

# SCL Associates

## SCL Associates Mark 35th Anniversary

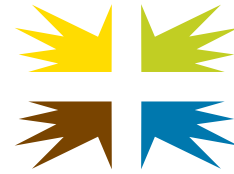
This year marks the 35th anniversary of the SCL Associates. The theme of the observance is “Charity cannot be contained. It flows out and beyond without ceasing.”

Amy Mauton, SCLA, Director of Associates, has distributed materials to build interest in this historic milestone. These have included a timeline of Associate history and a video tour of special locations on the Leavenworth campus to cultivate a sense of the SCL history and home. The new Associate logo was unveiled. The plan is that this updated graphic will be used for the design of the new Associate pin. Amy also shared the 35th anniversary prayer card with Associates.

She explains, “While we may face some restrictions and limitations due to COVID, we hope to be able to host celebratory events to mark 35 years of companionship with the SCL Community. We anticipate opportunities going forward where we can meet, pray, and work together in the spirit of the Vincentian charism.”

Associates are individuals who share in the charism, mission, and spirit of the SCLs, Mother Xavier Ross, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. Louise de Marillac. While they don't profess vows, SCL Associates make formal commitments and strive to live gospel values. 🕊

As part of the 35th anniversary observance, SCL Associates introduced a new logo and a special prayer.



Sisters of Charity  
of Leavenworth  
**ASSOCIATE**



### WELCOME, NEW SCL ASSOCIATES



Fran Padow, SCLA (second from the right), with her Come & See sponsors (left to right) Megan Trout, SCLA, Sister Linda Roth, Marcia and Steve Nicely, SCLAs, Sister Maureen Hall, Fran, and Sister Mary Barbara Wieseler. Fran made her public commitment on June 11, 2022.



Cathy Mies, SCLA, made her initial SCLA commitment on Sunday, May 22, in Topeka, Kan., in the presence of two of her sponsors, Sister Ann Moylan (on the left) and Sister Jean Lockett (not pictured).



Steve Belen, SCLA (center right in jacket), made his initial commitment as an SCL Associate on Sunday, May 29, in Marillac Center at a gathering of family, friends, Associates, and Sisters. Steve is the principal of Cristo Rey Kansas City.



# 'Homecoming' for New Director of Associates

On June 13, Amy Mauton, SCLA, officially started her position as the new Director of SCL Associates.



Amy grew up in Leavenworth and has deep ties with the Community and its Vincentian charism. Of her new position, she says, "I am extremely humbled and honored to accept the position of SCL Associate Director. This feels like a homecoming to me."

Amy has spent the last 25 years in the banking industry. She has experience in operations management, program development, and corporate training. Most recently, she worked as senior vice president of Dickinson Financial Corporation, where she developed and managed relationships with a variety of external vendors and strategic partners in business-related projects. Amy has a strong record of organizational development, team building, creativity, and motivational teaching, which she hopes will aid in her new role.

Amy has previously served on the board of directors for United Way of Leavenworth County and as vice chair of the board of directors for First City Development Corporation in Leavenworth. She is currently part of the youth ministry team at her local parish assisting with Confirmation formation.

She is a 1998 graduate of Saint Mary College (today's University of Saint Mary) with a degree in English and has a special fondness for English and Russian authors. Amy has been an SCL Associate since 2007.

Amy resides in Houston, Texas, with her husband, Flynn. She plans to work remotely and travel to Kansas on a regular schedule. In her spare time, Amy enjoys reading, baking, spending time with family, and hiking in the Rocky Mountains.

Her mom, Ivonne, is also an SCLA, a graduate of Saint Mary College (class of 1971), and a resident of Leavenworth. 🐾

## First Lay Director of

As Terri Butel reflects on her almost 11 years as Director of SCL Associates, she marvels at the moments of grace that sustained her along the way.



She was the first layperson to serve in this role. At a reception in honor of her mid-June retirement, Terri acknowledged the difficulty in leaving her position and the faith community that has played a strong role in her nurture and development. She received a hand-crafted wooden "memory" box filled with affirmations from Associates.

### Growing up with the SCLs

Terri first met the SCLs at St. Charles Borromeo Elementary School, Kansas City, Mo. She remembers the large, square-shaped headpiece worn by her first-grade teacher, Sister Mary Clare Gappa. Sister Mary Rosenda Arkfeld, who taught fifth-grade, encouraged her writing ability. In a memorable junior high conversation, Sister Mary Arthel Cline affirmed this talent, telling Terri, "You have a gift as a writer – and that's from God, and you need to keep writing!" The exhortation stuck, and the young student worked hard and later received a full scholarship to Saint Mary College (SMC).

At SMC, Terri's main professor and college advisor, Sister Mary O'Rourke, affirmed a double major in chemistry and biology. Sister Mary modeled learning with curiosity, awe, and reverence – recognizing the limits of human understanding and appreciating the transcendent. Thereafter, Terri referred to her affectionately as "Sister Mary A-W-E."

After graduation, Terri worked in largely medical-related positions as a medical technologist, client



## Associates Reflects on Moments of Grace

services manager, and laboratory and pathology practice manager. She paused working for a few years to raise her infant son.

### Taking 'association' to new levels

In 2001, Terri became an SCL Associate. She later served on the Associate Advisory Board and enjoyed working with many talented and dedicated Associates under the leadership of Sister Sharon Smith. She appreciated how the association deepened, enriched, and focused her spirituality.

Years later, the SCLs decided to open the position of Director of Associates to Sisters and Associates. Terri's husband, David, encouraged her to explore the opportunity and enter a discernment process.

When she arrived at the SCL campus to interview, she had a sense of her life, circumscribed by a circle that began with her brick road exit from Saint Mary College in 1979 and ended with her entrance into the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth driveway nearly 32 years later. Sister Maureen Hall, Community Director at the time, called her later to offer the position.

When Terri began her new role in August 2011, she experienced many feelings. She wondered if she could inspire Associates as her Sister predecessors had done. She missed their energetic and thoughtful leadership. Her SCL Council liaison, Sister Nancy Bauman, provided strong support. After Mass one morning, Sister Sue Miller encouraged Terri to get to know the Sisters and their spiritual stories, which proved valuable.

### Dedication to charism

In time, she realized the SCL Community's wisdom in hiring an Associate to lead the SCLAs. She also understood the challenges sometimes posed in living out the charism, and encouraged and facilitated honest Associate conversations. During her leadership, the SCL Council approved Associates inviting and sponsoring Candidates, a role previously reserved for Sisters.

During COVID, Terri used Zoom sessions to keep Associates and Sisters connected for times of prayer,

education, and encouragement. She is often amazed at the various ways Associates are inspired to live the charism.

Sister Phyllis Stowell, who worked closely with Terri as Council liaison for six years, says, "I have appreciated

Terri's leadership during years of challenge and change – it has been extraordinary. Her sense of mission and grasp of the Vincentian charism were often my inspiration to persevere in the good work of our common call. It is perhaps even more so for our Associates. We have been blessed with her insights, her commitment to the Associate life and call, and her dedication to the lived charism of Mother Xavier Ross."

Once, in 2016, after arriving at her office, Terri found a small red and white metal heart on her desk. It fit in the palm of her hand and made a delightful sound when shaken. Often, when she travelled, spent time in prayer, or prepared a presentation, the little heart accompanied her as a miniature reminder of the SCL heart and mission to bring love and service to those in need. Terri has given this cherished heart to her successor, so that this token of grace is carried on.

A presentation by Sister Regina Bechtle, SC, during the SCL 150th anniversary has always stuck with Terri. Sister observed that the pioneers who headed westward had to learn to let go of things they valued along the way – emblematic of a person's spiritual journey.

Terri says, "I love that the SCL Community uses the word, 'Chapter,' to describe their every-six-year meeting. For me, resigning my position is the closing of one chapter and the beginning of a new one. It's a time of letting go, and I know God's Spirit is in this, not just for me, but for the Community. The timing is right for new energy and new leadership, and I'm grateful." 🌿



Gifted with this small, metal heart, Terri passed it on to her successor to continue grace and blessings.

## New Agency Aims for Housing Stability

While working at the Leavenworth Interfaith Community of Hope to help persons who are homeless, Sister Vickie Perkins repeatedly saw clients struggle to find fit, affordable housing. The rising cost of rental property forced many people and their families to live in sub-standard conditions. “I went into apartment after apartment and found nothing I would live in, yet people had no choice,” said Sister Vickie. She added that some landlords in low-income areas fail to provide maintenance and repairs needed to make property safe and livable. During one winter, a family she knew suffered for two months without heat because the landlord neglected to fix or replace the furnace.

### Vision takes shape

When Sister Vickie left her Community of Hope position at the end of 2020, she did not think long about what to do next. She gathered 20 people, including Sisters and SCL Associates, who wanted to advance the idea of sheltering the homeless by providing affordable housing in Leavenworth.

She convened the group with the conviction that attainable housing creates stability for low-income families and strengthens communities. She was also convinced that good things happen when people gather around a shared mission. Her past community work opened doors to key partnerships and gave her immediate credibility with city officials and area leaders.

Early on, discussions took place with Community Housing of Wyandotte County and Depaul USA, a national homeless services organization based in Chicago which supports the Vincentian Family’s 13 Houses Campaign, a global initiative to eliminate homelessness. Both agencies provided helpful information and support, which kept the Leavenworth group from having to create capacities others already had in place.

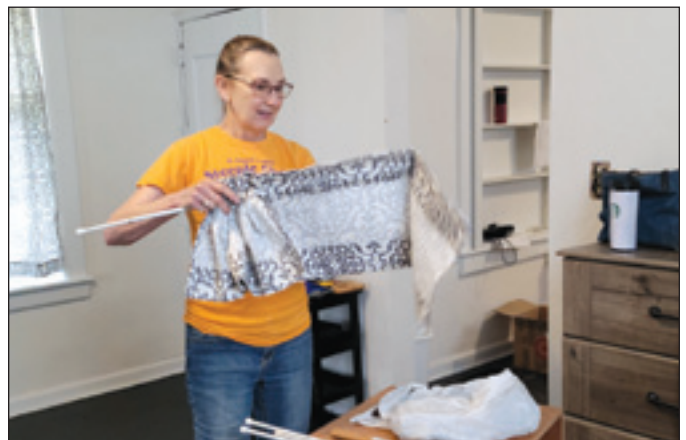
The group learned about the importance of a stable home life, especially for children, whose education and self-esteem suffer when they are moved around and lack a sense of place. “It’s devastating for people to be without a place to live; housing is a basic need,” explains Sister Vickie. “Imagine trying to keep a job without a home. People without a home are trapped in a continuous circle of discouragement, and the COVID-19 pandemic only made things worse.”

### Moving forward

By mid-2021, Leavenworth Attainable Housing (LAH) was officially established, and a corporate board was formed. By fall, a working committee was handling day-to-day concerns and project details. Committee members include Sisters Nancy Bauman, Vickie Perkins, and Sharon Smith, and Katie Frandsen and Linda Martin, both SCLAs. Sister Nancy says, “LAH responds to the critical needs of God’s people, which our Directional Statements have challenged us to do. Our goals are to provide low-income tenants with housing that is *attainable, sustainable, and affordable.*”

It took time to locate housing suitable for the ministry’s purposes, but its first property was in plain sight. When Sister Vickie was executive director of Leavenworth Interfaith Community of Hope, the building’s owner, Ron, sometimes dropped by with a contribution for the ministry. After one visit, Ron told Sister Vickie that he was going to leave her his house after he died. She was not sure how to respond, but on a later visit, he had placed his intentions in writing. Surprised, Sister Vickie replied, “Ron, I’m a Sister. I can’t own a house. I took a vow of poverty!” Eventually, Ron met with an attorney and arranged for his small home to be donated to Community of Hope. Unexpectedly, and to everyone’s sadness, Ron died a few months later.

The news about Ron, however, did not quickly reach Sister Vickie. Because the home sat dormant, theft and vandalism raised questions if the property was salvageable. Fortunately, city appraisers approved the rehab work.



Katie Frandsen, SCLA, installs curtains in the first Leavenworth Attainable Housing home.



Sisters Nancy Bauman, Kathleen Marie Henscheid, Frances Juliano, and Mary Ann Theisen ready the kitchen for use.

Over the course of time, Community of Hope donated the house to Leavenworth Attainable Housing (LAH). The LAH board and the committee met to consider their challenges and the best ways to prepare the home for occupancy.

The committee soon enlisted volunteers to help with painting, plumbing, electrical work, and clean up. Students from the University of Saint Mary donated their time and efforts. Jim Wally, LAH board member who attended nearby First United Methodist Church, provided expertise to ensure the house would be safe and livable. The committee also collected furniture and other household items for the home.

### Clean-up day and open house

As rehab neared completion, the committee organized a clean-up day for May 13, 2022. Sisters, SCL Associates, and special friends brought cleaning supplies and equipment. While some did deep cleaning, others removed trash, decorated, and performed last minute tasks.

Two days later, LAH held an open house that was attended not only by Sisters and SCLAs, but also by community leaders and a reporter from the *Leavenworth Times*. All came to celebrate Leavenworth Attainable Housing (LAH). Committee members recited a special blessing for the home, which read in part, “Loving and gracious God, as we come to bless this house, we

acknowledge all those who have made it possible for this home to be affordable, attainable, and sustainable.”

A new occupant is now making the house his home.

After the first home launched, Ed Mease, LAH board member and senior pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Leavenworth, secured five more houses for use, which are owned by the church. His congregation believes in the work of LAH and wants to support the initiative. The homes are grouped together, which will allow opportunities for community-building activities among the residents. Four of these homes have been renovated and are now occupied.

This latest development is another reminder that by bringing people together around a shared mission, things happen. In addition, LAH has signed a merger agreement with Depaul USA. As of Jan. 1, 2023, the new agency will be named Depaul Leavenworth Attainable Housing and be part of a national network addressing homelessness.

### Vincentian spirit in action

As Sister Vickie reflects on the ministry of Leavenworth Attainable Housing, she is gripped by a strong level of gratification shared by all those who have contributed to this initiative. She says, “I’ve had the privilege of serving people in poverty – this is something that is very Vincentian. Sometimes, I stop and think, ‘St. Vincent de Paul would like this; St. Louise de Marillac would like this; and so would Mother Xavier Ross.’ They would like Leavenworth Attainable Housing because it’s so basic to life – to have a home and an opportunity for a better life. Helping people achieve this is at the center of our charism. It is the kind of thing Jesus would want us to do, and the people of our community want to respond and join with us.” 🕊



Sister Charlotte White affixes the house number.



The Leavenworth Attainable Housing (LAH) Committee in front of the first home rehabbed by LAH that is now occupied by a tenant.



# Ministries

## Cristo Rey Begins School Year with New President



Claudia Meyer, new president of Cristo Rey Kansas City, visits with students.

In June, Claudia Meyer assumed responsibilities as the new president of Cristo Rey Kansas City High School.

Claudia brings broad experience to Cristo Rey, having served as lead school principal for the Guadalupe Centers Charter Schools in Kansas City, Mo., and with the Blue Springs School District as a teacher and school counselor. In addition to 24 years of educational experience, Claudia is pursuing a doctorate in educational leadership from William Woods University, Fulton, Mo. She has a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Central Missouri, a master's degree in teaching from Webster University, and an educational specialist degree in school leadership from William Woods University.

"I appreciate the opportunity to serve as Cristo Rey's president," said Claudia. "I am inspired to bring my

professional experience in the classroom and in administration to this mission, which not only promises college readiness but also builds career readiness through our Corporate Work Study Program. Cristo Rey's talented faculty and staff will be a tremendous asset as we continue to shape future leaders for our community."

In welcoming Claudia to Cristo Rey as the high school's fourth president, Ivan Nugent, chair of the board search committee, observed, "Her intellect, enthusiasm, and commitment to education and opportunity are a perfect match with Cristo Rey's mission to provide a rigorous, college preparatory education to students from throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area. The board looks forward to partnering with Claudia, and she has our full support."

Claudia fills the role formerly held by John O'Connor, who became the school's third president in 2017. 🐦





Left to right at the convent in Piura, Peru, Señor Carlos, Trisha Waldman (USM), Hermana Esther Vilela Gutiérrez, Agustina Berru Berru, Sister Helen Therese Mack, Hermana Laura Rumiche Morales, Jude Huntz (USM), Wendy Hildenbrand (USM), and Sister Janet Cashman.

## Two SCL-sponsored Ministries Explore Partnership

This summer, representatives from two sponsored ministries of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth began exploring opportunities for a partnership through student study abroad experiences.

From June 27 to July 3, a team from the University of Saint Mary (USM), Leavenworth, travelled to Piura, Peru, to visit Hermanas de la Caridad, and staff of San Vicente de Paul Pastoral Center and local schools.

Jude Huntz, USM director of campus ministry/instructor, says the university is working toward developing a student trip for May 2023. He adds, “We are actively raising funds to develop this program and look forward to its growth.”

The plan is that USM occupational therapy students will do service days in the clinic in Piura, and undergraduates will assist at a local school helping students learn English. There will also be excursions to see various historical and cultural sites to provide the students with a well-rounded experience. The long-term goal is to expand this study abroad to more students and to provide regular clinical rotations in Peru.

Hermana Laura Rumiche Morales, director of the pastoral center, is enthusiastic about the prospects of the mutual link between the two sponsored ministries. She believes this would benefit both San Vicente de Paul Pastoral Center, and USM and its students. While in Peru, the USM team also visited the López Albújar School, where Hermana Esther Vilela Gutiérrez is a professor, and the National University of Piura.

Also representing USM were Wendy Hildenbrand, program director for the doctor of occupational therapy, and Trisha Waldman, human anatomy lab coordinator. Sisters Janet Cashman and Helen Therese Mack accompanied the group. 🐦

# Pandemic Perspectives

## COVID-19

### and Three Lessons for Social Justice

by John Shively, Coordinator,  
SCL Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation



As the pandemic passes the two-year milestone, I pause to reflect on the lessons COVID teaches us about social justice work. The pandemic did not create, but certainly widened and deepened the already existing cracks in American society and across the world. While there are many lessons to consider, three stand out for social justice practitioners.

#### **Lesson One: Personal health is also public health**

Catholic social teaching emphasizes the common good and asks what is best for a whole society while respecting individual human dignity. During the pandemic, many Americans resisted restrictions on gatherings, mask mandates, and the need for vaccinations – decisions put in place to save lives.

As individual rights took priority over societal need, the virus' spread increased, leading to more deaths, and laying bare the important truth that one person's health can affect us all. While individual rights are significant, our approach to health cannot put others unnecessarily at risk.

This is especially important when considering health from a global standpoint. When we commit to health solidarity and distribute care and treatment

more equitably across the world, we protect and save more lives. When countries with more resources and newer technologies extend benevolence to those with less, we all benefit.

#### **Lesson Two: Inequality**

The pandemic exposed and exacerbated inequalities already present, but hidden by “normal” life. A pertinent example is the crisis of unhoused people. As people struggled to find affordable housing, COVID further limited their options to the point of making shelter unavailable for many. Labor markets, quarantines, and business closures further compounded affordability and availability. Those barely scraping by on minimum wage jobs were soon unemployed and unable to pay for their homes and other necessities. A just recovery must focus policy and charitable efforts on keeping people housed. Whether they are living in shelters or on the streets, we must treat displaced persons with dignity.

It is important to add that the challenge of widening inequality is often felt unequally among people, depending on their age, gender, culture, or class. We know from the evidence that women are affected by the brunt of economic downturn more than men. According to Oxfam International, women lost more than 64 million jobs across the globe in 2020, and had a greater percentage loss than men.<sup>1</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Labor (as of February 2021), as



“...the pandemic teaches us about integral ecology – the understanding that everything is interconnected.”

the economy rebounded, the gains primarily benefitted men, leaving 1.4 million fewer women employed than pre-pandemic.

Black Americans have had to contend with lower vaccine and booster shot access, larger drops in wages, and double the food insecurity as white families, according to a report from the Black Coalition Against COVID.<sup>2</sup>

The pandemic has also aggravated continued inequalities in wealth distribution, healthcare access and insurance rates, safe working conditions, and the equitable distribution of vaccines.

Catholic social teaching should challenge us to question the way society has chosen to distribute its surplus – the goods of the earth should be available to all.

### **Lesson Three: Integral ecology**

Most important, the pandemic teaches us about integral ecology – the understanding that everything is interconnected. Though the pandemic is a health crisis at its core, the fallout has spilled over into economic life, social relations, culture, and political life. Integral ecology reminds us that our crises are not separate but inextricably interwoven, which requires us to address their various root causes.

As a society, we have neglected our responsibilities and duties to one another. We have ascribed personal responsibility for every failure and success, and thus,

impart a moral assessment of those who are deserving and those who are not.

An integral approach calls us to seek new ways of seeing, loving, and doing – to detect God’s presence in creation and all living things. This allows us to recover a love for those once judged as expendable, unlovable, unworthy, and undeserving. Integral ecology encourages us to encounter people as they are, to listen to their stories, and work to build God’s Kingdom in the here and now.

What works may look different in different contexts, since no parish, city, religious community, or prayer group is the same. Only by knowing, listening, and encountering all people within our communities can we advocate and partner with those on the margins.

It is never too late or too early to be engaged in advocacy work on the local or state level.

If you are unsure where to start, visit our website ([scls.org/jpic](https://scls.org/jpic)) for helpful resources and information. 🐦

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1 “COVID-19 cost women globally over \$800 billion in lost income in one year,” Oxfam International, [oxfam.org](https://www.oxfam.org), April 29, 2021.

2 “The State of Black America and COVID-19: A Two-Year Assessment,” Black Coalition Against COVID, [blackcoalitionagainstcovid.org](https://blackcoalitionagainstcovid.org).



# Then and Now: The Spanish Flu and COVID-19



by Tonya Crawford,  
SCL Head Archivist

Over the past two plus years, journalists and historians have drawn parallels between the outbreaks of the COVID-19 and other world health crises. Reviewing SCL archival resources, this article describes the Community's experiences of the Spanish flu pandemic and reflects on similarities and differences related to COVID-19.

## A new strain of influenza

In 1918, with the world still at war, a variant of the influenza virus appeared in the United States. What became known as the Spanish flu spread through military camps first, but soon branched out to the civilian population across the world. While the initial outbreak appeared no more dangerous than a seasonal flu, a second wave in the fall of that year was a different story, and the public only slowly realized the danger.

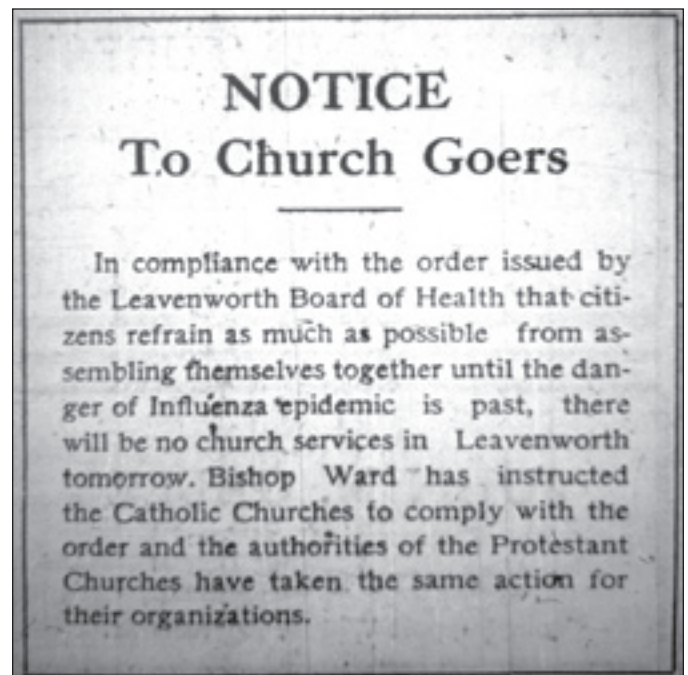
By late October, many places where the Sisters served felt the effects. As more people succumbed to the flu, the impact rippled throughout society. Towns placed bans on public funerals, affecting people's ability to fully mourn the loss of loved ones. Where funerals were allowed, they frequently were outdoors and hurried to limit interpersonal contact and minimize the spread of the virus. An example was the funeral for the first SCL to succumb to the flu, Sister Mary Ruth Ferguson.



Sister Mary Ruth Ferguson was the first of seven SCLs to succumb to the Spanish flu.

## The Sisters experience the impact

Sister Mary Ruth became afflicted on mission at St. Joseph's School, Topeka, Kan. No one realized the seriousness of her illness until the usual remedies failed, and her symptoms worsened. Rushed to nearby St. Francis Hospital, Sister died on Oct. 13, 1918. Her body was transported to Leavenworth by train for burial in Mount Olivet Cemetery. Upon arrival at the Mother House, Sister's coffin was placed on a bier at the foot of the outside steps of Annunciation Chapel and not inside the worship space. Candles stood at the head and the foot of her coffin. Sisters took shifts keeping vigil outside all day, saying prayers for the repose of her soul. At 4:00 p.m., Sister Mary Ruth's funeral service was held outdoors from the same chapel steps before she was



In an announcement in this 1918 edition of the *Leavenworth Times*, Bishop John Ward instructs Catholic churches not to offer worship services during the flu outbreak.

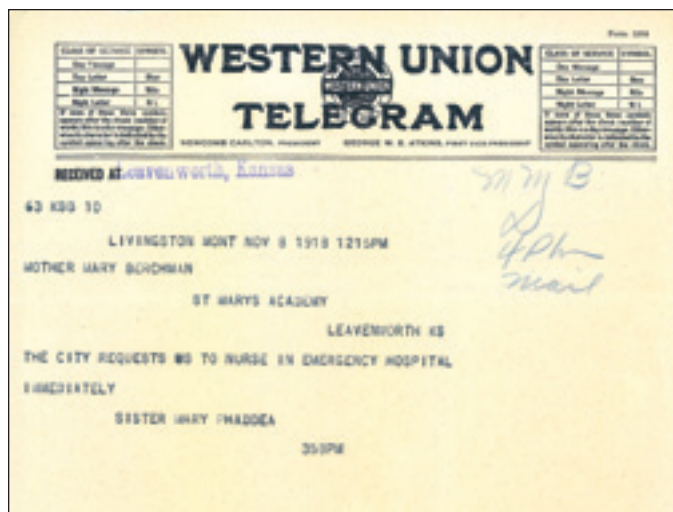
taken to the cemetery. In the words of Sister Mary Aurelia Ferry, chronicler, “[I]n a little more than 24 hours after she breathed her last, Sister Mary Ruth was in her last resting place in Mount Olivet.”

The Sisters bore witness to similar scenes in the parishes where they worked. In the midst of the 1918 flu pandemic, churches closed and people lost the comfort of familiar spiritual outlets. Bishop John Ward ordered all Catholic churches in Leavenworth closed according to the guidelines of the Leavenworth Board of Health.

Across the country, similar scenes played out. Churches and schools closed, and children were encouraged not to gather in large groups, even for play. In Leavenworth, the Sisters faced a dilemma when it came to St. Mary’s Academy. The academy was still a boarding school, so the Sisters had to decide whether to quarantine the girls there during the outbreak or send them home to wait out the virus. Eventually, the Sisters decided it would be safer for the girls to remain at the academy, but contact between students and Sisters was curtailed. Among other precautions, whereas the Sisters and girls had once shared daily Mass in Annunciation Chapel, they were no longer allowed in the chapel and attended private Masses.

## All hands on deck

With schools closed, the teaching Sisters strived to aid the hospital Sisters as best they could. The hospitals



By telegram, Sister Mary Fabia Shanahan alerts Mother Mary Berchmans Cannan that the city of Billings, Mont., requests Sisters to help staff an overflow hospital due to the spread of the virus. Note that the telegram operator misspelled the Sisters’ names.



The SCLs who lost their lives to the Spanish flu were only in their 20s and 30s, and few of these Sisters had photographs available in SCL archival files. Sister Mary Lorena Quigley was an exception.

were overflowing with patients. In Montana, city fathers opened emergency hospitals in empty school buildings in Helena and Butte and begged the Community for Sisters to staff these facilities. Those teaching Sisters who could perform nursing duties did so, while others helped in the kitchens. Other Sisters sewed hospital gowns and made surgical masks.

While the Sisters nursed in their own hospitals and emergency hospitals, they also prayed with and over the sick and the dying. To the best of their abilities, they offered not just physical comfort but also spiritual comfort, regardless of the patients’ religious affiliation.

The Sisters did this with little to no thought of their own safety. They undertook the duty to nurse and care for the sick, despite knowing they could contract the illness. Several Sisters fell sick from the flu while nursing. For example, Sister Mary Marguerite Heffernan passed away on Nov. 19 in Grand Junction, Colo., followed by her sibling, Sister Aloysius Marie, on the 24th of the same month in the same city, both having contracted influenza from their work at St. Mary’s Hospital.



This dedication to the Sisters who died as a result of the Spanish flu was painted on the wall of Annunciation Chapel on the SCL campus.

## Ministering to orphans

The rippling impact of the 1918 epidemic created new orphans. In many cases, mothers and fathers died within days of one another and left behind surviving children. For some of these children, their residence at the orphan homes was temporary while the Sisters sought surviving relatives able to care for them. Others, however, were left with no living family to assist. In either case, the Sisters assumed the care and comfort of these children.

In addition to offering support for the newly orphaned, the Sisters had to deal with the virus making its way into the orphanages they served. In Leavenworth, at the height of the disease, 114 orphan boys and six Sisters at the home were ill with the flu at one time. None of them died from the illness.

## The epidemic fades

As 1918 moved into 1919, the epidemic eased. Fewer cases appeared, and life slowly returned to something approaching “normal.” Churches reopened, schools resumed classes, the emergency overflow hospitals closed, and the crisis diminished. There was hardly anyone in any given city or town, however, who had not lost a family member, friend, or acquaintance to

the illness. Some parishes lost beloved priests. The SCL Community lost seven members to the flu. The Community remembered their devotion to service with a dedication painted on a wall in Annunciation Chapel.

In the aftermath of the Spanish flu epidemic, young women flooded schools of nursing at the Sisters’ various hospitals, inspired by what the world had experienced to enter this demanding but necessary field. The Mother House, long closed to visiting Sisters, reopened, and Annunciation Chapel once again welcomed Sisters, students, and visitors to worship services.

## Parallels and differences with COVID-19

Reading this overview of ways the Spanish flu affected the SCL Community and persons the Sisters served, recent parallels surface quickly. Word of COVID-19 began to spread in early 2020, and then the coronavirus itself spread rapidly. Its variants have persisted over two years and continue to affect the population nationally and globally.

In efforts to stem the impact of COVID-19, there were frequent quarantines, postponement of funerals and special events, and discontinuation of in-person Masses. Sisters in Ross Hall and at the Mother House spent many days in isolation to ward off exposure to the coronavirus. Factors like these affected many people across the population, although persons – including SCLs and SCL Associates – in “essential” jobs and ministries continued to work and serve.

Technology, epidemiology and pharmacology made a difference in the COVID pandemic. Electronic devices enabled interpersonal communication and computer-reliant jobs to continue through live streaming, Zoom sessions, email messages, and telephone calls and texts. Based on analysis of the coronavirus by disease specialists, treatment and prevention modalities evolved. Vaccinations followed and demonstrated efficacy.

The Spanish flu appears to have been more short-lived, whereas COVID lives on. Different variants of the coronavirus have continued to develop; new vaccines are rolled out to address them. Caution and uncertainties loom over the 2022 flu season as everyone attempts to understand what the “new normal” is and what lies ahead. 🐦



# Blessings! ¡Bendiciones!

## In Thanksgiving, a Madonna for Modern Times



In keeping with the longstanding tradition of the SCL Community that values the importance of art in worship and in life, Sisters presented the 2016-2022 SCL leadership team with a mixed media image of the Madonna and Child at the February Chapter. The work of art was an expression of gratitude for the service and leadership of Sister Constance Phelps, Community Director; Sister Eileen Haynes, First Councilor; Sisters Amy Willcott and Phyllis Stowell, Councilors; Sister Jean Anne Panisko, SCL Community Treasurer; and Hermanas Clorinda Timaná Martínez and Esther Vilela Gutiérrez, immediate past and present Directors of Latin American Missions.

Adding special significance to the gift, the SCLs commissioned Bryan Collier, artist and illustrator, and husband of Sister Constance's niece, Kristina, to create the Madonna and Child. Haley, daughter of Kristina and Bryan, was the model for the Madonna. Sister Constance will identify a location to display the artwork. She and other members of the former leadership team received copies of the image imprinted on glass. 🐦



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A publication of the  
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth

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