

HM
Sisters of the Humility of Mary

Voice

“As an apostolic congregation, we direct our energy and resources to the service of human needs through a diversity of ministries.”

– HM Constitutions #71



HM Voice

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Cover Photo:

Sr. Carla Rutter began ministering in-person to inmates at the Ohio State Penitentiary in 2016. After COVID, she refocused her ministry and now corresponds with fifteen inmates in ten facilities. Photo courtesy of Sr. Carla.

Special thanks to Sr. Joanne Gardner for proofreading

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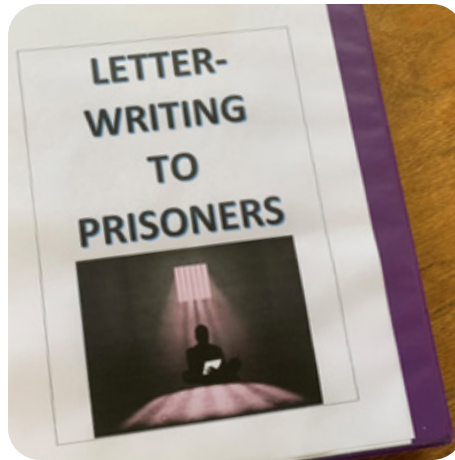
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Sustainable stewardship of natural resources is part of the corporate witness of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary. Please join us in making recycling a priority.

Dear friends,

As I write this message, the leaves are beginning to turn color, and I am reminded of the refrain of the song, “Leaves Don’t Drop They Just Let Go” by Carrie Newcomer:

*“Leaves don’t drop, they just let go,
And make space for seeds to grow,
And every season brings a change,
A tree is what a seed contains,
To die to live is life’s refrain.”*

Reflecting on these words in this season of harvest brings to mind seeds sown over the years by so many of our sisters and committed partners in faithful service to our mission. Typically most of us don’t think of the harvest as we plant the seeds. We don’t think about the results of our own letting go. But over the past weeks, I have been deeply touched by some examples of these realities.

In September, Magnificat High School inducted its first class of the Magnificat Fine Arts Hall of Fame. Included among the inductees were Sister Rose Marie Kramer (Sr. Gilmary) and Sister Paulette Kirschensteiner. Powerful tributes by former students whose lives were forever influenced by these two sisters reflected the harvest of their teaching, dedication and tremendous talent as artists themselves.

As I was leaving the event, one of the inductees, an alumna, came up to me and said, referring to Magnificat, “Sister, please always know this school is transforming the world,” ...seeds being sown and harvests rich in abundance.

On October 3, Sister Ann McManamon (Sr. Mary Patrick) was presented the 2023 Simeon Booker Award for Courage at the Tyler Historical Center in Youngstown. Serving for years as the coordinator of the Dorothy Day House of Hospitality in Youngstown, Sister Ann, I know, never thought about awards or the trees that would flourish from her profound commitment and leadership including throughout the COVID pandemic. Yet they have...another abundant harvest.

On October 14, alumnae of Our Lady of the Elms School in Akron gathered to celebrate the school’s Centennial. Of the 4000 alumnae, 100 were recognized as Women of Distinction.



Among these was Sr. Judy Dohner. As she ministered for over 25 years in Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere, she saved countless lives, nursed the sick, and served, in the midst of hurricanes, earthquakes, and mudslides, the poorest of the poor through her nursing and administrative skills. Yes indeed, profound love and courage involve tremendous letting go that does make space for seeds to grow.

When Sister Loretta Rafter (Sr. John Mary) began Life Opportunity Services in 1987, little could she imagine that in 2023 the ministry would have grown to include ten sites throughout northeastern Ohio. Nor could she have imagined Humility of Mary Housing led by her successor Fred Berry receiving this year CARF International’s accreditation, “Promoting providers’ demonstration of values and quality across the Lifespan of Millions.”

These sisters, among hundreds of Sisters of the Humility of Mary over the years, have let go, sown seeds and inspired others, who, like you our readers, carry on our mission. Indeed “God, who is mighty has done great things for us.” In true humility, we are so deeply grateful.

As you sow seeds and let go in countless ways, we wish you and your families, a blessed Thanksgiving with our grateful prayers,

Lovingly,

Sr. Carol Anne Smith, HM
Pastoral Leader



**Leadership
Team**

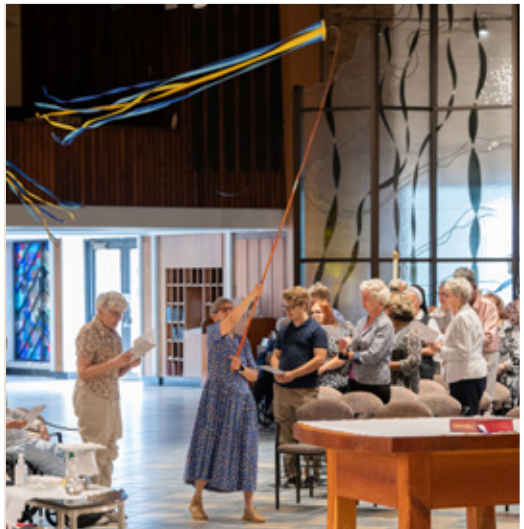
Sr. Margaret Marszal
Sr. Annette Solma

Sr. Anne Victory
Sr. Carol Anne Smith, Pastoral Leader

Summer Celebrations at the Villa

Enjoy these photos from our Silver Jubilee celebration in July and August Community Days, where we were finally able to honor all our 2020-2023 Jubilarians celebrating milestones of 60, 65, 70, 75, and 80 years.





Sister's Ministry Calls Her to Compassion

By *Kylene Kamensky*

At the end of a street-light lined driveway off Route 616 between Coitsville and Hubbard, a building complex sits back from the road, surrounded by barbed wire. The Ohio State Penitentiary is a maximum-security prison that was opened in 1998 to house level 5 inmates.

Sr. Carla Rutter drove past it every time she came to the Villa, but she never gave it much thought. It was just another structure along her route. That changed in mid-2016.

“I was driving by one day and I had the thought, ‘I wonder what this place is like?’ I wondered who was there. I wondered what their needs were,” Sr. Carla said. “I knew that Sr. Nancy Dawson from the Ursuline Sisters in Youngstown taught a class there, but I had no idea what she taught or what she did.”

After meeting with Sr. Nancy and the coordinator of the volunteer Catholic

chaplains from the Youngstown diocese to get a better idea of what their ministry at the prison entailed and how she could get involved, Sr. Carla decided it would be a good fit for her. With her background in religious education, she began teaching a class on spirituality and prayer at the prison once a week.

“Initially I was able to meet with the guys in an actual classroom,” Sr. Carla said. “It was eight desks bolted to the floor and a guard who either sat in the classroom with me or just outside the door, but it was face to face. I could reach out to them; I could give them a hug

when they came in. I never, ever felt frightened by any of the men. Then they changed the procedures, and the rule became that inmates with certain designations couldn't be in the same room and sometimes my classes were just one guy. It wasn't an efficient use of my time for classes.”

Her new classes were taught in rooms containing program booths, which were individual booths that kept the inmates separate from each other. Sr. Carla said there were six of them in the room, and they were about the size of an old telephone booth with a seat and desk area. She didn't care for this set up because it felt isolating to her as the inmates were completely enclosed.

“There was no way of having any physical contact with them, but I adjusted to it,” she said. “When I wanted to give them a sign of peace, I had put my hand up on the plexiglass and they would do the same, so even though there was no touching, there was still a sense of connection. When class was over, I would try and visit them individually at their cells. The primary purpose was to minister to the Catholic inmates and those who wanted to become Catholic or were interested in the Catholic faith.”

Sr. Carla volunteered at the penitentiary for about three years before the pandemic disrupted her ministry.

“As an apostolic congregation, we direct our energy and resources to the service of human needs through a diversity of ministries. These ministries flow from our participation in the prophetic and life-giving mission of Jesus as expressed in scripture and in the social teachings of the Church.”

– *HM Constitutions #71-72*

“COVID-19 shut me down completely,” she said. “When COVID hit, we were not able to get in there for a little over two years. When they started letting people back in, I was just really nervous because it’s like a Petri dish and I just was not feeling really comfortable about it.”

Before the shutdown, she had also been running into some issues with not having the same people in her class consistently, which made planning difficult and repetition necessary. So she prayed about it and decided to pivot into letter-writing

instead. Sr. Carla felt her time would be better used keeping in contact with inmates she had known that were transferred to other prisons, which was not something she could do if she was still volunteering in person.

“One of the laws in Ohio is that because I was a volunteer contractor at the Ohio State Penitentiary, that meant that if I got to know one of the guys that came regularly to my class and he was transferred to another facility like Lucasville, I was not allowed to keep contact with him at all—even just to say I was thinking of him or praying for him,” said Sr. Carla. “I’m sure there’s a reason behind the ruling, but it just made no sense to me because I had established some relationships with these guys. So the more I thought about it, the more I felt it would be more effective to keep written

Sr. Carla began ministering to inmates at the Ohio State Penitentiary in 2016. After the COVID shutdown, she refocused her ministry and now corresponds with inmates in ten facilities.

correspondence with them instead of continuing to teach in person because there would be continuity.”

She began her correspondence ministry in 2021 with one inmate that she had previously known through her class. Sr. Nancy provided her with a list of inmates currently at the Ohio State Penitentiary that expressed interest in having Sr. Carla write to them, and Sr. Carla also made a list of other guys who had regularly attended her classes and figured out where they had been transferred. She rents a post office box with money from a grant from the HM Community; the grant also covers other expenses like postage and devotional items. Since she can’t send items through the mail, she purchases items like palm crosses, rosaries, and bibles to be distributed at Ohio State Penitentiary by Sr. Nancy.

Sr. Carla thought she would cap her list at twelve people, but she currently corresponds with fifteen inmates across ten different facilities. She tries to write two or three letters a month and also sends cards on birthdays and holidays. The contents of her letters usually include a little bit about what’s going on the world, a little bit about her life, and she always adds a reflection she thinks is timely.

“I’ve probably sent over 800 letters in the two years I’ve been doing this,” Sr. Carla said. “Some of them write back, some of them don’t. I don’t really expect them to write back. If they do, that’s great, but it’s more to let them know that somebody is thinking about them—that somebody cares about them.

Somebody sees them as more than a number—that they’re a

continued on next page

human being. I know that for so many of them, they're just really forgotten. They're forgotten by their families. They're forgotten by society for sure. Most people don't tend to think about people who are incarcerated, they're just kind of like, oh, well, they deserved it. And in most of the cases, they all were probably in there for valid reasons. But there's a part of them that's still a child of God. They're human, you know? I just want them to know to not get caught up in all these labels that get put on you."

One of the things that Sr. Carla has come to know since beginning her prison ministry is that her experiences have stretched her compassion and allowed her to become less judgmental of others. Hearing the inmates' stories has also motivated her to get more involved in advocacy with the Catholic Mobilizing

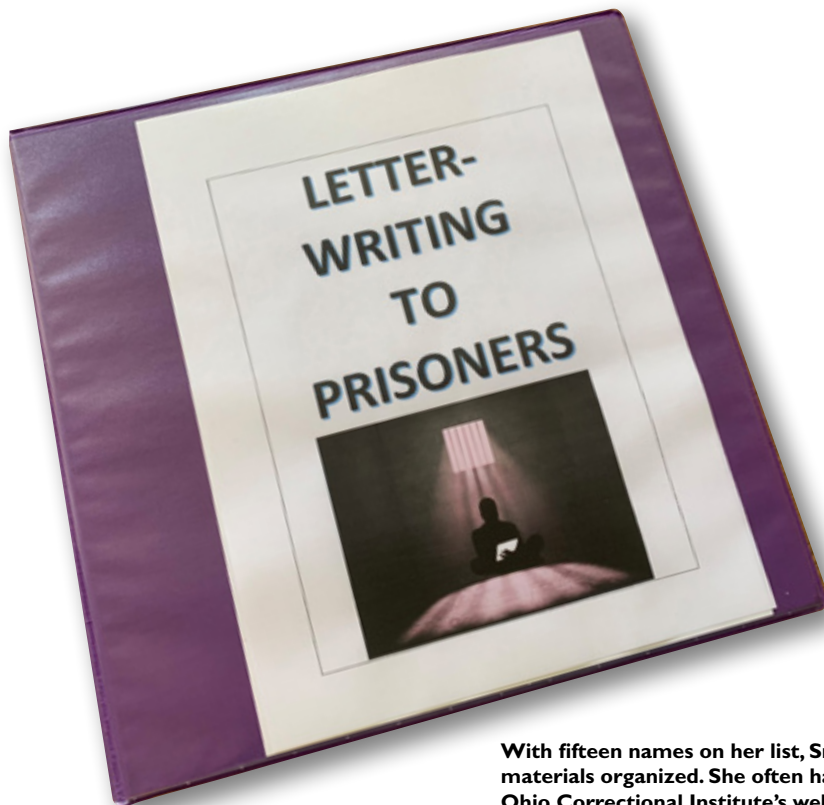
Network, which works toward the abolition of the death penalty.

"For me, it's a daily reminder to look for God in unexpected places," Sr. Carla said. "I'm so convinced that those of us who grew up Catholic, who are born and raised Catholic, we sometimes think that God is in

"For me, it's a daily reminder to look for God in unexpected places... Of course, I would expect to meet God in church. Of course, I would expect to meet God here in the [HM] community. But I think sometimes we forget that God is everywhere, so it's those unexpected places that speak to me more profoundly than the ones that I expect."

– Sr. Carla Rutter, HM

this place or in this place or should be in this place. Of course, I would expect to meet God in church. Of course, I would expect to meet God here in the [HM] community. But I think sometimes we forget that God is everywhere, so it's those unexpected places that speak to me more profoundly than the ones that I expect. I went into the prison, and I met God there—I really did. And now these guys have really become like brothers to me. I'm really grateful to the community for allowing me to do this ministry and especially for the grant that helps me with materials for the letter writing and the devotional items I distribute. I'm grateful for being a part of this community that's molded me to be able to do this ministry."



With fifteen names on her list, Sr. Carla needs to keep her materials organized. She often has to look up names on the Ohio Correctional Institute's website to make sure none of her correspondents has been moved to a different facility.

Gospel Values Drive Sister's Social Advocacy Ministry

By *Kylene Kamensky*

From participating in protests to collaborating with other organizations to tackle issues like human trafficking or advocating for an end to gun violence, HM Sisters respond to the needs of the times with vision, courage, and generosity to embrace the diversity of all peoples, work with others to proclaim the gospel message, use their resources to meet needs, especially those of people who are poor, and do justice.

Individually, affecting social change can be a daunting task. Sr. Josie Chrosniak dedicates her ministry to amplifying that message and collaborating with other organizations on behalf of the HM Community to help to affect that change.

Her journey to social advocacy began while she was teaching. An educator by training, Sr. Josie said that a thought came to her while teaching a class one day, and she began to wonder what she could do to help people facing societal issues like homelessness and poverty. As she expanded her focus to include teaching theology, that thought not



Sr. Josie (front row, second from right) attends an immigration rally in Cleveland a few years ago.

only persisted, but became more insistent. But it was while she was working with Heartbeats, an HM sponsored ministry which focused on developing world countries, fair wages, and how workers were being

treated, that the call to pursue that path crystallized.

“Working with Heartbeats helped me realize that unless we change systems, the issues are not going to

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“Individually and corporately, we reflect on our experiences in mission and choose our ministries in light of the gospel mandate, our founders’ preferential love for those who are poor, the tradition of our congregation, the changing needs of the world, and our resources, abilities, and limitations. Our institutions, as well as our individual ministries, become a sign of contradiction and a force for social change when they use authority for service and promote justice in relationships and in the use of resources.”

—HM Constitutions #77-78



From L to R: Sr. Josie Chrosniak, Sr. Barbara Wincik, Sr. Jean Orsuto, and Sr. Ann Solma.

change,” said Sr. Josie. “So around 2000 I got involved with Pax Christi USA, the Catholic Peace Movement that committed to nonviolence and to promoting a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world. That drew me deeper into wanting to do more, wanting to be an advocate for changing systems, for really making a difference. That blossomed into the work that I’m doing now.”

That work involves helping to coordinate the HM Community’s response to peace and justice issues as part of the HM Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation team, serving on the HM Racial Justice committee, co-chairing the HM Laudato Si’ committee, serving on the Shareholder Advocacy committee, and serving as coordinator for the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility’s (ICCR) Region VI Coalition for Responsible Investing. She also represents the HM Community with several collaborative justice groups, like the Cleveland Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation group, the Ohio Sisters Justice Network, and the newly created Nuns Against Gun Violence.

“My time is spent mostly focusing on responding to the needs that surround us, especially climate change, racism, poverty, gun violence, and the like,” Sr. Josie said. “Unless we change the systems and policies that cause these problems, they will continue to exist. So through the focus of our justice groups, we try to engage legislation and legislators to change the policies that encourage the issues that we face. Another part of my work is with an organization called the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility. ICCR, as it is familiarly known, is a coalition of over 300 faith and values-based investors who view shareholder engagement with corporations as a powerful catalyst for change.”

Sr. Josie spends her days networking with members of ICCR and the collaborative justice groups, either

through Zoom or in person. They share information, develop plans of action, engage both corporations and legislators, develop shareholder resolutions, and pull together educational resources for distribution.

ICCR was founded over 50 years ago, and the HM Sisters have been involved with the organization since its early days. ICCR approaches investing from a different perspective than other investment groups. While most investment advisors may look at factors like company size and profit margins, ICCR focuses on, among other things, the ethics of the company’s policies. ICCR members leverage their investments to engage corporations to promote responsible and sustainable business practices through speaking with management and introducing shareholder resolutions that can be voted on at the businesses’ annual meetings.

“With ICCR, our guiding principle as shareholders is that sustainable corporations must look beyond the next earnings report to account for the full impact of their business on society,” Sr. Josie said of the organization. “We as shareholders and stakeholders must call CEOs and other corporate leaders to action that helps to focus on the workers and the communities where they operate. I’m privileged to currently be one of our community representatives to this

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– Sr. Josie Chrosniak, HM

Some ways Sr. Josie suggests others can get involved in social advocacy include educating themselves about social justice issues, writing a letter or email or calling their representatives, joining local peace and justice groups, exercising their right to vote, and using their purchasing power to buy fair trade items or to shop at stores that are concerned about their workers.

organization. Through it, we engage corporations whose policies affect worker rights, child labor, fair wages, racial and gender equity, and health and justice.”

Some of the resolutions draw more support than others. Sr. Josie said around a 30% support response is normal for a first-time resolution. While that might not be enough to pass, Sr. Josie also said that it can bring investor awareness to an issue with company policies and a second attempt might draw more support.

We're In It for the Long Haul

“One of the things we have to realize, whether it's addressing issues from the justice perspective or the corporation

investor perspective, is that systemic change takes time,” Sr. Josie said. “It's a long-term commitment. We've been engaging some of the corporations for over 20 years. When we're dealing with corporations, the CEOs are accountable to their boards. They may agree with some of what we're saying, but they may have members on their board that don't, so we make baby steps and that's good. The other thing that we're realizing is that many of our ICCR members and our justice members are probably the only consistent people at the table with some of these corporations or legislators. Some legislators are in office for one or two terms, and then they're gone. We're at the table

for 10 or 12 years, so we provide the consistency for the conversation.”

Money Talks, Ours Speaks for Justice

Sr. Josie said that using nonviolent language in these interactions is key to establishing rapport with legislators and corporations.

“We have to be sensitive to what they're saying and call them to also be non-violent in their actions,” she said. “This is what our values call us to, and we're challenging the legislators and the corporations to see those values. The work I do leads me to understand the gospel message more deeply. It helps me to understand what Jesus would do, and the call of the Beatitudes or of some of the prophets. So it has deepened that part of my faith, and in another way, it invites all of us in this whole network to proclaim that faith. The investments that we have, we use to make a difference. Our community is committed totally to making change, whether it's through direct service or through systemic change. One of the phrases I use with the other 16 communities that I work with is ‘money talks and ours speaks for justice.’ I think people need to realize that's what our investments are all about. That's what our mission statement calls us to.”

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Villa Land Committee: Lasting Contributions to the HM Story

In the spirit of the stewardship of their founders, the Sisters of the Humility of Mary have always shown reverence for the places provided for them by God’s providence. When the community came to America, Father Begel, Mother Anna, and all the sisters worked tirelessly to make wise choices about the land that would sustain them and eventually become the Villa. From creating space for crops to selectively harvesting timber to sell to the railroad, the sisters were guided by principles of simplicity and sustainability.

This heritage of working with the land was passed down through the generations of sisters who followed and established a core value of the community to care for creation. Sr. Barbara O’Donnell brought this heritage to the forefront when she

established EverGreen Ministries in the 1990s, which focused on Eco-spirituality and Eco-justice. The ministry offered programs and activities to help people connect with nature and further expanded the HM focus on care for creation. EverGreen

was eventually folded into Villa Maria Education and Spirituality Center to ensure the continuing focus on principles of Earth Spirituality.

Villa Land Committee Established

Continuing on the path begun by the founders, and guided by the HM Constitutions “...to live simply, supporting one another through our work and using the goods of the earth in responsible stewardship” (*HM Constitutions #30*), the Villa Land Committee was formed in January 2008. Its purpose was to develop objectives and strategies outlined in the HM Financial Strategic Plan to “preserve and maintain our land in a just, sustainable, and peaceful way so that it continues to provide a special place for spirituality, education, sustainability, and simplicity.” With such a goal in mind, the importance of the committee at that time could not be overstated.

Two subcommittees were formed—Land Ethic and Principles of Sustainability and Villa Land Conservation—to develop a land ethic and principles of sustainability and to research ways that Villa land could be protected into the future, respectively. A third subcommittee—Shale Gas Drilling Education—was formed in 2011 to address the shale gas drilling that was becoming prevalent in western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio with the rise in interest in the Marcellus Shale formation.



Sr. Barbara O’Donnell, HM, (left) and Frank Romeo (middle) were among the first members of the HM Land Committee.

Committee Impact

During the 15 years of its existence, Land Committee members led by example, seeking out educational opportunities for themselves, the rest of the HM Community, and the public. They presented their findings at community meetings; organized educational displays on various topics like water conservation, recycling, plastic pollution, and climate change; made recommendations to the HM Community at large and to HM Leadership; and established the groundwork for the future conservation of Villa land.

Among their many projects was the development of the HM Land Ethic and Principles of Sustainability. This document encapsulates the sisters' commitment to the care of the land the congregation is responsible for, guides the community's decisions relating to Villa land, and "affirms the prophetic call to ecological sustainability and nonviolence in all of our relationships." A banner featuring the land ethic is on public display at the Villa.

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As mentioned previously, the committee took great initiative when the shale gas boom was beginning in 2011. They planned and hosted a series of town hall style meetings to educate both the HM Community and the public about the subject. They engaged a variety of speakers to offer their perspectives, including environmentalists, attorneys, public officials, property owners, oil and gas representatives, socially responsible investors, and educators from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. Committee members also created a brochure titled Reasons for Not Fracking at Villa Maria to further explain the community's stance on the issue.

Over the years, committee members have invited various experts to conduct studies on Villa flora and fauna... a biologist from the Cleveland Museum of Natural History documented the first occurrence in Lawrence County, Pa., of a rare tree called the Pumpkin Ash on Villa land. Also found during that study were a rare beetle and the presence of the Shumard Oak tree, which the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program considers an endangered species.

The Villa Land Committee initiated several studies of Villa soil, air, and water, including the wetlands and bedrock, to establish baseline values

so any impact on Villa land from increased drilling activity in the surrounding area can be monitored.



This invaluable resource will have significance far into the future.

Over the years, committee members have invited various experts to conduct studies on Villa flora and fauna, with several exciting discoveries coming to light. As reported in the summer 2019 issue of the *HM Voice*, a biologist from the Cleveland Museum of Natural History documented the first occurrence in Lawrence County, Pa., of a rare tree called the Pumpkin Ash on Villa land. Also found during that study were a rare beetle and the presence of the Shumard Oak tree, which the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program considers an endangered species.

Expanding the Call

Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si' On Care for Our Common Home*, published in 2015, resonates deeply with the HM Community—in part because of the community's heritage and connection to the Villa land. On the fifth anniversary of that letter, the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform was



launched as a call to all people to commit to work together to address the ecological crisis currently facing us. The HM *Laudato Si'* Committee was formed in 2021 in response to this call and now coordinates issues

of land justice as the congregation continues work with selected conservancies to achieve the goal of preservation of Villa land according to the HM Land Ethic and Principles of Sustainability.

Thank you to all who have served on the Villa Land Committee and/or the three subcommittees over the years:

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Julie Arena | Maura DeNuccio | John Moreira | Sr. Mary Slick |
| Sr. Jean Babeaux (deceased) | Sr. Millie Ely | Sr. Barbara O'Donnell | Sr. Ann Solma |
| Dr. Dorothy Bassett | Sr. Maryann Golonka | Frank Romeo | Reneé Weber |
| Sr. Janet Burkhart | Sr. Mary Elizabeth Henaughan | Sr. Marilyn Ruffin (deceased) | Kevin Weber |
| Sr. Sharon Cahill | Sr. Toby Lardie | Sr. Susan Schorsten | Sr. Barbara Wincik |
| Sr. Mary Cunningham (deceased) | Eileen Mohr | Sr. Alma Siffrin (deceased) | |



Villa Sisters Spotlight

By *Kylene Kamensky*

Catholic Sisters don't retire, they merely change ministries. In this issue, we highlight three more "retired" sisters living at the Villa and the ways they are still serving and listening to where God is calling them.

Sr. Margaret Daniels (Sr. M. Rebecca)

Sr. Margaret Daniels may have retired from teaching in 1997, but she remembers her years as an educator and guidance counselor with a special fondness. She taught secondary education in all the schools the HMs staffed except Villa Maria High School, including Magnificat High School in Rocky River, St. John in Ashtabula, Cardinal Mooney in Youngstown, Lourdes Academy and Lourdes-St. Stephen in Cleveland, Central Catholic in Canton, and Erieview Catholic in Cleveland. Some of the schools she even returned to up to three times!

In her early days, Sr. Margaret taught English, speech, drama, religion, British literature, American literature, and world literature. She also branched out into mythology, visual communication, film study, and Black literature over the years.

"The highlight of my ministry has always been the entirely wonderful young men and young women I taught or counseled and the truly magnificent partners in ministry I served with in so many institutions and settings," Sr. Margaret said. "I saw my students as people who were

"The highlight of my ministry has always been the entirely wonderful young men and young women I taught or counseled and the truly magnificent partners in ministry I served with in so many institutions and settings."

— Sr. Margaret Daniels, HM



going to have whole lifetimes and eternities, and that made me honest as a teacher."

Sr. Margaret was in college studying to be a radio broadcaster when she received her vocation to religious life. She always wanted to give everything to God, so when she attended a retreat between semesters at the Christian Life Center on Lakeshore with her best friend, a Lourdes

“The world needs a greater enlightenment of hope. People need to grasp their role of loving one another as Christ has loved us and continues to love us. I get to pray for this to ask God’s abundance on the world.”

— Sr. Margaret Daniels, HM

Academy graduate, she observed her friend in prayer and said to God that she [her friend] knows how to pray.

“I’m sure He thought that was funny because He does know,” explained Sr. Margaret. “So I said, I would like to know how to pray also. Watch what you ask for—in 20 minutes, I was not only taught how to pray, but I also had a vocation to religious life. Just like that. And I would never have considered it, but I could see the life that He could see for me, and I didn’t question it. I didn’t know what community I was called to for about a month, and then I discerned that it was the HMs.”

Since then, prayer has been an important part of Sr. Margaret’s life. Before she retired from teaching, she spent a year at the Youngstown Diocesan House of Prayer as a member of the core team. There she worked with sisters from four different communities. Through discernment with her spiritual director, she decided to dedicate herself to the HM Prayer Ministry full-time.

Sr. Margaret currently spends her time in contemplative prayer for the HM Prayer Ministry and ministers to sisters and staff in Villa Maria Commons.

“I could not be more grateful than to have had so many wonderful years serving the people of God with a variety of ministries I’ve been called to over the years, and I will be ever grateful to the community for recognizing my call together with me,” she said. “The world needs a greater enlightenment of hope. People need to grasp their role of loving one another as Christ has loved us and continues to love us. I get to pray for this to ask God’s abundance on the world. God hears these prayers of compassion and love, and He takes the needs into His attention. You may be sure that all such prayers motivated by love have great effect in this world.”



Sr. Marguerite Holz (Sr. Lorraine)

Sr. Marguerite Holz followed her older sister, Sr. Mary Hilary, into religious life, much to her mother’s chagrin.

“God gave me the vocation when I was in high school,” she said. “I can’t remember exactly when, but by the time I was a junior I was pretty sure. My sister was seven years older, and I chose this order because of her.”

She began her ministry in education teaching business, typing, shorthand, and accounting classes at Central Catholic in Canton and Magnificat High School in Rocky River. Sr. Marguerite eventually added guidance counselor to her credentials and served as one at both schools.

After spending a year at the Youngstown Diocesan House of Prayer in the mid-1970s, she found her path drawn to providing spiritual direction.

“That was such a wonderful experience,” Sr. Marguerite said of her time at the House of Prayer. “We were in a prayerful setting all day. We saw individual people who came for a day or more and met with an individual

continued on next page

director, usually once a day. We would suggest prayer passages for them to pray according to what was going on [in their life]. I was encouraged by directors and by directees to continue in the work, and so I did, and I loved it.”

After leaving education in the early 80s, she pursued the seeds that had been planted when she served at the House of Prayer and became a spiritual director, offering her services at Villa Maria Retreat Center and later at Villa Maria Education and Spirituality Center (VMESC).

“Seeing God at work and seeing people delight in God was the best part of my ministry,” said Sr. Marguerite of her years offering spiritual direction. “It was just awesome. It really strengthened my own faith and helped it grow.”

After formally retiring from VMESC in 2011, Sr. Marguerite volunteered at St. Angela Merici Parish in Youngstown while also serving the HM Prayer Ministry.

Sr. Marguerite keeps herself busy these days with the HM Prayer Ministry and a variety of other activities, including needlework, knitting, and crochet.

“Seeing God at work and seeing people delight in God was the best part of my ministry. It was just awesome. It really strengthened my own faith and helped it grow.”

—Sr. Marguerite Holz, HM

Sr. Cheryl Samblanet (Sr. Mary Howard)

Sr. Cheryl Samblanet has always had a love of nature. Growing up on a farm in Louisville, Ohio, holds fond memories for her and laid the groundwork for her ministry once she entered religious life.

An incident that has stuck with her to this day is a story she tells of the time her family’s barn caught on fire. The local priest brought over food for the volunteer firefighters extinguishing the blaze and then stayed at the house with her and her siblings to offer them comfort.

“He came up and told stories, read a book to us, and he stayed for a long time before he went home,” Sr. Cheryl said. “But that to me was the church in action. It was an example of how to minister—take care of the needs, but look for other needs that maybe aren’t apparent.”

Sr. Cheryl followed that example of taking care of the needs of people and the examples of the HM Sisters who taught her at St. Louis Church when she followed her call to religious life and entered the HM Community.

“I wanted to go to the Villa for high school, but my dad said he couldn’t afford to do that for all of us. He believed that what he did for one [of us], he would do for the rest. So I went to Louisville High School instead,” she said. “But it was really the sisters at the parish that kept pulling me; I just experienced them as fun-loving and down-to-earth. The influence and pull for me was always with Humility of Mary.”

Sr. Cheryl began her ministry in education teaching first graders at St. Raphael in Bay Village and St. John the Baptist in Canton. She moved into religious education and spent the next 18 years as a religious education coordinator and director of religious education at several parishes in the Youngstown diocese. It was during this time she discerned she was called to formation ministry, and so she joined the HM Membership and Affiliation team.

She took a sabbatical after ten years of working in formation ministry, and when she was ready, God provided her the opportunity to minister with a population she had always wanted to serve.

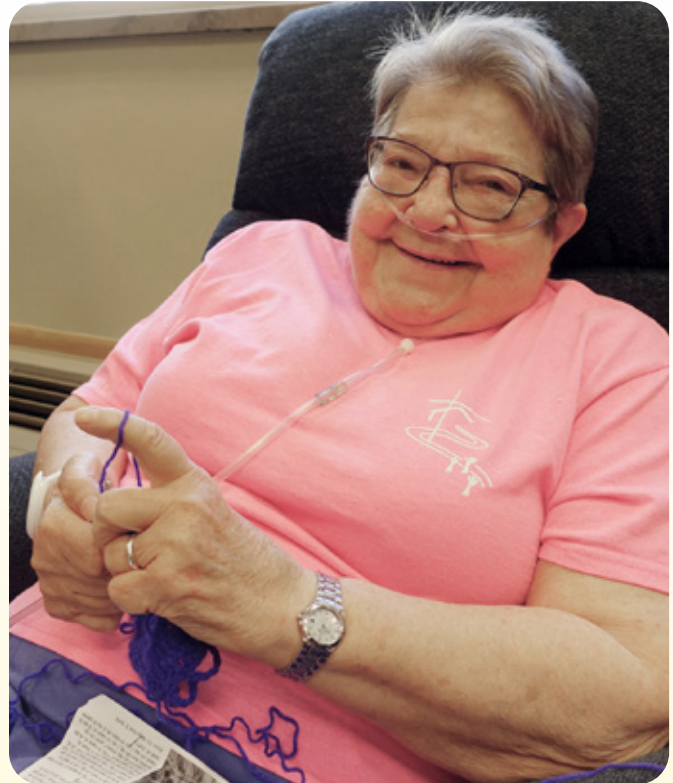
Since retiring from active ministry, Sr. Cheryl keeps herself busy with the HM Prayer Ministry and the prayer shawls ministry she and other Villa Sisters began in 2015.

“I always wanted to serve among the rural poor because I grew up on a farm and never had the chance [to do so],” Sr. Cheryl said. “When I was ready to go back into ministry, Sr. Ruthmary [Powers] and Sr. Anne Victory saw the ad for [a pastoral position in] West Virginia. It was to be a presence to the people of St. Elizabeth’s and the people of Wirt County. I loved the wording of that. It was just what I would want, and I wanted to give back a little to the rural poor before I wasn’t doing active ministry. So that’s how I got there, and it was a wonderful experience. The people were delightful—more laid back. People who loved people who were willing to not be nosy, but give a hand when it was needed.”

She served the people of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Mission for 11 years before returning to the Villa. When asked the most important thing she learned through her ministries, Sr. Cheryl said it was the gift of listening and being present to people.

Since retiring from active ministry, Sr. Cheryl keeps herself busy with the HM Prayer Ministry and the prayer shawls ministry she and other Villa Sisters began in 2015. She also helps out in The Villa Shoppe.

“The Villa is such a beautiful place, and I have always found it a rich place for prayer,” Sr. Cheryl said. “I like to go out on the porch and just pray in the midst of God’s beauty.”



Sr. Cheryl shows off the latest batch of completed shawls and blankets. They will be donated to various local organizations.

Items of Interest



Sr. Carolyn Capuano [second from right] is pictured with several St. Michael volunteers and the future homeowners on the first day of construction when the foundation was tarred and braced.

Parish Community Sponsors Habitat Build in Southeast Canton

Sr. Carolyn Capuano currently ministers as a Pastoral Associate for Social Justice at St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Canton, Ohio. This year, in honor of the 70th anniversary of the parish, St. Michael initiated a Catholic Community Build with Habitat for Humanity of East Central Ohio. The four parishes of St. Michael, St. Paul, North Canton, Holy Spirit, Uniontown and St. Francis of Assisi, Canton came together to financially sponsor and actually build a home in urban southeast Canton. The Habitat model is recognized as truly a “hand up” and is a Christian ministry.



Sisters Attend Parish Centenary Celebration

HM Sisters attended a celebration in late August to observe the 100th anniversary of St. Brendan Parish in Youngstown, Ohio. Among those in attendance were Sr. Zoe Ann Reiter, Sr. Sharon Cahill, Sr. Susanne Gill, Sr. Ardath Blake, Sr. Carla Rutter, Sr. Janet Burkhart, and Sr. Marjorie Haidet, who had all served at St. Brendan in the past. Sr. Marjorie was recognized for the many years she ministered as principal of the school and received flowers in appreciation. Approximately 70 HMs have ministered at St. Brendan during its 100-year history.

[standing, from left to right]: Sr. Zoe Ann Reiter, Sr. Sharon Cahill, Sr. Susanne Gill, Sr. Ardath Blake, Sr. Carla Rutter, and Sr. Janet Burkhart; [seated]: Sr. Marjorie Haidet



Seated left to right: Bucky Richards, Patsy Richards, Robin Shura, Anne York Romanoff, Joyce Muoio, Gerrie DiMatteo, Jan Huter, and Darlene Morrison.

Standing left to right: Melinda Smith, Deborah Zawislan, Reneé Weber, Kevin Weber, Maura DeNuccio, Kathleen Perry, Clara Kana, Rosie Wilson, Rita McCoy, Judy Lisko, and Sr. Toby Lardie.

HM Associate Community Picnic

Eighteen HM Associates and some guests gathered for a fun-filled picnic in Lourdes Assembly room at Villa Maria Community Center on a beautiful sunny Sunday in July.

Hot dogs, burgers, and all the fixings were provided, and each associate brought a delicious dish to share. HM Associate Kathleen Perry created watermelon centerpieces which were not only beautiful, but the scooped-out center could be eaten!

Clara Kana, Associate-at-large, led a special summertime prayer and provided several engaging games which added to the festivities. Each associate took home a lovely gerbera daisy.

The HM Associate spirit was alive in the many wonderful stories and heartfelt memories that were shared.



Sister Recognized for Her Service at Organization

Sr. Madeline Muller was recognized for her service at Fatima Family Center at their 2023 Legacy Luncheon on May 18 in Cleveland. Sr. Madeline volunteered with the senior programs, community meal service, and bible study programs during her time there.



Sister Assists Hospital Auxiliary to Meet Needs

Sr. Margaret Ebin has volunteered in various capacities at Mercy Health-St. Elizabeth Youngstown Hospital since she retired from serving as director of ambulatory clinics. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way Sr. Margaret would continue her volunteer work as the volunteer program was discontinued at that time. As a member of the Hospital Auxiliary, she began sewing masks. When the need was no longer critical, Sr. Margaret offered to assist the Auxiliary's pillow committee to sew covers for the pillows given to surgical patients to bring comfort to their recoveries. Sr. Barbara Herrmann also assists with the project.

Kathy Detec, the Auxiliary member who began the project, said the idea sprang from her own surgery experience at another hospital. She was able to speak with that hospital's Auxiliary and receive the instructions for making the pillow covers. "It was a case of auxiliaries helping each other out," Kathy said.

Since implementing the program 14 years ago, the Hospital Auxiliary has made 3,000 pillows for patient use. "It's a minor thing," Sr. Margaret said, "but it gives me an opportunity to send a little prayer with each cover to ask God's blessing to bring gentle comfort and good health for the individual using the pillow."



Sisters Make Donation to Benefit Local 4-H Youth

Sr. Margaret Ebin (right), assisted by Sr. Linda Valasik, collected extra sewing supplies from the Assumption Hall Third Floor Sewing Room to donate to the fourth annual Fabric Frenzy hosted by The Ohio State University Extension Mahoning County in May. They organized and categorized the supplies, and Sr. Janet Burkhart delivered the boxes to Mahoning County OSU Extension Office. The sewing supplies are purchased for a freewill donation to the 4-H Youth of Mahoning County during the event. The supplies ranged from fabric and zippers to needles, pins, buttons, thread, and sewing tools. The 4-H youth learn skills often neglected and gain confidence in their abilities as a result of their participation in sewing projects. The projects will eventually be presented to judges and will offer youth recognition for their hard work.



Arizona Border Immersion Trip

In July, a group of rising juniors and seniors from Magnificat High School traveled to the United States-Mexico border in Tucson, Arizona, for an annual Border Immersion Trip. The journey was facilitated by Borderlinks, an organization that invites students to deepen their understanding of borders, migration, and social justice rooted in Catholic Social Teaching. Students learned firsthand about the difficulties of migration and life along the border; visited Southside Presbyterian Church, hiked through the desert, and walked along the border wall. Afterwards, students came together to reflect further on their experience by gathering at St. Leonard's Retreat Center in Avon, Ohio, for a day of reflection, prayer, community building, and action planning.

Sister Honored for Work in Youngstown

In conjunction with Nonviolence Week in Ohio, a local organization, Mahoning Valley Sojourn to the Past, honors the courage of those involved in the Civil Rights movement in the South. This is done through the Simeon Booker award. Sr. Ann McManamon was the local recipient honored with the 2023 Simeon Booker Award for Courage on October 3 at the Tyler History Center in Youngstown. She received the award for her work as coordinator of the Dorothy Day House. Congratulations, Sr. Ann!





Inaugural Class of Magnificat High School's Fine Arts Hall of Fame Includes HM Sisters

Congratulations to Sr. Rose Marie Kramer and Sr. Paulette Kirschensteiner who were inducted into the inaugural class of Magnificat High School's Fine Arts Hall of Fame on September 22. The Fine Arts Hall of Fame was established "to recognize and honor alumnae, faculty, and friends of Magnificat High School who have distinguished themselves in one or more of the various fields of the Fine Arts. Members of the Magnificat Fine Arts Hall of Fame exemplify the Magnificat Mission to learn, lead, and serve in the spirit of Mary's Magnificat."



Photos courtesy of Magnificat High School and Sr. Margaret Marszal, HM.



Young Adult Ministry

A group of young adults gathered at Sr. Mary Ann Spangler and Sr. Jeanne Thurin's home on August 30 for a simple supper and conversation. "We started out getting to know each other and by the end of the evening we were friends looking forward to our next time together," said Sr. Jeanne. From bringing snacks and home-made bread, to taking photos and scooping ice cream, everyone contributed toward the fun evening. Plans were shared for the upcoming Gospel Reflection and Women's Faith Sharing groups. Stay tuned!



Sister Brings NETWORK to Youngstown

NETWORK Lobby hosted a Care Not Cuts Rally at Youngstown's St Patrick Church in May. Fred Berry, president/CEO of Humility of Mary Housing, Inc. (HMHI) was one of the speakers and several HM Sisters attended. Sr Eilis McCulloh, HM, who serves as the Education and Organizing Specialist at NETWORK, helped host the event. She also co-hosts a podcast called Just Politics, which covers current political issues and their intersections with Catholic social justice teaching. The podcast is a joint venture of NETWORK and *U.S. Catholic* magazine.



Sister Recognized As Woman of Distinction

Congratulations to Sr. Judy Dohner who was recognized as a Woman of Distinction by her alma mater, Our Lady of the Elms School in Akron, on October 14 at the school's centennial celebration. Sr. Judy was one of 100 alumnae honored at the event.



Sr. Anne Victory (front row, second from left) with the organization's original board members.

Organization Celebrates 10th Anniversary

US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT), a national network of Catholic Sisters and their colleagues working to end human trafficking, celebrated its 10th anniversary September 28-30, 2023, with an education conference in Chicago. Membership includes over 113 religious congregations, 11 coalitions and organizations, and 62 individual members. The HM Community has been a member since its founding in 2013, and Sr. Anne Victory is a founding board member and past president of the organization. USCSAHT engages in education, advocacy and survivor support services, and is part of the Talitha Kum, the global network of religious congregations working this issue. The anniversary celebration included revealing the new, more inclusive and welcoming name of the organization, Alliance to End Human Trafficking.

Upcoming Programs

The following programs are provided by Villa Maria Education and Spirituality Center (VMESC). Please call 724-964-8886 for more information or visit www.vmesc.org. Additional programs and speaker information can be found on the VMESC website. Visit vmesc.org and sign up for our e-mail list to receive info about all upcoming offerings.

Empty Bowl: Quest for the True Self The Holiness of Self-Acceptance

Presented by Sr. Cheryl Rose, HM

Dates: December 8–10

Cost: \$205

In this Empty Bowl retreat we will consider Thomas Merton's concept of True Self/False Self, and the necessary path of spiritual growth that leads us to acceptance and compassion for the self. The retreat, which is the 10th in this series, includes input, time for personal reflection, guided exercises, prayer and some gentle sharing. It is not necessary to have attended other Empty Bowl retreats.

Taizé Prayer

Music Ministers: Daniel Laginya & Barb Zorn

Date: December 12

Taizé is a form of Christian prayer originating from the ecumenical Christian community of Taizé in France. One is invited to rest in God through the singing of psalm verses and other simple chants, alternating with periods of silent reflection. It is a time to "come away and rest for a while" through experience of the simplicity and depth of the Word of God.

TaNaK Studies for Christians Jesus, the Torah Made Flesh

Dates: November 15, December 20 & January 17

Cost: Free Will Offering

This Bible education series is an opportunity for Christians to reflect on the Scriptures using video resources from various Scripture scholars. Working closely with the biblical text, we will explore the methods and insights of the sages of the Jewish tradition, their love for Torah, their eye for detail, their incisive questions, debates, and creative storytelling (midrash). TaNaK is the total Jewish bible. In person and via Zoom.

Coffee & Contemplation

Dates: December 19, January 16 & February 20

Cost: \$10

Hosted in person and via Zoom
from 10am – noon



Save the Date for these 2024 Programs

Weekend Retreat with Dena DeLuco

January 13-14

Weekend Retreat with Dena DeLuco and Lee Ann Heltzel

February 9-11

Day Retreat with Dan Rotnem

March 2

Day Program with Dena DeLuco

April 6

Conference Retreat with Anne Kertz Kernion

May 3-5

Villa Maria-thon 5K

June 1

Conference with Kathleen Duffy, SSJ

June 9-13

Weeklong Individually Directed Retreat

June 16-23

In Loving Memory




Sister Dorothy Zwick formerly Sr. Mary Zita, entered eternal life on May 9. She was 95. Sr. Dorothy dedicated her decades of faith-filled service to ministering in healthcare, administration, and congregational leadership. She earned her diploma from the St. Elizabeth Hospital School of Nursing and worked as a nurse at the Rose-Mary Center in Euclid and as a nursing supervisor at St. Joseph Hospital in Lorain before returning to the Youngstown area.

Sr. Dorothy served as Director of St. Elizabeth Hospital School of Nursing from 1961-1989 and helped train generations of nurses in her time there. She generously served three terms in HM Congregational Leadership as General Secretary and served as Administrator of Villa Maria Community Center from 1989-2002. During the 1980s, Sr. Dorothy was part of the Constitutions writing committee.

She began a rewarding ministry in pastoral ministry at St. Patrick Parish in Youngstown in 2002, where she served until 2020. Sr. Dorothy joined her sisters as part of the HM prayer ministry until her death.

She is survived by her sisters in the Humility of Mary Congregation and nieces and nephews and their families. She was preceded in death by her parents, Roman and Clara (Donant) Zwick and her sisters, Eulalia Heck, Zita Zwick and Ruth C. Wirtz.

Memorial contributions may be sent to the
Sisters of the Humility of Mary, Development Office, PO Box 534, Villa Maria PA 16155



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Help us to continue providing more abundant life for God's people by including the Sisters of the Humility of Mary in your will. To receive your free personal finance planner and information on the Heritage Society, please return the form below:

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“As companions on our journey in faith, we deepen our communion through prayer and reflection together, faithfulness to the action of the Spirit in our lives and celebration of our shared life and heritage.”

—HM Constitutions #66



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