

LAURELS

Ursuline Sisters of the Central Province

Summer 2020



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New Ursuline Leadership Team Missioned

The Ursuline Sisters of the Central Province missioned a new leadership team with a prayer service on June 9 at the Ursulines' provincial offices in St. Louis. Serving for the next five years are Sister Elisa Ryan, provincial; Sister Jean Hopman, councilor; and Sister Peggy Moore, councilor.

Sister Elisa is a graduate of Ursuline Academy in St. Louis. Her Ursuline ministry has included high school education, as a teacher and principal. She previously served in leadership for the Ursulines, first in the Central Province and then on their international leadership team in Rome. Most recently, she has been vocation director for the Ursulines of the United States provinces.

Sister Peggy is a graduate of Ursuline Academy, Springfield, Illinois. She has served as a high school science, math and theology teacher as well as in high school campus ministry. In addition to teaching,

she has served the Central Province in leadership as a local prioress and on the provincial council. She returns to ministry in the province after 10 years as a theology teacher at Ursuline Academy in St. Louis.

Sister Jean grew up in San Francisco and entered the Ursulines of the Western Province in Santa Rosa, California. Fluent in Spanish, she ministered with the Spanish-speaking population in various settings for 20 years. She later was missioned to Chicago and transferred

to the Central Province. She served as co-director of vocation ministry for the United States Provinces until she was called to full-time province leadership in 2017.



Serving on the Ursulines' 2020-25 leadership team are, from left, Sister Jean Hopman, councilor; Sister Peggy Moore, councilor; and Sister Elisa Ryan, provincial.



Parades have never been more popular than during this pandemic!



At left, Sister Mary Troy greets a parade of well-wishers on her birthday as students, co-workers and alumnae of Ursuline Academy in Dallas feted her with a drive-through celebration. Helping her gather balloons, flowers and other birthday offerings is Sister Glenda Bourgeois. At right, Sister Ginger Cirone holds a sign for Sister Carla Dolce at a parade for residents of Our Lady of Wisdom in New Orleans.

A Message from the Provincial

My mother was born in St. Louis in the summer of 1918, to parents already blessed with three small children. By fall of that year, the Spanish flu raged around the country. Stories say the mayor of St. Louis at the time and a German-born doctor imposed measures on the city that saved it, even though the chaos of World War I continued.

I've always loved my grandparents, but I have felt closer to them these past six months than ever before. Yes, they have long since passed from this life. But I converse with them every day now, asking them to pray that we will come through the present pandemic just as they survived the flu crisis.

I have felt the courage and faith of these dear grandparents of mine, and I know their presence. Others on the opposite side of the "thin veil" that separates us from those in eternity are also very near: family and friends, Ursuline Sisters, important Saints and everyday saints. As one newly called to leadership of the Ursulines in a time

of worldwide catastrophe, I am strengthened by the belief that they are with us. Each one remained hopeful when the road ahead was not at all clear.

Likewise, on this side of eternity, where planet earth keeps turning in time, as our new Ursuline Central Province Provincial Team moves into the mission entrusted to us, we are encouraged by the support and connection of many. Blessed with superb colleagues in province service, an Ursuline community that is truly global, and active collaborators and friends, we want to keep widening our circles. The spirit and legacy of St. Angela Merici will continue only if we can fully engage the wisdom, energy and help of all who carry this Ursuline story with us.



We, in heaven and on earth, are one body in Christ. And we do not ever stand alone.

Elisa Ryan, OSU

Elisa Ryan, OSU
Provincial
Ursulines of the Central Province

Thank you to all of our generous donors. Your faith and support fill our hearts, and we are grateful for your presence on our journey.

In Remembrance

*"I am more alive now than
when I was with you."*
—St. Angela Merici

We remember with gratitude the lives of our sisters who have passed into eternal life since February 2019.



Sister Mary Peter Bachand
Nov. 2, 1925 –
March 24, 2020
Professed 1956



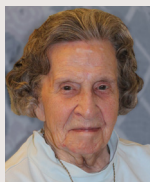
Sister Barbara Becnel
Oct. 23, 1937 –
May 3, 2019
Professed 1958



Sister Mary Patrice Clifford
Sept. 2, 1935 –
March 29, 2020
Professed 1956



Sister Celeste Cour
Jan. 11, 1924 –
Feb. 24, 2020
Professed 1947



Sister Mary Ann Luth
May 28, 1920 –
June 28, 2020
Professed 1943



Sister Marie McCloskey
Feb. 17, 1914 –
Oct. 4, 2019
Professed 1941



Sister Rosemary Meiman
Feb. 4, 1929 –
July 11, 2019
Professed 1949



Sister Mary Margaret Prenger
March 11, 1923 –
April 9, 2019
Professed 1945



Sister Ann Smith
Oct. 5, 1927 –
July 31, 2019
Professed 1949



Sister Wilma Wittman
May 2, 1924 –
March 3, 2019
Professed 1945

You can read the sisters' obituaries at www.osucentral.org.



The Ursuline Sisters are among the Catholic Sisters of St. Louis who have partnered with the Incarnate Word Foundation to stand up for racial justice with a billboard campaign in the St. Louis metropolitan area. The billboard is being featured throughout the metro area for two months. The Incarnate Word Foundation is a ministry of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

My Perspective

Pauline Lorch, OSU

“They look but do not see, they listen but do not understand.”

Matthew 13:13



“I need humble, focusing corrective lenses to see more clearly the power that racism has, and empathic hearing aids to hear the voices raised in pain and frustration, desperation even, trying to help Americans understand that racism not only affects Black Americans but all Americans.”

When I grew up in St. Mary's, Missouri, Black people were not allowed within the city (a town of less than a thousand) limits. Black Catholics, many of whom had been catechized by Mother Isadore Ripperger, OSU, worshipped in the three back, left-hand pews of Immaculate Conception Church. Despite this blatant racism, my parents acted out of a different set of values.

My earliest sense of neighbor was Miss Madora, a Black woman who lived “up the hill and across the road” from us. Aunt Madora was my friend and protector during the rough and tumble of early childhood. Dad's good friend and co-worker, Henry Cole, a Black man, died in a house fire while Dad had to be forcibly held

by firemen to keep him from trying to save Mr. Cole. In his later years, Dad threatened to resign from the Knights of Columbus when a well-respected William Coffman was about to be blackballed (how ironic) simply because of the color of his skin. I am grateful for my parents' example, but for many years I had no idea of the extent of the racism in which I and they were complicit.

Only time and graced opportunities; many friends and companions who were also struggling to understand the origins and consequences of a thoroughly racist, unjust justice system; the reality of white privilege; the myth of Black inferiority, particularly intellectual inferiority; and the magnitude of targeted housing made law by Congress, have brought me to begin to realize that I am racist and that I must re-form my attitudes, my choices,

my judgments, my way of seeing, my way of listening. I need humble, focusing corrective lenses to see more clearly the power that racism has, and empathic hearing aids to hear the voices raised in pain and frustration, desperation even, trying to help Americans understand that racism not only affects Black Americans but all Americans.

There have been other times when there was hope that racism would be, could be addressed in a just and comprehensive manner. Think of the hopes of Reconstruction following the Civil War with the radical retrenchment of rights and respect which followed, the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s with its inherent compromises. But is this now the moment in history when we will truly face the power that racism has on our society? I hope, I pray that this time we will truly perceive the depth of racism in our minds, our hearts and our policies and be willing to address and change our country and ourselves. I, we, have a long way to travel. There is hope in the possibility of a new America even in the face of so much rhetoric to the contrary. In the conclusion to his book *Christ in Crisis*, Jim Wallis includes some practices which all of us could embrace when we mourn our inability to join the marchers for social justice.

- We need to start each day with a “yes” to our faith and to our own personal and public integrity. We need to say yes to engaged citizenship, civil discourse, service to what is right and courageous resistance to what is wrong.
- We need to have the courage to say “no” when that is required and to whatever requires it.
- The opposite of fear is trust, and when fear is the political energy of a nation, we need to rebuild the trust.

Ursulines adapt according to times and circumstances

“And if, according to times and circumstances, the need arises to make new rules or do something differently, do it prudently and with good advice.”

– St. Angela Merici

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Ursulines throughout the Central Province have been finding new ways to pray together and with others while apart, help the most vulnerable among us, and spread messages of hope and faith.

Here are some of their stories:



Sister Mary Jacqueline Pratt leads a scripture-sharing group at Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

SINCE FEBRUARY, **Sister Mary Jacqueline Pratt** has been facilitating Sunday scripture sharing for a small group at Mother of Perpetual Help in St. Louis. When all group activities were canceled on March 16, the activity director asked if she would facilitate scripture sharing each day. Since lockdown began, she has been meeting in the chapel with a group of about 10 residents—spaced six feet apart—for prayer and sharing on the daily scripture.

Meeting Monday through Friday for about 45 minutes, Sister Mary Jacqueline says, “Initially, it seemed like ‘work,’

but now that we are in a rhythm, it has become a fruitful way to begin the day.”



The prayer bowl at the sisters' Fairdale house keeps filling up.

JUST BEFORE the coronavirus lockdown, the Ursuline community of five on Fairdale in St. Louis made and distributed cards to their neighbors in the 24 houses on their street. The card read:

“Dear Neighbor, We, Catholic Sisters who live at the beginning of Fairdale Avenue, want you to know that we care about you and pray for you, your family and loved ones. This is a very challenging time for our whole world, but we trust that God is with us always. If, at any time, you have a special need or intention that you would like us to include in your prayers just email or phone us (email and phone number included), and we will put it on our prayer table. United with you all, **Sisters Elisa, Mary Ellen, Pauline, Rita Ann and Susan.**”

Prayer requests that they receive in response are put in the “prayer bowl” on the table where they gather each day for community prayer. It is filling up.

URSULINE MASK MAKERS have been at work across the province,

including **Sister Karen Schwane in San Antonio and Sister Susan Kienzler** in St. Louis. Sister Karen wears one of her own creations while joining the Sisters of Divine Providence in their sewing room. They are making masks for the staff in the Sisters of Divine Providence’s skilled care facility. Sister Susan is making masks for her community as well as her nephew, a nurse assigned to a COVID-19 unit in Denver, and his co-workers.

BECAUSE OF COVID-19, our sisters in New Orleans and their SBP (St. Bernard Parish) partners working on Ursuline-



Sisters Karen Schwane, top, and Sister Susan Kienzler went into mask-making mode as soon as quarantine began.



Sisters Regina Marie Fronmüller, Ginger Cirone and Mary Anne Holmes get creative at their Valence Street house in New Orleans.

sponsored houses have been unable to go out and rebuild. Instead, they are keeping in touch by phone with those they have helped, offering hope, encouragement and, when needed, food.

As a sign of hope in their Valence Street neighborhood, **Sisters Regina Marie Fronmüller, Ginger Cirone, Mary Anne Holmes (and Magdalita Roussel)** painted a rainbow on their driveway.

ADAPTABILITY CAN BE KEY to success in helping others these days, and the



Sister Madonna O'Hara and her Sutherland house community help with a parish lunch program.

sisters in our Sutherland community in St. Louis adapted quickly.

Notes **Sister Madonna O'Hara**, "Our Sutherland community (St. Louis) had offered to prepare a meal for the 20 persons presently in the Room at the Inn program for homeless families. A week before, we received word that their policy needed to change, and they no longer could accept prepared food from the outside. However, we were able to direct our energies to the lunch program at St. Vincent de Paul Parish by getting prepackaged items for the huge numbers of lunches they give out daily.

"As with so much of our lives these days, I have come to realize that efforts to help others need to be flexible and easily changed."

WHEN QUARANTINE BEGAN, **Sisters Theresa Davey, Brendan Jacoby and Nancy Vandever** in Springfield, Illinois,



Sisters Nancy Vandever, top, and Brendan Jacoby are staying safe and strong with workouts in their basement gym.

added a time each morning to pray together for those affected by the virus. They posted a sign of hope in their front yard and spent much of their days in quarantine calling, texting and writing friends of their Springfield community, Ursulines in assisted-living and skilled-care facilities—and elsewhere around the province—and their families and friends.

During this pandemic, self-care is important, too. After doing what they can to support and comfort others, Sisters Nancy Vandever, Brendan Jacoby and Theresa Davey in Springfield, Illinois, look after their own health by working out in their basement gym.

Meanwhile, **Sister Rosemary Skelley** in nearby Decatur spends time each day at her parish church, where parishioners often come to speak with her—from a safe distance. The conversations are mutually beneficial, she says.

Following in St. Angela's footsteps

Angela was a contemplative, captured by the Lord whom she sought and found everywhere, following him with love ever alert and faith ever discerning. "Everywhere" for her meant in long hours of prayer; and it also meant everyplace where she felt she had a task to do; every person whom she met, regardless of age, sex or rank; every service that she rendered according to needs and circumstances. For at all times she acted under the influence of love, at once liberating and unifying, which in a single thrust brought her to God and to her fellow [women and] men. (*Lead a New Life, Constitutions of the Roman Union of the Order of Saint Ursula*, 1969)

Since their founding in 1535, Ursulines have lived the lives of contemplatives in ministry. Here seven of our Central Province sisters share about their lives as contemplatives.

Sister Elizabeth Susan Hatzenbuehler, San Antonio, Texas



The invitation to be contemplative for me invites a smiling heart and travels back to a retreat near Grottaferrata, Italy. Do come and join me if

you wish. The story begins here:

In Rome, a sculptor is carving a lion out of marble. A little boy comes along and pauses to watch. After a while, the child says, "Mister, how did you know there was a lion in the marble?" (adapted from *Clowning in Rome*, by Henri Nouwen, p. 87)

The sculptor's answer in Nouwen's book echoes in my life, indeed in each of our lives, both knowingly and

unknowingly, over and over. Slowly I have come to realize the special gift of his answer to the child will be unwrapped in ordinary moments when I become aware of holding and being held. I invite you to unwrap these moments in your life also ...

— standing as a teenager on a street corner, aware of my happiness and contentment in that moment,
— eyes and hands lingering over paper splashed with brilliant watercolor hues and lines etched by crinkled Saran wrap,
— being with the elderly sister cradling the dying baby hummingbird in the warmth of her hand,
— sitting on the banks of the Mississippi, listening to the river tell me her story accompanied by the flute player's longing strains,
— weaving with warp threads of red and white (not really my choice!) but weft threads of every hue and choice... the birth of a dawning realization that my loving Master Weaver and I are weaving my being for others together.

And yes, for each of us, the answer of the sculptor to the child in Nouwen's book continues to be one of unfolding mystery and discovery:

"I knew there was a lion in the marble because before I saw the lion in the marble, I saw him in my own heart. The secret is that it was the lion in my heart who recognized the lion in the marble." (Nouwen, p. 103)

Sister Lois Castillon, Dallas Texas



Angela Merici encourages us to "cultivate the vine entrusted to us." As I dip into my prayer of contemplation every morning, I

feel Angela's words in my heart. It is a gift for me to start off the day with a cup of coffee and an hour to deepen my love of God and feel God's love for me. Angela is a companion for me during this time of prayer. Contemplation for me is being "present to the presence" of God and Angela journeying with me, sensing their presence in those quiet moments. Taking time together and sensing their spirits energize me as I move into ministry carrying God's love and Angela's gentle presence with me.

Sometimes I ask Angela what she would like me to share with our students and co-workers at Ursuline Academy when I begin the day with them, and I share at times over the PA system. Later, as I walk down the hall at school and greet the students along the way, some of them may stop and tell me how great it was to hear what St. Angela wanted them to know or pray for.

It is a joy for me as an Ursuline to make an annual retreat, days of prayer which I call my "vacation with God." When I am at a retreat center, a special kind of contemplative prayer for me is the outdoor labyrinth. This is a tradition dating back thousands of years in religious cultures, and many kinds of labyrinths have been created. This concentric walking pathway is a way for me to prayerfully center myself and "be present to God's presence," moving toward a center, and then moving out again, bringing those special moments to others.

These haiku poems suggest what the fruits of contemplation are for me:

*I walk, hearing Angela's
"Cultivate the vine" gift from God
Reach out to our world*

*Labyrinth wanders
As I wonder, sensing God's
Breath on our good earth*

**Sister Thomas More Daly,
Alton, Illinois**



For 30 years I was engaged in teaching young people in Catholic schools. Toward the end of that time, I was graced with an awareness of the real presence

of Jesus in each of the students before me. What the students perceived in me, often not recognizing it, was the truth of Jesus being given to them. We together were living God's reality.

For me this is the meaning of being an active contemplative. Christ's presence is the grace given to me by letting myself be loved by Jesus. St. Angela urged us as Ursulines to make Jesus our one, only treasure and to shelter at the feet of Jesus. Throughout my life, God the Father has deepened my relationship with Jesus within our hearts together.

Now I work in the Ursuline archives of our Central Province. People ask me what I do now, and I tell them that I work with the dead. They find this response humorous, but it is profoundly true. Researchers, relatives and former students of Ursulines ask for information about specific sisters who have died. At times it is difficult to search out the information needed. I ask the sister, living now in total union in the heart of Jesus in the communion of saints, to guide me to what is needed by the one making the request. Amazingly I discover what the inquirer desires. I work in awareness of living in God's reality.

This is how contemplation empowers my ministry in the archives as it did my ministry in the classroom.

**Sister Chabanel Mathison,
St. Louis, Missouri**



For several years I have experienced my prayer around what is called Christian Meditation, taught by the World Community of Christian

Meditation in the tradition of Benedictine Father John Main. It involves simply sitting in stillness and repeating over and over to myself an image-free mantra that, like a leaf sweeper, moves aside the clutter of my mind and heart and makes room for the awareness of being immersed in Holy Mystery—the God within, and the God around me in every aspect of creation.

It is radically simple but not necessarily easy, and it is not prayer that can be rated as successful or unsuccessful. I just “do it” at both ends of my day with the raw faith that God is living and working deep inside of me and all around me though I may experience nothing at all. Sometimes it is a challenge to remain committed to it when it feels empty and hopelessly distracted. It would be so much easier to pray with measurable progress marks. Over the years, however, it has become my way to “come home and wait for God.”

Where I do FEEL a difference with Christian Meditation is that it enhances my awareness of the presence of God in the people, the events, and the circumstances of my days as I move through them. It gives me a contemplative view. An example of how this happens for me in these pandemic days is a perspective it has brought to the innumerable Zoom meetings that

consume my energy and punctuate the way we seem to be organizing our lives while we are being challenged as never before to relate.

The computer is not the focus; it is simply the means of bringing us together. The focus is our relationship and common purpose as we listen and listen and listen to each other. Zoom has become a new human space and we “hold” this sacred space together. It is no longer being gathered in a meeting room that holds us together. As we tune in to each other, we are led to wholeness, not just with those on the screen, but with all living beings—presence to presence. We are held together by our contemplative, Spirit-filled awareness.

**Sister Mary Ellen Neeves,
St. Louis, Missouri**



For me, there are two truths that are the foundation for living contemplatively:
1) The presence of the Holy One is in all created reality;

2) God meets me where I am, physically and psychologically.

To be contemplative then is to look, to listen, to be still in the face of what is. It is to let “what is” be the place where the Holy One is revealed. This takes many shapes and forms. The key is to look, to be aware of what is.

It is in the depths of life where I find the sacred presence of the Holy One: in the ordinary, everyday happenings in my life; in my city, in our world, in the spectacular beauty of creation; in the reality of good health and illness; in the

Following in St. Angela's footsteps *continued from page 9*

experience of loss and limitations; in the gifts of music, dance, art and books; and in the blessings of family, community and friends.

This is where God meets me. It is in that meeting that I begin to see that all of life is one. God is here in this moment. God finds me where I am. Can I find God where the holy is?

Sister Carolyn Marie Brockland, New Orleans, Louisiana



I try to be a contemplative by paying attention, noticing the ways in which God is present all around me—in nature, in people, in events, in my

reflections and prayer.

I believe it is important to spend time in prayer each day, especially to reflect and try to hear what God wishes to teach me. Journaling, or writing my prayerful reflections, is especially important for me.

The ministry of spiritual direction is a privileged experience of how God is at work in others and in me during our time together. I learn much from these sacred conversations.

Sister Theresa Davey, Springfield, Illinois



God does most of the action in helping me be a contemplative. Three pieces of wisdom assist me to be receptive to that action. The

first is a quotation from Mary Oliver's poem, *Yes! No!*

"To pay attention, this is our endless and proper work."

I try to pay attention to the world, others and myself. This takes time and some effort.

The second help is the reminder, "Come as you are!" For years, I thought that my best prayer time was when my life seemed to be going smoothly—like I was dressed in my Sunday best and with no spots on my clothes and no skinned knees. Of course, there aren't too many days like that! Then I realized I could be in the Divine Presence just as I am—tired, happy, crabby, excited, sad, bored, angry, grateful, worried or calm. I feel like I am bringing my real self into a sacred space where I am accepted and loved as I am in this moment.

The third source of wisdom is a title of a book, *Pray as You Can*. I don't remember reading the book, but I remember the title. Although I reserve a time for quiet each day, I have discovered so many ways to pray: participating in the Mass; watching a sunset, a daisy, or children on a teeter-totter; crying with grief; sitting quietly in a chapel, or car, or a waiting room; while walking or riding a real or recumbent bike; reflecting on the scriptures or on the goodness of friends; listening to a song over and over or listening to a broken-hearted person sharing their pain. As my life unfolds, I am drawn to various ways of praying. They are all good because they are flowing from our God.

Congratulations to our Jubilarians

In 2020 we celebrate the jubilees of 14 of our sisters who have ministered to God's people a total of 820 years.

70th



Sister Kevin Ritterbusch
Springfield, Illinois

65th



Sister Maria Goretti
Bernier
Lewiston, Maine



Sister Maria Goretti
Hotop
Alton, Illinois



Sister Marcella Savoie
Lewiston, Maine

60th



Sister Carolyn Marie
Brockland
New Orleans, Louisiana



Sister Louis Marie Carter
Dallas, Texas



**Sister Genevieve
Goessling**
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Ann Mary Hasting
Coppell, Texas



Sister Nancy Vandever
Springfield, Illinois

50th



Sister Ann Barrett
St. Louis, Missouri



**Sister Rita Ann
Bregenhorn**
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Diane Fulgenzi
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Susan Kienzler
St. Louis, Missouri



**Sister Paulette Ann
Ducharme**
Waterville, Maine

**We gratefully acknowledge the
combined 730 years of ministry
of our 2019 jubilarians.**

70th



Sister Patricia Couture
Waterville, Maine

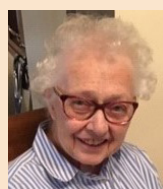


Sister Rosemary Meiman
New Orleans, Louisiana
(died July 11, 2019)



Sister Ann Smith
Eureka, Missouri
(died July 31, 2019)

65th

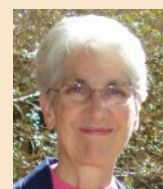


**Sister Mary Denis
Lessard**
St. Louis, Missouri

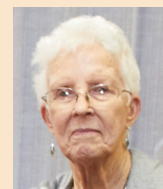


Sister Mary Troy
Dallas, Texas

60th



**Sister Regina Marie
Fronmüller**
New Orleans, Louisiana



Sister Ann Mangelsdorf
Dallas, Texas



Sister Mary Ellen Neeves
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Ann Marie Owen
Springfield, Missouri

50th



**Sister Maria Teresa
de Llano**
San Antonio, Texas



Sister Peggy Moore
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Mercedes Videira
Waterville, Maine

URSULINE SISTERS
CENTRAL PROVINCE OF THE U.S.
Provincial Offices
353 S. Sappington Road
St. Louis, MO 63122

Provincial

Sister Elisa Ryan, OSU

Councilors:

Sister Jean Hopman, OSU

Sister Peggy Moore, OSU

***Laurels* Editor**

Susan M. Whelan

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As Ursulines of the Central Province, members of a worldwide community of Catholic sisters, we are women whose lives and mission are rooted in the gospel of Jesus and the spirit of our foundress, Angela Merici. Grounded and empowered by our relationship with God and with one another, in prayer and community, we seek to be a compassionate, reconciling presence of God in our world.

Statue of Angela Merici,
Desenzano, northern Italy.
Designed by Benedetto Pietrogrande,
sculpted by Peter Kostner.
Photo by Madeline Kelly, OSU.