

LAURELS

Ursuline Sisters of the Central Province

Fall 2021



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Living *Laudato Si*

Sister Jean Hopman, OSU

What is *Laudato Si*? Italian for “Praise be to you,” these are the opening words spoken by St. Francis of Assisi in his now familiar “Canticle of the Creatures.” Pope Francis chose this phrase as the title of his groundbreaking 2015 encyclical “*Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*.” His goal was to draw the world’s attention to the increasingly precarious state of our common home. With this encyclical, Pope Francis sounded a clarion call to the world to awaken from our indifference and to “hear the desperate cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” (LS, 49)

We Ursulines live the charism of St. Angela Merici, a lover of the earth and of the poor. Growing up in Desenzano, Italy, very near to Lake Garda, she was familiar with the beauty of nature. Her family had a farm, and Angela was expected to help with the crops and the animals. She learned firsthand the necessity of caring for the earth and listened to its cries throughout her life. In her teens she was greatly influenced by the Franciscan Friars. At about age 20 she became a lay member of the Third Order of St. Francis. Certainly she must have prayed the Canticle of the Creatures! Twenty years later, when she was sent to Brescia by her Franciscan superiors to comfort a woman her own age who had lost her husband and three children, Angela began to discern the cries of the poor in a new way. The city of Brescia had been ravaged by war. The material and spiritual needs of the people

were great. Angela listened, discerned, rolled up her sleeves, and did what she could to meet the needs of those around her. She lived the spirit of *Laudato Si* throughout her life and passed it along to all who share in her charism. This is the foundation of our firm commitment today to live *Laudato Si*.

On May 24, 2020, the fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si*, the Vatican Office for Integral Ecology announced a special anniversary year. At the end of the year, they launched the groundbreaking seven-year *Laudato Si* Action Platform, whose purpose is “to make communities around the world totally sustainable in the spirit of the integral ecology of *Laudato Si*.” Pope Francis is looking to religious women and men in our prophetic vocation to lead the way in this endeavor, which involves many groups: families, parishes and dioceses, hospitals, schools, businesses and farms. The Action Platform outlines seven categories of sustainability goals to guide our actions. They are shown in the graphic below.

On July 4, 2021, the three Roman Union provinces in the United States kicked off our Ursuline response to Pope Francis’ invitation to live the seven *Laudato Si* goals. Our USA Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) committee has begun creating weekly reflection sheets, highlighting a different

“Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.”
(LS, 91)

goal for each day of the week, along with meaningful action steps. We are discerning the ways we already live the spirit of integral ecology and how we advocate for our common home. Over time, this discernment, firmly grounded in St. Angela and our charism, will prepare us to make a public commitment as Roman Union Ursulines of the USA, adding our efforts to those of religious congregations and concerned people around the world.

This is not a new journey for us. At our 2019 General Chapter in Rome, we set as one of our intentions for the next eight years to “choose care of our common home as the mindset that pervades all of our decisions, behaviors and actions.” We invite you, our supporters and collaborators,

to join us in striving to live ever more sustainably in the spirit of *Laudato Si*. For more information and to read our weekly reflections, visit our JPIC website usaromanunionursulines.org and click on Act for Justice. We’d love to hear from you!



A Message from Leadership

The table where our provincial team meets is round. Although there are many ways in which a circle is symbolic (try an internet search for “meaning of a circle”), for us sitting in a circle is a symbol of our shared responsibility as leaders in this province. We regularly widen the circle by adding a chair or two so co-workers and others can join us to share information and wisdom.

In June 2020 we began our service of leadership with a prayer, and the prayer began with a song: “Welcome to this Circle.” * One of the reflections chosen was by Tom Porter: “The power of the Circle ... is recognition of sacred space ... giving everyone voice and promoting good speaking and listening. ... It is a

“The power of the Circle ... is recognition of sacred space ... giving everyone voice and promoting good speaking and listening. ... It is a circle of collective wisdom.”

—Tom Porter

circle of collective wisdom.” We have been graced in the ensuing months to be part of many circles of wisdom.

What a joy it was, beginning this past May, to have the complete circle of co-workers back in the office every day after 15 months of staggered schedules, with some working from home and

some on site. As two co-workers moved into retirement, we welcomed two new members to our circle. And it was a circle of delight as we were finally able to celebrate Christmas together in July.

Many of our circles have been meeting by Zoom during these past months. We were able to offer the opportunity to the sisters in the province to gather by Zoom a few times for shared prayer and reflection, including one meeting where we simply shared with each other what we are reading. We have also met with local prioresses and those co-workers and sisters who care for our sisters in assisted-living and skilled-care facilities. Even though on Zoom participants appear in rows, the conversations have had all the qualities one would hope to find in a circle.

Of course, there are days that we, like many others, are “Zoomed out,” but we have found that connecting electronically allows us more frequent interaction. So, the circle of the leadership teams of the three Roman Union provinces in the United States—Eastern, Western and Central—that used to meet in person only annually has been able to meet quarterly for prayer, sharing and business. While we look forward to meeting in person again, we also agree that the pandemic has opened opportunities that we did not take advantage of earlier.

It is a gift to be part of the circle of our Roman Union community and to be invited to share wisdom and insights with sisters from all over the world, especially as we work together toward



accomplishing the goals set by our 2019 General Chapter.

As sisters in leadership, we interact with other circles of leadership, the teams of other Ursuline congregations in the United States, the sisters in leadership in other women’s congregations in St. Louis and, of course, the national organization of those in leadership of women’s religious congregations. The experience and wisdom of these other leaders is a resource for us, one that is both needed and appreciated.

And we want you to know that it is with gratitude that we think of and pray for you, our friends and supporters, who are such an important part of our circle.

Sister Peggy Moore, OSU
Provincial Councilor

*“Welcome to this Circle”
by Trix Bruxvoort Colligan

Feeding Faith at the Border

In late April, Sisters Maria Teresa de Llano and Karen Schwane began making a near-weekly journey from San Antonio to Laredo, Texas, to help immigrants and asylum seekers arriving at the border with Mexico. Since then, they have returned to the border many times, sometimes joined by an alumna of an Ursuline school.

Serving with other volunteers—religious and lay persons—from around the country at Catholic Charities' La Frontera shelter, their duties have been as varied as the stories they hear from those arriving by bus each day. Sisters Karen and Maria Teresa greet the new arrivals, assist them with the required paperwork, help them get in contact with the family member who is sponsoring them, make travel arrangements, and help them find needed items such as clothing, shoes and toiletries. Later they will roll up their sleeves and help prepare and serve meals, wash bedding and mop floors. Whatever is needed.

Here are stories from the front line of immigration on our southern border, shared in photos and reflections.

Hope and Sorrow

Sister Karen Schwane, OSU

One Wednesday in late June, I went with two other volunteers, Clare and Mary, to a location near the border crossing to wait and receive newly arriving migrants being escorted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agents.

We were situated at a Church's fried chicken restaurant, which permitted us to use the outdoor seating area to interview the new migrants away from the hot sun. As we waited, we shared how the experience of our service in Laredo had inspired and changed our lives, our prayer, and our awareness of what migrants had to endure during their long journey.

We caught sight of a small group accompanied by U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents. Mary took the first family to a nearby table, and I took the second—a young mother with three children: a son, 14, and daughters ages 10 and three. I checked their documents, copied file numbers, and wrote down the name and phone number of her relative who would be driving from Houston to pick them up (about 350 miles). I thought to myself, how good of him to do that, and explained to her that it would take about five hours. She nodded with assurance. They had just spoken, and he was on his way. I gave her a sheet of paper with a map and pointed out our location and where we would all go to have lunch at La Frontera



Sister Karen and Sister Connie Trainor, SSJ, prepare tacos for their migrant guests at La Frontera.

(Catholic Charities Center) and relax while they waited.

There was a second sheet of paper with helpful phrases in Spanish and English that I read with the son and he repeated with good pronunciation in English. I returned the documents to the mother, which she carefully placed in a special envelope. She looked at me and intentionally stated she was not illegal. I nodded to her and remarked with a smile that those papers prove that she has permission to be here.

Sister Maria Teresa has a front-row seat to the joyful reunion of two cousins during intake.



The Catholic Charities minibus arrived to take us to La Frontera Center for lunch. Mary, Clare and I joined the other volunteers in the dining area. About an hour after our arrival, Clare returned to the dining room and told me that the young mother had shared her very sad story. Their family was at home when some men banged on the door, broke in and took her husband away. A few days later he was found dead. He had been shot. His wrists were bound and there was evidence that he had been tortured. This young wife was taken to see his body and given photos as proof to witness to the horrors that they faced.

I was deeply shaken by her story and immediately had to find her, embrace her and express my deep regret and sorrow for what she and her children had been through. She shed tears even while expressing gratitude for the good people who helped her to God for supporting her in these terrible events.

Formation

Cameron Dunbar

The Ursuline School, New Rochelle, New York, Class of 2017

A gust of wind surges across the plastic table. With one hand, I press onto a stack of intake forms and travel route sheets. With the other, I leaf through pages of immigration documents. Even under the shade of a billowing tent, the merciless Laredo heat beats against my skin.

“¿No firmó nada, señora?” I ask the woman sitting in front of me, incredulous that all of the lines requesting a signature were untouched.

“No, nada.” She beams with pride and rests her hand on her baby bump. Unlike many of the other new arrivals to the United States, she had refused to sign the paragraphs of dense jargon that released immigrants from many of their rights.

“Eres una mujer muy fuerte,” I whisper, jotting down her birthday onto an intake form. *You’re a very strong woman.* She just gives me a hollow laugh and shakes her head. Her hands clench on the crest of her stomach. The bags under her eyes seem out of place on her young face.

Once again, I am reminded that I do not know the treatment that she endured on her way from Honduras, the safety of the facilities in which she was housed, or the state of her family – if she has any supportive family. All I have to give her is a small smile and a wristband that allows her to walk around the shelter grounds.

I ask her if she’s traveling with anyone.

“Estoy sola,” she breathes around a raspy sigh. *I am alone.*

As she stands to leave, I call for the next person to bring his or her papers to me. A man in his mid-30s with a



On some days Sisters Maria Teresa and Karen work in the clothing room, sorting donations and finding items that fit arriving immigrants.



Two young boys follow along with a volunteer dispensing water and snacks.



Ursuline Academy of Dallas alumna Rene Reid comforts a young Haitian child.

short beard greets me. We go over each question, and I jot down the alien number that they generated for him in the detention center. Once the form is complete, I clasp his wristband and tell him when breakfast will be served. He asks if there is a place for him to shower. Since the line behind him had thinned considerably, I decided to bring him inside for some new clothes myself.

Out of the corner of my eye, I see the pregnant traveler at a table filled with women, sharing food and conversation. From their intake forms, I know they have at least four countries of origin and three languages between them. Yet no doubt lingers in my mind that they will care for her as if she were their own family.

I usher the man inside into the *ropa* room, which is stocked with the community's clothes donations. Each box stuffed with clothes has a neat label, with sizes ranging from infant to XXXL. Socks of all colors and sizes dangle from the shelves. Blouses hang on a rack in the center of the room. Toiletries in

Laundry is one of many tasks Sister Maria Teresa regularly undertakes.



multicolored bins line the walls by the door.

We start the fitting process, which is usually an ordeal when 50 people want similar sizes of the same types of clothes within the hour. I pass him a pair of jeans. He slings the pant legs around his back and tries to pull the waistband around his neck. In many Latin American countries, this is the method men use to test the fit of their jeans. When the two ends barely touch, he tosses them back in the bin. Then I hand him much larger pants. We both break into fits of laughter, and he feigns hurt that I would try to give him a clown outfit. Once we finally find a decent match, we move over to the toiletries.

"What is your name?" He asks in English. Taken aback at the sudden language shift, I tell him slowly.

"You are angel, Cameron."

My hand stills around a bar of soap. I want to thank him. I want to tell him that I am just a post-grad volunteer. I want to broadcast to the entire country how much this good man, this hardworking man, deserves to find something for himself here. I want to cry at how unfair it all is that he will probably never get the chance to try. Instead, I pass him the bar of soap and show him to the bathroom.

During our first week, the center's executive director informed us that 90 percent of people that we encountered would not be permitted to stay in the United States. My mind feeds me images like the pregnant woman, the gentle man, the young boy who has two pairs of shoes to his name and donated one of them back to the *ropa* room. We are in a place that spurns away the huddled masses and assigns them alien numbers to replace their personhood. A place where the most mundane



Sister Maria Teresa helps a woman who needs to connect with her sponsor.

display of human kindness is likened to the divine. Where access to a piece of metal that spurts hot water, or the sound of their name, is angelic. In this country today, the immigration debate has been politicized into a dilemma of righteousness and deservedness, and the American dream hangs in the balance.

The discussion around immigration rights is rife with misinformation and scapegoating, which has only worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of us are so dedicated to the misconceptions about the border that we are missing on the human capital and value that immigrants bring into the United States.

When I posed questions about the early stages of religious life, the Ursuline Sisters and Daughters of Charity described their formation, a period in which a religious community shapes a young woman and prepares her for a life led by Christ.

While I am not a part of a religious order, my time serving with Sister Maria Theresa and Sister Karen gave me



Sister Karen, left, and Eastern Province Ursuline Sister Sandy Wardell, right, work the serving line.

insert into the system the compassion that the volunteer staff showed me. Every asylum seeker deserves to move through the legal process with dignity, advocacy and awareness of their human rights.

I will be forever grateful that the Ursuline Sisters Maria Theresa de Llano, Karen Schwane and Elisa Ryan, in all their grace and patience,

clarity in my career path, and the gifts that I wish to share with others during my lifetime. After only two weeks with them, I feel ready to step into adulthood, guided by the light of God, the faith I have in Him, and the faith I have in my fellow man. In a way, they placed me on the path of realizing my own formation as a layperson.

While many aspects of the journey were difficult to witness, it reaffirmed my calling to serve refugees and immigrants in the most vulnerable times of their lives. As an immigration attorney, I hope to

provided me with this opportunity. They believed in my abilities to connect with people, and pushed me not to shy away from discomfort in order to grow. Whether it was the assurance that I could take on the intake process, or the simple reminder that bees were creatures of God, too, they nurtured the spirit of serviam within me and reawakened my spirituality.

Next week, I will begin my gap year job managing all youth programming at Refugee and Immigrant Self-Empowerment in Syracuse, New York.

Quiché

Sister Maria Teresa de Llano, OSU

The older I get the more I realize how often I assume certain things and come to realize my assumption was completely wrong.

One day I was assisting a father and child of about five years old. I bent down to greet the little girl and began to speak to her in Spanish, asking her what her name is, how old she is, etc. The little girl, with a childlike smile, met my eyes but did not answer my questions. Her father stepped in and informed me in a very polite way that his child speaks only Quiché. They are from Guatemala and their native language is Quiché. I was taken aback after having assumed that they were from a Spanish-speaking country. I apologized and congratulated him for teaching his daughter their maternal language.

After that encounter, this little Quiché girl, would wave to me every time she saw me. She would not stop waving to me until I spotted her and waved back. Obviously, I had made a friend for life! If for just the few seconds that we would wave to each other, I found myself transported into her world of customs and rituals that she and her father had left behind, possibly never going back to their ancestral roots due to the difficult situation in their country.

Ursuline alumna and volunteer Cameron Dunbar assists a new arrival with his paperwork.



A young girl plays with a toy shopping cart at La Frontera.

Calling All Gardeners!

For this issue of “Laurels,” some Ursuline Sisters and co-workers known to enjoy gardening were invited to share a little about the gardens they planted and tended this summer, and why they choose to be gardeners. Here are their tales of the joys—and sometime obstacles—on their journeys to enjoyment of nature’s bounty.

Sister Chabanel Mathison, OSU

Everything I know about growing tomatoes I learned from my father. It is in his memory that I plant my five potted Bush Goliaths every year in the chicken wire cages I made myself. The cages even have tops against predators who would peck or snatch the fruit from them!

The plants stand in the only two tiny spaces of sun that will nurture them on and near our small front porch. I love getting my hands in the fresh potting soil each spring and then watching the vines grow and feed us in the spirit of this poem, sent to me, appropriately, on a Christmas card by Sister Eileen O’Hea, CSJ, a soul sister and friend:

*Today I ate the sun, warm, luscious,
plump, ripe.
Attracted by her beauty, I touched
(ever so gently) her warm, silky skin.
Inexplicably, in some millimeter of a
second, like a sparrow resting in my hand,
pulsating with life, the gift.
Is this the reward for water
sprayed on summer’s garden?
Startling, this revelation of being,
of being in Being.
Where to adore if not here?
If not everywhere?*

Sister Mary Lapping, OSU

It all started last spring when I ordered six strawberry plants. I’ve tried strawberries before but without much success. Too many critters also like them. So I decided these new plants would be planted in hanging baskets, mainly to try to outsmart the squirrels.

My plants arrived in perfect shape, and I put them in two hanging baskets on my front porch. About three days later, I noticed a bird was taking a liking to one of the baskets. She would come and sit on the side of the planter, dig in the soil, and peck away at the plant. This went on for at least a week, despite my efforts to chase her away.

Looking to the future, I didn’t like the scenario that would play out when the strawberries eventually appeared. So I took some of my garden row cover (a very light cloth), cut it into narrow strips, and attached these strips to the top of the hanging basket. The breeze would keep the strips of cloth moving.

My bird friend did not like this at all and didn’t hesitate to tell me so. From the top of the overhang, or the top of the nearby garage, she would chirp and chirp at me whenever I went out on the porch.



But the strips did the trick. She let the basket alone. And today I have some luscious strawberries starting to arrive!

Michael Puetz, co-worker

My family’s garden in Shrewsbury, Missouri, is primarily a flower garden. Prominent flowers include tropical elephant ears, canna lilies, Stella d’Oro daylilies, hydrangeas, azaleas, peonies, altheas, liriope, daisies, sedums, chrysanthemums, hostas and more.

I have been gardening for about 45 years. I started working with plants as my summer employment during high school and college consisted of working for a landscaper. I enjoy working with the earth’s soil and plants to grow beautiful flowers. The work is fulfilling and mostly relaxing. I like the quote of 1800s British Poet Alfred Austin when he states, “*The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul.*”

The Stella d’ Oro daylilies are among my favorites. It is a beautiful yellow flower but mainly it is one of my favorites because of my beloved grandma named “Stella,” who lived

From left, Sister Chabanel with fresh-picked tomatoes from her patio garden; Sister Mary’s strawberry plant; Michael with the canna lilies he plants each year.



to 104! Stella's daughter Jacqueline graduated from Ursuline Academy in St. Louis in 1947. Stella's great granddaughter and namesake Stella, my niece, is likely to graduate from Ursuline Academy in 2030.

A final thought: Gardening is also good for conversation as you may always ask another gardener, with a touch of humor, *"A peony for your thoughts?"*

Ellette Gibson, co-worker

Why do I garden? I have moments when I ask myself this question—especially when I am fighting critters, heat, humidity and weeds. But, despite all that, every year about February I start thinking about my plantings for the upcoming season with great anticipation and hope for our best gardens ever.

As a Nebraska girl, gardens have always been a part of my life. My grandparents (especially Grandma) had a beautiful garden and blessed us with homemade dill pickles for years—the only rule being to get a new jar you had to return the empty one. So when we bought our first piece of God's wonderful earth there was no question that we would garden.

Is there anything better than going out to the garden and bringing in a fresh tomato or green beans for dinner? Pretty much every morning during growing season, I grab a cup of coffee

Ellette with her "happy" flowers.



and stroll around the yard to see what changed since the day before. Of course, I love flowers too. I think zinnias are my favorite. They are such "happy" flowers.



Sister Ginger with a rare tomato in her vegetable garden.

Sister Ginger Cirone, OSU

I have always loved having a vegetable garden. In particular, I like to plant tomatoes. There is nothing much better tasting than fresh ripe tomatoes from one's own garden.

I had great success growing tomatoes in Galveston, Texas, and Crystal City, Missouri. As much as I try in New Orleans, it is more difficult as the weather is so terribly hot. Next year I plan on starting early in March as I started too late this year and only got a few tomatoes before the plants dried up. However, I have had great success with my herbs. In our small garden we have rosemary, basil, parsley and thyme, which we use often in preparing meals.

Though not good for my tomatoes, the heat and rain does wonders for the flowers growing in Regina's gardens both front and back. She has the most beautiful gardens on the block.

Sister Regina Marie Fronmüller, OSU

Line, shape, color—it's all in the garden on Valence Street in N'awlins!

The little voices of laughter coming from two- and three-year-olds dancing on

the painted rainbow on the driveway and then squatting to smell the flowers in the garden are so awesome. The monarchs and the bumblebees are added features to the garden and so important to the ecosystem. The milkweed plant, with its bright red-orange and yellow flowers, attracts butterflies, as does the low ground cover of portulaca with its white, pink and yellow flowers.

Look closely within the foliage of the coleus, the yellow mums, the golden dahlias, the delicate reddish-brown shrimp flower and you may find kitten sculptures and a statue of Our Lady! Also, tucked within the violet Mexican petunia, you will discover a tiny bird in a birdbath with pale blue, green and pink Mardi Gras beads!

Gardening for me dates way back to my grandpa, who owned Jones Flower Shop, and to my Mom, who had over 50 rose bushes and 11 climbers in the garden. They both taught me a few tricks of the trade: when to pinch off a leaf, cut a flower and where to cut a rose from a bush.

If you're in the neighborhood, don't be surprised to see people pause, look, wonder and even take a photo or two. I give photos of the garden to my sister, Sister Bernadette Marie Frömmüller, who makes beautiful notecards. Thus, "line, shape, color" goes well beyond all the passersby on Valence Street.

Sister Regina Marie's flower garden features a ceramic, "Flutist," by Sister Deana Walker.



The Purple Book (abridged)

Sister Pauline Lorch, OSU, was hospitalized for COVID-19 on Nov. 14, 2020—the day before her 83rd birthday. Here she chronicles her month-long journey from her assisted-living home in St. Louis, Missouri, to the hospital, rehab and finally back home.



COVID-19 hit Mother of Perpetual Help Assisted Living Center earlier that week with a vengeance. We were on lockdown, confined to our rooms where the only people we saw were dietary

“After a moment of shock, tingling on terror, I asked: ‘Am I going to make it?’ The reply: ‘We don’t know. We will do all we can, but we don’t know.’”

and medical staff. We had no idea how extensive the virus had invaded our home. That Friday, the day before my birthday, I was taken to Mercy Hospital due to low oxygen. I had no idea how sick I was.

X-rays showed a black mist moving across my lungs, and the doctor informed me this was viral pneumonia. After a moment of shock, tingling on terror, I asked: “Am I going to make it?” The reply: “We don’t know. We will do all we can, but we don’t know.” At that moment I had a vision of months on a respirator, fighting for my life. Rather quickly I came to the decision not to give permission for this. I was literally hours away from turning 83; I had led a happy

and long life. The doctor assured me that my choice would be honored. I did not fear death; I was at peace.

The treatment was complex. The medical staff could not say for sure whether an infusion of antibodies from survivors of COVID, or extensive steroids, or oxygen bypass treatment, or a combination of all the above made the difference. The antibody treatment, given just before my release, took some nine hours. The steroids sent my blood sugar level dangerously high but, quite honestly, no one except me seemed concerned about this. Oxygen bypass was quite another experience. The best way I can describe it is that it seemed as though I were being blasted with oxygen continually.

Period panic attacks occurred, partly due to a sense of helplessness and partly due to my inability to call for assistance. The call bell had been disabled when they installed the oxygen bypass system and seemingly no one could fix it—not nurses, not technicians, not maintenance. One day in a serious panic attack, I called our Fairdale house and asked Sister

Mary Ellen (Neeves) to call the seventh-floor nurses’ station. In calmer moments, I realized that the nurses were working with patients in the ICU next door who were probably in more serious condition and in need of more immediate attention than I.

The nursing staff was superb. However, due to stress and other priorities such as saving lives, they neglected to write their names on the white board and I, whose memory for names is always compromised, simply couldn’t remember them. I began teasing them by saying that when I wrote my book, I would have to refer to them as the unnamed nurses. Triumphant, a nurse named Kathleen arrived with a purple marker the very next day. This, in addition to my memory of the blackish purple of the X-rays in the ER, led me to name the fanciful, projected book “The Purple Book.”

My support system—concerned Ursuline Sisters, nieces, nephews and friends—were so encouraging and lifted my spirits, especially as I felt so alone and helpless both in the hospital and in 14-day rehab which followed. Music brought me the greatest peace, in particular Josh Groban’s “Never take a single breath for granted.” There were so many serendipitous moments during those days, very often God telling me “Stay calm. You are loved and cared for.” A sense of taste returned quickly. Brain fog only gradually cleared over two months with intensive speech therapy. My recovery was slow but steady with dedicated, patient therapists. By Dec. 10, I was back in Apartment 46 breathing well, brain fog still present, and grateful for all who helped me over the past month.

Keeping Hope Alive

Sister Karen Schwane, OSU

When I returned to San Antonio in 2018, Sister Elizabeth Susan (Hatzenbuehler) invited me to join the “Soul’s Journey Poetry Circle,” which meets the third Saturday of the month at the Ecumenical Center. When things closed due to the pandemic, we continued meeting on Zoom.

This has been an enriching, educational experience for me. The theme for July was “Laden with Beginnings,” and poems sent out for our musing reflected that theme. However, my mind went back several months to December. At that time, when it seemed a new era was dawning, I submitted this poem to the poetry circle:

*“Sunday, December 20, 2020
Today comes as a sigh of relief.
2020 – a year full of promise
almost ending.
Expectations of new insights,
creativity, innovations...
Challenges never imagined!
Will this experience of adjusted vision
lead our hearts, my heart, to greater
tolerance, acceptance, love,
generosity of spirit—
regarding all the inhabitants
and dwellers of our earth?”*

Now, in the summer of 2021, I hear disturbing details of the Delta variant daily—quite a disappointment after vigilantly abiding with the recommendations for surviving COVID



19. Are others feeling this? How do we bolster our hope now?

I found inspiration in a poem suggested for reflection in July. “Hope,” by Lisel Mueller, lyrically and metaphorically explains how signs of hope can be found in our daily lives, stating in part, “It hovers in dark corners before the lights are turned on ...” and “... it explodes in the starry heads of dandelion turned sages”

For me, our peace garden awakens my awareness of the resurgence of plant life that appeared dead after the hard winter freeze.

How could testing positive for COVID after vaccination hold a kernel

of hope? The period of isolation gave me time to reflect, pray and divest myself of several heavy journals.

Could Facebook, disdained by some, be a source of hope? Yes, in finding an invitation to recall and celebrate the life of an Ursuline alum and unexpectedly renew friendships from the past.

Google, the go-to-place for information, reveals innumerable symbols of hope with strong Biblical, Christian roots often recreated in jewelry. Signs of hope.

Finally, I have added to my email signature this quote from St. Angela: “Have faith and do not lose heart and hope.”



Time for Renewal



Sister Susan
Kienzler, OSU

Most of us can think of many things during the past 18 months that have either been canceled or postponed. The thought of “getting back on track” is topmost on the minds of a number Ursuline Sisters scheduled to attend the International Tertianship in Rome. I will be directing this renewal program for 14 Ursuline Sisters from around the world. Originally slated to begin in November 2020, the group will assemble in Rome to begin the seven-month program in November 2021.

Tertianship is an opportunity for the sisters, all of whom have been in the community from 10 to 20 years, to take

stock of their lives and, hopefully, deepen their commitment as Ursuline Sisters. It is also an opportunity to develop strong international bonds in this unique Ursuline community.

Participants this year will come from China, Czech Republic, Guyana, France, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Poland, Slovakia and Thailand. Everyone will speak English, but for many this will be their second, third or fourth language.

Although I directed this program from 2010-13, this year offers unique challenges in addition to the delay. Typically, some of the sisters spend time in an English-speaking country before going to Rome, which allows them to practice speaking English on a regular basis. The pandemic made this impossible, but the Ursuline motto of *serviam*—“I will serve”—has been evident as many of our sisters have been helping our tertians prepare for this important year. Ursuline Sisters in New

York, Ireland and Mexico have served as English tutors to the sisters, two of them via Zoom over the course of many months.

Some of the sisters probably will need to quarantine when they arrive in Rome. We will take our cues from the Italian Ministry of Health throughout the year. We hope to visit Assisi, as well as Brescia and Desenzano—places that are steeped in the heritage of St. Angela Merici. The pandemic will determine whether these visits will be possible.

In one of my earlier letters to the tertians, I told them to plan to pack extra amounts of patience and flexibility. I think that we will need both as we face the unknowns in this most uncertain time. I ask for your prayerful support during this coming year that all will remain well and that it will be a grace-filled time for each of the sisters.



Sister Susan in 2011 with tertians she directed at the Generalate in Rome. The sisters from India had just finished their province presentation.

Congratulations to our Jubilarians

In 2021 we celebrated the jubilees of 14 of our sisters who have ministered to God's people a total of 915 years. Throughout their years of commitment to Ursuline life and ministries, these daughters of Angela have had a profound impact on the lives of countless individuals.

75th

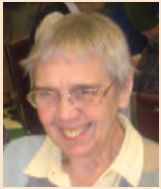


Sister Pauline Belanger
Waterville, Maine



Sister Lorraine Pomerleau
Lewiston, Maine

70th



Sister Betty Carpentier
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Theresa Sarich
Alton, Illinois

65th



Sister Carla Dolce
New Orleans, Louisiana



Sister Peggy Hill
(died May 14, 2021)



Sister Anne Therese Mayol
(died May 1, 2021)



Sister Joan Ann Springman
(died April 18, 2021)

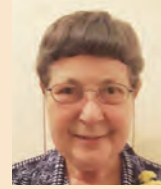


Sister Jane Wiessing
St. Louis, Missouri

60th



Sister Virginia Cirone
New Orleans, Louisiana



Sister Bernadette Marie Fronmüller
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Mary Anne Holmes
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Brendan Jacoby
Springfield, Illinois



Sister Rose Marie Moran
Elkridge, Maryland

In Remembrance

"In heaven you will find complete love, which is the fulfillment of love begun on earth."

—Sr. Angela Merici

We remember with gratitude the lives of our sisters who have passed into eternal life since July 2020.



Sister Joan Bretz
Oct. 31, 1931 –
June 9, 2021
Professed 1951



Sister Patricia Couture
Dec. 10, 1928 –
April 15, 2021
Professed 1949



Sister Miriam Patricia Faricy
Sept. 27, 1930 –
May 12, 2021
Professed 1952



Sister Genevieve Goessling
Feb. 7, 1939 –
Aug. 12, 2020
Professed 1960



Sister Miriam Teresa Graczak
June 30, 1929 –
Aug. 25, 2020
Professed 1952



Sister Peggy Hill
April 25, 1935 –
May 14, 2021
Professed 1956



Sister Anne Therese Mayol
Oct. 7, 1933 –
May 1, 2021
Professed 1956



Sister Marianne Mullen
July 3, 1934 –
Nov. 13, 2020
Professed 1958



Sister Mary Ellen Neeves
Dec. 11, 1938 –
April 13, 2021
Professed 1959



Sister Joan Ann Springman
Feb. 24, 1934 –
April 18, 2021
Professed 1956



Sister Peggy Stovall
Aug. 13, 1937 –
Dec. 4, 2020
Professed 1980



Sister Martha Helen Thibodeau
Feb. 21, 1927 –
Sept. 16, 2020
Professed 1951



Sister Francis Marie Thrailkill
Sept. 21, 1937 –
Oct. 2, 2020
Professed 1958

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



In March the Ursulines joined Catholic Sisters from 24 congregations in four states in launching a yearlong, live-streamed conversation series on the leading social justice issues of our time.

Titled "Exploring Intersections: Catholic Sisters on Racism, Migration and Climate," each month this series focuses on a different social issue in a thought-provoking and engaging conversation. Three panelists, including Catholic sisters, bring unique perspectives to each episode.

Topics include gender equity, human trafficking, gun violence, economic

justice, food security, restorative justice, affordable housing, educational justice, equitable access to health care and more.

The series is free and open to the public, with episodes airing at 3 p.m. CT on the second Wednesday of each month. You can view upcoming topics and register to view episodes live on Zoom at www.exploringintersections.org. You will also find links for past episodes on YouTube and podcasts at this website.

"Exploring Intersections" is a project of Region X of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR).

What's New with . . . Sister Mary Frances Judge?



Ursuline artist Sister Mary Frances Judge has been pursuing her passion for painting in her Minneapolis, Minnesota, studio. Her latest undertaking is painting circular canvasses with a cosmological theme. “I usually do eight or nine paintings a year,” she says. “I work in my loft apartment where I have a large window and two great skylights. My work is hanging in the hallways of the first and fifth floors of Schmidt Artist Lofts.”

Sister Mary Frances with three of her paintings in her Minneapolis loft.

Sister Mary Frances recently shipped 27 paintings for the permanent collection of the Museum of Friends in Walsenburg, Colorado. “They will keep some of my work on display at all times and offer me a one-person show in the near future,” she says. “I am also going to show at the October Artist Crawl, when people visit our studios and buy work.”



Standing in front of the Ursulines' former novitiate are Sisters Rita Ann Bregenhorn, Peggy Moore, Adele Brennan and Elisa Ryan.

Return to Crystal City

The new owner of the Ursulines' former novitiate in Crystal City, Missouri, invited the sisters in the St. Louis area for a visit in early September. A group of 11, including some co-workers, enjoyed a beautiful Saturday checking out the ongoing renovations and admiring the

gorgeous views. With an ATV at their disposal, the sisters took turns riding through the property after lunch. They shared many stories of their days as novices there and gladly accepted an invitation to return next year.



Sisters Chabanel Mathison and Rita Ann Bregenhorn view the Crystal City property from the front of their former novitiate, which faces the Mississippi River.

**URSULINE SISTERS
CENTRAL PROVINCE OF THE U.S.**

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St. Louis, MO 63122

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Sister Elisa Ryan, OSU

Councilors

Sister Jean Hopman, OSU

Sister Peggy Moore, OSU

***Laurels* Editor**

Susan M. Whelan

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Angela-Family painting
from the Family Agricultural
School of Saint Angela in
Pedro II, Piaui, Brazil.

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.

We are grateful to our many friends and donors who support our mission in this, the 486th year since St. Angela founded the Company of St. Ursula in Brescia, Italy.