


Volume 15.3 Winter 2012

# Good NEWS

A Publication of  THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

*Also in this issue:*

- Conditions Bright for Congregation in Sun-Drenched South
- People & Places
- Sharing the Good News

## Sister Unlocks Hope *for* Women in Jail

## Commitment Statement

We recommit ourselves  
to “rebuilding the Church”  
by living the passion of the Gospel  
in the discerning spirit  
of our Franciscan charism and tradition.

We are willing to take the necessary  
risks to be a healing, compassionate  
presence in our violent world especially  
with women, children, and those who  
have no voice.

We desire to reflect this commitment  
in our dialogue with the entire Church,  
in our own governing structures, and  
in our relationship with one another  
as sister.

## Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of  
Philadelphia, choose to live the Gospel  
in the prophetic spirit of Francis of  
Assisi and our Foundress Mother Francis  
Bachmann. With Jesus Christ as Brother,  
we live as sister with one another, with  
the entire human family and with all  
creation. Calling ourselves and one  
another to continuous conversion of  
heart, we commit ourselves to a life of  
contemplation, poverty and humility.

As vowed women of the Church, we  
respond with diverse gifts in a spirit of  
collaboration and of mutual service to  
the needs of others, especially the  
economically poor, the marginal and  
the oppressed. Seeking to participate  
in the Spirit's action in the world, we  
direct our personal and corporate  
resources to the promotion of justice,  
peace, and reconciliation.

Filled with trust in the goodness of  
God, we move forward.

## POINT OF VIEW

### The Gift of Presence

**A**s I reflect back on my life, I remember times when I received difficult news concerning a family member or friend. I recall often feeling helpless and powerless to assist. What does one say? One of the gifts of aging is the recognition that it is not important to search for words but to simply be present to the other, silently sharing the pain and sorrow of the moment. Presence matters. It says I am here, I care, and I am reaching out in love and trust that love can heal.



**Sister Esther Anderson, OSF  
Congregational Minister**

In his book, *Presence*, Peter Senge, a pioneer in the field of management innovation describes presence as deep listening and being open to the other person beyond one's preconceptions and historical ways of making sense. This resonates with Franciscan ministry which encourages one to see God in each person, to name the good in them, to help them see that good in themselves, and to acknowledge the source of all good, God. As

*Sisters of St. Francis, we seek to respond to the need each person has to be heard, understood, respected, and when required, helped and supported.*

*In this edition of Good News, we encounter Sister Kathy Dougherty who serves as a chaplain at a women's detention center in Maryland. Her ministry brings her in contact with women who often have hit rock bottom. They frequently are dealing with the trauma of arrest and may suffer from the effects of notoriety, shame, guilt, and recrimination. The women need someone to listen to them attentively with a sense of nonjudgmental, unconditional acceptance. Kathy is present to them and unlocks hope.*

*In a very different setting, Sister Jean O'Connor is present in the lives of the parish members of St. Dominic's Parish. She is warm and inviting and attentively listens for and calls forth the gifts that people are often unaware they possess. Jean unlocks the parishioners' desire to be present to others, to affirm their goodness, and to assist them in need.*

*Presence is a gift. Let us share it generously with the people who may be most in need of that gift today.*

*St. Esther Anderson, OSF*





VOLUME 15.3 WINTER 2012

# INSIDE *Good* NEWS CONTENTS

Point of View . . . . . 2

Sister Unlocks Hope for  
Women in Jail . . . . . 4

*In a maze of concrete cell blocks surrounded by chain link and barbed wire, Sister Kathy Dougherty helps to inspire hope and personal growth in women who have hit rock bottom. Sister Kathy works to provide for spiritual needs but also goes above and beyond to help provide for material needs as well. Her reason? She sees the person of Christ in all.*

Written by Deb Litman

Photography by Andrea Cipriani-Mecchi

People & Places . . . . . 10

Conditions Bright for Congregation  
in Sun-Drenched South . . . . . 12

*In Panama City, Florida, where Catholicism is often misunderstood, Sr. Jean O'Connor found her home at St. Dominic's Parish—a parish that continues to grow and thrive. In part, the growth can be contributed to Sr. Jean's love and enthusiasm for the RCIA program and the ministry of religious education.*

Written by Deb Litman

Photography by Mark Wallheiser

Additional photos supplied by St. Dominic's Parish

Sharing the Good News . . . . . 16

Focus . . . . . 18

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The purpose of *Good News* is to further the Gospel mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia by sharing the good news of the congregation with our friends, family, companions, and sisters. Through this publication, we hope to share the charism of our congregation and invite others to become involved in our mission.

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**On the cover:** Sister Kathy Dougherty holds hands and prays with one of the inmates at the Baltimore City Women's Detention Center. As the center's chaplain, Sister Kathy tends to the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of women who are jailed for days, weeks, or months as they await trial

# Sister Unlocks Hope *for* Women in Jail

“I TREAT THEM LIKE PEOPLE. I CALL THEM BY NAME RATHER THAN NUMBER. I KEEP THEIR CONFIDENCES.”

Entering the Baltimore City Women’s Detention Center as an inmate can be an intimidating experience. Once a woman is arrested, she is taken by the police to Central Booking for processing. She is searched, stripped of all personal belongings, finger-printed, and issued a uniform. Then she is sent to the detention center

where she is placed in quarantine to be assessed medically and psychologically and assigned a security level. After a week or two, she is moved into the general population where she is housed in a dormitory containing rows of metal bunk beds furnished with thin mattresses.

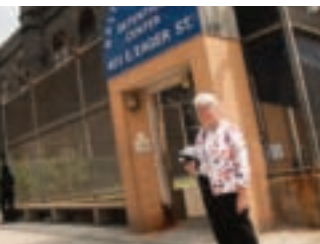
Even for people coming to the detention center on other business, the place can be daunting with its maze of concrete-block buildings surrounded by chain link fences. Sister Kathy Dougherty recalls clearly the

apprehension she felt on her first visit to the facility thirty years ago. At that time, Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia Sister Elena Goulding was chaplain of the facility and Sister Kathy, then a high school teacher, was delivering a box of toiletries that her students had collected for the women detained at the center. “I remember it being so depressing,” said Sister Kathy. “I thought to myself that I could never do what Sister Elena was doing.”



*Sister Kathy talks with an inmate in the 45-day Addicts Changing Together Substance Abuse Program (ACT-SAP) at the detention center. This program helps addicts through recovery by offering acupuncture, counseling, and life skills training. After successfully completing the program, women move on to a recovery house to continue the healing process.*

*The detention center itself is a formidable structure, a maze of concrete buildings surrounded by chain-link fences and barbed wire. Inside, women are housed in open dormitories with rows of bunk beds lined up military style.*



*Sister Kathy Dougherty outside of the Baltimore City Women's Detention Center.*





Then about three years ago, Sister Kathy returned from a year of renewal and began searching for her next ministry. While exploring a website dedicated to ministry openings, she saw that there was an opening for a chaplain at the detention center. “Despite my earlier impressions, I couldn’t get that out of my head. Every time I sat down to pray it was there. When I finally visited the center again, it seemed to me that that was where I needed to be.”

Today Sister Kathy serves as chaplain at the women’s detention center and her ministry brings her into daily contact with women who have hit rock bottom. Many suffer from addiction which has led them to illegal activity. It is not unusual for them to suffer from mental health issues and serious medical problems or to have been victims of physical and sexual abuse. Some women who have been detained are not guilty of any crime but, because of

their economic status, they cannot produce bail and sit for months in detention awaiting their day in court.

### Providing Essentials

Each day Sister Kathy meets with an average of 25 women in a series of one-on-one meetings. She listens to their stories, prays with them, and assesses their needs. For

*continued on page 6*

“ONCE THEY REALIZE  
I AM HERE TO HELP  
THEM, MANY OF THE  
WOMEN BECOME  
MORE OPEN TO  
SHARING THEIR  
STORIES.”

*Inmates pray with Sister Kathy during her weekly Catholic Communion Service. Kelly, a former inmate at the BCDC, said those weekly services helped her achieve “spiritual stability.”*

*continued from page 5*

many women the most immediate needs they present are practical, external ones. In response Sister Kathy provides toiletry bags much like the ones she delivered from her students thirty years ago. This seemingly small offering—a bag containing a travel size tube of toothpaste, soap, deodorant, and a few other items—can mean the world to a woman at the detention center. “I’ve had women cry when I give them a bar of soap,” said Sister Kathy. “It is very humbling.”

According to Sister Kathy, this is a piece of her ministry that she couldn’t accomplish on her own. Individuals, parish groups, school children, Sisters of St. Francis, and even former inmates supply her with donations of toiletries to assist the women. In addition to toiletries, the women often need undergarments as well as clothing to wear when they are released.

Former inmate Kelly\* remembers what a big deal it was to be on the receiving end

\* Last names have been removed to protect the person’s privacy.

of those donations. “Something like real toothpaste is such a luxury in there,” she said. Now that she is out on her own, Kelly gives back by making up bags for “the girls” and bringing them to Sister Kathy.

## Going Deeper

For many inmates like Kelly, what starts as a practical relationship—Sister Kathy as the supplier of material items—develops into a personal one—Sister Kathy as the sounding board, the advocate, the supporter. “Once they realize I am here to help them, many of the women become more open to sharing their stories,” said Sister Kathy. “I don’t preach to them; I just take them where they are. I ask them, ‘what do you think would help you?’ and draw them out when they are ready.”

Kelly says finding Sister Kathy was a blessing for which she is extremely grateful. “I couldn’t confide in other inmates because when they got mad, they would use the information against me,” said Kelly. “I went to see Sister Kathy whenever I could. If I had a problem, I could always talk to her and I never felt like I was being







▲ Sister Kathy reviews upcoming events with Program Coordinator Charzetta Gaylord. The two women work together closely to provide inmates with the opportunity and encouragement they need to attend programs such as church services, GED prep classes, and legal workshops.

► Sister Kathy (left) meets with BCDC's assistant warden Gwendolyn Oliver (right) to share updates on inmates.



judged. There were times I wanted to give up or lash out but with Sister Kathy I felt like I had my mom there to listen to me and keep me in line.”

“The women understand that I’m an ally,” said Sister Kathy. “I treat them like people. I call them by name rather than number. I keep their confidences.” And, when they are ready, Sister Kathy facilitates reflection on a desire to change. Some want to do better but are not ready to do the work that goes with it. Others have the motivation they need, whether it is a yearning to get their children back or the weariness of living a life ruled by drugs and crime.

When Tagerin\* arrived at the detention center after being arrested on drug and gun possession charges, she said she was “devastated but happy not to run any more.” After a few days of feeling low, she said she surrendered to God and decided to become “a new person.” When she met Sister Kathy a week or so later, she felt that this was someone she could trust. “She was real sweet and kind and caring to people,” said Tagerin. “I started to feel real a connection. I talked with her, cried, and told her the truth about myself.”

## Feeding the Spirit

In addition to being there to listen to and support women in their daily struggles, Sister Kathy works to provide for their spiritual needs. She conducts a weekly Catholic Communion service as well as observances for holy days. On Friday afternoons she leads a class on prayer and spirituality which incorporates everything from Scripture readings and discussion to centering prayer, meditation, and journaling. She also brings in volunteers from various religions to provide worship services for women of other traditions.



*Tagerin was thrilled to be accepted at Marion House upon her release from the detention center. The intensive program at Marion House provides housing, counseling and case management, addiction treatment, education, employment assistance, and life skills training*

“This is a place of awakenings,” said Sister Kathy. “Once the women are here for a while and they start to think more clearly, it is not unusual for them to come to a service and find their hearts somehow touched. They find a challenge to a more moral way of living and see that ‘When I do these things, life seems better.’”

Often groups from the Archdiocese of Baltimore will come to the detention center to conduct a service or lead a reflection. On one such day, a volunteer did a reading on forgiveness. “There was one inmate for whom it was just like a light bulb had gone off in her head,” said Sister Kathy. “She began sharing with the group, telling them that on the streets she felt in control of everything—in this case, the dealers and the pimps. However, she had also prostituted herself and at one point was raped and brutalized to the point where she was in a coma for three months. Seven years had passed since that time and at this moment she sensed that God was asking her to imagine how bad the life of the man who hurt her must have been to lead him to do something like that. She felt there had to be a reason that she sur-

*continued on page 8*



“WHAT I HOPE I CAN PROVIDE FOR THEM IS THE KNOWLEDGE THAT SOMEONE CHOOSES TO BE WITH THEM IN THE MIDST OF THEIR SUFFERING.”

## HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Pray for men and women who are incarcerated and for those entrusted with their care and rehabilitation.
- Get involved in prison ministry. Many inmates have few, if any, visitors. Simply being present to inmates in need of human interaction can make a big difference. Visit prisoners one-on-one, send letters to persons who are incarcerated, or help organize and lead faith-sharing groups at nearby correctional facilities.
- Donate clothes and toiletries for prisoners. An item as basic as a bar of soap or a pair of socks can mean the world to an inmate.
- Utilize your skills to help those who are incarcerated. Many facilities are willing to host volunteers who can provide services such as GED tutoring, ESL classes, and basic computer skills training.
- Become an advocate for improvements to criminal justice and correctional policies.
- Use the attached envelope to make a donation to Sister Kathy’s ministry at the Baltimore City Women’s Detention Center.

▼ Sister Kathy meets with Carol Harmon, facility administrator of the BCDC as Lt. Priscilla Reaves works nearby.



*continued from page 7*

vived and used that as inspiration to try to move from what she had been to the person she knew she could be.”

Sister Kathy also remembered Carolyn\*, an inmate who became particularly emotional during a Good Friday service during which there was a reflection on Mary’s suffering in seeing her son crucified. Sister Kathy looked over and saw Carolyn’s eyes filling with tears and remembered that Carolyn’s own son had been murdered. She knew that suffering and related deeply to Jesus’ mother’s pain.

“Being with these women and seeing the suffering in their lives has been a very meaningful spiritual experience for me,” said Sister Kathy. “What I hope I can provide for them is the knowledge that someone chooses to be with them in the midst of their suffering to share their burden and that someone sees the person of Christ in them.”

### Helping with Next Steps

As the women at the detention center do the internal work of the heart and the



▲ Sister Kathy has a shelf full of literature on a variety of subjects that she shares with inmates.

► Sister Kathy talks one-on-one with an inmate. “I feel like I am making an impact even if it is just by sitting and listening to them,” said Sister Kathy. “Simply being there makes a difference.”







*Samantha greets Sister Kathy warmly as she sees her for the first time since beginning the program at Marion House three weeks earlier. “Seeing a woman go through a positive transformation while detained and then moving into a program where she can build a positive life is most meaningful,” said Sister Kathy.*

spirit, they must also begin to face the challenge of transitioning to life after the detention center. For some, the move will be to prison. For others, the joy of release will be tempered by the reality of a return to the same set of circumstances that led them to the choices that landed them in jail in the first place.

“A lot of the women go back into the same environment and pick up the same habits,” said Sister Kathy. “They have been in the cycle for so long—their whole lives in many cases—that it is extremely difficult to break that. Many women are in jail five or six times before they say, ‘I’m tired of this. I’m ready to change.’ Some never get to that point. For them my role is just being present.”

For those ready to do the hard work required for change, Sister Kathy is their biggest champion. She encourages them and helps them to find support on the outside. In Tagerin’s case that meant help getting into Marion House, a program that provides housing, counseling and case management, addiction treatment, education, employment assistance, and life skills training. “Sister Kathy was there with me in court. She told me about the program at Marion House, got me an interview, and went with me to the interview. She had a big part in getting me to where I am today.”

Today Tagerin is doing well at Marion House. She knows she still has a long way to go but feels she is on the right track.

And her relationship with Sister Kathy still serves as a support for her to lean on. “I have Sister Kathy listed in my phone as ‘Guardian Angel,’” said Tagerin. “She was there for me when no one else was and she is still there whenever I need her.”

As Tagerin begins this bright new chapter of her life, another group of women are just facing their first night in quarantine. Fortunately Sister Kathy will be there for them, too—providing, listening, caring, and helping them on their way. ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).

# PEOPLE & PLACES



*A few shovelful of soil and St. Anthony Hospital is on its way to the future—carrying on a long legacy of healthcare.*

## Who are the 'Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia'?

*Through this section we hope to share a glimpse of our congregation and the individuals who make real its mission.*

### OREGON

May 30—a big day for St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton as the facility breaks ground for a new hospital! The facility's history in Umatilla County dates to the 1880s when the sisters first opened the doors of their three-story home to care for the sick. The original hospital opened in 1902 with additions and updates added in 1922, 1961, 1982, and 2002. The current building will continue in operation until the new hospital—slated for completion in 2014—opens. Through its many transitions, St. Anthony's has brought high quality healthcare to the people of Umatilla County and will continue to do so in the years to come.



### WASHINGTON

Spokane's VOCARE 2012 was a wonderful example of women religious from various congregations working together for something bigger than any one of them—a way to open to young women the world of possibilities that a religious vocation might hold for them. Sister Elaine Thaden was one of a core group of vocation directors from the diocese who planned the experience which ultimately resulted in a two and a half day experience for 31 young women ages 13-18. Rather than a "camp" experience or a program of formalized retreat talks, the group spent an exciting two days

on a bus traveling to various sites where sisters from various congregations live and/or minister. These visits plus a variety of prayer experiences and a sharing of vocation stories provided the participants with a "live" picture of the various lifestyles, charisms, and contributions made by the various congregations of women religious.



### IRELAND

On a recent trip to Ireland, Sister Marguerite O'Beirne was honored by her former school, St. Ronan's National School in Cloonloo. During the celebration, Sister Marguerite took part in a tree-planting ceremony. After a special liturgy, a commemorative plaque was unveiled and her achievements were cited, including having been acknowledged as a top Irish American educator, having been named Woman of the Year by the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and having served as Grand Marshall of the St. Patrick's Day Parade. In turn, Sister Marguerite shared her own pride in St. Ronan's which she described as "a school that has been a vital part of the community and that has helped to shape the lives of so many through the years."



*In spite of the rain, Sister Marguerite O'Beirne took an active role in the tree planting ceremony held in her honor at St. Ronan's National School in Cloonloo.*





(L-R) Sisters Patricia Kidd, Kathleen Kelly, and Carmel Earls were among the 11 sisters who attended the Eucharistic Congress.

## IRELAND

Our sisters who either work in Ireland or who were visiting family there this summer were able to participate in the 50th International Eucharistic Congress. The congress' theme—The Eucharist: Communion with Christ and with One Another—finds its roots in the Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium*. Each day had its own theme flowing from the celebration of the Eucharist and relating to the congress theme. The sisters also enjoyed the opening and closing ceremonies and the theological and pastoral reflections on the theme of each day.



## HAWAII/ROME

Sisters Rochelle Liu and Joan Roddy traveled from Hawaii to Rome to represent the congregation at the canonization of Mother Marianne Cope. Mother Marianne, a former superior general of the Syracuse Franciscans (now part of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities), spent many years in Hawaii ministering with people afflicted with leprosy. In addition to her direct service to those suffering from the disease, she also improved healthcare and nursing procedures in the island's hospitals and provided homes for children whose parents were stricken with the disease. Because the Syracuse congregation was originally part of our congregation, we share the great joy of their sisters as they celebrated this special recognition of Mother Marianne's life.

## NEW JERSEY

St. Francis Medical Center recently added its own "Wall of Fame." The idea was conceived by Father Carmen Carlone, a priest who ministers at the Trenton hospital. He wanted to create a "Wall of Fame" to help preserve the rich heritage of the Sisters of St. Francis who founded the hospital and the many sisters have ministered there over the years. Hospital administrators agreed and the "wall" became a reality. On one side of the hallway is the quote from St. Francis: "Preach the Gospel at all times; if necessary use words." On the other side are photographs of the seven sisters who still minister or volunteer at the hospital.

because food stamps deem these items "ineligible." The Kimberly Clark Company, located near the center, also donated cases of paper products. Another regular feature at Anna's Place is the lunch served to 80-90 men, women, and children each Thursday. Three years ago when the center opened, they served only five. Six youngsters from Anna's Place also benefited again this year with scholarships to Neumann University's basketball camp.

▼ Bishop David O'Connell and Gerald Jablonowski, president and CEO of St. Francis Medical Center, joined the sisters who minister at the hospital to bless the Wall of Fame.



## PENNSYLVANIA

Things have been hopping at Anna's Place in Chester. Sr. Julie McCole was invited to Maris Grove Retirement Facility to talk about the mission and vision for Anna's Place. The residents, moved by her presentation, conducted a paper drive, collecting paper towels, toilet paper, napkins, etc.,

► Sister Julie McCole's presentation at Maris Grove touched hearts, forging a new bond and a helping hand for those who gather at Anna's Place.





*The staff and students of Vacation Bible School at St. Dominic Catholic Church in Panama City, Florida, present Sister Jean O'Connor with a token of their appreciation for all her hard work in organizing the congregation's very successful VBS program.*

# Conditions Bright for Congregation in Sun-Drenched South

✠ "IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE NOT ONLY PASS ON THE FAITH, BUT THAT WE ALSO GIVE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE THE ABILITY TO EXPLAIN IT TO OTHERS."

**L**ocated on the panhandle of northwest Florida, Panama City is a popular tourist destination boasting beautiful beaches and a subtropical climate. The home of Tyndall Air Force Base and neighbor to the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, it has a strong presence of military families who call it home. The region is predominantly Southern Baptist with a Catholic population of less than five percent. There among the palm trees, St. Dominic Catholic Church serves a

population that includes multigenerational locals, military folks, and a strong Hispanic and Filipino population.

The campus of St. Dominic's is spread across twenty acres, encompassing the church, the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, the Lourdes Grotto, a parish hall, rectory and offices, a gift and book store, outdoor pavilion, playing field, religious education building, twelve apartments for parish seniors, and even a fully-equipped and

functioning TV studio that broadcasts Catholic programming. But despite the amazing facilities, it is the people who make the community special. "It is like a close-knit family," said Sister Jean O'Connor, the coordinator of religious education for grades K-8 and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), vacation Bible school (VBS), and various other parish projects. "Our people are so loving and supportive. Their generosity feeds me."





*Music is an integral part of VBS at St. Dominic's and Sister Jean gets right into the thick of things—singing and dancing along with the students.*



*Sister Jean places great importance on helping young people feel confident in their faith. "I want them to get joy and comfort from their faith and to be able to explain it to others," she said.*



*Reverend Kevin McQuone presents students with medals for perfect attendance at the end-of-year ceremony for religious education.*

## Welcoming To The Faith

Of course, that generosity goes both ways. "Sister Jean is instrumental in the lives of all of us at St. Dominic's," said parishioner Grace Schifley. "She is one of the main pillars of our church community." Grace first met Sister Jean eight years ago when she began attending services at St. Dominic's with her husband, a cradle Catholic and retired military man, and their daughter. Grace had been raised with what she describes as "a smattering of Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian" influences in a family with a strong but nondenominational faith. She had never been baptized and had never found a church in which she felt comfortable. That was before she came to St. Dominic's. There, she says, she finally found a spiritual family.

When considering becoming a Catholic, she turned to Sister Jean. "I definitely felt a connection to St. Dominic's and an attraction to the Catholic faith but it was still a big step for me to make the commitment to becoming Catholic," said Grace. "Sister Jean was instrumental in

helping me make that step. She was warm and inviting. She never made me feel awkward for not knowing something and always encouraged questions."

## Educating The Next Generation

Sister Jean brings the same love and enthusiasm she has for RCIA to the ministry of religious education. Her goals for the program are to help children learn about Jesus, grow in their faith, and reach out in service to others. To help accomplish those objectives, Sister Jean has recruited a legion of volunteer catechists to help pass on the faith. "I am so proud of the teachers here," said Sister Jean. "They give of themselves week after week, year after year, sharing their faith life with the children."

According to Sister Jean, the mysteries of the faith are not difficult for children to grasp. She encourages teachers to use the

children's life experiences to bring concepts of faith to life. "Young children can relate to mysteries because there are so many of them in their daily experiences," she said. "When they turn on a lamp, they don't understand what makes it work but they trust and know that the light will come on. In the same way, they trust and know that God loves them and his light shines in them."

In a region of the country where Catholicism is often misunderstood and many people are surprised to learn that Catholics are Christian, Sister Jean says that it is particularly important that children have a solid foundation in their faith and a multitude of positive Catholic role models. This is especially true because there are no Catholic high schools and only one Catholic elementary school in the area. "The Catholic faith is much maligned around here and our children are surrounded by challenges to their faith," said

*continued on page 14*

*People get involved in many different ways at St. Dominic's. As part of the greeters' ministry, these women welcome worshipers as they arrive at Mass. The work they do ensures a warm reception for regulars and visitors alike.*





*continued from page 13*

Sister Jean. "It is important that we not only pass on the faith, but that we also give our young people the ability to explain it to others."

In addition to weekly religious education for children, Sister Jean organizes a very successful vacation Bible school (VBS) that is attended by more than 90 students each summer. Michele Butcher has taught music at VBS for the past nine years and all three of her children have attended. Her oldest son, now 18, is too old to enroll but still gets involved by helping his mom and working with the younger children. "It is so much fun sharing the VBS experience with my children," Michele said. "And in a generation where so often we lose children's attention after thirty seconds, it is nice to see them immersed in learning about God and having fun doing it. We have a song we sing called 'God is Awesome' and it is great hearing the children belt that out. They leave here feeling good about themselves and knowing that God loves them."

*Last year, the students at VBS sent ice pops to the troops. Below, Father Pete Zelewski helps unload a truck full of the soon-to-be-frozen treats.*

And when the singing and dancing start, Sister Jean gets right out there with the children singing and dancing along with them. "She gets them going," said Michele. "For some of the middle schoolers, dancing and singing may not be considered 'cool' but Sister Jean makes them feel that this is not a place to be embarrassed. It is a place to be free to enjoy and experience God's love."

## Reaching Out To Those In Need

When it comes to teaching children to reach out in service, Sister Jean often takes her cues from the issues facing families in the St. Dominic community. Strong ties to the military make service projects directed toward United States service men and women a natural fit.

One year children in VBS collected unfrozen ice pops to send to U.S. troops. The idea started with the pastor, Father Peter Zelewski who was himself stationed in the Middle East as an Air Force Chaplain. Father Pete talked about the brutality of

the desert heat and the idea for Project Chill was born. Church families donated the ice pops, one of the parish maintenance workers built a shipping container,

▼ *Sister Jean lifts a VBS student so she can add her box of prayer-wrapped Tic Tacs® to the crate being sent to troops in Afghanistan. One grateful recipient posted his thanks on YouTube, telling the children that their gift brought encouragement—and fresh breath—to the troops serving in the hot desert of Southeast Asia.*





# HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Pray for all those in parish ministry and for our service members who have put themselves in harm's way.
- Share your faith with the next generation by becoming a religious education teacher at your place of worship.
- Volunteer to oversee a new project at your church. Whether you are providing music that wasn't previously available, organizing a monthly dinner to bring congregants together, or spearheading a clothing drive for the needy, your contribution will enrich your own life and the life of your congregation.
- Support U.S. military service members. Although you can no longer send care packages addressed to "Any Service Member" because of increased mail restrictions, you can still support the troops overseas. Go to [military.com](http://military.com) to find more information on getting involved in letter-writing and e-mail campaigns, purchasing authorized pre-made care packages, and volunteering time through nonprofits.

and 60 boxes of the treats made their way from St. Dominic's to the grateful troops.

Last year's VBS students also held a prayer service for the father of one of the children as he deployed. "That was special for all of us," said Sister Jean. "It helped his daughter deal with the separation and reinforced the importance of clinging to faith during difficult times." This year the students Skyped with him as he continues his tour overseas. For this year's Project Refresh, the children sent personalized notes attached to 864 boxes of Tic-Tacs to the troops in Afghanistan.



▲ *The studio of Catholic in America, a television network dedicated to connecting Catholics to their faith, is located on the grounds of St. Dominic's.*

▶ *In the Catholic in America editing studio, Ray Herard, Sister Jean, and Rowena Trzechik work on editing a one-minute YouTube video message that the VBS students recorded for the troops overseas.*



## Making A Home For All

Of course, it isn't just the military community that brings its special flavor to St. Dominic's. Significant Hispanic and Filipino populations also enrich the congregation with their vitality and unique customs. In addition to holding a Spanish Mass every Sunday, the church celebrates special feast days, festivals, and other traditions that make Hispanic and Filipino members feel at home and give all parishioners the opportunity to experience Catholicism from a different perspective. "I always encourage people to take what speaks to their hearts and bring it to the entire church community," said Sister Jean. "Incorporating these special traditions introduces a real vibrancy to the congregation."

It is just that attitude, it seems, that makes Sister Jean such a gift to St. Dominic's. In a place where volunteers play an enormous role in keeping the congregation active and dynamic, it is often Sister Jean who gives them the encouragement they need to take on a project. "Sister Jean sees potential in people that even they don't see in them-

selves," said Grace. "After I finished the RCIA process, she approached me about becoming a religious education teacher. She believed in me so much that she made it easy for me to say 'yes' to something that I otherwise wouldn't have been sure I was ready for. She unlocks a piece of us that wants to do these things and then makes us feel so good about what we do."

Sister Jean admits she does work hard to make sure people feel supported and valued. "I make a point of telling them how good they are and how much they are appreciated," she said. "I leave them notes, host an annual appreciation dinner—anything to show them 'we couldn't have done it without you.'"

Still, Sister Jean insists that she gets even more from the congregation than she gives. "It's the people that keep me here," said Sister Jean. "They are just so supportive and encouraging of one another. I have ministered in many other places but nothing compares to the people of St. Dominic's for a feeling of belonging." ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).

# SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

*Everyone has within a piece of good news.*

— Anne Frank (adapted)

See more good news at [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org)



*Our sisters made a great showing at the dedication of the Sisters of St. Francis Heritage Garden at St. Joseph Medical Center in Towson.*

## St. Joseph's Honors Our Sisters

The last three sisters moved from St. Joseph Hospital Convent in Towson, Maryland, in June. The hospital recently initiated a deal to become part of the University of Maryland Medical System. However, as part of the agreement, St. Joseph's will be allowed to retain its Catholic identity and religious heritage. At a special ceremony, the hospital dedicated the Sisters of St. Francis Heritage Garden in recognition of all the congregation has done for St. Joseph's. The board of directors passed a resolution outlining the facility's history, beginning with its inception in 1864 in three row homes on Caroline Street to its 1965 move to the present hospital in Towson. The resolution concluded with the statement, "...under the guidance and inspiration of the Sisters of St. Francis, St. Joseph Hospital and Medical Center achieved a reputation for providing loving service and compassionate care to our patients."

## Benedictine Academy Wins the Gold

Sister Donna Jo Repetti and the staff and students of Benedictine Academy were awarded the Jefferson National Gold Medal for Public Service. Known as the Nobel Prize for Public Service, the Jefferson acknowledges Benedictine Academy for rendering the greatest public service in the nation by a high school. Sister Donna Jo represented the school's administration in accepting the award. Also present was her coworker, Linda Michalski. The staff was commended for empowering the entire school community to live out the school's mission to "Listen, Learn, Love, and Lead in serving the Lord Jesus Christ."



## Let There Be Light: St. Clare Presentation

Sister Anne Amati gave a rather unusual presentation to groups of Franciscans both in Syracuse and Lodi: "Let There Be Light: St. Clare Through the Lens of the Sacred Scriptures and Albert Einstein." The idea came from reflecting on a comment by cosmologist Brian Swimme who questioned what difference our awareness that the world is not flat has made on our spirituality and in our relationship with God, others, and self. Coupling that with what we have learned about light from Einstein and other physicists, Sister Anne asked the question: How can what we have discovered about light in the 21<sup>st</sup> century inform our understanding of Clare whose name means light and who has been viewed as a clear light showing us how to live the Gospel? Einstein imagined himself riding a beam of light. Sister Anne asked her audience: Suppose we rode the light beam that was Clare of Assisi. What difference would that make in our lives?

## Franciscan Federation 2012

Our sisters were well represented at the 2012 Franciscan Federation conference in Cincinnati, Ohio, where they participated in Eucharistic liturgies and prayer rituals and enjoyed presentations by Father Joseph Chinnici, OFM, and Sister Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA. Both speakers addressed the conference theme,

"Releasing Energies to Love: Creative Fidelity in the Church."

Sister Nancy Crossen was our nominee for the annual recognition award. Sister Nancy typifies the conference theme. During her 63 years as teacher and principal, she has been a steadfast and committed educator, especially with children who are poor and on the margins of society.



*Sister Nancy Crossen's steady presence has been a beacon of light to all those whom she has served.*



## God's Extravagant Love – Singapore Bound!

Our sisters have taken the God's Extravagant Love program to folks in various parts of the world. In February Sisters Patricia Smith and Ann David Strohming introduced the program to a group in Singapore. The impetus for the trip came from Pat DeSouza, a native of Singapore, who had attended a class taught by Sister Kathleen Moffatt. Determined to bring GEL to her own country, Pat contacted Sister Kathleen, arrangements were finalized, and the program headed to Singapore. Ironically the planners had invited a group from Australia to attend the program. However, the Australians discovered that the program was also being presented in their own country. Amazing how God's Extravagant Love gets around!



*Sisters Patricia Smith and Ann David Strohming enjoyed lunch in Singapore with the team from Cana, a diocesan outreach program.*



**We first reported about the God's Extravagant Love program in the Spring 2012 issue of Good News. If you would like to read more about this program, visit our website [www.osfphila.org/about/goodnews](http://www.osfphila.org/about/goodnews).**



## In Memoriam

Sister Margaret Aloysius McGrail  
May 2, 2012

Sister Rita Francis Fiefhaus  
May 25, 2012

Sister Patricia Ann Lynch  
(formerly Sister Rose Marie)  
July 16, 2012

Sister Marie Olivette Weiss  
July 24, 2012

Sister Marie Anthony Heiss  
July 30, 2012

Sister Theresa Helen Klein  
August 28, 2012

Sister Marie Brendan Linehan  
September 10, 2012

Sister Viola Marie O'Keefe  
October 8, 2012

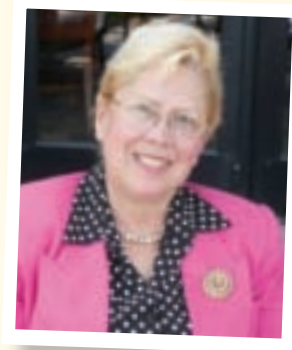
## What's Happening at Neumann U?

In addition to regular classes, students, faculty, and staff at Neumann University have been busy with a number of special occasions and activities. At the 2012 Charter Day, Neumann celebrated its 47th anniversary. Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, OFM Cap., celebrated liturgy and later received an honorary degree. The Dr. Dorothy A.P. Leunissen Presidential Lecture, an important feature of the Charter Day activities, was focused on "St. Clare and Medieval Holy Women"—an appropriate topic in light of the 800th anniversary of St. Clare's conversion. Neumann University is a member of the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities (AFCU). This year a group of Neumann students attended the 2012 AFCU Summer Symposium at Viterbo University in LaCross, Wisconsin. Together with AFCU members from across the country, they explored their call to serve the communities in which they live and work. This concept of community service is alive and well at Neumann. The university was recently recognized by the Corporation for National and Community Service and the U.S. Department of Education for its engagement in service programs to help rebuild communities and to serve those who are poor in four surrounding urban areas.



# FoCUS

► Mireya's love for those who are poor and her knowledge of the Hispanic community make Mireya a perfect fit for her ministry as community outreach worker.



## MIREYA INGRAM

"SHE SHARES OUR CONCERNS FOR THOSE WHO ARE POOR, MARGINAL, AND OPPRESSED, ESPECIALLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN."

Mireya Ingram will tell you that she was "practically raised by the Sisters of St. Francis." In her native Panama, she was educated by a group of European Franciscan sisters who taught her that, while we are all born equal, we don't "grow equal." We need to help those in need. Mireya first met our congregation in 1996. She was a member of the social justice committee at her parish in Wilmington, Delaware. Aware of many Hispanic families in the Newark area who had inadequate access to affordable healthcare, the committee asked St. Francis Hospital to send the St. Clare Van to the area. When they realized that the needs were beyond the van's scope, the hospital opened the Center of Hope, a family medical office in Newark. Mireya was hired as an office clerk. Eventually a grant from the congregation's mission fund allowed her to become a community outreach worker, visiting homes to assess the families' needs. She aids families in obtaining needed medical care and sets up contacts with other agencies to provide what these families need.

Although Sister Elise Betz who worked with Mireya at the center has moved to another position at the hospital, she continues to utilize Mireya's gifts. "She is invaluable in helping our medical and nursing staff find patients whose test results necessitate follow-up visits," Sister Elise explained. "She also provides additional information about patients' families or social/financial issues that prove vital in providing comprehensive care." Mireya views her work simply as living the mission of the hospital and the center. "Our mission can't be accomplished unless it comes from the heart and it can't be successful unless our heart is happy on a daily basis," she explained. "We have to make this 'work happiness' contagious to our colleagues, our management, and our community clientele." It's precisely this attitude that makes Sister Elise see Mireya's work as an extension of the congregation's mission. "She shares our concerns for those who are poor, marginal, and oppressed, especially women and children," Sister Elise said. "What she has been doing is not an eight-hour job but rather a 24-hour Franciscan ministry."

And how does Mireya see herself as furthering our mission? "I like to inculcate happiness and excellence in the work we do as a hospital as a community outreach—to awake healthy ambitions and change life directions," she said. "We must listen to the pain of our patient community—not just their illnesses. And daily I listen with empathy." Somehow this sounds very Franciscan!



▲ Although her primary focus is assisting families in securing Medicaid, Mireya also secures donations of food, furniture, and clothing and makes referrals to other agencies and to lawyers.

► Mireya enjoys spending time with her husband Jim; her children, Bob, Monica, and Arlene; and her two dogs, Frankie and Lulu





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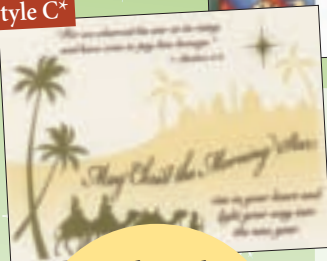
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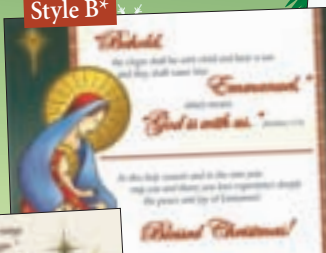
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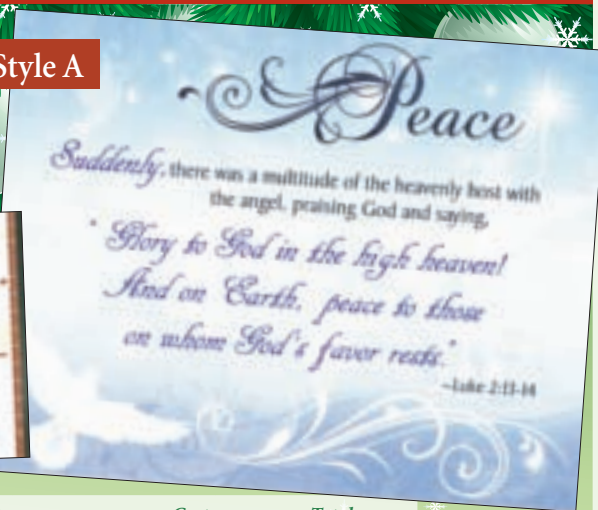


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## Support for Nuns on the Bus!

Sisters Ann Forrest, Nora Nash, and Anne Patrice Hefner all attended Nuns on the Bus gatherings—two in Philadelphia, one in Baltimore. They were impressed with the clear, insightful presentations by Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, and the other sisters who traveled to nine states to speak against the House Republican Budget authored by Rep. Paul Ryan. Our sisters commended the clear outlining of inherent problems in the Ryan budget—primarily its undermining and cutting of funding for the needy. In its place, the speakers proposed a “faithful budget” that allows us to address our serious financial challenges without endangering those most in need.

◀ Sister Anne Patrice Hefner attended the Nuns on the Bus gathering at the Quaker Meeting House in Baltimore.



## Faithful Budget Discussion on Al Jazeera Television

During the week that the Nuns on the Bus were spreading the good news about a “Faithful Budget,” Sister Marie Lucey was sharing a similar message in an interview on Al Jazeera TV. Sister Marie spoke about the budget as a moral document and addressed the problems inherent in the budget proposed by Rep. Paul Ryan. “It is contradictory not only to Catholic social teaching, but also to the Gospel. The Gospel clearly says that we should be concerned about everyone and have particular concern about those who are poor,” she explained. “I don’t know any poor people who want to be reliant on the government. What they want to be is self sufficient... That’s what a faithful budget should do—to help people move out of poverty.”

*Parish ministry has a deep history with our sisters, although back in the early days, it was done through the ministry of education. Our sisters who taught in Catholic schools did it all—taught sacramental programs in the parish, organized the choir, handled processions (much like the May Procession in 1954 at St. Mauritius Church in Ashland, Pennsylvania, pictured here), cleaned the church, etc.—you name it, we did it. Helping young people learn about the Catholic faith and preparing them for a faithful presence in their adult lives is a joy that has been shared by many of our sisters. Sister Jean O’Connor shares in this joy in her work at St. Dominic Parish in Panama City, Florida (read her story on page 12). Although the times have changed, and along with them the ministries of our sisters, the need for religious education remains.*

