

SAVE THE DATES FOR 2018

For a list of 2018 volunteer opportunities, visit: www.bvmsisters.org/volunteer

September 9

Diamond Jubilee Celebration
Mount Carmel, Dubuque, IA

October 12-14

Associate Coordinating
Committee Meeting
Felician Motherhouse,
Chicago

October 27-28

BVM Network for
Women's Issues
Felician Motherhouse,
Chicago

November 1

185th Anniversary of the
BVM Community
Mount Carmel, Dubuque, IA

November 10

BVM Heritage
Society Meeting
Mount Carmel, Dubuque, IA
Contact: Jeroma Day, BVM
jdjay@bvmcong.org, or
563-556-3240.

Did You Know?

The BVM public website features a blog where BVM sisters and associates share reflections! Check it out at www.bvmsisters.org/blog. Interested in writing for it? Contact Lori Ritz: lrutz@bvmcong.org.

We can share your dates for associate events—just let us know in advance! We would love to share your experiences! Take photos and send to: bvmassociates@bvmcong.org.

BVM Associate News

will be emailed and posted on the Associate page of the members' website. Copies mailed on request. Contact bvmassociates@bvmcong.org.



BVM Associate News

A Faithful Present, a Hopeful Future

FREEDOM • EDUCATION • CHARITY • JUSTICE

SUMMER 2018

Dear Circle of Friends,



As I complete my service as an associate coordinator, what's "on the horizon" for me? While continuing with you on my spiritual journey, I will focus not on the setting of the sun, but, rather, on the dawn of new adventures. Together we will live out the BVM charism and core values. The Spirit's call is inspiring us to bring hope and compassion to a hurting world. My heart is humbled with gratitude for the gifts that have been given in my three years of service.

"May today there be peace within.

May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be confident knowing you are a child of God.

Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise, and love.

It is there for each and every one of us."

(A prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Avila and St. Thérèse of Lisieux)

—Associate Kimberly Emery

How Can Our Call Be Heard? 2018 Associate Retreat

Forty-two associates, sisters, discerners and friends gathered in St. Joseph Hall at Mount Carmel in Dubuque, Iowa (pictured r.). Bridget Spurduto, director of The Well Spirituality Center in La Grange Park, Ill., and Eileen O'Shea, BVM associate coordinator led the experience.

We gathered in small groups at tables throughout the Roberta Kuhn Center and the hall to share our stories and our dreams for ourselves, our circle of friends, and the world. We were able to share our enthusiasm in the Caritas Dining Room and the Studio, meeting old friends and making new ones over meals and snacks. We even got to see the quilt made from the



ribbons of last year's retreat, lovingly patched together by Colleen McGinnity (sister-in-law to Colleen McGinnity, BVM).

As one person and as a part of the BVM circle of friends, I was challenged to find ways that I can make difference in this crazy world one step at a time, one day at a time.

It was a blessing and a joy to participate in such a Spirit-filled event!

Watch the video:

www.bvmsisters.org/2018Retreat

—Associate Grace Mendez
ACT Member

Ecumenical Advocacy Days

Scripture commands us to “welcome the stranger.”

Hebrews 13:2 “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

Zechariah 7:9-10 “Thus says the Lord of hosts, render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.”

This April, along with a group of BVMs and associates, I was privileged to be called to put my faith into action by attending Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) in Washington, D.C. Several years ago, when I was considering association, I heard about EAD from my companion, Marge Clark, BVM. Sister Marge is an integral part of the EAD team and helps to plan and organize their annual national gathering.

EAD is an advocacy movement uniquely grounded in ecumenicalism and our shared religious traditions and ministries focusing on social justice. It hosts an annual education conference that brings almost 1,000 people of faith to D.C. to learn how to advocate effectively for the human rights and dignity of the poor and marginalized in the United States and around the world. Through plenary sessions, workshops, advocacy skills training, and prayer, we were primed to converge on Capitol Hill to lobby our



Attending the EAD are (l. to r.) BVMs Mary Fran McLaughlin, Eileen Fuchs, Marge Clark, Elizabeth Avalos, Bette Gambonini, Maryknoll Affiliate Kathy Ress, Associate Kathy Linhardt, NACAR Board Member Conni Dubick, and Associate Kimberly Emery. (Note: this photo was used in error in the last newsletter)

elected officials for the specific “legislative ask” of the conference.

The theme for this year’s gathering was the “uprooted-ness of our world” and the need to welcome into our midst migrants, refugees and immigrants. Millions and millions of people around the world are being “pushed” out of their countries and communities by the effects of climate change, political corruption and/or violent conflict. Our “ask” to our legislators was for funds to be redirected from deportation, detention and border militarization to programs that prevent and reduce poverty and create sustainable communities.

Our faith, our BVM core values, and the charisma of Mary Frances Clarke resonate

with a call to “welcome the stranger,” provide hospitality, treat all human beings with dignity and respect, and advocate for those in need. Associate Kathy Burns Linhardt reflected, “It was exciting to be with impassioned people who are tirelessly ‘fighting the good fight’ on so many important issues and against tremendous odds.”

Next spring perhaps more associates will “hear the call” to Ecumenical Advocacy Days and use this rich opportunity to revitalize and hone our associate expression of BVM core values and charisma.

—Associate Kimberly Emery

Meet Associates: Kausar and Razia Khokhar—Chicago



Meet Kausar Allahrakha Khokhar (l.) and Razia Shafi

Khokhar (r.), sibling BVM associates whose country of origin is Pakistan. Razia lived with BVM sisters in Chicago, first while a graduate student in religious studies at Mundelein College, and again later when she moved permanently to the United States. Kausar followed and was the first of the two to become a BVM associate.

They currently reside together in Skokie, Ill. and work in the Chicago metro area: Razia as the director of

religious education at Mount Carmel Parish; Kausar at home, as director-provider of a licensed daycare center.

Both women feel a strong sense of connection to the BVM community and are actively involved in a BVM cluster. They value the freedom of spirit and the strong sense of community they experience among BVM sisters and associates and are very clear about the ways they live the BVM core values.

Having come from an oppressive culture where Christianity is a minority religion, they treasure religious freedom in the U.S.: the ability to name what they believe and to act on that belief without fear. They encourage the people they serve to do the same.

As lifelong learners and educators, they receive life and energy while freeing others: Razia through offering parish, faith formation programs and by engaging persons in ministry, and Kausar through parenting programs and the training of new daycare owner-providers.

They view justice as giving due respect to each person and being in right relationship with others, self, and God. They live that out in valuing and acting with respect toward all persons, from infants to parishioners and work colleagues.

We are blessed as BVM sisters and associates that Kausar and Razia have pitched their tent among us.

—Dodie Dwight, BVM

Why Should I, As an Associate, Attend the BVM Congregational Assembly?

That's the question I asked when I first heard about the BVM Senates. I thought, "I don't vote in their elections, and I don't need to know all their business." But I attended anyway. Wow! What an enlightening experience! I met sisters and associates I didn't know. My heart was touched by the sharing, the prayers, the songs and the rituals. Everyone made me feel welcomed and valued. That experience has been repeated every time I have attended what is now called the Congregational Assembly. I even served on the planning committee for the latest one. It is an experience I recommend most heartily for any associate.

Here's what associates had to say about the event:

"I found it to be a lovely honor to be included in this experience. The opportunity to see and meet the wider body of BVMs as well as to bear witness to the profound decision-making was humbling."—Suzie Wright

"The presence of the Spirit and the sense of connectedness with BVMs were powerful. I am grateful for the welcoming inclusion!"—Joanne Crowley Beers

"It was great attending the assembly. I witnessed an efficient method to educate and choose future pathways for the BVMs."—Kathleen Weishaar

"I was very pleased to have attended the 2018 BVM Congregational Assembly as an associate last month. There has

always been a concern about what the future would be for all of the associates as the BVM numbers decrease. The reports shared for the future of Mount Carmel were very encouraging. Even though the BVM finances are not a part of the associate program, they were shared at this assembly. We now all know that the heart of Mount Carmel will go on forever and, despite the number of BVMs in residence, will continue to be of value to the community of Dubuque."—Clara Schwartz

"The co-chairs of this year's Congregational Assembly Planning Committee, BVMs Mary Martens and Joan Lingen, did an excellent job of helping everyone feel included. Voting participants and non-voting participants, including associates, had access to detailed information in advance, so we had few questions left to be answered during the Assembly. We mingled at small tables, which made it easy to hear. Non-voting participants felt free to contribute to the discussions. We were far more than just 'observers.'"—Sharon Scully

"In all the BVM gatherings I have been a part of since becoming an associate, I have never felt the power of the Spirit among us so strongly. The recent Leadership Conference of Women Religious reflective journal 'Becoming One in Love' provided many profound examples of deepening communion, but for me, the reflection 'Be attentive to the call of wisdom' by

Cathy Sheehan, DW said it all. Our BVM community clearly was attentive to the wisdom call. You too can be a part of that call."—Helen Gabel

Please join us for next year's gathering July 12–14, 2019, at the Best Western in Dubuque, Iowa.

—Associate Grace Mendez
ACT Member



Sisters and associates shared stories and met in fellowship during the 2018 Congregational Assembly.

Meet an Associate: Kay Derner Brown—Tulsa, Oklahoma



Kay has been an associate since 2002. I have had the privilege of getting to know her through our Zoom cluster, which links geographically isolated associates.

Before health problems limited her activities, she lived out the BVM core values through volunteer work with school counseling groups, children with a parent in prison, a food pantry, and serving meals to the homeless. These days, Kay is still active with the food pantry and sends cards to those who are sick or grieving.

After graduating from St. Scholastica College in Duluth, Minn., Kay moved

to southeast Oklahoma to become an Extension Lay Volunteer. During her time there, she read about BVM Sister Mary Frances Reis' work in Missouri and decided to write to her. Mary Frances immediately wrote back, inviting Kay to visit her. Having grown up with Notre Dame and Benedictine sisters, Mary Frances was the first BVM Kay had ever met.

Before leaving, Mary Frances gave Kay a bag of books and told her she'd make a great associate.

Kay didn't even know what that term meant, so, after research, reading, and weekly phone calls with Mary Frances, she became the first associate to complete her

discernment process entirely by phone.

Becoming an associate began a whole new chapter in Kay's life. She became a member of the Associate Coordinating Committee at the invitation of Association Coordinator Nancy Van Anne. That experience opened up new friendships with other BVMs and associates. Kay still talks with Mary Frances once a week.

Kay feels that fate and the Holy Spirit brought her to the BVMs. She even learned that she and Katie Doherty, BVM were distant cousins. The two of them did genealogy together and became close friends.

—Associate Kimberly Emery

Cluster Klatch: Montrose, California

God and Mary Frances Clarke were with us as many gathered to welcome four women to BVM association last spring.

Margaret "Peggy" Daze chose Holy Redeemer Convent as the site for her commitment ceremony and acknowledged the influence of her aunt, Mary Generosa, BVM, in connecting her with BVMs in Southern California.

Carol Walsh, Teresa Tiffany, and Kathleen Hebron held their ceremony at the parish hall of Holy Redeemer Church. Their testimonies revealed their connection to the core values and the spirit of Mary Frances Clarke.

Carol began a friendship with the BVMs when they moved to Holy Redeemer in Montrose six years ago. She recalls the feeling of kinship as they identified the core values that were already a part of her life.

Teresa Tiffany's journey with BVMs began as a third grade student of Mary Jean Ferry, BVM at St. Francis Xavier in Phoenix and continued into adulthood when she taught with Mary Jean with Theresa Mc Nerney, BVM as their principal. In retirement, she enjoys feeding people through the Foothills Kitchen Ministry.

Kathleen shared her experience of meeting BVMs when she was a member of the faculty at Holy Family High School in Glendale. That BVM influence and focus on social issues was fostered by her parish faith community who came to witness the ceremony.



Margaret "Peggy" Daze



Carol Walsh (l.), Teresa Tiffany, and Kathleen Hebron

These ceremonies may be samplings of more to come. Three new inquirers are ready to transition to candidacy.

In the 2018 summer issue of the Associate Newsletter, the Heritage Society was searching for "hidden" BVMs in the congregation's history. Writing this article, I could not help but wonder who might be the un-named but significant "hidden" sisters and associates who influenced these new associates and inquirers. God has a way of calling all of us to bring the Gospel message wherever we are to whomever we meet.

—Vicki Smurlo, BVM

Associates in Action



Associate David McGhee (r) preached his final sermon at Nativity Church, Dubuque, Iowa, before retiring as a deacon. His wife Alice (l) is also an associate.



The Santa Cruz, Calif. cluster recently celebrated associate Shirley Guidry's (front) 90th birthday. With her daughters associate Carol DeCarvalho and Nancy Guidry.



The Associate Coordinating Committee met in May at Mount Carmel. They are pictured at dinner after a full day of sharing and planning.



Members of the Shareholder Education and Advocacy Group gather for a photo at Mount Carmel.



The Wisconsin cluster takes a "selfie."

BVM Mission:

We are the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a community of Catholic women called to live the mission of Jesus through our core values of

FREEDOM, EDUCATION, CHARITY & JUSTICE.

Check us out online:




Sisters of Charity
of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Freed by Love, Acting for Justice
1100 Carmel Drive | Dubuque, IA 52003-7991 | 563.588.2351
WWW.BVMSISTERS.ORG