

Salt



*'Act Justly, Love Tenderly,
Walk Humbly With Your God'*

—Micah 6:8

Dolores Marie McHugh, BVM
1933–2020



SEASONing

A Message from BVM Leadership

As we move into the summer of 2020, the usual expectations of these months are on hold as national, state, and local governments guide us to think and act differently in light of the challenges of COVID-19. Without the usual seasonal events, it feels like time has paused, and yet by our lengthening hairdos, we know that that is not the case.

This year is momentous for the world, and for each one of us, as we take in the reality of our fundamental connectedness and seek a new understanding of who “we” are within our cultural, economic, societal, and religious systems. With the recent protests in angry response to George Floyd’s tortured death, we must look more deeply into how we connect with our families and neighbors.

While many in the media are wrestling with this, the year 2020 carries with it several significant milestones. In it we mark the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment that gained for women the right to vote. Read BVM Carolyn (Lester) Farrell’s summary of the path taken by those who advocated for the vote.

We share with gratitude the important bridges made 25 years ago by our sisters who participated in the 1995 United Nations Conference on Women held in Beijing and

by Rose Mary (Sebastian) Meyer, BVM, who launched the legislative advocacy group Project IRENE (Illinois Religious Engaging in Nonviolent Endeavors) for the concerns of women and children.

Fifty years ago, the first Earth Day was celebrated, and five years ago, Pope Francis penned *Laudato Si’*, his pastoral letter on the need to care for all of life with tenderness. Associate Katie Pfiffner and Eileen Fuchs, BVM shed light on some ways we think and talk about God’s creation that give insight into the inherent connectedness of all.

A door may symbolize connecting with friends and the unknown. You are invited to meet Sharon Rezmer, BVM, who opened a door when she entered the congregation, and Clarke University’s new president, Thom Chesney, who is committed to opening the doors of education to students of diverse backgrounds. Associate Lori Ritz illustrates the importance of opening a door between sisters and Clarke students as Prayer Partners.

Lastly, we remember the life of our sister and former President Dolores Marie McHugh, BVM, who opened many doors in her life and in our hearts.

As we, together, seek new understandings of who “we” are within our cultural, economic, societal, and religious systems, know that the BVM family holds all of you in our prayers. May all with whom you connect be safe and stay healthy.

Jeri Haddo, BVM

Lou Anglin, BVM

LaDonna Manternach, BVM

Mission Statement: The Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a community of Catholic women religious who, in response to a personal call from God, have chosen a vowed life of prayer, ministry, and community. BVMs express their mission of being freed and helping others enjoy freedom in service to God's people through their core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice.

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Editor: Angie Connolly
communications@bvmsisters.org

Managing Editor/Staff Writer:
Mary Glindinning

Layout and Design: Sandra Dieter

Communications Advisory Committee:
Lou Anglin, BVM; Carolyn (Lester) Farrell, BVM;
Mary Fran (Virginia Mary) McLaughlin, BVM;
Ann Sweeney, and Associates Lori Ritz and
Andy Schroeder

If you would like to receive **Salt**, contact:
development@bvmsisters.org
1100 Carmel Drive, Dubuque, Iowa 52003
563-585-2854

2020–2021 Calendar of Events

Aug.	
11–14	LCWR National Assembly (virtual)
Sept.	
13	Saint Mary's HS Alumnae Luncheon Lombard, IL (tentative)
13	Diamond Jubilee Celebration Mount Carmel, Dubuque, IA (tentative)
Dec.	
1	Giving Tuesday
Feb.	
6	Mass for Benefactors Mount Carmel, Dubuque, IA (tentative)

For more events and information, visit:
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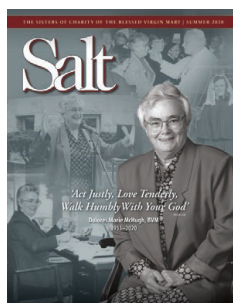
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On the cover: In this issue of **Salt**, we rejoice in the life of former President Dolores Marie McHugh, BVM. See how BVMs continue "to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God," (Micah 6:8) as they build relationships with students at Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa, connect with the Earth and each other, and pray through the pandemic. Explore how doors opened to give women the right to vote and increase women's rights in the United States and around the world.



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This letter dated May 2020 arrived on the wings of an eagle following the sunrise over the Mississippi River. It fluttered to Earth on the Mount Carmel bluffs, in Dubuque, Iowa, where it was discovered by a sister taking her early morning walk. Written on the back of a well-worn 19th century envelope scented with prairie grass, the letter is addressed "To our dear BVMs and Associates from BVM Foundress Mary Frances Clarke and her companions Margaret Mann, Eliza Kelly, Rose O'Toole, and Catherine Byrne."

My dears

In this time of pandemic, we are with you in an intimacy that goes soul-deep.

I, Mary Frances Clarke, look upon you with love as you ask, "How can I be good for others?" Then, as you make your response, I eavesdrop on phone calls to relatives and friends that linger long and carry a tone of exceptional tenderness.

I peer over your shoulders as you connect via social media with book clubs and clusters, Twelve-step support groups and spiritual directors; pop in on a virtual Zoom open house for brunch or tea; stand with you in doorways along your Motherhouse corridor as you check in with one another before supper.

I witness how you carefully tend to weekly prayer requests and listen as you breathe wordless blessings into the universe letting them alight where the Spirit wills.

I look with you on the stunning clarity of the less-polluted environment and celebrate your resolve to partner with natural creation in taking back its home.

And, I reverence your graceful humility as you give another the gift of being gift for you. As I did from my tiny room on St. Joseph's Prairie, you are transcending confinement with an embrace that knows no bounds. Yours is the calico apron, the mark of simple affection steadily and quietly serving the expansion of love in the world.

I, Margaret Mann, am right there as you clean living spaces to the very corners; sift through precious papers, cards, and photos;

delve into books you have always wanted to read; restlessly surf TV channels; stare at the walls; gaze mindlessly out your windows.

I am with you as familiar daily patterns dissolve into amorphous disorientation, when feeling unmoored and helpless to make everything better you finally just sit down and sink into the Mystery of God. This is the moment I hold you close.

In the early days my companions turned to me for practical wisdom. That wisdom came from the place where you are now, the place where powerlessness is transformed into radical trust in the power of God. In our hardest days, wisdom freed me to take out the hats I carried from my Dublin millinery shop, pass them around, and lead us in dance.

Now, I toss those hats to you. Choose one; place it stylishly atop your unruly ever-lengthening hair symbolic of everything beyond your power to control and move through these days trusting the abiding power of God's steadfast love.

I, Eliza Kelly, am beside you as you breathe the scent of fresh rain, pause before a blooming azalea, savor a newly tried recipe, receive the calm of a mindfulness session, stretch with an online yoga exercise, cherish a poem or a work of art arriving from the silence in your soul, dwell in videostreamed prayer and liturgy encircling participants in a palpable communion of grace.

With you I am moved to tears by the sound of musical arias wafting across nations from cathedral plazas and by the rhythm of applause for healthcare workers, grocery store personnel, mail carriers, trash collectors, and truck drivers carried as a ceaseless mantra across time zones.

I delight with you at the sight of a teenager making surgical masks on a 3-D printer, a caravan of appreciation wending its way along roads bordering fields of farmworkers, the shimmering flight of blue angel wings streaming over a city skyline.

Among you beauty rises up in its myriad apparitions, wraps you in its solace, and saves your life. I knew that when, suspended on a rope ladder over an ocean, I held on fiercely to a singing bird. Now you know it, too.

I, Rose O'Toole, am with you as people wearing the faces of every country and culture take up residence in the center of your life: university seniors missing the long-awaited ritual of commencement; athletes placing Olympic dreams on hold; brides walking down aisles lined by photos of invited guests; women giving birth as husbands coach them via phone; grandfathers waving final goodbyes through nursing home windows; small business owners anxiously awaiting unmaterialized loans; coroners and morticians giving life by looking death in the face every minute of every day; civic leaders transforming hotels into homes for the homeless; first responders living apart from their families for the sake of a larger love; chefs partnering with farmers to feed long lines of the hungry; researchers working around the clock for a vaccine; teachers making internet wires vibrate with the adventure of learning.

In this time of sheltering in place, your generous hospitality shelters the globe. I smile; you remind me of the boarding house where I grew up, spacious with room for all, where fresh strawberries from my mother's springtime garden were served up as bits and pieces of delicious hope.

I, Catherine Byrne, awaken beside you each morning as the stark relentless reality of pandemic dawns again in your awareness. I watch with tenderness as your anguish draws you close to medics unable to look upon the immensity of suffering and live; as constriction on your freedom of movement in the world intensifies your

ache for all confined by pre-existing pandemic boundaries of immigration and racial stereotypes; as, comfortable in the midst of excruciating socioeconomic disparities, the pain of privilege gnaws like an insatiable hunger for justice within you; as bearing the heartbreak of physical distance from your BVM sisters at the time of their death, you hold the broken hearts of the global family prohibited from honoring the deceased loves of their lives; as planning for your future dissipates into an ever-receding horizon of uncertainty and the sadness in you wells up in piercing concern for the millions who cannot imagine a future at all.

I watch you with tears of recognition. An orphan feeling the pervasive sorrow of parental loss, I longed to nurture life. I studied pharmacology and nursing, donned the cape, identifiable mark of a healing presence, and spread it out in womb-like compassion for the hurting. You wear that cape today.

So tie a calico apron of simple affection around your waist; place a stylish hat of wisdom on your head; wrap a spacious cape of compassion around your shoulders; fill your arms with hospitable baskets of fresh strawberries; top them with the beauty of a singing bird; and walk into life bearing the irrevocable joy of God's steadfast love.

We love how you look and, even more, we love what is happening in the world because of you.

We will be where we have always been, right here among you. It may be hard to single us out because we look just like you.

your ever affectionate

Mary Frances, Margaret, Eliza, Rose, Catherine

About the author: This letter was "discovered" by Mary Ann (Clement Mary) Zollmann, BVM, not dropped by an eagle on the bluffs, but in the depths of her own perceptive, creative spirit in the midst of COVID-19 in Spring of 2020.



Dolores Marie McHugh, BVM:

Led With Heart and Soul

by Mira Mosle, BVM and Mary Glindinning

Dolores Marie McHugh, BVM,

who served as president of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, died April 24, 2020, in Dubuque, Iowa.

Dolores worked hard, laughed heartily, and lived life to its fullest.

“She never worried about the workload, and she played with every fiber of her being,” says her close friend Jean (James Miriam) Gordon, BVM. “Whatever it was—a board meeting, a day at the office, mowing the lawn, barbecuing for friends—she put her heart and soul into it. She cared and she loved. It was never about her, it was always about someone else. Who she was as a BVM was more important to Dolores than all the things she did.”

Dolores served the congregation as first vice president before becoming president in 1992.

“Dolores was a kind, understanding, and conscientious woman. She was highly organized, determined, joyful, fun-loving, honest, and always hospitable. She was an outstanding administrator. I consider her friendship one of the special blessings of my life,” says Mary (Mercedie) McCauley, BVM, who served as vice president during Dolores’ tenure.



During her 1992–2000 BVM presidency, Dolores (second from r.) drew out the best from those around her, including the BVM Leadership Team: Mary (Loras) Martens (l.), Kathryn (John Laurian) Lawlor, Sue (Michaela) Rink, and Mary McCauley.

Dolores brought her love of God, passion for religious life, intense love for each sister, compassion, and caring to leadership.

The congregation and the wider world are reaping the benefits of that leadership now, says Anne (Robertine) Kendall, BVM, who was a BVM regional representative when Dolores was vice president. “She knew how to utilize the gifts and talents of others. Whatever she did, she did with vigor and her whole heart, whether it was working, playing, or praying. She liked to sing and had a beautiful voice.”

Dolores’ conviction that women religious can make a communal difference in the world was shared in the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, where she chaired Region X and was a national board member. The leaders respected her clarity, organization, and capacity to relate while simultaneously enjoying life and celebrating.

“She listened to each person’s thoughts on issues; reflected on them and their impact on the whole; considered her own truths and made decisions that she believed were just, based on her call to be just toward all,” says her friend Diane (Joanella) O’Donnell, BVM. “She listened, prayed, and tried to make decisions for the good of all.”

An Early Calling

She had an initial desire for religious life early in elementary school, and she joined the congregation at age 16, before completing high school.

Her first mission was teaching kindergarten in Chicago, where she taught 60 children in the morning and another 60 in the afternoon. She was not quite 19 years old. Dolores managed through “youthful exuberance and the grace of God,” and with a determination that the children “would have to be independent. I was not going to tie shoes.”

Later, she taught in California and served as a principal in Missouri.

Dolores served as superintendent of schools and curriculum coordinator for the Diocese of Des Moines from 1976–1984. She was the only woman superintendent among the four Catholic dioceses in Iowa.

“She was a remarkable woman,” says Jude Fitzpatrick, CHM, who worked with Dolores at the Des Moines diocese and was her friend for more than 45 years. “Dolores never settled for half measures in any aspect of her life, and frankly she didn’t expect that anyone else would, either. She had high expectations and challenged all of us to do our best.”

“There were times I would say Dolores must have made a vow never to waste a minute. She was always busy, but she

was never too busy to build and sustain relationships,” Jude says.

Dolores’ passion for Catholic education, her work ethic—110 percent all the time—her honesty, and ability to build relationships left a legacy in Des Moines. These years also graced Dolores with a dynamic, supportive intercongregational living community and a Vatican II-centered diocesan leadership that was pastoral and prophetic.

A Leader in Education

In 1984, Dolores received the National Catholic Education Association presidential award for outstanding service to Catholic education. She served on the Iowa Legislative Excellence in Education Task Force and was a delegate to the National Congress on Catholic Schools in the 21st Century.

She served on the Clarke University board of trustees in Dubuque for more than 20 years and received an honorary doctorate from Clarke in 2000. She served on the Mundelein College board in Chicago and on the Carmel Catholic High School board in Mundelein, Ill.

“She was a great person,” says Brendan Quann, of Dubuque, who served on the Clarke board with Dolores. “She was a hard worker. When in work mode, she was no-nonsense. When the work day was over, she loved a good time.”

Dolores brought a unique perspective to the Dubuque Bank and Trust board, says Doug Horstmann, former president and chief executive officer. She connected with business leaders, other directors, and bank employees. And she always led the praying of grace before company dinners.

After her presidency, Dolores ministered as pastoral care coordinator at Mount Carmel in Dubuque.

Her favorite Scripture quote was Micah 6:8, “To act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God.”

She lived that way her entire life, which came to a close on her 87th birthday.

About the authors: Mira Mosle, BVM lives in Dubuque, Iowa, and is active in a variety of justice issues as well as volunteering at Mount Carmel. Dolores was her long-time mentor and friend.

Mary Glindinning is a communications specialist for the Sisters of Charity, BVM in Dubuque.



Blessed with a beautiful singing voice, Dolores liked to sing and dance as she did with Anita Therese Hayes, BVM; wore many hats (literally); and found joy in celebrations with BVMs (I.) Catherine “Katie” (St. Thoma) McHugh, Anne Kendall, and Teresita Poulin.



Dolores met Mother Teresa at an International Union of Superiors General meeting in Rome.

On the count of three! Dolores taught at Holy Family Grade School in Glendale, Calif., from 1958–1965.



Rose Mary Meyer, BVM:

17 Years of Building Bridges and Trust

by Mary Fran McLaughlin, BVM



Completing 17 years (2002–2019) as director of Project IRENE (Illinois Religious Engaging in Nonviolent Endeavors), Rose Mary (Sebastian) Meyer, BVM has worked tirelessly with others to assure the passage of justice-oriented legislation in the Illinois House and Senate.

Some of these bills involved issues of human trafficking, immigration support and protection, increases in childcare, mental health, and domestic violence services, lowering interest on payday loans, ending the death penalty in Illinois, earned paid sick leave, salary equity, and many more.

Project IRENE is a collective voice seeking justice for women and children through systemic change in Illinois. As Rose Mary transitions into “retirement,” she is grateful to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) Region VIII, that has supported this endeavor since 1996. Her Rolodex is expansive and includes

those involved in each step of the legislative process: grassroots individuals and organizations that supported or opposed proposed legislation, legislative assistants, lawyers, legislators, and the governor.

Using her networking and diplomatic skills to build bridges, she grew relationships where “questions are honored, expertise is shared, experience is treasured, trust is built, and facts are used to counter any false information that has surfaced,” Rose Mary says.

Studying research, scheduling and attending meetings, making phone calls, participating in teleconferencing, and checking emails were time-consuming but necessary to keep issues and pending legislation moving forward.

Each year monitoring and scrutinizing the proposed state budget was essential and brought attention to increased needs for childcare, early childhood education, immigrant services, colleges and

universities, mental health support, domestic violence services, etc. Unfortunately, in some years, these items not only were deeply cut but eliminated from the funding. For some Illinois residents, this caused great suffering.

Rose Mary believes that rallies at the Illinois State Capitol in Springfield were helpful in getting attention from a wider audience for impending legislation.

Legislators who supported the bill were speakers, as were individuals who were impacted by the bill. These witnesses who shared their challenges were especially effective in touching hearts and changing minds.

“Questions are honored, expertise is shared, experience is treasured, trust is built, and facts are used to counter any false information that has surfaced.”

—Rose Mary Meyer



Legislative Victories

Legislation to protect women who have been trafficked is one of Rose Mary’s proudest accomplishments during her time with Project IRENE.

“I am forever grateful for meeting regularly with a group of women who had been trafficked, as well as with other advocates working at the Capitol regarding justice issues. We advocates listened to the women who had been trafficked. After much listening, we worked to pass a bill, one each year, that was essential for their well-being,” Rose Mary says.

“Some of these women went to the Capitol to testify during committee hearings on behalf of those currently



Rose Mary (Sebastian) Meyer, BVM (third from l.) gathers with other advocates, including BVM Mary Ellen (Davidette) Meckley (third from r.) at an immigration rally in 2019.

being trafficked and those who were survivors of trafficking. Their testimony was deeply moving and convinced numerous legislators to vote yes on trafficking bills,” Rose Mary continues.

“We legislative advocates also did much education as we talked with individual legislators to obtain their ‘yes’ votes on the bills”

Elimination of the death penalty is another advocacy issue Rose Mary will never forget.

“Legislators from a variety of geographic areas in Illinois had experienced the murder of a family member. The decision to vote for or against the death penalty bill was a deeply personal decision,” she says. “I also had the

privilege of accompanying some women who came to Springfield to advocate for the bill because they too had experienced murder in their families. Their strength and courage I shall never forget.”

From Teaching to Advocating

Previous to Rose Mary’s time with Project IRENE, she spent her early years as a BVM in education in elementary and secondary schools; served at 8th Day Center for Justice in Chicago; participated in establishing parish social ministry programs in several Chicago parishes; led the BVM Women’s Office; joined the Call to Action staff; and was one of the founders and executive director of the now-closed Peace

Museum in Chicago and its participation with “Arts in the Park.”

Although Rose Mary is not making any plans at this time, she is looking forward to a more relaxed schedule with time to catch up on reading.

No doubt we will continue to enjoy her updates on important state and national legislation, receive her resourceful advice on social issues, and meet her at rallies!

Blessings, Rose Mary!

About the author: Mary Fran (Virginia Mary) McLaughlin, BVM is enjoying retirement in Chicago and is a board member at Christ the King Jesuit College Prep, a Cristo Rey School in the Austin neighborhood.



No Easy Task: 70 Years of Struggle to Win Women's Right to Vote

by Carolyn Farrell, BVM

Voting is the significant decision-making moment for citizens of the United States. A healthy democracy calls its citizens to participate in its governmental process. As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the women's right to vote, Carolyn (Lester) Farrell, BVM shares with us a timeline of how the perseverance of so many led to winning that right.

Today, men and women who meet the qualifications indicated in the Constitution cast their vote for president of the United States; this is considered an honor and a responsibility.

It was not always so. This year, Aug. 26, 2020, marks the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

The old-time civics teacher will tell you that the 19th Amendment granted American women the right to vote, a right known as women's suffrage.

That right, however, was not easily recognized by men in office or a majority of the U.S. population.

BVMs (l.) Joellen McCarthy, Diane (Malia) Rapozo, and Rose Mary (Sebastian) Meyer joined millions of people around the world who came together to "raise their voices" in support of the Women's March on Washington in 2017.

The passage of the 19th Amendment required nearly 70 years of arduous work to build support, to formulate, and to present this amendment to Congress.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott were the prime movers and shakers who organized the first women's rights convention in 1848 at Seneca Falls, N.Y. These two women were a driving force of additional women's rights conferences in various parts of the country, and they were eventually joined in their advocacy work by Susan B. Anthony and other activists.

At the convention, a group of delegates led by Stanton produced a Declaration of Sentiments document—modeled after the Declaration of Independence—that supported the delegates' belief that women should have the right to vote. Following the convention, the notion of women having the right to vote was met with mixed reactions of support, as well as rejection of the "crazy proposal."

Meanwhile, the onset of the Civil War moved the energy of many women to the needs of the war effort. After the war, women were divided among themselves regarding their support of the proposed 15th Amendment that provided the right to vote to African American men.

Some women

thought that joining the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) would provide them an opportunity to bring forth the discussion and support of women's right to vote.

The plan didn't work. The 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870. Black men could vote, not women.

In 1869, Stanton and Anthony formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) with their eyes on a federal constitutional amendment that would grant women the right to vote. These women didn't give up—they kept on keeping on.

In 1878, the NWSA and the collective suffrage movement had gathered enough influence to lobby Congress for a constitutional amendment. However, the result of the study and debate in the House of Representatives and Senate was an unsuccessful attempt to pass the amendment.

A New Strategy

In 1890, the NWSA and the AWSA merged to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). The new organization's strategy was to lobby for women's voting rights on a state-by-state basis.

In 1900, with the committee's energetic Stanton and Anthony advancing in age, Carrie Chapman Catt stepped up to lead NAWSA. She played a significant leadership role in the successful support for women's enfranchisement at the state levels. Between 1910 and 1918, 16 states and the Alaska Territory extended voting rights to women.

Stanton's daughter, Harriet Stanton Blatch, introduced parades, pickets, and marches as means of calling attention to the cause.

These strategies succeeded in raising awareness and led to unsettling days in Washington, D.C. As President Wilson was enjoying his 1913 pre-inauguration activities, protesters blocked a massive



1920–2020 Celebrating 100 Years OF THE 19TH AMENDMENT

suffrage parade in the nation's capital and hundreds of women were injured. This happening did not move Wilson, who did not support women's desire to vote, and no action took place.

In 1918, however, President Wilson changed his mind and supported the amendment that would give women the right to vote. He tied his support to the positive role of women in World War I.

Regardless of Wilson's new-found support, however, the amendment proposal failed in the Senate by two votes. A year passed before Congress took up the measure again.

The struggle wasn't over yet. May 21, 1919, the House of Representatives was presented with the resolution to approve the Susan B. Anthony Amendment granting women the right to vote. The resolution passed the House of Representatives with 42 votes beyond the required two-thirds majority.

Two weeks later, on June 4, 1919, the Senate passed the 19th amendment by two votes over its required two-thirds majority, 56-25. The amendment was sent to the states for ratification. By March

1920, a total of 35 states approved the amendment, one state short of the two-thirds required for ratification.

The Southern states strongly opposed the amendment. In a dramatic situation, 23-year-old Harry T. Burn, representative of Tennessee, facing a 48-48 tie in the legislative body, cast the tie-breaking vote. The amendment was ratified!

Women Can Vote!

On Aug. 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment was certified by U.S. Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby, and women finally achieved their long-desired right to vote.

In October of 1920, Mother Mary Isabella sent a letter to the BVMs stating, "It is deemed well for the Sisters to register in order that they use their privilege to vote when an important issue is in question."

On Nov. 2, 1920, more than eight million people across the United States voted in elections for the first time, BVMs included.

One hundred years later, it is imperative to exercise this hard-won right.

About the author: Carolyn Farrell, BVM is retired and living at Mount Carmel in Dubuque, Iowa, after an administrative and teaching career. She is a longtime advocate for women in leadership, was the first woman elected to the Dubuque, Iowa, City Council, and served as the city's mayor in 1980. She continues to promote inclusivity and women's rights.

Source: "19th Amendment," www.history.com

Historical photos: Left: Women suffragettes working to get the vote, 1912. Library of Congress; WSPU leaders Annie Kenney (l.) and Christabel Pankhurst, circa 1908. Wikimedia Commons.

Just a Pinch

In 1995, the United States celebrated the 75th anniversary of the 19th Amendment. *Salt* magazine carried a feature article by Rita (Borgia) Benz, BVM to note this significant celebration. She captured and shared personal stories from BVMs who remembered the time when women did not have the right to vote. Read the article: bvmsisters.org/women-win-the-vote.



BEIJING +25

Ongoing Heritage of 1995 UN Conference on Women: More Women Elected but Much More Work to Do

by Rose Mary Meyer, BVM

The 1995 Fourth World Conference

on Women in Beijing marked a significant turning point for the global agenda for gender equality. The largest international gathering of women in history set strategic objectives and actions for the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality in 12 critical areas of concern.

Women from around the world had hoped to gather again in New York this past March to celebrate the 25th anniversary, but nearly all events at the United Nations Conference on Women were cancelled due to COVID-19.

BVMs Carol (Conrad Ann) Cook, Carolyn (Lester) Farrell, and Rose Mary (Sebastian) Meyer attended the United Nations 1995 International Conference on Women: "Look at the World Through Women's Eyes."

All agree there is more work to do to ensure equality for women and girls. But the Beijing conference is viewed as a turning point in the world's understanding of women's human rights.

Energy Still Propels Change

From a 25-year vantage point, Carolyn stresses that the conference was an experience she will never forget.

Ongoing Heritage continued on p. 12.



Celebrating 25 Years

1995 WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN | BEIJING

Ongoing Heritage continued from p. 11.

“Women came from all sections of the world, dressed in the clothes of their country, intent on speaking ‘truth to power’ regarding women’s issues,” Carolyn says. “Their energy and ‘know how’ manifested itself throughout the work of the conference.”

The experience changed how Carol has looked at the world ever since.

“Interacting with such a large number of women reinforced my awareness of our likenesses and differences,” Carol says. “My view of the position and influence of the United States among the world community shifted as I experienced the reality experienced by other countries. These were not new concepts for me, but being with so many women leaders for several days made them a permanent part of the way I view news and the type of actions I choose.”

Rose Mary is still energized by being with thousands of women whose home addresses encompassed the globe.

At the conference, Carol and Carolyn presented a workshop on non-sexist language. Following Rose Mary’s workshop on spirituality, a participant from Northern Ireland shared that she was going to use the workshop model with groups of women to create common bonds among them despite their political differences.

From Being Told to Telling

What is the impact of the 1995 conference on the world’s women today? The global participation of women as workshop leaders and as presenters of larger gatherings moved women from being told about their lives to being the storytellers themselves.

Statistics document that women’s participation as elected government officials has doubled in the last 25 years. Gender equity is now understood much more broadly as essential to the well-being of society.

Much still remains to do to achieve gender equity. For example, a gap still exists regarding the education of girls. Statistics document that one in three women will experience violence in her lifetime. Sexual abuse is still rampant. Multitudes of rapes go unreported. Trafficking flourishes.

Studies of diseases often focus on the impact of a particular disease on men’s lives. Lack of inclusive language communicates negatively about women’s and girls’ self-understanding.

Those who negotiate for climate change are 70 percent men while drought and famine mean women work harder to find food and water.

Gender inequity in whatever form is an abuse of power.

What Can You Do?

In the midst of all the gender inequity, what inspires women and girls today to stay in the struggle for gender equity? Celebrating International Women’s Day is much more common now in the United States, following the example of many other countries. This year the focus on International Women’s Day (#EachforEqual) included challenging gender norms, breaking stereotypes, celebrating diversity, empowering each other, and taking action.

Emphasis on generation equality has deepened since the Beijing conference. This movement is sprouting and growing locally and globally. Pushback against generation inequality is much stronger.

Activist, author, and retreat facilitator Edwina Gateley says: “Hopelessness adapts, hope resists.”

Carol, Carolyn, and Rose Mary agree that the 1995 conference still energizes them today regarding justice efforts.

What energizes you? How are you a creative disruption against gender inequity? How are you an advocate for gender equity? How do you push back



BVMs (l.) Carol Cook, Rose Mary Meyer, and Carolyn Farrell participated in the largest international gathering of women in history in Beijing.

against generation inequality? How do you promote generation equality?

May you continue to be a part of the heritage of the 1995 Beijing conference as you “Look at the world through women’s eyes.”

About the author: Rose Mary Meyer, BVM recently retired from Project IRENE (Illinois Religious Engaging in Nonviolent Endeavors), a project of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, focusing on systems change regarding women’s and children’s issues in Illinois.

Sources: “Women and Power,” Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary General.

“Commemorating International Women’s Day in New York, Closing Remarks,” Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women.

Throughout the year, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*



This is the first of three reflections by Eileen Fuchs, BVM to be published in Salt on caring for Mother Earth, our common home.

Eileen Fuchs, BVM lives in Dubuque, Iowa, and is a congregational representative for the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She served as a high school science teacher and says Nature is her way of grounding herself.

We Are Part of Nature, Not Its Ruler

by Eileen Fuchs, BVM

Imagine that you are in a vehicle and the driver suddenly gasps.

The driver says, "Turn around and look at the view behind us." You turn around and see the beautiful blue gem that we call Mother Earth. You have never seen anything so beautiful.

When you look at that amazing image of our planet home, you can actually see some of the fragility that makes Earth a place for life to exist. You can see the atmosphere, not too thick, not too thin. You see the blue of liquid water.

You can't see it, yet this planet has a specific percentage of oxygen, not too much, not too little. The planet is a specific distance from the sun, just right for habitation.

Very small, subtle specifics that make Earth habitable.

All of the specifics that allow for life are indeed fragile. We know they are in danger. Plastic in the oceans, rising average daily temperatures melting the ice caps, etc., etc., etc. We know it.

We also know that other life forms did not bring this about. We did. We know it. Not me, but we. Our current throw-away lifestyles will not let the beautiful blue gem survive.

As this article is written, we are in the

midst of the Virus Crisis of 2020 (as I have dubbed it). Our main concern today is the continued rise in the number of people affected by the virus and how many are going to die because of the infection.

Viruses, by the way, are also part of the life diversity that we must live in union with here on Earth.

Plastic in the ocean is not the big thing that is on our minds and hearts right now. During this crisis, the internet is full of jokes and facts and pleadings for people to do what they need to do to keep the virus from surviving.

We are also receiving videos of dogs and cats and deer to keep us calm. We are receiving the images of the new flowers beginning to bloom in various parts of the land.

Spring is here and life forms like the animals and plants don't know that we are suffering. And we look to them for comfort.

We are truly a part of, and not the rulers of, Nature. No matter how hard we may try, we cannot control Nature. We live within and with Nature.

As we continue to try to survive the Virus Crisis of 2020, let us not forget that we are part of Nature. Let us use this crisis to help us get back to the basics, to what is most important in life.

Let us let Nature help us.



Commemorating

5th Anniversary of
Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*:
*Care for Our
Common Home*

50th Anniversary
of Earth Day

Reflection:

"*Laudato Si'*,
mi' Signore"

"Praise be to you,
my Lord,
through our Sister,
Mother Earth,
who sustains and
governs us."

Laudato Si', 1

Actions:

Soak in the sun
and reflect on
your relationship
with it and creation.

For more *Care For Our Common Home* reflections and actions follow us on Facebook for monthly tips.
facebook.com/bvmsisters.

Sharon Rezmer, BVM: *Answering the Call by Seeing the Open Door*

by Mary Glindinning

Friends gifted Sharon Rezmer, BVM with this collage of Dubuque doorways that represent places she has worked and lived. Opening the door to Sisters of Charity, BVM is how she answered the call to religious life.



Sharon Rezmer stood on the threshold of a life-changing decision. And the door kept beckoning.

While visiting the Art Institute of Chicago, she saw a huge painting of a door by Ivan Albright. She came back three times. It was called “That which I should have done, I did not do.”

Religious life had been calling her for most of her life, but Sharon wanted to discern if it was a true calling from God and the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary or only what she wanted.

“I thought even if it doesn’t work out, I think I need to do this.”

Once she decided, no one seemed surprised.

During the year as a candidate when she met and prayed with the Edmund Street BVM community in Chicago, Ruth (Lyle) Evermann, BVM gave a presentation called, “I am your open door, inviting you to step out into another.”

Sharon lived the first year of novitiate with BVMs Margaret “Peggy” (St. Cabrini) Geraghty and Diane (Joanella) O’Donnell. The first day they gathered for prayer, Diane had prepared a meditation on doors, unaware of how significant this was for Sharon.

Those signs, along with prayer, confirmed Sharon’s discernment.

“I just thought if they’re willing to take me, and they’re willing to open their arms to me, I’m going to step across that doorstep,” she says.

Her perpetual vow ceremony had been scheduled for May, but due to COVID-19, it has been postponed until sometime next year.

Sharon works at St. Raphael Cathedral and St. Patrick Parish in Dubuque, Iowa, as a parish visitor, visiting the sick and elderly, bringing Communion and praying with people. She also helps plan receptions for ordinations and other celebrations.

BVMs first impressed her when she

met them at St. Ferdinand Elementary School in Chicago.

“I remember coming home on the first day of school in fourth grade and saying to my mom, “These sisters smile and laugh,” Sharon says. “It opened up a whole new way of looking at God for me—that God was not a judgmental, strict God, but a God of love and joy and peace. Even in fourth grade, I noticed that.”

Years later, she worked as associate administrator at Wright Hall, a BVM residence in Chicago. “There were 60 sisters living there and sisters coming in for meetings. One thing I noticed was that they enjoyed being with each other. They were having fun. That was huge for me,” she says.

She worked in hospital laboratories throughout high school and college.

She joined a religious community and stayed four years. “One of the things that was important to me was to be with the people. I felt our order was not going in that direction.



Sharon Rezmer, BVM, serves a meal at St. Patrick Parish in Dubuque, Iowa, where she is a parish visitor.

“I just started living my life. I graduated from the University of Illinois with a degree in medical technology. I worked in laboratories all those years, 34 years at the last one. That was kind of a ministry for me.”

And she started a prayer group, volunteered as a Eucharistic minister, catechism teacher, and soup kitchen server.

“After all those years in the hospital, I felt like I wanted to do something different,” and she found the job at Wright Hall, “which I absolutely loved, and I think it was mutual. At that point, I wasn’t even thinking about religious life at all.”

In training to become a spiritual director, she had to write a reflection on what she longed for in life.

“My longing was for religious life,” Sharon says.

About that time, she was working on a project with Kathleen (Richard Marie) Conway, BVM, who asked, “Sharon, did you ever think about religious life?”

After a silence, she stunned herself by saying yes. “But it doesn’t matter now, because I’m too old anyway.”

And Kathleen said, “Maybe not. I’ll find out.”

The doors opened.

“It’s like everything I have done in my life has all lead up to this time,” Sharon says.

About the author: Mary Glindinning is a communications specialist for the Sisters of Charity, BVM in Dubuque, Iowa.





**In the midst of a whirlwind of change,
it's necessary to stop and take care of yourself.**

The second of three reflections by Associate Katie Pfiffner explores how living through COVID-19 reinforces our intuitive knowledge and awareness that we are all connected.

Katie Pfiffner is a pastoral services minister for the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dubuque, Iowa. She meets with the sisters for mindfulness meditation, Omega discussion groups (based on the work of Sister Ilia Delio, OSF), Praying into the Moment with chair yoga and breath practices, and other activities.

We Can Feel Our Connectedness

by Associate Katie Pfiffner



Over thousands of years, ancient traditions from around the globe have carried the message of our connectedness, knowing deeply that the web of life holds all of creation together. A vibration that is sent through one strand of the web reverberates through the whole.

We know the truth of this today, in this pandemic, in ways we were unaware of just a few months ago.

Science continues to provide evidence for our interconnectedness through things like mirror neurons, evolution, and morphogenic fields.

As our consciousness deepens, our awareness of the *other* increases with it. We *know* this to be true. We are connected, we are each other, and we are the world.

Charles Eisenstein, author and social philosopher, writes that we are living in a time of transition between two stories. The Story of Separation—the notion that what I do does not affect you and vice versa—informs and influences how we live. The Story of Interbeing is the idea that nothing exists on its own. It is a perspective that speaks directly to our connectedness with one another and our dependence on all of creation.

The Story of Separation structures how we live and can impede our sense of connectedness.

Our heart knows differently. We *feel* the Story of Interbeing, and, as our consciousness grows, so too does our awareness of interbeing.

It's why we are moved by the pain and the joy of other beings. It's why so many are drawn to serving others, to relieving the suffering of creation, and why even a few minutes outside can create a shift in us physically, mentally, and emotionally.

We embrace the Story of Interbeing not as a way to strive for another ideal but in recognition of the truth of the connectedness we feel in our bones.

The more we act from this story, the more we create a world that reflects it.

The last few months have thrust us into new ways of being.

Mindfulness—paying attention to the present moment, on purpose and without judgment—can help us to remain grounded and centered as we live into each new moment. It can be as simple as pausing for two or three deep breaths to drop in and notice our thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations, and *choosing to respond* with gentleness rather than react.

Science tells us that we affect each other on a cellular level. The energy created from our responses and reactions, from our thoughts and words, and even from our heartbeat, touches those we encounter.

Sister Ilia Delio, OSF, an American theologian specializing in the area of science and religion, says that every encounter is an act of evolution. How we live into each moment, evolve, and respond in each moment matters.

May we continue to open our hearts to our connectedness and choose to live from the depth of our interbeing with all of creation.

A portrait of Thom Chesney, the president of Clarke University. He is a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a yellow and blue striped tie. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred image of a building with large windows and columns, with blue and yellow decorative lines overlaid.

Meet Thom Chesney, Clarke University President

Thom Chesney, president of Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa, introduces himself in his own words in this Q&A. An accomplished leader, educator, and community volunteer, Dr. Chesney started as the 16th Clarke president in July 2019. Clarke was founded in 1843 by Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and named for BVM Foundress Mary Frances Clarke.

What has your first year as president been like?

In a word, illuminating. Since arriving in July of last year, I have been welcomed into dozens of conversations about Clarke University, our Catholic identity and core values, our long legacy of service to greater Dubuque, and ways to grow and sustain all of these for generations to come.

I never grow tired of hearing from people who know us already or have just heard of us. It makes the days and nights move quickly and provides energy and insight for each one that follows.

How do you view the BVM connection to Clarke?

Indissoluble and perpetual. Shortly after my appointment as Clarke's 16th president, BVM sisters provided me with an abundance of primary and secondary resources on our shared history. As I read, research, and get to know the BVMs in Dubuque and beyond, the experience has become the main lens through which I view my workday.

From individual interactions with students and colleagues to inclusive strategy sessions with diverse audiences, I am always mindful and reflective on how we got to where we are and what it means to be progressive with the times.

How do you view student connection to BVMs, such as through the Prayer Partner program?

It is just essential for Clarke students today to be connected and engaged with BVMs, even if the settings and circumstances have changed. Alumni frequently ask about BVM connections, especially for our students. Although the number of BVM sisters and associates teaching is nowhere what it once was, ample opportunities exist to ensure their living legacy.

The residential life assistants who have been paired with BVM Prayer Partners all speak positively and enthusiastically about how the experience is broadening their learning and providing an experiential opportunity to discuss our BVM and Clarke core values of freedom, education, justice, and charity. It is vital that together we continuously affirm and adapt BVM-student connections, and make sure they extend to Clarke employees as well.

What do you envision for Clarke's future?

I'm spending a lot of time currently making the "CASE" for Clarke: **Community; Access, Affordability, and Attainment; and Student Experience.** I believe we share a special relationship with our community as part of an educational ecosystem, one that, through Clarke and our other higher education

partners and local P-12 school systems, provides the learning and extracurricular experiences that lead to graduates who are career and community ready—prepared to work and to serve.

By working collaboratively and through co-investment, I am hopeful that we can continue to open our doors to students and community members from diverse backgrounds and circumstances and thereby achieve a more just and equitable society for all.

In so doing, the Clarke University student living and learning experience will be one that encourages more of our students—regardless of where they originally come to us from—to learn, live, work, and play here for the long term.

What do you wish people knew about your job?

How accessible it is and I am. When I'm introduced as a college president, the air in the room sometimes seems to change. When I'm introduced as Thom, someone worth getting to know, that doesn't happen.

As an educator doing work for the common good, I believe what we do is among the most important and challenging work that exists. But it should never put us out of reach of anyone who wants to participate, ask questions, or learn more.



Praying and playing: BVM Josette Kelly (above) plays Jenga and BVM Mira Mosle prays during gatherings with Clarke University resident advisors. The Prayer Partner program enhances the longtime connection between BVMs and Clarke students.

Unexpected Friendships Blossom from *A Tiny Seed*

by Associate Lori Ritz

When I think about the Prayer Partner relationships between 17 Clarke University students and 17 Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dubuque, Iowa, I am reminded of a well-known children's book, *The Tiny Seed*, by Eric Carle. A tiny seed travels through the wind, weather, and various climate changes and finally lands on rich soil and grows into a beautiful, tall flower.

So it is with the Clarke/BVM Prayer Partners project. What started out as a small idea, shared in a hallway, continues to grow, spread, and touch the lives of many.

In July 2019 Brenda White, director of student life at Clarke, and I, as director of the Office of BVM Life and Mission, met to brainstorm what Prayer Partners between the Clarke dormitory resident advisors (RAs) and BVM sisters might look like.

For me, I recalled my student days at Clarke when sisters lived in the dorms as RAs. Relationships, trust, and some long-time friendships were built between generations.

As Brenda and I talked, we discovered

that somewhere in the history of Clarke there had been "Prayer Pals." Together we saw a rekindling of the spirit that once was a part of the BVM history at Clarke. Our ideas started to become reality.

The sisters and students were paired based on personality, interests, and special characteristics. The 17 pairs of Prayer Partners met for the first time on an August afternoon at Mount Carmel.

The focus was getting to know one another as new friends and as leaders. Conversation flowed over the creation of a self-portrait paper doll. Photos were taken of the partners and dolls they created. The dolls were exchanged between the partners to hang in a prominent place, to be seen and remembered daily.

BVMs and RAs shared insights on leadership. "Leadership calls people to be encouraging and compassionate," Tyler Offield said.

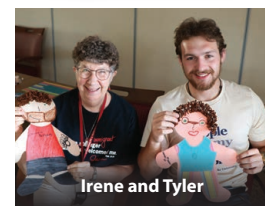
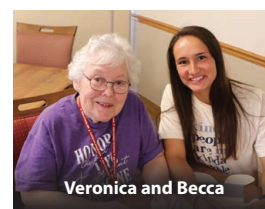
Creative canvas paintings focused on three words that described leadership to each person. Decorated bottles containing special quotes on leadership from the sisters were sent home with each RA. The afternoon ended with a blessing over the RAs by the sisters.

And so began the story of the "tiny seed."

At the encouragement of the sisters and students, the plan to meet twice during the 2019–2020 academic year quickly changed to meeting monthly. The themes of relationship, leadership, and fun soon became the focus for our time together.

Sometimes the gatherings were at Mount Carmel and sometimes at Clarke. Food, prayer, and activities brought the group together. Unexpected friendships, mutual interests, problem solving, creativity, and shared energy emerged.

What do you learn about things for





The egg survived! BVMs Joan (Ramone Mary) Lingen (I.), Sheila (Mary Trea) O'Brien and Clarke students used assigned materials to cushion an egg for a two-story drop.



BVMs Nancy (Josephine Mary) McCarthy (I.) and Julie O'Neill make self-portrait paper dolls that they traded with their Prayer Partners.

which you are grateful by playing Jenga? How do you turn a White Elephant Gift Exchange into a service project? How fun is it to play Bingo with New Year's vocabulary? What do you do with a variety of unrelated things to build protection around an egg so it does not break from a two-story drop?

What Sisters and Students Say About the Experience

Irene Lukefahr, BVM comments that "these times together make me more aware of the energy, hopes, and passions of our young adults."

The times together were filled with laughter and conversation. In addition, Carol Marie (Joseph Louis) Baum, BVM, refers to the "interaction with young men

and women through prayer, games, and topics that pertain to how one leads as they go about their normal daily activities."

They shared true mutual interest in each other's lives. "One consistent link Gavin [Collingwood, her Prayer Partner] and I have is Vail, Colo., where my past and his future converge," says Josette Kelly, BVM.

Josette's family has had a Vail home since the '60s, and she ministered in Colorado for 41 years. Gavin spent school holidays working at Vail's sports industry as an apprentice and now has a full-time job there.

Students shared similar reactions regarding the Prayer Partner exchanges. Claire Ronnebaum, a sophomore, "enjoyed learning about the history of Clarke and how the BVMs play such a big part in Clarke history."

"The relationships that we have built have been unexpected," says junior Sammi Moehle, "I know for sure that I did not expect this partnership to mean so much to me, not only for my own partner to

have such a big impact on me, but also for the other sisters that are involved that I have made friendships with."

Similarly, Nathan Dettmer, a sophomore, comments, "The random, unexpected friendships and bonds that you would never expect happened."

Josh Sanchez, a graduating senior, knows his relationship with his Prayer Partner Karen Conover, BVM will continue and be an important part of his future.

The interactions between the RAs and the sisters were not limited to monthly meetings. Taylor Foecking often visited BVM Julie O'Neill for the noon meal and an afternoon visit. BVMs Carol Marie Baum and Kathy Carr invited RAs Caity Cox and Rebecca Underwood to their home for a visit and home-cooked meal. BVMs Mira Mosle and Karen Conover attended a play at Clarke University starring Rashaud Colbert. And Delaney Dicus is convinced that Bertha (Dolorose) Fox, BVM will be an honored guest at her wedding.

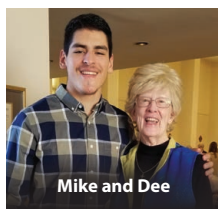
So the story of *The Tiny Seed* continues as the seeds are released into the air and spread to become more flowers.

The time together was truly a gift: friendship, caring, sharing, fun, and prayer.

The coronavirus pandemic abruptly interrupted the program. The students left. Classes continued online. A good-bye was not said.

But how the lives of the BVM sisters and the Clarke students were transformed by one another will be there for a very long time.

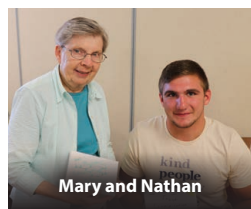
About the author: Associate Lori Ritz is director of the Office of BVM Life and Mission for the Sisters of Charity, BVM in Dubuque.



Mike and Dee



Mira and Rashaud



Mary and Nathan



Gavin and Josette



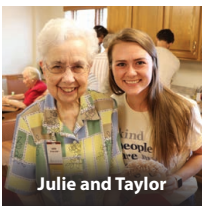
Nancy and Sammi



Joyce and Alex



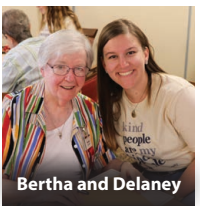
Sav and Carol



Julie and Taylor



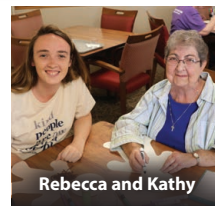
Rubi and Catherine



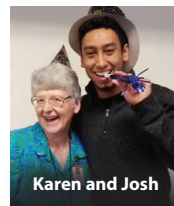
Bertha and Delaney



Joan and Colton



Rebecca and Kathy



Karen and Josh

BVM Artists' Works Shared

by Mary Glindinning

Eleven works of art by Sisters of

Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary professional artists have been donated to the Dubuque, Iowa, Museum of Art.

The donation ensures a presence of BVM art in the Dubuque area into the future and provides a glimpse into the breadth and scope of the artists' work.

With the impending move into newly constructed buildings at Mount Carmel Bluffs, it was clear that not all pieces of art in the collection would fit or be used. At the same time, there was a desire to share the artwork of these professional BVM artists with the larger community.

Since Dubuque is the home of the Sisters of Charity, BVM, choosing the Dubuque Museum of Art as a repository for selected works of the congregation's professional artists seemed appropriate and ensured the presence of these fine artists for years to come.

The congregation retains many other works by each of the artists. The collection also includes pottery, photography, needlepoint, ceramics, and other works of art by BVMs.

Four artist created donated works.



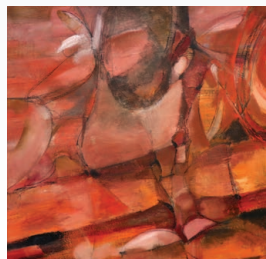
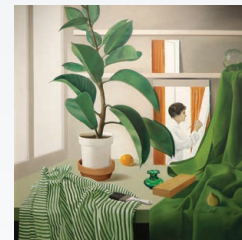
Barbara Cerny, BVM taught art and history at high schools in Dubuque and Emmetsburg, Iowa, and presented workshops for elementary art teachers. She was a water colorist in retirement, and two paintings of New Mexico missions and a portrait were donated.



Blanche Marie Gallagher, BVM was a professor of art at Mundelein College in Chicago. An artist, educator, and spiritual leader, she exhibited her works professionally in national and international galleries. Two oil abstracts and one watercolor housescape were donated.



Helen (Paulita) Kerrigan, BVM was an art teacher, department chair, and adjunct professor/artist in residence at Clarke University in Dubuque and also taught at other universities and in grade and high schools. A self-portrait and two abstracts were donated.



James Ann Walsh, BVM whose works are in private collections and museums throughout the country, taught at Clarke and chaired the art department. She also taught at other colleges. An oil painting of birch trees in winter and a modern painting of orange and red shapes were donated.



Construction Progress: Looks Like Home

Mount Carmel Bluffs, a new senior living community along the Mississippi River in Dubuque Iowa, is taking shape. New turrets echo those on the Motherhouse, built in 1893. Mount Carmel Bluffs is shared ministry of the Sisters of Charity, BVM and Presbyterian Homes & Services.





Catholic Sisters Week

To celebrate Catholic Sisters Week, three BVM sisters shared stories about how they found their calling. BVMs (I.) Rosalie (Victor Ann) Glanz, Kathryn (John Laurian) Lawlor, and Mary (Mercedie) McCauley spoke about their vocations and experiences. "I see vocation as something very active, ever-changing, very dynamic," says Mary.

➡ Read more: tinyurl.com/y7a22gj8.



Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt, BVM read *The Runaway Bunny*, a children's book by Margaret Wise Brown, as part of the Chicago Public Library's "Live From the Library" series. Sister Jean not only read the book but also explained the illustrations and helped children find the moral of the story. She encouraged children to read and listen to more books. Current and former Chicagoans, including Oprah Winfrey

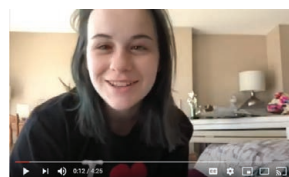
and Barack and Michelle Obama, also read books that children can access online from home during COVID-19.

Photo: Lukas Keapproth, Loyola University.

➡ Watch Sister Jean: tinyurl.com/y8t7uqgc.

BVM Life and Mission

BVM Pat Thalhuber's message of love and acceptance inspired Dubuque, Iowa, Wahlert High School students. Pat was one of 26 BVMs interviewed by the students in a Real World Communications class. "I am deeply grateful for having the opportunity to share my story with the students and to hear their reflections," Pat says. Teams of four students produced a video, and while each was different, the responses were similar. Sisters touched each life in a unique way, showing the "Heart of BVM."



➡ Watch Video: tinyurl.com/y7fb79d2.



BVMs in San Jose, Calif., Bette Gambonini, Elizabeth Avalos, and Marilyn Wilson met via Zoom with students from Carmel Catholic High School in Mundelein, Ill. Both sisters and students shared with each other how they live out the BVM core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice. "It was, for me, a wonderful way to connect again with young people," says Elizabeth. "They have so much positiveness to share with others, and it is important to give them a platform to do that." Students expressed that the core values will influence how they choose and practice their careers.

➡ Read more: tinyurl.com/y9xy2mhd.



Joan Fitzgerald, BVM, president of Xavier College Preparatory in Phoenix, was named one of Phoenix Business Journal's Most Admired Leaders for 2020.

Joan is joined by 29 other leaders from Phoenix's business, education, health, and nonprofit sectors. The award recognizes her integrity, values, vision, and commitment to excellence. The growth of the school both in its academics and physical campus and Joan's imprint of Catholic values were an integral part of being chosen for this award.

➡ Read more: tinyurl.com/y7xzzqvs.



Mary Frances McLaughlin, BVM is the first recipient of the Footsteps of St. Ignatius of Loyola Award at Christ the King Jesuit College Prep in Chicago. Her involvement

with Christ the King began in 2008 when she signed on as development officer for major gifts. She retired at the end of the 2012 school year and joined the board of directors in 2014. Christ the King is in Chicago's Austin neighborhood and is considered one of the most economically underserved and violent areas in the city.

➡ Read more: tinyurl.com/y9tslg5k.

Marie Greaney, BVM

knew there was a blood shortage due to COVID-19, so she made sure to keep up with her long tradition of donating.

She gave blood on her 87th birthday last year and has donated three times since then. In the Winter 2020 issue of *Salt*, she says giving blood is a family tradition, is easy, and saves lives.



➡ Read more: tinyurl.com/yd5cm6nf.

In Memoriam

Please pray for the BVMs who have died January 2020–April 2020.



**Mary Ann (Adoratrice)
Ruhde, BVM**

Aug. 31, 1937–Jan. 29, 2020

Mary Ann taught or ministered in Maquoketa and Davenport, Iowa; Rock Island and East Moline, Ill.; Chicago; Butte, Mont.; Boulder, Colo.; Omaha, Neb.; and Petaluma, Calif.

“Mary Ann found great joy in helping others. She believed people should be treated justly and spoke up when she perceived an injustice. She taught by example how to be observant and attentive to the needs of others and how to generously respond in a kind, caring, and loving manner. She knew that the simplest kindness could mean so much.” (Eulogy)



**Joan (Magdaletta)
Stritesky, BVM**

May 6, 1928–Feb. 18, 2020

Joan taught or ministered in Des Moines and Council Bluffs, Iowa; Elmwood and Rock Island, Ill.; Memphis, Tenn.; Denver and Boulder, Colo.; and San Francisco.

“Joan had the ability to see and appreciate the beauty of people. She is known for accumulating an excessive amount of apparently trivial items, but Joan saw the relationship behind each item. Giving up the item felt like giving up the relationship and Joan would never do that. She was incredibly grateful for everyone who impacted her life. Relationships truly were Joan’s treasure.” (Eulogy)



**Maureen (Wenefride)
Sheehan, BVM**

Aug. 26, 1938–March 20, 2020

Maureen taught or ministered in Huntington Beach, Petaluma, and Santa Barbara, Calif.; and Phoenix.

“Maureen [retired] and returned to the San Francisco area . . . because she wanted to get to know her family better, especially her five nephews and their families. Maureen loved to go to the kids’ ball games and family barbecues and was pleased that she had the time to spend with them and share that ‘Sheehan wit.’” (Eulogy)



**Donard
Collins, BVM**

Sept. 23, 1931–March 23, 2020

Donard taught or ministered in Dubuque and Sioux City, Iowa; Chicago; Memphis, Tenn.; Clarksdale, Miss; and Seattle.

“After retiring, Donard volunteered at Mount Carmel . . . and, as Jesus with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, walked with our sisters during their most troubling moments. Ever so generous, compassionate, and loving, she visited the sick and homebound and went the extra mile for a sister who needed a companion with medical skills, even traveling half-way across the country. She could ease burdens simply by her presence and had a gift for bringing out the best in others.” (Eulogy)



Mary Paulino Crabb, BVM
June 9, 1923–April 6, 2020

Mary Paulino taught or ministered in Santa Ana, Pasadena, Tujunga, and Los Angeles, Calif.; and Phoenix.

“Paulino was welcoming and generous, a true giver of her time and talents.

Neither guests nor friends wanted for anything, for helping someone was never an inconvenience. Always doing for others behind the scenes, she lived the words of Mother Clarke, ‘If our divine Lord and His sweet mother and St.

Joseph know us and [are] pleased, no matter for the world.’ It is no wonder that she made lasting friendships with her BVM sisters, professional artists, former students, and so many others she met in her life.” (Eulogy)



**Clarenita
Froehlich, BVM**

July 18, 1934–April 13, 2020

Clarenita taught or was principal in Sioux City, Boone, and Des Moines, Iowa; Melrose, Minn.; Omaha, Neb.; Los Angeles and Montrose, Calif.; and Chicago.

"During an interview for the Year of the Consecrated Life, Clarenita commented, 'My greatest joy in my vocation has been being able to spread God's word, love, and joy to his people.' Religious life has given me the opportunity to be a part of the BVM congregation and to work with prayerful, dedicated, supportive, and loving women who are striving to bring God's message and love to all." (Eulogy)



**Dolores Marie
McHugh, BVM**

April 24, 1933–April 24, 2020

Dolores Marie taught or ministered in Chicago; Glendale, Calif.; Kansas City, Mo.; Dubuque and Des Moines, Iowa.

"An outstanding administrator with boundless enthusiasm, her sense of humor helped keep life in perspective. Her laughter was infectious, and she relished a party, complete with music and dancing. She initiated contact in difficult situations, firmly believed in a team approach, and utilized consultation effectively to reach a resolution. Family was important, and she had a strong, individual relationship with each person." (Eulogy)



**Theresa (Amelia)
Kramps, BVM**

Aug. 31, 1941–April 27, 2020

Theresa ministered in Clinton and Dubuque, Iowa; Chicago; St. Paul, Minn.; Phoenix; Wichita, Kan.; and Kansas City, Mo.

"Theresa was ever steadfast and faithful, a woman with a compassionate heart who served others with loving kindness. We were indeed blessed to have Theresa among us. She showed us that every life has significance and meaning, every contribution counts, every gift holds beauty and grace." (Eulogy)



**Mary L. (Charlotte)
Stokes, BVM**

Dec. 26, 1921–April 28, 2020

Mary taught or ministered in St. Paul, Minn.; Dubuque and Des Moines, Iowa; San Francisco; Lincoln, Neb.; and Boulder, Colo.

"Mary was kind, caring, loving and faithful in her relationships. Even though she was a very private person, Mary was a fun-loving soul with a number of great sayings and a wonderfully clever sense of humor. In her Five Wishes, she wrote, 'Know that I am grateful that I found my way to the [BVM] community. My deep gratitude to all who generously befriended or helped me along the way.'" (Eulogy)

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and
let perpetual light shine upon them.*

We Remember

**Our Associate
Ramona Stubbs**

June 1, 1939–April 6, 2020



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Faith, Compassion, and Gratitude in Facing COVID-19

Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary are praying through the pandemic for all those who lost their lives and livelihoods and all those helping the ill. May all experience peace and healing now and in the days ahead.



To show their gratitude, BVM leadership created a banner placed at the entrance of Mount Carmel. The banner recognizes every employee as a first responder and essential for the care of sisters and each other.



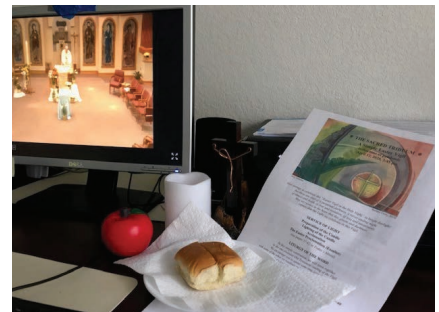
Bernadette Marie (David Ann) Schvach, BVM, along with other sisters and staff, cut and sewed more than 1,000 masks to be distributed at Mount Carmel and beyond.



Sisters posted handmade signs of thanks, resilience, and hope like this one by Mary Anne (Leslie) Bradish, BVM.



BVMs participated in fitness classes and Bingo games that aired on closed circuit television. They danced at a social distance to "YMCA" by the Village People in the hallway.



Masses became virtual, and some sisters set up altars in their homes. They found the prayers shared across the country to be comforting, meaningful, and inspiring.



Phone calls, Zoom meetings, and walks through neighborhoods kept BVMs connected to each other and the rest of the world.

'We Are Right Here Among You.'
**A Letter of Comfort from
Mary Frances Clarke and her
Companions during COVID-19 (See p. 4.)**