

Salt

VOLUME 53 NUMBER 3 SUMMER 2025

SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN MARY



50

The BVM story continues "... through
works of education, justice, and peace." —BVM Constitutions #16

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF SALT

Honoring 50 Years of Faith and Flavor

Dear Salt,

BLESSINGS AND CONGRATULATIONS!

For 50 years, you have told the BVM story with openness and creativity . . .

For 50 years, your writers, editors, layout artists, and printers have captured the spirit and heart of BVM life and mission . . . and worked hard . . .

For 50 years, you reached out to donors, families, institutions, libraries, and beyond to inform and educate . . .

For 50 years, you made ideas, words, and photos come alive . . .

For 50 years, you made us cry, laugh, question, wonder, and desire more . . .

For 50 years, you spiced up the ordinary and made the extraordinary down to earth . . .

For 50 years, you opened eyes to the needs and cries of the world and offered remedies and hope . . .

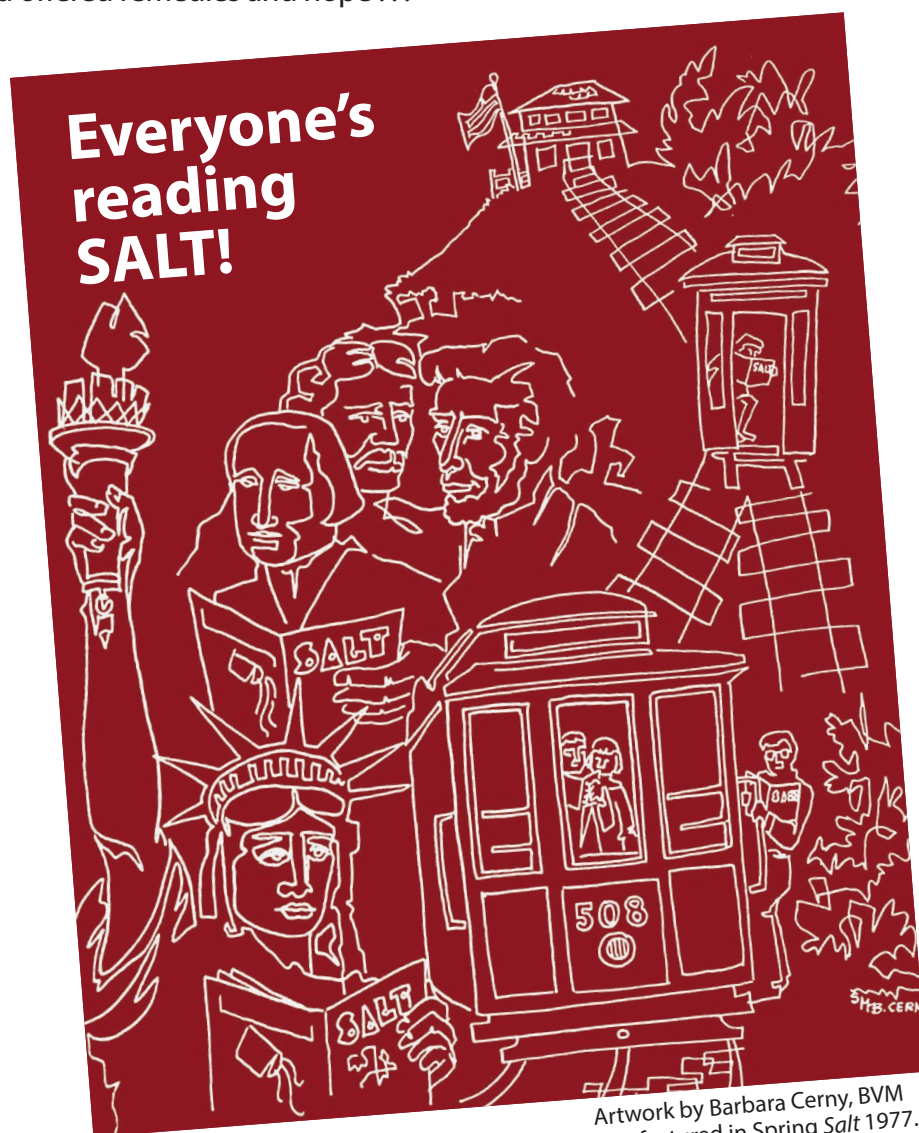
So we thank you: Communication experts, editors, writers, board members, readers, and everything in-between . . . Now we say: "Let's party and look to the future . . ."

—by Marilyn Wilson, BVM



On the Cover

Looking back on 50 years of Salt, we feature the evolving ministries of BVM sisters.



Artwork by Barbara Cerny, BVM was featured in Spring Salt 1977.



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Photo by: Tui Selvaratnam



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Salt

SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN MARY

ISSUE

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SEASONing

A Message from BVM Council

*There is always light.
If only we're brave
enough to see it!
If only we're brave
enough to be it!*

Gorman, A. (2021). "The Hill We Climb."
Delivered at the Inauguration of
President Joseph Biden

Daily reports of war, poverty,

homelessness, loss of employment, and so much more can negatively impact how we see our world. It seems all too easy to shut off the news, unsubscribe to current events sites, and ultimately disconnect from the challenging environment in which we find ourselves. Amanda Gorman dares us to do otherwise, to be brave enough to see the light, to see hope in whatever unexpected form it takes, and ultimately, to be brave enough to become a glimmer of hope for others.

The stories told in this edition of *Salt* magazine exude the light of hope of those who are "brave enough to see it and be it." For Such a Time as This, an organization inspired by hope amid disaster and poverty in Puerto Rico, invites partners to meet the needs of the most vulnerable when a single woman is brave enough to act.

Similarly, another young woman sees the light of hope as she visits her grandmother, a resident of Damien House, in Guayaquil, Ecuador. With the support of BVM scholarships, she was brave enough to embark on a journey to become an optometrist. Now she is brave enough to be hope for others as she offers free eye exams for children and serves others in the rural communities of her homeland.

Sister Lynn Winsor, BVM commented that being a teacher and coach is all about accompanying students along their journey from learning skills to becoming "respectful faith-driven individuals." Stated differently, being a mentor is all about helping students be so brave and

hopeful that they "deal with their challenges in life" and become a sign of hope for others.

Many BVM associates have been inspired by other associates, BVM sisters, and the BVM core values. While hope didn't make our list of core values, there is little doubt that the "light of hope" is an outcome of living the values of freedom, education, charity, and justice. Associate Laura Field braved the journey in association and certainly has become a "light" for so many others who grace her life.

The Sisters of Charity, BVM joined with Catholic Sisters throughout the country in bravely sharing our vision for a future full of HOPE. We know this is only possible when we lead with love, compassion, and empathy.

In the prayer celebrating the anniversary of this *Salt* magazine, we are reminded of the 50 years that this volume has challenged us to be "brave enough to see" to "open our eyes to the needs and cries of the world and offered remedies" so that we are "brave enough to be" the light of hope!

Ladonna Manternach, BVM

Katherine J. Kendefer, BVM

Kate Kendel, BVM

Carol Marie Baum, BVM



New Leadership Team Elected

Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary chose leadership for the next four years at a Congregational Assembly April 23–25. The Leadership term begins Aug. 1.

Sisters, associates, and staff gathered in the Mary Frances Clarke Chapel at Mount Carmel Bluffs in Dubuque, Iowa, and watched on livestream, to affirm the women who will form the congregation's new leadership team. President LaDonna Manternach, First Vice President Kathy Kandefer, Second Vice President Anne Marie McKenna, and Third Vice President Amy Golm were called to the service of leadership by the voting members of the Assembly and have accepted the call of their sisters.



We celebrate our newly elected leadership team: BVMs Kathy Kandefer (l.), LaDonna Manternach, Amy Golm, and Anne Marie McKenna.

LaDonna Manternach, BVM will be president of the congregation. President since 2021 and second vice president 2016–2021, LaDonna is a graduate of Beckman High School in Dyersville, Iowa, and Clarke University in Dubuque, where she earned a bachelor's degree in music. Her master's in music education is from Holy Names University in Oakland, Calif., and her Doctor of Musical Arts in vocal performance is from the University of Hartford in West Hartford, Conn. A Cascade, Iowa, native, she served as an elementary music teacher in Iowa and California, and as assistant professor of music, and in campus/youth ministry at Clarke University.

Katherine "Kathy" Kandefer, BVM will be first vice president. Kathy holds a bachelor's degree in religious studies from Mundelein College in Chicago and a master's in ministry from Creighton University. She served as a pastoral associate; diocesan director of catechesis; coordinator of initial membership for the congregation; associate director of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership and director of conferences and events for the Theological Union, both in Washington, D.C.; and operations manager for the Religious Formation Conference in Chicago. She has been vice president for the past four years.

Anne Marie McKenna, BVM will be second vice president. Anne Marie earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Mundelein College in Chicago and a master's of art in teaching in elementary education from Lewis and Clarke College in Portland, Ore. Anne Marie taught elementary school for 20 years on the east and west coasts, in Chicago, and served at Clarke University for three years. She ministered as a parish liturgy and music director in Dubuque and California for 21 years and then served the congregation in liturgy and music at Mount Carmel Bluffs in Dubuque. She has served the congregation on its stewardship committee, board of directors, and regional and assembly planning committees.

Amy Golm, BVM will be third vice president. Amy earned a bachelor's in English from Clarke University and entered the congregation in 1993. After clinical pastoral education at Loyola University Medical Center, she was a hospice chaplain in Palos Heights, Ill. Following final vows in 2003, she earned a master of divinity from Wartburg Theological Seminary and served as Clarke's campus liturgist, then director of campus ministry. In 2014, she joined St. Agnes Hospital's spiritual care team, in Fond du Lac, Wis., specializing in palliative care. Today, she serves as a chaplain at MercyOne in Dubuque, as co-chair of the continuity and coordinating committee of the congregational assembly, and on the board of directors. ■

The new leadership team will be installed at a July 30 ceremony in the Mary Frances Clarke Chapel at Mount Carmel Bluffs. The ceremony begins at 2 p.m. and can be viewed virtually at portal.stretchinternet.com/bvmsisters.

The BVM elected leaders bear a special responsibility to facilitate, encourage, and inspire Gospel living with the congregation and serve as its presence and voice in the broader church and civic community.



Habemus Papam: We Have a New Pope

by Kate Hendel, BVM

Vatican Media (2025)



Leo P.P. XIV

White smoke signaled “Habemus Papam” and in short order, the world met Robert Francis Prevost, Pope Leo XIV. In his first greeting to those watching in the square, around the world, and on television throughout Mount Carmel Bluffs, he said, “We have to be a church that works together to build bridges and to keep our arms open, like this very piazza, welcoming.” This statement provides a glimpse of what might be expected of our new pontiff:

A person who values others and calls all to actively participate in the mission of the church:

This first statement extended an invitation to all to join him in sharing the mission of Jesus, spreading the good news, and taking part in the work of the church.

A proponent of Catholic Social Teaching:

Our new pope chose the name Leo primarily for Leo XIII’s emphasis on Catholic Social Teaching. Leo XIV is known for his views on the importance of defending human dignity and promoting justice, a justice that is expansive and includes addressing the environmental crisis and tending to our relationship with all of creation.

A leader who acts locally and thinks globally:

In 2023, Cardinal Prevost is quoted as saying, “The spirit of synodality included the need and desire to listen not only to the bishop, but to many people in the diocese to see what the best way is to promote an authentic



“I am thrilled he has been elected. I’m thrilled he’s American but also he’s a worldwide traveler and a worldwide missionary who speaks the peace of Christ to all of us.”

—Jan Pertle, BVM (r.)



“It was an exciting moment to be in the Eternal City of Rome when the white smoke indicated that a new pope had been elected. The approximately 1,000 leaders of congregations of women at the UISG (International Union of General Superiors) Mass had just finished receiving communion. The election was on all our minds since the gathering began on Monday. The room erupted in “alleluia!” and dancing. Some left the event hall immediately to make their way to St. Peter’s Square in time for the announcement of Pope Leo XIV.”

—LaDonna Manternach, BVM (above, center)

“I was stunned at the announcement and surprised at my emotional reaction! I was moved to tears! I never expected an American and one from Chicago! The name he chose, Leo XIV, gives me hope.”

—Mary Gene Kinney, BVM



church in each and every diocese in the world.” In his position as a leader among world leaders, he is expected to be a “bridge-builder,” building relationships among world leaders on current issues and more importantly, promoting the mission of the church.

A citizen of the world beyond his birthright:

At this moment residents of the United States are discovering how they know or relate to Leo XIV. For example, his mother and her sister attended BVM-founded high school The Immaculata in Chicago; one sister was a BVM and is buried here at Mount Carmel Bluffs. And of course, White Sox fans are celebrating his allegiance! But lest we forget, he spent less than one-third of his life in the United States! His global attitudes were formed in Peru where he served for more than 20 years and became a citizen. As prior general of the Order of St. Augustine, he traveled the world and spent much of his time in Europe. Similarly, his ministry as the prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops provided significant familiarity in Rome and the Vatican.

“Seasonings” in this edition of *Salt* begins with a quote from poet Amanda Gorman. The following quote from this author offers a poetic way of looking at the work ahead of Pope Leo XIV.

If we’re to live up to our own time,
then victory
won’t lie in the blade, but in all the bridges
we’ve made.

That is the promised glade,
The hill we climb, if only we dare it:
Because being American
is more than a pride we inherit—
It’s the past we step into
and how we repair it.

Gorman, A. (2021). “The Hill We Climb.”
Delivered at the Inauguration
of President Joseph Biden.

“If [he is] to live up to our own time, the victory won’t lie in the blade, but in all the bridges [he’s] made.” ■

About the author: Kate Hendel, BVM is Vice President of the Sisters of Charity, BVM.

“Feeling great joy and amazement as we followed the actions in St. Peter Square on TV, I sensed that we too were among the cheering crowd in Rome. I pray in gratitude and support for Pope Leo XIV. What a position for him to embrace!”

—Kathleen Mullin, BVM

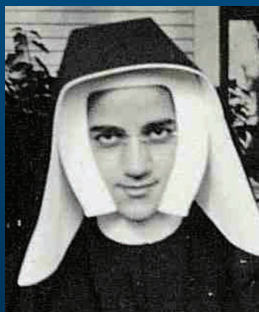


“I’m happy for his experience and understanding of Latin America—its poverty, political chaos, and violence—and the reasons why people migrate from there. Speaking many languages will serve him well as he addresses groups from many countries in their own language.”

—Judy Callahan, BVM



BVMs Kathleen Mullin (l.) and Carol Spiegel celebrate the announcement of Pope Leo.



We have a connection! ***Did you know that Pope Leo’s aunt was a BVM Sister?***

Sister Amarita Martinez was the sister of Pope Leo’s mother, Mildred. Both women graduated from The Immaculata, a BVM all-girls Catholic high school in Chicago’s Lakeview neighborhood. Their sister Sulpice was a Sister of Mercy.

Sister Mary Amarita Martinez, born in 1906, became a BVM in 1926. She shared her love of music as a teacher in schools from Clinton, Iowa, to Tigard, Oregon—and was the first BVM to teach at St. Gilbert in Grayslake, Ill.

From the very beginning, Pope Leo’s life was deeply rooted in Catholic faith and tradition.

Salt: Still Seasoning the Story

The Third Article of a Three-Part Series

by BVMs Teri Hadro and Mira Mosle

As sisters changed, so did the congregation and *Salt* was right there with them:

Following Vatican Council II's challenge to BVMs to return to the vision of Mary Frances Clarke, TOPA (Totally Open Personnel Application allowing sisters to pursue individual ministries) was the most intense of the changes for the BVM Congregation. However, growth in other areas of religious life happened as well.

Ministry in New Forms

Ministry, the product of education, thought, prayer, and conversations among BVMs underwent the most radical change. Yet, in reality, it was the congregation itself that became more diverse. The mission stayed the same but was understood more deeply: BVMs continued to serve others whose needs were greater than their own. Their minds and hearts moved beyond the parish school to a world full of need and *Salt* moved with them—telling story after story of sisters doing something new, feeling something different, committing themselves to a new awareness of basic human needs across the globe.

Sisters joined networks organized by others—Bread for the World, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Justice, the NAACP, Doctors Without Borders, to name a few. Funds were secured to enable sisters to receive Third World

Experience Grants, opening BVM minds and hearts to the deep poverty of peoples in Africa, India, and Central America. Some sisters remained in Guatemala and Ghana doing what they discerned would best serve their sisters and brothers. These stories, and those from long-term ministries in Ecuador graced the pages of *Salt*.

From seeking out unique ministries with hearing-impaired and Indigenous peoples to covering the outreach of BVMs and associates in various locales, writers explored the many manifestations of the BVM charism—alive in its members and expressed through diverse spiritualities, simple lifestyles, and collaborations with a wide range of groups: Nuns and Nones, other congregations, college students, and justice-seekers of all kinds.

As more BVMs retired from “boots on the ground” service, *Salt*



Advocacy against gun violence is one of many social justice causes sisters and associates support.

increased its coverage of how BVM scholarships continued the legacy of education, charity, and justice. Profiles of scholarship recipients appeared regularly. Features on legacy scholarships to schools in dioceses where BVMs had once served illustrated how these funds were leveraged to provide even greater financial assistance to young people in need.

Thanks to technology, recipients of Ministry Partnership Grants—especially in Africa—were able to share and show how BVM funds transformed lives through nutrition projects, healthcare, and education at all levels, particularly for women and children. Some sisters from these communities shared their stories in person at Mount Carmel Bluffs, and *Salt* was there.

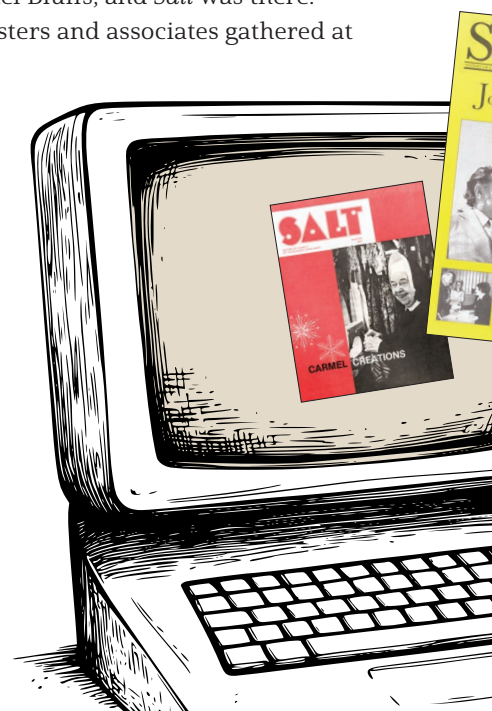
Sisters and associates gathered at



Young women around the globe have received Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Scholarships for Women.



Living out the BVM core values and the spirit of Mary Frances Clarke, sisters and associates work together to “help those most in need.”





The Mary Frances Clarke Chapel at Mount Carmel Bluffs bears witness to a lifetime of sacred celebrations.

a Congregational Assembly to create directional statements outlining priorities for this decade. The statements led to increased study and action focused on care for creation, confronting inequities rooted in racism and other injustices, and a resolve to be “the face of an inclusive, welcoming, and merciful church.”

Wherever they are located, BVMs and associates can be found writing letters, participating in rallies, advocating for nonviolence,



As part of ‘A Legacy of Love,’ BVM Sisters support others through Ministry Partnership and Hunger Fund Grants.

empowering women, and serving the marginalized. *Salt* continues to capture these steps on the journey.

With Change Comes New Life

The magazine informed readers about difficult times—the Vatican’s Apostolic Visitation investigating the life of religious communities, including the BVM Congregation; the closure of Wright Hall, a BVM retirement community in Chicago; and the challenges of COVID on both individual and communal life.

It chronicled new beginnings: Loyola’s Institute of Environmental Sustainability established on the site of Wright Hall; the LCWR-sponsored *Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America* nationwide exhibit; the collaborative founding of Bethany House in Chicago to support immigrant women and children; and the growth of the Roberta Kuhn Center’s classes for seniors.

Salt continued on p. 10.



Salt’s Digital Journey

The appearance of *Salt* evolved with the times. The personal computer made the production of the magazine much easier. In fact, the 25th anniversary edition of *Salt* marked the first fully digital issue. Stories written by authors far from the editorial offices could be submitted in no time at all. As costs changed, using

color on every page became more affordable.

Shorter articles, briefs, opinion pieces, and death notices continue to provide insight into the congregation, while messages from BVM Leadership challenge readers to look into their own hearts. *Salt* has realized its charge to “Live into the future.”

50 Years



Angie Connolly (center), current *Salt* editor, is surrounded by decades of wisdom from previous editors BVMs Mira Mosle (l.) and Teri Hadro.

A Heartfelt Thank You to the Editors:

Since its founding in 1974, *Salt* has thrived because of the dedication and talent of countless educated, passionate women—writing compelling articles, capturing photos, guiding the advisory committees, and shaping each issue through careful editing.

Their commitment has been the essence of the magazine’s story:

Rita Benz, BVM
Teri Hadro, BVM
Carolyn Farrell, BVM
Jane McDonnell, BVM
Mary Kevin Gallagher, BVM
Mira Mosle, BVM
Angie J. Connolly

In 2017, the BVM Congregation experienced a transformative change at “Our Mount Carmel Home” partnering with Presbyterian Homes and Services (PHS) to establish Mount Carmel Bluffs, an expanded senior living community. This development included the deconstruction of existing buildings and the construction of new facilities on the campus. With PHS becoming the managing partner, this new living community allows sisters to age in place while also welcoming residents from the Dubuque area and beyond.

Salt closely followed and documented this transition, capturing the emotional farewells, the progress of construction, the sisters’ moves into their new homes, and the return of sisters from across the country. Today, BVMs continue to live out their mission by offering care, companionship, and spiritual support to all residents of Mount Carmel Bluffs,



Catholic Sisters of the Tri-State Area posted billboards in support of Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si’*: On Care for Our Common Home.

embodying a spirit of love, respect, and shared community.

A partnership with a community of Vietnamese IHM Sisters has enriched the BVM Congregation over the past decade. These sister students came to Mount Carmel Bluffs to learn English while continuing their academic studies.

Their presence has brought renewed joy, energy, and cultural vibrancy to the lives of the BVMs embodying the spirit of global sisterhood.

Life and Mission Continue

Of course, celebrations are in abundance: new members, associate commitments, silver, golden, and diamond jubilees, annual assemblies, school anniversaries, funerals, and donor thanksgivings.

Over its 50 years, *Salt* has captured the essence of the congregation’s understanding of Vatican II’s intent: serving others whose needs exceed one’s own is best done by those who use all that God has given them and who recognize that individuals are more than their needs.

As long as BVMs continue to evolve, *Salt* will tell the story of a congregation that keeps discerning and striving to meet the needs of the people among whom it lives. Happy 50th year, *Salt* Magazine! ■



BVM sisters and associates serve a meal twice a year at a local parish.



Moving day has arrived at Mount Carmel Bluffs.



A peaceful start to the day on Two-Spiders Lake in Hayward, Wis.



Nearly 5,000 women have professed vows in dedication to the legacy of Mary Frances Clarke.

About the Authors:

Teri Hadro, BVM is a former member of the BVM Leadership Team, co-founder of *Salt* magazine, and is currently retired and happily learning to live without an alarm clock.

Mira Mosle, BVM, a former *Salt* editor, is actively retired at Mount Carmel Bluffs and serves on the Assembly Planning Committee, Opening Doors Board of Directors, Tri-State Coalition Against Trafficking, and UN Day of Peace Committee.



Associate Laura Field: *Experiences Inner Spiritual Freedom*

by Dee Myers, BVM

“I fell in love with the BVMs for the good work that they do and the spirit of joy and laughter that I sensed when visiting Mount Carmel Bluffs (MCB) in Dubuque, Iowa,” Associate Laura Field declared when asked what drew her to a BVM relationship. Then, being the extrovert she is, she elaborated with a significant addendum.

“In particular, their sense of freedom called to me, too. In my adult spiritual journey, I’ve grown by learning about mystics, saints, and kind-hearted, good people in history who challenged authority based on their own inner freedom. My intuition was affirmed as I earned my master’s degree from Loyola University Chicago in spirituality and discovered a group of women for whom freedom is a core value. And the BVMs have been relentless at inviting others into this inner spiritual freedom.”

Spiritual Imagination

Laura came to know the BVMs through Associates Eileen O’Shea and Marybeth Coleman, meeting at Old St. Pat’s in Chicago. They became dear friends these 22 years. Laura is inspired by the way they live authentically and with integrity.

Eileen and Marybeth’s long-time BVM association left a mark on her spiritual imagination. They warmly received her and invited her to speak at a BVM gathering. From there the opportunity to lead a retreat for associates at MCB captured her heart and imagination again.

For Laura, spiritual freedom is predicated on deep respect for a spiritual tradition and is grounded in curiosity and an eagerness to learn. Then, filled with an abiding trust in the Divine that flourishes with these open-hearted encounters, one grows in one’s life purpose of loving service, faith, and hope in all circumstances.

Blossoming Freedom

The more Laura “hung out” with these new friends, the more she found laughter, joy, energy, and a profusion of freedom. She found that she was living the core values and sincerely seeking a more just world where all could live as God imagined. Laura could see nuances to what she had always known in other core values.

Education for herself, which she had pursued in a degree that helped her achieve in the corporate world, added another layer because it made the world better; she became more sensitive to other’s need for education also.

Charity wasn’t just giving a handout or writing a check. It could mean giving time to the vulnerable and relating to all of God’s creations with respect and gracious intent.

Justice became about lending a voice and taking an active part against unfair initiatives—economically, and culturally.

The **Freedom** that blossomed in Laura displayed itself on other fronts as well. She discovered and appreciated the community of Old St. Pat’s. She was nourished by the retreats which ignited how being “baptized, reconciled, fed, and sent forth” could bring such richness to life.

Sharing Sacred Skills

Laura developed her skills and sacred listening with others, leading retreats and days of prayer, including a favorite with the associates at MCB.

For the past three BVM Congregational Assemblies, including the 2025 Election, she worked with BVM Dee Myers in planning the prayer sessions for participants.

Laura became an associate in 2019, joining Marybeth and Eileen, as well as almost 200 hundred others in a unique relationship with BVM sisters. ■

About the author: Dee Myers, BVM moved to Mount Carmel Bluffs in Dubuque, Iowa, after 30 years in California happily ministering as a pastoral associate and spiritual director.



Reflections at the Border: *BVM Sisters Journey to Nogales*

by Katie Anders, BVM and Colleen McGinnity, BVM

On a Heritage Tour to visit BVM missions in the West, novice Katie Anders and Colleen McGinnity, BVM made a stop to visit the border in Nogales, Ariz. *Salt* invites you to journey with them as they share their emotional reactions to thoughts about what they witnessed, reflecting on the challenges, struggles, and human stories tied to the border experience.

Called to Welcome the Stranger

Katie Anders, BVM



On April 3, Colleen and I travelled from Phoenix to Nogales, Ariz., to learn more about immigration. Upon arriving, we met with Mobilization Specialist Sister Eileen McKenzie, FSPA and Mission Engagement Officer Father Pete Neeley, SJ who introduced us to the work of the Kino Border Initiative.

This is a non-profit organization that works on both sides of the border assisting migrants. Their vision is migration with dignity, and their mission is to promote humane, just, and workable migration through direct humanitarian assistance, holistic accompaniment of migrants, and policy advocacy in both Mexico and the United States.

Eileen walked with us to one of the three ports of entry along Nogales' border to get a sense of the fluidity of movement into and out of both countries.

People were walking and driving, going to work, going to school, visiting family and friends, attending church services, and doing their shopping. It has become such a violent system for the migrants as well as for the border patrol with the wall and barbed wire as a constant reminder, and yet there was a sense of normalcy in the rhythm of what was happening.

Eileen commented several times that part of the work they do through education, advocacy, and encounter is to help change the narrative that is given to us through the media. Sadly, migration has come to be criminalized in our perceptions, but the vast majority of the people trying to migrate are simply seeking a safe and healthy life. Yet, nothing about their journey is simple.

As we walked along the wall together, the scene I will carry with me was a family celebrating a birthday on both sides of the wall. A young couple on the U.S. side and the rest of their family on the Mexico side.

The young man was cooking on the tailgate of his pick-up, and the woman was reaching her fingers through the grate that has been placed over the slats of the fence, trying to touch a small baby that a woman was holding on her lap on the other side.

It was a family picnic like nothing I have ever seen. They were smiling and laughing together, and while I too smiled with them as we passed by, my heart also ached as I'm sure theirs did, too.

This experience reminded me not only about what a complicated issue immigration is, but after spending time with Eileen walking the wall, I experienced in a new way how we are called to welcome the stranger and that this can be done with dignity, compassion, and joy.

The border wall in Nogales, Ariz., marks a physical and symbolic boundary in the ongoing story of migration and hope along the U.S./Mexico border.

A Country of Immigrants

Colleen McGinnity, BVM



Nogales, Ariz., is a small city of 20,000 that literally spans the U.S./Mexico border. On the other side of the wall is the much larger Nogales, Sonora,

Mexico, a city of nearly 265,000.

The border patrol refers to the wall as a fence. It reaches 13' into the air. The slats are 4-5" apart, big enough for a hand to reach through and touch hands on the other side. At the beginning this was possible, but no longer. Today, the fence is covered by chicken wire, making it impossible to reach across.

Along the top of the wall are huge rolls of razor wire that extend about a yard away from the slats and would cut to pieces anything, or anyone, that touches it. For much of the wall, the wire is at both the top and the bottom. It is a cruel, ugly statement of "You are not welcome here! We do not want you!"

The wall filled me with shame and left me wondering "Who are we as a people, as a country?" We are a country of immigrants from our very beginning.

Eileen has worked with the Kino Initiative for a year and a half. She is a welcoming woman, whose wide smile expresses warmth, acceptance, and a bit of mischief.

She crosses into Mexico several times a week. Because so few



BVM Katie Anders (center) visits with Father Pete Neeley, SJ and Sister Eileen McKenzie, FSPA to learn about Kino Border Initiative—a "Community of Care" that goes beyond providing basic needs to migrants.

Learn more:
kinoborderinitiative.org

immigrants are coming into the United States today, much of the work of Kino is in Mexico, supporting the people being detained. The Kino Initiative operates on both sides of the border. Kino USA has a large corps of volunteers who help collect and sort donated items.

Eileen said that some people share the views of the American government. However, most residents of Nogales do not share the animosity expressed by U.S. leaders. Nor do they experience the behavior of the immigrants as described by American authorities—cruelty, violence, and rape. Eileen feels safe in the city, but admits that, as a woman, she does not usually go out alone at night.

She shared with us that the border became a problem after the NAFTA

trade agreement was signed. U.S. agriculture is subsidized, but that is not true in Mexico. The growth of the maquiladoras (factories) in Nogales, Sonora, drew many Mexicans to the city from the countryside. Many gangs and drug cartels control life on the Mexican side of the river.

For me, the wall represents a failure of creativity and compassion. We are not trying to help others in need. We are simply closing our eyes and building a barrier so we cannot see the needs. ■

About the authors:

Katie Anders, BVM is a novice/formation member of the Sisters of Charity, BVM and spiritual care minister in Dubuque, Iowa.

Colleen McGinnity, BVM serves as the BVM formation director for the Sisters of Charity, BVM in Dubuque, Iowa.

As BVMs Katie Anders and Colleen McGinnity prepared for Katie's novitiate Heritage Tour, they met with over 30 sisters who had grown up in or been missioned in the West. The time was filled with sharing stories, memories, and impact.



“Sista” Lynn Celebrates 50 Years at Xavier College Prep

by Kari Litscher

For 50 years, “Sista” Lynn Winsor, BVM has ministered at Xavier College Preparatory (XCP) in Phoenix, leaving a significant mark on the school and its athletic programs. As both a coach and an athletic director, she has touched the lives of countless young women, shaping not only their athletic abilities but also their character.

The Role of a Coach: Teacher and Mentor

In her role as a coach, Lynn always stresses the importance of the coach-athlete relationship. “Coaching is about being a teacher—someone who urges their athletes to become better, teaching them the skills they need,” she asserts. She believes that coaching isn’t about being a “friend” to the athletes but rather being a mentor. “I never approached coaching as being friends with my student-athletes. I wanted to be their teacher and their coach.”

While she maintains a professional relationship with her athletes during their time at XCP, she acknowledges the rewarding relationships that develop when they return as adults. “After they graduate, that’s when we become friends. When they come back, we talk about their families, their careers, and how they’re doing. To me, that’s really a special thing.”

Memorable Milestones: State Championships and Lifelong Connections

Lynn’s coaching career has been filled with remarkable achievements, and one of the most significant moments was when her team won its first state golf championship in 1980. She recalls, “You always remember your team’s first championship,” acknowledging the emotional significance of that victory after years of hard work. She

continued to lead her teams to victory, with XCP’s program winning a total of 37 state championships and seven runner-up finishes.

The impact of one athlete, Heather Farr, stands out as particularly pivotal to the growth of the program. “Heather came in 1979, and she was an outstanding junior golfer,” Lynn recalls. “Her arrival at XCP and her outstanding golf talent and her love of XCP, has really impacted our program to this day.” Heather’s decision to attend XCP played a key role in the program’s success, laying the foundation for many championships to come.

Beyond the Golf Course: Lifelong Success

Lynn takes pride in her athletes’ success both on and off the field. “Six of my golf team athletes have gone on to the LPGA, which is wonderful,” she shares. “When one of them was selected for the 2024 Solheim Cup [where the United States golf team competes against the Europe golf team], like Sarah Schmelzel was this year, one of my XCP golfers helped the U.S. team win. It’s a proud moment.”

Other XCP golfers, such as Amanda Blumenherst and Cheyenne Woods, have gone on to achieve great things in the world of golf, broadcasting major women’s and men’s golf championships on networks like ESPN and the Golf Channel.

But for Lynn, it’s not just about athletic success. She’s proud of how her athletes have thrived in many other fields. “Many of them are now doctors, teachers, mothers, professional athletes, or involved in other successful careers. That’s what makes me proud and happy,” she says, noting that her former athletes frequently return to share their successes and the impact XCP had on their lives.



Advocacy and Legacy: Title IX and Expanding Opportunities for Women

A significant part of Lynn’s impact has been her advocacy for women’s sports. Through her efforts, she has worked to level the playing field for women’s athletics, both at the state and national levels.

Her work didn’t stop at maintaining traditional sports. For example, Lynn has been involved in bringing new high school sports to Arizona, such as flag football, crew/rowing, beach volleyball, soccer, and e-sports. “When I got involved with flag football, I was excited to help

Mahalo “Sista” Lynn!

Xavier College Preparatory (XCP) celebrated the 50th anniversary of “Sista” Lynn Winsor, BVM in Hawaiian style. The luau themed celebration captured Lynn’s heart, joy, passion, and energy. From the first tiki torch to the last hula, XCP expressed their love and appreciation for Lynn and her many impactful years on the lives of XCP students, faculty, staff, and families.



Athletic Director “Sista” Lynn Winsor, BVM encourages student-athletes Lana Klein (l.) and Lizzy Marino at Xavier College Preparatory in Phoenix. *Photo by: Tui Selvaratnam*

it to become an official high school girl’s sport in Arizona. This was a huge win for girls’ athletics, especially in a state where it wasn’t yet recognized.” To Lynn’s credit, Arizona is one of the first states to offer girls high school flag football.

The Importance of Faith and Excellence

At XCP, faith and excellence are at the core of everything, and Lynn embraces that mission in her work. “Our school motto is ‘Women of Faith Pursuing Excellence,’ and that’s something I

live by as a coach and an athletic director,” she shares. She believes in nurturing the whole person—not only learning the skills they need to compete but also developing into respectful, faith-driven individuals.

In her role as athletic director, Lynn oversees 70 coaches at XCP, each of whom is tasked with helping their athletes embody these values. “I’m the coach of the coaches,” she says, explaining her responsibility to lead by example and mentor the staff at XCP. “We’re all trying to help these young

women become strong women—women of faith and excellence.”

The Impact of 50 Years at XCP

Looking back at her 50 years at XCP, Lynn feels deep gratitude for the opportunities she’s had to shape young lives. “I’ve had the opportunity to be a teacher, a coach, and an administrator,” she says. “I’ve been able to work with thousands of young women, and that’s what means the most to me.”

Lynn’s impact extends far beyond the sports field. She has helped mold a generation of women who understand the value of hard work, respect, and faith. “Being an athletic director and a coach puts you in a position where you can effect change and help these young women with the challenges in their lives and help them celebrate their successes,” she states.

Looking Ahead

As she celebrates this incredible milestone, Lynn has no plans to slow down. With a deep passion for her work, she continues to inspire the next generation of athletes and coaches. “I have a lot of energy, and I thank God every day for that,” she says. “I’ve been very blessed with the support of the BVMs, especially my XCP President Joan Fitzgerald and Principal Joanie Nuckols . . . I’ve been very blessed with the opportunities I’ve been given. God is good. I love what I do.” ■

About the author: Kari Litscher is a communication specialist for Sisters of Charity, BVM in Dubuque, Iowa.



For Such A Time As This:

The Power of Love, Hope, and Community in Puerto Rico

by Kari Litscher

Yanira Ocasio Hernández, the

Foundress and President/CEO of For Such A Time As This, has witnessed firsthand the incredible impact of community outreach and faith-driven work. Growing up, she was inspired by her missionary mother and pastor grandfather, whose selfless service paved the way for her passion for charity and community empowerment. Over the years, she has worked tirelessly to bring hope to underserved communities, most recently in Puerto Rico, in the wake of natural disasters.

The BVM Connection: A Story of Hope

Yanira's connection with the Sisters of Charity, BVM began when she met Congregational Secretary Ann Sweeney during her service trip to Puerto Rico. Ann, who has worked twice with Global Volunteers on the island, explained to Yanira how the BVMs support programs around the world through the BVM Hunger Fund Grants. Inspired by this conversation, Yanira applied for a grant to further her mission of helping those in need.

For Yanira, the partnership with the BVM Sisters has been more than



Yanira Ocasio Hernández, Foundress and CEO of For Such a Time As This, serves hope and nourishment to the poor and homeless in Puerto Rico.

just financial—it has been a source of encouragement and solidarity. The funds have been instrumental in supporting their work, which includes serving the homeless community. BVM Hunger Funds have helped purchase food, including perishable items like fruits, vegetables, and proteins, as well as non-perishable goods like canned foods, grains, and snacks.

A Story of Resilience

In September 2017, Puerto Rico was hit by the devastating forces of Hurricane Irma and Maria. With winds exceeding 155 miles per hour, the Category 4 hurricanes caused widespread destruction—homes, schools, roads, and the electrical grid were decimated. In the midst of the chaos, Yanira knew she had



Throughout our congregation's history, the BVM Legacy of Love has remained constant: "to seek out and attend to those in need." How we engage in that mission has changed. As BVMs have retired from active ministry, we have established BVM Ministry Partnership Grants and Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Scholarships for Women to ensure our legacy will continue through individuals and organizations who hold similar values.

to act. Within days, she organized relief teams to bring much-needed support to those affected.

"I began organizing relief teams and taking to the streets to bring love, faith, and hope to a people in great need," she says. Thanks to partnerships with churches, companies, and individuals, Yanira's efforts helped sustain Puerto Rico's recovery long after the immediate aftermath.

Yanira's work did not stop with emergency relief. In December 2017, a vision she had received 25 years earlier came to life: "You will be the mother of many, mother of hundreds, you will bring love and hope to those most in need." That calling led to the founding of For Such a Time As This. Since then, the organization has worked tirelessly to address hunger, health, and psychological challenges, while fostering long-term community empowerment.

Serving the Most Vulnerable: The "Los de a Pie" program

A central program of For Such A Time As This is "Los de a Pie" (The Ones Walking), which serves the elderly and homeless throughout Puerto Rico. Inspired by the example of Jesus, who walked from place to place sharing love and compassion, this initiative embodies the spirit of Matthew 25:40: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Yanira often travels to Aguadilla in northwestern Puerto Rico, where she leads efforts to serve hot meals, provide prayer, hygiene supplies, and, most importantly, hope. "The need is increasing as the Puerto Rican economy is in a bad place, and food costs are high," Yanira shares. Currently, the organization provides hot meals for

"The BVM donation has meant to us a beautiful relationship that brings the opportunity to serve those 'no one sees,' showing empathy and compassion. It is a great help to continue easing the struggle of others."

—Yanira Ocasio Hernández

over 100 homeless people each month, relying on private donations to sustain their operations. In addition to serving meals, For Such A Time As This, also brings groceries, water, solar lamps, and other necessities.

The success of this program is made in part by the support of the BVM Hunger Fund. "The BVM donation has meant to us a beautiful relationship that brings the opportunity to serve those 'no one sees,' showing empathy and compassion. It is a great help to continue easing the struggle of others," says Yanira.

These funds help ensure that those in need receive nutritious meals. Yanira shares that at a recent meal, the recipients "were happier when I told them that we changed the menu and made meat burritos with beans, cheese, salad, and water. We also brought cookies and coffee! They were so grateful, and they give us so many blessings!"

Dreams Within Reach

Yanira's dream of building a self-sustaining, empowered community in Puerto Rico feels more achievable than ever. As the need for support continues to grow, she remains committed to empowering Puerto Rican communities for long-term success. Through educational programs, training initiatives, and the support of partners like the BVMs—especially through the Hunger Fund Grants—For Such a Time As This is helping individuals develop the skills needed to thrive in a post-disaster economy.

The mission to heal, uplift, and transform lives on the island is poised to continue for many years to come.

For more information on For Such a Time As This, visit forsuchatimeasthispr.org. ■

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



Yanira Ocasio Hernández (first row, center) and friends are committed to empowering the Puerto Rican community.

Milena's Dream: Helping the World See

BVM Scholarship Recipient Becomes an Optometrist

by Kari Litscher



Scholarship recipient Milena Izquierdo masters the tools that shape her future as an optometrist.

Milena Izquierdo's path to becoming an optometrist is a story shaped by determination, family, and the generosity of others. A recipient of multiple Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Scholarships for Women, Milena's journey is proof of the power of education and community support. Her BVM sponsorship, provided by Annie Credidio, BVM, who founded Damien House, helped Milena navigate higher education and the financial hurdles it brings.

Milena's connection with Annie and Damien House started through her grandmother, who suffers from Hansen's (Leprosy) disease. Damien House provides around-the-clock care for residents and free medical help to poverty-stricken outpatients.

Milena's grandmother has been a resident there for many years. During Milena's visits to see her grandmother, she met Annie. Over time, Annie's support expanded beyond helping her grandmother to include helping Milena—supporting her in her goal of attending college and becoming an optometrist.

The Power of Scholarships

Milena reflects on how the BVM scholarships she received allowed her to continue her studies. "I remember the day I received the news as if it were yesterday. It was a moment of immense joy and excitement . . . thanks to the BVM Community, I could continue my studies without the heavy financial burden that worried me so much."

With the help of BVM scholarships, Milena attended classes and completed her degree at Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo. For her, BVM support was more than just a financial boost—it was a reminder of the people who believe in her and in her future.

Volunteering and Finding Her Passion

Volunteering at Damien House played a pivotal role in Milena's personal and professional growth, giving her an early understanding of the importance of serving others, especially those who are often overlooked. Her commitment to service continued while studying at university, where she created a group that visited the elderly in a home near campus. Milena saw this as an opportunity not only to apply what she was learning but also to encourage her classmates to value the importance of personal connections in care.

Making a Difference in Her Community

Milena's passion for helping others extends to her work with children. While in school, she organized free eye exams for children in rural communities. Milena recognized a need for basic eye care in these underserved areas, and with her growing knowledge as an optometry student, she sought to address that gap.

Because many children don't have access to simple eye exams which can affect their learning and development, Milena wanted to offer something practical that could help these children succeed.

Milena recognized a need for basic eye care in these underserved areas, and with her growing knowledge as an optometry student, she sought to address that gap.





Looking Ahead

Annie, who has been a constant source of support for Milena, is proud to see how far she has come. “I greatly admire the inner strength that Milena has developed and the high expectations that she has for herself. I know that she will continue to achieve her goals . . . this is one of the greatest strengths of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Scholarship for Women as we can see young women blossom before our eyes and receive the profound sense of inspiration as they are a part of a larger generational shift.”

Now graduated, Milena plans to continue her work with underserved communities, providing eye care and support to those who need it most. Her life reveals the impact that education, mentorship, and a desire to give back can have on a person's life.

Milena hopes to be a role model for others in her hometown and beyond, showing that even small actions can lead to big changes in the world. Milena shares, “From the bottom of my heart, I am infinitely grateful for your kindness. Your support has transformed my life and has allowed me to dream big . . . I promise to honor your generosity by working hard and being an example for others.” ■

About the author: Kari Litscher is a communication specialist for the Sisters of Charity, BVM in Dubuque, Iowa.

BVM Scholarship Recipient: Emma McCarthy Adds a Young Voice to the Conversation

by Mary Fran McLaughlin, BVM

Completing her three-year term as a member of the BVM Communications Advisory Committee, Emma McCarthy will continue to assist with her “younger” voice, planning issues of *Salt* magazine and advising/reacting to social media outreach.

Following graduation from Xavier College Prep (XCP) in Phoenix in 2021, Emma completed a B.S in Political Science, a B.S. in Sociology and a Certificate in Sports, Ethics & Cultures at Arizona State University (ASU) Tempe in three years, graduating in May 2024. She managed to keep her GPA at 4.0!

In August 2024, she returned to ASU to pursue an M.A. in Strategic Communication and plans to graduate in December 2025.

Fortunately, Emma is the recipient of a Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Scholarship for Women. Since graduate studies typically do not offer the same kinds of grants or scholarships as undergraduate programs, the BVM scholarship will help relieve some of the financial burden she is currently carrying.

As an XCP student, Emma was taught by BVM teachers. As an XCP alum, Emma recognizes and embraces the BVM core value of education. As an undergraduate, she worked for *America Reads*, which provides after-school tutoring. While there, she worked as a content creator, producing videos that featured activities for students to do

at home or for tutors to use with their students.

Currently she interns at the Arizona Board of Regents, the governing board for the three public universities in Arizona. As a multimedia communications intern, Emma creates content and markets for their “College Ready AZ Program.” Targeting middle and high school students, the sessions prepare them for college, teaching them how to apply for financial aid and scholarships, and hosts events to connect students with counselors and mentors.

Emma is an industrious and passionate young woman, a creative and collaborative leader, with strong critical thinking and problem-solving skills. How fortunate we are to have her on our communications committee and numbered among our scholarship recipients!



About the author: Mary Fran McLaughlin, BVM lives in Chicago and serves on the Communication Advisory Committee for Sisters of Charity, BVM in Dubuque, Iowa.

In Memoriam

Please pray for BVM sisters and associates who have died January 2025–May 2025.



*Katherine "Katie"
E. Heffernan, BVM*
April 14, 1923–Jan. 31, 2025

Katherine was born in Omaha, Neb. She entered the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in 1958 and transferred to the BVM

Congregation in 1973.

With God as her foundation, Katie was fearless and resilient. The richness of how she lived life was a foretaste of the joy she now knows. Surely her heavenly homecoming was the party of a lifetime and, knowing Katie, she quite possibly cajoled everyone in heaven into line dancing.

Katie served as a district social worker, clinical social worker, and special education care manager in the Chicago area. In retirement, she served on the board of the American Women for International Understanding, a member of American Architectural Society, and Chicago Council for Global Affairs.



*Eugena
Sullivan, BVM*
June 26, 1931–April 13, 2025

Eugena was born in Chicago and entered the congregation in 1953 from St. Kilian Parish in Chicago.

She was a gentle, kind, and loving person who never wanted to draw attention to herself. She was far more interested in learning about people . . . She loved to cook and was generous, gracious and the essence of hospitality. Eugena loved bringing people together and treating them, whether welcoming new Clarke faculty by inviting them to dinner or organizing a pizza party for the members of her set who meant so much to her.

Eugena worked in the computer center at Clarke University, in Dubuque, Iowa, prior to becoming the registrar, a position she held for nearly 40 years. She also taught in Glendale, Calif., Santa Ana, Calif.; Kansas City, Mo.; and Chicago.



*Susan (Michaela)
Rink, BVM*
Aug. 8, 1927–April 27, 2025

Susan was born in Tulsa, Okla., and entered the congregation in 1948, from St. Patrick Parish in Dubuque, Iowa.

Sue put her gifts to good use in a life of service. She was a strong woman, yet there was a gentleness about her. She could state her opinion, speak her mind, and then go with the flow and not fret about the outcome. Her twinkling eyes and warm smile welcomed everyone as a friend.

Sue taught high school and/or college in Dubuque, Milwaukee, and St. Louis. She was the assistant dean at Mundelein College in Chicago before being named president. Later she became a youth and substance abuse counsellor. Interested in alternative investments and helping provide funds for the poor, Sue served as the treasurer for the congregation for eight years.



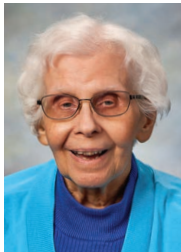
*Edissa Mary
Szczepanski, BVM*
Dec. 29, 1933–April 29, 2025

Edissa Mary entered the congregation in 1952 from Our Lady of Angels Parish, in Chicago.

While spending retirement with her BVM sisters at Mount Carmel Bluffs, Edissa shared that, "being a BVM is a special way of loving and brings joy, peace, and happiness to my heart and to others with whom I interact in my daily life." Even though she was quiet, she was deeply interested in other people and enjoyed one-on-one conversations. Sewing was one of her favorite pastimes.

Dedicating 22 years to elementary education, Edissa taught in Cedar Rapids and Clinton, Iowa; Chicago, and Memphis, Tenn. In Chicago, Edissa served as a media specialist and school librarian.

Visit our website to read a sister's entire obituary or watch her funeral Mass at:
bvmsisters.org/obituaries.



***Donna (Blanche)
Schauf, BVM***

July 25, 1937–April 30, 2025

Donna was born in Wichita, Kans., and entered the congregation in 1955 from St. Joseph Parish in Wichita.

Donna's ministry with many cultures and people of different races and economic levels aided her to grow in love of others and helped her let others love her in return. Later in life, Donna joined the pastoral care team at Mount Carmel and was filled with many graces and blessing. "I grew in love of God, others, and especially the BVM Community life with my sisters."

She spent 23 years in elementary education as a teacher and/or principal in Chicago, Kansas City, Mo.; and Boone and Fort Dodge, Iowa. Donna served as a director of a preschool and home tutor in David, Ky.; Head Start teacher and family support in Steele, Mo.; and director of senior care and pastoral associate in Wichita.



***Diana
Malone, BVM***

May 6, 1935–May 5, 2025

Diana was born in Chicago and entered the congregation in 1956 from St. Callistus Parish.

Diana truly poured out her life in service to Mary Frances Clarke's educational vision: "We must wake up their minds by constantly calling into action their powers of observation . . . and incite them to ascertain for themselves." Known as a legend, Diana was dedicated to the ministry of education—a scientist who was also an accomplished teacher known for both her rigor and for the many students she sent on to graduate and medical school.

Diana began her 47 years at Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa, teaching chemistry in 1969 serving as a professor and chair of the chemistry department. She also taught chemistry at Assumption High School in Davenport, Iowa.

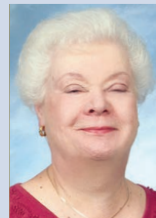
We remember our Associates



Lois A. (Schnier) Nilles
Feb. 26, 1932–March 9, 2025
Dubuque, Iowa
Accepted Sept. 24, 2009



Patricia Halpine
Oct. 12, 1942–March 15, 2025
Thornton, Co.
Accepted Dec. 8, 2002



Patricia O'Driscoll
July 29, 1943–April 19, 2025
Madison, Wis.
Accepted May 3, 1998

Obituaries for associates are posted online at: bvmsisters.org/associate-obituaries.



Salt Briefs



Fathers Thomas J. Ascheman, SVD (back row, l.), and Thang Hoang, SVD, present the Donaghey Service Award to Sisters LaDonna Manternach, BVM (front row, l.); Kathy Knipper, OSF; and Carmen Hernandez, PBVM. *Contributed photo.*

BVM Sisters Receive Donaghey Service Award

The Sisters of Charity, BVM received the Fr. John Donaghey Award for Outstanding Service for their support of Divine Word College's mission to prepare students for missionary service. BVM President LaDonna Manternach accepted the award, emphasizing the congregation's commitment to nurturing future women religious leaders. She noted the meaningful partnership with the IHM Sisters of Nha Trang, based in Vietnam, saying that their initial "yes" to hosting the sisters sparked a valued relationship that has deeply enriched the BVM Community.

Effective June 1, 2025, the Office of Development for Sisters of Charity, BVM will no longer receive mail via a PO Box.

Instead, mail will be delivered directly to Mount Carmel Bluffs. Therefore, we ask you to utilize the following address for all future correspondence:



**Sisters of Charity, BVM
Office of Development
1100 Carmel Dr
Dubuque IA 52003-7911**



BVMs Mary Ellen Meckley (l.), Lynn Lester, Mary Nolan, Irene Lukefahr, Janet Desmond, and Paulette Skiba stand for justice.

BVMs Stand for Justice

BVMs and associates joined the 'May Day Strong Dubuque' peaceful protest as part of the #NationalDayofAction, standing for justice and calling for an era in which working families lead, immigrants are protected, and no one is left behind. They also participated in 'Hands Off' events in Chicago; Dubuque; Gurnee, Ill.; and Northern California, joining 1,300 registered events across the nation and around the world to make their voices heard.

CSW69—'FOR ALL WOMEN FOR ALL GIRLS'

The UN Commission on the Status of Women plays a vital role in advancing women's rights, shedding light on the realities of women's lives around the world, and shaping global standards for gender equality and women's empowerment.

BVM Roberta White, BVM (front row, left); Mariah Reeves, BVM representative to Loretto at the UN; former Wahlert instructor Barb Ressler; and Opening Doors Marketing and Development Director Natalie Finley traveled with Dubuque Wahlert High School students to participate in this impactful international gathering held in New York.



Jeffrey Bruno, Creative Commons

A Pope for Our Times

We are saddened to hear of Pope Francis' death. This humble man was a pope for our times and for all the world. As a spiritual leader, he gave hope to the people, making space to accompany, listen, and dialogue with them. He was a true brother of the poor instructing those who proclaim the gospel to take on the smell of the sheep, to be in solidarity with the poor.

The Sisters of Charity, BVM joined with Catholic Sisters throughout the country in sharing our vision for a future full of HOPE. We know this is only possible when we lead with love, compassion and empathy. We invite you to share this message to join us in creating a world where the most vulnerable are cared for, truth is spoken and justice leads the way.

A Vision for a Future Full of **HOPE**

To Our Dear Neighbors,

As Catholic Sisters, vowed women religious, we deeply value the relationships and encounters we have had with so many of you while serving in schools, hospitals, parishes, retreat centers, nursing homes, food pantries, and outreach centers. Even if we do not know each other personally, we feel compelled to reach out to you today to express our heartfelt sadness, grief, and lament as we witness sudden and devastating changes severely impacting people in our communities—people we know, love, and who are our neighbors.

Many actions we observe in our nation today seem to contradict values that underlie our shared humanity, values which we have nurtured and endeavored to embody in our actions—although not always successfully—over our lifetimes as Catholic Sisters. Love, compassion, empathy, radical hospitality, and mercy are central to our lives. These values shared among all the world religions make us genuinely human. We firmly believe these values must ground us as a nation if there is to be a future full of hope for ALL generations to come.

Imagine a future centered on principles that allow for the full flourishing of all humanity and our common home, Earth. We know these principles as Catholic Social Teaching. Although you may use different words, the essence of this teaching transcends faith traditions and resonates in the lives of all people of goodwill. Adopting these principles can guide us in the days ahead.

We believe that:

- Every person is an expression of God. All life is sacred.
- We must prioritize the needs of those who are the most vulnerable.
- There is dignity in all work, and the rights of all workers must take precedence over profit.
- Earth is God's gift to us, and we have the privilege to cherish, defend, and protect her for future generations.
- Justice is the path to lasting peace.

Today, we ask you to join us in living these values with courage. Love our neighbors! Welcome the stranger! Care for the most vulnerable among us! Speak the truth! Work for justice! Only when "We the people" lead with compassion and empathy will a future filled with hope for all generations be possible.

May God continue to bless us on this journey.

With love and hope,

Your Sisters,

Congregation of the Humility of Mary, Davenport, IA
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, Sinsinawa, WI
Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, La Crosse, WI
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dubuque, IA

Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dubuque, IA
Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, IA
Sisters of St. Francis, Dubuque, IA
Sisters of the Visitation, Dubuque, IA



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Message of Hope and Welcome

A banner has been placed at the entrance of Mount Carmel Bluffs, offering a message of hope, love, peace, and welcome to immigrant communities in accordance with our Congregational Immigration Stance.

We pray that all who view this banner will receive this message with open hearts and open minds and will strengthen others to act with compassion and work for justice.

Sisters and Students Share Stories

Students from Carmel Catholic High School in Mundelein, Ill., visited Mount Carmel Bluffs, where they joined BVMs—including Diane O'Donnell (r.)—in writing notes of encouragement to adult immigrants studying English at Dubuque's Presentation Lantern Center. The BVMs reflected on the powerful stories shared by the students, many of whom have personal ties to immigration.

