

VOLUME 54 NUMBER 1 FALL 2025

Salt

SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN MARY



*Call and
Commitment*
Transforming Promise into Reality



Heart of BVM

Our Mission

The Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a community of women religious whose members, 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.

Our Core Values

- **Freedom:** The gift that permits us to become our most faithful self and who we are called to be at the deepest core of our being.
- **Education:** The process of calling forth the gift and potential of ourselves and others.
- **Charity:** The gift of love! The simple and profound power that calls forth a benevolent, tender, and sensitive response to all peoples and events.
- **Justice:** The principle that assists us to recognize the dignity, equality, and rights of all persons.

Our Directional Statements *(Abbreviated)*

Drawn by grace and compelled by grief for current situations of injustice, we commit ourselves humbly, boldly, and courageously:

- To live our interconnectedness with all creation.
- To express publicly values aligned with the Gospel.
- To confront inequities we have caused and act boldly with others to repair injustices.
- To be the face of an inclusive, welcoming, and merciful Church working for a world in which all flourish.



SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

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SEASONing

A Message from BVM Council

Life is full of transitions. Seasons bring endings and new beginnings. Light expands or diminishes as we move from season to season.

Our Changing Lives

Sometimes we choose the transitions that come into our lives, such as moving from one ministry or job to another.

At other times, situations create the need for a transition: our health may change, the need to relocate to assist family and friends is required, or even congregational elections call us forth to be of service as we move into the future.

In every transition, God is at work, calling us, inviting us into something deeper than we've known before and reminding us that "we are creating something new." What might be the "new" in our lives?

Celebrating Changes and Milestones

We love to celebrate anniversaries, birthdays, jubilees, or other significant moments with friends and family. Over the past several months we have had many such celebrations at Mount Carmel Bluffs.

Although we might not always see these times as progression, they move us from one decade of life to another. They can be reminders of the changes we have gone through previously in our lives, and the celebrations themselves can offer us time to reflect on not only what has

been but also what can be in our future. How can we continue to celebrate these transitions in life with family and friends?

Changes in Our Natural World

We have experienced significant environmental changes over the years.

Some of these changes in nature are natural, and yet we know some of the environmental transitions are caused by human beings not thinking about the interwoven reality that all life is connected to this planet. What is ours to do to connect with God's creation and make our planet livable for future generations?

During these times of change and transition, whether big or small, none of us can see the whole picture at one time. Reflecting on Scripture has provided many examples of men and women being called to something new.

Abraham was told to "go to a land I will show you." Peter stepped out of the boat with no guarantee the water would hold. Mary responded "yes" to the angel, not knowing exactly what that would mean. Often God graces us with just enough light for the next step—not the full story.

We have so much to reflect upon. God will continue to be our light through transitions. We can rely on family, friends, and community to support us. The question remains, what will we do together to move through the transitions in life? ■

Ledonna Manternach, BVM

Katherine J. Kendefer, BVM

Anne Marie McKenna, BVM

Amy L. Gilm, BVM



Left: Anne Marie McKenna, BVM (r.) is presented with a candle by BVM Mary Ann Zollmann, former president, on behalf of the congregation.



LaDonna Manternach, BVM (l.) welcomes Amy Golm, BVM to the new leadership team.



New Leadership Installed

by Kari Litscher

Surrounded by love, gratitude and

a deep sense of purpose, the 18th president of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her leadership team were installed during a special ceremony in the Mary Frances Clarke Chapel at Mount Carmel Bluffs in Dubuque, Iowa.

The installation marked the beginning of a new term for President LaDonna Manternach, BVM and First Vice President Kathy Kandefer, BVM, both re-elected to continue their service. They are joined by Second Vice President Anne Marie McKenna, BVM and Third Vice President Amy Golm, BVM.

LaDonna, Kathy, and the two

outgoing members of leadership—Kate Hendel, BVM and Carol Marie Baum, BVM—were each presented with a “circle of friends” sculpture that included five figures (bottom, l.). The fifth figure represents Lou Anglin, BVM, who died in 2022 and had served as first vice-president. Accompanying each gift is a card that reads: “Today we celebrate and give thanks to you, a special circle of friends within our BVM Community who have served us in leadership these past four years of doing ‘something new.’”

The incoming leadership was presented with candles embossed

with pine cones and inscribed: “Mount Carmel Pine Walk is the sacred path to our Communion of Saints. We pray that all buried there and across the land intercede that we may carry forward the spirit of love that frees.”

Former BVM presidents Mary Ann Zollmann, Teri Hadro, and Joellen McCarthy led the congregation in prayer for the new leadership team, asking that they be guided by wisdom, grounded in faith, and energized by hope as they lead the community forward. ■

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

We are grateful to these BVMs who have served our community in leadership from 2021–2025:



LaDonna Manternach
Lou Anglin (d. 2022)
Kathy Kandefer
Kate Hendel
Carol Marie Baum

President
First Vice President
Second Vice President
Third Vice President
Fourth Vice President



Immigration Reform Initiative Kicks off With High Hopes for Change

by Michelle London



BVM Congregational Stance on Immigration:

“Conscious of the present suffering and injustices experienced by our immigrants and with an awareness that our current United States immigration policy is morally unacceptable, we proclaim and affirm our commitment to comprehensive immigration reform.”

A Voice for the Voiceless

The Sisters of Charity, BVM hosted an event to kick-off a year-long immigration reform initiative.

Carol Marie Baum, BVM opened the event with a message that called for speaking up.

“Your voice is important,” she says. “To find our voice for the voiceless, marginalized, and not seen in our country. There is hope because of each of you.”

The impact of the immigrant experience was shared by speakers Megan Ruiz, executive director of the Presentation Lantern Center, and Ry Meyer, an immigration attorney with

Karen Conover, BVM asks Ry Meyer about the high costs of legal immigration.



Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Dubuque.

Both organizations have received support from the Sisters of Charity, BVM—Presentation Lantern Center has received a Ministry Partner Grant and Catholic Charities has received funds for its immigration legal services program.

The (High) Price of Freedom

Megan shared that food insecurity in many South American countries has reached astronomical levels—\$10 for a gallon of milk or \$9 for a loaf of bread is not uncommon. Economic collapse has forced many people to leave their homelands.

The journey, most of it on foot and through treacherous terrain, is just the beginning. Receiving asylum and authorization to work in the United States can take months—sometimes even years.

Megan and her staff at the Lantern Center assist immigrants and refugees with language tutoring and citizenship test preparation, as well as serving as advocates and supportive community members.

“Imagine that you are vetted and approved for asylum,” Megan says. “You’ve got work authorization and get a job that provides a living wage. You begin to want to give back to your community. Doesn’t that sound like quite an upstanding citizen and someone we’d want to be our neighbor?”

A May 30, 2025, court ruling changed the life of many immigrants in the Dubuque, Iowa, area who were doing just that. More than 530,000 immigrants nationwide were affected by the ruling, which stripped them of their work authorizations, effectively making them instantly “illegal.”

“The rug was pulled out from under them,” Megan says. “They received

notification that their case was closed, but not much else.”

People were never notified that they no longer had authorization to work.

“It’s pure cruelty and pure evil,” she says. “We know about 15 families locally who were affected by this.”

Karen Conover, BVM agreed with Megan’s description of how immigrants have been treated. She highlighted some of the recent government policies that have been enacted.

“We were made aware of some of the provisions,” she says. “Including the horrendous costs that would be levied along the way to getting asylum [in this country]. It just seems so cruel for people who are fleeing such horrible conditions and are in that asylum situation.”

Working Together for Good

Ry offered his thanks to the BVMs for their support of Catholic Charities’ immigration legal services.

“The program has really benefited from your guidance, your ongoing support, and your donations,” he says. “Our clients’ needs are not met cheaply. You’re really a powerful force in this community.”

Judy Callahan, BVM says it has been wonderful to see the work being done in Dubuque by Catholic Charities on behalf of immigrants.

“When I was working in the Archdiocese in the Hispanic ministry program in the early 2000s, I and many of my colleagues badgered and lobbied [Executive Director] Tracy [Morrison] over and over at every opportunity for getting more immigration help, and they have responded amazingly.”

Speaking Up and Speaking Out

Ry spoke about the historic change in immigration issues.

“I believe that immigration is one of, or perhaps the biggest, civil rights



The BVM immigration reform initiative kicks off with a well-attended event led by Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Dubuque Immigration Attorney Ry Meyer (l.); Presentation Lantern Center Executive Director Megan Ruiz; and Executive Director of Catholic Charities Tracy Morrison.

question of our age,” he says. “People are beginning to feel that they can’t live safely here. Whether it’s because of race or gender or sexuality issues or age, it seems we’re at a point where the temperature is rising, the tension is building, and the divisions are starting to show.”

Ry says being a voice for those who are voiceless is important.

“One of the things that is important to me is being on the front lines where people really need help,” he says. “If you’re a U.S. citizen, you have a channel through which to make your voice heard. But immigrants? Not so much. The barriers are high, the

laws are convoluted, and you really need an attorney to get a lot of that straightened out.”

BVMs recognize that our country was established by the talents, skills and contributions of generations of immigrants and migrants. The immigration reform initiative is planning a year of events to support that rich history, to encourage changes in immigration policies, and to show solidarity with our immigrant and refugee brothers and sisters. ■

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



To write letters or make phone calls supporting and encouraging changes in immigration policy, visit congress.gov/members/find-your-member for information on connecting with your elected officials.

BVMs, Resources Unite Help Local Families

The BVMs have donated two vehicles to Resources Unite, of Dubuque, Iowa, that have been presented to deserving families.

A local nonprofit, Resources Unite connects those in need to resources and opportunities that help them lead a happier way of life.

While both recipients are grateful, there is one family you won’t see standing joyfully beside their new car because they live in fear. This family moved to the United States legally. The parents work and the children attend school. Yet they keep cardboard taped over their windows and only leave the

house when absolutely necessary. They are afraid that because they were not born in the United States, they could be stopped and whisked away to a detention center.

Let us pray that our legislators and leaders take positive steps to change immigration policy within the current administration, so hard-working families can enjoy freedom and justice in their adoptive homeland.



Prayer to Foundress Mary Frances Clarke for ‘Our Dear Country’

Mary Frances Clarke, we have come to know and sense your spirit through the letters you wrote.

In one of your final letters (Letter 274) you penned the following:

Help O Lord poor Ireland, my dear country and bless dear America for her great charity toward all.

Many years have passed since you wrote those words. Times have changed, attitudes have changed, needs have changed. Today, America, our dear country, faces an immigration crisis. We face a crisis at our border. Immigrants and refugees are living in fear. Our immigration laws and policies are harsh and out of date.

We come today to ask for your intercession. Our deepest desire is to have your words, your hope and your prayer expressed over one hundred thirty-eight years ago come alive in the hearts of all. Help our legislators to take positive steps to have our immigration policy meet the needs of the day. We need a system that is fair, just, open and good for all. We need minds and hearts that recognize the dignity and value of every person. We need immigrants and refugees who abide by our laws. We need welcoming hearts and open minds. We need a spirit so profound that with you we can say:

Help O Lord America, our dear country. Bless her for her great charity toward all.

Amen

Mary McCauley, BVM
May 2025

Saying 'Yes': Katie Anders Professes First Vows as a BVM

by Kari Litscher



ROOTED &
GROUNDED IN
Love
Ephesians 3:17

Katie Anders felt called—to teach, to serve Christ, to care for a family. “That was the path I chose,” she says. “I continued to serve God, just in different ways: as a wife and a mom, working for the church, and as a BVM associate. I was living the God-community connection in another way.”

After her marriage ended and her children, Alex and Lauryn, became adults, the call to religious life returned with conviction. Having worked closely with sisters as a spiritual care coordinator for the past seven years, Katie decided that this was the right time.

Freedom and Formation

In 2023, Katie's “Yes” to religious life began as she entered the community. Now, after completing her novitiate, she has professed her first vows as a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

“What has been both surprising and formative for me as a novice,” Katie shares, “has been the continual support and affirmation I have received from the congregation.”

During her discernment, Katie received encouragement and support through cards, letters, prayers, and many check-ins. Yet she never felt pressured to make a decision, and knew that the relationships she had forged would last no matter what path she chose.

“I felt safe and loved knowing that no matter what I decided, those connections were not dependent on my decision,” she says.

That assurance gave her the courage to let go of doubt and trust where God was leading.

“I have learned that this is the gift of community,” she says. “It is not about what I do but rather who I am. Receiving this gift has also helped me learn how to offer it to others more deeply.”

At the InterCongregational

Collaborative Novitiate in Chicago, she deepened her sense of calling.

“My calling is both specific to the BVMs, and it is much bigger as I connect my life to the global sisterhood of religious women around the world,” she says.



Leading the congregation in song are Dave McDermott (l.), Mary Kay McDermott, Brenna Cussen Anglada, and Stacia McDermott.

Vows and Vision

During the vow ceremony, words from the reflection of Pat Bombard, BVM captured the spirit of the day: “The spiritual poet Mark Nepo says at a certain point for each of us, talk evaporates. Words cannot bring love into the open. Only the soul's presence coming from us can attract the soul's presence in others.”

Katie also reflected on her many life experiences and the “Yeses” she said along the way: “The amazing thing is that my ‘Yeses’ were where they needed to be at each stage of my life. I never chose incorrectly.”

She remains hopeful, not only for her own future in religious life, but for the unfolding future of the BVMs.

“One of the things I am most excited and hopeful about is that we do not control the charism,” she says. “While

religious life is changing, there is also an unfolding happening. The BVMs have been bringing the message of Jesus' love and life into the world for more than 190 years beginning with Mary Frances Clarke and her circle of friends, and it has been changing ever since.”

Katie believes the unfolding continues as BVMs allow it and trusts that through Mary Frances' spirit and love, God continues to create a pathway for it to happen.

To those who may feel the tug toward religious life, Katie offers this advice: “Talk to the people who know you best and let them help you explore all the possible ways religious life leads you, and the world, to greater wholeness. And spend a lot of time in quiet and stillness listening to yourself and to God.”

As for what anchored her through these past months, Katie says, “I have tried to spend the most time just listening.”

And it is in that listening that her deepest “Yes” was found. ■

About the author:

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

Sisters and guests witness Katie Anders, BVM profess first vows in the Mary Frances Clarke Chapel.





2025 diamond jubilarians are BVMs Rosemary Surby (l.), LaVerne Dolphin, Florence Mary Heflin, Mary Elaine Waddell, and Marcella O'Rourke.

A Lifetime of Faithful Commitment

by Kari Litscher

"Jubilee" was originally defined as the special anniversary of an event, derived from the ancient Jewish tradition of celebrating a cycle of renewal every 50 years.

The Catholic Church followed suit with a Christian Holy Year, observed first every 100 years, then every 50 years to coincide with the biblical jubilee, and eventually every 25 years to increase the opportunities for people to participate in the celebration.

Over time, women religious began celebrating individual jubilees to mark vow anniversaries, honoring their commitment to religious life, and serving as a period for spiritual renewal.

The Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrate the women who have walked in faith for 25, 50, and 70 years, and devoted their lives and vocations to service shaped by love and community.

In July, the congregation gathered in the Mary Frances Clarke Chapel to honor the silver (25 years) and golden (50 years) jubilarians. In September, the diamond jubilarians came together to celebrate 70 years of religious life.

Each sister's journey is unique, yet all are grounded in the same call: to live the Gospel fully, freely, and faithfully, and to help others enjoy freedom in God's steadfast love.

These women have taught in classrooms, ministered in hospitals, served in leadership and spiritual

direction, and stood with those who have been marginalized. They have offered their lives in simplicity, humility, and charity.

Their commitment reflects the very heart of BVM life:

- To follow Jesus Christ in the spirit of Mary, the mother of God.
- To carry forward the vision of BVM Foundress Mary Frances Clarke.
- To live the core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice.

During the liturgy for the silver and golden jubilarians, Mary Ann Zollmann, BVM reflected, "Walking humbly in the company of God, these jubilee women make love known as it grows and shows in them. Magnifying God in the world, they bear fruit that endures. It is all so ordinary and, at the same time, so radiant with grace."

Diamond jubilarian Florence Heflin presented her co-celebrants with vibrantly colored baby orchid leis sent from Hawaii by her sister, who also made sure to send one for the presider, Rev. Mark Ressler.

During the Liturgy, the jubilarians jointly chose readings from the Book of Isaiah, the letters of Mary Frances Clarke, and the Gospel of John.

The reflection was presented by Joellen McCarthy, BVM: "These readings give a glimpse of the God who has accompanied the jubilarians these past 70 years.

"The passage from Isaiah offers lush, fertile land crying out in joy as an image of God's presence.

"The words of Mary Frances Clarke share her wisdom, knowing that our love of another makes it possible for God's love to take root and flourish."

"And the vine image in the Gospel of John invites us to feel God's very life coursing through our being.

"Indeed, today we gather surrounded by this presence of God."

To read individual stories about the jubilarians, visit: bvmsisters.org/2025-jubilarians.

Celebrating Golden Jubilees are BVMs Mary Lou Wetzell (l.) and Katherine Kandefer (r.). Ann Therese Chaput is celebrating her Silver Jubilee.



Silver Jubilarian:



Ann Therese Chaput, BVM

"I emailed the BVMs, thinking I was too old to enter, but had to let the Lord know I still wanted to respond to his call. Freedom is the BVM value that attracted me most. I could be myself. And the BVMs were intelligent, loving, happy, serving the lost, forgotten, and poor."



Rosemary (Rose Mary) Surby, BVM

"Being taught by the BVMs, I loved their attitudes and the way they loved. They were happy people, and so that would be that. I decided I wanted to become a BVM. They have made me feel this is where I belong to help me grow and become a better person. I believe in living out the BVM core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice, which are life-giving to me."

Golden Jubilarians:



Katherine Kandefer, BVM

"It took me a long time to decide. I felt God was speaking to me and I kept saying, 'Oh, forget this noise!' I was trying to ignore that call from God. And it got to the point where I couldn't ignore it any longer."



Mary Elaine (Valerie) Waddell, BVM

"I'm very grateful for all the gifts I have received because I am a BVM, and the many relationships I have with my wonderful BVM sisters. I'm just grateful to God for my vocation." ■



Mary Lou Wetzell, BVM

"The decision to become a BVM unfolded over time with prayer, listening to God calling me to my life as a BVM, probably since I was in the third grade. Growing up with BVMs, they felt like family. I am so blessed to be a member of such an awesome, loving BVM family."

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

Diamond Jubilarians:



LaVerne (Thereselle) Dolphin, BVM

"BVM life led me down a path I never could have imagined for myself. I was given so many wonderful opportunities for advanced education and encouragement to excel as a teacher and eventually to branch out into other ministries. I loved everything I did. The ministry I was in was always my favorite until I got to the next one."



Florence Mary (Floretta) Heflin, BVM

"I did not write about becoming a nun [in my assigned essay], but when it was returned to me, there was a note in the margin asking, 'Have you ever thought about becoming a BVM?' . . . I don't have a favorite mission. All the ministries have formed me in becoming the person I am today, and I loved it all."



Marcella (Eugenia) O'Rourke, BVM

"My mother was very happy and supportive when I wanted to become a BVM. I have been so fortunate to be surrounded by wonderful sisters and staff. I look at the staff as family. I pray for them. I thank God for all of my blessings."

A Look Back: Then & Now

Fun facts from 25, 50, and 70 years ago

25 Years Ago—2000

- The world survived Y2K with barely a glitch.
- Text messaging began to take off in everyday communication.
- *Erin Brockovich* and *Gladiator* dominated at the box office.
- The United States topped the 2000 Sydney Olympics medal count with 93.
- Google was just two years old—and still in beta.

50 Years Ago—1975

- *Wheel of Fortune* premiered on NBC.
- *Love Will Keep Us Together* by Captain & Tennille won the Grammy Award for Record of the Year.
- Sony introduced the Betamax video cassette.
- Microsoft was founded by Bill Gates and Paul Allen.
- *Jaws* premiered and became the first summer blockbuster.

70 Years Ago—1955

- Disneyland opened in Anaheim, Calif.
- *Rock Around the Clock* by Bill Haley & His Comets became the first rock and roll record to hit #1.
- The average price of a new car was \$1,900.
- Poodle skirts and saddle shoes were the epitome of teen fashion.
- J.D. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye* stirred conversation in classrooms across the country.

Living Out Our Directional Statements

Drawn by grace and compelled by grief for current situations of injustice, Sisters of Charity, BVM commit ourselves to live out our directional statements of inequity, spirituality, and worldwide view. (DS).



To be the face of an inclusive, welcoming, and merciful Church working for a world in which all flourish. —DS

Damien House Expands Services, Staff

Founder Annie Credidio, BVM visited from Ecuador to give an update on Damien House in Guayaquil, which serves those living with Hansen's Disease. The organization has expanded its services to include two kinds of "medical brigades"—teams who come to Damien House to perform needed surgeries, and others that travel to the rural provinces outside the city to deliver medical care, food, and other needed supplies. These teams are made up of doctors, healthcare professionals, and volunteers. Damien House has a staff of 25, including a psychologist and physical therapist. An on-site lab, which will eliminate long delays in obtaining test results from outside sources, is also in the works. Over the years, the congregation has financially supported Damien House, and sisters have traveled to Ecuador to volunteer their services. Read more about Damien House at tinyurl.com/PadreDamien.



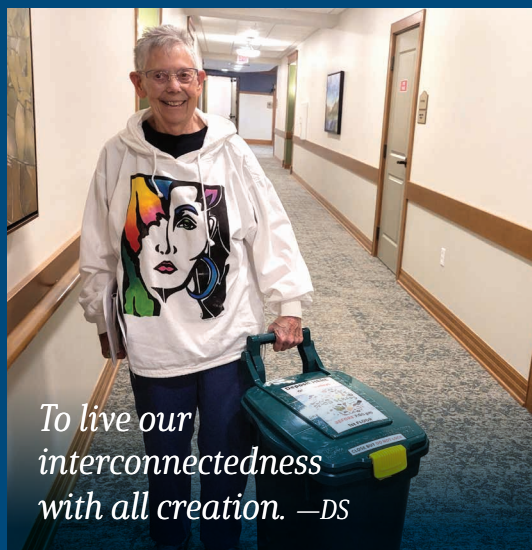
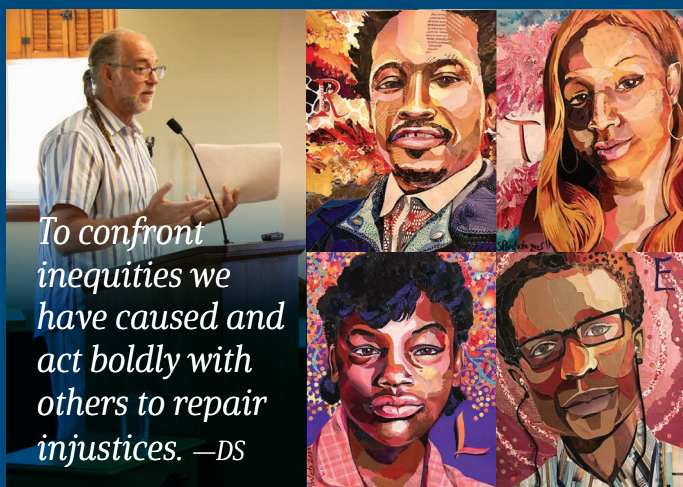
Women Religious Aid in Bringing Art Exhibit to Dubuque

Sisters of Charity, BVM, along with other area religious congregations, were instrumental in bringing the art exhibit "They Are Not Disposable" to a local Dubuque, Iowa, gallery. The collection of 16 collages is by Connecticut-based artist Steven Parlato. Each piece depicts an individual who has lost their life due to racial violence or systemic racism. Steven



created each portrait from disposable objects—junk mail, paper bags, to-go containers, wrapping paper, straws, used dryer sheets, and more. Voices Studios hosted the exhibit, which also featured local Black artists. Read more at tinyurl.com/mpcan4nn.

To confront inequities we have caused and act boldly with others to repair injustices. —DS



To live our interconnectedness with all creation. —DS

From Food Scraps to Compost

Mount Carmel Bluffs (MCB) in Dubuque, Iowa, is making efforts to reduce food waste in landfills. Residents of Terrace and Vista, independent living apartments on the campus, collect their food scraps and place them in city-provided bins located on each floor of their buildings. Volunteers then move the bins to a collection point. The City of Dubuque collects the contents and takes it to the local solid waste collection center, where it begins the process of being turned into compost. The residents' efforts have resulted in five 13-gallon containers filled each week. The main kitchen at MCB is starting to participate in this program and, eventually, all dining areas on campus will have a plan for the collection of post-consumer food scraps.

The Laudato Si' Action Platform guides the church toward ecological sustainability. Read about the BVM Sisters' commitment: tinyurl.com/LaudatoSiAP.



Mount Carmel Clockwork of Compassion

by Judy Callahan, BVM and Michelle London

What does it take for a fine watch to keep time?

In the heart of a watch, gears whisper, and each cog is a dancer in the watch's movement. Measured, precise, divine. Springs tighten and uncoil, marking the moments not with cacophony, but with grace.

BVMs are a living clockwork of care, each soul a gear turning for a purpose, not praise. The spring is compassion, wound deep by conviction. It sets hands in motion toward hope and helpfulness.

Hearts tick in unity. Minutes are gifts, and hours are hymns of love. Our core values promote advocacy and invite others to engage in our local and world communities.

It is the small, hidden, unknown acts of love and tenderness that make our BVM life so rich. The gears are rarely seen, but those tiny actions of love benefit many.



Peace and Justice

BVMs Kitty Lawlor (l.) and Julie O'Neill are part of a committee that collects donations during Sunday Mass. The committee chooses 12 organizations to receive donations throughout the year. In 2024, nearly \$11,000 was donated. The largest collection has been \$3,700, which was donated to help those affected by the Los Angeles wildfires.



Blast to the Past

Organizing archival records, photos, and documents is an important part of keeping BVM history alive. Diane O'Donnell, BVM is one of the volunteers who spends time in the archives helping with what is a monumental task.



The Mall in the Hall

LaVerne Dolphin, BVM takes care of the greeting card and stationery donations for Mall in the Hall. She sorts and categorizes the cards, then arranges them in the card stands so it's easier for sisters to choose what they like.



Meet Me in the Middle

Nancy McCarthy, BVM (r.) often takes her friend Carol Cook, BVM outside for a daily dose of sunshine. Nancy prefers the shade while Carol loves the sun, so they'll find a spot that makes them both happy.



Traditional Harvest

BVM Ann DeNicolo (l.), Mount Carmel Bluffs resident Mary O'Rourke, and Associate Miriam Todoroff brought the Native American tradition of planting three seeds together to support and sustain one another to community prayer. After the blessing, the planted seeds resulted in a fruitful harvest for which to give thanks.



Hosts With the Most

Volunteers set up St. Joseph's Hall for funeral luncheons and celebratory occasions: BVMs Joellen McCarthy (I.) and Linda Roby; Associate Marybeth Coleman; and BVMs Ann Marie Dress and Fran Donnelly.

Barbara Fernandes, BVM arranges floral centerpieces.



Pen Gal

Alice Caulfield, BVM puts her writing skills to work penning birthday cards, thank you notes, and letters to family members and friends of sisters who need a little correspondence assistance.



Study Skills

Judy Callahan, BVM (I.) tutors Tham Dinh, IHM a visiting sister from Vietnam, with her English skills. Tham is also studying at Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa.



Strike!

Linda Roby, BVM hosts a weekly game of Wii bowling. The regular gathering promotes socialization and allows those with mobility issues to participate.



Recycling Routine

Lois Dolphin, BVM volunteers to collect aluminum cans, which she then prepares for the recycling center.



Stitch By Stitch

BVMs Karen Conover (I.) and Mary Anne Hoop repair a pillowcase that Mary Anne brought from Ghana. Karen, a skilled seamstress, enjoys helping others with their sewing projects.



Black & White & Read All Over

Associate Diane Kopp (I.) and Kathleen Antol, BVM are IRIS (Iowa Radio Reading Information Service) volunteers. Using a radio microphone, they read the daily newspaper so the visually impaired can listen to their daily dose of local news.

Grief as Soul Work

by Katie Anders, BVM

Grief is the word we use to describe the sadness and ache we feel when we experience loss.

Losses come in many shapes and forms. Loved ones and friends die, people move away, relationships end. We lose our physical mobility, mental acuity, eyesight, and hearing. We let go of unrealized dreams or the way we thought things would be, all of which changes and shifts the landscape of our lives.

All-consuming Emotion

In her book, *The Spirituality of Grief*, Fran Tilton Shelton offers this definition: “Grief is an all-consuming, involuntary response—emotional, physical, social, and spiritual—to detachment from someone or something that gives a person meaning.” While the change and shift that grief brings can be named in similar ways, the experience is always unique.

We are a species that lives most of our lives thinking about what we feel rather than allowing ourselves to actually feel it. Most of us live our lives from the neck up, ignoring all that is going on throughout the rest of our body. We often avoid acknowledging our feelings because the process of recognizing our emotions can be difficult and uncomfortable. We live in a society that has created a culture where money is spent and made helping us to deny, numb, distract, or ignore our feelings, especially difficult ones.

Many of us were never taught how to acknowledge our feelings in healthy ways, yet learning to acknowledge and allow our feelings to just be what they are—to hold them gently—is the key to helping us heal and discover meaning in a loss.

Embracing Grief

Carl Jung said, “Embrace your grief, for there the soul will grow.” Learning to embrace our grief sounds impossible when the waves of sorrow are crashing over us, and yet, if we allow ourselves to enter into the process of grieving, it becomes soul work. It is a source of growth because it asks so much of us.

In our grief, there is a depth of vulnerability that is present. Most of us find vulnerability an uncomfortable feeling. As we learn to allow ourselves to become vulnerable, to feel the pain of loss and all the difficult feelings that accompany it, we can begin to know ourselves in a different way. Learning to embrace and honor these feelings is what makes the labor of grief soul work.

We learn we are capable of self-compassion and, as our self-compassion grows, so too does our compassion for others. We develop greater empathy for our friends, family, and others who are grieving. No one escapes loss, so opportunities to share our new-found compassion and empathy abound.

Embracing our grief requires a capacity to learn to stay the course rather than avoid, ignore, or push it away. Learning to stay goes against the grain of our culture. Tara Brach, a Buddhist teacher, says we are a quick-twitch culture. As soon as it's unpleasant, we have a tendency to do whatever we can to make it go away.

Finding Gratitude Through Grief

But sometimes we need to stay in the sadness to find the gratitude, and there are times when we need to explore the grief to remember and feel the love. Just like we have the capacity to resist, we also have the capacity to learn to allow what's really difficult—to enter into this soul work.

In his book, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*, Francis Weller says, “We're learning to become an apprentice to sorrow, because loss moves through the entire landscape of our lives.”

Loss and grief are not something we experience only once. Grief is

Embracing Grief Leads to Unexpected Joy

by Michelle London



Emelyn Malecki, BVM (r.) with her nephew Rick Calkins.

The youngest of 11 children, Emelyn Malecki, BVM has a close relationship with many of her 25 nieces and nephews.

Rick Calkins is one of those nephews.

“We have a very cordial, happy relationship,” he says. “It’s like talking to a friend.”

During a phone call, Rick, a talented woodworker, told “Aunt Millie,” as Emelyn is known to her family, that he’d recently finished building his coffin.

“If you’ve finished yours, you can do mine,” Emelyn says.

Rick was reluctant.

“I had the opportunity and the time to build my own,” he says. “The idea of making something for my aunt’s departure was hard for me to swallow.”

Emelyn was persuasive.

“I asked him to do it as a last gift to me,” she says.

Rick and Emelyn spoke regularly to discuss specifications.

“I wanted to make something that was respectful to her,” he says. “She’s helped and cared for so many people

part of the river of our life experiences. Although it may not always feel like it, we do have a choice in how we relate to it. We can choose to resist, pushing back against the current, finding ourselves continually exhausted, perhaps bitter or hard-hearted. Or we can choose to allow ourselves to move with the current and let our hearts be open to feel all of those feelings that accompany loss and know they are there because of the gift of love. When we are grieving the death of someone we care about, it hurts because we were given the gift of love.

Poet Naomi Shihab Nye says, "Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside, you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing."

Living, letting go, loving, grieving—they are all entangled, and we don't get the gift of love without experiencing all of them. ■

About the author: Katie Anders, BVM is the Director of Spiritual Care for the Sisters of Charity, BVM in Dubuque, Iowa.

A Meditation on Hope

by Marilyn Wilson, BVM

Look into the eyes of a newborn ...

Watch a 3-year-old at play ...

Contemplate a flower opening up its petals ...

Immerse in an awakening sunrise ...

Share with another a blazing orange-red sunset ...

Wipe a tear away—yours or a loved one ...

Note a star against a black-blue sky ...

Hear a kind word and repeat it to yourself ...

Accept an offer of bread ... (or a cookie)

Sit next to a warm fire or soak your feet in cool water ...

Feel and smell a refreshing rain ...

Walk along the shoreline of a stream, river, lake and ocean ...

Join with others in a dance of gratitude and joy ...

Observe a wound healed ...

Deep in your heart hear and feel God's life message ...

This we pray ...

Esperanza
Speranza
Spes
Tikvah
Hoffnung
Amal
Kibó
Elpis

Photo by Diane Rapozo, BVM

and looked out for so many people in the family. I couldn't deny her this."

The oak coffin lined with sky blue satin has been in storage at Mount Carmel Bluffs in Dubuque, Iowa, for the last two years. Emelyn recalled taking two friends to see it for the first time when it arrived.

"I felt like we were going to a wedding," she says. "I was so exhilarated. I hadn't seen it, so it was exciting. I can't really explain why."

Rick's initial hesitation disappeared when he realized how happy Emelyn was.

"I never thought that [making her coffin] would bring this much joy and happiness," he says. "It's totally outweighed the sadness that is due to come."

Rick is sure the stories that have been told among family members about

Emelyn and her coffin will be shared for a long time to come.

"All the reluctance I had about building it was totally washed away with all the fun we've had talking about it," he says.

Emelyn knows there will be grieving when she is gone, but she hopes telling those stories will assuage the sadness.

"I always say, 'No gloom, no doom,'" she says.

"It's a reality, so why not get ready and plan ahead? Your family won't have to worry about what you want, because you've already told them. There's a relief for everybody in knowing that." ■



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



More Than a Place to Live:

Reimagining Aging in Chicago—One Neighbor at a Time

by Kari Litscher

Across the United States, aging often means slipping into isolation. Living on a limited income in cities like Chicago, many lose community, mobility, and housing stability. But in a few shared spaces, a different story is being written.

Nonprofit H.O.M.E. (Housing Opportunities and Maintenance for the Elderly) is dedicated to helping low-income seniors maintain their independence through affordable housing and support services.

A Ministry Partnership Grant from the Sisters of Charity, BVM helps make this work possible.

The collaboration began through DePaul University colleagues Pat Bombard, BVM and Ramya Ramanath, who serves on H.O.M.E.'s Board of Directors.

"I was happy to encourage Ramya to apply for a Ministry Partnership Grant," Pat shares.

A Mission Rooted in Dignity and Independence

In 1982, H.O.M.E. was founded to address the growing crisis of Chicago's aging population. In some cases, seniors without financial means or family support were faced with having to leave their homes.

H.O.M.E. began with a mission to



At Chicago's Nathalie Salmon House, residents celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Holiday parties bring residents together for socializing and connecting. Photos provided.

help economically vulnerable seniors stay in the homes where they had raised their families and built their community network. For more than 40 years, the organization has been committed to providing personalized care while expanding its reach.

Housing and Services That Feel Like Home

The nonprofit owns and operates three apartment buildings in Chicago (Pat Crowley House, Nathalie Salmon

House, and Blackhawk Manor) offering affordable communities where seniors live alongside young adults and families. Shared spaces like gardens and lounge areas create a sense of belonging.

The agency also has programs that help seniors maintain their homes. Contractors and technicians perform repairs, and volunteers prepare homes for Chicago's harsh winters. A wheelchair-accessible shuttle service provides transportation. If relocation becomes necessary, there is moving assistance.



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.

Responding to Growing Challenges

Development Director Brendan Short explains that most low-income seniors rely primarily on Social Security, which doesn't provide enough funds for home repairs or household emergencies after taking care of housing, food, and healthcare.

H.O.M.E.'s Upkeep and Repair Program assists those homeowners.

"Older homeowners also have a great need to remain in their homes," Brendan says. "They want to be able to afford stable housing, age in a community with family and friends, and retain their property as an asset for future generations."

For seniors living in predominantly Black or Latine neighborhoods, discriminatory practices in lending and insurance lead to undervalued homes. These homeowners are often preyed upon by disreputable lenders and contractors, which makes them leery about seeking out business for repair work.

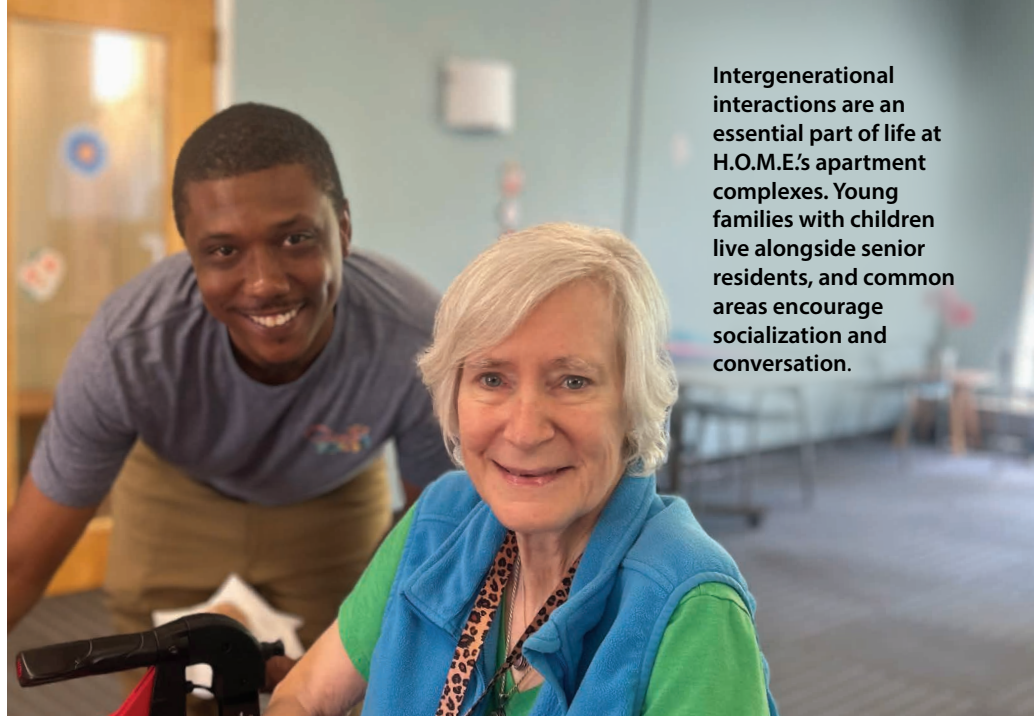
With funding from the Sisters of Charity, BVM and others, H.O.M.E. expanded their repair program staff. From June 2024 through April 2025, 802 home repairs were completed in 112 homes, compared to 389 repairs in 29 homes the previous year.

Leadership Grounded in Community

Executive Director Gail Schechter's personal connection to H.O.M.E. runs deep. Before joining the agency, she directed another nonprofit focused on helping seniors housing.

Gail visited the Nathalie Salmon House in 1999 with a local interfaith coalition.

"We saw it as a model of dwelling together," she shares. "And what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called a 'Beloved Community'—people of all ages, races,



Intergenerational interactions are an essential part of life at H.O.M.E.'s apartment complexes. Young families with children live alongside senior residents, and common areas encourage socialization and conversation.

abilities, gender identities, sexual orientations, and religions living, sharing, and enjoying life together."

When the H.O.M.E. executive director position opened in 2018, Gail applied. The organization's philosophy of respect for all people inspires her, and she believes that the way people interact—with kindness, patience, and humor—is as important as the homes themselves.

"How H.O.M.E. delivers its housing and programs sustains a culture of community," she says.

Looking Ahead

The BVM Ministry Partnership Grant helps provide critical support for H.O.M.E.'s daily services.

"At a personal level, I feel honored by your recognition and endorsement of the great respect and passion with which our staff, Board, and volunteers work with and for seniors," Gail says.

There are still challenges. Among them is the elimination of the City of Chicago's Small Accessible Repairs for

Seniors Program, which removes an important funding source.

A key goal is expanding the Advocacy and Neighborhood Engagement Program, which empowers seniors to advocate for themselves. H.O.M.E. also leads Fix Our Homes Illinois, a coalition working to expand home-repair funding for seniors with limited incomes. With dedicated grant funds, they hope to hire their first Advocacy Director later this year.

Pat saw a connection between the BVMs and H.O.M.E. that she knew would bring good results.

"I could see that it fit well," she says. "Not only with our BVM core values and desire to serve marginalized and underserved populations, but also our long history in Chicago and our current reality as an aging congregation." ■

To learn more, visit: homeseniors.org.

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

Scholarship Spotlight:

Queen Liza Ayinesom Aboyah's Journey of Service, Support, and Social Work

by Kari Litscher

Queen Liza Ayinesom Aboyah's path to becoming a changemaker began in the town of Zuarungu in Ghana's Upper East Region. The youngest of four children, she grew up in a deeply Catholic family where service was central. Her father, a social worker, and her mother, a public school teacher, instilled values of kindness and compassion that shaped Queen's worldview.

"From an early age, I watched my father go above and beyond for the vulnerable and marginalized which lit a spark in my desire to help others," Queen recalls.

Zuarungu, though a close-knit and caring community, faced serious challenges including poverty, teenage pregnancy, mental health stigma, and domestic violence. These realities fueled Queen's passion for social work, leading her to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in the field at the University of Ghana, Legon.

A Meaningful Connection

When Queen was accepted into the Master of Social Work program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, her excitement was mixed with anxiety. While her tuition was covered, living expenses in a new country were a daunting hurdle. A conversation with her mentor, Father Martin, and his

colleague, Father Attah-Nsiah, became a turning point.

"Father Attah-Nsiah immediately thought of Jackie Cramer, BVM from the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and said he would reach out. Soon after, I was connected to Sister Jackie, who would become my sponsor," Queen shares.

Jackie helped Queen craft a strong scholarship application and has since provided ongoing guidance, mentorship, and support.

"That divine connection changed everything," Queen says.

A New Home in Wisconsin

Madison quickly became a second home for Queen. Though the winters were colder than anything she had known, the city's peaceful atmosphere and welcoming community made it feel warm in other ways. At the Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work, Queen experienced not only academic growth but personal transformation.

"The faculty and my fellow students have been a strong pillar of support," she says. "I will always be grateful for the knowledge, encouragement, and community I found here."

Dreaming of Impact

Looking ahead, Queen's dream is to return to Ghana to open a mental health agency dedicated to outreach,

education, and culturally sensitive services. She hopes to challenge the stigma surrounding mental illness and create safe spaces for healing.

"To prepare for that mission, I plan to become a licensed clinical social worker with additional certifications in trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, adoption competency, and solution focused therapy," Queen explains. "For me, social work is not just a profession; it's a ministry which I am deeply committed to."

Scholarship That Changed Everything

The support from the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Scholarship for Women has been transformational. Balancing 21 hours of unpaid clinical fieldwork each week with a 20-hour on-campus work limit as an international student left Queen financially strained.

"This scholarship changed this nightmare," Queen says. "Thanks to BVM support, I could focus on my studies and fieldwork without the constant pressure of financial insecurity."

Jackie has felt equally blessed.

"It has been a real pleasure for me to interact with Queen during the past two years of her studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison," she says.

Jackie has been impressed that as an accomplished student, Queen has



"For me, social work is not just a profession; it's a ministry which I am deeply committed to."—Queen Liza Ayinesom Aboyah

Ghanian native Queen Liza Ayinesom Aboyah received a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Scholarship for Women, which helped her complete her Master of Social Work at University of Wisconsin–Madison. Photo provided.

brought to her U.S. studies the diverse experiences of growing up in a remote part of northern Ghana and working with a mental health agency in Accra, Ghana's capital and largest city.

She shares, “Queen’s intense desire to become an effective therapist and advocate for people struggling with mental health issues mirrors at an even deeper level my own 51-year history as a high school counselor in Mississippi and Tennessee. She will bring greatly needed skills back to Ghana.”

A World of Thanks

Inspired and grateful for this support, Queen offers a heartfelt thank you to Jackie and the Sisters of Charity, BVM for making this possible. The scholarship didn’t just support Queen’s education—it transformed her life.

“Special thanks to Sister Jackie, who has been more than a sponsor. She has been a mentor, a mother, and a friend,” Queen says. “Her prayers, check-ins, and belief in me have kept me going. I am also deeply thankful to Development Director Jean Tucker for her help with my applications and to every sister on the scholarship committee. Your kindness has planted seeds that will bloom in Ghana and beyond. God bless and keep you all.” ■

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



Salt Briefs



Sisters Speak Out

This summer, women religious, associates and allies gathered in Washington, D.C., for Sisters Speak Out, an event sponsored by more than 50 congregations, including the BVM Congregation, to call attention to justice issues like immigration policy, environmental rollbacks, and federal budget cuts to Medicaid and SNAP. BVMs supported the effort by writing letters to legislators. More than 300 women religious traveled to Washington to pray the rosary and meet with Capitol Hill Lawmakers.



Maria House Celebrates 25 years

Opening Doors Dubuque celebrated the 25th anniversary of Maria House, a transitional housing program for women and children. The special ribbon cutting included BVM sisters, along with Catholic sisters in the tri-state area, who have been part of the Opening Doors mission since the beginning—focusing on opening doors and hearts for women seeking a new start. BVM Mira Mosle (r.) is a member of the organization's board of directors.

LCWR Conference

The 2025 assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) entitled *Hope Unbroken: Journeying in God's Promise* drew approximately 560 LCWR members to Atlanta, as well as nearly 300 collaborators including justice promoters, communicators, and executives. A highlight of the week was the one-mile pilgrimage through the downtown area in which BVM sisters and staff participated, committing themselves to addressing systemic injustice in the areas of racism, migration, and the climate crisis.



Associate Eileen O'Shea (l.), Ann DeNicolò, BVM, and Associate Marybeth Coleman participate in the Dubuque Pride Festival.

Community Pride

For the first time, BVM associates hosted an information booth at the Dubuque Pride Festival. Associates and volunteers spoke with festival attendees, provided information about local resources, and enjoyed the festive atmosphere celebrating equality, justice, and community.



We remember our Associates



Mary Ann McGee

Peoria, Ariz.

Sept. 2, 1941–June 23, 2025

Accepted June 30, 2013



Kathryn Kean

Cascade, Iowa

March 4, 1935–July 31, 2025

Accepted April 28, 1996

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



Valuable Volunteers

Presentation Lantern Center honored its volunteers with a gathering at Eagle Point Park in Dubuque, Iowa. Mary Martens, BVM and Associate Mary Moothart and her husband, Tim, were among those who were recognized for the work they do helping others grow in community and learning. The Presentation Lantern Center offers

hospitality, education, and advocacy to adult immigrants who are striving to better their lives. The center has also been the recipient of a BVM Ministry Partnership Grant.



The Bee's Knees

BVMs and staff who were members of Team Bee-VM buzzed into this year's Area Residential Care (ARC) Annual Corporate and Community Games in Dubuque, Iowa, to raise funds that will help empower people with intellectual disabilities to achieve their highest quality of life.

Anne Carr in America: *The Jesuit Review*

Anne Carr, BVM, the “founding mother” of Catholic feminism, author, advocate, and pioneer, was recently profiled by journalist James T. Keane in the July issue of *America: The Jesuit Review*.

Anne, who died in 2008, was known for helping to shape a generation of theologians and opening doors for countless women in a field once dominated by men. You can read the full article at tinyurl.com/munawura.



Don't miss a thing!

Subscribe to our
BVM News page:
bvmsisters.org/news.

Double the Fun

Surrounded by her BVM sisters, family and friends, Josephine “Jo” Roche, BVM, and her twin Maureen recently celebrated their 100th birthday! Congratulations, Jo and Maureen, on this centennial milestone!



50 Years A Sweet, Salty Celebration

Sisters of Charity, BVM and friends celebrated 50 years of *Salt* magazine with an open house showcasing the stories (often written by BVMs) and the congregation's evolving ministries.

The event was joyful and reflective. Guests journeyed through decades of *Salt* covers that lined the walls, reminisced about their favorite articles, and enjoyed "Salty" snacks.

Since its founding by Teri Hadro, BVM and Rita Benz, BVM in 1974, *Salt* has thrived because of the dedication and talent of countless educated, passionate women who wrote compelling articles, captured photos, guided the advisory committees, and shaped each issue through careful editing.

To view 50 years of *Salt* covers, visit: tinyurl.com/4evax7zk. ■



Associate Mo McGrain (l.) and Betty Voss, BVM re-read, "BVM Trailblazers", an article Betty wrote in a 1992 edition of *Salt*.

The Evolution of Communication

by Michelle London

A long time ago: The Latin word *communis* comes into use among Italic tribes. It is an adjective formed from the prefix "ko" (meaning "together") and the root word "munis," meaning "shared," "duty," or "gift." It is the source of words like community and communication.

1843: The letters of Mary Frances Clarke communicated the virtues of being free and helping others enjoy freedom in God's steadfast love. A prolific communicator, she penned more than 300 missives. Most of them are preserved in the BVM archives.



1854: Bells were often used to communicate that it was time for prayer, for Mass, for school, or for recreation. Several of these bells were used at St. Joseph's on the Prairie, the original Motherhouse south of Dubuque, Iowa.



1874: When the congregation acquired a typewriter, a duplicating method using a hectograph became the cutting edge way to communicate. The hectograph used a gelatin pad to make copies with the master image. It was messy but effective.



1895: The first phone call at Mount Carmel was from Sister Loyola Rutherford to Mother Cecelia Dougherty: "Mother, the telephone is in working order . . . good night." "Good night! God bless you."



1913: A printing press came to Mount Carmel, and so did BVM Mary Mechtilde Reilly. She was well-known for her purple prose in *Our Herald*, which printed news of appointments, new postulants, novices, jubilarians, obituaries, and more. It was printed three or four times a year until 1957.



1957: Until 1969 *Vista* communicated BVM news not only to the congregation, but also to the many friends and supporters of the community.



1974: With *Vista* as its foundation, *Salt* has communicated the mission and activities of BVMs and associates to friends, family, and supporters. From social justice to environmental concerns, from charitable giving to ministry partners, *Salt* tells stories that matter to the BVM Community.



Today: BVMs communicate in myriad ways. From digital communications such as Zoom to the latest AI advances, every committee meeting, class, or retreat uses some form of modern technology. BVMs have embraced these changes at every turn to advance their mission, living through their core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice.





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

In Memoriam

Please pray for BVM sisters and associates
who have died July 2025–September 2025.



Veronica "Ronnie" (Rosine) Higgins, BVM

Nov. 21, 1945–July 2, 2025

Veronica was born in Chicago and entered the congregation in 1963 from St. Bartholomew Parish.

She knew the value of companionship in times of suffering. It was important to Veronica to remember that a family member never forgets the death of their loved one and what was said (or not said) in that experience. She considered each patient and family encounter sacred and felt privileged to offer comfort and prayer at a very personal time in the lives of those she served.

Veronica was an elementary teacher in Des Moines and Iowa City, Iowa; and Chicago and East Moline, Ill. In Chicago she served as a religion and social studies teacher and worked in public relations. Veronica completed her Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and proceeded to minister to the ill and their families for the next 36 years as a hospital chaplain in Arlington Heights, Springfield, and Belleville, Ill., and in St. Louis. Ronnie also was administrator and secretary for the National Catholic Vocation Council and served on the National Certification Committee of College Chaplains.



Julia (Lorenzo) Acosta, BVM

Aug. 13, 1925–July 21, 2025

Julia was born in Valley Junction, Iowa, and entered the congregation in 1943 from St. Agatha Parish in Chicago.

She knew the importance of standing up for one's convictions, and it was a quality she passed on to her students. She had the ability to engage them in appreciating the Spanish language and culture. She directed the Spanish Club at Carmel Catholic High School in Mundelein, Ill., and chaperoned trips to Spain. She taught her students to love learning, and would often pray for them. She was far more interested in the well-being and success of others than in herself.

Julia taught secondary Spanish at St. Patrick in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Fr. Bertrand in Memphis, Tenn., Carmel Catholic High School in Mundelein, Ill., and Cathedral High School and St. Benedict in Chicago. She ministered as an elementary teacher in Iowa at St. Patrick in Cedar Rapids and St. Joseph in New Hampton; and in Illinois at St. Joseph in Rock Island, Holy Name and St. Thomas of Canterbury in Chicago, Mary Queen of Heaven in Cicero, and St. Rose in Wilmington.



Patricia (Frederick Mary) Nolan, BVM

June 30, 1937–Aug. 5, 2025

Pat was born in St. Paul, Minn., and entered the congregation in 1955 from St. Therese Parish.

She discovered her passion for English and literature after entering the congregation. She especially enjoyed teaching fiction, poetry, and literary criticism and was known as an enthusiastic and inspiring teacher. Her students knew her as patient, a tough grader, and a dear friend. Everyone admired Pat's passion in education and how generous she was with her time, energy, and spirit.

Pat served as an English instructor and department chair at Clarke University, as an English teacher at Wahlert High School, and a volunteer instructor at the Roberta Kuhn Center, all in Dubuque, Iowa. She also taught at Columbus High School in Waterloo, Iowa, and The Immaculata High School in Chicago. Her career as an educator spanned 49 years, including 29 years at Clarke.



Elizabeth (Elizabeth Mary) Huber, BVM

May 15, 1934–Sept. 1, 2025

Elizabeth was born in Sioux City, Iowa, and entered the congregation in 1955 from St. Boniface Parish.

Elizabeth was caring, committed, and dependable. She enjoyed nature and took hundreds of photos of flowering plants and fall foliage. She studied the art of iconography under iconographer Vladislav Andrejev. Her collection of icons was gifted to the Bellarmine Jesuit Retreat House in Barrington, Ill.

She served as a secondary mathematics teacher at Heelan High School in Sioux City, Our Lady of Peace in St. Paul, Minn., and Ryan High School in Omaha, Neb. She also was a teacher for the Guadalupe Area Project in West Saint Paul, Minn., and the Art & Spirituality City Academy in Mendota Heights, Minn. She was an instructor at Clarke University, Dubuque, Iowa, and Briar Cliff College in Sioux City.



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Freed by Love, Acting for Justice.

In response to these tumultuous times and with a desire to bring hope to our world and community, BVMs have committed to a year-long focused initiative to raise immigration awareness and advocacy guided by our BVM Congregational Stance on immigration reform.

an immigrant
I was a stranger
and you welcomed me.
Jesus
Matt. 25:35

Immigration Awareness and Advocacy

The home pictured is that of a reader who reached out to us and asked for signage they could display to show their support for this initiative.

We invite everyone to send a message of hope, love, peace, and welcome to our immigrant communities.



Order a T-shirt and download postcards, banners, and social media graphics with our immigration reform message by scanning the QR code or visiting: tinyurl.com/WelcomeTheImmigrant.

The deadline to order T-shirts is Oct. 31.

