

# *Journey*



Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, PA Vol. 42, No. 2 Fall 2024

# *Transformation*



# Keeping Room in Our Hearts

by Katie Clauss, IHM

Autumn invites us into her embrace, unfolding a rich, majestic landscape that reflects the beauty and power of transformation. Together, we enter this season as a community of seekers, drawn to the vibrant hues of the changing leaves and soon, to the delicate, bare branches that will remain. This moment invites us to gaze in awe at the richness and simplicity of creation, to see beyond the surface and become more aware of the hidden wholeness that lies within.

In this edition of *Journey*, the authors share a collective story—a call to reflect on both the spiritual and human aspects of the path toward a conversion of heart. Through these reflections, we are invited to:

- Live from a place of deep gratitude, while also embracing the loss and grief that can transform us;
- Listen for the call to draw closer to God's dream for us all;
- Be doers and hearers of the Word, attuned to the voice of God speaking within and around us;
- Be ignited with love for God, choosing to be bridges of love and action in the world;
- Act as catalysts for change, allowing transformation to unfold within and around us;
- Listen attentively to the subtle and clear invitations from God, exploring how we

are being called to transform our hearts for the sake of the common good.

As you reflect on the call to conversion of heart, consider using questions to help you understand your own personal journey of transformation. Richard Rohr, OFM, reminds us that questions “can free us to be vulnerable, allowing us to enter that liminal space where God's grace can surround us, and where we can begin to realize that we are not in control.”

Questions can help us to listen more attentively, inviting us to hear what God is planting in our hearts. As you consider entering more deeply into the transformative love that may be calling you, you might consider reflecting on questions such as:

- What are you truly seeking? (John 1:38) From where does your desire for transformation arise?
- What is emerging within you, waiting to unfold?
- What is challenging or unsettling you at this moment?
- How are you being drawn into a deeper experience of God's redeeming love?
- Why is this calling so important now, at this point in your life?

As IHM Sisters, we are committed to living this journey of transformation intentionally.

*As vowed members, we believe that our journey of ongoing transformation thrives in an environment of inclusivity, trust, and deep listening. This commitment invites us to love unconditionally and embrace a unity that*



*rejoices in diversity. Together, we pray, contemplate, and dialogue to deepen our identity as women religious living in the spirit of the Gospel and our founders. From this deep collective center, we extend our joyful, loving, hospitable, and self-emptying service to the people of God. (IHM Constitutions, 50)*

May this season of transformation stir within us a new desire to “Keep some room in our hearts for the unimaginable” (Mary Oliver, 2009) as we encounter the blessings and challenges in the days ahead.

*Sister Katie serves as president of the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, PA.*



Our mission as Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Scranton, Pennsylvania, is to follow Jesus as a community of disciples, aware that we are sent to be a clear and understandable prophetic witness to the presence of God in the world. - *from the IHM Mission Statement*

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# The Transformative Journey of Gratitude as a Spiritual Path

by Joanne Weiss

As the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart (c. 1260 - c. 1328) wrote, "If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is 'Thank You' it will be enough." We live in a time of such intense suffering and uncertainty from so many different sources that it can seem almost trite, inconsequential or naïve to hear those words as relevant to life now. Yet for centuries, gratitude as a spiritual path has been recognized as a profound journey of transformation in many spiritual traditions including Buddhism, Judaism, Islam as well as indigenous cultures.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 Paul writes, "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ for you." At the heart of Christian life is the acknowledgment of the blessings we receive daily, both big and small, recognizing the loving presence of the sacred in all that is, which opens us to experience "the peace of God that passes all understanding," that Paul speaks of in Philippians 4:7. Rather than a particular practice, gratitude itself is a way of life that increasingly brings our consciousness into alignment with the holy mystery that lives in all and through all. It is one of the foundational qualities of the contemplative path that slowly shifts our identification from the separate, egoic false self to the true self, transforming the mind and aligning the heart with the sacred. The simplicity of "Thank You" has the potential to impact every dimension of our being, changing the way we show up in life in relationship to the Sacred, to ourselves, to others and to the world.

Brother David Steindl-Rast (b.1926), a Benedictine monk and internationally known author and teacher, has dedicated his life's work to teaching gratitude as a pathway to both presence and joy. Gratitude doesn't ignore or whitewash the problems that we face either individually or collectively. Rather, it is a larger container that allows our hearts to open, to see clearly without being swept away or overwhelmed by the enormity of suffering, and to take appropriate responsive action grounded in the sacred. He states that our approach to gratitude has to be big enough to embrace all the difficulties of the world as well as our personal suffering which reflects the Buddhist stance that our hearts must be able to hold all that life has to offer, the "10,000 joys and the 10,000 sorrows."

In addition to the transformative power of gratitude as a spiritual path, the holistic benefits of gratitude, as a way of life, are well documented in the fields of neuroscience and mind/body medicine. It increases happiness, reduces depression, improves sleep, engenders greater resilience



In addition to the transformative power of gratitude as a spiritual path, the holistic benefits of gratitude, as a way of life, are well documented in the fields of neuroscience and mind/body medicine. It increases happiness, reduces depression, improves sleep, engenders greater resilience and ability to handle adversity, fosters better relationships, and improves immune function with overall better health.

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It sounds easy to live with a grateful heart. Yet, in my decades of work as a minister, therapist, and retreat facilitator as well as in my personal journey, I know the difficulty of moving from a theoretical concept to a new way of being. While we may have a strong intention to be present in our lives with gratitude, it doesn't just happen. Neuroscience has shown us how the inherent negativity bias of our primitive, limbic brain is fear-based and powerfully primed to hijack us repeatedly into automatic default patterns of reactive behaviors: complaints, judgements and criticisms of self, others and life, anxiety about the future, and regrets and resentments about the past. These are universal patterns, and neuroscience has given us numerous ways to cultivate the more evolved part of the brain with its ability to form new neural pathways that strengthen the ability to choose and cultivate a particular quality such as gratitude.

For gratitude to become a way of life in which we reap the benefits at all levels, we have to do our part and practice. There are many ways to practice, and any consistent practice of gratitude shifts our consciousness into alignment with the sacred and moves our physiology into a healthier functioning. It is helpful to start the day with a clear intention to live with a grateful heart which then directs our attention throughout the day, and informs our actions. Planting seeds of gratitude frequently throughout the day is especially powerful. One practice is to stop for about one minute, take a few conscious breaths, come into the physical body and senses (what do I see, hear, smell right now?), and end with, "And a blessing in this moment is\_\_\_," or "Thank you for your presence with me." Short practices done frequently have a cumulative effect that add up to a life that is more and more grounded in gratitude. Find one or two that work for you and practice.

May each of us experience the transformative power of the Spirit that is grounded in the thank you of our souls!

*The Rev. Dr. Joanne G. Weiss holds graduate degrees in theology, clinical social work, and music and maintains a private practice in Clarks Summit, PA, that integrates these fields. With lifelong connections with the IHM community, she was commissioned as an IHM Associate in September 2020.*

# Transformational Grief

by Ann Barbara DeSiano, IHM

Having lived at Our Lady of Peace for almost two full years now, I have had the privilege of watching sisters pass away from time to time and of attending beautiful funerals that mark their passing. In July and August eight sisters died at OLP, and suddenly everyone seemed to be mourning at once and were also caught in a heavy, collective sadness. It was almost as if we could not make room for one more loss.

It's not as if we knew this might never happen. In my first year here, I worked with several administrators to help individual sisters compose the content for their own funeral programs; more than 60 sisters participated in finding the artwork, the music, the words and the prayers they wished to be used at the time of their own passing. Clearly so much loss in such a short time required much more energy, and the weight of multiple griefs became overwhelming.

In her book, *It's Ok That You're Not OK*, Megan Divine gives insights that suggest that up till now, grief and loss have faced a culture that does not understand them.

She perceives our models of grief as broken and believes that we need a new model that allows us a way to do something with our grief, understanding we may not have to just "suffer" as individuals. Grief, like love, is limitless, so we can learn new ways to live with it; this learning is the way we honor those we have loved. It is not easy learning and is unique to the circumstances of the loss of each loved one.

My own mother's death followed a bumpy five-year journey with cancer. Anyone who knew my mother, knew her as a force to be reckoned with and her diagnosis of breast cancer was no different. This is a woman who, several years earlier, had sneaked out of her house after all were asleep, walked two hours to the nearest hospital and later came home with her arm in a cast and a sling. Rather than call for help, she arrived home at about 8:00 a.m. My dad had been out searching for her for about an hour. He was shocked to see the cast and just looked at her for an explanation. She admitted to an earlier fall the day before, but she didn't want to wake anyone up, lest she disturb us.

Cancer proved different from any other illness she had ever faced, but my family also agreed that cancer had never met a force like my mom. She never complained, never refused a treatment and when treatment failed, bravely



took on experimental treatments in the hope of a better outcome. It was a five-year fight. Each year she lost her hair and each year it would grow back curlier than the year before. She never stopped believing she had a chance to win. I would love to know what she had to say to Jesus when she met him face to face! Grief in the face of death is very real but there are other circumstances that allow grief to enter as well.

As for myself, I have faced my own learning curve about grief in the past two years. I came to OLP after a hip replacement for what I thought would be four weeks of healing. Each week that passed showed my heartbeat growing slower and eventually the nurses determined that it had to be addressed. I was taken to the hospital for a pacemaker implant. Within a few weeks my breathing and heartbeat improved, I had excellent PT care and thought I was improved enough to ask to live at St. Joseph's Center Convent. The sisters welcomed me and I spent eight happy weeks traveling between OLP and going home to St. Joe's. Then one day I got on an elevator with a nurse I had never met before and she asked me to return with her to the convent. There she said she felt something was off in my speaking and suggested we call other nurses to ask their assessment. I left St. Joe's to return to OLP and its great care.

Several weeks later, a nurse found me flailing my arms in my bed. This time the ambulance showed up and took me to Geisinger. I awoke, to the surprise of some, three days later, in a special care unit to learn I had complete kidney failure, pneumonia, kidney stones, sepsis and other medical complications. Thus, began for me, my new journey to a grief I could never have anticipated. Back in unit 1B at OLP, I began dialysis three times a week and did so for

three months. There were a number of minor surgeries during those weeks, both before and after dialysis, to remove tubes and more stones. This illness unmoored me.

Medical appointments continued at four or five a week with every kind of doctor, and now almost a full year later I have come to accept that I will not be able to live at St. Joe's again... I will always need close medical care on a daily basis. My ministry engagements will be much fewer and much simpler. The possibility of dialysis again is very real. I have not been well enough in these two years to attempt a trip home to Long Island and am unsure if that will really change. I am trying to sit still every day and pray just to be whatever God needs me to be, and that is enough. Finally, that is enough. I am learning to sit still.

These are the losses I am grieving still, yet my gratitude for each person who helped me, encouraged me, visited me and nursed me is endless and enduring.

I lived in a community of sisters who have lives much more challenging than mine, who no longer have a voice or no great physical capacities left and yet here I found real community as we celebrated special occasions, sang our hearts out on almost a daily basis and cheered each other on. I found a staff that daily offered unconditional love—even on the most challenging days—and I will always carry them in my heart. Our unit motto was "What happens in 1B stays in 1B," and because of what happened in 1B, I have been blessed beyond measure.

Finally, I came across a book by Marisa Renee Lee titled *Grief is Love*. She states that we can no longer continue to ignore grief, to relegate it to whispered conversations, to expect folks to navigate their broken heartedness on their own when the mere act of sustaining one's own life feels impossible. Grief, like love is also limitless. In our toughest moments, let us help each other to cross the threshold from grief to love by extending grace as best we can, by sharing love for the long haul and the common bond of peace.

*Sister Ann Barbara is a native New Yorker called to service as an IHM sister working primarily as a teacher and pastoral associate in various parts of New York. She now ministers at Our Lady of Peace in the area of spirituality.*



# Historic and Contemporary Effects of Racism

The Mother Theresa Maxis, IHM Center for Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation  
at Marywood University

by Yerodin Lucas

Since the foundation of the United States, Blacks/African Americans, Indigenous and other People of Color (BIPOC) have been marginalized based on historical paradigms of prejudice. These groups were systematically disenfranchised, disempowered, segregated, and endured various forms of harsh and unjust treatment simply based on the color of their skin. Some of the well documented examples of this include the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, the American institution of slavery, forced assimilation of Native Americans through boarding schools and forced segregation onto reservations, and other atrocities stemming from a pervasive belief in the hierarchy of human value. Similarly, Blacks were marginalized, and denied basic civil rights to vote, to obtain a quality education, equitable housing options, and employment for nearly one hundred years with the establishment of Jim Crow laws, which followed after the end of the American Civil War.

The Hispanic/Latinx population has experienced inequities in immigration, which limited their ability to legally obtain employment and a living wage. "Limited pathways to citizenship and major restrictions to resources that promote integration have adverse consequences for immigrants and their families. Research shows that children experience toxic stress that negatively impacts their long-term health and development from heightened immigration enforcement, regardless of any personal impact (Ng'andu & Fu, 2023, p. 46). In addition, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders have experienced detention and forced imprisonment; and, poor Whites in rural areas have been denied equal access to jobs, resources, and healthcare. When one looks at these injustices through the lens of social justice, it becomes clear the way in which resources, wealth, and power have been structured in this country, creating structural inequalities that continue to negatively impact the lived experiences of our BIPOC citizens in our communities at-large.

One notion that defines or identifies how the effects of racism impose on the mental and physical health of Blacks in particular is the concept of "Double Consciousness" coined by W.E.B. DuBois. In his ground-breaking book, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), DuBois characterized double consciousness as a kind of socio-psychological, and, sometimes, socio-

historical disposition of African Americans specifically and for people of color generally to view their aims and goals as shaped by the social barrier of racial segregation and colonization. DuBois refers to this barrier as "the Veil." He also describes it as a "two-ness" in terms of Blacks as having to contend with being both African American and American in a racist society that views them as "the problem."

"It signifies the ubiquitous and pervasive impediment, on racially segregated grounds, to both the fulfillment and the belief in the fulfillment of African American ideals and objectives. But it also signifies the concealment from white people's comprehension the legacy and currency of African-American practices and forms of life as shaped by this racial hindrance – practices and forms of life reflective of material poverty, stifled ambitions, and diminished expectations on one side, yet uncommon moral courage, melodious eloquence and expression, and irrepressible religious faith on the other" (Kirkland, 2012, p. 2). Generally speaking, double consciousness causes an inner conflicted psychological state of mind which plagues African Americans as a whole regarding their aims, pursuits, and the fulfillment of them in light of the duality that this cultural and social dilemma inflicts.

Moreover, many contemporary effects of racism continue to be perpetuated based on their historical antecedents. For example, in recent years, the turmoil between law enforcement and Black and Brown people has ignited large protests demanding change; subsequently, issues of race and racism have been catapulted back onto center stage. The idea that individual racism can account for much of the racial inequality has received the strongest pushback from those who believe that racism today is primarily a 'structural' phenomenon. In fact, structural racism is just one among many intergroup phenomena now widely understood primarily in 'structural' terms, 'Structural inequality' (or 'structural injustice') (Ng'andu & Fu, 2023).

As a result, claims that contemporary societies are steeped in institutional racism have again become commonplace. Over the years, there are some who tout the rhetoric that racism is not as ingrained in our society as it was in the past (e.g., Jim Crow era), but when you hear the first-hand experiences of BIPOC groups (e.g., students, employees,



*The TRHT Center seeks to  
bridge the racial and social  
gaps that divide us, and  
be a catalyst for change,  
togetherness, acceptance,  
and progress.*

medical patients), it is clear that our behaviors (e.g., implicit biases) have had a direct influence on our institutional policies and practices in nearly all of our companies and organizations. Sometimes, other terms such as structural racism are used, but whatever the term, what unites their use is the thought that contemporary racism is now not mainly an individual phenomenon. Furthermore, there is significant evidence to show that racism is pervasive in our society.

Consequently, our country as a whole has suffered immeasurably due to the effects of racism. I have read some research from those in the medical field that say discrimination based on race has cost an estimated 310 billion dollars in loss due to disproportionate patient treatment and care in the last decade alone. The majority of our BIPOC and students in rural communities are also continuing to suffer. However, there are many groups and

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# Francis of Assisi: Saint of Transformation

by Nancy Hawkins, IHM

Of the many Catholic saints, Francis of Assisi remains one of the most loved and respected. We know he embraced the natural world as a reflection of God's goodness and saw the elements of nature as his sisters and brothers. We attribute the Christmas Creche to him, and somewhat romanticize him in movies such as "Brother Sun and Sister Moon," which I loved by the way! But there was more to the man than sparrows and songs. Francis grew up in a world where the Church was powerful and the monasteries plentiful. They offered a stable life of prayer and work. After his conversion and call, Francis had a unique vision of how to follow Jesus and "rebuild" the Church. His life choices and zeal for God would transform religious life, the Church, and those who became his disciples.

Francis chose to embrace radical gospel poverty and live as the outcasts of his day. He walked along the roads and connected personally with all he met. They gave him the name of "Il Poverello," the little poor one. This new form of life, apart from the monastery, came to be called mendicant. It transformed the medieval church and gave it a new direction. It must be mentioned that Saint Dominic also embraced the mendicant life.

The way Francis evangelized was transformative. He did not carry doctrinal texts with him as he spread the gospel. His evangelization was primarily through his example. He wanted his life and the lives of his brothers to teach the gospel. A popular statement attributed to Francis reads, "Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words." Like any troubadour, Francis was on fire with love for God. He called himself "God's Fool," and was not afraid to share the intimacy he had with God. Francis' vision of the world was totally sacramental. He saw every act of life as a revelation of God. People were transformed when they heard him declare that God is incarnate in everyone and in every created thing. No wonder Pope John Paul II declared him the patron saint of ecology, and Pope Francis chose his name.

Francis lived during the days of the Crusades, and unlike most Christians he did not view the Muslims as enemies of Christ. He chose to go to the middle east and personally meet with Sultan Malik al Kapal. This was

certainly a transformative act. Author Bret Toman, OSF writes that "the Sultan, for his part, was content to have discovered a Christian Sufi, an inner mystic who had encountered the one God within." No conversions took place after this visit, but the Sultan decided to turn over the administration and control of the Christian sites in Muslim territories to the Franciscans. To this day, they administer most of the Christian Churches in Israel and the surrounding areas. They maintain the sanctuaries, offer hospitality to pilgrims, and serve the local Christian community. They are witnesses to peace.

Not only did Francis of Assisi transform the lives of others and the way the Church was viewed, he himself was transformed throughout his life. One of those transformative moments was when he encountered a young woman named Chiara, who is now known as Saint Clare of Assisi. She was inspired by the meaningful and compelling preaching of Francis and chose to live her life with the same zeal for poverty and simplicity as he. Most likely, as a man of the middle ages, he would not have imagined how Clare and her followers would take his strenuous message so deeply to heart. Franciscan scholars write that her life and dedication was a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. It taught Francis not to underestimate the deep holiness and dedication of women called by God. Murray Bodo, a Franciscan, in his well-known book *Francis: The Journey and the Dream*, writes, "She followed him because she loved the treasure. She heard him speak of what he had found, and a passage in her own heart opened up. She was Clare and he was Francis, and together they would show the world its hidden heart." And together they transformed each other.

This piece is being written the week after the 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of the horrible events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. The first certified fatality of the attacks that day was Father Mychal Judge. He was a Franciscan friar and Catholic priest who served as a chaplain to the NYC Fire Department. He rushed down to the Twin Towers on that fateful day to minister to those injured and dying. To read about Mychal Judge is to read a biography of Francis of Assisi. Judge ministered to those dying of AIDS, those dealing with addiction, those in mourning and



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those alienated by society. He was a son of Francis. Three thousand people attended his funeral and surely Francis of Assisi was one of them.

*Sister Nancy lives in Scranton, PA, and teaches in the religious studies department of Marywood University. She has always been inspired by the life of Saint Francis of Assisi.*



## A Peace and Justice Perspective

# Mining the Consequence of Showing Up

by Chris Koellhoffer, IHM



Call it “The School No One Ever Wants to Attend.” It’s the school of suffering and pain and loss, and there’s clearly no line of hopefuls queuing up to register. Who, after all, would be waiting with bated breath to be ushered into such a school? Who would ever choose such a potentially life-altering enrollment?

Still, might we, after some reflection, be able to name some learnings that have come our way because of attendance in that very school? Perhaps some wisdom earned by being brought to our knees through pain, illness, or the loss of a cherished loved one? Perhaps we’ve had to own our inability to save others? Found ourselves brought up short in the glaring light of a public forum? Underestimated the power of grace blessing our limitations?

And then there’s this: perhaps we’ve landed in the school no one ever wants to attend because of outright failure or actions for justice that yielded no apparent success. We may wonder if any learnings are worth the experience of watching our hard-earned reputation slowly collapse or our energies dwindle. We might be tempted to choose instead a path that is constantly cautious, that embraces no risks, that avoids failure at all costs.

Ah, but here’s the wrinkle: failure itself can be transformative. We hear hints of that in the Principle and Foundation of Ignatian spirituality, which notes that “everything has the potential of calling forth in us a more loving response to our life forever with God.”<sup>1</sup> And yes, “everything” includes failure.

Author Dee Dee Fisher<sup>2</sup> encourages each of us to find what she calls a soul-making room, a holy space in which we are in community with others. She believes that “the most essential work we have to do in this world is to marry the hope and vision of youth with our failures. This work allows us to become who we are meant to be. It releases a wiser, stronger power in us that will sustain us for the long haul. We cannot tap this power,” she asserts, “if we do not face and share our failures.”

In the safety of a soul-making room, we can acknowledge and name the learnings that have come into our lives and into our work for peace

and justice through what may seem, at least on the surface, to be unproductive, or futile, or the end of the story.

A holy space was created in my IHM congregation’s Chapter of 2018.<sup>3</sup> At this gathering, we invited a small group of our sisters to reflect back to us each day what they had heard. The reflection from the second day was especially enlightening. The reflectors noted that the day before, we had arrived at some solutions and had come up with a few answers.

But then they opened up significant “What if?” questions: “What if we also shared with one another our failures and what we learned from them? What if we shared what we wish we had done differently—in our collective life and in our individual lives? Might our best work be done when our hearts are broken by what we have seen and experienced?”<sup>4</sup>

As we sit with those questions, we have before us the witness of giants, holy ones who have given over their lives for the sake of a more just and inclusive world. They have sometimes had to live their “failures” out loud and with cameras rolling. Yet Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and John Lewis, and Mahatma Gandhi, and Rosa Parks, and Malala Yousafzai, and Dorothy Day and a host of unnamed and unknown saints among us keep showing up, even when tangible results and success stories are hard to find. Their showing up keeps moving us closer to the fulfillment of God’s dream for all of us.

In his poem, “Self-Portrait,”<sup>5</sup> David Whyte asks questions about our deepest experiences of both failure and transformation. He wonders:

“I want to know if you are willing to live, day by day, with the consequence of love and the bitter unwanted passion of your sure defeat. I have been told, in that fierce embrace, even the gods speak of God.”

As we move forward, our prayer is that we may learn to live richly in the face of loss. Our hope is that our learnings will continue to be transformative for us as well as for our beautiful yet wounded world.

<sup>1</sup> David L. Fleming, SJ, *Draw Me Into Your Friendship*, A Literal Translation & A Contemporary Reading of the Spiritual Exercises, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St. Louis Missouri, 1996, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Dee Dee Fisher, *The Soulmaking Room*, Upper Room Books, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> A Chapter is the governing body of a religious congregation, in which members participate.

<sup>4</sup> Questions from Day 2, reflections on Chapter 2018, Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, PA.

<sup>5</sup> David Whyte, “Self-Portrait,” *Fire in the Earth*, Many Rivers Press, 1992.

*Sister Chris is a writer and spiritual guide who offers retreats and presentations internationally through her Mobile Spirituality Ministry. Visit her blog, Mining the Now, at [chriskoellhofferihm.org](http://chriskoellhofferihm.org)*

# TRANSFORMATION FROM TO

## FROM HEAD TO HEART

by Donna Korba, IHM

*“Deep within our DNA we belong to the stars, the trees, and the galaxies.  
Deep within we long for unity because at the most fundamental level  
we are already one.” - Ilia Delio*

What do the stars, trees, galaxies, and all of nature share with us? If you’ve ever wandered through a forest and felt the quiet wisdom of the trees, or sat in a field, lost in the beauty of wildflowers, or lay beneath the sky, marveling at the moon, the stars, and the planets—perhaps you’ve sensed it. If you’ve ever looked into someone’s eyes and glimpsed their soul, or examined the lines on your own hands, or the wrinkles on your face, you may have noticed something deeper: nature does not craft straight lines. From the spiraling galaxies to the curving paths of planets and even the swirling dance of atoms, life flows in circles, curves, and arcs.

As an artist and teacher, I have often heard students say, “I can’t even draw a straight line.” To that, I smiled, because neither could the Divine. In God’s infinite wisdom and creativity—and perhaps with a touch of humor—life was not shaped by rulers and straight edges. Instead, it was born of spirals, circles, and graceful curves. Straight lines, it seemed, were left for humans to create through logic and control. But the Divine preferred the softness of circles—forms that invited connection, forms that symbolized wholeness, unity, and belonging. We see this in our language too: “circles of grace,” “knitting circles,” “circle dances,” and the “circle of life.” These are the spaces where relationships flourish, where collaboration thrives, and where we find the deep bonds of equality and

love. Straight lines? They are rigid, precise, often goal-driven, and tend to divide more than unite.

Life, from the very beginning, was created to be circular, to reflect the interdependence of all things. But somewhere in the course of history, humanity broke the circle. It turned away from the sacred call to live in harmony with creation, and instead, it reshaped the world into a triangle—where power sat at the top and everything else was pushed below. Perhaps the original sin wasn’t about an apple or a couple in a garden, but about the human inclination to sever the circle of life, to create hierarchy, and to disconnect from the whole.

The Irish writer Daniel O’Leary said it beautifully: “A spirituality of the heart reveals that everything we search for is already within us.” The transformation our world so desperately needs lies not in reaching outward but in turning inward—to the heart to rediscover the circle within ourselves, the circle of inclusivity and relationship that has always been there. This shift, from the linear to the circular, is not just about changing the way we see the world—it’s about remembering who we truly are.

Nine months ago, the members of the three IHM Congregations began their own journey of transformation through a program called “Thresholds of Transformation.” Guided by wise spiritual leaders from across the world, (Donna Fyffe, a process consultant from the United States, Hilary Musgrave, a pastoral

minister and expert in creation spirituality from Ireland, and Monica Brown, a Christian musical composer from Australia) this program invites participants to pause, to reflect, to listen deeply, and to engage in the kind of conversations that touch the soul. Rooted in the principles of *Laudato Si’* and the *Universe Story*, it beckoned us to shift our focus from head to heart, from separation to connection, from parts to the whole. It called us back to a worldview held by Indigenous peoples for centuries—one where we were all part of a sacred web, where every living thing, including Mother Earth, was in relationship with us.

This is the transformation we need—a return to the way of the heart, where we recognize our place in the circle of life. A linear worldview, with its focus on power, hierarchy, and goals, cannot sustain the kind of relationships that the heart knows to be true. But a circular one invites us back into communion—with ourselves, with each other, and with Mother Earth.

Autumn, with its golden leaves and crisp air, is a perfect time to reflect on this transformation. The falling leaves remind us of life’s natural cycles—vibrant color today, and dull earth tones tomorrow. Yet we know they will return in spring, as they always do. Birds and butterflies migrate south, only to return next year, faithful to their ancient rhythms. The days grow shorter, and the nights grow longer, but soon enough, they will trade places once again, as they always

have. Nature, in its gentle wisdom, reminds us of the cyclical rhythm of life. And we are part of that rhythm—more connected to the stars, the trees, and the galaxies than we often remember.

In our very DNA, we belong to the stars, to the earth, to each other. At the most fundamental level, we are one. We share the same Source of Love that flows through all of creation. Maybe we’ve forgotten, but this Love has been holding us in the Circle of Life since the beginning of time.

Let us take the steps we need, together. Let us cross the thresholds in front of us with courage and faith, knowing that on the other side is a rediscovery of the power and beauty of the circle. As Pope Francis so wisely reminds us, “If we want the world to change, then first our hearts must change.” We are standing on the edge of a linear worldview—let us have the courage to step through, to return to the circle that has always been waiting for us, and to embrace our responsibility for transformation as co-creators and co-inhabitants of this beautiful Earth, our home.

If we can do this together, as C.S. Lewis once said, “There are far better things ahead than any we leave behind.”

We are already one. It’s time to remember!

*Sister Donna serves as the IHM Congregation’s Director of the Office of Peace, Justice, and the Integrity of Creation.*

Nine months ago, the members of the three IHM Congregations began their own journey of transformation through a program called “Thresholds of Transformation.” Guided by wise spiritual leaders from across the world, this program invites participants to pause, to reflect, to listen deeply, and to engage in the kind of conversations that touch the soul.





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Sister Donna Korba



Let us have the courage to step through,  
to return to the circle  
that has always been waiting for us.



# Peering into the past... D

by Stan D

"I do not feel discouraged, still hope and pray... My trust lies in the justice of God and in (God's) mercy which surpasses all (God's) other works." Mother Theresa to Sister M. Genevieve, September 21, 1884.

**I**ncarnation-St. James Parish was one of the first parishes in the Diocese of Trenton to be merged into one parish in 2006. It was an odd pairing: Incarnation had been a territorial parish established in the late 1940s during unprecedented growth in a rural area bordering on the city of Trenton. Four large buildings on 20 acres of land welcomed the faithful in around Ewing Township. But by the end of the 20th century it had experienced decline, like most other Catholic parishes. St. James was a national parish established in 1919 for the large Sicilian immigrant community in the city of Trenton. By the end of the 20th century the Sicilian community had largely left the inner city, but remained loyal to their parish. Three buildings sat on a paved corner lot surrounded by high fencing with barbed wire. The original church and convent had already been razed. The former rectory and school were rented to other organizations. The church was only used about 5 hours a week for three daily Masses and one Sunday Mass.

By the time I arrived in 2020, decline had continued both in numbers and activities, animosity between the two once-independent parish remained, and I was the fifth pastor to be assigned since the merger. Covid gripped the nation, and I was replacing a beloved pastor who had died suddenly. One of the first things I heard from parishioners was "Father, just keep the church open until my funeral." For many, death was looming, for themselves and for the parish.

The St. James campus is located in what has been referred to as the most dangerous area in one of the most dangerous cities in the U.S.

One Saturday morning as I was leaving St. James, I encountered a man coming towards me. He was not a parishioner. I had never seen him before. He introduced himself as Harrison, and, in the course of our conversation, he looked at the church, pointed to it, and said, "St. James saved my life." He was not referring to the apostle James the Brother of the Lord, but to the community. He went on to tell me a bit of his story. As a teen he was constantly in trouble. His parents threw him out of the house; he lived on the streets, got involved

in the growing drug trade and all that brings with it. One day a parishioner of St. James asked him to join their CYO basketball team. And that changed his life. With a community surrounding him, he got out of the cycle that was destroying him.

This got me thinking, would anyone be able to say this 50 years from now? Or were we going to just wait to celebrate the last funeral and walk away? When the last Mass is celebrated will we turn out the lights and close the doors? Would our beautiful church, rich in a 100-year-old tradition of presence on this little corner of the world join the ranks of the empty Catholic schools, rectories, convents, and hospitals that already populate the city.

The Incarnation campus had its own symbol that needed to be wrestled with. One of the largest buildings on the campus is the "old convent." By the time I arrived, it had been abandoned and unused for nearly 10 years. And right in front of it was a large dead tree. The darkness of the building showing the lack of care, the dead tree hovering over it was as powerful to me as the sadness of the St. James community awaiting the last funeral.

The "old convent" and Harrison have, over the three years I've been here, become an inspiration for a new vision and a new hope for our little urban community. Yes, the schools are gone, the sisters are gone, both worship sites are visited by only a fraction of the people that once filled a thriving parish. But the presence of the buildings, and more importantly, the people who have remained, are called to be the light of Christ amid the struggles that surround our campuses, and our own homes.

The "old convent" became a special place for me. It was once the home of about 20 Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary from Philadelphia. Windows in the chapel hold the memory of their presence, as well as the stories of parishioners who knew them. As I walked through the building about a month after arriving, I wondered if we could revive the building, bring life into something that had been dead for a while now. And we began a



restoration project.

But it could not remain the "old convent." It needed to be new. And we decided to name it the Theresa Maxis Center for Formation and Mission. I began to tell the story of Mother Theresa, someone I've come to love and admire since I've become close to a number of IHM Sisters who have helped form me as a religious and a priest. To promote a woman, a woman of color, a woman of great courage and strength who was not a stranger to marginalization, discrimination, rejection, who remained faithful to her call, is important. The people of the parish, and those in our neighborhoods could see themselves in her.

Moses said to the Israelites at one of the most difficult and challenging times in their history, "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live:



To promote a woman of color, a woman of great courage and strength who was not a stranger to marginalization, discrimination, rejection, who remained faithful to her call, is important. The people of the parish, and those in our neighborhoods could see themselves in her.



# Dreaming of what could be

Stan De Boe, OSST



ies” (Gaudium et Spes) of parishioners, former parishioners, former Catholics, neighbors and partners in mission and community, with open hearts and open minds. We must listen to the voice of God who speaks to all of us, not just the clergy. And then we must explore what it means to be “doers” of what we hear — what actions and programs will come out of our listening and walking together.

It will be a long process. But so far, we are finding this an exciting process and we are already seeing the fruits of

it as people are drawn to join us in the dialogue and visioning.

The author and activist James Baldwin wrote: “One discovers the light in darkness, that is what darkness is for, but

everything in our lives depends on how we bear the light. It is necessary, while in darkness, to know there is light somewhere, to know that in oneself, wanting to be found, there is light” (*Nothing Personal*, Beacon Press, 1991).

Each day I find glimpses of light — in the words and actions of the parishioners who are waking to a new purpose of mission — beyond waiting to turn the lights off after the funerals.

*Sometimes glimpses are enough.*

Many years ago, I had a powerful experience of what glimpses can do. The Trinitarians once owned a large property in Pikesville, MD, formerly owned by the Howard family. Before we sold that part of the property, I had the opportunity to host IHM Sisters from Scranton who were missioned in the Baltimore-Washington area for a day of prayer in a mansion on the property. We read from Mother Theresa’s life that “she was taken to the door of the drawing room in the Howard home outside Baltimore and told that the visiting English major was her father. It seems she did not speak to him, but went back again and again to look at him. She never mentioned whether he saw her or not, or



Stan De Boe, OSST

even whether he knew of her existence” (*Pilgrim Let Your Heart Be Bold*, p. 11).

After we read it, one by one the Sisters went to the door of that parlor and peered through the opening. What did they see? What did they hear? Some smiled, some cried, all of us were silent. We had the chance to peer into the past, and yet dream of what could be.

Like Mother Theresa, we might have to go “back again and again” to the door and look “again and again” as we listen, pray, speak to one another, dream, and act. From death into life.

*Father Stan De Boe, OSST, is a member of Order of the Most Holy Trinity and currently serves as pastor of Incarnation-St. James Church in Trenton, NJ and is on the leadership team of the U.S. Province. He counts several IHM Sisters from Scranton as very good friends and companions on the journey of religious life and priesthood. He has served as the Justice and Peace Director of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men. He is the “dad” to Champ, a Yorkie-mix, and an avid fan of the Baltimore Ravens.*



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(Deut. 30:19). This is what faces us as a parish. Are we going to only wait for death, or will we live into the Christian hope that life springs from death?

The movement toward life is not easy. It requires looking at our history and honoring it without enshrining it, opening a dialogue within the parish and beyond in the neighborhood, and a renewed vision of what discipleship would look like if we heeded the words of our patron, St. James, “Be doers... and hearers... of the Word.” These words from St. James have become our vision and our guiding purpose.

We are now in the process of revisioning what it means to be a parish — and it will look quite different from the traditional model. We must take time to listen — we must lament what has been lost (something that has not been done since the merger), we must listen to the “joys and hopes, the griefs and anxiet-



# Transforming Ideas

## and Significant Markers: John Courtney Murray, S.J.

by Gail Cabral, IHM

Transformation can occur when transforming ideas are developed, communicated, and generate the capacity to unify people despite their diverse origins and beliefs. I have some thoughts on transformative thinking about the relation of the Church and State which we see in the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution. In part, this stems from my early exposure to ideas in political science from a dear friend. I have in mind two public events which marked the transformation brought about by transforming ideas.

When Sister Patricia Ann Matthews, IHM, arrived at Marywood University to join the History and Social Studies Department, she was completing her dissertation on the work of John Courtney Murray, S.J. The theological work of his lifetime had several transforming effects: on the view of U.S. democracy by the European Church, and on the view of American Catholics by other Americans.

The Catholic Church of the late 1800s and early 1900s, largely dominated by European leaders, looked with fear at the pluralism in religious ideas which seemed natural to U.S. citizens. Some Europeans felt that monarchy was the ideal form of government and that Church and State should be united in promoting the truths of Catholicism. If Catholics were a majority, it was expected that they would work to establish the Catholic Church as the official church of the nation. This was accompanied by the idea that "Error has no rights," i.e., that the organizations of other religions were not entitled to complete equality.

After the Second World War, Pope Pius XII realized that people



Sisters Gail Cabral and Patricia Ann Matthews

*Ideas transform. Important ideas of religious liberty in today's pluralistic world deserve recognition. The search for truth in all its forms requires our sincere appreciation for transforming ideas that may become a stimulus for a more peaceful, equitable world.*

of every faith and background would be needed to rebuild a broken world. On what basis might those of other faiths or no faith be engaged? At the same time, John Courtney Murray was examining the two ideas which open the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...." He viewed these two clauses as coming from natural law, and as having their roots in Catholic understanding of the nature of the human being. In his book *We Hold These Truths*

(1960), Murray argued that the American structure of church-state relations is more congenial to Roman Catholic thinking on the subject than any other such structure in history (Time, 1967).

For Murray, the non-establishment clause is essentially an article of peace, based on the principle of union. Murray quoted Pope Pius XII's idea that peace (or union) is the primary principle "when it comes to dealing with the difficulties which arise out of mankind's multiple pluralisms and dissensions" (quoted by Murray, 1960). The idea that the state should not be a

direct support of the goals of any religion came about, according to Murray, because of the plurality of religious traditions and because many colonists were "unchurched" in the American colonies when the Constitution was being formed. John Courtney Murray's work sometimes raised concerns. Not invited to the first session of the Vatican Council, he attended the later sessions as a peritus, or expert, at the insistence of Cardinal Spellman. However, his role on the Commission which wrote the Vatican Declaration on Human Freedom (*Dignitas Humanae*, 1967) was uniquely valuable. His ideas form the basis of much of that document.

Murray was able to move within the tradition of the Church even while unfolding conclusions that changed thinking in unexpected ways. That brings me to a small but significant event that encapsulates transformation. The day after the Council closed, Murray was privileged to concelebrate Mass with Pope Paul VI and a highly respected group of pre-eminent theologians. It was not only an honor, but also a symbolic event of transformative thinking.

This has been about the Church coming to understand and accept the U.S. view of non-establishment of a state religion. The other half of the transformation concerns the attitude of non-Catholics toward Catholics in the United States. Despite the presence of Catholics in the 13 colonies since 1634, anti-Catholic sentiment rose regularly over the course of the next several centuries. This animosity was often fueled by anti-immigration sentiment, and the idea that Catholic obedience to Church

*continued on page 19*



## In Memoriam

*As women of faith, we find ourselves in communion with all who stand at the crossroads where death is giving way to risen life. As we grieve the loss of our own cherished IHM Sisters, we also celebrate their lives poured out in love and service to our beautiful yet wounded world. We invite you to join us in honoring the memory of these beloved and holy women.*



M. St. Henry Haiss, IHM  
March 1, 1934  
March 20, 2024  
by Susan Armbruster, IHM

On March 1, 1934, Marie and Henry Haiss welcome their ninth child, Catherine. She was born and raised in the Bronx - a member of St. Jerome's parish and school, receiving all of her sacraments at St. Jerome's. She was proud of her baptismal date, March 18. It was like a second birthday. She recalled it each year. How many of us remember our Baptismal date? Growing up in the Bronx, her family lived in what she would call a tenement. The children played kickball and stickball on the street. With nine children, they had enough players for their own team! Her big family had lots of fun. Her dad was a hard worker and she treasured the memory of his coming home after work to tuck them in bed and bless them each with holy water. Such a simple gesture of love meant the world to them.

Through her high school days, she loved to sing and loved to dance. One of her favorite memories was marching in the NYC St. Patrick's Day parade. She was always in for a good time. That fun spirit never left her!

When she decided to enter the convent, she was a bit nervous, but her friend and partner in crime, Catherine Rynn, was also on this journey. They supported each other throughout life. When it was time to receive their names in religion, Catherine wanted to honor her dad.

She asked to be St. Henry and so... Sister St. Henry she became. St. Henry was an excellent primary teacher. A particular student, John, kept in touch with her. She asked that we contact John to let him know she was living in Scranton. We know John is watching on livestream today. John, you definitely have an angel in heaven today.

Family... when Henry spoke of you, you were her world. She was so proud of you all! She loved visiting and watching your families grow. Ronnie, the love you and Henry shared was amazing. For her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, her Little Flower community arrived for a surprise party. It was quite a weekend-going out to dinner and celebrating with a toast!! She loved her toasts!

Henry was asked to serve as an administrator at our Marian Convent. When asked how she could make the switch from children to elders, she said there really wasn't much difference between young and old. Treat them with love and keep them smiling. And that she did! Later, when she came to OLP, she picked up where she left off. The staff absolutely loved her.

When her cancer returned, Henry decided she was not going to go through any more treatments: she just wanted to live her days happily. She said, "After all Suzie, God has blessed me with 90 good years! I just want to make sure Ronnie will be OK."

Henry, it has been a privilege to be mentored by you in Syracuse and in Rocky Mt., but most especially a privilege to walk this final journey with you as you prepared to go home to God. Now, you are home in the loving arms of your God, St. Henry. I am sure you will enjoy heaven the way you enjoyed life. Here's to you Henry, cheers!



M. Tarcisius Tasselli, IHM  
April 12, 1929  
April 5, 2024  
by Judy O'Brien, IHM

It is my privilege to welcome all of you who knew, loved and shared the sacred life of Sister Tarcisius Tasselli, IHM. In the mid-80s as a very young sister, I lived in community at St. Joseph's Center with the then, Sister Rosemary Tasselli, IHM. For a brief time, about two years or so, Tarcisius assumed her baptismal name of Rosemary but Rosemary realized that she missed and longed to return to her religious name of Tarcisius. She asked her councilor at the time, Sister St. Mel, to go back to her beloved religious name of Tarcisius.

I did some research about St. Tarcisius. His story is said to be an example "of the power of faith and the willingness to stand up for one's belief even in the face of persecution and death." He defended the Eucharist. Like her patron, Sister Tarcisius had that same passion for the Eucharist.

If asked to describe Sister Tarcisius we would say a kind, sweet, humble and gentle presence in the world. She had the gift of making all of us feel important and loved. But a closer look revealed that she was strong, sometimes stubborn and even fierce in her love of her God. Tarcisius was motivated by that love. Everything flowed out of her intimate relationship with Jesus; that was how she lived her life. Once upon a time in her later years, around the age of 93, while living at St. Mary's Convent in Dunmore, Tarcisius would drive

herself, and others, to daily Mass. There is a small, tightly-spaced garage in the back where the house car was often parked. In her determined spirit to get to daily Eucharist, Tarcisius would attempt to back the car out of the garage and in doing so on many an occasion scraped the frame of garage door leaving multiple scratches. No problem. She had a secret supply of permanent markers that she used to color in the scratches. The side of the car was covered in them. She filled the marks with the closest color she could find because nothing was going to stop her from getting to Mass. She was fierce in her love of God.

Two years ago, Sister Tarcisius moved to Our Lady of Peace where she quickly settled in and made it her home. She loved it here. She spoke of the care and the compassion that she received and treasured her time living with her sisters, having her many friends and family visit and interacting with those caring for her daily. To be in the presence of Sr. Tarcisius Tasselli was to be in the loving presence of God.

About two months ago, I stopped in to see her. She was still curled up in her bed. She hadn't slept well and was very tired. She was ready for God to take her. I knew that she spoke the truth. Her earthly journey came to an end last Friday. Assisted by our wonderful staff and the beautiful caregivers from hospice, Tarcisius peacefully closed her eyes and I have to believe walked into the loving arms of the God. Off you go my friend, fly free and happy. Thank you for loving us, and so teaching us how to love.



Margaret Loftus, IHM  
March 23, 1925  
May 18, 2024  
by Katie Clauss, IHM

As we celebrate Margaret's life we recall her faithful and faith-filled "Yes" to God's call. She brought her love for education and for the French language to the students she taught in the high schools where she served. Her love for education continued during her first encore ministry as Film Librarian in the Radiology Department at Marian Community Hospital.

As I think about Margaret, I am reminded of a reality that we often experience during our lives. We never know when a particular gift of ours might become essential to meeting a need we never thought would be on our horizon. Such was true of Margaret as she entered into her second encore ministry as the translator of the prayer book of our foundress Mother Theresa Maxis. All of the prayers in Theresa's book were handwritten and many were in French. Margaret provided our key to unlocking the treasure of Theresa's prayer. Her gift of freeing Theresa Maxis' voice through her prayer will continue to bless us.

I had the privilege of working with Margaret during the beginning of the translation process. The sessions were filled with a deep appreciation for Theresa as Margaret read the prayers in French and then carefully recited them in English. As I typed the words she spoke, I could hear in her voice a sense of awe as Theresa's words in French and English were spoken. I sensed that Margaret felt a special closeness to Theresa as she entered into her intimate prayer of desire to be known and loved by God. What a blessing Margaret gave us as she allowed us to hear Theresa's voice expressing her deep love for God through her prayer.

Margaret's gift of self is reflected in the first reading from Isaiah: How beautiful on the mountain are the feet of the messenger bringing good news. Margaret's legacy of 78 years

of service as a messenger of God's unconditional love will live on in the hearts of the students and the colleagues she served along the way.

Seventy-eight years ago, Margaret professed her vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. She heard and answered God's call. It is God, who loved her over her lifetime, who now calls her home.

As Sister Margaret's Vow Card is placed in her hands, let us thank God for the gift of Margaret's life and listen to the words of one of the prayers that Margaret translated in Theresa's prayer book. This may be a prayer that Margaret is praying for herself today.

My God, my Creator, last end and my all! I believe strongly that You are here present and I am in You, and You are in me; that Your eyes are set on me as though there is not another one in the world to whom You were giving your attention.

How true this is for Margaret today.



Lois Buckley, IHM  
June 8, 1936  
May 20, 2024  
by Grace Surdovel, IHM

Our Sister Lois was born on June 8, 1936, and would have celebrated her 88<sup>th</sup> birthday in a little over a week. She will now celebrate with her parents and siblings in her heavenly home. I am sure it will be quite the celebration! Lois was a native of Pittston and was the daughter of Daniel and Mary. She and her 9 siblings were reared in a loving, Catholic home. We are blessed to have 33 members of Lois' family with us today both in person and on livestream.

Lois attended St. John the Evangelist Elementary and High School in Pittston before heading off to college at Marywood College to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education. After profession, Lois spent over 50 years ministering in schools and parishes in Pennsylvania and Maryland. Lois loved the children she taught

as well as the adults she guided in her pastoral work and was always ready to share a heartwarming smile with all she encountered. She would also share many funny stories from her ministry with the sisters in her local community. Here at Our Lady of Peace, Lois was a quiet presence among her sisters in the 1C community and was loved by the sisters and staff who cared for her.

Lois was a blessing in all of our lives, and we are grateful for the gift she has been to each of us.

As I reflected on Lois' life and all those who mourn her loss, I recalled a poem by the late John O'Donohue entitled, *On the Death of the Beloved*. I share it with you now as a prayer of gratitude for the 88 years of life our Lois shared with us.

*Though we need to weep your loss, You dwell in that safe place in our hearts where no storm or night or pain can reach you.*

*Your love was like the dawn brightening over our lives, awakening beneath the dark a further adventure of color.*

*The sound of your voice found for us a new music that brightened everything.*

*Whatever you enfolded in your gaze Quickened in the joy of its being, You placed smiles like flowers on the altar of the heart. Your mind always sparkled with wonder at things.*

*Though your days here were brief, Your spirit was alive, awake, complete.*

*We look toward each other no longer from the old distance of our names; now you dwell inside the rhythm of breath, as close to us as we are to ourselves.*

*Though we cannot see you with outward eyes, we know our soul's gaze is upon your face, smiling back at us from within everything to which we bring our best refinement.*

*Let us not look for you only in memory, where we would grow lonely without you. You would want us to find you in presence, besides us when beauty brightens, when kindness glows And music echoes eternal tones.*

*When orchids brighten the earth, Darkest winter has turned to spring; May this dark grief flower with hope in every heart that loves you.*

*May you continue to inspire us: to enter each day with a generous heart. To serve the call of courage and love Until we see your beautiful face again In that land where there is no more separation, where all tears will be wiped from our mind, and where we will never lose you again.*



Jan Marie Kalyan, IHM  
March 5, 1943  
May 31, 2024  
by Grace Surdovel, IHM

I was a student teacher under the supervision of Jan Marie at Notre Dame High School in East Stroudsburg, PA, in 1990. Jan was a newly minted art educator after spending many years as an elementary and secondary music educator in schools in NY, MD and PA. Jan loved to teach, and her love was contagious. Those of us blessed to learn from Jan caught this love for education. After leaving the K-12 classroom, Jan supervised student teachers in music and art education at Marywood University, once again helping to foster a love for teaching in the next generation of educators.

Jan was an accomplished musician and avid artist and photographer. Along with her teaching responsibilities, Jan provided organ accompaniment at parishes in Blakeslee and Wyoming as well as at numerous congregational gatherings. Her photography is known across many states through her website "Photos by Jan" and can be found in many of our homes or offices. Jan's love of life and love of nature were evident in all her captured images, artwork and music.

During these last years as Jan struggled with illness, she decided that she would create a "bucket list" of things that she wished to accomplish before she returned home to God. These items included visits to her family homestead or favorite destinations, evenings out for dinner or ice cream with friends and long visits with her close friends and family.

One final piece Jan wanted to complete was a reflection journal that would include photos taken by her along with quotes that inspired her, and that she hoped would inspire the reader. I encouraged Jan to work toward completing this book as a part of her legacy. Jan worked with Sisters Fran Fasolka and Kathy Burns in the layout of this book in these last few months and I am happy to

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share that this journal is now in the final stages of publication and will be available through Amazon in the next few weeks. We also hope to have copies available for purchase in Heartworks. When you look at this beautiful journal and pray through the images and inspirational quotes, you will be able to hear Jan's call to "come within," enjoy the beauty of nature all around you and rest awhile in the love of God as Jan is now doing in her heavenly home.

In closing, I would like to share one of the quotes from Jan's final publication. I think it sums up Jan's own courageous path of life, love and adventure: "Do not be afraid to travel a new path. It may be the way to find what you've been looking for all along." - Author unknown

Jan, may your new path lead you home to the loving arms of your God and family. May eternal rest come to you and may perpetual light shine upon you now and forever.



M. Mercille Schneider, IHM  
July 7, 1927  
June 3, 2024  
by Suzie Armbruster, IHM

Sister Mercille was born on July 7, 1927, and given the name Elizabeth Ann, affectionately known as Betty Ann. This year she will be spending her 97<sup>th</sup> birthday reunited with her parents, John and Mary, her brother Walter, and sisters Ann, Peg and Madeline. Sister Mercille spent 71 years of her life as a professed Sister, Servant of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and almost a full century of union with God as a disciple of Jesus through her baptism. While we grieve the loss of her presence among us, we recall with fondness the gifts Sister Mercille brought to the world as a witness to her faith.

On the day of her profession, Sister signed a vow card, promising her fidelity to living poverty, chastity, and obedience. As we celebrate her life today, we acknowledge that she has fulfilled these vows with joy.

When we hear the name Mercille, we smile and remember one of the funniest sisters in our community.

Mercille had a magic trunk of costumes and props for every occasion.

An IHM custom for those in the Southern missions was to gather at the beach to enjoy one last fun day in the sun before the beginning of a new school year. Besides spending time playing cards, sitting in the sun, and of course, feasting... the sisters would get creative and have their own Miss America pageant. Once they decided to draw words beginning with the prefix "mis." With 20+ sisters, it was a serious task to think of so many such words. We drew a word, and secretly went to create a charade and costume to represent such word. We could only use items found in the cottages. After mass and dinner, it was time for charades. Mercille, true to form, donned a blue flowing caftan and came into the room, stumbled and stumbled again. After we all gasped thinking she had really tripped, we began to guess till we realized she had drawn the word "mishap." Others had to act out the words misfortune, Mississippi, misread, and more.

It was an experience watching a football game with Mercille. Quietly she would slip out of the room and re-emerge as a football player complete with helmet and football or even funnier, as a cheerleader! All from her magic trunk.

While teaching first grade at St. Ann's as a young sister, Mercille found herself in a very warm classroom and a very sleepy group of children. To wake them up and gain energy, she jumped up on a student's desk to dance and continue teaching a phonics lesson. More often than not, you would hear laughter, squeals and giggles coming from her classroom no matter where she taught.

Mercille served as a parish minister in Lumberton NC. During her time in Lumberton, she established a small pantry for the poor, visited folks in prison and taught literacy. Upon leaving North Carolina, she joined the community at St. John the Evangelist in Silver Spring where she was the director of the afterschool program.

Mercille's Rhode Island accent, along with the sparkle in her eyes and broad smile, will live on in our hearts and memories.



Raymond Mary McIntyre, IHM  
October 12, 1935  
June 10, 2024  
by Anne Mary Boslett, IHM

Sister Raymond Mary was born in Ashley, PA. She was one of ten children, five boys and five girls. The third from the top was a priest, Father Ray; the third from the bottom was a religious sister, Sister Raymond Mary. Her parents named her Theresa. The McIntyres lived on Manhattan Street, the same street where St. Leo's Church was located, so all they had to do was walk a few steps to get to the church. When Theresa graduated from high school, she entered the convent and became Sister Raymond Mary, Raymond being a popular name in the McIntyre family. Since she entered in 1953, she was received in 1954, the Holy Year. That year all the postulants took the name "Mary" after their name rather than before their name, so she became known as a member of the "Mary" band.

In her early years as a sister, Sister Raymond Mary was not known for being prompt. I would say to her, "Ray, that paper is due today." Her answer, "Well the day isn't over yet," and she would have the paper in at the last minute.

One year I got a Christmas card from Port Washington, I thought "I don't know anybody in Port Washington." When I opened the card, it was from Sister Raymond Mary. She had been missioned in Port Washington the year before when she wrote her Christmas cards. She mailed them the following year.

Sister Raymond Mary had many interests, she enjoyed playing Scrabble, and she enjoyed playing cards and she liked putting puzzles together. Often, she would laminate the puzzle, then frame it and hang it on the wall. She made a lot of things out of yarn; many she gave as gifts. She also made bookmarks, which she gave to her friends and relatives. One thing Sister did not do at the last minute, was write her prayer service and obituary. A few years ago, she told me that she had her prayer service and obituary written.

Needless to say, I was very surprised.

Sister Raymond Mary was no stranger to suffering. More than once, I visited her in the hospital, and I thought she would never come out. Anyone who saw Sister Raymond Mary right before she died knows how much she suffered. Now she has no more suffering, only the peace of Christ.

Thank you, Sister, for your friendship all these years. May you rest in peace.



Joan Marie Thompson, IHM  
July 29, 1938  
June 16, 2024  
by Kieran Williams, IHM

I first lived with Joan Marie at Most Holy Rosary Convent, in Syracuse, NY, while on formative activity. Most Holy Rosary was a large and vibrant community of 18 sisters. Friday nights were so much fun, dancing, eating lots of popcorn and enjoying one another's company. This was also my first experience of, walking side by side with Sister Pat Schaeffer, IHM a young sister dying of cancer. It was the community's sharing of life, love and prayer with Pat that was so profound.

In all things, Joan's "yes" was clearly evident. She was willing to go where the greatest need was at the time and would be willing to travel even as far as Peru. She served in many different positions: teacher, principal, administrator, Director of ESL to name only a few.

In all things, Joan was a team player, talented and tremendously supportive. She was a great mentor to many in formation including Rachel, Trish, Wendy, Amanda, Elvia, Grace, and me.

In all things, Joan shared her deep faith with the people in parishes where she served, especially through Children's Liturgy.

Joan had a tremendous love for sports and cheered on most passionately Notre Dame and Syracuse.

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Joan loved to roller skate and she was great! We were probably the only elementary school who went roller skating seven times a year. Who else could have at age 70 gone to the water park, or at age 75, gone sledding down the hill at the IHM Center on a tray from the kitchen?

Somewhere between 75 and 80 years old, Joan went tubing with the next generation of the Williams' family around Newton Lake.

In her final transition at Our Lady of Peace, Joan expressed her deepest thoughts to many Sisters, "I'm 85 and have lived a good life; I'm ready to go home to God."

God's time wasn't always Joan's time. June 16, 2024, was Joan's time. What a wonderful reunion that must have been for Joan, to gather once again with her dad, mother, and brother. June 16 was Father's Day and as I celebrated this day with my family at Newton Lake, we remembered Joan with love and gratitude for being a wonderful principal for seven of my brothers and sisters. She was teacher, friend, mentor and our best cheerleader.

Joan, thank you for the memories and for your love, prayers and support. I will always treasure the most sacred moment of your final "YES." Go in peace, God be with you. Go in peace, be at rest with the saints and the angels. Now you are free. Go in peace.



Anne McDonald, IHM  
July 28, 1950  
July 4, 2024  
by Katie Clauss, IHM

Anne was the beloved of her family and of her many friends, former colleagues and IHM sisters who have claimed her as part of their lives. That sense of belonging and love filled the IHM Center Chapel last night with great energy and peace as we engaged with one another. Perhaps, it was in our reconnecting with Anne, our recalling memories that were important to your relationship with her, remembering times when Anne reached out to you

when you needed support, or when she just made you laugh; yes, that power of remembering what Anne's love was like brought her spirit to life in this space in a way that she was present and enjoying every moment of being in our hearts.

During her life, Anne's honest way of being with us enabled us to feel comfortable as we welcomed her into our lives and placed our trust in her. There is a beautiful Irish saying about a person, like Anne, who has earned the trust of others over the long arc of time: "You are the place I stand on the days when my feet are sore. You are the place I stand on the days when my feet are sore."

Anne, you were the place where we stood on the days when our feet were sore and our hearts were broken. You welcomed us to that place and freed us to experience the unconditional and redeeming love of Jesus there with you. Be at peace, our friend. Know that we will continue to remember what your love is like. May your soul, Anne, and the souls of your parents, John and Ruth, your brothers, Robert, James and John, and sisters Margaret and Barbara and all those who have gone before us rest in the peace that only God can give.

Sister Kathy Kelly will place Anne's bible on her coffin as a reminder to us that Anne staked her life on the word of God and that it is Jesus, the Word of God who now welcomes her home.



Virginia Waters, IHM  
May 15, 1934  
July 7, 2024  
by Judy O'Brien, IHM

We sisters all bear the initials IHM following our names. It is who we become on the day of our first professions. These initials create an automatic bond among us, a belonging that lasts a lifetime. On that day we are bestowed these initials without any clue or remote idea of all the places they will take us, the people we will serve, and the convents that house all the women with whom we will share community.

We go to our graves with these beautiful initials Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, or as we are referred to the IHM sisters. One of the most wonderful places these initials took me as a very young sister was to St. Joseph's Center where I met and shared life with Sister Virginia Waters, IHM because IHM followed our names.

Many of us sisters have other initials following our names because of the educational degrees we have earned. You may or may not see them, but they are there and they connect us to other communities of people all over the world. For our Virginia Waters those initials were R.N., registered nurse. It is this Virginia that I remember and share a bit of her story with you. As many of you know Virginia had a tad of OCD in her personality. Everything Virginia did was an attempt at perfection. In God's design, I'm sure it was no coincidence that nursing was her chosen field of expertise. Nursing requires exacting, sanitizing, and extreme accuracy and, if done well, an abundance of love. I was blessed to witness first-hand Virginia's loving heart.

In our days at St. Joe's, the babies who were waiting adoption lived with us in a nursery downstairs. Sister Virginia, R.N., was in charge of that holy place. Sometimes there would be one baby and sometimes there would be ten babies, but in Virginia's care for a brief moment, they were all her babies. If I close my eyes, I can see this impeccably attired, veiled sister in a pure white habit rocking an infant to sleep in a sweet white rocking chair while the others slept. In the chaotic moments, she would be bustling about in short quick steps up and down the lined, clear plastic cribs to meet each one's needs. Feeding, changing, rocking or holding closely a beautifully swaddled infant who needed human connection and love. Virginia provided that abundance of love. At dinner she would give us an update on their growth and progress. And when the time came, it was Virginia Waters, R.N., IHM who dressed them and placed them into the arms of those they would call mom and dad forever. She knew deeply the experience of letting go for the common good. This was our sister who loved these infants into life.

I also believe that it was in God's design that during these last years Virginia would be cared for by that community of people who bear the same R.N. or C.N.A. initials. These wonderful professionals who, like Virginia with the infants, show

that same abundance of love with her and our elderly sisters. They knew Virginia's need for exacting, sanitizing and accuracy. They knew how she liked her clothing and hair to look, what she liked to eat and when she liked to eat, and what time she liked to sleep. For all of her caregivers, we are grateful.

Some may say that initials don't matter, but for those of us with IHM following our names, they mean everything. Go in peace Virginia Waters, IHM, R.N. and please watch over all of us left to carry on that mission of serving with an abundance of love. Amen.



M. Josaire Brady, IHM  
October 13, 1930  
August 5, 2024  
by Grace Surdovel, IHM

Our Sister Josaire, born Jane Brady in Danville, Pennsylvania, was the only daughter of Patrick and Catherine McClain Brady. She and her brother Joseph grew up in a loving home and attended St. Joseph's Catholic Elementary School; she continued on to the Slovak Girls Academy. Josaire attended Marywood University, graduating with a degree in Elementary Education in 1959. She entered the congregation on September 8, 1950, professing temporary vows on August 2, 1951 and final vows on August 2, 1953. Some of her band mates are with us today to remember their sister and friend. Josaire ministered in schools in Connecticut, Maryland, New York, North Carolina and Pennsylvania before serving as a receptionist at both the Marian Convent and Our Lady of Peace Residence.

Although reserved in social settings, Josaire was the consummate educator and storyteller. She loved teaching and working with young children. Some of her favorite memories revolved around students she taught, schools where she ministered and the families whose lives she touched over her 43 years

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in the classroom and school library. When you had the pleasure of sitting with Josaire, she would often share a story about her years of teaching and would usually have you laughing as she told her tales. Josaire also loved Notre Dame football and sports in general. During the college football season, as she was departing the dinner table here at OLP, she and Mary Ann Remus would say to one another, "see you at the game." This was a regular occurrence for Josaire and Mary Ann and no doubt, fellow Notre Dame fans who are with us today.

Other loves of Josaire's were bingo and the Bloomsburg Fair. Josaire would meet up with her brother, Joe, to spend the day together at the fair. No doubt they made a stop at the Bingo tent!

In a blessing prayer entitled, *In the Leaving*, poet Jan Richardson offers a final blessing for those whom we have loved and lost. I offer these words of blessing for our Sister Josaire and for all who grieve her loss.

In the leaving,  
In the letting go,  
Let there be this  
To hold onto  
At the last:

The enduring of love,  
The persisting of hope,  
The remembering of joy,

The offering of gratitude,  
The receiving of grace,  
The blessing of peace.

Josaire, may you experience the loving embrace of your God, your parents, brother, family and IHM sisters as you are welcomed into your heavenly home. Know that our love goes with you on this final journey.

Well done, good and faithful servant.



The IHM Communications Office is seeking old photographs of Scranton IHM Sisters both living and deceased. Send photos to [communications@sistersofihm.org](mailto:communications@sistersofihm.org)



Lillian Marie Farrell, IHM  
December 17, 1930  
August 8, 2024

by Marie Lourdes Vanston, IHM

Today we honor our Sister, Lillian, who journeyed with us in community and ministry. Thinking of Lil today, I recalled reading these words written by an unknown author: "Loving God, You have taken me like clay and formed my life. You have given shape to my hopes and dreams. I praise You for having loved me enough to create life through and for me. I ask that You use me to bring new life and joy to all your people."

After a second reading, I thought it truly reflected Lil's utter trust in the God she loved so unconditionally. The words also offer consolation to us who contemplate anew the mystery of a Divine Love who called Lil home last week with an urgency that our human hearts struggle to understand but for which our hearts of faith truly yearn.

We all know Lil's love of poetry, her determination, humor, and love of a good party. She had an abiding love for her brothers, especially her brother, John, as well as for our congregation and those with and to whom she ministered.

She moved us with her persistence and insights into reading and reciting classic English poetry. Do you remember *The Hound of Heaven* by Francis Thompson? "I fled him down the nights and down the days; I fled him down the labyrinthine ways of my own mind." Despite any upheaval in the background, Lil remained the perfect lady! These valuable memories remain in our own minds and hearts.

Today then we give gratitude for the life of Lil and the countless ways she shared life with us as sister, friend, teacher, pastoral minister, and so much more during her 67 years of religious life.

We remember today, Lil's parents, John and Lillian Dunn Farrell, her brothers, John J. and William, her sister, Mary Ruth and all her extended family. We ask God to fill with hope and peace her IHM Sisters, especially

those who lived in her Household 1C here at Our Lady of Peace, the members of her band, the staff and administrators of OLP, the nurses and aids on first floor and her hospice caregivers.

Certainly, Lil embodied a deep love of prayer and through it, served God and our world. May her example continue to inspire, energize and guide us always, and leave a smile in our hearts. Amen.



Mary Jane Maloney, IHM  
June 7, 1932  
August 21, 2024  
by Judy O'Brien, IHM

Last Saturday on August 17, we received notice that Sister Mary Jane was being released from the hospital, back to OLP, on hospice. My plan for the day had been to take my 6-year-old granddaughter Avery, who was here from Boston, to visit OLP and have dinner with the sisters here. As we were arriving, the ambulance was at the front door bringing her home. She was, of course, being received with open arms and the most tender of care by our nursing and personal care staff, to her familiar space called home. I witnessed Anne Boylan stop everything she was doing to make sure all was ready for her return, and making Mary Jane comfortable and at ease was her singular priority. There are no words to express the gratitude we have for all of our care-takers here at OLP.

At around 1:30 I went in to see Mary Jane. She looked lovely. For those of you who may not know, looking nice was very important to Mary Jane, and she always succeeded. In fact, it is well known that Sisters Mary Jane and Felicia were the best dressed nuns in Brooklyn and this Saturday was no exception. Her hair was done beautifully, her blue, lace trimmed night gown matched her sheets and she was so peaceful. As I approached her bed and took her hand in mine and she opened her eyes and whispered "Hi Judy" Then she closed her eyes. I told her that we loved her and were praying for her as she moved along her sacred

journey. She responded, "I can feel the prayers." For anybody who has not had the privilege of being with a person who is taking the next step in life's transitions, I really wish that experience for you.

My eyes shifted to the top of her dresser. There sat a transistor radio that looked like something manufactured in the nineteen fifties, a little perforated black oblong box with a silver antenna reaching to the sky for its signal and playing, to my surprise, quite loudly, was music from the 80s, my music and also hers. Music was Mary Jane's mission and ministry in life. For 67 years, she taught and imparted one of life's greatest gifts, the gift of music. For us IHMs, music, art, literature and poetry are at the core of our mission and this beautiful woman passed that on to hundreds and hundreds of children. From Bach to Neil Diamond they sang and danced and they were happy. This is the extraordinary legacy she leaves. Mary Jane Maloney, IHM, The Music Woman who spent life teaching the universal language called music, all in the name of IHM. Thank you, Mary Jane, for a life well lived among us. The poet, Percy Shelly expresses it this way:

"Music when soft voices die  
vibrates in the memory"

Beautiful, Mary Jane our musician, you live on in our memory. May a choir of lute playing, and singing angels, clad in gorgeous woven cloth lead you home today. Amen.



Mary Newett, IHM  
August 24, 1928  
September 5, 2024  
by Maria Viatori, ocd

Several years ago, I visited Mary at Our Lady of Peace. Our conversation veered into serious territory as she told me that she did not want to have a time of remembrance at her funeral because she did not feel that people could testify to the important aspects of her life.

During our subsequent visits,

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she recalled the milestones of her religious life. The break through moment for Mary occurred when she read, *The Nun in the Modern World*, by Cardinal Leo Jozef Suenens. That book and the tenets from Vatican II opened the windows and let the Holy Spirit flood her life. It enlightened her trajectory as a woman religious on fire with the love of God.

She told me of the experience she had while living with the Sisters of Saint Joseph. Some of the sisters were ministering to people of Hispanic origins. Mary became aware of their plight- not having adequate spiritual and pastoral accompaniment within the Roman Catholic Church. This awareness ignited her and deepened her sense of mission to the abandoned and under-served. She was impelled by the zeal of St. Alphonsus Liguori and the determination of St. Teresa of Avila to follow the way of Jesus Christ in welcoming the stranger.

In the mid-seventies, Mary began her ministry to the Hispanic people at Our Lady of Sorrows in Tacoma Park, MD. This was a turning point in the history of IHM as sisters were venturing into "new – nontraditional ministries." Some sisters could not understand why she left the classroom. In these turbulent times, Mary was a witness to fidelity to prayer, love for her community and dedication to her ministry.

Mary was graced by God in her pilgrimage toward authenticity, integrity and wholeness. She was comfortable in her own skin and knew to whom she belonged – Jesus Christ, her Savior and Lord. Mary was a wise woman who sifted through the chaff to see the essentials in life and point to the truth. This wisdom came from a life-long commitment to prayer. Praying with the Scriptures was one of the anchors in her life that grounded her being. She wanted those around her to know the treasure and gift it is to pray with the Word of God.

Embodying the vision of Vatican II for growth in collaboration, inclusion and welcome, Mary encountered some resistant responses from her clerical counterparts. Although it must have been frustrating, Mary pressed on knowing that her life was about serving the people and spreading the good news of God's redeeming love; not vying for recognition or status. This focus shaped the way she served in all her ministries.

Mary's vision for the Church was dynamic. Her desire was that all people should know the deep love of God and the Church should do all in its power to make that a lived reality. She yearned for the day when all people could receive the Eucharist.

The highest priority was that we remain a sacramental church for all people in every corner of the world. Mary truly had a missionary heart and wanted others to know the redeeming love of God that radiated through her own life.

In her last years at Our Lady of Peace, Mary would gently tell us that she was ready for God to take her home. She knew that her life would not end but be radically changed and transformed into the very heart of God. This was the final bit of wisdom that she wanted to convey to us. Mary, we are all so very grateful for your abiding presence in our lives. May you be enfolded in God's loving embrace for all eternity.



Mary Ellen James, IHM  
November 3, 1924  
September 12, 2024  
by Grace Surdovel, IHM

Our Sister Mary Ellen James, previously known as Sister M. Cordia, was a native of Baltimore, Maryland and the daughter of John and Ellen Johnson James. She and her sister Helen grew up in a loving home surrounded by family and friends. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Science and English from St. Joseph College in Emmitsburg, Maryland and a Medical Technology License from the American Society of Clinical Pathologists. She served as a science and English teacher in schools in Scranton, Dushore and Ashley before transitioning to her work as a medical technologist at St. Joseph's Hospital, Lourdes Hospital, Marian Convent and St. Joseph's Center. She served in the ministry of medical technology for over 50 years before retiring in 1984. Not one to sit idly by, Mary Ellen then served on the support staff at the IHM Center until transitioning to Our Lady of Peace in 2013.

One of my earliest memories of Sister Mary Ellen was her close relationship with our Sister Mary Kay Dwyer. During college and initial formation, I would volunteer at St. Joseph's Center assisting my friend

Gail in the feeding of some of the residents. Mary Kay would observe this interaction and eventually introduced herself to me and invited Gail and I to join Mary Ellen and herself to dinner at Billy's in South Scranton. Over a period of time, there were multiple invitations to dinner or lunch from Mary Kay and Mary Ellen and these invitations were always warm and welcoming.

A second memory I have of Mary Ellen was when she served as a medical technologist at the Marian Convent. As a newly minted temporary professed sister, I found myself having unscheduled surgery and needed a place to recuperate. My counselor at the time recommended that I go to the Marian Convent to recover. Upon arrival, Mary Ellen arrived at my door with the nurse, and they quickly took my vitals and helped me to get settled in and comfortable. For the next week, Mary Ellen would stop by my room after she finished her shift to see how I was doing. While Mary Ellen would often present herself in a stern, medically serious manner, I was blessed to see another side of her during these off-hour visits.

For more than sixty years, our Sister Mary Ellen was a bearer of light, compassion and care for her students and those she cared for in her ministry as a medical technologist. May the angels welcome you into your heavenly home as you are reunited with your loving God, family, friends, and IHM sisters.

Well done, good and faithful servant.



M. Martin de Porres, McHale, IHM  
October 23, 1931  
September 24, 2024  
by Katie Clauss, IHM

By her baptismal call, Sister Martin de Porres was a woman of the Church. For 66 years she devoted herself to joyful, loving, and hospitable service of God's people. Her service was undertaken in prayerful union with God and supported by the shared vision and

commitment of our sisters for the transformation of this world. She consciously chose to live in a way that allowed her talents, resources, spiritual gifts, and commitment to become a source of life giving energy and creativity for all creation.

In mission and community, Martin was called out beyond herself to serve the sisters with whom she lived, the students she taught, and the colleagues with whom she ministered. Her reliance on God's providence supported her as she responded to the needs of those she encountered. These moments awakened and drew her more deeply into the call she received to be a presence of God's unconditional love wherever she was.

Over the years I have heard numerous stories about Martin's quiet and generous response to those who were in need. I don't think that we will ever know how many women, men, and children were recipients of her kindness. Surely, her goodness was a blessing for each of them, a blessing that was never forgotten.

As a daughter, a sister, and an aunt, Martin was deeply loved by her family. She now joins her parents, Thomas P. and Elizabeth McHale and her brothers Thomas and Joseph who have long awaited her presence.

Our Sister Martin de Porres McHale staked her life on God's word. It is Jesus, the Word of God, who now welcomes her home.

On the day of her profession Martin committed herself to living fully and freely the vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience throughout her life. She spent her life living into these vows, finding the depth of new meaning for them as an IHM Sister. So, today we rejoice in Martin's fidelity. We rejoice that she was a woman of the church, a woman who cared deeply for those she loved and those she served. The pain and loss of her presence is very real today. I believe that she is right on the other side of the veil and is available to you. She will take care of you in her death as she did in her life. You can take that to the bank. That would probably be an expression that Martin would deeply appreciate.

God bless you and know that we hold you in our hearts and in our prayer.



*Lucas, continued from page 5*

organizations that seek to create a more comprehensive level of awareness and understanding of the systems of oppression caused by racism and create solutions that address and dismantle these systemic entities.

In 2019, the mission and core values of Marywood led a small group of faculty and staff to apply for a grant from the American Association of Colleges and Universities to develop a Center for Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) on campus. Marywood was fortunate to be one of only 12 other schools awarded the grant. Since that time, the Center has become an instrumental part of campus and generally in NEPA, providing critical resources (e.g., training, workshops, community events, and lecture series) on campus as well as in the local and regional community. In May 2024, the Center was renamed to honor Mother Theresa Maxis, IHM, who herself grappled with racism and discrimination. The TRHT Center seeks to bridge the racial and social gaps that divide us, and be a catalyst for change, togetherness, acceptance, and progress.

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*Yerodin Lucas is an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at Marywood University located in Scranton, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Arcadia University with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Relations. He completed his Master's degree in Education at Temple University, and his Master's degree in Social Work and PhD in Administration and Leadership from Marywood University. His published dissertation titled: Factors Affecting African American Male Students at Predominantly White Institutions: A Case Study in Northeastern Pennsylvania (NEPA) highlights the support structures necessary for first-year Black male student persistence. As a Philadelphia native, Yerodin enjoys good food and city life. Yerodin has traveled and worked abroad in Asia, Canada, and Europe.*

*Cabral, continued from page 12*

authorities, especially the Pope, would mean a disavowal of the religious liberty described in the first amendment. As late as the 1920s, the cry against the presidential nominee, Al Smith, enumerated "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion" as the supposed dangers of a Catholic in high office. This fear that Catholics would not support the broad view of religious freedom in a pluralistic society was still present when John F. Kennedy ran for office in 1960. A turning point in that campaign was Kennedy's speech to Baptist ministers in Texas which allayed their fears concerning an imposition of policies narrowly Catholic in import. Kennedy consulted with Father Murray ahead of that speech. In it, Kennedy called for an America where no Catholic prelate would give directions to a Catholic president, and "no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners how to vote."

Today we do not find the type of anti-Catholicism that tries to keep Catholics from political voice. Catholics presently hold or have held especially important positions on the Supreme Court, in Congress, and even the White House. My point is that these two moments, Murray's invitation to concelebrate with Pope Paul VI as a leading, accepted theologian, and John F. Kennedy's election as U.S. President, are the significant markers that speak to decades of hard theological work by Father Murray and others.

Ideas transform. Important ideas of religious liberty in today's pluralistic world deserve recognition. The search for truth in all its forms requires our sincere appreciation for transforming ideas that may become a stimulus for a more peaceful, equitable world.

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*Sister Gail retired from Marywood University in 2022. She currently teaches a course in developmental psychology to Catholic sisters in Kenya and Uganda via Zoom.*



*A Photo-Guided Journal by  
Jan Marie Kalyan, IHM*

## Photo-Guided Journal Published

Before her death, Sister Jan Marie Kalyan, IHM, had nearly completed the layout of her photo-guided journal. The final pages were completed by Sister Kathleen Burns. Jan's photo journal was published and is available for purchase on Amazon and at Heartworks Gift Shop at Our Lady of Peace Residence.

Sister Jan's profound spirituality and unwavering love for God radiates from every page of this photo journal, a testament to a life dedicated to capturing the divine in the everyday. For decades, her creative eye meticulously documented the breathtaking tapestry of God's creation, from a peaceful path in the green wood to a sandy path leading to the ocean's edge. An artist, musician, photographer, teacher, mentor, and liturgist, Sister Jan Marie generously shared her multifaceted talents, her insatiable curiosity, and her boundless love for life.

She envisioned each image in *Come Within* to be a catalyst for reflection, a doorway to contemplation, and a connection with the divine.

*Come Within* can be purchased at:  
<https://tinyurl.com/4ftypzmy>  
or search Amazon "Come Within."





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*In the presence of the Sisters of St. Casimir and the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, PA, at Franciscan Village in Lemont, IL, the transfer of the Sisters of St. Casimir governance to the pontifical commissary took place on August 29. This date also marked the 117th anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of St. Casimir at Marywood in Scranton, PA. The new Leadership Team of the Sisters of St. Casimir are pictured L-R: Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius, SSC, Advisor; Sister Ellen Maroney, IHM, Delegate; Sister Kathryn Clauss, IHM, Pontifical Commissary; and Sister Immacula Wendt, SSC, Advisor.*