

A stylized illustration of a mountain range in shades of green and white, with a small white star in the upper right corner.

# *Journey*

Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, PA Vol. 43, No. 1 Spring 2025

A close-up photograph of a white daisy flower with a bright yellow center, set against a blurred green background. A green flower bud is visible to the left of the main flower.

## Living

## Simply

## An Intentional Choice by Katie Clauss, IHM

*Living simply is an intentional choice—though not always a simple one.*

**L**iving simply is an intentional choice—though not always a simple one.

It's a meaningful act, an act of love and resistance, rich with implications for how we live today and provide for the future. Choosing simplicity invites reflection on our values, habits, and the systems in which we participate.

The authors writing for this edition of *Journey* address the multifaceted nature of "Living Simply." They offer insights, examples, and questions that suggest implications for spirituality, personal and communal ethics, lifestyle, and vowed life. They remind us that living simply is not about having less—it is about living with greater purpose, care and connection:

- Live from an abundance of faith, hope and love.
- Be self-emptying in order to be a mystical presence in the world.
- Be wholeheartedly aligned with the mind and heart of Jesus.
- Reflect on your choices and actions for the good of the world.
- Notice that in times of economic hardship, we're more likely to return to older established practices that repair and restore our world... fixing, mending, thrifting.
- Be good, live simply, love limitlessly.
- Live a simple lifestyle rooted in the Gospel.
- Recognize that "enoughness is a radical act in an economy that is always urging us to consume more" (Kimmerer, 2024).

Ari Wallach, in his book *Longpath: Becoming the Great Ancestors Our Future Needs*, reminds us that the decisions we make today carry weight far beyond the present moment. He offers readers a reflection from the Talmud on care of the future through long-term vision and selfless dedication:

*One day a man named Choni was walking along and saw a man planting a carob tree. Choni asked the man, "How many years will it take until it will bear fruit?" He said to him, "Not for seventy years." Choni said to him, "Do you really believe you'll live another seventy years?"*

*The man answered, "I found this world provided with carob trees, and as my ancestors planted them for me, so, I too, plant them for my descendants (Talmud (Ta'anit 23A – quoted in Longpath by Ari Wallach).*

In choosing to live simply, what are we, as faithful ancestors, planting for our descendants?

*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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# Living from an Abundance of Faith, Love, and Hope

by Mary Elaine Anderson, IHM

*"And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So, He said, 'Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.'"*

- Luke 21:1-4

Reflecting on this Biblical story, I realize that I have never played the role of the widow who gives from a place of poverty. However, I have been blessed to receive the widow's two mites over and over during my lifetime.

When I lived in Sicuani, a town in the Andean Mountains of Peru, it was not uncommon for people who had very little materially to share what they had with their neighbors and even with a "foreigner" like me who was living among them. I remember walking for hours one day to reach an elementary school in one of the outlying communities of Sicuani. A woman, sitting in a field tending a fire and roasting potatoes that she had just harvested, invited the other sister and me to sit down and share her banquet. We added the little we had ... one orange and a handful of lemon candies. It was enough for the three of us, and there were even leftovers!

My ministry with migrants has brought me many blessings of a similar kind. Several years ago, I met a woman from Venezuela who was migrating to the US with her husband. Verónica was about my age, and I marveled at her courage to uproot herself and leave behind all that she had known to start a new life in the US. I soon came to realize that what Verónica grieved most was not the material possessions but rather the family members she had left in Venezuela. She told me that what drew her to me was that I had eyes the same color as her mother-in-law... a ninety-year-old woman who was fragile and could not make the journey with her son and daughter-in-law. As I walked Verónica to the security line at the airport, she began to search among her meager possessions. What she did next was a complete surprise to me. She gave me a COVID face mask that she herself had made and then asked me to remember her and to pray for her mother-in-law. And in receiving the little Verónica had to offer me, our relationship changed! I was forever bound to her.

Most US citizens cannot imagine themselves uprooting their families for a better life... maybe because many of them are already



*Many migrants are coming from a situation of poverty. Their desire is to give their children and family a life where there is enough food and where there are opportunities for education and employment. They have a dream for a better life, not only for themselves but also for those whom they have met on the journey and for us who will be their neighbors. For many, that dream was wiped away with an executive order and one stroke of a pen that terminated the CBP One app which was their legal way to enter the US.*

living the good life. Social media has portrayed the US as a place of plenty... where there is an abundance of money, food, cars, and any kind of resource imaginable. It is no wonder that migrants choose the US as their place of destination. They see it as a place where there is enough for everyone, including others who come from different countries. Unfortunately, the poor and marginalized living in the US know the truth. There may be enough, but that does not necessarily mean that those who have an abundance want to share it with others, even if the less fortunate are US citizens.

Is the desire to live simply a goal of people who already have more than enough? I have never heard a migrant say, "I am coming to the US with my family to live simply." Many migrants are coming from a situation of poverty. Their desire is to give their children and family a life where there is enough food and where there are opportunities for education and employment. They have a dream for a better life, not only for themselves but also for those whom they have met on the journey and for us who will be their neighbors. For many, that dream was wiped away with an executive order and one stroke of a pen that terminated the CBP One app (Customs and Border Protection) which was their legal way to enter the US.

As I reflect on what it means to live simply, I cannot help but wonder what good it will do if we do not also share the wealth that we have with those who have less. It seems that we need to examine our motivation and inspiration for living simply. Our migrant brothers and sisters have much to teach us about what is important in life, namely, family and relationships. They, too, live from their abundance, but it is not a wealth of material goods that they have, but rather an abundance of faith, love, and hope.

*Sister Mary Elaine is a member of the OSP-IHM core community in McAllen, Texas, an inter-congregational initiative that accompanies asylum seekers on the US-Mexico border.*

# Our Call to Live More Simply

by Redempta Sweeney, IHM

The year 1971 was a momentous one in the salvation history of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, Pennsylvania. On the fateful night of February 22, 1971, our IHM Motherhouse burned to the ground. As Director of Novices at the time, I was living at the Novitiate, now the IHM Center. From a third-floor window, I could see the inferno and thought to myself, our junior sisters living on the fourth floor will never make it out alive, but by some miracle of God's Divine Providence, no lives were lost. That night all of our sisters living in that Motherhouse, including the professors and staff at Marywood College, now Marywood University, lost everything they had. The shock of that event was the beginning of our call to live more simply and the beginning of our real spiritual renewal.

At the 7:00 a.m. celebration of the Eucharist the next morning, our sisters in bathrobes, bedroom slippers and whatever clothing they could find were all there in the chapel. The opening hymn was "God Gives His People Strength." It was planned the week before the fire, and, indeed, God's strength and healing prevailed.

That same year, 1971, was a momentous year for me personally. I found myself in Rome, Italy, in September enrolled in the ARC Program (Apostolic Religious Communities) for English speaking women religious. Most of the sisters were directors of formation programs. We were taught by Jesuits from all over the world. Paul Molinari, S.J., the director, was from Rome. Passionist priest, Barnabas Ahern, taught us all that could be known and written by St. Paul. A woman religious, Mary Milligan, from Marymount University, taught the Old Testament. The immersion in the Scriptures and the contemporary challenges from Mother Theresa of Calcutta integrated our Gospel focus toward "living simply" in a very powerful way.

David Stanley, S.J., taught the Gospel of St. John. It was this class that took hold of me, and I have never stopped loving this Gospel for more than fifty years. It was a pure gift for me, and I taught it for many years afterward.

Now in retirement at Our Lady of Peace Residence, the mystical Gospel often referred to as the "eagle in flight" continues to inspire me. In the most recent Direction Statement from our Chapter of 2022, we IHMs proclaimed our desire to empty ourselves so as to commit ourselves in all simplicity to being a mystical presence in our world.

In his book *Arise, My Love: Mysticism for a New Era*, William Johnston, S.J., explains that in his forty years in Japan, he experienced many views of Jesus as a mystic from interactions with the Dalai Lama and many other mystical masters. What attracted all these lovers of Jesus from other faiths was his kenosis—his total self-emptying. For the life of the world, Jesus accepted the loss of everything and embraced his death on the Cross.

The early Christians saw Jesus as more than a prophet and more than a mystic. Jesus was the Son of God who existed before He was born of Mary. John the beloved stated in the prologue to his Gospel, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:14). This doctrine appears with clarity in the famous hymn in Paul's letter to the Philippians 2:5-11: "Though Jesus was in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped. Rather, He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" (Phil. 2:6).

God's story is one of love and can be found throughout John's Gospel, beginning with Jn. 3:16. "God so loved the world that God gave an only Son, so that everyone who believes in Jesus might not perish but might have eternal life." The Father loves the Son and shows Jesus all that He is doing (John 5:30). Jesus, too, loves the Father and from their mutual love proceeds the Holy Spirit. This is the heart of the mystical experience of Jesus. In a Spirit of Love, Jesus cries out, "Abba, Father," and it is an interpersonal love leading to a mutual indwelling. It is the mysticism that Christians call trinitarian, and it is one of the chief characteristics of Christian mysticism.

This trinitarian love brings total unity so that Jesus can say, "The Father and I are one." (John 10:30). A second aspect is one of intimacy or familiarity so that Jesus speaks to the Father with great confidence



Imitation of Jesus' self-emptying  
love leads us to holiness  
and to utter simplicity of  
lifestyle, for this self-emptying  
love must take us to the poor,  
the sick, the persons  
with disabilities,  
the underprivileged, the  
persecuted and the dying.

"Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son" (John 17:1).

In John's Gospel Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Jesus understands that He is sent by the Father in all humility and simplicity, to lay down His life for humanity. We can never forget these words of Jesus, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

Jesus became a model for mystics of the third millennium. He certainly is a model for Christians; however, Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims have been influenced by the mysticism of Jesus even though they do not accept the dogmas of the Christian church. These religions resonate with the

continued on page 17

## A Peace and Justice Perspective

# A Stitch in Time Saves More Than Nine

by Chris Koellhoffer, IHM

Many years ago, a spiritual guide shared a profound observation with me. He noticed that when people were struggling with some inner soul work, they often began the growth process by first tending to something outside of themselves. Refinishing an old cabinet. Painting a room. Cleaning out a neglected file cabinet. Mending a piece of clothing.

I get that. I sometimes wonder if that's the genesis of my attraction to thrift shops, where clothing that one person no longer finds useful is donated and reappears as a new neighbor in my closet. Thrifting is not only part of my effort to live simply but, if I'm being transparent, it's also part of my desire to live simply *and* look good while doing it. Could it be that when the prospect of stretching the entrenched boundaries of my heart seems too overwhelming a task, I'm warming up for the necessary inner soul work by tackling what is exterior, what is seemingly more doable and less daunting? Perhaps. I like to imagine there could be an even more basic spiritual truth underneath.

That deeper meaning might be expressed in our profound desire to live lives of meaning so that our time on this earth, however long or brief, makes a difference for a world that is at once both beautiful and broken. The prophet Isaiah (*Isaiah 58:6-12*) describes this effort as the fasting the Holy One desires, a fasting that is not genuine unless we also reform our own way of life and work to ensure the flourishing of others. Isaiah challenges us to change social patterns so that the basic human needs of all people may be met. To release those bound unjustly. To share our bread with the hungry. To consider the well-being of every creature who will be affected by our daily choices. To notice what we pay attention to, how we spend our time, and what we buy. To reflect on the implications of our every action for the rest of our world, especially for our most vulnerable neighbors.

*The Message* Bible offers this contemporary translation of what happens when we embrace Isaiah's understanding of fasting:



"You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past. You'll be known as those who restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate, and make the community livable again."<sup>1</sup>

"To make the community livable again" sounds so much like the Holy One's dream of abundant life for all of us. To live simply is also to live justly, in the sense of *tikkun olam*, repairing and restoring the world through social action. The practice of *tikkun olam* calls us to love and care for our world through volunteering, donating, and advocating for social change.<sup>2</sup>

We may have noticed that in times of economic hardship, we're more likely to return to older established practices that repair and restore our world. Making do with what we have. Fixing, rather than discarding something or buying a new replacement. Thrifting. Mending what is torn or worn.

I want to believe that this is what's really underneath my practice of thrifting, which sometimes calls for mending with a stitch or two to repair a ragged seam or close a tiny hole. In "Spirituality of Mending,"<sup>3</sup> Rev. Laura Everett calls mending an act of devotion. She notes that mending is a spiritual practice, an environmental commitment, and an act of resistance to the disposability of people and things. As she darns an old sock, she reflects that "this is what God is like. God is a mender. God takes what the world considers disposable, curls up in a large chair, and looks with patience to repair what is broken in each of us. God sees our tears and tenderly stitches us up."<sup>4</sup>

As we work to embrace simple lifestyles, may we be moved by the image of each of us curled up in a comfy chair and nestled next to a loving God. This mending God gazes approvingly at the soul work we're trying to embrace. This restoring God more than matches us stitch by stitch. This repairing God reads our weeping as a desire for wholeness for ourselves and others.

With the grace of the Holy One, may our way of living usher into being the words of Jan Richardson:

"From all that is broken,  
let there be beauty.  
From what is torn, jagged,  
ripped, frayed,  
let there be  
not just mendings  
but meetings unimagined.  
May the God in whom  
nothing is wasted  
gather up every scrap,  
every shred and shard,  
and make of them  
new paths,  
doorways,  
worlds."<sup>5</sup>

May it be so!

<sup>1</sup> *THE MESSAGE: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. Eugene H. Peterson, NAVPRESS, Colorado Springs, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> "The World Is Broken, so Humans Must Repair It: The History and Evolution of Tikkun Olam." Jonathan Krasner, *The Jewish Experience*, May 22, 2023. <https://www.brandeis.edu/jewish-experience/history-culture/2023/may/tikkun-olam-history.html>

<sup>3</sup> "Spirituality of Mending," Laura Everett, Religion News Service, April 12, 2019, <https://religionnews.com/2019/04/10/the-spirituality-of-mending/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *In the Sanctuary of Women*, Jan Richardson, Upper Room Books, Nashville, TN, 2010, p. 221. © Jan Richardson, [janrichardson.com](http://janrichardson.com).

For the past 30 years, Sister Chris has written this peace and justice column for every issue of *Journey*. She is a writer and spiritual guide who offers retreats and presentations through her *Mobile Spirituality Ministry*. Visit her blog, *Mining the Now*, at [chriskoellhofferihm.org](http://chriskoellhofferihm.org).

# In the Midst of Simple Living

by IHM Sisters Norma Poma Arpi, Eileen Egan, and Ancilla Maloney

It seems that one cannot separate the call to live simply from the concept of simplicity. In the volume, *Praying with Louise de Marillac*, the authors write that “simplicity means that we live close enough to the limits of our resources so that we can rely on God’s providence and appreciate the simplicity of life.... Simplicity is not a simple way to live. It requires serious reflection to sort out what is necessary and what is luxury. With all the pressures to buy this and have that, it is difficult to be satisfied with having just enough to be generous and caring.”

In July of 1986 as a result of the work of Chapter delegates, a Renewal of Vows for our IHM Congregation was written. The Sisters wrote, “By my poverty I choose dependence on God and simplicity of life. I pledge myself to use sparingly the resources of this earth. I will foster an attitude of contentment with what is provided. I will not accumulate things I do not need and I will share what I have—my time, talents, possessions, myself—with my sisters and with those in need.”

Added to these ideas, we are very mindful of our living side-by-side with families who, not by choice, but by the circumstances of their lives, have very little of this world’s resources. We are very mindful that, compared to most of them, we are rich. We have a stove, a refrigerator, hot water, furniture, comfortable spaces around us. We can buy what we need when we need it. We’re fortunate. There are five little food stores in a radius of one or two blocks so we don’t stock up on food. We have donations from friends far and wide which help us respond to the many needs that present themselves at our doors. One of our very long-time neighbors was in the hospital in Cusco, a two and a half hour drive away. His wife needed to



IHM Sisters serving in Sicuani, Peru: L-R Sisters Eileen Egan, Norma Poma Arpi, and Ancilla Maloney

be near him as his surgery was serious, but she had no money to stay anywhere in Cusco. And we helped her. A young student of Sister Norma’s tried to commit suicide last week. Norma was by her side in the hospital. The girl was shivering. Without hesitation, Norma gave the young girl her own coat.

Each of us has reflected on her own life choices and experiences of simple living and we recount them here.

## Ancilla

Food is basic to daily living. Sometimes I just want a grilled cheese sandwich and some potato chips for supper. BUT, often there is leftover food in the refrigerator. What’s the choice? Most times it’s the leftovers. Our convent is really the parish house and we are available 24-7 to the people who live here. Our doorbell rings in the middle of a meal or prayer or 3 seconds after we sit down to rest at the end of a busy day. I often say a quick prayer to Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez, a doorkeeper at a Jesuit college in Spain. Rodriguez imagined everyone who knocked at the door to be the Lord himself and greeted everyone with the same smile he would have given God. Then, I open the door with a smile.

I’ve been in Peru twelve years and have rarely bought clothes. I have what I need. My uniform for special occasions is blue fleece and black slacks. No other.

None of our neighbors have indoor heating. We don’t either. We have a heater in the community room for the cold months from mid-April until August -- if the gas works. Layering of clothing is necessary as on sunny days the temperature rises to T-shirt temperatures. The rooms in the house are all separate. A friend who visited said, “Now

I know what living outside is like,” as we have to walk outside to go to another room. When one knows what others do not have, one must make choices. And also, be content with what is provided.

As neighbors make known their needs, I again and again recognize how grateful I am for all the IHM Congregation provides me.

Everything we can recycle we do, or use up completely. For instance, we give our food scraps to feed the the chickens and guinea pigs Sister Norma’s mother raises. We compost food scraps. We burn paper or recycle it. We separate other garbage and each morning a woman bangs on a piece of metal to let us know that her bicycle propelled garbage cart is passing by. Poor women here collect the garbage beginning very early every morning. In return they receive a free meal for their children.

We have a car, but most of the time we don’t use it. We step out the front door and within 5 minutes a van, called a “combi,” comes by and for a sole (less than 35 cents), takes us downtown where everything we might need is within walking distance. Or we can take a moto, a bicycle with a battery and a cab attached that takes us where we

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need to go for three soles or one dollar. We can take a bus to Cusco for 11 soles or less than 4 dollars.

And then there is the beauty of creation surrounding us. Mountains in every direction with streams and fields and animals. Nature is at our doorstep and in our mind's eye in just a glance.

### Eileen

Having grown up on a farm, I carry a few traditions in my long-term memory that help to see me through the challenges of living in the South Andes of Peru. For example, during my childhood when the pipes coming from the well froze during the winter, my Mom made sure that the dishes were scraped before placing them in the dishwasher—one pan for washing, the other for rinsing. Then that water was used to mop the floor and what was left over was used to flush the toilet. On occasion our water is shut off in Sicuani, especially during planting season to irrigate the crops. Because of global warming the traditional rainy season is now intermittent. Thus, "The Egan water routine" comes into play in our home. We've also become accustomed to storing water in a covered garbage can for fear of the water stoppage.

Since I still have roots in the USA, every year my suitcase carries three items that are unavailable on our mission: cranberry sauce for Thanksgiving and Christmas, canned pumpkin pie mix and some packages of Good Season's Salad Dressing. I always wished that the weight wouldn't prohibit my bringing some cans of tomato soup until I had some in a restaurant in Cusco and asked the cook for the recipe. During the week we eat the same food as the girls in the IHM House of Studies which includes meat twice a week... mostly lamb since each needs to contribute a lamb as part of her room and board.

Other than that, our menu includes lentils, beans, squash stew with cheese or rice and eggs. On weekends we cook more traditional food like chicken, meatloaf or barbecue.

One time, my friend, Sister Margaret Burke, came down to Peru to help out. She commented that we waste too much time washing our clothes by hand, so, returning to the States she organized a collection at the First Friday Mass in Holy Rosary School to get us a washing machine. Up to this day we call it the "Holy Rosary washing machine." Currently, a solar hot water tank is being installed on our roof to help reduce the electric bill.

St. John of the Cross in his Spiritual

Canticles seems to sum up the simple life with these words:

My beloved is in the mountains  
And the lonely wooded valleys  
Strange islands  
And resounding rivers  
The whistling of love stirring breezes

The tranquil night  
At the time of the rising dawn  
Silent music  
Sounding solitude  
The supper that refreshes and deepens love.

### Norma

To live simply is a challenge. How can one live simply? It seems to me that to live simply is not to become enslaved by things, but to live as Jesus taught. In our materialistic culture, this is difficult, but not impossible. Many times, we are enslaved by the clock, by technology, by the latest styles, or by ads for the newest box of fast food. God has created us out of love, filled us with gifts and talents and placed us in this world to cultivate it. However, we humans, seeking happiness, mistake it for material comforts and

pleasures. Unfortunately, we become prisoners of things and gadgets. We become addicted to our cell phones and oblivious to the people beside us.

For me, to live simply is to live as Jesus taught, loving my neighbor, pardoning those who offend me, living the beatitudes and acknowledging with humility that I am a weak human being who could also become addicted to material things. But having Jesus as my example, I can strive to follow Him in spite of my weakness, and say with His Mother Mary, "Be it done unto me according to Your Word."

By our vow of evangelical poverty as written in our 2024 approved IHM Constitutions, we read and ponder our commitment in the following passages: "We witness to our vow of evangelical poverty through a simple lifestyle, making choices based on need rather than desires." Further, "Our primary motivation is the following of Jesus Christ in his total giving of Himself to the Father for the salvation and liberation of humankind." Evangelical poverty also commits us to: "the dedication of time, labor, resources, and talents for the benefit of others, especially the marginalized."

Years ago, Sister Elaine Prevallet, SL, wrote "Reflections on Simplicity" in a Pendle Hill Pamphlet 244, which we strongly recommend. She pointed out that the spirit of simplicity requires an uncluttered and unclinging spirit. If as the Quaker, Thomas Kelly suggests, we take the matter into that Center where God's direction is available, we can be sure that we will be guided - sometimes in painful ways we might not have chosen - in the process of letting ourselves be made simple.

The old Shaker song reminds us: "Tis a gift to be simple, a gift to be free. Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be."

As followers of Jesus, it's where we ought to be.

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We are very mindful of our  
living side-by-side with  
families who, not by choice,  
but by the circumstances  
of their lives, have very little  
of this world's resources.

We are very mindful that,  
compared to most of them,  
we are rich. We have a stove,  
a refrigerator, hot water,  
furniture, comfortable spaces  
around us. We can buy what  
we need when we need it.

We're fortunate. ”

# TO LIVE SIMPLY MEANS TO LOVE SIMPLY

by Kyra Krzywicki

Jesus is known for giving tall orders. Love your enemies. Turn the other cheek. Take up your cross. But perhaps the most startling command that comes from Christ's lips is, "Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Every time I read this passage, I give a slow-blink over the words as I ponder how the Lord is asking me to be perfect as the Father is perfect. As I think about what it means to live simply during this Lenten season of fasting, sacrifice, and almsgiving, I do so knowing that many of us may be bogged down by the weight of perfection that society demands we carry. Luckily for us, we need only listen to the Lord's command to be perfect, which is steeped in love, understanding, and patience. Aiming at perfection seems like the opposite of living simply, yet that is the order Jesus gives us. There must be a reason why Jesus, who knows how imperfect we are, would command us to aim at a bullseye like the perfection of God.

As with most things in Scripture, it's important to examine the context in which these words are spoken. Jesus instructs his disciples to be perfect only after explaining to them exactly how they are to do so. This verse comes from Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus teaches about praying for your enemies, settling disputes by fostering reconciliation, and ridding yourself of anything that could cause you to sin. Only after telling you how to love your brothers and sisters does he tell you to be perfect because that's what it means to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect—loving others to the best of your ability by offering the same mercy, compassion, and charity that God offers to each one of us in his Son. In this context, being perfect does not mean being the best, but it certainly does not mean being average either. No, being perfect in this context is the key to living simply, and I believe living simply means being good.

We might be tempted to believe that our lives would be perfect if we had the perfect car, the perfect clothes, the perfect spouse, but the truth is that none of those things fills the God-shaped hole in our hearts. God, who is the source of all that is good, gives good and perfect gifts (James 1:17) to his children, so why should we fear that living simply will leave us lacking or dissatisfied? By living simply, we remind ourselves of another verse from the Sermon on the Mount - "If you then, who are wicked, know how to give

good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him" (Matthew 7:11). God will provide for all that we need if we only surrender ourselves to him as little children.

When I was 17, I struggled with scrupulosity – the paralyzing fear of sin that comes not from piousness but from a distorted view of God and sin. I thought everything I did was sinful. It was torture. That was the first time I realized just how dangerous it was to aim at perfection by human standards. I was not living simply. I wasn't living at all. I felt like God was dangling me over the fire waiting for me to mess up, so he could drop me into the flames. My life during this time was anything but simple. I overcomplicated, overthought, and overcorrected, hoping that I could reach the heights of perfection that I believed were necessary to attain holiness. I think this pattern can occur in all pursuits of perfection, whether that be in regard to family, academics, careers, or spirituality. We're all struggling so hard against our true calling from the Lord to live simply and to be who he created us to be—children made in his image and likeness.

After a few years of living under these chains, I went to the annual Solemn Novena to St. Ann at St. Ann Basilica in Scranton and received a blessing with her relic. I believe my scrupulosity began lessening after this encounter, and I have come to learn what living simply means for me. Now, I talk to God like I would talk to my best friend, and my fear of him has transformed into love. I no longer recognize the girl I was at 17, though I think of her often and long to tell her she won't feel like this forever. After years of feeling this way, I have finally fallen in love with the Lord and know nothing but his goodness and mercy.

So, perhaps to live simply means to love simply. When we overcomplicate our relationship with God and others, things start to go awry, and when Jesus tells us to be perfect, I don't believe he's talking about being perfect in the sense that we might think of perfection. Being perfect as Jesus commands is about doing the opposite of what the world tells us to do – to have things that are less than perfect, to love the neighbor who does not love us, to leave everything behind to follow Jesus. Sounds like a pretty perfect life to me.



*"Being perfect as Jesus commands is about doing the opposite of what the world tells us to do—to have things that are less than perfect, to love the neighbor who does not love us, to leave everything behind to follow Jesus."*

I believe a line from my favorite book speaks to forsaking worldly perfection for heavenly perfection. In John Steinbeck's novel, *East of Eden*, the beloved character named Lee says, "And now that you don't have to be perfect, you can be good." Since God is the source of all that is good, we know that when Jesus tells us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, he's just asking us to be good, to live simply, to love limitlessly. Our perfection doesn't hinge on a life free of mistakes—no, our perfection is rooted in reflecting the goodness of God in the world. Sounds like another tall order. However, I think it's one of the simplest things we can do. Living simply is the antidote to this rampant and destructive perfectionism. If you can't shake the negative connotation of perfect, you can think of it as good. Then you can step into Easter with a little of John Steinbeck's wisdom under your belt knowing that "Now that you don't have to be perfect, you can be good."

*Kyra Krzywicki is a 2023 graduate of the University of Scranton and currently serves in the Diocese of Scranton Vocations Office and two Scranton parishes. Kyra is passionate about the power of faith, communication, and the relationship between the two.*

## Living Simply as an IHM Disciple by Ann Parker, IHM

As I reflected on the theme of “Living Simply” the opening words of our IHM Mission Statement came to mind since they have become very significant to me. “Our mission as Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary 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. This mission is further clarified in our statement on evangelical poverty. “An IHM Sister commits herself to a simple lifestyle rooted in the Gospel.”

The Gospels depict Jesus’ message and lifestyle and indicate ways in which we should strive to live simply as faith-filled disciples. Those who listened intently desired to develop a personal relationship with Jesus and discover ways in which they could live as disciples, not merely as observers.

Following Jesus as a disciple has become an important aspect of my IHM life and mission. After many years serving as a teacher, principal, DRE/youth minister, and pastoral associate, the image of being a disciple, especially in today’s world, has taken on great significance for me.

Jesus called and formed disciples in many ways during his mission on earth. He called them through his teachings, parables, miracles, and his loving presence among them. Being a disciple was a call meant for many people Jesus encountered as well as the twelve apostles and the seventy-two disciples mentioned in the Gospels. It is a call also intended for each of us, perhaps in a greater and more challenging way in today’s world and church.

This Holy Year of Hope is depicted in the graphic image of sailing pilgrims holding on to the cross and anchor of hope. We are those “pilgrims” seeking HOPE in so many ways as we hold on to what is physically, materially and spiritually life-giving for us as we sail through life, trying to hold on to what really matters. In announcing the Holy Year, Pope Francis stated, “we must fan the flame of hope given to us and help everyone gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart, and far-sighted vision.” He also said that living simply means living a more meaningful life, and he has encouraged people to focus on simplicity, charity, and love.

As an IHM disciple, I tried to focus on the meaning of discipleship when I was actively engaged in parish ministry. Discerning ways to live and act like disciples, individually, as

families and as a community became very meaningful to me. I became more aware of the many qualities of discipleship, such as listening to messages from Jesus, applying them to life situations, loving and forgiving others, trusting deeply in God’s plan in various situations, observing opportunities to interact and share faith with others and developing a deeper sense of trust. The need for prayer and contemplation also became a priority.

The vision of my IHM mission of following Jesus as a “community of disciples” has become significant in my growing awareness of the spiritual hunger that I have discovered in people who are searching and longing for opportunities to deepen their “disciple” relationship by sharing their faith life with others, especially through the Gospel. We do this in various ways as IHMs, and I have discovered that this is a longing of many people. After years of journeying with our IHM Associates, the vision and experience of “community of disciples” has become a vibrant reality.

My vow of poverty and living a “simple lifestyle” has also taken on greater relevance in recent years, especially since I have shifted from active ministry. The concepts of “needs versus wants” and “downsizing” have taken on greater significance in my life as I become more aware of what living simply really means in terms of clothing, food, material things, purchases, recycling, caring for creation, and how I spend my time.

My ministry is now described as “Volunteer Outreach for Spiritual Formation.” It’s both a challenging and life-giving ministry. I am enriched by my monthly gatherings with three groups of Associates. We share Gospel reflections with a discipleship focus related to their life experiences as well as share insights into ways to give our IHM Charism relevance. Associates also give witness by their service to those in need and by how they live simply in today’s world. Although I can’t physically do some of the things I see and hear them doing, I am well aware that they are truly IHM disciples who are living simply. I journey with them through prayer, affirmation, support and awareness of their discipleship efforts in their communities.

The vision of the Holy Year “Pilgrims of Hope” logo in the boat is a very poignant image for me in terms of those who are searching for what is necessary and relevant in their lives. May they hold on to simplicity, charity and love as they look to the future



with an open spirit, a trusting heart and the far-sighted vision of a disciple desiring to live simply.

*Sister Ann is a volunteer with Outreach for Spiritual Formation.*

# ONE THING I DO T

*IHM Sisters and*



One thing I do to live more simply is to get in touch with my inner spirit that lets everything that is unimportant fall away.

- Sister M. Rosella Salvato



One thing I do to live more simply is to regularly look over what I have and decide if I really need it. Before the hurricanes I was beginning to slowly declutter; having

many things quickly destroyed by the unforgettable storms, it made me realize I didn't need as much as I had.

- Sister Flo Marino



One thing I do to live more simply is to be conscious of my use of water. Not wasting by just running water - brushing teeth, taking a shower, rinsing dishes, watering plants,

not using bottled water.

- Sister Jane Snyder



The one thing I do to live more simply is I try to recognize what truly nourishes me each day.

- Sister Mary Ellen Higgins

To live more simply, I incorporate time for silence each day. - Eileen O'Donnell



To live simply, I try to purchase only what is essential, use sustainable products, and live by the philosophy "less is more."

- Sister Suzanne Delaney



Go through my stuff and give away things I no longer need nor can use.

- Sister Miriam Joseph Reinhardt



One thing I do to live simply is to turn off my television and lights whenever I leave my room in order to save electricity.

- Sister Loretta Mulry



I avoid "conspicuous consumption." This is a term coined by Thorstein Veblen in 1899. He was a controversial sociologist of his time, and his term is on the mark today —

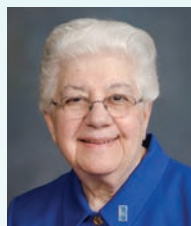
perhaps with even greater importance!

- Gale Jaeger



I clean out my closet and donate clothing and shoes to a local charity.

- Sister Beth McEneaney



One thing I do to live more simply is to be content with what I have and share any material possessions with those who are not as fortunate. I also offer my gift of prayer

to those in need of prayer. I live at OLP — where the spiritual richness abounds.

- Sister M. Celesta Sinisi



One thing I do is to think twice before I decide to buy anything, asking myself whether I have a real need for it.

- Sister Joanne Madden



One thing I do is... buy nothing unless it is necessary.

- Sister Mary Schoberg



Part of my trying to live simply is not to buy new clothes unless I need them.

- Sister Joan Quinn



One thing I do to live simply is..."reinvent" our left-over foods into another meal. (Even though we are only two, there are times when we have extra food at the

end of a meal and we will reuse it the next day or so. That way we aren't wasting anything.) - Sister Ruthanne Gypalo



Instead of using paper towels to dry my hands, I always have a hand towel ready to use.

- Sister Eleanor Marie Malanaphy



One thing I do to live simply is to try to be more environmentally friendly by recycling paper and plastic, using cloth napkins instead of paper ones, and turning off lights when I

leave the room. - Sister Mary Ehling



One thing I do to live more simply is to be grateful for what I have, conserve electricity and water, be mindful of food choices as prices soar, and remember those who do not have

what I do. - Sister Mindy Welding



One thing I do to live more simply is I try keep my belongings in good order and limited only to those items and files most important. This is a struggle at times, but it

keeps me focused. - Sister Ann Monica Bubser



I believe I live my life more simply by watching what items I purchase at the store, buying only what I need and will use.

- Pat Sheehan

# TO LIVE SIMPLY...

IHM Associates



I keep asking myself if things are a want or a need. - Sister John Michele Southwick



One thing I do to live more simply is live by need not want. - Jean Shields



One thing I do is try to take care of the things I have so they last longer. - Sister Fran Fasolka



One thing I do to live more simply is to focus more on giving than getting. - Frank Walsh



One thing I do to live more simply is to be satisfied and grateful for all that is provided. - Sister Kathleen Hassett



One thing I do to live more simply is ask myself, "Is it need or want?" - Sister Jane Connolly



One thing I do to live more simply is never to buy anything I see advertised on television, even though it looks like something I would want or like. - Sister Bernadette Thomas



I belong to the Cleveland Heights/University Heights BuyNothing Facebook group, which is part of a global movement to reduce consumption and keep items out of landfills by freely giving to and receiving from neighbors items that might have otherwise been disposed of. Learn more at [buynothingproject.org](http://buynothingproject.org) - Mary Lynn Delfino



One thing I do to live more simply is practice solitude-quiet contemplation. - Sister Angela Kim

*"Simplicity means that we live close enough to the limits of our resources so that we can rely on God's providence and appreciate the beauty of life. Simplicity fosters spontaneity, truthfulness, and clear speech. Simplicity also is required of anyone who seeks justice, peace and equitable stewardship of resources. Simplicity is not a simple way to live. It requires serious reflection to sort out what is necessary and what is luxury. With all the pressures to buy this and have that, it is difficult to be satisfied with having just enough to be generous and caring. It is not simple to speak plainly and truthfully. We are tempted to equivocate, massage the truth, and manipulate our speech. Only conscious and consistent meditation, prayer, and examination can help us live the simplicity of Jesus." - Audrey Gibson and Keran Kneaves, Praying with Louise de Marillac, p. 84, (42).*



In reference to the quote above, I have no one thing I do to live simply as I see it as a contemplative evolutionary process which changes with time, place, need, want, and situation. - Sister Denise Lyon



One thing I do to live more simply is avoid using bottled water, Styrofoam cups and plastic grocery bags. - Sister Janet Yurkanin



Each year, I go through my drawers and closets to assess what I have or have forgotten that I have. This enables me to dispose of the excess that I have accumulated. -Sister Mary Ann Adams



One thing I do to live more simply is I go to the Goodwill store. - Sister Karen Marie O'Neill



I will try to live simply by living in the present moment. - Sister Jane Gaughan



When I have a cough, instead of buying chemical cough medicines from the pharmacy which come packaged in bottles and cartons, I make a home remedy which I learned from my indigenous friends in Guatemala. I peel and cut an onion into rings and place it in a small glass jar (reused mayonnaise or jelly). I add a few tablespoons of sugar, cap the jar and leave overnight. By morning, a mild syrup has formed which I use a few times a day to suppress the cough. Nature at its best! - Sister Donna Korba



One thing I do to live more simply is to be aware of what I purchase and how I recycle properly. - Sister Katie Sitja y Balbastro

# Take a Long, Loving Look

by Jean Louise Bachetti, IHM and Jean Coughlin, IHM

**T**his article will take the format of a dialogue. Employing the practice of deep listening, we will respectfully build on each other's thoughts and questions. In this way we hope to create a container for trust and honesty where new ideas can emerge as each of us attunes to the Spirit within and the wisdom of the other. An essential element of deep listening is contemplation. Since we are exploring a life element of simple living, we might consider this endeavor as a spiritual journey. Applying the spiritual practice of the acclaimed Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, the series, *Bridges to Contemplative Living*, notes that "Contemplative Living is a spiritual journey... a way of responding to our everyday experiences by consciously attending to our relationships. It deepens the awareness of our connectedness and communion with others, including nature, and becomes a positive force of change in our lives." Therefore, as we, Jean and Jean Louise pursue the topic of simple living, we realize that we can approach it only in a contemplative manner, in other words, through an awareness, a consciousness of the "truly important issues of human existence."

**Jean:** As I viewed the documentary, "Buy Now," I was shocked at the sight of the growing mountains of waste from our throw-away society.

**Jean Louise:** In addition to the sight of these massive piles of waste, Jean, I felt a deep sense of grief. I guess, anger also, when I heard how corporations use algorithms

in their advertising to create in us an urgency to "buy now while supplies last," appealing to a need for the latest fashion, gadget, etc. From where does this desire grow in me? What generates this magnetic draw? I'm not even conscious of how it appeals to my ego's compulsive nature.

**Jean:** Yes, the documentary! Those visuals prick my conscience. They shake me awake to what we are unconsciously doing to our planet, our own health. It was Chief Seattle who said, "Whatever we do to the web of life we do to ourselves." There are consequences! In those mountains of waste are items I threw away. I am complicit in polluting. In her book, *The Serviceberry*, Robin Wall Kimmerer, a descendent of the Anishinaabe Tribe, asks, "What would it be like to consume with the full awareness that we are recipients of earthly gifts which we have not earned? To consume with humility? We are called to harvest honorably,

with restraint, respect, reverence, and reciprocity."

Pause/Reflect/Contemplate: How do Robin's questions land in me?

**Jean Louise:** During that contemplative moment, I felt ashamed. I believe I love my home, this little blue dot in the vast universe. Taking that long, loving look at Mother Earth while at the same time treating her with disrespect with my garbage calls me to accountability. I can no longer be a mindless consumer. My recycling and composting are good, but not enough.

**Jean:** I know there are people who model this understanding of the interconnectedness of the web of life, real examples of living simply with a deep respect for the sacredness of God's creation. Let me read to you what Robin writes about this sense of respect and gratitude. She says, "Enumerating the gifts you received creates a sense of

abundance, the knowing that you already have what you need. Recognizing 'enoughness' is a radical act in an economy that is always urging us to consume more." I'm wondering now, do I ever consider what IS enough? The Indigenous Peoples who inhabited this land before us were reflective, perhaps prayerful before killing a buffalo. They took a long, loving look at the buffalo and then asked forgiveness for taking its life because of their need for food and clothing. It might have been a form of ritual for an all-is-sacred kind of people who were grounded in their Great Spirit. What that buffalo had was enough for them at that moment.

**Jean Louise:** Hmm, I can stretch that somewhat when I consider how perceptive they were of life in all its forms. Thoughtfulness before killing the buffalo could be likened to the practice of contemplation. It reminds me of what

*continued on page 17*



Sisters Jean Coughlin (left) and Jean Louise Bachetti notice early buds on the Serviceberry tree in front of the IHM Center. "Without gift relationship with the bees and birds, the Serviceberries would disappear from the planet." – Robin Wall Kimmerer

## 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 and wounded world. We invite you to join us in honoring the memory of these beloved and holy women. Following are the reflections shared during their funerals.*



Sandra Grieco, IHM  
May 26, 1949  
October 26, 2024  
by Terri Jordan, IHM

I would like to welcome everyone to this prayer service for Sister Sandy Grieco. I extend our sympathy to Sandy's brothers, Robert and Richard, and their families and to her dear and faithful friend, Sister Redempta.

This reflection draws from the memories of several of Sandy's friends and conveys the essence of who she was.

Gratitude, humility, courage, fair-mindedness, humor, intelligence, and enduring personal honesty were the hallmarks of Sandy's life. She spoke and modeled the truth in words; her lessons were soul-deep. Her resilience in the face of numerous difficulties, especially health-related, was a source of inspiration for many. She never gave up; never gave in, and her courage was such an inspiration to so many.

We knew Sandy as sister, teacher, mission coordinator, mentor, counselor, coach and so much more, but most of all, as friend. She loved life and lived it to the fullest, imparting to us her infectious

joy. Her zest for life often led to amusing incidents, like when she returned from a not-approved beach outing with purple legs from her newly acquired jeans because she forgot her non-sisterly clothes. Though seemingly mischievous, these moments were a testament to her love for life and her ability to find joy in every situation.

Sandy never sought personal honors or attention and was humbled by the gratitude she received from so many whose lives she touched. That's what I think really made her so special to us. Her focus was never on herself but always on others. People mattered deeply to her, and they knew it. She relished these relationships and encounters because that's where she found God, too.

We'll miss Sandy... her smile, wit, generosity, resilience, honesty, and capacity to inspire happiness in the hearts of those she met each day. We will miss her undying kindness, her faith, and her all-inclusive love. She touched our lives in many ways, especially as a friend.

Melanie Svoboda, SND, wrote the following poem; it has been adapted to capture our gratitude for Sandy's life.

*We called you friend, for you were home to us. Within the shelter of your good company, we safely laid our burdens down.*

*We called you friend, for you were healing for us. You listened to all we had to say and, in so doing, we were made more whole.*

*We called you friend, for you*

*allowed us to be our true selves. Because of you, we are more of the person we want to be.*

*We called you friend. In part, we were alike, sharing deep values we seldom had to articulate. In part, we were different, and our differences broadened our perspectives, spurred our growth, and, yes, at times, honed our patience.*

*We called you friend, for you encouraged us not merely by your words but by the example of your own strivings, questionings, and yearnings.*

*We called you friend. You were our cheerleader, rousing us to stay in the game of life. You were our ground control, confirming where we were and where we were headed.*

*We called you friend.*

Our lives are better because Sandy was a part of them. May the memory of her life be for us a light in the darkness; may we think of her and know God is with us; may we join our hearts with hers and trust in the power of resurrection: A cherished earthly journey has ended, but an eternal heavenly residence has been set up - and a smiling Sandy stands waiting at the door for us to join her.

*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)*



M. Melissa Hester, IHM  
July 28, 1923  
November 20, 2024  
by Suzie Armbruster, IHM

Welcome everyone, as we gather today to celebrate the life of our Southern Belle, Sister Melissa Hester.

Melissa was born in Richmond, Virginia and given the name Anne by her parents, Holly and Melissa. Growing up in a bustling household of nine children, Melissa's early life was undoubtedly filled with laughter, adventure and the enduring bonds of family.

In 1941, Melissa answered the call to faith, joining the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. On May 8, 1944, she professed her vows, embarking on a lifelong journey of discipleship.

Her ministry began in elementary education where she taught music. She taught the young children to sing and dance but also instilled in them a deep appreciation for the beauty of faith and the love of Jesus. It became the bridge for Melissa, connecting hearts and minds to the divine in a way that words alone could not.

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As her ministry evolved, Melissa became deeply involved in catechetical work. She became a trail blazer in implementing Vatican II reforms. She played a pivotal role in developing catechesis for children, RCIA programs for parishes and the diocese, and helping to create opportunities for lay involvement. Melissa had an unshakable belief in an inclusive Church—one that embraced everyone, regardless of one's role or station in life.

Melissa was not just a teacher or minister; she was a pioneer and often walked to her own beat. For much of her life she served in the South, a region often regarded as mission territory. Melissa definitely had "tar" on her heels for she managed to reside in North Carolina for many years.

For those fortunate enough to live or work alongside her, Melissa was a force of nature paired with her southern charm. At the dinner table, during beach gatherings, or at Sisters' council meetings, Melissa would share stories of transformation, tales of adventures, and dreams of the work yet to be done. North Carolina, in particular, held a special place in her heart. She immersed herself in the life of the people, building bridges across denominations and fostering a spirit of ecumenism that was as practical as it was profound.

Melissa's love for adventure extended beyond her ministry. She was a traveler at heart, embracing the beauty and diversity of God's creation. Melissa approached every journey with joy and anticipation. Her sense of humor shone brightly in these moments, particularly when her companions teased her about her penchant for health food—a passion she embraced long before it became fashionable.

In her later years, Melissa became a beloved figure in the local community, making

friends with neighbors who were delighted to drive her on many adventures.

Her life was a tapestry of laughter, resilience, and unwavering faith. She inspired others to live boldly, love unconditionally, and follow Jesus without hesitation. She was a trailblazer, and when she sang, "I have decided to follow Jesus... no turning back," she lived those words every day of her life.

Today, as we bid farewell to Melissa, we celebrate not just the life she lived but the legacy she leaves behind. Melissa was a lover of people and a true woman of the Gospel.

As she enters the gates of heaven, with her walking staff in hand and leading the way, we can only imagine the joy of her reunion with her parents, siblings, and the many companions who walked this earthly journey with her. Fly high, Melissa, our Southern Belle, thank you for showing us what it means to live a life of purpose, joy and unshakable faith.



Jean Conaty, IHM  
January 17, 1931  
January 15, 2025  
by Grace Surdovel, IHM

Today we gather with Jean's niece Diane and family to celebrate the life of our dear sister and friend, Sister Jean Conaty, formerly known as Sister Mary John.

Over the last few weeks, I have been blessed to hear so many share their stories of friendship with Jean and how she impacted their lives, often in a quiet and unassuming manner. Many echoed the

same phrase— Jean was such a great lady! I could not agree more! Our Sister Jane Ellis shared a story about when Jean helped Jane update her resume in preparation for new ministries when she returned to Scranton after a longtime ministry out of state. No fanfare, just quiet supportive assistance. IHM Associate, Mary Lynn Delfino, shared stories about her time getting to know Jean. Mary Lynn would visit periodically and could be found sitting with Jean discussing politics, the church, family memories and possible solutions to the daily New York Times crossword puzzle; usually over a cup of tea and some chocolate ice cream or candy. Mary Lynn noted Jean's quiet practice of prayer, serenity and acts of love and kindness that had a profound impact on Mary Lynn.

Over her many years of active ministry, Jean served as a classroom teacher, administrator, pastoral assistant and Tribunal Auditor. In 1999, our Sister Margo McCormick hired Jean to be the part time librarian at Sacred Heart High School in Carbondale, Pennsylvania.

It was at Sacred Heart that Jean and I met and developed a friendship that has lasted 26 years. Jean often joined me and my family for holidays and family celebrations. Over the years, Jean got to know my family well and became an adopted member.

One of Jean's favorite summertime adventures for many years was to visit her family at their vacation home in Cape May, New Jersey. While Jean was confident driving herself to local appointments and errands, she was more hesitant to make the five-hour trip to Cape May. So, I would happily take Jean to visit her family. These trips were a wonderful opportunity for us to get to know each other on a deeper level.

More recently, when our leadership team was elected in 2022, we came to OLP to visit

the sisters and thank them for their prayers. When I walked into Jean's room, she was sitting in her chair with tears in her eyes. She gave me a long, loving hug and whispered in my ear that she was so very proud of me. She has never wavered in her commitment of prayer, love and friendship. I am very confident that these prayers will continue as Jean now enters her heavenly home.

From poet Jan Richardson's *This Day We Say Grateful*, I offer these words: "We release you in God's keeping and hold you in gladness and love."

Jean, thank you for our many years of friendship, and for your life of service to our congregation, the church and the people of God. It has been my honor and privilege to walk these past 26 years with you and call you friend. Be assured that my love, our love and prayers go with you as you return home and are reunited with family and friends. We will be sure to toast you with a bit of chocolate and a hot cup of tea as we recall many wonderful memories of our years together. Indeed, you were a great lady, and we can say with confidence and love, well done, good and faithful servant.



M. Marguerita Carbone, IHM  
December 6, 1927  
March 1, 2025  
by Katie Clauss, IHM

Today, we come together to mourn the passing and celebrate the beautiful life of our Sister Marguerita Carbone. We are especially grateful for

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the presence of her loved ones, including her nephew-in-law, Edward Heim, his daughter, Angela and her children Dea Rose and Nick, and her dearest friend of many years, Franciscan Sister Patricia Therese Miszczuk.

As we honor Marguerita's life, we also remember those who have gone before her—her father, Vincent, her mother, Margaret, her brother, Vincent, and her sisters, Theresa, Lucy, Christina, and Maria, her cherished niece, Christina, who now welcome her into eternal life.

We keep in our prayers Marguerita's sisters in Household 1B, with whom she shared a deep sense of community, as well as the compassionate nurses and aides who cared for her so tenderly.

Now that she has joined her parents, siblings, and niece, I pray she finds herself in a warm and peaceful place in heaven, where she no longer has to battle the cold that often troubled her. No matter how many sweaters, blankets, or quilts surrounded her, warmth always seemed just out of reach. Her sisters, with whom she shared meals, lovingly called her their "Frozen Marguerita," a nickname that always brought a smile.

While Marguerita may have felt the cold, her heart burned with faith. As an IHM Sister, she lived for 74 years as a prophetic witness to God's presence in the world.

Reflecting on her life of ministry, I was reminded of a passage from article 5 in our Constitutions, which speaks of our Congregation's earliest days: *The Redemptorist mission led Father Louis Gillet to frontier Michigan in the 1840s, where, in partnership with Mother Theresa Maxis, he founded our Congregation in 1845. Their purpose was to foster the human aspirations of the people—especially the deepening and spreading of faith in Jesus Christ. They chose the work of education as the most appropriate to fulfill*

*their purposes in that time and place.*

Like our foundress, Mother Theresa Maxis, who was a teacher, Marguerita devoted herself to fostering the human aspirations of her students—nurturing their minds, bodies, and faith. She spent 56 years in the classroom, igniting a love of learning in countless young minds and hearts.

In Marguerita's file, I found a beautiful testament to her dedication. In August of 1970, after earning her Master's Degree in Education and Reading at Marywood College, she requested permission to continue her studies and to pursue certification as a Reading Specialist. She wrote, "the children in my school need a great deal of help learning to read." By 1974, she had earned her certification and went on to serve as a Reading Specialist for 27 years.

Marguerita embodied the words of Malala Yousafzai, who said: *One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world.*

Through her ministry in education, we can only imagine how many lives Marguerita influenced—and how those students, in turn, went out and changed the world.

Beyond the classroom, her years of service as a caregiver for Visiting Angels, as well as her time in prayer ministry in Delaware and at Our Lady of Peace Residence, reflected her joyful, loving, hospitable, and self-emptying service of God's people. She lived the Gospel message with quiet strength, embodying the very heart of our IHM mission.

Marguerita was faithful to her commitment to her vocation and her life as an IHM Sister. We know that it was God who blessed her with a call to the Congregation. I believe that as Marguerita's family and friends walked her journey with her, they helped her to strengthen and live her call to the full. As we celebrate her fidelity to her vowed life, we celebrate Ed, Angela, Dea

Rose, Nick, and Sister Pat's faithfulness to Marguerita. Ed's 8:30, evening phone calls surely brought a warm ending to each day. Pat's frequent visits brought joy to her heart.

Sister Terri will now place Marguerita's vow card in her hands. Marguerita signed this card 74 years ago on the day of her profession.

Go in peace, dear Marguerita, with all our love and gratitude. You heard God's word, you staked your life on it, and now, at last, the Word of God—Jesus Himself—welcomes you home.



M. Myra Gilbert, IHM  
June 6, 1927  
March 6, 2025  
by Suzie Armbruster, IHM

Today we gather to celebrate the life of our Sister Myra and offer our support to Myra's family, especially her sisters, Sister Mary Mercy, Sister Mary, and Catherine, and her brother, James, as well as her many nieces and nephews. Sister Myra, Aunt Gloria treasured each of you and spoke of you all with pride and joy.

Born on June 6, 1934 and given the name Gloria Gladys by her parents Thomas and Marguerite Gilbert, Myra was # 1 in the line-up of the Gilbert children. She was raised in Baltimore, a city that remained an integral part of her identity. Within our IHM congregation, the Baltimore sisters formed a bond as strong as family—one built on loyalty, love and, of course, a bit of Baltimorean stubbornness. Their bond was very much like blood family;

in a family, members can agree and disagree but if someone else tried, they banded together, because outsiders can't cross that Baltimorean threshold.

I had the privilege of serving with Myra in Rocky Mount, NC, during the early 1980s. Our Lady of Perpetual Help was a small school in a small town where the Catholic community was a minority. We lived in a small house which was much different from our big, three-story convents in the North. Myra had already been there for two years. She eagerly took me under her wing to share the diverse culture of a Catholic school where Catholic children were the minority.

Myra loved sharing her wisdom—but if you needed a quick answer that was another story. Asking Myra a question in the morning was an adventure which lasted most of the day! It started in kitchen, went across the street, into the school, and to the classroom door. Myra had a special way of talking—and sometimes she would forget the point she was trying to make. Most of the time it involved "roundabouts" and we would laugh for that was part of her unique charm.

Myra was a gifted teacher, beloved by her students! Her classroom was always filled with laughter and joy, and often the laughter and joy would spill into the hallway of our tiny school. We knew our dinner conversation would be entertaining as she turned everyday moments into stories.

Life in our small convent was different from what we had known before. We cooked our own meals, entertained ourselves and took long car rides ALL together, ALL the time. Often these trips took us to the beach or to community meetings. If it was a holiday, our trip included a stop in Baltimore to drop Myra off with her mother. Despite being a native Baltimorean, Myra's

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directions home were also “roundabouts”—so much so that we eventually kept an index card with the “official” directions to mom Gilbert’s house.

Myra was always eager to help, whether it was with shopping, cooking, decorating or any other household or community task. She was always there. She was always kind and full of joy. She may not have been the most punctual—operating on “Myra time” but she was never in a rush. She embraced life with Southern ease, never worrying about the clock, a trait she embodied well. We learned to tell her a different time the car would be leaving, in order to arrive at the event on time.

Myra was a gifted teacher and her presence in a school was treasured. She embraced innovations in teaching. She was among the first to introduce computers in her classroom—though let’s be honest, part of the excitement was letting her students play Oregon Trail.

Later in life, Myra left the classroom and dedicated herself to pastoral care in parish ministry, serving in faith formation, visiting the elderly, the sick and the homebound. Each visit brought her signature warmth and compassion. She was there to listen, but we all know she probably did plenty of the talking and sharing of stories as well.

Myra had two speeds—talking fast or sleeping. Saturday mornings were a sacred time for sleeping in and enjoying a leisurely brunch.

And there were many adventures. One Holy Week, Myra volunteered her students to hide eggs for my class. I assumed they were simply hiding eggs and filling treat bags for later. What I didn’t realize was that they had filled the eggs with chocolate and the North Carolina 95-degree heat melted every single one. When the little ones cracked open their eggs, they were greeted

with a gooey surprise!

Now, Myra, you are finally home embracing your parents and family, meeting Padre Pio, and asking God a few questions. You are free of pain, free of time, and free to sleep in. Share your gift of kindness, wonder and awe—and if there is an angel band--- be sure to grab your flute and play.

You will be deeply missed, especially by your family and your beloved Baltimore contingency. Soar now, fly high with the angels with that ever-present sparkle in your eye. Rest in peace, dear Myra, you are loved.



Barbara Jablonski, IHM  
April 5, 1942  
March 20, 2025  
by Terri Jordan, IHM

I want to welcome everyone here and those on livestream to the Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Barbara Jablonski.

I offer my deepest sympathy to Barbara’s sisters, Linda and Chrissy, her nieces and nephews, and her dear friend Flo. I also offer this sympathy to us, the Congregation of Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for we indeed have lost a treasure.

The capable woman from Proverbs, the reward for fidelity from the letter to Timothy, and St. John’s account of the Wedding Feast at Cana are the readings for today’s liturgy. All of them are reflective of Barbara’s life.

Some characteristics of being a Proverbs 31 woman include virtue and worth, hard work and resourcefulness,

generosity and caring, wisdom and trustworthiness, versatile and skilled in various areas, respected and honored, as a woman of God. Barbara spent many years in the education, counseling, and administration ministries. In all of her ministries, she embodied these characteristics. For example, her resourcefulness paid off when decorating the chapel for Easter at Our Lady of Grace. She took a very young sister for a ride in the truck without saying where they were going or what they were doing. They soon got leftover flowers for the chapel at a funeral parlor.

For eight years, Barbara served as Councilor for Temporal Resources. At that time, the President showed Barbara an empty field and told Barbara that there would be a building there one day. And Barbara laughed. She would eventually oversee the construction of Our Lady of Peace Residence.

If I recall correctly, Barbara submitted a proposal to the Chapter of Affairs before the Chapter of Elections at which she was elected. The proposal was to have the Chapter every six years instead of every four years. Barbara did not like coming to Scranton every four years and thought every six would be fine. The proposal did not pass. Barbara spent the next eight years on the leadership team in Scranton. And God laughed.

From the letter to Timothy, we will hear the familiar saying, “I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.” On March 20<sup>th</sup>, Barbara finished the race. During her life, she had serious health issues, but she kept on competing; she kept on living. Barbara fought to the very end. Barbara died on her own time; she most likely had a deal with God regarding the timing. Barbara was never one to let people know where or when she was going or how she was getting there. That was true up until her death. She was showing plenty of

signs that she was leaving over what seemed to be an extended period. She finished the race on her timeline with God and no one else.

Lastly, we hear the story of the Wedding Feast at Cana. Today’s translation will start with, “It was such a wonderful wedding feast! The music, the dancing, the food and wine. There was a burst of joy just then.” Barbara loved a good party. She loved her clams, Arby’s, surf and turf, and, of course, her wine. She was the life of the party. Her laughter was contagious. Her generosity in providing a banquet was unmatched. As the administrator of Our Lady of Grace, she would host a week of fun and relaxation for sisters residing at the Marian Convent. One major disappointment in her life was when St. Joseph’s Center stopped serving clams at their summer festival.

Barbara loved the congregation, her friends, her family, and her sister’s dog, Daiquiri. The memories and stories of Barbara could go on forever. I do not doubt that Barbara’s niece, Maggie, will touch on what Barbara was to her family.

When I was leaving the position of Business Manager, Barbara gave me a nicely framed copy of An Irish Blessing. Barbara, I now leave you with that same blessing.

#### *An Irish Blessing*

*May the road rise up  
to meet you  
May the wind be always  
at your back  
May the sun shine warm  
upon your face  
May the rain fall soft  
upon your fields  
And until we meet again  
May God hold you  
in the palm of His hand.*

continued from page 3



L-R: Sisters Rose Patrice Kuhn, Kieran Williams, and Mary Elaine Anderson at the Rio Grande River (US-Mexico border)



Sister Mary Elaine accompanies children at the Casa del Migrante in Mexico.



When asked to identify their country of origin before Mass at the Casa del Migrante, US citizens raise their hands. Notice the raised hands of the little girl and her brother (US citizens deported with their parents).

continued from page 4

kenosis or the self-emptying of the Crucified Jesus. We might even be able to speak of Jesus as the model of all simplicity, as the architect of all mystics.

The response is always love. Consider Paul's words: "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2).

The same is true for Francis of Assisi who, leaving all behind, experienced the wounds of Christ's kenosis in his body; and lastly in the self-emptying love of Edith Stein who refused her chance of freedom and went to her death in the gas chambers of Auschwitz to share in the fate of her Jewish brothers and sisters.

We have superb examples of the ultimate simplicity of giving it ALL in love. Imitation of Jesus' self-emptying love leads us to holiness and to utter simplicity of lifestyle, for this self-emptying love must take us to the poor, the sick, the persons with disabilities, the underprivileged, the persecuted and the dying. In simplicity, we are wholeheartedly aligned with the mind and heart of Jesus Christ and relate to our brothers and sisters as Jesus taught us, with unconditional love and complete purity of heart. So, let us "live simply that others might simply live" (Mahatma Gandhi).

Sister Redempta serves as a prayer minister at Our Lady of Peace Residence.

continued from page 12

Carmelite Sister Constance Fitzgerald defines as contemplation, "a love embrace of God's Spirit in which transformation can create a new kind of earth community where I inhabit the earth in a truly human way." She implies that in not caring for the earth and one another I am losing my humanity. Seemingly, then, by practicing this deep consciousness, I can become more attuned to how I can change my habit of heedless consumerism and consequent disregard for the care of our common home. It might even change the patterns in my brain to move from neediness to "enoughness."

Pause. Reflect. Contemplate: What might I be willing to sacrifice today for future generations?

**Jean:** What you are saying calls me to respond from the core of my spiritual beliefs, beliefs that motivate me to create a culture of gratitude and respect by a mind/heart conversion. Perhaps the small acts of daily life suggested by Robin Wall Kimmerer can point me in the right direction when she says:

- Give thanks for what you have been given.
- Give a gift in reciprocity for what you have taken.
- Sustain the ones who sustain you and the Earth will last forever.

"Going forward, we have to seek a mutually enhancing human-earth relationship."  
—Thomas Berry

Sister Jean Louise serves as an Assistant for the LCWR Initiative.

Sister Jean serves as a volunteer at Our Lady of Peace Residence and at Friends of the Poor's Jackson Terrace Food Pantry.

Resources:

*Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton*, vol. 2, edited by Jonathan Montaldo & Robert G. Toth, Ave Maria Press, 2006.

*The Desire for God and the Transformative Power of Contemplation*, Constance Fitzgerald, OCD, Desire, Darkness, and Hope, Theology in a Time of Impasse, ed. by Laurie Cassidy and M. Shawn Copeland, 2021, Liturgical Press Academic

*The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World*, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Schribner, 2024

# Resources for Living Simply and Sustainably

Each of us is called to be a good steward of the Earth. *Laudato Si'* challenges us to live simply and resist the “throwaway” mindset that too often drives consumption. From reducing waste to supporting renewable energy, every small act contributes to the common good. You can find all of our educational resources and materials here:

- Catholic Energies: <https://tinyurl.com/3v7cr8vs>
- Catholic Climate Covenant: <https://tinyurl.com/3869tnaz>
- AI's Sustainability and Climate Challenges: A Catholic Response to Protect Our Common Home: <https://tinyurl.com/2s46y6xs>
- Embarking on the 2025 Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation: <https://tinyurl.com/522ks5wc>
- Season of Lent 2025: <https://tinyurl.com/fh4ky75j>
- Green Goals: <https://tinyurl.com/mwurdjtw>
- Green Saints for a Green Generation: <https://tinyurl.com/3kdmcmhc>
- Green Corner: <https://tinyurl.com/5us4t3d7>
- Waste Reduction Resources: <https://tinyurl.com/39pxe5u5>
- A Conversation on Teilhard: Visionary Scientist: <https://tinyurl.com/drzu4h5w>
- PBS Program on Teilhard: Visionary Scientist: <https://www.pbs.org/video/teilhard-visionary-scientist-pt9dc1/>

## Tips for Living Simply

1. Declutter your home. Having a house full of stuff is the opposite of living a simple life.
2. Establish routines. Routines can simplify your day-to-day activities, reduce decision fatigue, and reserve more energy for the things that truly matter.
3. Connect with nature. Set aside regular moments to immerse yourself in nature, experiencing its calming and rejuvenating effects.
4. Say no. We often agree to take on more than we can handle. Create some boundaries on your time. When you know your major priorities, saying no becomes easier.
5. Know your values. It's making peace with slow progress and making decisions that align with your core values and your life vision.
6. Simplify your wardrobe. One of the easiest ways to simplify your life is to simplify your wardrobe.
7. Practice gratitude. Practice being grateful every day by giving thanks for all the many aspects of life that contribute to living a healthy life.
8. Choose quality over quantity. Although quality items may cost more in the short term, they pay off in the long run.
9. Eat slowly. Mindful eating is the practice of carefully chewing each bite of food and savouring your meal.
10. Eat simply. “The food you eat can either be the safest and most powerful form of medicine or the slowest form of poison.”  
- Ann Wigmore
11. Schedule everything. Whether that's your phone, computer, or TV, schedule at least an hour a day where everything is turned off. Limit your media exposure. As a culture, we spend so many hours mindlessly scrolling and searching.
12. Focus on well-being: Prioritize well-being with impactful daily activities. Ensure adequate sleep, stay hydrated, and engage in regular exercise.
13. Journal daily. Pick up a pen and paper and simply write down your thoughts.
14. Avoid multitasking. Don't try to do many things at once; it's more stressful than doing them all separately because our brains can't concentrate well when doing multiple things simultaneously.
15. Listen to yourself. Once you listen to yourself (and not the noisy world around you) then you can identify your priorities, what's important and what's not.
16. Don't buy unnecessary things. To maintain a minimalist home, or at least, a clutter-free space, we should declutter our belongings regularly. But more importantly, we should stop accumulating and buying unnecessary things. So avoid impulse buying when you know you don't need anything specific, and ask yourself questions before making a purchase. If you're struggling to shop with intention, make it a bit more difficult for you to purchase things. For instance, don't save your credit card information on Amazon or other websites. Stop going to the mall or the dollar store every time you feel bored, and avoid the sales rack at Target, Walmart or your favorite store. Just because it's cheap doesn't mean you need it.

As we celebrate our 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary as Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we are profoundly grateful for your unwavering support, without which our efforts to serve those in need would be significantly diminished. Your generous contributions, whether through heartfelt prayers, tireless energy, or invaluable donations, breathe life into our mission and make our commitment to service truly fruitful and fulfilling. We extend our deepest thanks to you, our cherished friends and donors, for standing alongside us as co-partners in the sacred mission of Jesus. It is through your compassion and generosity that we are able to make a tangible difference in the lives of so many.





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# Living Simply

## IN SOLIDARITY WITH IMMIGRANTS



*Presidents' Day was the backdrop for many venues where citizens took to the streets and city plazas across the country to voice their concern over the massive deportations of our immigrant and refugee neighbors. On February 17<sup>th</sup> IHM Sisters and Associates joined a multi-faith prayer vigil on Courthouse Square in Scranton. The prayer highlighted scripture, Pope Francis' message, and the recent letter of Bishop Bambera. The participants prayerfully walked with banners and signs into St. Luke's Episcopal Church where a 175 gathered to hear the testimonies of an immigrant who became a U.S. citizen, a Congolese refugee who became a U.S. citizen, and the grandson of Irish immigrants.*