HAPPY EASTER

At long last, Spring has arrived and we begin Holy Week in joyful anticipation of Easter.

As we emerge from the reflective season of Lent, we find much to be grateful for and much to be hopeful about.

A little over a year ago, life began to change dramatically and it has not stopped changing since. Regardless of who we are, where we live, our age, or our politics, no one has been unaffected by the events of the last twelve months. Nor will any of us soon forget them. What happens around us does not define us, though.

When things appear dim, even dire, we can remain hopeful.

Easter is a perennial opportunity for rebirth; a chance to once again “roll away the stone” to reveal Christ risen.

With grateful hearts, we turn away from darker days to face a glorious dawn: God’s promise of salvation, fulfilled! Happy Easter!

Our Next Chapter

You’ve been hearing a lot lately about the 2022 Chapter of the CPPS Sisters. As Sr. Janice Bader and Sr. Ginny Jaskiewicz explained in the March 6 Zoom meeting, this will be the final Chapter to elect CPPS leadership—although certainly not the final chapter for the sisters. Beyond the three-year term of the next Leadership Team, sisters will continue to live out their charism and mission as vowed religious. For Partners in Mission, this actuality brings other, significant changes.

So, what is next for Partners in Mission? The answer to that lies within each of us.

Very soon, Partners in Mission will be responsible for our own future. The Sustainability Committee of the Governing Board have identified key areas important to that future: Leadership, Spirituality, and Membership Development. These will be our focus as we move forward.

I ask that you consider how you might contribute to one or more of these key areas with gifts of your time, ideas, and talents. Whether you join a formal committee or not, your engagement in Partners in Mission is now more valuable than ever.

Very soon, a questionnaire will be mailed to all Partners. Hopefully, the questions will inspire you to think about what you want PIM to look like in the future and where you see yourself in that picture.

We are each truly a chrysalis of the Precious Blood legacy, and the future of Partners in Mission lies within us. Thank you, for all you do and all you are!
Welcome, New Partners in Mission!

As it turns out, neither rain, nor sleet, nor COVID-19 delays can keep Pathways candidates from completing the course! I am very happy to share that in January, four of our candidates did just that and immediately decided to make their initial commitments to Partners in Mission!

Please join me in welcoming: Ellen Gardiner, Mary Hargadine, Christy Presnell, and Anne Schulte. I know you will enjoy getting to know these wonderful, faith-filled women in the months ahead.

Ellen, Mary, and Anne, with Mentor Sr. Carol Orf, will form a new Small Faith Community in O’Fallon. Christy, who lives in Perryville, will join Sr. Delores Schilli and Vincent’s Friends. My heartfelt thanks goes out to both Sr. Carol and Sr. Delores for the support, encouragement, and instruction they gave the candidates on their Pathways journey. I know the sisters’ loving guidance will continue in their Small Faith Communities.

Although new Partners would normally make their initial commitments in September, this year’s candidates have been very patient with the delays of last year and they are all very eager to become Partners. Soon. Therefore, the Governing Board is planning a small, safe commitment ceremony for them this Spring. You will have a chance to meet and welcome our newest Partners in person at our next Assembly.

Until then, we give a very warm “Welcome!” to Ellen, Mary, Christy, and Anne!

-Audrey Jungermann

Meet Prayer & Presence Partner Conchita Ongjoco

In the late 1980s, a petite force of nature was introduced to St. Agatha’s Center: Conchita Ongjoco. Sr. Frances Therese, who had been working in Conchita’s parish, brought her to the Center as a volunteer. Conchita remembers, “The sisters and the other workers welcomed me with open arms. It was an instant friendship!” Conchita had never been to a pantry before and immediately enjoyed the task of greeting clients and signing them up for “extras”, such as shampoo and toilet paper, each month. After getting to know them, she would bring books for clients who were dying to read but could not afford to buy books themselves.

Conchita lost her husband early in life and had four children to raise on her own. They ranged in age from 18 years down to 18 months when their father passed. Conchita was a nurse by profession, so caring for people came naturally to her. Throughout all those years, Conchita relied on faith to see her through.

In the 1990s, when the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood started an associate program called “Partners”, Conchita happily became a member! She has been praying and supporting Partners in Mission all this time. Now in her 90s, Conchita is still sending love and prayers to her Small Faith Community, St. Agatha’s Disciples in Action. Just so that they feel loved, beautiful bouquets of flowers show up at the Sisters’ door every holiday!

I have been blessed to enjoy the drives in the country and down to the Center with this incredible lady. Each time we part, I thank her for the beautiful example she has given all Partners for how to live the Sisters’ legacy of care and reconciling presence!

-Patti Belmont
Sister Delores Schilli was born in St. Louis, but grew up in Ste. Genevieve county where she attended grade school at Our Lady Help of Christians, in Weingarten, MO. This is the same parish Bishop Robert Hermann came from. It was in grade school that young Delores met the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood and decided she wanted to be just like them. She fondly recalls that the parish priest taught her class each week, and he really encouraged her vocation.

As a junior in high school, Sr. Delores entered the Aspirancy in O'Fallon. She took her first vows in 1972 and was assigned to teach in four different schools during the next eight years. Climbing up the ladder of education, Sister was next called to teach math at St. Mary's College at the Motherhouse in O'Fallon. She was also to accompany candidates in the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) program. This experience awoke in her the desire to work in adult religious education.

In 1998, Sr. Delores was welcomed to the St. Vincent DePaul parish in Perryville, MO where she would lead the RCIA, teach bible studies, facilitate a grief support program, and help in food pantries. Although COVID-19 halted many programs, Sr. Delores still keeps her parishioners informed through pamphlets. The need to feed the hungry at the food pantries is great, and Sr. Delores has helped at both St. Vincent DePaul and Ladies of Charity centers. COVID-19 has been reported in the Perryville area, but the sisters there have remained healthy.

In her free time, Sr. Delores enjoys reading and being able to experience the changing of the seasons in the country.

-Mary Jane Matejka

Historic St. Vincent’s Parish, Perryville, MO

In researching information for an article about Perryville, some very interesting history turned up. Perry County was settled early, in the 1700s, but no chapel was built until 1812. Prior to that time, Mass was only occasionally said in a residence by a visiting priest.

However, in 1817, Bishop Rosati sent the Vincentian order of priests to Perryville and the parish began to blossom. This was the same year in which the Old Cathedral in St. Louis was built. The parish was named St. Mary’s (Assumption) and parishioners mainly spoke French or English.

In 1865, a large population of Germans settled in the area and began St. Boniface parish. They soon saw the need for a school and prepared to open one. Can you guess which sisters were asked to teach there? In 1873, three German-speaking sisters of the Most Precious Blood came from O'Fallon and took charge of the first school! Ursuline nuns would later replace the Precious Blood sisters at St. Boniface.

St. Mary’s parish eventually also built a school, run by the Daughters of Charity, which would become St. Vincent’s. St. Boniface and St. Vincent schools merged in 1947. By that time everyone in Perryville was speaking English.

So where did the Precious Blood Sisters go when they left St. Boniface? There were plenty of little towns needing sisters for their schools. One was Weingarten and Our Lady Help of Christians parish where Sr. Mary Brendan Block taught and where my brother, Fr. Bill Wigand, was pastor. Weingarten was home to the Precious Blood sisters for a long time. Those sisters taught a young boy who later became Bishop Robert Joseph Hermann and a little girl who became a Precious Blood sister herself: our own Sr. Delores Schilli! You will find the rest of her story in the article above.

-Mary Jane Matejka
Hospitality Month is Here!

Our plans to share the Partners’ experience with others is finally here—“Hospitality Month” has arrived. What a great opportunity to make our presence a gift to others!

Hopefully you have someone in mind to invite to your Small Faith Community’s gathering this month. After the meeting, if your guest is interested in learning more about Partners in Mission, I will be happy to follow up with them. It would be wonderful to have our guests become Pathways candidates this Fall!

If you have questions or need assistance from me, please don’t hesitate to ask.

Thank you for being a welcoming presence to potential new Partners!

-Audrey Jungermann

Wanted: Newsletter Contributors

The “doors” of the PIM Newsroom are always open!

We love to hear what Partners and Small Faith Communities are up to. We know there are talented poets and story-tellers out there and we’d love to showcase your work in the Newsletter.

Think about where you find inspiration or what experiences have influenced your life. Why not share these with your fellow Partners and Sisters?

If you have an idea for an article or piece to submit—or better yet, if you want to join our committee—please reach out to Carol Oldendorf or Audrey Jungermann. We’ll save a spot for you in the Summer issue!

Thank you!

-The Communications Committee