

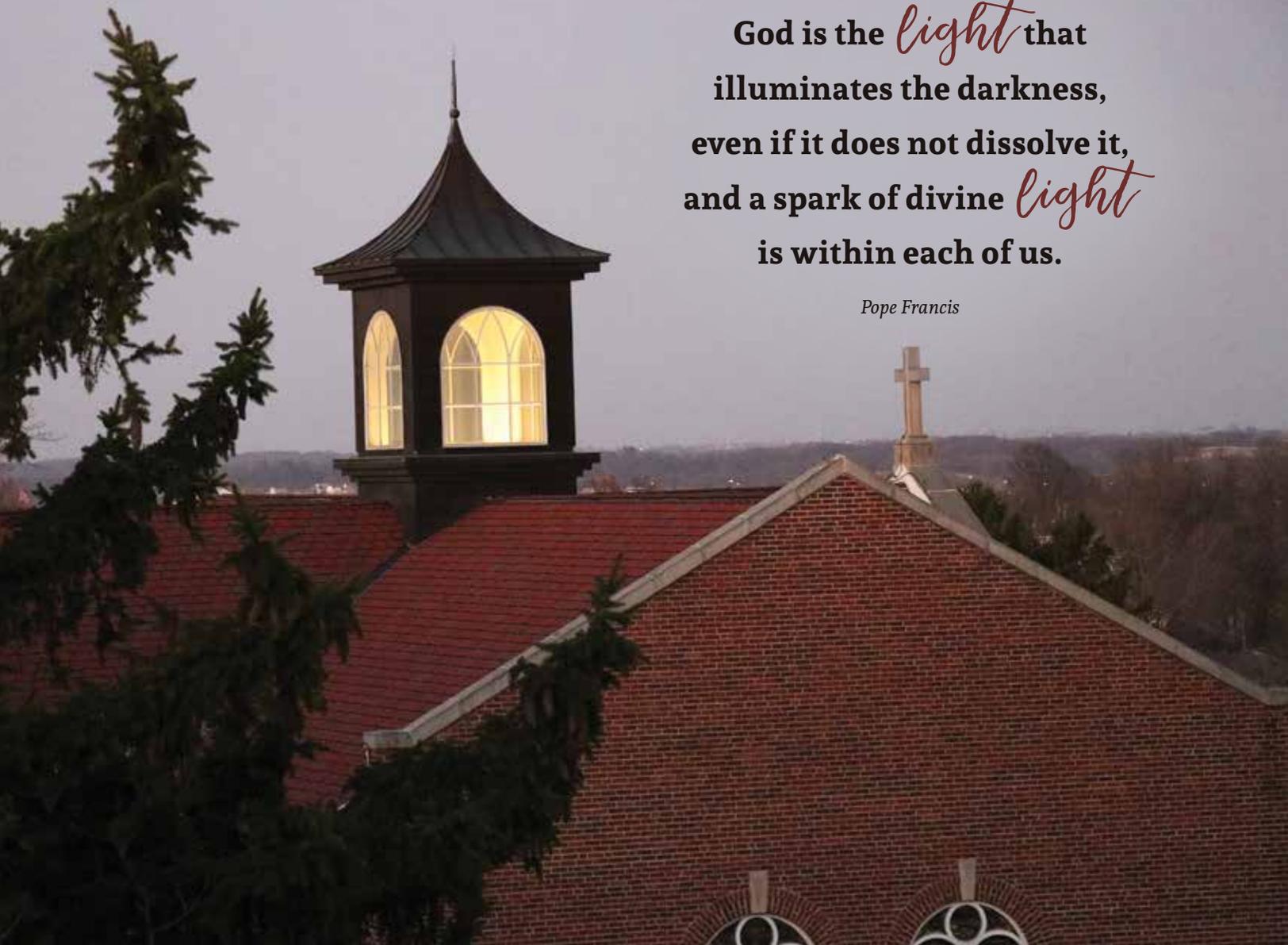


PRESENTATION DOORWAYS

offering hospitality to the world

God is the *light* that
illuminates the darkness,
even if it does not dissolve it,
and a spark of divine *light*
is within each of us.

Pope Francis



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The PURPOSE

The purpose of Presentation Doorways is to further the mission of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our associates by sharing the news and views of the congregation with our benefactors, families and friends. Through this publication, we hope to share the charism of our congregation and to invite others to become involved in our mission.

Your THOUGHTS & COMMENTS

We want your input. Please send or email photos, stories and information about our sisters, associates, former members, family and friends, or any ideas which relate to the aim of this publication. Submit to:

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Cover PHOTOS

The doorways represented on the cover are snapshots of significant doors in the Presentation history and present day ministries: (Left to right) Doorway of Hotel Hope, a nonprofit hotel for homeless women and children in New Orleans, Louisiana; Doorway of St. Vincent's Academy (now St. Columbkille) in Dubuque, Iowa, in 1879; Doorway of Céad Míle Fáilte (100,000 Welcomes) located on the property of the Presentation Motherhouse at 2360 Carter Road in Dubuque, Iowa; Doorway of the Presentation Motherhouse at 2360 Carter Road in Dubuque, Iowa; Doorway of Casa Betania, home for retreats and a gathering space for students in Tarija, Bolivia.

PRESENTATION DOORWAYS

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The Presentation lantern light above our chapel reminds us that God's presence is always with us.

Openings A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

by CARMEN HERNANDEZ, PBVM

The person you encounter is often more than the person you see.

Clare Vanderpool

How different the world became for all of us in March of this year when COVID-19 arrived and forever changed our lives. We began to quarantine, self-isolate, wear masks, social distance, wash our hands more frequently and use Zoom for meetings. These actions became our new normal. The virus is affecting everyone, without regard to boundaries of race, gender, age, religion or borders. We are experiencing immeasurable social unrest and emotional upheaval to an extent that we simply cannot fathom. Workers who have no option to work from home may have no income. Many people have lost close friends and beloved family members and cannot be present for the moments that matter most – graduations, weddings and birthdays. These lost moments are forever etched in our hearts. A huge portion of our daily lives have been affected. Where does one find hope in times like these? What will carry us forward into 2021, if, as it seems, this pandemic remains with us?

It may be worthwhile to recall the hidden blessings of these months of disruption, remembering that in all things there is gift. We have heard stories of parents spending more time with their children. We ourselves may have had more opportunities to finish our “to-do” list. Perhaps we are connecting anew with family and friends via Zoom and telephone calls. Many of us have had time for long walks, time for exercise, time to reflect and pray.

Schools are addressing student educational needs in new and creative ways. Choirs, across the country, are coming together virtually to give stunning performances. Many people have shared their stimulus checks with those in need and essential workers who were unable to work from home. Essential workers, courageous doctors and nurses continue to risk their lives to serve others. We continue to hear about strangers reaching out to others, volunteering and donating food. Acts of goodness and generosity are all around us.

Colleen Dulle, of *America* magazine, reflects on Pope Francis’ latest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*:

“Pope Francis states that we cannot go back to where we were before the pandemic. We will either come out better or worse. Francis believes that it is in acts of encounter with our neighbors, those who are different from us, like that of the Good Samaritan, the outsider, that we become aware of social issues causing suffering to our brothers and sisters – the social structures that need to change. This is what Francis calls ‘a culture based on encounter.’ It involves listening to our struggling brothers and sisters at every level and reimagining how to transform the structures that can cause people to suffer. This means giving people our time, like the Good Samaritan, who stops and is present to the man on the side of the road giving the gift of his time.”

How will we choose to love in our acts of encounter with our neighbor? Will we strengthen our inner capacity to continue to help one another as the suffering continues to increase? Will difficulties be seen as paths leading us to opportunities? Will we take time to listen to others, especially those made poor, and those who, by our standards, are different? This is our chance to come out better from this pandemic by building a new society based on loving our neighbor.

In the following pages, we hope you will enjoy reading the personal “acts of encounter” of our sisters and associates that work with, listen to and give time to our struggling brothers and sisters. During this holiday season, may the “gift of encounter” be yours.

Sister Carmen Hernandez Sister Rita Menart Sister Joy Peterson Sister Marilyn Breen



Our MISSION

We, the Sisters of the Presentation, are Catholic women who dedicate our lives to God through evangelization, prayer, service and hospitality. Our way of life is based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We share in the vision of our foundress, Venerable Nano Nagle, who dared to dream of a better world for the poor, sick and uneducated of Ireland. We commit ourselves to the empowerment of women and children. We reverence and celebrate all creation as gift. We commit ourselves to confronting injustice and working for peace.

As we continue to keep Nano’s dream alive, we are pleased to share our vision with you.

Our DIRECTION

Rooted in the Gospel, inspired by Nano Nagle and united to Presentation Sisters and associates around the world through the International Presentation Association, we, the Sisters of the Presentation of Dubuque, Iowa, are called to live our charism of radical hospitality in kinship with Earth and all people.

Sisters of the Presentation LEADERSHIP TEAM

Sister Carmen Hernandez

Sister Rita Menart

Sister Joy Peterson

Sister Marilyn Breen



Associate Billie Greenwood helps in the migrant soup kitchen bringing nutrition and warm beverages to people in need.

Unexpected Developments, Again and Again

by BILLIE GREENWOOD, ASSOCIATE

Presentation associate Billie Greenwood has volunteered for the last 14 years assisting migrants on the U.S.-Mexico border through Kino Border Initiative. She has witnessed the many challenges and injustices migrants face. Billie shares reflections of her experiences that have not only gifted her in many ways, but allowed her to make a difference.

For the past several winters, I've attended a daily human rights class conducted in Spanish. Considering I first learned the alphabet in Spanish only when I was 50 years old, I didn't ever expect to be learning human rights *en español*. But, surprisingly, my new, broken Spanish became good enough to allow me to volunteer in assisting migrants on the U.S.-Mexico border.

At the Mexican soup kitchen where I help, providing a hot meal wasn't the only service. Migrants also learned a daily lesson on their 30 universal human rights. Just as important, the migrants taught us daily, simply by being there. They showed us that human rights guaranteed aren't necessarily rights received. Each migrant could cite human rights they didn't have. So, their brave spirits impelled them to leave home and family. They sought to live where they would find the rights I take for granted. But, routinely, I saw my nation thwart their praiseworthy quest. "Why?"

Immigrants as Blessing

I puzzle because it doesn't make sense. We *need* immigrants' labor, their skills. We need their values of family and community and faith. We need their strength of character, their ability to work hard, to risk, to create.

Why are we pushing them away, keeping them out? Who would expect that? Is it because we are afraid of "the other"? Maybe unfamiliar people intimidate us. *Different* is hard. Change is uncomfortable. Breaking away from the usual is challenging. We do not like the *unexpected*.

And immigrants bring new languages, new customs, new perspectives and experiences. So, rather than taking advantage of their positive contributions, we would rather not have to change.

Maybe our hospitality is deficient. Maybe we miss what is most important because we don't go past the surface. Pope Francis explains how to look deeply:

"Only those who see with the heart see things well, because they know how to 'look into' each person: to see a brother or sister apart from his or her mistakes, hope amid difficulty. They see God everywhere."

Look deeper. Find God. Recognize a brother, a sister in migrant asylum-seekers. There are many rewards.

Volunteer Blessings

Working in a different country, navigating in a foreign language was uncomfortable enough that in the beginning I almost quit. I didn't, fortunately. Now, I'm rewarded there every day. I went – hoping to help. But, I am helped in unexpected ways:

- I learn **what the world is really like**. According to the *World Bank*, nearly half of the world's people live on less than \$5.50 a day. Hard for us in the U.S. to imagine! You may not know even one person like that. But, as a border volunteer, I'm with many all the time.
- Knowing, liking and respecting people who don't have basic rights or resources such as migrants, I learn to see life differently. It helps me **question my expenditures**: Is this purchase necessary? How am I spending this money on myself when kids on the border have only flip flops and no socks in the winter cold?
- Working in a foreign place in a language in which I can't communicate well teaches me humility. I learn to step back. **Overcoming ego** is a vital spiritual lesson. I become grateful to others who, despite having important roles, adjust to my special needs.
- When I volunteer, I'm surrounded by people who inspire me. I'm **surrounded by heroism**. The migrants are heroically brave, family-oriented and industrious. The aid workers are heroically altruistic and generous. It's the opposite of impressions from national news reports. There, migrants are fearsome invaders and most other newsworthy people are dangerous and selfish. From my own experience, I know that's not true.
- Both political parties have agreed for decades that the U.S. immigration system isn't working. Like many, I've pushed for years to repair immigration. So far, our leaders lack the political will to accomplish this. It's frustrating. But, in the migrant soup kitchen, I actually *can* alleviate a little suffering. By chopping veggies or scrubbing the coffee pot, I help the team bring nutrition and warming beverages to people in need. **Making a difference** gives me satisfaction.

COVID-19 on the Border

The pandemic's unexpected arrival has worsened many things on the border – for me and for migrants. In fact, after 14 years, I can't volunteer there this winter. The border is closed to non-essential people. No U.S. volunteers can help in the Mexican soup kitchen. But, the disruption for asylum-seekers is horrifyingly worse.

In March, the U.S. abruptly began returning asylum-seekers who are fleeing in fear for their lives, as well as other people in migration, to Mexico. Migrants are not receiving due process.



Left to right: Associates Sarah Gieseke and Billie Greenwood, who were volunteering not far from one another, met up at the inauguration of the new migrant assistance center in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico.

All asylum processing at the U.S.-Mexico border has simply shut down.

During a pandemic, when everyone's safety and health are at risk, our nation has turned its back on our international obligations, on any commitment to public health, on common decency.

Especially during a pandemic, we must uphold human rights, international law and due process. But, instead, we have forced the creation of impromptu, makeshift migrant camps in Mexico where thousands now live in legal and humanitarian limbo. They don't know if they should return to their likely deaths in their places of origin or remain in suspension without support on the border indefinitely.

Outraged, we anguish that 666 migrant children may never see their parents again, after our national policy deliberately separated them at the border.

We Rely on "The Other"

COVID-19 shows us how far we have fallen from a fair immigration policy. Our nation can prosper only if we keep everyone safe and healthy. America needs effective immigration policy for economic and social progress.

Immigrants bring skills, labor, entrepreneurship and ideas. Money they contribute to our economy adds to our tax base, raising our standard of living. They fill jobs that Americans can't or won't do. Their customs and culture enrich the diversity that makes our country dynamic and exciting. Our national policy must match this reality.

Look deeper. Find your brother, your sister in "the other." God is in everyone. Is that really unexpected?



From a distance, Sister Paula Schwendinger works closely with others in planning the weekly Spanish Mass in Dyersville, Iowa.

Virtual Ministry to Immigrants

by PAULA SCHWENDINGER, PBVM

In 2015, Sister Paula Schwendinger initiated HOME ministry, Hispanic Outreach Ministry of Evangelization. She began with small groups of Bible sharing in various towns to allow the people to get to know and trust her. Once the immigration raids began, the people were afraid to leave their homes, so she stopped the Bible sharing and journeyed with the people in their struggles with the immigration system. This article explains her ministry with immigrants during these trying times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone in all walks of life, of all ages and cultural backgrounds. For the past five years, I have closely worked with Hispanics in the rural areas of Dyersville, Petersburg, Cascade and Farley, Iowa. This experience has given me a new and clearer perspective on

Hispanics' way of life and the unique problems they face each day as immigrants who are undocumented, not because they wish to be, but because there is no way for them to even begin a process to become part of our country.

Since March, I have been quarantined in our motherhouse in Dubuque, and have been unable to physically be among the people. I am often asking my Hispanic families these questions: "How are you? How is your family? What effects has COVID-19 had on all of you?"

It has been interesting to learn that especially for Hispanic women who do not work outside of the home, their life is not much different. In fact, staying away from others, being at home and hoping that the immigration services don't come looking for them or a family member to deport, is a reality not

unlike how all of us are now living because of the pandemic. We are asked to social distance, stay away from crowds and stay home as much as possible. The women tell me that is not difficult for them, since they have been living that reality for years. The difficult part is trying to convince their children to play at home, to stay away from friends and to wear their masks. This brings sadness, stress and emotional pain for them as they watch their children withdraw from them. Several of the women have had the virus which has been challenging in keeping the rest of the family safe as there are often multiple families living in the same house with one bathroom.

In trying to anticipate the needs of the immigrants during this time, I learned that when school began, parents needed to take their children's temperatures each morning before they left home. Thermometers were as difficult to find as toilet paper was at the beginning of the pandemic. I located a pharmacy that would send no-touch thermometers directly to the Catholic school in Dyersville. The school nurse gave them to the parents while a bilingual parent explained the nurses' directives. Thanks to donors I am grateful to have funds in the HOME account to purchase the thermometers.

As I learned how important the flu vaccine is this year, my next objective was to help the uninsured Hispanics get access to the vaccine. A Dubuque pharmacy goes to neighboring towns and administers the vaccines at a reasonable cost so I arranged for them to go to Dyersville. I found volunteers to sign people up and collect a small fee while a couple of high school students interpreted for the pharmacist. We had 19 receive the flu vaccine. The HOME fund subsidized the rest of the cost of the vaccine.

Jesus asks us to be present to those in need of help, regardless of whether or not they belong to our social group ... he challenges us to put aside all differences and, in the face of suffering, to draw near to others with no questions asked.

Pope Francis

The Spanish Mass at the Basilica in Dyersville continues each Sunday. Each week I am on the phone with the guitar player and together we choose familiar songs that can be sung without books. Since she does not read music, I teach her the melody and chords to the responsorial psalm. I miss celebrating with the Hispanic community, but I know the music brings life to the liturgy. I am appreciative that from the beginning of my ministry, there have been leaders who take charge of lectors and other needs that may arise.



HOME ministry provided no-touch thermometers to several Hispanic families.

Several families did not have internet services so when school went online in the spring, they were at a disadvantage. The school staff did what they could to give them hard copies of the homework, and allowed them to bring laptops home. However, the only way they could connect online was to go and sit in the Dyersville school parking lot.

I recently learned that there is money set aside to help Hispanics who work for farmers, and are impacted by the virus. I applied for funds for families so that they could connect to Wi-Fi and pay for internet service for a couple months. Having Wi-Fi at home would certainly be helpful and necessary for these families especially if schools go all online this winter.

Last week parent teacher conferences were online. For Hispanics who still have no Wi-Fi and needed an interpreter, I went on Zoom with the teacher, and then on the phone with the parents. I am impressed and amazed at how the school staff adjusts to the needs of the students.

Almost every household has extra expenses due to COVID-19. Since most of the Hispanics live paycheck to paycheck, I was glad to anticipate their needs and help with thermometers, flu shots and Wi-Fi. It may not change the lives of many, but at least a few will be able to breathe easier and keep one step ahead.

As I continue my work with the immigrants, I remember the words of Sister Raphael Consedine's poem: "Go out! For need calls loudly in the winding lane, and you will find Christ there." Even though I may not be going out, I trust that I am listening to the voices of the people in need and am a virtual presence among them. This ministry continues to bless me in ways I never imagined.



Dubuque Presentation Sisters and associates held their annual community gathering over Zoom this year. Although the personal connections were missed, the gathering held many blessings of group conversations and sharing.

Committed to the Mission

2020 Community Gathering

by BETH KRESS, PBVM

The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, “Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Messiah? ... Many more began to believe in him because of his word ...” (John 4: 28-29, 41)

Jesus showed by example how to engage with the world. Through the power of his resurrection, Christians are challenged to meet Jesus at the well, to return to Galilee to share the Good News with others and to do his mission in the world.

On October 9-10, Sisters of the Presentation and their associates gathered “at the well” for a virtual 2020 Community Days. Using video conferencing, about 75 individuals reflected on the theme, *Conversations at the Well: Deepening Radical Hospitality*. Sister Carol Crepeau, a member of the Congregation of St. Joseph (CSJ) from LaGrange, Illinois, facilitated the first two days. Sister Carol has worked with the Presentation congregation in its planning process since 2018.

Conversations at the Well

On the first day, attendees “zoomed in” to hear Sister Sophia Park, SNJM, associate professor in the religious studies and philosophy department at Holy Names University in Oakland, California. She is a member of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. Previous to October, sisters and associates had read and discussed Sister Sophia’s book, *Conversations at the Well: Emerging Religious Life in the 21st Century Global World*, which provided background for the gathering. Sharing in small groups and coming together to have conversation with Sister Sophia gave participants opportunity to articulate insights on the future of religious life and shared mission. “The experience was a great beginning of conversation for us and gave me hope for believing in the future of religious life,” states Sister Joan Brincks. “I appreciated Sister Sophia Park’s delightful spirit and the chance for us to have conversations with each other.”

Sister Sophia explains in *Conversations at the Well* that religious life is now in a “liminal” or “middle space.” Religious congregations must understand that in such

The experience was a great beginning of conversation for us and gave me hope for believing in the future of religious life.

Sister Joan Brincks

a time, the former way of being is challenged. As in the current pandemic time, they are not in control. Yet, it is a graced time. Neither “the past or old model of religious life” nor “the future of religious life” ought to be the focus.

“... Religious women [and associates] live and serve ... in the reality of a multicultural and interreligious world, engaging with others and residing on the margin spiritually and socially,” Sister Sophia adds. Thus, during this “middle time” Dubuque Presentation Sisters have chosen to reflect and have conversations and be open to the transformation.

“We met one another in *Conversations at the Well*,” says Sister Raeleen Sweeney. “We began through a book and videos, followed by meeting with the author Sophia Park and then brought her message alive in our small group conversations. From Sophia’s Korean heritage and sharing of international experiences, we had an intercultural experience. It is now our turn to hear ‘the message.’ Not unlike those who first heard

the missionaries speaking another language, eventually, when we listen deeply to others, we are ready to hear each other.”

Like the woman who met Jesus at the well, the Community Days process invited participants to reflect on the realities of their world and their lives, to have a life-changing experience and, together, to move forward.

“I appreciated seeing everyone and having the opportunity to hear a variety of voices open to possibilities and hope in our often uncertain and chaotic world,” comments Sister Diana Blong. “For me, what has continued to reverberate is Sister Sophia’s invitation to ‘share our narratives’ with one another. In our present pandemic world, where our physical contacts are limited, we are still called to encounter one another, to listen, not only with our ears, but also with our hearts. Sister Sophia’s account of engaging a struggling passerby led to discovering a commonality of experience and the challenge to be open to transformation by others.”

Not only is this a “middle time” for the Presentation congregation to reflect and be open to the future, but it is also a time to imagine creatively how living the Gospel mission can contribute to a sustainable future for all. Listening to the Spirit can energize and deepen the Presentation expression of the Holy Spirit and our charism of radical hospitality.

“From Sister Sophia’s sharing, I took a number of ideas for more reflection: I must be open to the unknown, lean into the Spirit and be open to where the Spirit is leading me,” shares Associate Anastasia Nicklaus-Schmelzer. “I can pray, ‘God, what do you want to give me today? What do you want to take from me?’ We were truly connected in the online



sharing and I enjoyed getting so many perspectives. It was a wonderful way to witness to each other about the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. From the inspiration of this gathering, I can deepen radical hospitality in my life and in my parish ministry.”

Promise Group Updates

COVID-19, Black lives, immigrant families at the border, discrimination against persons of color, gun violence, non-violent protest, effects of global warming on those made poor, respect for others of differing views – the list goes on. In 2018 the Sisters of the Presentation renewed their commitment to mission through four promises: to live radical hospitality; to practice non-violence; to form partnerships and utilize resources for mission; and to implement governance with dialogue and communication for decision-making. Energized by the work of four promise groups through 2019 and 2020, sisters and associates spent the second day of Community Days hearing how each group had identified ways to live out these promises.

“I was really impressed with the promise groups’ presentations and small group sharing. People did real sharing and my outlook was broadened by the promises made in 2018,” remarks Associate Carol Kane. “Learning more about racism has influenced me to purchase, for my own reading, the book *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson and to order more copies to share with family and friends.”

Associate Linda Dolphin sums up her thoughts saying, “During 2020 Community Days, I participated in conversations about the future of religious life and I took part in discussions related to the promise groups. Sophia Park commented that ‘We are standing at the threshold where the Spirit will guide us.’ She also suggested that ‘the future depends on living mission

I liked Sophia’s comments encouraging everyone to be enthusiastic and hopeful about the future and ‘Do whatever comes with vitality!’
Associate Linda Dolphin

interculturally.’ The non-violence promise group, of which I am a member, is working on personal acceptance of various cultures, along with ways to promote non-violence toward others and toward our planet. I appreciate the encouraging comments and suggestions from those attending. I liked Sophia’s comments encouraging everyone to be enthusiastic and hopeful about the future and ‘Do whatever comes with vitality!’ Community Days were spiritually rich and I am so grateful to have participated as an associate.”

From conversations about the four promises and the ongoing work of the promise groups, Sisters of the Presentation and their associates affirmed the continued work of education for anti-racism and non-violence. They suggested ongoing planning for the property and buildings by a committee, and focus on partnerships and resources for mission. They affirmed the deepening of their commitment to collaboration, shared responsibility and dialogue.

Being together virtually presented the challenge to let go, to see with a new vision, to dream more dreams and to be holders of God’s vision encountered at the well of life-giving water.

Commitment to Mission through these four promises:

We promise to live radical hospitality in all relationships, especially with people made poor.

- We will educate ourselves and others to better understand our own racism.
- We will commit personally to learn about other racial and ethnic groups through personal relationships.
- We will advocate for and support the reunification of unaccompanied minors and their mothers at the border.

We promise to practice non-violence of mind and heart, speech and action as we address injustice directly and systemically.

- We will educate and practice non-violence toward self, others and all creation through reading and study; hosting a violence-prevention training event.
- We will offer prayer experiences about non-violence toward self, others and all creation.
- We will practice active non-violence locally and engage with global grassroots movements of non-violence.

We promise to form partnerships and utilize resources for the purpose of mission.

- Within the context of mission sustainability, care of members and legacy, we will study, research, develop and initiate implementation of a phased plan for property and resources of Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque, Iowa.

We promise to implement governance practices that foster dialogue and communication in decision-making.

- We will create opportunities among Promise Groups and others to engage in communication about our shared future.
- We will research models of leadership and governance to identify and propose practices that promote dialogue and communication in decision-making.

Radical hospitality begins with a single heart, a growing openness, a prayerful desire for the highest good of a stranger and an intentional invitation to welcome.

Each year, the Sisters of the Presentation send out a call for support. Due to COVID-19, your support this year will assist those sisters serving outside of Mount Loretto. Today, sisters minister in 10 states, Washington, D.C. and the country of Bolivia. Each sister is taking a risk being on the frontline and serving people when they need them most. These sisters show resilience to the pandemic that surrounds them and offer compassion in a variety of ways. They carry out the mission of living radical hospitality and integrate radical inclusivity into their ministries.

Our call for financial support in 2020 will assist all sisters to carry out their ministry and, ultimately, support the mission of the Sisters of the Presentation. Your partnership is truly appreciated and allows us to continue to serve those in need.

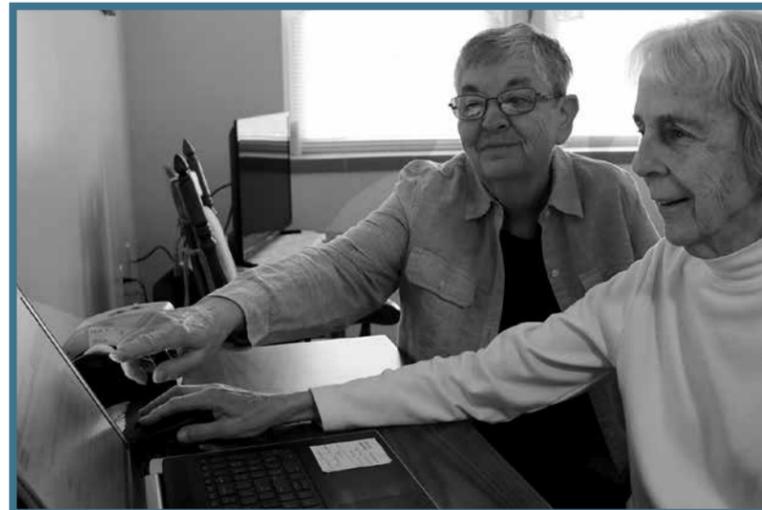
Thank you for considering a gift to our community. Your donation can be made online at www.dbqpbvms.org by clicking the **Donate Now** button.

You may also contact Karen Tuecke in the Partners in Mission Office for more information at 563-588-2008 ext. 109 or partnersinmission@dbqpbvms.org.

May you have a joyous holiday season.



After working from home for several months, Sister Beth Driscoll is back in her office at the College of Saint Mary in Omaha, Nebraska.



Left to right: Sister Rita Cameron enjoys helping Sister Anne McCormick with computer questions and lessons.

Sheltering in Place Unexpected Blessings

by BETH DRISCOLL, PBVM & RITA CAMERON, PBVM

During this pandemic, Presentation Sisters have continued their work while sheltering in place, both inside and outside the motherhouse. Despite many challenges, they have discovered creative ways to reach those they serve, receiving many blessings along the way. Sisters Beth Driscoll and Rita Cameron share their experiences of ministry during these times.

The spiritual journey is full of paradoxes. Sometimes we come to a place, be it physical or spiritual, whose task is to trouble us, to wake us up to possibility.

Associate Barbara Ressler, *Becoming Light*

SISTER BETH DRISCOLL *Ministering Outside the Motherhouse*

While sheltering in place for 13 weeks, I received a letter from a friend who imagined this pandemic time as an extended personal retreat. She expressed the blessing it is to have an inner life, to accept and be comfortable with self, to be happy and content while solitary. COVID-19 continues to cause tremendous suffering across the globe. Yet, I, too, experience its potential to wake me up to possibility. We dwell in possibility if only we can turn our attention to its many and varied invitations.

After working from home for three months, I returned to ministry at the College of Saint Mary (CSM) in mid-June 2020. Upon return, I witnessed an abundance of hospitality as staff members eagerly stopped at one another's doors to offer heartfelt welcomes and to express concern for one another's well-being. Colleagues shared newly-appreciated blessings – eating dinner together as a family, going on walks, settling into a more reflective space to notice redbirds and beautiful sunsets.

Theology professor Jennifer Reed-Bouley's Christian Life and Service course, pre-COVID, took students to a variety of service sites off campus. Re-imagining the possibility of personal interviews taking the place of service sites, Jennifer invited me to participate and asked if other Presentation Sisters might also be interested in being interviewed.

Throughout September and October, CSM students interviewed 11 sisters. Stimulating conversations focused on everyday Christian life and service in light of scripture, human experience and contemporary expression of service in the church and world. I was delighted to receive emails from sisters describing the conversations they had with students. Students, in turn, told me about the sisters they had met via the Zoom interview. Particularly meaningful to students was that the sisters recognized each student's dedication to earning a college degree while trying to balance full-time and part-time jobs and family responsibilities.

Fortunate to worship with Omaha's Jesuit parish, St. John's, I received yet another invitation to possibility. Anticipating restrictions on the usual parish activities to extend well into 2021, parishioners who serve on the Leadership Commissions were invited to engage in a year of dreaming and discerning. We will reflect on Bill Huebsch's recently published book, *Promise and Hope: Pastoral Theology in the Age of Mercy*. I look forward to remotely gathering with commission members each month so that, together, we might re-imagine possibilities for the parish we hope to be – church as people of God.

St. John's also initiated conversations among North Omaha congregations for the purpose of getting to know one another as neighbors, sharing experiences of work and worship and acknowledging injustices illumined by the pandemic. In our effort to live the Gospel mission, our perspective broadens. We identify and name areas of commonality and challenge. It is a blessing to be involved with this richly diverse group of neighbors.

Possibility abounds! "Grace comes when we welcome God's work and it's always worth the wait." (*Becoming Light*)

SISTER RITA CAMERON *Ministering Inside the Motherhouse*

"Be still and know that I am God." These words resonate very deeply with me as I reflect on what has taken place since we have been in quarantine these last few months. I have learned a new appreciation for a more relaxed lifestyle and less busy schedule. Instead of rising early and heading for school, I find myself rising early and spending extra time in prayer, silence and visiting with sisters in the motherhouse. I have read more books in the last six months than I have read in many years.

I now have time – time to enjoy the beauty of nature at Mount Loretto; time to sit in silence and enjoy hearing nothing; time to write birthday notes to friends and family; time to help serve food, water and coffee to sisters at mealtime; time to answer the call for help when a sister

is having trouble with her computer; time to help plan entertainment events for sisters in Presentation Center and on the house channel; and a lot of time on Zoom with various committees. My appreciation for being present has increased tremendously. I believe I don't have to fix, change or solve problems for others as long as I am truly present as a listener and friend.

As a facilitator for a grief support group sponsored by Catholic Charities and Mercy Hospital, I have found that I need to be creative and reach inside myself so I can find ways to help the support group do just that – support each member. During our weekly meetings, which are possible because of video conferencing, we have found there is a connection that has a different meaning than face-to-face meetings allow. There is a need to be silent and listen carefully as members share what the grief process has brought to them during the time since our last visit. Since one of the members joins us by phone, we are not able to see facial images and we must rely on what we hear. As a result, I believe the group members have developed a form of listening from the heart. It is truly amazing to participate in these weekly gatherings.

As I have experienced being quarantined, I have changed my definition of "radical hospitality." I have always known radical hospitality needs to exist on many levels, but now I see the importance of being radically hospitable to those people with whom I interact on a daily basis. As I have had opportunities for closer interaction with sisters at the motherhouse, I have a heightened awareness of the need to practice hospitality not only on a daily basis, but minute by minute.

As I practice radical hospitality here at Mount Loretto, my hope is I will be more hospitable to those I meet beyond these walls. I definitely do have the time and my motivation is to be still and know that God is present in each moment and in each person I encounter.

Leaving Our Footprints

by HERMANN PLATT, PBVM, ARCHIVIST

Nano's lantern continues to bring the light of Christ in places where Sisters of the Presentation have ministered, even after they are no longer physically present. Here we highlight dedications and memorials in honor of Presentation Sisters.

ST. JAMES PARISH, CHICAGO, IL

"In recognition of the service of Sister Barbara Rastatter to St. James, the hall has been blessed and named Presentation Hall. A plaque for this honor is being placed in the hall to remember always the time, talent and love Sister Barbara gave to the St. James community." (*St. James Parish Bulletin, Sunday, July 24, 2016*) On April 17 of that year, the parish dedicated Presentation Hall in honor of the works of her Christian charity to the community of St. James Catholic Church. A reception held in her honor brought out crowds of people who wished to thank her and honor her presence among them.

Sister Barbara began her ministry at St. James Parish in August of 2001. She worked tirelessly, bringing Nano's lantern to all in the neighborhood whose lives she impacted. One of the oldest Catholic churches in Chicago, established in the near south side in 1855, its parishioners have received awards for their dedication to working with the poor and to advocacy for systematic social change.

A very social person who had empathy for anyone in need, Sister Barbara was in her element delivering necessities to those who patronized the parish pantry. In addition, she was active in the parish, bringing Eucharist to seniors in their homes, conducting Bible classes, coordinating social activities and helping families prepare wake services and funeral liturgies. All of this after retiring from active ministry.

While Sister Janet Stelken continues the work in her place, fond memories of Sister Barbara linger in the hearts of those who knew her.



Sister Barbara Rastatter loved her work at the parish food pantry.

There was a series of video conferencing with Zoom to plan the agenda and other details using the same contemplative process. Registration began ... then COVID-19 hit in March 2020. The risk of an in-person gathering was too great so the core group decided in consultation with others to go virtual in 2020. Another flurry of Zooms occurred to develop a virtual format before opening registration for the virtual gathering.

Over 200 Presentation people gathered on their computers connecting on Zoom on September 24-26, 2020. Zooming across North America created scheduling challenges, due to four time zones, but the happy chatter began in unison at 8:30 a.m. in the West, 10:30 a.m. in the Central zone and 1:00 p.m. in the Canadian East. Presentation people sat at computers each day for presentations, small group reflection and large group sharing in a contemplative listening style to deepen reflections and relationships.

Day one set the context of the story with a dramatization of Nano Nagle and sharing on how Nano's story is expressed in participants' lives. On day two, each congregation in the Conference shared a video describing their roots on the continent and mission. Participants reflected on how their story merges with the larger story. On day three, panelists shared how their work is ministry through contact with Presentation people. Participants then processed their work as ministry.

The virtual event was an unexpected blessing. The evaluations showed a great appreciation for the widening tent as connections formed. Prayer and group sharing incorporated contemplative silence. Ideas transformed and energy swelled.

Comments made on evaluations were ... "Great sense of energy and oneness ... It was a deepening of our call to mission ... The energy and depth of commitment to live the Spirit of Nano, the Spirit of Jesus was palpable ... The gathering exceeded expectations in content, activity and interaction ... a sense of our being family became a reality ... We walked together ... The energy and excitement of Presentation people ... The charism is so alive and active."

Another unexpected blessing of the virtual gathering is that out of 158 evaluations, 91 percent said they would very likely be at the in-person Gathering of Presentation People in 2021.

Hopefully, the taste of the widening tent in the virtual gathering will promote the blessing of an even wider tent at the 2021 gathering!

To learn more about the
Conference of Presentation Sisters
and view videos from the gathering
www.pbvmconference.org



Presentation people from all over North America gather for days of building and deepening relationships, group sharing and contemplative silence.

Virtual Gathering of Presentation People Widening the Tent

by RITA MENART, PBVM

Back in 2018, the Conference of North American Presentation Sisters, composed of the foundations of Aberdeen, Dubuque, New Windsor, Newfoundland, San Francisco, Staten Island and Union, stated a desire of widening the tent by providing contemplative, transformative formation experiences for Presentation people to build relationships. No one dreamed of the unexpected blessings and challenges the idea would bring.

From the beginning of the planning, the elements of widening the tent and contemplative experiences were in the mix. A group of sisters, associates and employees met as a task group in Aberdeen, South Dakota on June 29-July 2, 2019 to concretize the idea of a gathering of Presentation people to fulfill the stated desire. Sister Mary Catherine Redmond, a New Windsor Presentation, developed a contemplative process to help the group reach a consensus and solidify steps to make the gathering a reality. Some participants were doubtful that the contemplative process planned would

Who are Presentation People?

Presentation people are sisters,
associates, employees, friends
or partners who share in the
Presentation mission and charism.

get the group to the needed place, but it did. The group fell into the rhythm of silence, listening before discussing and respecting diverse ideas. Everyone shared and decisions surfaced with unanimous support. The process worked beautifully and committees formed to carry out the work for the Gathering of Presentation People in September 2020.

Offering Support to Others Jail and Prison Ministry

by JODY TOMKINS, ASSOCIATE

In October 2019, associate Kim Schmidt reached out to her Nano's Hands associate group regarding her interest in Jail and Prison Ministry (JPM) through Catholic Charities in Dubuque. Kim arranged for her group to meet with Deacon Bill Hickson, coordinator of Jail and Prison Ministry with Catholic Charities. Deacon Bill suggested that the associates attend drug court since most of the recovering clients are required to attend.

Drug court is a special initiative that gives people facing sentences for nonviolent crimes stemming from their addictions an alternative to jail. Instead, they are offered a spot in a 12- to 18-month program. To graduate, participants must undergo intensive treatment while fulfilling a requirement to work and meet other conditions.

The associate group attended drug court together and were amazed by the respect, empathy and support that the judge showed to all of the clients. Some had setbacks with consequences, and others celebrated milestones with rewards. In addition, the group had the opportunity to share with other Circle of Support volunteers. Circles provide a healthy and supportive relationship between the individual reentering society and the community, opening an avenue for restoration and healing of all people impacted by crime.

After attending drug court, the group agreed that this ministry aligns with the mission of Nano Nagle and were fully eager to participate. In February 2020, Deacon Bill was beginning to organize two new Circles of Support. Associate group members, Sister Maura McCarthy and Kim Schmidt were assigned to one circle and Jenny Schultz and Jody Tomkins were assigned to another. Both participants were battling with addiction and experiencing major struggles throughout their lives.

The support sessions always begin with a prayer followed by active sharing from all members of the group. The participants are asked to set their own goals related to housing, transportation, finances, faith, health, mending relationships and education. The regular Circle of Support gatherings give the client or core member the opportunity to get feedback and guidance from volunteer members of the community who are willing to help in any way they can.

Both support groups experienced significant setbacks during the COVID-19 pandemic, including job loss and the need to replace in-person meetings with Zoom calls, which continue.

Being a part of a circle reminds me daily to pray for those fighting addictions. Our support, love and prayer give hope, and without hope there is nothing.

Kim Schmidt

Kim and Maura describe their participant as an extremely hard working young man who has never missed a day of work. He is employed at a fast-food restaurant and is now managing the work schedules and opening and closing duties. He notes that he communicates with his employees to help them become more responsible and attempts, when possible, to give them a second chance. He recently progressed from a supervised halfway house to living in his own apartment.

Kim shares, "Being a part of a circle reminds me daily to pray for those fighting addictions. Our support, love and prayer give hope, and without hope there is nothing."

"What a thrill it is to be in a circle with caring people and a young man out of incarceration from addiction getting his life together, moving to his own apartment and finding furnishings for it with special thanks to the Sisters of the Presentation garage sale," adds Sister Maura. "He is manifesting great responsibility in his work, in charge of personnel and opening or closing the business. I am so impressed by the work of Deacon Bill and all his initiatives in benefit of the personal growth of the recovering clients. The drug court also seems to have a definite affirmative action to help those in recovery."

Jenny and Jody describe the woman that they are working with as hard working, energetic and determined. She has had some obstacles to overcome, including health issues and



Kim Schmidt



Sister Maura McCarthy

finding suitable housing, but through it all, she has remained extremely positive. She is now living in her own apartment and her health has improved. Deacon Bill recently noted that she is, without a doubt, one of the best success stories to witness.

"I was so hesitant to be a part of this ministry as I thought this was so far out of my comfort zone, but I can't imagine not being a part of this," reflects Jenny. "I look forward to every meeting, to be that support when needed and to celebrate their successes with them."



Jenny Schultz

"Being a part of a Circle of Support has been so rewarding. I would highly recommend participation in the Jail and Prison Ministry for those that are looking for ways to help others in their community. Everyone deserves a second chance, they just need others to support and encourage them when life gets hard," says Jody.



Jody Tomkins

If you are interested in hearing more about the group's experiences with Jail and Prison Ministry, please reach out Kim Schmidt at kimschmidt@tnci-dbq.com or 563-543-3593.

Dubuque Presentation Associate Scholarship

In the spirit of Presentation foundress Nano Nagle, the Dubuque Presentation associates are offering scholarships to assist individuals in pursuing their goals. In partnership with the Sisters of the Presentation, associates strive to live out the congregation's mission of offering radical hospitality in the world.

Presentation associates contributed to the scholarship fund and, in 2020, awarded three \$800 scholarships to individuals connected with the following organizations: La Luz Hispana in Hampton, Iowa; Dubuque Presentation Lantern Center; and Hotel Hope in New Orleans, Louisiana.

In 2021 the Dubuque Presentation Associate Scholarship will again be awarded to financially assist individuals to further education, receive job training or to help with immigration/citizenship expenses. The scholarship award is intended for such expenses as tuition, books and supplies; tools or uniforms for work; transportation; legal and filing fees for immigration or citizenship; or other needs associated with the above mentioned pursuits.

Applications are available on the Sisters of the Presentation website at www.dbqpbvms.org and from the organizations mentioned above. Applications are due April 1, 2021, to the Associate Partnership Office.

We Welcome Our Newest Associate

As is a sign of the times, Lisa Schmidt recently completed her associate orientation process via Zoom and also celebrated her commitment with the community over Zoom on November 17, 2020. Lisa began her journey with the Sisters of the Presentation 23 years ago in Algona, Iowa, and was a member of the congregation for 10 years.



During that time Lisa ministered with Alternative Services in Dubuque and at Sojourner Truth House in Gary, Indiana. After completing massage therapy school, Lisa worked at St. Luke's Hospital in Cedar Rapids and at the EXCEL Program in Okolona, Mississippi. In 2011 Lisa moved back to Dubuque and continued to work as a massage therapist, providing massages to the sisters at Mount Loretto for the past seven years. Earlier this year Lisa moved to her hometown of West Bend, Iowa, where she owns and operates Homestead Country Store.

Lisa shares, "The Presentation Sisters have been a significant part of my life for over 23 years. My connection and friendship with Sister Sharon Kelchen, now deceased, and many other sisters and associates continues. The Presentation community welcomed me into this relationship, and it has been a journey of a lifetime. I have gained much more than I could ever have given. The desire to become an associate gives me hope to continue to walk this path and share in the dream and future of what the Presentation Sisters represent."

We welcome Lisa. May our lives continue to be enriched by Lisa and through her participation in the Presentation Associate Partnership.

Associate Partnership

For more information, please contact:

Office of Associate Partnership
563-588-2008
associates@dbqpbvms.org

Reflections on the Journey

Sister Marian Sweeney

by MAURA MCCARTHY, PBVM



**I finally became what I was meant
to be! I love to read!**

I love books!

I even like the feel of them!

Sister Marian Sweeney

on the radio. This intense awareness resulted in Marian's lifelong passion for history.

Marian's parents, along with their four children, attended Assumption Church of Sylvia Switch, a mission of St. Therese in LaMotte. She recalls having read her Bible history so thoroughly at home that she could not be stumped in her religious education classes. On a wintry day, when the priest could not make it to the church for Mass, the local folks would pray the rosary together "at an incredible speed," Marian reminisces.

Marian entered the Sisters of the Presentation in the fall after completing high school. She became a teacher, like most Presentation Sisters of her era. Sister Marian taught school in Iowa, South Dakota and Minnesota at all levels and is remembered for her striking bulletin boards. She recalls crossing the foot bridge from the convent in Mason City, Iowa, to the beautiful iconic library. She feasted on the gorgeous art books and checked out a pile of books every week.

In due course, Sister Marian studied library science at Rosary College (now Dominican University) in River Forest, Illinois, and fulfilled her dream of becoming a full-time librarian and, later, archivist. "I finally became what I was meant to be! I love to read! I love books! I even like the feel of them!" she exclaims.

Sister Marian's life of prayer often arises out of the awesome beauty of her childhood locales. Celtic spirituality, so deep in her roots, entails a wakefulness to God in living beings, hills, rocks and trees. Her favorite psalm is Psalm 23, "The Lord is my Shepherd." Akin to Sister Marian's pronounced esteem for history and integrity is one of her favorite quotes: "Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God."

When asked what advice she would give to young people, her response was: "Always learn something new – always. Keep on learning and travelling every chance you get."

Marian Sweeney, firstborn of Joe and Irene Sweeney, became the epicenter of their world until her brother Jude was born four years later. Marian suddenly felt superseded by this babbling and beaming new brother. This early learning that she was not the center of the world carried her into an ever-expanding view of the world. Marian learned to love the steep hills, ravines and bluffs of the Sylvia-Bernard area in Iowa, where she learned to drive horses and milk cows. Her father was an Iowa farmer and a good Irish storyteller; her mother was a teacher and later a cosmetologist before marrying Joe.

Marian walked a mile to the "Sweeney School," Washington Township Rural School # 8, where the Dubuque Public Library bookmobile dropped off a box of books every four weeks. Marian read every last one. She remembers that she and her friend, Irma Mesch, stood up for a smaller boy who was being bullied. Later in high school, after he had moved to Clinton, he found them at a basketball game and accompanied them for the entire evening. Marian attended St. Columbkille High School in Dubuque, where she stayed through the week with her aunt, Mrs. Marcella Kane.

Marian describes herself as a very shy child who was 10 when the United States joined World War II. Her father, Joe, kept tabs on the troop movements in Europe, Africa and the Pacific. Marian scrutinized the war reports in the *Telegraph Herald*, studied the maps and listened to the news dispatches

Mount Loretto AND BEYOND

Featured below are special times in the lives of Dubuque Presentation Sisters and associates.



Renewal of Temporary Vows

On October 12, Sister Mary Therese Krueger (left) renewed her temporary vows for two years in the presence of Congregational Leader Sister Carmen Hernandez (right) and Formation Director Sister Elena Hoye (middle). Sister Mary Therese's final profession was planned for December 12, 2020, however it is postponed to a later date due to COVID-19. We continue to hold Sister Mary Therese in prayer as she journeys toward final profession with the Sisters of the Presentation.



ROOTED IN PRAYER
STRENGTHENED BY COMMUNITY
CALLED TO SERVE

We are the Sisters of the Presentation

Is this life for you?

Contact Sister Jessi Beck at vocations@dbqpbvms.org

CONNECT WITH US @dbqpbvms



SISTERS OF THE PRESENTATION
DUBUQUE, IOWA

PLEASE CONNECT WITH US.

Due to the coronavirus, many activities have been cancelled. We continue to be closed to visitors at this time. We await the day we can fill the calendar with encounters with friends.

PLEASE PRAY WITH US.

November 29-December 20, 2020

Mary's Journey Through Advent
Online Retreat
Dubuque, Iowa

December 12, 2020

Christmas Dinner provided for
Dubuque Rescue Mission
and Hope House guests

February 2, 2021

World Day for Consecrated Life

March 8-14, 2021

National Catholic Sisters Week

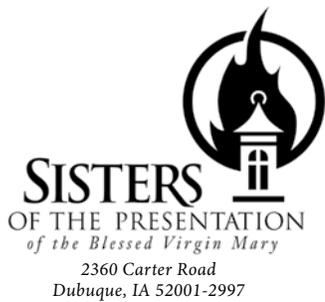
21st of each month

Pray for Vocations

25th of each month

Pray for Benefactors

For updated information about the activities and events of the Sisters of the Presentation of Dubuque, please visit our website at www.dbqpbvms.org or call 563.588.2008.



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(please indicate which is correct)

Out of the silence –

music,

Out of the darkness –

light;

Out of uncertainty –

promise.

Hope was born that night.

May the blessing and joy of God's greatest gift be yours.

SISTERS OF THE PRESENTATION | DUBUQUE, IOWA

