



VOLUME 5
SPRING 2011



In her day, Catherine McAuley brought her heart to misery and in the self-gift released a call still heard. By courageous, contagious concern for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the poor, the sick and the ignorant, she broke through the impossibilities of her time. She animated many to walk with her. She animated others at centers of wealth, power, and influence to share in her heroic efforts. She connected the rich to the poor, the healthy to the sick, the educated and skilled to the uninstructed, the influential to those of no consequence, the powerful to the weak to do the work of God on earth.

— M. Joanna Regan, RSM

Mercy Comments

SISTERS OF MERCY OF THE AMERICAS

A DEVELOPMENT PUBLICATION OF THE
NEW YORK • PENNSYLVANIA • PACIFIC WEST COMMUNITY
Serving Buffalo, Erie, Pittsburgh, Rochester & Philippines

Our Amazing Senior Sisters!

What are they up to now?

Where are they? What are they doing?

Lest you think that being over 70 qualifies a sister to curl up in her rocking chair, we invite you to take a look at how some of our Sisters of Mercy spend their time! A day in the life of a sister over the age of 70 can be quite exciting and challenging! You may have seen many of our senior sisters working and volunteering in ministries right in your own neighborhood, at a hospital, nursing home or in your parish. The Sisters of Mercy take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and unlike most religious communities, profess a fourth vow of service to the poor, sick and uneducated. This commitment continues all the days of their lives. We hope you enjoy reading the stories on pages 3-5 about some of our amazing senior sisters and what they are up to now!



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Dear Friends of Mercy,

This issue of *Mercy Moments* focuses on "Our Amazing Senior Sisters – What Are They Up To Now?"

I am always in awe when I see and hear of the commitment and energy that our sisters give to ministry. I am proud of each sister – no matter what the sister's age – but I am

especially proud when I see our sisters in their 70's and 80's living out the mission of Mercy to provide support and assistance to those in need and doing it with such wholeheartedness and joy.

This commitment to mission is part of our Mercy DNA. Our *Constitutions* state:

We as Sisters of Mercy, freely responding to a call to serve the needy of our time, commit ourselves to follow Jesus Christ in his compassion for suffering people...Through direct service and through our influence, we seek to relieve misery, to address its causes and to support all persons who struggle for full dignity. (#2,3)

As you read the stories about our sisters in this issue, you will see how the words of our *Constitutions* are concretized in their lives and you will be as in awe of them as I am!

I want to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of our friends and benefactors every blessing and joy in 2011. Thank you for all that you do to assist us in our mission. May God continue to bless you and those whom you love.

In Mercy,

Sister Nancy Hoff, RSM,
President



Dear Friends,

Well, we all know that each day can be a challenge. Some days we are rejoicing because we have something to celebrate and other days we are sad because of a loss or disappointment. This time of year can sometimes be gloomy due to the letdown after Christmas and often the weather!

It is during these times that we often pause and think about what is truly important in life. Often we have difficulty keeping everything in perspective and realizing that the most important things in life are not things, but rather relationships, family, health and the love we can give to others. Then when a crisis is over, we often fall back into patterns of material things. We certainly are funny creatures, aren't we? The same may be true for our celebrations. We are so happy all turned out well that we soon forget that joy as another issue surfaces that occupies our mind and seeks attention.

It is a struggle most of the time to keep things in perspective. What helps? Often it is our faith and our belief in God and all that God promises that sustains us! How blessed we are! During the season of Lent which is fast approaching, we recall the blessings of God redeeming us and choosing to walk with us in the good and not so good times. God is with us! We hear this often at Christmas but soon forget that promise when life seems rough and unmanageable. Let us be reminded that God is with us ALWAYS!

When I think about God being with me at all times, I think about the blessings in my life. I think about all the good in the world, all the people who care about others, who try hard to relieve the sufferings of others, and then I think of YOU.

YOU are a sign of God's love in the world. You are someone who thinks of others and are willing to do something to assist others less fortunate than yourself. How blessed we are to know you and we want to thank you, once again, for the blessing you are to the Sisters of Mercy.

Gratefully,

Sister Peggy Gorman, RSM,
Chief Development Officer



Our Amazing Senior Sisters!

What are they up to now?

Sister Bernadette Geiser, RSM, has been a Sister of Mercy for 61 years. Sister recently celebrated her 80th birthday and still volunteers her time wherever she is needed. As a receptionist at Harvest House, a free educational center and medical facility for people lacking health insurance, sister is the first person you'll see every Friday morning at 8 a.m. Sister also serves as receptionist one day a week for the Sisters of Social Service. But that's not all she does! Sister Bernadette scoots around town driving sisters to their medical appointments, arranges for Sunday Mass at a neighboring assisted-living facility, and provides transportation for the priest celebrant. When asked why she still volunteers at her age, she responded, "I've always wanted to work with the poor, helping them in any way that I can, just as Catherine McAuley did so many years ago." Sister further said, "When I see so many others volunteering, it



Sr. Bernadette (l) with Kathy Vespa, LPN, CNA, BOCES, and Cameron Stanton, Education Liaison at Harvest House.

gives me a feeling like no other—we need to give back and that's a most gratifying reward."

Sister Maria Elena Benigra, RSM, is 74 years old and considers that a big bonus from God! Sister spent most of her religious life in the ministry of education and continues to spend her time teaching reading and literacy in the library at St. John the Baptist School in the Philippines. Sister enjoys helping those with reading difficulty and



Sr. Maria Elena reads to 4th grade children in the library at St. John the Baptist School.

works with all the students encouraging them to do better. Sister Maria Elena finds it truly gratifying to guide and help the children integrate Christian values and morality into their lives while also improving their reading skills.

Sister Maria Corazon Dongallo, RSM, recently turned 81 years young and still enjoys working in God's vast vineyard. Sister Maria Elena was involved in various ministries throughout her life including education and counseling children and adults. She served as Chaplain at Mercy Community Hospital in the Philippines and supervised its recent construction. Sister also served as Coordinator of the Diocesan Family Life Ministry in the Diocese of Iligan. Today, Sister serves as the Community Archivist for the Sisters of Mercy in Lanao del Norte in the Philippines. In her spare time, Sister volunteers helping children who are victims of sexual abuse and counsels their parents. For sunshine and exercise, Sister enjoys growing vegetables and flowers in her garden.



Sister Maria Corazon refers to a chart in the Archives in the Mercy Regional House in Iligan.

Sister Kay Schwenzer, RSM, a Sister of Mercy for 51 years, first taught theology and Asian and African Culture studies at



Sr. Kay reads excerpts from the bible to Aracelis Reyes.

Notre Dame High School in Elmira, NY, while completing graduate studies in history. Sister spent twelve years

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ministering to the marginalized in Mercy missions in Santiago, Chile. As a natural continuation of her desire to minister to Latinos, upon returning to the U.S. and obtaining an M.A. in theology, Sister Kay served for 16 years as a pastoral associate among the Latinos of St. Michael Parish in Rochester, NY. Since 2007 she has been Hispanic Pastoral Minister for the Diocese of Rochester in Yates, Ontario and Wayne counties with offices in Geneva and Newark. When asked why she enjoys her ministry, Sister replied, "It's the people! I love their openness to and acceptance of others, and many are deeply interested in experiencing and knowing God through prayer and bible reflection. They are generous and loving to others, and, although they may not have many material things, they share the little they have."



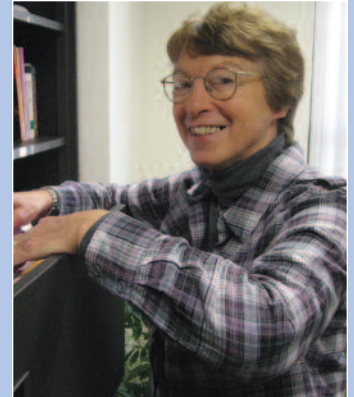
Sister Miriam visits Sally DiMartino on one of her daily visits to the sick.

Sister Miriam Nugent, RSM, is a woman of many tasks, to say the least. Having a background in education, Sister spent a number of years as a teacher and principal. Today, at the age of 70, Sister spends her days serving as Pastoral Associate at St. Charles Borromeo in

Rochester, NY, a position she has held for the last 16 years. Her gentle yet dazzling personality serves her well in her position. A day in the life of Sister Miriam begins with visiting the sick and homebound, sometimes over 20 people daily. Sister is also in charge of the RCIA Program for adults and children, planning Baptisms and funerals, and serves as Eucharistic Minister, Lector and Pastoral Coordinator. Sister Miriam says her gratification is being with people at their most vulnerable time, whether they are saying goodbye to a loved one or spending time with someone who is suffering. Sister Miriam explains, "My days are blessed by being out there for the people, feeding the hungry and lending a listening ear".

A day in the life of a sister over the age of 70 can be quite exciting and challenging!

Sister Janet Korn, RSM, has been a Sister of Mercy since 1956 and has an extensive background in assisting the poor, sick and uneducated in the community where she serves. Her past ministries include serving two terms on the Leadership Team of the Sisters of Mercy in Rochester, NY, raising awareness of justice issues for Catholic Charities, assisting with the continuum of care for pregnant and parenting teens, advocating for migrant farm workers, providing mission education for schools and parishes, and also, volunteering once a week for the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. In addition, Sister has established housing for women, soup kitchens, clothing ministries and food cupboards for the disadvantaged. Sister Janet also ministered for 16 years in Chile, South America. Today, Sister Janet continues her Works of Mercy by serving as Coordinator of Urban Ministries for the Diocese of Rochester. Sister Janet says she is energized in knowing that people do care and that they want to do something for others.



Sister Janet works tirelessly in addressing social issues and developing structures to keep the ministries going.

Sister Mary Felice Duska, RSM, at the young age of 76 years, is the Executive Director of the Mercy Terrace Apartments,



Sister Mary Felice converses with two residents of the Mercy Terrace Apartments.

a senior living facility in Erie, Pa. Sister's background includes elementary education, music ministry, pastoral assistant at St. Patrick Parish in Franklin, Pa., and two four-year terms and one-five year term on the Leadership Team of the Sisters of Mercy in Erie. In her current position, Sister enjoys working with the seniors and strives to meet their emotional and physical needs on a daily basis. Sister Mary Felice resides in this 64 apartment complex and is on call just about 24 hours on many days. Sister's passion is interacting with the residents—sharing their joys and sorrows and making their lives more comfortable.



Sister Audrey Clauss, RSM, proudly says she is 83-1/2 years old. Sister was an educator with a Ph.D. in French and taught high school French for a number of years. Coming from a family of athletes, Sister Audrey was a swimming



Sister Audrey feeds one of her patients with some good nutrition and a smile.

instructor for many years at a camp for the blind and also at the Barber Center in Erie, Pa. Sister taught CCD at a mental health facility for the physically handicapped in Polk County. For the

last 22 years, Sister Audrey has served as a Unit Aide at Brevillier Village, an 85-bed senior nursing facility where she is in charge of distributing supplements and natural foods. When asked what she finds most gratifying at the end of the day, Sister said, "I love what I am doing—giving food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty."

Sister Carolyn Schallenberger, RSM, ministers as Nursing Support Coordinator at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), Mercy Hospital in Pittsburgh. Now 75 years old, Sister served in the health



(l to r) Gregory Pallus, RN, Mary Ann Sobieszzyk, RN, Sister Carolyn Schallenberger, RSM, Janice Holan, RN and Sean Maya, RN.

field for the last 51 years. In her current position, Sister welcomes new hires and plans orientations, acts as a support person and coordinates nursing staff. In between her regular duties,

Sister enjoys spending time with patients and families and is always there to lend a listening ear. Sister Carolyn is a legend at UPMC hospital. Her joy is supporting the nursing staff, thanking them for what they are doing, and helping them work through issues in their daily work.

Sister Joan Sherry, RSM,

has been a Sister of Mercy for the last 56 years. Sister's background includes 36



Sr. Joan Sherry with two grandmothers in the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program.

years in education, 24 of which were in administration in the Buffalo area. In her previous position, Sister served 14 years as Director of St. Brigid's Outreach and Pantry in the Old First Ward of Buffalo. Today, Sister Joan acts as the Buffalo Facilitator for the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program. Sister Joan said, "There's a great need for support groups for grandparents raising their loved ones. I have the skills, know the resources and am able to help people improve the quality of their life."

Sister Joan Laboon, RSM,

could be characterized as the "Energizer Bunny," she just keeps on going! A Sister of Mercy for the last 65 years, with a background in education, Sister spends her days volunteering as Special Projects Volunteer at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) Mercy Hospital in Pittsburgh.



Sister Joan organizes supplies in her "Recycle Closet" at UPMC Mercy Hospital.

At the young age of 82, you'll find Sr. Joan at the hospital five days a week/eight hours a day, and sometimes even after midnight. On any given day, Sister participates in the "No One Dies Alone Program," and also works in the gift shop two mornings a week, operates the "Recycle Closet" and "Picture Closet," and is a Eucharistic Minister and Lector. Sister is a member of the Founders Day and Christmas Committees (dinner for 3,500 employees!), prepares apartments for families of patients who need overnight accommodations, and serves coffee to guards and prisoners at the hospital while they wait to return to jail. Sister Joan said, "Whatever I do is what Catherine McAuley would do—reaching out to others."



Christmas Appeal 2010

Thank you to all our benefactors who donated so generously to our Christmas Ornament Appeal. A total of \$80,003.00 was raised to continue our works of mercy and care for our retired and infirm Sisters of Mercy. Our sincere thanks for your generosity and kindness in assisting our sisters and persons less fortunate.



Mercy Money Calendar coming soon!

If you participated in last year's Mercy Money Calendar, you won't want to miss our next one scheduled for Spring 2011. Calendars will be available on our website www.mercynyppaw.org after February 20th. To be certain you are on our mailing list you can also e-mail pgorman@mercynyppaw.org or call 716-821-1648 and we will be sure to add your name to our calendar mailing list. You could win up to \$2,500 in prizes with chances to win every day!



New Tax Law on Giving

Are you familiar with the new tax law on Charitable Giving? If you are over the age of 70-1/2 you can make charitable distributions of up to \$100,000 from a traditional or Roth IRA directly to charity in the year 2011.

Also of importance is the return of the estate tax after a one-year repeal. The enactment of this legislation provides renewed incentive for people to consider including charitable provisions in estate planning in 2011.

Have you made your Will? If not, now may be a good time to meet with your advisor to make or update your estate plans. Life is short—don't let the state make decisions for you.

Sister Mary Socorro Largo, RSM, New Local Development Coordinator for Philippines



Sister Nancy Hoff, President of the NyPPaW Community, is pleased to announce that Sister Mary Socorro Largo, RSM, has been named the new Local Development Coordinator for the Philippine area.

Sister Mary Socorro, the first sister from the Philippines to join the Buffalo Sisters of Mercy, came to the United States and entered in 1958. While in the States she taught at Mt. Mercy Academy and St. Monica School in Buffalo, NY. Sister Socorro holds a Bachelor Degree in Education, Arts and Sciences, and a Doctorate in Philosophy. Sister returned to the Philippines in 1963 and taught at various Mercy schools for the next 25 years. Sister also served as a hospital chaplain and campus minister as well as the Director of New Members to the Sisters of Mercy in the Philippines.

Since 2001, Sister has been teaching the Filipino people ecology and the importance of reforestation and organic farming. Sister also enjoys writing letters, recycling cards and spending quality time visiting relatives and friends.

We welcome Sister Mary Socorro as she begins her new ministry as Local Development Coordinator for the Philippines.



Around the Circle of Mercy

NEW MINISTRY

Sisters Margaret Park and Trish Tyler (Erie) established the Rural House of Mercy in Reynoldsville, Pa., in September 2010 to meet needs of underserved people in that area. The sisters are meeting with area individuals, parishes and groups to identify and prioritize needs and explore ways to address them.

CLOSED MINISTRIES

WARDE CENTER

In August 2009 the Sisters of Mercy closed the doors of Warde Center on South Park Avenue in the First Ward of Buffalo. Warde Center was a Literacy and GED Center since 1995 and had helped over 200 students obtain their GED (high school equivalency certificate). The closing of this ministry was necessary due to a low enrollment along with duplication of services in the surrounding area.

HELPING HEARTS KIDS CLUB

In June 2010, the Sisters of Mercy transferred administration of Helping Hearts Kids Club to Trinity Catholic School in South Buffalo. Initiated in the Fall of 2006, Helping Hearts Kids Club provides a safe haven after school program for latchkey children.

THREE YOUNG WOMEN CONTINUE THEIR CALL TO MERCY

It's a time to celebrate when three young women commit their lives to Mercy!

Sister Laurie Orman professed her final vows in Rochester on September 11, 2010.

Sister Jennifer Wilson professed her first vows in Erie, Pa. on September 4, 2010.

Nordia Brusola was received as a candidate in Erie, Pa. on August 16, 2010.

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE...SISTERS OF MERCY WHO HAVE DIED IN 2010

- Aidana Elizabeth Hatton, January 9
- Alicia Ariosa, January 13
- Jane Frances Hauser, February 8
- M. Peter Claney, February 9
- Jane Caufield, February 21
- Arvella Marie Spohn, March 27
- M. Annunciata Kelleher, April 20
- Mary Clare McWilliams, May 23
- Lucy Mullen, May 30
- M. Catherine Jamito, June 25
- Lilia Reyno, July 5
- Jeanne Marie Hartigan, July 22
- M. Aurelia Helmheckel, July 31
- M. Kenneth Mullen, August 2
- Mary Ruth Gilligan, November 7
- Patricia Ann Fogarty, November 22
- John Baptist Schad - November 26

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Greater Erie Community Action Committee presented the Charles B. Killinger Award for outstanding service in the field of aging on September 20, 2010 to **Sister Mary Dolores Jablonski**, Executive Director of the newly-named Mercy Hilltop Center, Inc., in Erie, Pa. **Sister Mary Dolores** was recognized for her 27 years of leadership at the former Mercy Center on Aging, Inc.

Carlow University and the Women of Spirit Institute in Pittsburgh presented the "Women of Spirit Award" to **Sister Fidelis McDonough** on September 16, 2010. Sister was cited as being a "model and embodiment of compassion, humility, perseverance, integrity, intelligence and fidelity." **Sister Fidelis** also received the 2011 Manifesting the Kingdom Award from Bishop David Zubik at Sunday Mass at St. Paul Cathedral in Pittsburgh on January 30, 2011.

Sister Sheila Marie Walsh received the 2010 "Reflections Award" from Trocaire College in Buffalo on October 14, 2010. The Reflections Award is presented annually by the college to individuals who have continually reflected their best, putting forth unlimited energies to achieve success while sharing their unique talents for the benefit of others.

"The Catherine McAuley Distinguished Alumna Award" from Mount Mercy Academy in Buffalo was presented to **Sister Sally Walz** on November 4, 2010. This award is presented to an alumna of Mount Mercy Academy who has distinguished herself as a woman of faith, knowledge, integrity and compassion – a woman whose accomplishments in all areas of her life - her family, her community, her career – reflect the legacy and mission of Catherine McAuley.

Sister Mary Paul Hickey was presented with an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humanities degree from Carlow University in Pittsburgh on December 10, 2010. The award recognizes Sister Mary Paul's significant lifetime achievements in the fields of education and pedagogy.

Mercyhurst Prep in Erie, Pa. presented **Mercy Associate Margaret McMahan** with the 2010 "President's Award" at the Alumni Recognition Dinner on September 25. Margaret, a retired high school teacher and 1933 graduate of Mercyhurst Seminary/Preparatory School and Mercyhurst College in 1937.

Sister Mariella Bradley was honored as a "Leading Lady" by Oakland Catholic High School in Pittsburgh at their annual auction on October 16, 2010. She is, indeed, a Leading Lady in many ways but especially with the many children and staff with whom she takes to their best performance.

The YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh presented the **Sisters of Mercy** in Pittsburgh with a Racial Justice Award on November 17, 2010 during their annual dinner. Nominated by Allyson M. Lowe, Ph.D., chair of Carlow University's Political Science Department, the Sisters received the award under the "faith" category.



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Pacific West Community

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Lenten Reflection 2011



It was a Sunday morning and a mother was making pancakes for her family. The two younger boys were arguing over who would get the first pancake. The mother saw this as a teachable moment so she said: "Now, boys, Jesus would have probably said: 'Go ahead, brother, take the first pancake.'" Without skipping a beat,

the older brother said to the younger one: "You be Jesus." We may smile at his response, but couldn't those words be just what we, adults, might practice this Lent? What if we woke up each Lenten morning and were challenged by hearing: "You be Jesus"? Would we feel helpless or would we feel honored and empowered? Because we are "God's chosen, holy and beloved" (Colossians 3:12), there is no reason why we wouldn't feel honored and empowered. We are not alone – any more than Jesus was alone in His mission. He placed His faith in the care of a loving Guiding Light, His Father. In this, He could face His accusers with confidence, bravely follow a steady course to His death, and trust in His Father's all-embracing support. We, too, can "be Jesus": to respond in kindness to harsh words leveled against us, to follow our daily calls to good works, and to remain at peace despite any frightening challenges which may insert their ugly heads into our lives. To "be Jesus" is to show forth His strength, His loving kindness, His eagerness to make peace.

Jesus, we have been given a share in the power of your resurrected life. With that, we can be like you in living wholesome lives of goodness, brightness and courage. We embrace that privilege as we walk our own journeys with You as our starlit Compass. Amen.

–Sister Teresa Okonski, RSM



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