A Century of Contributions

by Sister Bernadette Marie

When a family moves to a city, town or borough, the members of the family spend some time determining how they can become part of the community’s life and make a significant contribution to their new home. Since the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius arrived in Danville in 1919, we have endeavored to become a part of the community and to share our time, talents and expertise in a variety of ways, notably in education, health care and spirituality.

Education

Our first successful venture in 1920 was the establishment of an elementary school housed in Castle Grove, the building on the property we had purchased. The Slovak Girls’ Academy for boarding and day students eventually moved from the Villa to a building constructed for just that purpose, later to be called St. Cyril Academy. Until 1999, the Sisters and lay teachers who taught at the Academy educated hundreds of young women, instilling the attitude of generous self-giving contained in the school motto: “Enter to learn; leave to serve.”

For many of the 77-year long history of St. Cyril Academy, theater was the tool for reaching out to people. Beginning with adult shows at Christmas and Easter and Traveling Adult Theater for 10 years, in later years the students were annually directed in children’s theater, performing a musical play for busloads of area elementary school students. Even today, those students-turned-adults happily remember the joy of seeing Cinderella or Snow White or Winnie the Pooh perform in the darkened auditorium. In addition, the Raggedy Ann Players Traveling Theater performed over 500 shows in their 25-year history of entertaining children.

Before translating became a digital exercise, the international students of the Academy were occasionally asked to translate for the Geisinger Medical Center when patients from Haiti, the Dominican Republic or Mexico needed to be understood. They were happy to do it.

Opening in 1971, the Villa Conservatory of Music was the place to learn piano until a Sister taught her last Conservatory student in 2005. From 1977 to 1992, the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius taught at St. Joseph School in Danville. Taking up
where our IHM predecessors left off, the Sisters filled the roles of Principal and teachers, directors and teachers of religious education and even parish Pastoral Assistant.

Begun in 1977 as the Villa Preschool and moved in 1999 from the Villa to the St. Cyril Academy building, the St. Cyril Preschool and Kindergarten is a Catholic environment which provides very young children a firm foundation upon which to build their education. Classroom work and activities are structured to tap the greatest potential of the students. The Summer Stage program for 5 through 12-year olds continues the Academy’s well-earned tradition of excellence in theater.

**Health Care**

Our health care facilities are a boon to the Danville area. It all began March 19, 1962, when Maria Joseph Manor opened as a home for the aging. Now Maria Joseph Continuing Care Community offers, according to the Mission Statement, “a welcoming and secure environment, where the lives of senior adults and their families are enhanced with compassionate and professional care.”

The Meadows has one hundred one-story cottages and also three sets of four, one-story town house units in Trinity Terrace. The community center in the midst of the cottages includes an on-site beauty parlor, wood shop, pool table, exercise room, computer lab, a dining room and sunroom. Maria Joseph Manor Assisted Living Community offers senior adults compassionate and professional personal care. The skilled care facility, Emmanuel Nursing and Rehabilitation Center adds to our continuum of care.

The Nazareth Memory Center, a secure Assisted Living community, is devoted to individuals with Alzheimer’s or related dementias. Specialized activities are provided for cognitive stimulation and spiritual growth.

Since 1970, Maria Hall has been the home for our “retired” Sisters, and for over 15 years, a residential hospice unit on the fourth floor, administered initially by Columbia-Montour Home Health and Hospice, has welcomed the dying and their families into our home.

An integral part of health care is chaplaincy, and the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius have ministered over the years in pastoral care not only in our facilities but in the Geisinger Medical Center and the Danville State Hospital.

**Spirituality**

Villa Sacred Heart has been recognized and utilized as a place for religious gatherings and events since 1909, especially since the dedication of the Motherhouse Chapel-turneďBasilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius in 1939. Formally established in 1999, an important sponsored ministry of the Congregation today is the St. Cyril Spiritual Center. The Center’s Mission Statement presents its purpose: “Within a serene setting of natural beauty, the Center offers retreats, spiritual direction and a quiet place for individuals or hosted groups ‘so that the Gospel vision of the Kingdom may be fulfilled in us and in those we serve.’” The Spiritual Center provides access to: the Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius; a Perpetual Adoration chapel; a hermitage; a Chartres-style labyrinth; a library containing religious books, audio tapes and videos; and overnight accommodations for up to 90 persons.

Programs and retreats annually include personal or group retreats, silent and directed retreats, guided or preached retreats, reflection days during Advent and Lent, and spiritual direction.

In recent years the Spiritual Center has been able to share our facilities with other denominations for their spiritual and educational activities. The Society of the Holy Trinity, Lutheran pastors, hold their yearly retreat at the Spiritual Center. Methodist women also make their retreat here. The Stevenson School of Ministry comes regularly to provide classes for men and women discerning the diaconate or priesthood in the Episcopal Church. Men’s and Women’s Tres Dias and the Women’s Tres Dias Fiesta groups spend weekends here. Tres Dias is a three-day intensive Christian retreat experience similar to the Cursillo program. Our ecumenical outreach has brought us many blessings.

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Much to mention

Having inserted ourselves into the life of Danville, Pennsylvania, the Sisters recall a variety of intersections including:
• serving as a refuge for families flooded out of their homes during the Agnes Flood in 1972;
• helping to provide editorial oversight and contributing two chapters to the 1991 book: Danville: the Bicentennial History;
• contributing to the WVIA television segment: Our Town Danville;
• teaching English through the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit’s Literacy program;
• housing an Adoration Chapel which draws prayerful visitors day and night;
• biannually serving Saturday meals at the Jubilee Kitchen in Danville with our SS.C.M. Associates;
• participating in the Danville Community Singers;
• membership in Bookworms, the local reading club;
• sharing space with Children’s Service Center which assists children with autism, an Aphasia Center, and Sisters from other communities who have joined our Sisters at Maria Hall.

No doubt many things have been missed in this litany. Suffice it to say that we have been and continue to be part of the fabric of Danville, Pennsylvania, engaged as we are in witnessing to, proclaiming and building the Kingdom of God. Our 100-year home has been good to us, as we have tried to be good for it.

Do not forget the things which your eyes have seen, nor let them slip from your memory as long as you live…teach them to the children… Deuteronomy 4:9

In this year of 2019 the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius celebrate one hundred years of living in and serving the Danville community. Our hearts are filled with much gratitude and many fond memories. While we do not wish to live in the past, we know that it is important to remember the people and circumstances that helped to shape our lives. Being open to the past helps us to understand the present and guides us into the future.

We all loved to hear the stories of our pioneer Sisters, especially those who came to Castle Grove in Danville, now Villa Sacred Heart, on June 19, 1919. When the Sisters walked onto the estate, they found the mansion and the grounds in a terrible state of disrepair. The property had been vacant for fourteen years and much cleaning and weeding was needed to make the house and grounds habitable. We admired their spunk, courage and resourcefulness as they created a living space for the Congregation. We also admired their great desire to serve others in the Danville community and beyond. When we listened to their history, our history, we held their dreams in our hearts because we too wanted to carry the Mission forward in service and in love. Our early Sisters saw the need to educate young women and St. Cyril Academy opened in 1922. As time went on, the need to care for the sick and elderly became evident and in 1962 Maria Joseph Manor opened its doors. The Villa Preschool and Kindergarten, the Spiritual Center and the Hospice at Maria Hall were all born out of the desire to serve the needs of others.

Today, our hearts filled with memories and dreams, we continue that Mission as we serve others in the fields of education, pastoral ministry, healthcare, spiritual and social services and go wherever the Spirit leads us, wherever there is a need. This is our memory and our Mission. This is our legacy.
Committed to Serve as Jesus Served

On Sunday, October 28, the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius held the 2018 Servant Leadership Award Program in the Basilica. Thirty-five high school juniors and seniors were honored for exemplifying leadership in their parish, school and community. Each received a towel as a sign of their commitment to service.

In her welcome, Sister Michael Ann commented on our present advances in modern technology in communicating with others but stressed the need for the followers of Christ to reach out personally as He did to be the Good News to others.

The 2018 Father Matthew Jankola Lifetime Achievement in Servant Leadership Awards were given to honor the commitment to each area of the SS.C.M. mission: Evangelization: the Carmelite Nuns of Danville; Education: Carl Romanski; Eldercare: Dr. Richard Sciotti; and Ecumenism: Brother Michael Gosch, CSV.

Sister Angela Pikus, Prioress of the Carmelites in Danville, received the Evangelization award for her community. Sister Michael Ann cited among their merits the value of their faith to people in the area. Sister Angela responded by thanking the Cyrilites for recognizing the small community living in their midst and added that their lives of prayer extend both to the Church and the world.

Mr. Carl Romanski received the award for Education. Carl was not only an outstanding Spanish teacher in the Danville area but on his retirement, a translator and interpreter. He, like our patrons, Cyril and Methodius has channeled his love of language into services for the marginalized. Carl exhorted the young people to seek ways to help others personally, thus living a fruitful life.

Dr. Richard Sciotti received the award for Eldercare. His twenty-year commitment to infectious disease prevention has benefited the elderly and those in the Third World who are most susceptible to disease. Dr. Sciotti asked the young people present to have faith and to seek out the plan God has for all those faithful to His call.

Brother Michael Gosch, who will receive his award at the Indiana Award program in April, is a member of the Clerics of St. Viator. He is particularly dedicated to advancing justice for immigrants by working for reform. He is a co-founder of the Viator House of Hospitality for young men seeking asylum in the U.S. Brother also serves as the Director of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office for his congregation.

The Servant Leaders recognized in Danville posed for a photo following the ceremony held in their honor.

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The more we get together, the happier we’ll be.” This song could explain the joy that characterized the day-long Saint Cyril Academy Homecoming event which took place on October 20, 2018. There were memories shared, friendships updated and this very long photograph with which to remember the festivities and the participants.
Holidays at St. Cyril Preschool and Kindergarten

Left: At the annual Thanksgiving dinner for PSK students, their parents and grandparents, a costumed chorus of pilgrims and Native Americans serenade those assembled before they enjoy the Pine Barn buffet of turkey and all the trimmings.

Above and Right: This shepherd and a line of angels wait patiently in the school corridor for their entrance down the main aisle of the Basilica to dramatize the true meaning of Christmas in the annual Christmas pageant on December 9, 2018.

Above: Father John Kemper, P.S.S., celebrated the 8:00 p.m. “Midnight” Mass in the Basilica.

Right: Mrs. Claus (aka Sister Seton Marie) makes the rounds at Maria Hall during Christmas breakfast. With the assistance of Sister Michael Ann, she gives Sister Mary Kate Mensch a bag of little gifts.

Left and Below: At an extravagant event for 300 children, the SS.C.M. Sisters at St. Francis Center were able to distribute toys and gifts donated by the generous people of the South Carolina lowcountry parishes. Local Knights of Columbus, SS.C.M. Associates and their families helped in the party that brought Christmas cheer to so many.

Above Center: The Sisters in Danville shopped for the residents at the Danville State Hospital in the hope of making their Christmas merrier. Sister Seton Marie and her sister Regina bagged the gifts for distribution.

Above: Sister Joanne Marie (front row right) coordinated St. Mary’s Parish donation of 400 gifts to poor families and persons helped by Catholic Charities in Gary, IN. This annual outreach project is a revered tradition.
Marching and Praying for Life

On January 18, 2019, four SS.C.M. Sisters and four Good Shepherd Sisters (below) joined the Right to Life bus from Queen of the Most Holy Rosary parish in Elysburg and traveled to Washington, D.C., to stand with thousands of others who work and pray for an end to abortion in our country.

Catholic Schools Week

Celebrated from January 27th to February 2nd, Catholic Schools Week naturally endures the worst weather of the school year. This year was no exception. In between snow days, the students of St. Cyril Preschool and Kindergarten welcomed a local songwriter/musician, enjoyed a special art project with Sister Donna Marie (right) and ended the week with sundaes on Friday.

In Bloomsburg, St. Columba School held their Catholic Schools Week activities on days when the weather permitted attendance. Sister Lydia’s second graders lined up for a picture (below right) to immortalize their pajama day.

Dogs for Stress Relief

As the semester neared its end and finals loomed large at Susquehanna University, Sister Sara and Maggie Mae (below) joined other dogs and their therapy handlers to help the students “paws to relax.” What tension-riddled college student wouldn’t enjoy time with a carefree ball of fur?
When I Was Hungry You...

_The Poor We Have With Us_

Aware of our Christian call to address the needs of the poor, our Sisters work in collaboration with others in the areas in which we find ourselves ministering.

In Chicago, Sister Paracletta (left), delivers winter coats, gloves and toiletries she has collected from the Felician Sisters with whom she lives. These will be used by Celia Gonzalez, the Coordinator of the Community Benefits project.

The SS.C.M. Associates in Bluffton, SC, decided that they would routinely bring non-perishable food items to their monthly gatherings. One such donation filled a table (center) and will help to fill the shelves of the food pantry in the St. Francis Center where many of the Associates help the Sisters distribute food to those who arrive weekly for assistance.

Recently, each SS.C.M. Associate in Bluffton donated a new or gently used purse filled with personal items (left) to be given to a woman client at the St. Francis Center.

The Sisters pictured above, Sister Mary Attallah, RGS, (visiting from Egypt), and Sister Carol Marie, SS.C.M. (in disguise), await the drawings for silent auction items at the Maria Hall Mardi Gras party. The house used Mardi Gras as a reason to raise money for Catholic Charities immigration efforts in Texas. The $700 the Sisters raised was matched by SS.C.M. community funds as well as Father Jerry Heintzelman, Maria Hall Chaplain. Our fun became assistance for those who struggle to find safety, security and well-being in a very unwelcoming environment.

At the conclusion of the recent South Carolina Council of Catholic Women convention, Sisters Canice, Jacqueline, and Marcine happily received non-perishable goods which the Council collected for the St. Francis Center at St. Helena Island. The Council of Catholic Women has been generous and faithful in their donations to our programs for the poor.
In Memory of

Sister M. Cabrini Steber, SS.C.M.

Born: March 25, 1927
Professed: August 15, 1948
Went Home to God: December 19, 2018

written in her shaky handwriting that Sister Michael Ann found among her belongings. It contained a prayer asking God to help her to be loving to everyone she met. Everyone knows that request was granted because she was universally known for her kind demeanor and perpetual smile. Wherever she ministered she was much loved, especially at Maria Joseph where she spent her last years in ministry and later as a resident herself.

Though always pleasant, Sister Cabrini had to deal with serious illness. She contracted Guillain-Barré disease when she was missioned to St. John the Baptist School in Pittston. Paralyzed from the waist down, she prayed for a miracle to Sister Maria Kaupas, foundress of the Sisters of Saint Casimir. She recovered and spent the rest of her life in fruitful ministry. At the end of her life, she fell ill and though she had recourse to contemporary treatments, they ultimately proved unsuccessful. In response to the doctor’s explanation of what would occur after the blood transfusions were stopped, she responded, “It’s ok; I’m ready.”

Mary Steber was born in Coxeville, PA, the daughter of Joseph and Mary (Kotch) Steber. She attended Coxeville Public School, Beaver Meadows and St. Joseph School, Hazleton, and graduated from St. Cyril Academy, Danville.

Mary entered the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Danville, on September 11, 1945, and on August 13, 1946, she was received as a novice, Sister M. Cabrini. Following her profession, Sister Cabrini received a B. S. in education from Marywood University and later an M. S. from Scranton University, also in education.

For over forty years Sister Cabrini taught in parish schools in New York, Pennsylvania and South Carolina also serving as principal/local coordinator for twenty-one years. Later Sister served in various capacities at Maria Hall and Maria Joseph Manor, Danville, among them, receptionist, appointment escort and Coordinator of Volunteers. For eight years Sister was local coordinator at Maria Joseph where she also became a resident visitor.

The key to understanding Sister Cabrini’s success as a religious Sister lies in the small notebook

Forever United in the Story of a Miracle

Since Sister Cabrini’s life story intersects that of Mother Maria Kaupas, SSC, an EWTN film crew visited Emmanuel Center last Fall (far right) to record an interview Sister Margaret Petcavage, SSC, had with Sister Cabrini who told her story of the miraculous cure she attributes to the intercession of Venerable Mother Maria. Sister Margaret and the film crew set up in the chapel of Emmanuel Center.

Months later, on January 5, Sister Deborah Marie (above right) was invited to portray Sister Cabrini in the EWTN documentary. Additional scenes were shot at Nazareth School, by a convent refrigerator and at Holy Cross Hospital. As the story relates, on June 1, 1989, Sister Cabrini felt so sluggish and weak that she left school and was unable to even open the convent refrigerator door! In the hospital she was treated by a doctor (portrayed by Sister Nancy Streitmatter, MD), and visited by Sister John Vianney (portrayed by Sister Margaret Zalot, SSC).

The documentary on Venerable Mother Maria, “They Might Be Saints,” is in the early stages of production. EWTN host Michael O’Neill hopes it will air on the station by the end of the year.

In the hospital scene filmed for the documentary are Sister Nancy Streitmatter, MD, SSC, Sister Margaret Zalot, SSC, Sister Cabrini (aka Sister Deborah Marie) and Sister Margaret Zalot, SSC.
Many of our Retired Sisters at Maria Hall are not able to access our beautiful grounds because of mobility issues. Their dependence on walkers and wheelchairs limits them to the inside of the building. We would like to install a sun awning with patio furniture on the 4th floor deck of Maria Hall so that the Sisters can enjoy fresh air and the beautiful view of the Motherhouse grounds in 3 seasons. We anticipate the cost will be nearly $10,000.00. Can you help?

SS.C.M. Annual Raffle
August 15, 2019
If you would like to purchase or sell raffle tickets, please contact Sister Denise Marie at (570) 275-3581 x 101 or sscmdevsdm@hotmail.com.

When We Wish...
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Meetings, Meetings
On February 11, 2019, Sister Pamela Smith (left), represented Bishop Guglielmone at a listening session of the Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops. Committed to improving the quality of education in rural and impoverished areas of South Carolina, the gathering of religious leaders and concerned parents and students discussed policy proposals and action to improve public education.

You Are Invited to Leave a Legacy
With a gift through your will, you can support the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius and ensure that our mission of witnessing to, proclaiming and building the Kingdom of God will continue into the future.

An example of bequest wording:
I give, devise and bequeath to the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius, a not-for-profit organization located in Danville PA, the sum of $___ (or ___% of the rest, residue and remainder of my estate) for the unrestricted use and general purposes of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius.

It is a good idea to let your heirs know about the charities to which you are donating.
If you would like more information about giving to the Community in your will, please contact:
Sister Michael Ann Orlik, SS.C.M.
General Superior
570-275-3581 ext 300
smaosscm@yahoo.com

Representing the Diocese of Charleston at the National Workshop on Christian Unity in April, Sister Pamela Smith (right) saw Scranton Bishop Bambera, the USCCB member who oversees Ecumenical and Interreligious activities. Another connection for the two is the Bishop’s Aunt, Anna Mae Fagan and her husband Richard who are active members of St. Gregory the Great Parish in Bluffton. The convent is even home to one of Richard’s sculptures!
In November, Sisters Suzanne Duzen, Deborah Marie and Carol Ann Terlicher (left) attended the biennial Convocation of the National Religious Vocation Conference, a professional organization of vocation ministers that presents religious life as a viable option in the Catholic Church. Sister Deborah Marie was the organizer of the Convocation.

Speaking of a viable option, March 8-14 was National Catholic Sisters Week and an opportunity to get the good word out there to express gratitude for the ministries and commitment of past and present women religious, and inform and inspire the next generation of religious Sisters! Know anyone who might be called?

Far left and left: Sister Carol Ann speaks of religious life to grade school students in Endicott, NY, while Sister Joanne Marie connects with the students at St. Mary’s School in the parish where she ministers in Crown Point, IN.


Above: SS.C.M. Sister Marguerite Dankulich and SNDdeN Sister Marie Romejko peruse their community information on the table set up in the lobby of Emmanuel Center. Materials relating to the Carmelite and Good Shepherd Sisters were also available for staff and visitors to read and carry away.

Reflecting on the theme of Commitment, the group above gathered for Prayer Outside the Walls on Sunday, March 10, in Danville. Prayer is a powerful tool in vocation work!
A Gift of Bread and Salt to Celebrate 100 Years in Danville

During the week of the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, February 14, those who came to the Adoration Chapel at the Motherhouse received a small gift. In celebration of our 100 years in Danville, a loaf of bread and some salt were lovingly made and packaged to distribute in memory of our early Sisters whose Slavic roots used bread and salt as a welcoming gift. The bread represents a wish that the receiver may never know hunger; together the bread and salt stand for hospitality. Sisters Brigid and Carol Therese (far left) baked the loaves, and Sister Denise Marie fashioned the display (left).

Celebrate with us
100 Years in Danville
September 15, 2019
Anniversary Liturgy with
Bishop Ronald Gainer
in the Basilica
11:00 a.m.