



Our Times

Newsletter of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius

We Get by with a Lot of Help from Our Friends

by Sister Jeanne Ambre, SS.C.M.

Sister M. Brigid is the SS.C.M. version of the Energizer Bunny. She still bakes at the Motherhouse bakery, but because she is 95, she has been hearing her body tell her to slow down and possibly retire. All those who delight in what she produces, bread and kolacky especially, hope that that day never comes!

Sister Brigid tells us that she inherited her talent for cooking and baking from her mother Barbara who was of Slovak descent. According to Sister Brigid, Mom's pirohy, droby and goulash were the best. Sister and her siblings were also particularly fond of the nut rolls, banana cream pies and strawberry shortcake their mother produced.

After graduating from George Rogers Clark High School in Whiting, IN, Sister Brigid worked as a typist for four years at the Standard Oil Company before entering the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius. 2023 marked Sister Brigid's 70th anniversary of religious profession!

Beginning in 1953, Sister Brigid had a long and convoluted ministerial career in and out of the kitchen. During her years assigned to the Motherhouse and working in the St. Cyril Academy kitchen with Sisters Simplicia, Romana, Emerita and Claudia, Sister Brigid had the pleasure of baking birthday cakes for the students. For one year in the New York convent, Sister Brigid had the kitchen all to herself and only the Sisters in the mission home to please.

Two 20-year stints in the Midwest found Sister Brigid at Villa St. Cyril in Highland Park, IL, and then St.



Left: An expert seamstress, Sister Brigid spent time at the St. Francis Center making drapes for all of the buildings there.



Above: Sister Brigid and the baking sheets in the Motherhouse kitchen do fine work together as these nut rolls demonstrate.



Above right: At the 2022 Christmas Bazaar in Elysburg, Sisters Brigid and Denise Marie are ready for happy customers.

Benedict's Home in Niles, IL. At the Villa, Sister Brigid shared the kitchen with Sisters Ivan, Maria Baran, Michaeline, Mildred, Dolores and the lay staff. When the Sisters turned over the food service, Sister Brigid perfected other skills in housekeeping. This carried over into St. Benedict's where Sister Brigid was Director of Environmental Services (Housekeeping and Laundry) for the next 20 years.

Moving from Illinois to Indiana, Sister Brigid lived at Andean High School and began to share her culinary skills with an adoring public. At Saints Peter and Paul Parish in Merrillville, and with the encouragement and help of Betty Bodnar (Sister Barbara Sable's Aunt), and Betsy McDonald, Sister Brigid sold bread and baked goods at the Saturday Flea Market at the parish and in the Church vestibule. To this day, Sister Brigid uses Betty Bodnar's nut roll recipe!

Back to the Motherhouse, and in her mass-production mode, Sister Brigid has baked for the Summer Festivals with gracious help from several willing people. One such helper was Wilma Samorajczyk who traveled from Connecticut to help for days. Wilma gifted Sister Brigid with a marble rolling pin which she continues to use. Helpers from Harrisburg included Pat and Ben Williams and Joan Wasser. Sisters who have volunteered to help come away

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impressed by Sister Brigid's energy and enthusiasm for community projects. She welcomes helpers happily and makes them part of the finely-tuned effort.

Before the pandemic, a very successful marketing opportunity was provided at the Farmers' Market in Mount Carmel. With the help of Sister Denise Marie and several Good Shepherd Sisters, boxes of bread, kolacky, banana bread and nut and poppyseed rolls found their way into the homes of many admiring fans. While the shutdown for the pandemic ended that, orders from individuals still kept Sister Brigid baking.

For the third year in a row, Sister Brigid is preparing to fill a table at the Christmas Bazaar at Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Elysburg, PA. Sheila Olsheskie, Pat Wondoloski and Sherry Karpinski, members of the parish staff, have offered to spend a day with Sister Brigid to help her satisfy what they know will be a great demand, and to learn how the magic happens.

Recently, I was delighted to spend a Saturday morning with Sister Brigid learning how to make her famous nut kolacky. I reaffirm her Energizer status and am energized by her enthusiasm for a craft that she shares so happily. She delights in creating delicious food—and is grateful for the Sisters and friends with whom she worked and who have helped her over the years. God willing, Sister Brigid will slow down very gradually!



Top left: S'mores on a Sunday in the summer is a baking project everyone at Maria Hall enjoys, especially Sister Brigid.

Top right: As the Sister in charge of the Craft Shop at Maria Hall, Sister Brigid poses with the afghans she will have for sale at the Flea Market Plus on October 14, 2023.

Above: Sister Jeanne Ambre takes a peek at the kolacky in the oven.

Far Left: From the quantity still on the tables, this photo was taken in the first hour of the Summer Festival.

Left: The packaged prized confection.

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from the General Superior
by Sister Barbara Sable, SS.C.M.

Thanksgiving



As General Superior of the Congregation, Sister Barbara Sable welcomes Bishop Timothy Senior to the Diocese of Harrisburg at his installation Mass on June 21 at St. Patrick Cathedral.

allow life to move too quickly, even though it's almost always an unconscious decision, we are missing out on the sacredness of the present. In the hurried moments, let us remember to take a deep breath, and call to mind that we are always in God's presence, and all those around us are gifts from a loving God.

This mindfulness of continually receiving gifts is especially true in our dealings with others. Mystic and activist Dorothy Day said, "I speak to people as if they were angels." This is a reminder to us to express our gratitude to God as we work to see the best in others, be the best to others, and bring out the best in others. Each encounter is an opportunity to help people become their best selves by addressing them as people of value, worth, and holiness.

Let us pray that God will open our eyes to the angels in people we meet. Let us speak words of love and healing, and bring forth the best in them by being our best to them. Let us be mindful of every encounter today and each day, realizing with each encounter that we are on holy ground. Let us all work to address people with respect, kindness, and good humor, most especially those whose behaviors challenge our patience and tolerance. In this manner we will become truly people of Thanksgiving. A meaningful life begins with gratitude for the whole of life and all creation. It is giving thanks for everyone who has made, and continues to make, a difference in our lives. Gratitude joins us with God and all creation and enables us to say "yes" to life, recognize the gifts in those placed in our lives, be grateful for our gifts, and share our gifts with others. This is Thanksgiving.

Sister Barbara Sable

As we move closer toward Thanksgiving, I am mindful of the many things, large and small, for which we can be thankful. While family and food often come to mind first when we think of thankfulness, there is much more. We so often go about our day without giving a thought to the habits we perform throughout each day. We drink our cup of coffee or tea each morning without a thought. Our food is so often a lost opportunity for connection with those around us, and with the Divine. When we

Diocese of Gary, Indiana

To Serve as Jesus Did

For the seventeenth time in the Diocese of Gary, IN, Juniors and Seniors who demonstrate servant leadership were honored by the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius. The 28 students chosen by their pastors, youth ministers or school administrators received a certificate and towel at St. Mary's Church in Crown Point on April 30, 2023. They were invited to name a mentor--someone who had helped them embrace a habit of service to their church, school and community. They became a part of the 1,355 young people so honored by the Sisters since 2003.

A reception followed in the parish hall.



Top: As the Servant Leaders arrive, Sister Deborah Marie gives them a preview of the program.

Center: Following the ceremony, the Servant Leaders pose for a group photograph to remember the occasion.

Above: The Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius present for the event assemble to thank Sisters Joanne Marie (third from the left) and Sister Deborah Marie (far right) for all their advance work. As Sister Joanne Marie moves on from her Pastoral Associate ministry at St. Mary's, she becomes the last SS.C.M. currently serving in the Diocese of Gary, a presence that began in 1915.

A Joyous Renewal of Vows

With all the Sisters present for an Evening Prayer at Convocation on June 28, Sister Mary Kate renewed her vows. They were accepted for the community by Sister Barbara Sable (*right*). Following Evening Prayer, the Leadership Team posed with Sister Mary Kate to affirm her commitment.



No Dust Settles at St. Francis Center

No charitable opportunity neglected, the Sisters at the St. Francis Center seize every holiday and address all the needs they see. The much anticipated annual Mothers' Day (*right*) and Fathers' Day celebrations were grand successes. The same can be said for the annual Christmas in July fund raiser (*below and right center*).



Donations of food and funds are gratefully accepted from multiple sources, like the Darling family (*right*) who purchased bags of food for the Center to give away. Churches, scouts, Knights of Columbus, all help the effort. The Order of Malta raised money for a 2014 truck (*right*) to replace the 1995 one. Many people contibuted to the 200 air conditioners the Center supplied to people this hot summer (*far right*).



St. Cyril Preschool and Kindergarten
A School Year Ends and Another Begins

All in May, the students (and Mothers) crowned two statues of Mary (far left), and visited the Sisters at Maria Hall for avid listeners on Young Authors Day (below, center and right). The Kindergarten class held the trial of Gold E. Locks and visited the jails (center left and right), with the help of the police and Judge Norton. Every school year ends with a Field Day (left center) and the very touching wedding of Q and U (below, center).

How does one keep up with all the activities and experiences of a Preschool and Kindergarten? Photos!



May 31 was Lollipop Day for the 3-year-olds turned 4, June 1 was Certificate Day (above, right), and on June 2 the Kindergarteners took the stage in caps and gowns (above) to demonstrate their readiness to move on to First Grade. October already and school having begun, the student body comes in costumes to Maria Hall just before Halloween (left) to entertain parents and Sisters with pumpkin songs, accompanied by Sister Michaellette.

Of Those to Whom Much is Given

Where to begin? These photographs trace a circuitous path from several places in South Carolina and back to Pennsylvania. Such are the ministry and community calls to which Sister Pamela Smith responds. For instance:

Right: On September 30, Sister Pamela was invited by the Sisters Council to speak to the Sisters gathered to meet their new Bishop Timothy Senior in Harrisburg. Her presentation was: "The Eucharist Around the World and the Real Presence."

Right center: In May in South Carolina, an ecumenical dialogue on beliefs about Mary brought religious leaders to the table from Anglican, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal, United Methodist and Greek Orthodox churches. The start of something grand?

Below: Active in the gatherings held for the SS.C.M. Associates in Bluffton, SC, Sister Pamela addresses the group to explain "The Love Dare" on September 10. Meanwhile, the other Sisters prepare the refreshments: a cake to celebrate the SS.C.M. Founder's Day, one day early.



Above: On October 10, World Day Against the Death Penalty, seven different faith traditions were present on the South Carolina state capitol steps. Sister Pamela was one of the speakers, along with a United Methodist bishop, a representative of the Hindu tradition, and the executive minister of South Carolinians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. Since South Carolina seems poised to resume executions, they sent a message to the Governor and the legislature that the death penalty is immoral.

Left: At Convocation, Sister Pamela enjoys a light moment with Sister Catherine Ann.



Summer Music to Lift the Soul

On Monday, June 12, approximately 40 band students entering 7th, 8th or 9th grades gathered for the Wind Ensemble Summit. The halls of the Motherhouse were filled with the sounds of tubas, euphoniums, flutes, clarinets, trombones and trumpets as we were privileged to host this International Performing Arts Summit. For four days, the students arrived at 9:00 a.m. and worked until 4:00 p.m. They practiced in instrument groupings (*left*) and as an orchestra. Their work culminated in a concert performed in the Maria Hall Auditorium on Thursday evening (*left and below*). The ensemble delighted family members, friends and the Sisters who were there to listen. Unfortunately, these photos do not come with a soundtrack!



Gathering for Our Convocation

Our SS.C.M. Summer Convocation filled the days from June 25th to the 29th and gave us time to listen, ponder and share prayer and action. In addition to hearing updates from community leadership and our sponsored ministries, we were inspired by Sister Addie Lorraine Walker, SSND, (*right*) who spoke on Vocations and the Call to Holiness. We planted a tree at Emmanuel and assembled a donation of food for a local food pantry (*far right*). We listened to Sister Meaghan Patterson, SSJ, Executive Director of Dawn's Place in Philadelphia (*right*), who told us about her work with women who are trafficked. She and her two co-workers, former trafficked women themselves, went back to Philadelphia with a car trunk filled with bags of personal items to distribute to the people they serve (*far right*). We wrote poetry, sent postcards to legislators and ate ice cream—and on the last day, were missioned to our 2023-2024 ministries, resolute and refreshed.



Far left: One joy atop everyone's list for Convocation is the joy of being together. *Center left:* Sister Jana speaks of her Meadows ministry. *Left:* Packing the bags was a community job and its own reward.



The Jankola Library and Slovak Museum
Valuable Resources for Research

by Stephen Baluch

I have spent the summer of 2023 visiting several locations where older Czech and Slovak newspapers and periodicals are stored. I use a scanner to digitize these materials so that they can be preserved as electronic pdf files, and available for genealogical research by future descendants of our Czech and Slovak ancestors. I do this work in conjunction with the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International (CGSI) and its volunteer staff.

The Jednota newspaper, published by the First Slovak Catholic Union since 1891, is one of the papers I was

hoping to scan and preserve. The most complete source for copies of the newspaper was discovered at the Jankola Library. I was able to scan loose copies for the years 1891-1894 and 1922-1923.

Although I was previously aware of the Jankola Library, from the time I started researching my Slovak family history in 1999, I was amazed by the extent of the collection of printed materials and of the large collection of Slovak artifacts in the Museum that represent the history and culture of the immigrant Slovak community in the United States and Canada.

Sister Loretta Marie, the Library custodian, has been very helpful to me in understanding how these materials were collected over the years and how they are being maintained. Visitors to the Library and Museum have fallen off in recent years since the Covid-19 epidemic began in 2020. It is clear that the long-term care and maintenance of museum items and library materials will be a costly and labor-intensive enterprise in the coming years.

It is my interest to help in any way I can with the long-term preservation and enhanced user-access for this great resource. My greatest fear would be that these materials could be lost or destroyed by circumstances beyond the control of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius. Just this summer, for example, the Lahaina Museum on the island of Maui in Hawaii, and all its collection of Hawaiian history and culture, were completely destroyed by a raging wildfire. Such a loss!

Left: Sister Loretta Marie with Mr. Stephen Baluch.



Sisters Suzanne and Lydia

A great proponent of good fun, Sister Suzanne kicked off the newly formed Youth Group at St. Columba's in Bloomsburg. Having invited 6th through 9th graders to join the fun, the group has visited the Tee-to-Green Golf Center, the P-Nut Bowling Alley, a local farm (right) and Hunter's in Danville (far right) for their monthly gatherings. This is only the start of the fun!



Above and right: Sister Suzanne was one of the founding members of the Harrisburg Chapter of Pax Christi in 2000. On Good Friday, 2023, Sister joined other members in their annual Walking Way of the Cross.

Right: St. Columba's 2nd Grade First Communion class--school and Religious education students--pose with Sr. Lydia, their teacher, and the Pastor, Father Richard Mowery.





In Memory of
Sister
Rita Polchin,
SS.C.M.

Born:
August 31, 1929
Professed:
August 13, 1952
Went Home to God:
September 7, 2023

Sister Rita Polchin died at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, PA, on September 7, 2023. She was the daughter of Joseph and Anna (Fedor) Polchin, who had been married by Father Matthew Jankola, Founder of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius.

Rita Patricia Polchin was born in Coxeville, PA, the youngest of 10 children. After graduating from Hazle Township High School, and working in a factory for two years, she entered the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius in 1949 from Holy Trinity Parish in Hazleton, PA, and was professed in 1952. Sister Rita frequently said that she was drawn to religious life through the deep faith of her parents, who daily demonstrated that God was very much a part of their lives.

Sister Rita served in the ministry of education for most of her Religious Life, as a teacher in Charleston, SC; in Waynesboro, Bloomsburg, Nanticoke and Lebanon, PA; in Bridgeport, CT; in Endicott and Yonkers, NY; and as a principal in Waynesboro, PA, and Charleston, SC. She received her Bachelor's in Education from Marywood University in Scranton, PA, and a Masters in Educational Administration from Fairfield University in CT. When Sister Rita retired from her very active ministry, she was engaged in the Ministry of Prayer and Hospitality at Maria Hall in Danville.

On her 25th Anniversary as a religious, Sister Rita wrote: "Develop a deep spiritual life of prayer and a deep faith in all that God permits in your life. And another indispensable ingredient for happiness and holiness is a sense of humor." Anyone who knew Sister Rita knew that she also took these words to heart, being a woman of deep faith, prayer and good humor. Sister Rita's life of faith and service was rooted in the Gospel, summed up in one of her favorite quotes, "Be not afraid, I am with you."

Sister Rita was preceded in death by her parents and her 9 brothers and sisters. Sister is survived by many nieces and nephews and a Community who greatly misses her joyful presence and now counts on her prayers.

Left: Never one to miss an opportunity to honor Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Sister Rita joined the Sisters outside of Maria Hall for the crowning of the statue of Mary at the beginning of May.



Fr. Valentine Anyanwu, O.P.

In early July, the Sisters at Maria Hall were happy to welcome Father Valentine Anyanwu, O.P. (left) as our new Chaplain. Father had no sooner taken up residence than he celebrated his 25th anniversary of ordination on the Feast of St. Dominic. Since he celebrated that day with his confreres, we blessed him at a special Mass on August 29.



The week before Easter, Dr. Cover, a medical doctor at Emmanuel Center, donated a large crucifix for the Emmanuel chapel. Concerned that the corpus was too small for residents with poor eyesight, he found the perfect gift, just in time for Holy Week services. Thank you very much, Dr. Cover!



On May 19, Father Charles Ocul, A.J., Maria Joseph Chaplain, receives the microphone from Dawn Orzechowski, to begin his blessing of the new wheelchair van for Maria Joseph. Purchased with funds raised by the annual Golf Outing, this van has already brought much joy to MJ residents.



Organizations with Letters

SSCM

Four days of Council meetings in NJ at the beginning of September were a gift of work and play to start the ministerial year.



SCF

Members of the Slovak Catholic Federation gathered in Independence OH in mid-September.



RCRI and LCWR and NRVC

Teamed with Dayna Hurst at the Resource Center for Religious Institutes conference in St. Louis, Sisters Barbara Sable and Michael Ann present a workshop detailing the program used to invigorate the employees of Maria Joseph following the pandemic. There were 175 persons in attendance!



Sisters Barbara Sable and Michael Ann are proud to see Sr. Deborah Marie representing the National Religious Vocations Conference at the Leadership Conference of Women Religious assembly in Dallas, TX.

When We Wish



The Sisters at Maria Hall have a few mobility issues. Many use walkers or rolators to walk safely. Moving from Maria Hall to any of the other buildings on the grounds is a challenge, sometimes an insurmountable one.

On a few occasions, a maintenance golf cart or dietary golf cart proved useful for moving a Sister to a Basilica event or out into the Festival grounds. Easy to climb into and protected from the elements when needed, a golf cart dedicated to the transport of the Maria Hall Sisters--albeit one-by-one, would be a great advantage for making events in the Motherhouse more of a possibility to the Sisters.

The first golf cart to appear at Villa Sacred Heart was brought by Dominican Sister Fidelis, of happy memory. Perhaps from her place in heaven, she will oversee our request and bless any response!

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 Barbara Sable, SS.C.M.
General Superior
570-275-3581 ext 300
barbarasable@hotmail.com

DSH

SSCM's were grateful to be a part of the annual Danville State Hospital Thank You Dinner and happy to be able to spread joy to the residents at Christmas.





Summer Festival, Montour-Delong Fair, Bloomsburg Fair, Flea Market +

Festivals and Fairs

So many events in a short time, but a grand time was had by all! July 8th was the Summer Festival. With the beautiful weather the Sisters had requested and the delightful people who came, it was a success! On October 14th, the Flea Market +, held in the Auditorium and the Garages, was undeterred by the continuous rain of the day. Another success!

Many Sisters entered crafts, hobbies and edible creations to the Montour-Delong and Bloomsburg Fairs. They were rewarded with ribbons and the congratulations of many. The photographs can tell it all.





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Thank You for reading our Newsletter!

Fall 2023



Mission: *In the name of Jesus we teach and heal.*
 Spirituality: *Christ centered and Mary-modeled.*
 Motto: *Thy Kingdom Come!*



In the spirit of *Laudato Si'*, efforts to care for our common home have included the planting of trees at Maria Joseph (*far right*), and behind Emmanuel (*right*), as well as a peace rose in the front of Maria Hall (*below*).



Above: The generous gift of lily of the valley plants from a friend in Elysburg set Sister Barbara Sable to work in one of the corner gardens at Maria Hall.

An early apple harvest prompted Sister Susan Marie to enlist the help of friends to pick bushels of the crop (*right*). Then came the rallying of the troops to peel the harvest (*above*) for applesauce, apple butter and apple desserts. God is good!