



## Some Reasons for Joy

Jesus has redeemed us. We are God's dearly beloved sons and daughters. We have millions of Christian brothers and sisters praying for us. Jesus is our Good Shepherd, who will never leave us. Things are never as bad as they could be! Every good thought, word, or action of ours has repercussions in time and in eternity. This pandemic has brought about much good and heroism is so many people. Those who trust in the Lord will renew the earth They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength.

"For the LORD your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs." - Zephaniah 3:17 (NLT)

May you be richly blessed this Christmas Season and throughout the year. A novena of masses is being offered for your intentions. We hold you in our hearts and in our prayers.



## Sisters of St. Paul - District USA

ed 500 million people worldwide, with 50 million

Dear friends.

As of November 25, 2020, the COVID-19 virus has infected 57.2 million people worldwide, with 1.3 mil-

deaths. Of these 675,000 died in the United States.

to what it was in 1918, when the flu pandemic affect-

lion deaths. Of these over 12.6 million people were infected in the United States, with over 260,000 deaths. And as the writing of this newsletter, the numbers are rising exponentially.

The fear, the stay-at-home orders, the panic buying, the death of loved ones, the frightening toll on healthcare workers, the social distancing, the wearing of masks, the avoiding of family gatherings, the use of widespread distance learning in schools, the ban on indoor dining, and the closing of so many places, economic suffering ... these and more situations are daily realities that affect most people today.

Among the things that help me to keep my perspective on what really matters are readings I am doing of passages from the Bible that show steadfastness in the midst of struggles and stories from the lives of the saints. Along with these are the positive statements I hear from healthcare workers that make extreme sacrifices in order to serve those most vulnerable to the coronavirus, including living apart from their families so as not to risk being a carrier of the virus to their loved ones.

There are also people I know who go out of their way to bring food or other materials to those who are homebound, to "able-bodied persons" who are sick at home from the virus and remain guarantined so as to help keep others safe. I admire the ones who take time to show appreciation to the "frontliners" - healthcare workers, police officers, firepersons, those who re-tool their businesses to create needed equipment, those who transport protective equipment, and so many others whose heart is touched by their brothers and sisters in need.

We hold all of you in our daily prayers, and trust that each of you are doing your best to show God's love to others, and to stay in touch so the human connection thrives in spite of so many limitations.

May God bless you with peace in your hearts and peace and healing in the world.

-Sr. Mary Ann Laurin





## Page 4

## Updates on the Sisters in the USA District

- Sr. Maria Diem Nguyen and Sr. Fidelia Villa are now back in Washington, DC. Sr. Maria Diem is continuing her studies in English at Rosario College, and Sr. Fidelia is helping with social media posting of updates and reflections. She is also attending virtual courses that will help prepare her for a ministry in the Washington, DC area when the Covid restrictions are lifted.
- Sr. Clemence Mira is presently living in the Marquette convent, and will return to the Bishop Noa Home convent in



Bishop Noa Home convent in Sr. Maria weeding in Washington, DC the spring of 2021. At this time she is directing two online Prayer Groups every day.

- Sr. Juliana Djo is able to do some of her ministries. She is unable to minister directly to the people in the nursing care facilities except to bring parish bulletins to the central offices for distribution to the Catholic residents. However, she is able to visit some of the home-bound persons and bring them Holy Communion, wearing personal protective gear, and standing on the doorstep.
- Sr. Rosalie Hughes prepares reflections on the Sunday readings or other pertinent topics which are posted on the "Flock notes" of St. Christopher's Church and also of some parishes. She also helps to lead the singing at some of the weekend masses.
- Sr. Delfina Tede has been back at the Catholic Campus Ministry Center or Northern Michigan University since early October. Classes for the NMU students finished at Thanksgiving this year, so as to avoid re-gathering the students after their semester break, due to the likelihood of another coronavirus uptick if they return from their homes and vacations in various different places.
- Sr. Daria Moon is still with her ailing mother in Korea, and will return to Washington, DC in February of 2021.

## Praying through the Pandemic

When the coronavirus pandemic began raging in March, all of us, as well as most people in the United States, were not able to attend Mass in the church because of the Covid restrictions. At first, we watched the Mass on EWTN, or sometimes other places when the Mass was livestreamed.

But later on, Bishop John Doerfler of Marquette gave permission to Fr. Jeff Johnson, the hospital chaplain to say Mass at our Marquette convent, with the caveat that no other person could join us. All of us were so overjoyed about this wonderful privilege. We not only had Mass 6 days a week, but from Monday through Friday we also had Eucharistic Adoration from 9 a.m. to noon. We saw this time of prayer as a ministry, and we kept in our prayers all those suffering from the pandemic, as

well as all the sick, caregivers, and everyone in need of prayers throughout the world.

The Sisters in the Stephenson convent were given permission to go to the church to be present at the private Mass of Father Edward Baafi. But be-

cause they were not able to go to the Roubal's Care Facility or visit the home-bound because of the restrictions, they decided to have 2 hours of prayer every afternoon. Later on, they were able to visit some of the homebound parishioners by visiting them just outside their doors.

In the Bishop Noa Home in Escanaba, all Masses were cancelled, but the Bishop gave permission for a priest offer mass at the convent, so Fr. John Shiverski said Mass for the Sisters on Sundays. Sr. Marie Kim continued her ministry as a nurse. Sr. Gloria immediately began ministering to the tenants in the apartments by visiting with them and encouraging them. When it was allowed, she started to pray the rosary with some in the apartment dining room. Later they were able to have mass said first on Sunday and then every day of the week with Fr. John Shiverski and Fr. Emmett Norden. Sr. Dorothea could not visit the residents so she prayed for them and their families every day at 11 a.m. as well as other times. Later she started a phone ministry and spent hours on the phone reaching out to residents and their families as well as volunteers. Later on Sr. Dorothea was able to help the Activity Department in Assisted Living which allowed her to pray with them thus bringing them great joy. The Sisters also intensified prayer in the convent.







## CHRISTMAS JOY - SURE SIGN OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

-by Sr. Rosalie Hughes

"My heart is ready, O God. Awake, my soul, awake lyre and harp, with praise, I will awake the dawn..." (Ps. 100)

## "BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD." (Luke 19:38)

Be always joyful! Rejoicing, we look to JESUS, in the sacrament of this Christmas Season, living in trust, surrender, and joyful hope in the promises, love, and divine providence of our Creator God,

who was born, lives, "Emmanuel", God with us, ever present during these trying days of uncertainty, pandemic, unrest, grief ... as well as the global issues on many levels, where we feel captive to what is happening in and around us, struck with our own soul poverty, confused and unsettled in heart, mind and spirit, scandalized and bewildered by the violence, incivility and disobedience of the human condition, blinded by our own sin and that so prevalent in the world!



And... our God is here to lift us up.

## LET US COME TO KNOW HIM MORE INTIMATELY, TO LOVE HIM MORE DEARLY, TO SERVE HIM MORE FAITHFULLY!

#### JOY is the most infallible sign of the presence of God. -Leon Bloy

When, Mary, the Mother of God, visited Elizabeth, the child in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy at this visitation of the Presence of

God in their midst... Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried aloud with joy, comfort and jubilation to Mary: "Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." (Luke 1:40-49). Mary ecstatically rejoiced while carrying Jesus in her womb, and believing Him to be the Anointed of God, sang out joyfully, "My soul magnifies the Lord, for the Mighty One has done great things for me!" Edward Hayes, in his book <u>Chasing Joy</u>, speaks of rejoicing as stimulating the soul, the grace of the sacrament of the smile and a pursued living in joy with passion, praying for that grace, frequently engaged in the beautiful mysticism of smiling, even when things are upsetting, are not funny or are even trivial. A joyous smile in our christian hearts and lives is full of hope, inviting, contagious, heart-warming, compassionate and lifegiving! St. Julian of Norwich, in *Revelations of Divine Love*, was shown that "God is simple, friendly and wholly gracious"!

> "Come, let us sing to the Lord and shout with joy to the Rock Who saves us. Let us approach Him with praise and thanksgiving and sing joyful songs to the Lord." (Ps. 95)

Jesus, the Messiah and Master, Himself proclaims, in joy, a year of favor and jubilee in his person...

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free." (Luke 4:18)

Rejoice, dear friends, we are favored! JESUS IS BORN for us! How shall we be...or return his favor?

> GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST AND ON EARTH PEACE TO THOSE ON WHOM HIS FAVOR RESTS." (Luke 2:14)

## **Reflections on my Golden Jubilee**

By Sr. Estela Garcia



Looking back to 50 years ago, I wouldn't be here if I had listened to father when I went home to inform my parents that I planned to enter the convent. My father got angry and said, "over my dead body!" My mother, on the other hand kept quiet, because she knew that this might come in my life. She had a secret that she kept from my father.

After I was already a nun, my mother told me that when I was about 2 or 3 years old, one day I was playing by myself in our living room, and all of a sudden, she couldn't hear any more noise from me. At that time, my mother and our helper were doing something in the kitchen. She opened our living room and found me kneeling down in front of our altar, with my hands in praying position and my eyes were closed, and I was mumbling something. My mother was shocked, but did not disturb me. But she prayed, "Please Lord, do not take my daughter, but you can take as many of the boys as you want!" (We are 8 siblings: 2 girls and 6 boys.)

My journey these 50 years made me pass by many stages and many places.

I entered to the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres in 1969 as postulant, and then had my novitiate and juniorate in the Philippines. My apostolic ministry for the first 16 years was in the St. Paul Schools in the Philippines as teacher and Head of the Kindergarten Department, and Religion teacher in the grade school. Then my next 34 years were spent here in the United States. I came to the United States in 1986. The first 7 of these years I spent in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan as a teacher in Menominee Catholic Central School. The summertime most of those years were spent teaching CCD in several different U.P. parishes



where there were no Catholic schools, and other summers I took classes at Northern Michigan University for my Masters' Degree in Elementary Education.

After finishing my Masters in Elementary Education, I was assigned to teach in Washington, DC. I spent 24 years in Washington, DC, most of them teaching in a Catholic School. Then I came back here in the UP in 2017 to assume my responsibility as District Superior of our Congregation at our headquarters in Marquette for 3 years. Now, I am in Stephenson, MI working at pastoral ministry at Precious Blood parish.

A few years after I became a Sister of St. Paul, my parents came to support my vocation 100%. In fact, in 1986, when I was assigned as a missionary to the United States, my father told me to be faithful to my commitment. Yes, not only to be faithful to my Vows but to be rooted in Christ – that is allowing Christ to be the Center of my life. I know that I could not do it by myself without the prayerful support of my family, my Sisters back in the Philippines, and our Sisters here in the District, our Companions of St. Paul and friends who journey with me. The journey was not all rosy. It was a journey of falling and rising. But God's love, mercy, compassion and forgiveness were always there. I could not ask for more.

Today, my heart is overflowing with joy and thanksgiving to God for giving me 50 years of serving Him. I am grateful for my Sisters here in the District for all the support and encouragement they gave me. I ask our Lord's graces and blessings that I'll be able to continue serving Him until He calls me to His Kingdom.

If things were "normal" nowadays, the celebration of my 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee would have included a full one-month retreat in the Philippines with the 13 other Sisters who made their novitiate with me 50 years ago. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, all celebrations at the motherhouse in the Philippines were cancelled and all my groupmates, like me, had a much smaller celebration in their local parishes. But the size of the celebration is not important to me. Even if there were just the celebrant and myself having the Mass and giving thanks to God for all his superabundant blessings, it would have been enough. I am overflowing with joy and gratitude for all the graces God has bestowed on me personally, on

my family, and on my congregation, and all those whom I have had the privilege to serve in my ministry wherever I have been.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank Bishop John Doerfler and all the priests, deacons, Sisters, and friends who joined in the Jubilee Mass of Thanksgiving on November 8<sup>th.</sup> And my love goes out also to so many who were not able to come. Each one of you is so dear to my heart, and it is the love, prayers, and support of people like you, and above all the mercy, love, and blessing of our Good and Gracious God who have made my 50 years as a religious so enjoyable.

Be assured of my prayers for you and your family. Stay safe and healthy.



#### Humanity is Confronted by New Consciousness



Laudate Si, an encyclical by Pope Francis, written on May 24, 2015, has a title in English that translates to "Praise be to you, my Lord." In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.

The spring newsletter of the Leadership Council of Woman Religious was devoted to reflecting on this encyclical. In this Christmas newsletter, we share a few paragraphs taken from the LCWR newsletter:

"In 'Laudato Si', Pope Francis, in the encouraging and concerned tones of a beloved relative, wants us to know of his affection and pride in all of God's people. Every aspect and level of the non-human world, and peoples in every part of our world, are experiencing crises, devastating tragedies, and unbelievable deaths and losses.

The waters are rising; lands and seas are becoming wastelands; air and land-space are becoming garbage dumps. The energy of humanity which is meant to bring hope, creativity, imagination, partnership, and mutuality to the world and our relationships needs to be called forth.



Pope Francis is inviting all of humanity, and each of us in local communities, to make a decision:

what will we do to help heal our broken environment and mend our unjust relationships with one another and with our environment?

In this case, we can't start over. We can't throw it all away or give up on our relationship with our common home — its environment and its people. Our Creator God is helping us face the disappointment in ourselves for the crisis which we humans have inflicted on our planet.

We are invited to recognize in this dark moment a contemporary opportunity: multiple facets of creation each satisfy, heal, and challenge humanity's positive responses. We can intentionally promote the importance of interconnectivity, of interrelationships, of mutual learning which are intrinsic for healing our environment. We can promote this new awareness and lifestyle."



## **Prayer for All Healthcare Workers**

As we are all living through this pandemic together, we know that those who give direct care in hospitals and in various healthcare facilities are especially to be thanked for their devoted and caring service. I would like to offer in their honor the following poem, which was published in the <u>Catholic Healthcare World</u> earlier this year. The editor of the Magazine, Judy Vandewater, as well as the author, Kate Williams, have graciously given me permission to print it in our newsletter.

For me, the poem is a prayer that we can use in praying for all those suffering from the pandemic and all those who care for others. - Sr. Mary Ann Laurin

## **Blessed are the Health Care Workers**

By Kate Williams

#### A Blessing for Health Care Workers in Time of Pandemic

Blessed are the ones who cannot be isolated.

Blessed are all the healthcare workers.

Blessed are the hands that are raw from scrubbing and sanitizing, and the hands for healing, comforting, and supporting.

Blessed are the shoulders that carry the weight of life and death.

Blessed are the feet that are aching from standing at the bedside, running between rooms, and answering phones.

Blessed are the hearts that are frightened and breaking.

Blessed are the mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, sisters and brothers, partners and friends, who cannot go home.

Blessed are the families who become isolated from each other, the ones who sacrifice their own comfort so that others need not be alone in their suffering.

Blessed are the sick and the dying, those who bear the image of God before us.

Blessed are those who look upon their work as sacred as and as gift at this time of overwhelming demand.

Blessed are those who lack the space to process all what lies ahead and may others bear their burden with them.

Blessed are the ones who are found weeping in corners of our emergency rooms, our hospitals, our primary cares, our outpatient centers so that we might see a strong face to greet our need.

Blessed are those who weep openly with us, so that even our tears have companions.

Blessed are you, O God: quietly holding each of us along the way.

Come quickly, abide unceasingly. Love us while we see the worst, and give us the hope to do our best and continue our mission with compassionate care. Amen.







## **Par-Tee Update**

As you are aware, the Par-Tee is an activity normally held in the month of April, in order to raise money for the Gary Abrahamson Junior Memory Care Center in Escanaba. This year it had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. We have also had to cancel the one scheduled for April of 2021, since the "forecast" for the next four or five months shows that it is not wise to gather together in large groups, and as you know from attendance at the Par-Tee in other years, there are many people who gather, engage in golf activities, raffles, and enjoy a wonderful dinner. Now all of us are hoping to go forward with the Par-Tee already scheduled for April 7, 2022.

For those who may not know, the Par-Tee raises money for the Gary Abrahamson Jr. Memory Care Center, a mission sponsored by the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres, and is solely funded by donations. The GAJMCC building located at 2635 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. S., Escanaba, provides care for those struggling with Alzheimer's disease and dementiarelated illnesses and holds free education seminars for the community. If you have any questions, call (906) 786-5810, Ext. 150 and please leave a message, or visit "The Gary Abrahamson, Jr. Memory Care Center" on Facebook.

Anyone wishing to make a special donation\* to the Gary Abrahamson Jr. MCC for its needed expenses could



send it to:

Gary Abrahamson Jr. **Memory Care Center** Attention: Mary Uelmen 2635 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S Escanaba, MI 49829

\*Any donation of \$1000 or more will be matched by funds from Patricia Abrahamson



Here is a song that you can listen to on YouTube:

#### "Teach Me, Lord, to Wait"

Written by Stuart Hamblen

I. Teach me, Lord, to wait down on my knees Till in your own good time, you answer my pleas. Teach me not to rely on what others do, But to wait in prayer for an answer from you.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with winds as eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. Teach me Lord, teach me Lord to wait!

2. Teach me Lord to wait while hearts are aflame Let me humble my pride and call on your name. Keep my faith renewed, my eyes on Thee. Let me be on earth what you want me to be.

3. There's a time and a season for all things. You promised in your word to answer my pleas. I'm crying to you, Lord, to grant sweet relief. Oh, Lord remove all my unbelief.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with winds as eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. Teach me Lord, teach me Lord to wait!





#### **DIOCESAN DAY OF CONSECRATED LIFE**

The Second Sunday of November each year has been designated as a Diocesan Day of Consecrated Life throughout the Diocese of Marquette. We celebrate the lives of the men and women who serve the Diocese and have dedicated their lives to contemplative prayer, teaching in our schools, taking care of the poor and sick, and bringing compassion and the love of Christ to those shunned by society. We offer our heartfelt thanks to them and pray for those who are consecrated to God by the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. May they always reveal the love of Christ to those they encounter and continue to enrich our world by their dedicated lives of prayer. We especially thank Sister Fidelia Dator Villa, SPC, for her selfless dedication to the St. Francis Connection Center. She is now serving in Washington, D.C., and we miss her greatly. (Taken from the St. Anthony Parish Bulletin)



#### **Grants Received for Those in Need**

This spring, the Catholic Extension Society offered grants of \$1,000 to any Sister who submitted a worthwhile cause. The money would be given to the Sister for distribution to the named person or group. Several of us submitted the names of persons or organizations who could benefit from this money, but only three of our proposals were accepted:

- A grant was received for **Room at the Inn**, a program that provides housing for homeless persons in the Marquette, Michigan area. Sr. Rosalie Hughes, who had worked with the program during the weeks that housing was provided at St. Christopher Church, sent an application for the grant, explaining what the program was, and that there was a great need for financial support. The executive director explained that they provide breakfasts and dinners every day, shower facilities, and that they are currently in the process of renovating an emergency shelter.
- The Catholic Extension Society also approved the application of Sr. Fidelia Villa, who recommended the <u>St. Francis Connection Cen-</u><u>ter</u> in KI Sawyer, Michigan. The Connection Center normally provides food for distribution to the poor and also meals for needy persons twice a week. During the Covid restrictions, they were unable to have indoor meals, but Sr. Fidelia and a small crew of workers prepared meals every week and these meals were handed out to all those signed up. The \$1,000 was given to the director of the program and was used for food and supplies.
- Sr. Mary Ann Laurin sent an application for <u>a single mother</u> who normally cleans homes, offices, and other places such as B&B's (Bed and Breakfast). This person was unable to work for nearly 5 months and had several outstanding bills – car repair, refrigerator repair, etc. She was so grateful for this unexpected \$1,000.

## Our Lady, Salvation of the Roman People

Here is a copy of the miraculous image of Our Lady called "**Salus Populi Romani" or the Salvation of the Roman People**. The original is in a side chapel of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome. The image got its name because in the 6th century, Pope Gregory I carried the icon in procession through the streets of Rome begging the Virgin to end a plague.



# Prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary for help and protection from the coronavirus

The following prayer to Our Lady was composed by Pope Francis who asked that we pray it daily for her protection from the coronavirus.

"O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope. We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick. At the foot of the Cross, you participated in Jesus' pain, with steadfast faith.

You, Salvation of your People, know what we need. We are certain that you will provide, so that, as you did at Cana of Galilee, joy and feasting might return after this moment of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform ourselves to the Father's will and to do what Jesus tells us: He, who took our sufferings upon Himself, and bore our sorrows, to bring us, through the cross, to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God. Do not despise our pleas – we who are put to the test – and deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin."



#### **Compassionate Hearts Club**

In October we kicked off the 13th year of the Compassionate Hearts Club raising funds for our mission projects of: Haiti, Victims of Human Trafficking, Catholic Schools in the Marquette Diocese and Central Africa. Our 12th year, 2019-2020, over \$25,000 was donated between mostly The Compassionate Hearts Club mailing and through the newsletter. We are eternally grateful of your continued donations for this ongoing need. Thank you and bless you!



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#### A heartfelt Thank You to everyone sent in gifts and donations to the Sisters of St. Paul and the Mission Projects.

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Page 19

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Want more information about becoming a Sister of St. Paul?
You may write or email Sr. Mary Ann Laurin at:
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