Year of St. Joseph

The Feast of St. Joseph has not only been an integral part of the Catholic Church, but as a native New Orleanian, this day has been celebrated by individuals of all faiths and walks of life for centuries. While there are little details about St. Joseph's life, many have commended the patron saint of fathers, families, while countless others, for his steadfast devotion to Mary and Jesus during the formative years of His life. Therefore, it is with much gratitude that individuals from near and far gather to honor him through the creation of altars that are built throughout the city in numerous churches, public settings, and even in private homes. Thousands visit these altars on the feast day; partake in a special mass, and even attend a parade and celebration by the Mardi Gras Indians on “Super Sunday.”

As I reflect on the feast of St. Joseph, it is with deep admiration that my dedication to him stems from his courage, commitment and compassion shown through his care for a family God created him to lead. Not only did St. Joseph sacrifice his life to protect the dignity and safety of Mary and Jesus as a husband and father; but, he stands as a perfect example of what true obedience is to God's will as a faithful servant. It was his selfless acts of kindness that enabled Mary to safely bring our Savior into this world so that we too, could live. To me, this is the definition of love from a true father.

Kenitha Grooms-Williams, PBVM Associate & Director of Lantern Light Ministry in New Orleans, LA
Dear Friends,

As I write this, we are moving toward the end of April and looking forward to the beginning of spring. While it’s true that “April showers bring May flowers” and the daffodils are in full bloom, May also brings us an important feast of St. Joseph. On May 1st, the church celebrates the Feast of St. Joseph, the Worker. This is one of my favorite feasts perhaps because we honor one of the few definite things the Bible tells us about St. Joseph. We know that, like the rest of us, Joseph was a worker. He has traditionally been called a carpenter but modern day biblical scholars theorize that he may have been a stonemason. Stones were much more plentiful than wood in St. Joseph’s time. Either way, we can all agree that he was a builder, which is something to which we can all relate. During our lives, we have all spent time building: relationships, families, reputations, careers, legacies, core beliefs and values, just to name a few.

More importantly, we all have worked to build lives of service and care for our fellow travelers on this journey through life. Your prayerful and financial support have united us in ministry. Together, you and the Presentation Sisters and Associates have educated thousands of people, young and old. We have visited and cared for the sick and brought them the comfort of our presence and the gift of the Eucharist. Together we have walked the streets of Massachusetts and New York and many cities worldwide. We have sheltered and cared for the homeless. Our prayers have strengthened many families, friends, co-workers and strangers during difficult times. In all of this, you have united yourselves with us, and together we have, as our foundress did, “taken down our lanterns” and journeyed forth.

This will be the last letter from the current leadership team. We want to thank you for all the support and prayers you have given us over the last 12+ years. We thank you for who you are and how you inspire us. And, last but not least, we thank you for working with us in prayer and ministry for not only the last 12 years but for years too many to count. The privilege and joy of ministering with you is a gift we will hold in our hearts as we move on to new endeavors.

We would like to end by bestowing on you our traditional “Presentation Blessing:"

May the blessing of the Lord be upon you
We bless you in the name of the Lord.

God bless each and every one of you.

Sisters Patricia Anastasio, Martha Otterstedt, Mary Byrnes, Barbara King
With the advent of the pandemic in March of 2020, I transferred our in-person classes to an online program. As the months dragged on and we saw that the pandemic would not end quickly, I had to seek other ways to continue my ministry as Pastoral Assistant in charge of Faith Formation in the parish of St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta in Newburgh, NY. My experience serving in Bolivia for almost 25 years enabled me to adapt and find creative ways to face the unexpected.

As my team and I learned how to conduct virtual classes, we realized it definitely was not the same. What we take so much for granted is missing: the eye contact, the laughter, the human touch of a handshake or a pat on the shoulder. Physical proximity nourishes the deeper human, spiritual bond that is developed and strengthened. My teachers and youth members longed for prayer in our chapel around the Blessed Sacrament.

Likewise, the religious education program for grades 1-8 went virtual via our Zoom sessions. In addition, one night every week is devoted to Zoom parent meetings. The parents have become the primary educators of the faith and collaborators in this new way of teaching and learning. The twelve catechists and I try to share our experience of prayer and faith and review the lessons the parents have done with their children. Our challenge is to get the young people involved and actively participating in their faith development.

Our Zoom sessions have been most effective with the parents and godparents who are preparing for the baptism of their child/godchild. Through phone calls, text messages and emails, I am in constant contact with the parents and godparents. Thus, I am able to build a relationship of security, trust and confidence. On Zoom, I see them in their home with their child and I pray that the excitement and joy of this upcoming celebration will endure and that they are renewed in their faith and commitment as Church. On the day of the baptism, it is with joy that we meet; the human connection is finally made.

Through my calls, text messages and emails, I strive to be compassionate, caring and understanding. I try to be that glimmer of light in the darkness as was our foundress Nano Nagle when she carried her lantern through the narrow streets and shanty buildings of Cork City.

-Sister Laura Urbano, PBVM

You Never Know...

Every Wednesday evening I engage with 12 seventh graders to discover and reflect on our relationship with Jesus. I was encouraged to take on this ministry during a committee meeting with my Sisters when we discovered that Sr. Laura still needed a seventh grade catechist with classes in the parish of St. Mother Teresa in Newburgh, NY. Having just retired from the catechetical ministry, we realized I could help out. My only concern was doing this class online as I was not super confident about my technical capabilities.

On Wednesday, October 7th, the young people and I began our journey. We overcame a few bumps in the road: music playing with no sound; youtube clips with no voices; students turning off their cameras and ‘disappearing’ from class every once in a while. Through all of this, we strengthened our awareness of how God reveals Himself to us in Creation, Scripture and Church teachings: and delved into the mystery of the Trinity.

If you are searching for an energetic, uplifting experience I encourage you to volunteer in your parish Religious Education Program. Enjoy!

-Sister Christina Dougherty, PBVM
Presentation Connections

Allow us to introduce ourselves to you. We are Deacon Bill and Maria Castellane. Our journey to becoming Associates began a long time ago when we met Sr. Mary McCarthy and a friendship began.

Though our friendship, we became familiar with Sr. Mary’s congregation, whose Motherhouse, Mt. St. Joseph, is located approximately 2 miles from our home. Maria participated in several courses given by Sr. Mary at the Mount and I worked closely with Sister when Fr. Bill Scafidi came pastor of both Sacred Heart and St. Mary’s Parishes (where I was assigned after ordination) in Newburgh.

When St. Mary’s was closed, I began to attend daily Mass at Mt. St. Joseph and Maria on Sundays. It wasn’t long before Sr. Mary made it known to the community that I was a Deacon. I was invited by Sr. Mary Andre to lector and eventually invited to assist at Sunday Liturgy. Up until the pandemic, I also did First Friday Holy Hour and Communion Services on two Saturdays a month.

Maria became involved as well. She was invited to be a Eucharistic Minister and made sandwiches with the Sisters for the Newburgh Ministry and she would do shopping for the Sisters as needed.

On various occasions, such as Christmas, Easter, Halloween, Valentine’s Day, Maria created pleasantries using the holiday as a theme for the Sisters.

We were approached by Sr. Mary Byrnes one day saying “you two would make good Associates.” The rest was history. We both have always been concerned with helping the poor, but more importantly bringing Christ to all. We feel blessed to be able to be part of the community helping to fulfill Nano Nagle’s mission. We will be forever thankful to Sr. Mary McCarthy.

A Dream Come True

When I was chaplain at St. Teresa’s Nursing Home in Middletown, NY, I was impressed by the work of a young therapist, Faizool Ali. He had lost a leg in youth and now uses his prosthesis to encourage patients to get therapy for a damaged limb.

Faizool loved basketball and played on a traveling wheelchair team. His team often played at Madison Square Garden before the professional game, and he hoped to meet his favorite basketball player, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. When he heard that I had taught Kareem, he became my dear friend, but our basketball friendship ended when the nursing home was sold several years ago.

The friendship resumed three years ago when I was called by Sr. Barbara Muldoon who said that her therapist knew me. Faizool was now working at Sapphire Nursing Home and was anxious to meet me. He wanted to talk about a basketball team he started for disabled children. I thought it time to get Kareem involved. After telling him about Faizool’s work, Kareem sent his latest book, “Coach Wooden and Me,” with an encouraging note. Sr. Barbara and I were amazed at Faizool’s reaction when we gave him the book. Tears of joy and some high jumps filled the room with excitement. It was a dream come true.

- Sr. Hannah Marie Cox, PBVM
Sr. Josephine entered the Sisters of the Presentation on Feb. 2, 1946 after graduating from St. Michael’s Academy in Manhattan in June of 1945. Her first degree was a BA in English from Manhattan College. Her love for science blossomed when she received an MS in Chemistry from Fordham University and then a MA in Liberal Studies from Wesleyan University. Her elementary school teaching years were short in comparison to her long career of almost 30 years as a high school science teacher at St. Michael’s High School and John S. Burke High School in Goshen. Her students were enriched by the in-depth knowledge that Sister brought to her classes.

Sr. Josephine was principal of John S. Burke High School from 1983 to 1999. After a one year sabbatical, Sr. Josephine volunteered at John S. Burke as a part time teacher and mentor until 2008 when she retired. Now residing at Mt. St. Joseph, she lives close to nature, enjoying deer, bird songs and the changing seasons.

Sr. Lorraine Dougherty graduated from the Academy of St. Ursula in Kingston, NY and entered the Sisters of the Presentation on February 2, 1951. She studied at Fordham University, the University of Notre Dame, and at the Lumen Vitae Institute in Brussels, Belgium where she studied theology. Sister taught various classes at the high school level and served as chair of the religion departments in both John S. Burke High School and St. Michael’s Academy.

In 1971 Sr. Lorraine was elected President of the Presentation Congregation. After completing her term of office, she ministered as a Parish Director of Religious Education and then in the New York Archdiocesan Office as Associate Director of Family Development and Special Projects. Sister served as Pastoral Associate in St. Catherine’s Parish in Pelham, NY and at Our Lady of Mercy in Port Chester, NY until her retirement in 2007. Sr. Lorraine currently resides at Mt. St. Joseph pursuing her love of reading across many interests.

Upon completion of St. Michael’s High School, Sr. Margaret joined the Presentation Sisters on Sept. 8, 1951. During her years in ministry, Sr. Margaret earned a BS in Education and a MS in Religious Education, both from Fordham University and a certificate in Pastoral Ministry from Seattle University.

Her teaching years were spent at St. Michael’s in Manhattan, Holy Rosary in the Bronx and St. Andrew’s in New Jersey. In 1968, Sr. Margaret turned her energies to religious education in youth ministry and then as a pastoral minister in several New Jersey parishes. She also served as Director of Associate Ministers. After retiring from parish ministry in 2007, Sister was appointed congregational archivist, giving her the opportunity to share treasures and stories from the history of our Sisters. An avid Yankee fan, she faithfully follows the team each season. Sr. Margaret currently resides in Cabrini Nursing Home in Dobbs Ferry, NY.

Sr. Brian Elizabeth graduated from St. Bernard’s High School in Fitchburg, MA where she grew up knowing the Presentation Sisters. In 1951, she joined the Sisters of the Presentation and continued her education at Regina Coeli College in Fitchburg, MA. There she earned a Bachelors Degree in History and a Masters Degree in Elementary Education. Sister spent several years teaching in schools administered by the Presentation Sisters in Fitchburg and Leominster, MA and in Rhode Island. In 1968, Sr. Brian became principal of St. Leo’s School in Leominster where she ministered for thirty years. After a short sabbatical in 1999, she was appointed Administrator of Presentation Convent.

Today Sr. Brian resides at Presentation Convent in Leominster where she serves as house treasurer. She enjoys keeping in touch with friends and students she has known through the years.
In Memoriam

Sr. Mary Anne Duva (Sr. Mary Claver)
Sr. Mary Anne Duva passed away at Sapphire Nursing Home in Newburgh, NY on Wednesday, October 7, 2020, at the age of 89.

Sr. Mary Anne was born on November 11, 1930, in Bronx, NY and entered the Sisters of the Presentation on September 8, 1949. Sr. Mary Anne earned a BS from Catholic University in Washington DC. During her fifty-three years in ministry, Sr. Mary Anne taught in elementary & high schools administered by our Sisters. Additionally she worked in the Diocesan Secretary of Ministry in the Paterson Diocese and was parish business manager at St. Joseph Parish in Mendham, NJ.

Sr. Mary Anne’s ministries were enriched by her musical and artistic talents. Musical productions at St. John’s High School, Goshen, NY were enhanced by her playing with the school orchestra. She was instrumental in the design of the Sister’s former chapel on Jackson Avenue and she designed the congregational pin now worn by Presentation Sisters worldwide.

Sr. Sarah Ryan (Sr. Mary Consilia)
Sr. Sarah Ryan passed away at Mount St. Joseph Convent in Newburgh, NY on Sunday, October 18, 2020.

Sr. Sarah was born on December 13, 1932 in Bronx, NY and joined the Sisters of the Presentation on September 8, 1950. She earned several degrees: BA (Seton Hall University); MA in English (Manhattan College); M.Div. (Union Theological Seminary); D.Min. (NY Theological Seminary).

In her 62 years of ministry, Sr. Sarah taught in a number of schools in various locations including Manhattan, New Windsor, Goshen, Chappaqua, and Clifton, NJ.

In the last two years of her life and in spite of her illness, Sister tutored the child of a refugee family from the Congo and helped him find placement in a Catholic School.

Sarah was an avid reader and kept current on church and world issues, attending lectures at venues such as Fordham University and Union Theological.

Sr. Maureen Hickey
Sr. Maureen Hickey passed away suddenly at Montefiore St. Luke’s Cornwall Hospital in Newburgh, NY on Sunday, October 25th.

Sr. Maureen was born on August 10, 1958, in Nutley, New Jersey and joined the Sisters of the Presentation on June 19, 1999. She earned a nursing diploma from Holy Name Hospital in Teaneck, NJ, a BSN from the University of Iowa College of Nursing, a MPA in Healthcare Management from Seton Hall University in Orange, NJ and an MS in religious studies from Fordham University.

Before joining the Sisters, she worked at Hackensack University Medical Center. After her novitiate, Sister worked as a Nursing Supervisor at Peninsula Center for Rehab and Extended Care in Far Rockaway, NY. As a Nurse in Charge and Administrator at Presentation Health Care Center in Leominster, MA, she cared for our aged and infirm Sisters. At the time of her death Sr. Maureen was working as an intake nurse for Hospice of Orange and Sullivan Counties in New York State.

Sr. Maureen loved gatherings, especially organizing superbowl parties. She joined parish choirs and enjoyed being with new friends. Her care and compassion for the sick and elderly was her hallmark in caring for our Sisters and in parish nursing as well.
We Remember

Please join our Sisters & Associates in prayer for the following loyal friends who have recently passed away. We are blessed that the memory of loved ones remain with us forever.

Ms. Irma Hernandez  
Ms. Maurgarite Lambert  
Mr. Joseph M. Larkin  
Ms. Emma Levine  
Sr. Veronica Liegey, SC  
Mr. William Marotta  
Mr. Thomas McKenzie  
Mr. James McMahon  
Ms. Mary Miller  
Ms. Gina Batiste Mitchell  
Mr. George Pacenza  
Mr. Jack Redmond  
Ms. Gail Rowe  
Mrs. Virginia Ryan  
Ms. Bridie Sharkey  
Ms. Claudia Vargas  
Rev. Jerry Walsh  

A Prayer for Those Who Have Died

God of Consolation, we remember those who died. For those who have passed away quietly, we ask for joyous passage into your spacious heart.

For those who have suffered great pain, we ask for repose and the comfort of your compassionate embrace.

For those who have died too soon, in sudden and unexpected ways, we ask for peace and surrender into your loving care. Grant all of those who have died the grace of your eternal life and light.

Amen.

Author: Unknown

Prayer to St. Joseph

Glorious Patriarch St. Joseph, whose power makes the impossible possible, come to my aid in these times of anguish and difficulty. Take under your protection the serious and troubling situations that I commend to you, that they may have a happy outcome. My beloved father, all my trust is in you. Let it not be said that I invoked you in vain, and since you can do everything with Jesus and Mary, show me that your goodness is as great as your power. Amen.

Prayer to St. Joseph  
Recited each day by Pope Francis

Statue at Mt. St. Joseph Chapel in New Windsor, NY
Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, inspired by our foundress, Nano Nagle, commit ourselves to the Gospel values of hope, justice, freedom, and human dignity. In union with one another, we pledge ourselves to act for and with the poor and oppressed of our world, and to care for the earth.

Prayer Association

Our Sisters are mindful in their daily prayers of the intentions and prayer requests of our friends and benefactors. Masses are offered on the first Wednesday and the third Thursday of each month for all who have asked for prayerful support in the various aspects of their lives. Giving one of our attractively designed cards lets people know that you are remembering them in a unique way during a special time in their lives. The usual donation is $5.00 to be sent after you have used the card.

If you would like any of our beautiful prayer cards for Birthdays, Healing, Special Occasion, Thinking of You or Sympathy you may send your email requests to HcoxPBVM@hvc.rr.com or you may write to Mission Advancement Office, Mt. St. Joseph, 84 Presentation Way, New Windsor, NY 12553.