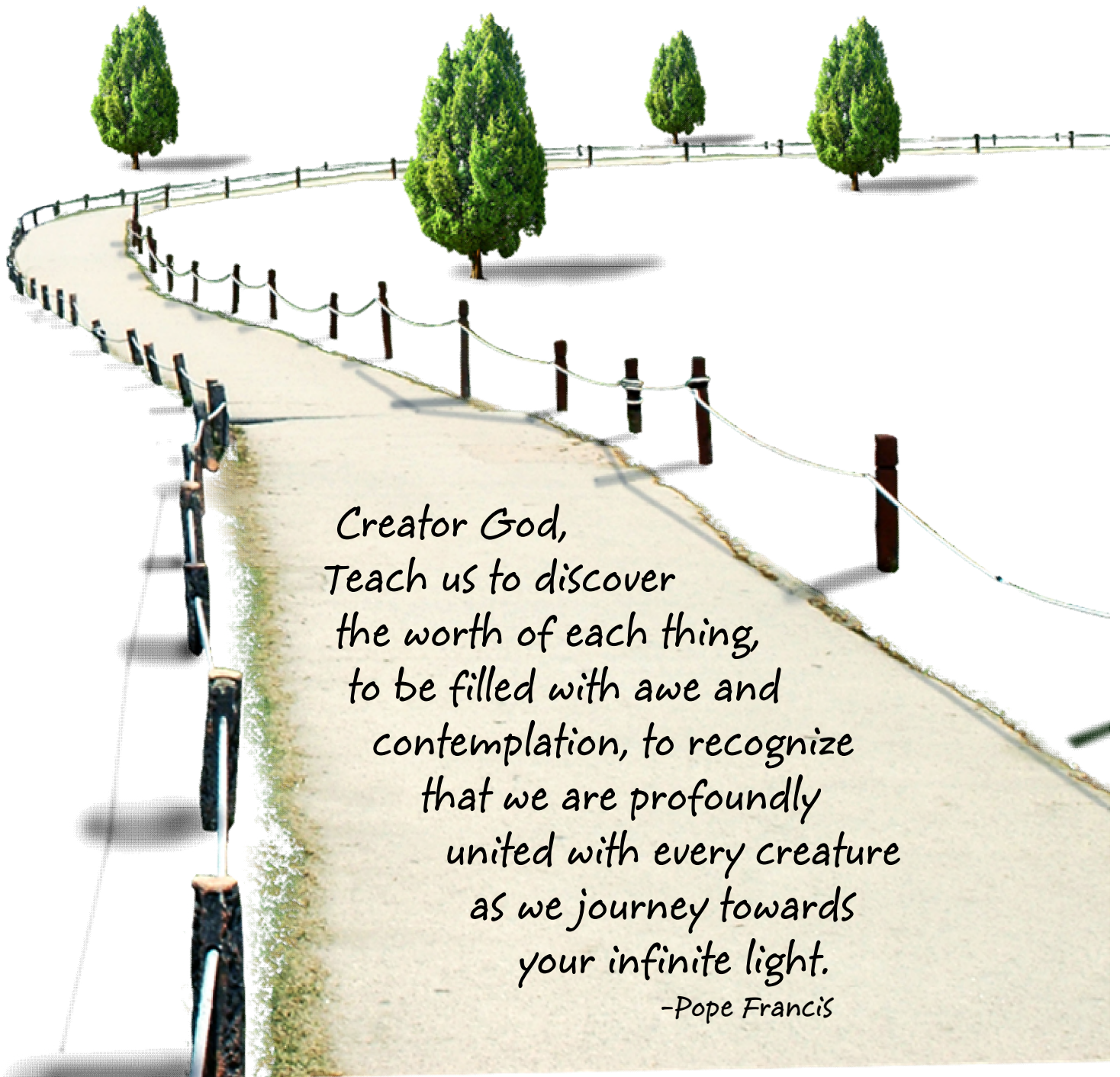




DMJlink

Daughters of Mary and Joseph ▪ California Region ▪ Spring/Summer 2023



*Creator God,
Teach us to discover
the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and
contemplation, to recognize
that we are profoundly
united with every creature
as we journey towards
your infinite light.*

-Pope Francis



Spring/Summer 2023

Editorial Staff

Sr. Linda Peters, DMJ

Sr. Linda Webb, DMJ

Sally Nowinski

DMJlink Logo

Jonathan Nowinski

Contributors

Sr. Pascazia Kinkuhaire, DMJ

Sr. Catherine Sullivan, DMJ

Sr. Sheila Lynch, DMJ

Sr. Mary Walsh, DMJ

DMJlink is a publication of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. It has a twofold purpose:

- to inform its members of the involvement of our Sisters in mission and ministry;
- to acknowledge the generosity of our donors.

All material submitted for the **DMJlink** is subject to revision and/or editing.

Editorial Policy:

The mailing list for the **DMJlink** is **not** made available to any outside business firm or organization.

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Joyful greetings of Easter and spring to each one of you!

"Today, more than ever, we hear echoing the Easter proclamation so dear to the Christian: "Christ is risen! He is truly risen!" Pope Francis reminds us. Watching the news, reading the newspapers nowadays, more than ever, we need Christ to stand in our midst and repeat to us: "Peace be with you!" Friends, thank you for continuing to be with us.

In this edition of our newsletter, we will share with you the joy of Mary and Joseph Retreat Center celebrating 60 years of existence. We have been blessed with dedicated Board of Directors, generous and hard working staff, faithful volunteers, and all of you who support the life of the retreat center with your prayer, friendship and resources. We are forever grateful.

You will also note that Sister Frances Fisher completed her life's journey and is now truly experiencing the fullness of new life. We remember how she lived her call as a DMJ, outstandingly living and serving as an instrument of God's mercy. Although we grieve her passing, we are grateful for the gift of Frances and for all the people whom she served during her long life. We are most grateful to you who expressed your love and appreciation of Frances through your messages and generous support. May she rest in peace.

This year, we celebrate 70 years of religious profession of our Sisters: Sheila Collins, Lois Claiborne, Chrissie O'Connor, Catherine Sullivan and Barbara Teresa Wright. A life span of 70 years in service is a long time but with love and joy, these Sisters dedicated their lives to the education of elementary students and pastoral work. They were truly at the service of Jesus and His Church. As you read their stories, please join us in thanking God for their continued YES to God's calling at this stage in their lives.

The end of 2022 saw the Daughters of Mary and Joseph in California elect a new leadership team. They are Sisters: Helen Vigil, Pascazia Kinkuhaire and Teresa Groth. We thank God for their yes. Please remember them in your prayers.

Finally, we would like to thank each one of you for your continued love, friendship and the many ways in which you support us. In thanksgiving for who you are to us, we, the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, remember you daily in our prayers.

In this season of rebirth, may you feel your faith renewed and your heart made new with the hope Easter season brings. We will continue to pray that God's love be a powerful source of happiness in your lives.

May God's promise of New Life bless and renew you,
California Leadership Team

Our Mission:

We are an international community of vowed religious women. We are committed to deepening our relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship manifests itself as an individual and corporate response to the needs of today's world. Our mission is to be a compassionate, joyful presence enabling those to whom we minister to recognize their value and dignity. We are dedicated to sharing the merciful love of God with all who experience brokenness or poverty in any form.

Our Vision:

"Be there for the whole Church, be there as a pardoned sinner who has found peace and rejoices in the merciful love of God."

~ Msgr. William Van Crombrughe, Founder

Celebrating our 70 year Jubilarians

Sister Sheila Collins



Sister Sheila Collins was born in Glin, Co. Limerick, overlooking the banks of the beautiful Shannon, where she grew up with her parents, brothers and sisters. While in high school she became interested in religious life. She entered The Daughters of Mary and Joseph for initial formation August 25, 1950, at Castlecree, Co. Longford. The final part of her formation was spent in Uccle, Belgium. She and all Novices from Ireland and England had an opportunity to learn about our roots as Daughters of Mary and Joseph and visit the tomb of our Founder, Canon Van Crombrugge. She made her first vows in Uccle, April 21, 1953, returned to Ireland to spend a little time with her family and prepare for her assignments in Los Angeles, California.

Sheila's first assignment was at Saint Sebastian School, in West Los Angeles. Thus began discovery of the gifts children had... how they became sponges of knowledge and most importantly how they blossomed in their love of God and Our Blessed Mother. Every child was very precious to her. In addition, she was a compassionate listener to parents. She was the confidant of many who needed a prayer or just a listening ear. All she met were inspired by her spirituality, compassion, prayerfulness, and delightful laugh!

After many years of teaching, she took a new path, that of Parish Ministry. There she became a wonderful support to the priests and parish staff. She visited families at home, and those in the hospital. She was

available when anyone was in need of assistance or a prayer. Sheila's compassion and constant availability to others was a gift that was most appreciated by all.

Her last parish assignment was in San Marcos. There Sheila's true gifts blossomed. She began as Religious Education Coordinator. That was just the tip of the iceberg! A change of pastors led to a change in parish dynamics. Her ministry expanded to numerous aspects of parish life: RCIA, Religious Education, and bereaved families through her presence at death, preparation of funerals and officiating at gravesides.

Sheila's special gift of making everyone feel important led to her becoming spiritual director for the Legion of Mary. She started a coffee group that met every morning after Mass. She invited women in the parish to join the DMJ Associate membership. (One of the Associates became our Sister Teresa Groth!) She shared with them her commitment to our DMJ charism by sharing with them the words of our founder: "Be there for the whole Church, be there as a pardoned sinner who has found peace and rejoices in the merciful love of God."

She was most especially known for her hospitality and her care for those on the margin. She helped The House of the Poor in Tijuana and as a member of the Home Alone Sister. Sheila also found time to lead groups of parishioners from San Marcos on tours of Ireland. She loved sharing her home, family, and the beauty of her homeland with others.

She had an extraordinary network among the clergy, not for herself but to enhance the life of the parish. When penance services were planned she could call on priests from as far away as Los Angeles and other places to participate in Penitential Services. Priests did not say no!

In the midst of her active ministry, she became a member of the DMJ leadership team. After having completed her term, Sheila retired to Marian Residence spending many happy years there. Sr. Sheila is currently a resident of Saint John of God retirement and care center in Los Angeles.



Sister Barbara Teresa Wright

I was born in Utah and grew up in Santa Monica. My father was a doctor at St John's Hospital and in Santa Monica Hospital. My mother was a homemaker, who loved her role as wife and mother. I have one sibling, my brother Ken. I had a wonderful childhood and had many adventures with my brother. I became interested in the Catholic religion and was baptized after graduating from college. A friend introduced me to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. Soon after that I entered their Novitiate on San Vicente Blvd.

After first profession, I was sent on my first teaching assignment to St. Michael's School in San Francisco. I enjoyed living in community and teaching at the school. This was followed by assignments in our schools including Saint Augustine, Culver City, and our Lady of Peace in what was then called Sepulveda. I particularly enjoyed teaching music and art classes, as I was able to reach many of my students through a creative and artistic curriculum.

Then my life took a totally different turn. On a visit to Mexico with Sister Mary Aquinas, I got to know the Carmelite nuns, who became lifelong friends. I taught English at a college language school in Mexico City for over twenty years. I also worked at two orphanages, where I helped make a difference in the lives of many underserved families. I was privileged to live very close to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe and to be part of the annual pilgrimage on December 12th.

For the past sixteen years, I have been fortunate to live at Marian Residence, our DMJ retirement home in the quiet, safe and beautiful city of Rancho Palos Verdes. While I miss teaching students and the work I did in Mexico, I have found new ways to relax and enjoy retirement. I now have more time to practice piano, an instrument that brings me joy and contentment.



One of the big highlights for me is my brother's frequent visits from Utah. He enjoys visiting with me and the other members of the community. Now that I look back on my life I thank God for providing me with such a beautiful fruitful life and for all of you, our donors, who have made this retirement possible.



Sister Christina O Connor



Sr. Christina O'Connor, normally called "Chrissie," was born on December 28, 1932, the fourth oldest of five sisters. She was born in a small not inconsequential village called Knocknagoshel. It was from here and the surrounding neighborhood that the reputable playwright, John B. Keane, found the material for his famous plays.

The village itself had a well known football player, and very importantly, a master dancing teacher who counted Sr. Chrissie among his star pupils. In short, as one of the local wits said, "Arise, Knocknagoshel, and take your place among the nations of the world."

Sr. Chrissie joined the Daughters of Mary and Joseph in 1954, followed by her two sisters, Maura and Sheila. She was an avid reader. She loved to dance and was always humming or singing the lyrics of popular movies, "Windjammer" being one of the many. It could be said that she provided the advertisement for these movies.

Sr. Chrissie, like many of the DMJ's of her time, followed the path of education, answering the need of the expanding parochial school system in California. Among the schools where she taught were St. Augustine's, Culver City; Our Lady of Mt Carmel, Mill Valley, where she later was principal; St. James, La Crescenta, and St. Joseph H.S. in Santa Maria. As a teacher Chrissie made learning an exciting experience for her students.

Sr. Chrissie's talents and capabilities were also used within her DMJ Community. She served on the Leadership Team for the DMJ Region. She also served in other capacities...Religious Education and pastoral ministry. After having completed her years of classroom teaching, she continued to volunteer her time at St. James School.

Sr. Chrissie had a keen interest in politics and took her civic duties very seriously. She studied, followed and researched politicians who had higher ambitions. She sought the advice of trusted people in the community regardless of their political affiliation. When the polling stations opened Chrissie cast her vote with great certainty that she had done her duty well.

Sr. Chrissie is now enjoying her retirement years at St. John of God Nursing Home in L.A. We, her Sisters, have fond memories of her light-hearted spirit as she trips along, lilting the words and music of one of Harry Belafonte's favorite tunes, "I met a little girl..."

Sister Catherine Sullivan

This story begins on January 6, 1934 in a little country parish about ten miles from the historic Lakes of Killarney. A baby girl entered the family of Katie Lyne and Jer Sullivan. I was that baby, the first child of a family of nine, and the first child to be born into that household in about twenty-four years. I remember well my grandparents and also neighbors who were part of our extended family.

Within the next four years, my first sibling joined our family. Soon after this I became very sick with a serious infection. I heard from my mother that she sent a request for Mass to be offered for me at Lourdes and yes, a miracle happened and I was cured. That miracle left a strong message to me and has guided me to have Masses said for various intentions.

My years at our local country school passed very quickly ... I made many friends, and at age fourteen was ready for a new experience. This came in an unexpected manner.

One day our teacher informed me about a letter she had received from a nun home from California. She was asking the teacher whether any girls in the school were interested in "joining the nuns". Yes, I would, I told the teacher. Amazingly, my family agreed.



This nun was Sr. Mary Kevin, who with Sr. Mary Francis was in the process of opening a novitiate in Ireland for their Order. The candidates would be prepared to join their Sisters in California as teachers. Another surprise was in store for me. Both of these Sisters were from our parish and Sr. Mary Kevin and my mother both attended my school. The Order was Ladies of Mary, now known to us as Daughters of Mary and Joseph.

A new life had opened for me. In the next seven years I completed high school, entered the DMJ Novitiate and traveled to our Motherhouse in Belgium where I made my First Profession. I am indebted for the prayer foundation I received in the Novitiate in Ireland and in Belgium. Based on the spirit of our Founder I would devote myself to be at the service of the whole Church in all of my work.

After a brief stop over in Kerry, I said goodbye to my family and was on my way to California. At this time we did not have permission to return to Ireland, so it was a very difficult moment. As I reflect on this experience, I am surprised. I was traveling alone...by boat to New York and by plane to California. What a maiden voyage!

The 1950's was an exciting time for Catholic education. The DMJ's were staffing schools...fifty to a class...and they needed more teachers. The Irish novitiate was a perfect answer, and we Irish girls were eager to answer the call. I was warmly welcomed by DMJ's and received my first assignment, teaching second grade in St. Augustine's School, Culver City. (This was the school where the first DMJ's taught when they arrived in Los Angeles in 1926).

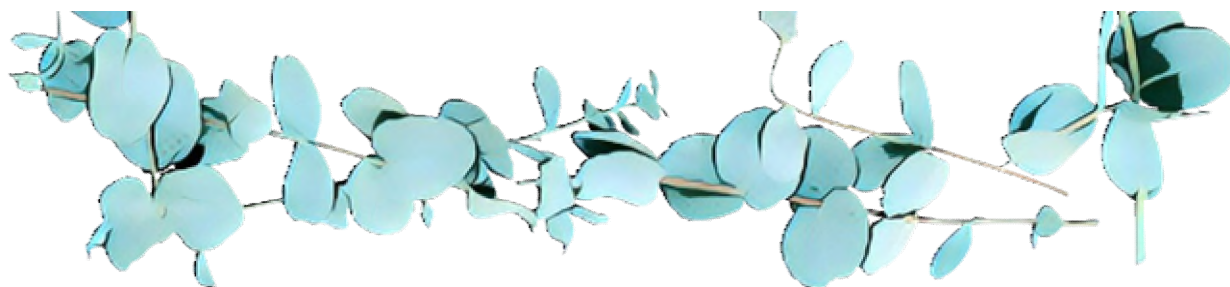
In our Order, the Sisters were assigned to new schools frequently, and we learned to adjust and appreciate new cultures and ways of living. I had taught in nine different schools and felt happy and comfortable in the grammar school arena. However, a surprise awaited me in 1969. I was assigned to newly opened St. Joseph High School in Santa Maria. An extra bonus was that our Josephite Brothers were also teaching at the school. A wonderful bond existed among faculty, parents and students. I have many memories of my time at SJHS and I still keep in touch. Some years pass and I am back in grammar school again, this time in La Crescenta, teaching junior high (grades 6-8). This was also a time of fulfillment...I was assisting students to face the scary task of deciding their futures as they prepared for high school. There was a variety of cultures in the school. I was impressed and edified by these students who appreciated their particular cultures.

I had announced that this was the "Last Hurrah." My teaching days were coming to an end. But, of course, I knew the Lord had something waiting for me. A major surprise! Fr. Charles had just been appointed pastor of St. Louis de Montfort Parish in Santa Maria. He invited me to come and be a Parish Sister, assisting the priests and working with parishioners and committee members. Undaunted, but with my hand in the Lord's, I said "Yes".

Returning to Santa Maria was a homecoming. I had taught with Fr. Charles at SJHS, and I was delighted to work with our brother Josephites again. I knew many of the parishioners from my time at SJHS. St. Louis de Montfort parishioners were open and willing to be active and supportive. Of course, there were trying times, but supportive and eager parishioners and clergy who lead, accomplish much.

Another surprise and blessing waiting for me was my DMJ Sister Regine Donner, a Holocaust survivor. From her I learned much about Jewish culture and her trust in God. We complemented one another, she at SJHS and at Marian Hospital with her Volunteer Program, and I with SLDM parish ministry. She is still my mentor from her heavenly home. And I plan to be buried beside her in the Santa Maria Cemetery. You can find her life story from the Holocaust Museum, WDC.

This is really the "Last Hurrah"...my transition (not retirement) to our Marian Residence in RPV. This is a precious time for me to join our retired DMJ Sisters in thanksgiving for our lives and fruitful ministries. But for me it is also a time for appreciating the friendships and connections over the years. With my collection of cards and faithful pen, I can keep in touch with friends in many of my former ministry spots. As I enjoy the ambience of our Center, I thank the Lord, in the words of our Founder, "...for having loaded me with innumerable blessings, both spiritual and temporal."



Sister Lois Claiborne

As we review Sr. Lois' ministry file, we note something that attests to her adaptability. She has had a rather "checkered" ministry career, or to put it in Biblical terms, she has worn a "coat of many colors" Her talents have benefited a very diverse set of ministries and people. Those who have known her indicate that Sr. Lois has been both very personable and very effective in all of them.

Sr. Lois has held the following positions: Elementary School Teacher, Principal, Assistant Principal, Retreat Center Staff Member, Medical Secretary, Parent Education Instructor (with emphasis on infants), Elementary School Religious-Education Coordinator, Parish Prayer Group Leader, Clerical Assistant, and in her retirement, a Volunteer at the Claretian Tape Ministry office.

It would not surprise anyone who knows Sr. Lois that the ministry she most cherished was working with infants and their parents at St. John's Hospital, Santa Monica. That experience really stole her heart! Sr. Lois' coat of many colors would need to include an emblem with that ministry in a prominent place.

Because of Sr. Lois' current need for nursing care, she resides at Marycrest Manor in Culver City. She is cheerful, is not prone to complaining, and even now has the deep spirituality that has motivated and energized her as a Daughter of Mary and Joseph. The Carmelite sister who administers Holy Communion to her each day has noticed that afterwards she appears to go into a deep period of prayer. Sr. Lois lives perfectly in the present moment and would not recall her service in the Church -- even if you asked her about it. Yet still she would smile...and gently greet you.



Mary & Joseph Retreat Center Celebrates 60th Year of Retreat Ministry

Mary & Joseph Retreat Center, located in Southern California atop the Palos Verdes Peninsula, overlooks the Los Angeles basin from the coast to the mountains. Our eight acres of trees, gardens, walking paths, buildings, and guest rooms – graceful, peaceful, and spiritual -- were designed, built, and operated by the Daughters of Mary & Joseph, who operated this sacred place for decades. For more than 20 years, dedicated lay staff have worked and run the Retreat Center. With the support of hundreds of volunteers and generous donors, we have continued the legacy of retreat ministry that the Daughters of Mary & Joseph started.

We welcome more than 15,000 visitors each year – private and non-profit organizations, churches, or schools putting on their own retreats; 12-step groups; public retreat programs that we sponsor; or individuals making their own retreat experience. Whether for a few hours, a day, or a few days, people of all faiths – or looking to reclaim their faith – who visit here, arrive in one way and leave another – energized, refreshed, spiritually renewed, better for what can happen along the way here. Nestled among the trees is our labyrinth – a sacred prayer path that has been walked by thousands, day or night, as part of their spiritual journey.



From our experience leading small group walks, and personal experiences others have shared with us, we know people hear God's voice on the path.

A recent guest left us this message:

"I had such a lovely stay. Your retreat center was the perfect place for me to pray, rest, read, and reflect. As I was reading the Gospel of Luke, I was struck by how often Jesus 'withdrew to lonely places' so that he could pray. Thank you for providing a safe and affordable place to retreat. You are such a blessing."

After an encouraging start to 2020, we experienced an abrupt stop in March due to the pandemic. Unsure when we could resume operations, we had to see through eyes of faith – cutting back, keeping the property and facilities safe, clean, and ready. By summer of 2020, we could open to the few groups or individual guests who wanted to be here; health restrictions required us to create outdoor meeting and dining spaces on patios or in gardens. As summer became fall, we had to light those spaces; and as fall became winter – and 2021 began, we had to heat those spaces. Beginning in spring of 2021, outdoor requirements ended, and we saw a steady resumption of meaningful retreat activity for all types of groups and ages – across all the indoor and new outdoor venues. Some groups or individuals returned, and many new ones found us for the first time.

We returned to a more significant schedule of guests and programs during 2022 – including new visiting international organizations focused on mission/ministry, prayer/meditation, and communication/outreach. We introduced new public retreat programs emphasizing spirituality through art, soul collage, and nature – including our pilgrim walk, finding God in the awe of nature, spiritual cooling in heated times, and soul gardening. We were especially encouraged – at a time when it is increasingly important to pass along our faith to young people – to welcome a total of more than 1,500 students participating in numerous school retreats visiting our grounds, as well as more than 400 teachers attending their school faculty retreat programs here.

With a positive view toward the future, we continue to enjoy a robust level of retreat visitors and programs during 2023. We are continuing the effort we resumed in 2022 to preserve and improve the indoor and outdoor spaces across the property. Specifically, we have renovated meeting rooms to enhance retreat comfort and experience; and we have cleared, graded, and paved a previously unused parcel of land to create a new outdoor meeting space – with landscaping still in process. We are preparing to celebrate our 60th anniversary on July 23, 2023 with an outdoor mass, keynote speaker, and reception.

After 60 years of existence, we thank God that the Charism of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph is still being lived and shared by all who come to our Retreat Center.

Paul Craig, Business Director



Sister Frances Fisher
1930 ~ 2022



Sr. Frances Fisher, DMJ was born in Waco, Texas on February 20, 1930. Survived by her sister Bessie Fretter and husband James, nephew Kenneth and wife Sherrie, niece Kristina Oswald and husband Robert. Although her family moved to

Los Angeles when Frances was 5, Frances remained a proud daughter of Texas for her entire life. She grew up in Culver City, attending St. Augustine Elementary School which was staffed by the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, and graduated from Immaculate Heart High School in June, 1948. Frances entered the Daughters of Mary and Joseph in August, 1948, and made her first vows in 1951. A great lover of learning, Frances pursued her education with focus and intensity. She was definitely a History “buff”. She loved teaching. Her first assignment was at St. Augustine’s School and for the next 53 years Frances taught in several Archdiocesan High Schools. Her teaching career ended with 14 happy, memorable years at Cathedral High School, Los Angeles. When she retired in 2005, Frances served as Vocation Director for the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. She also served as an advocate for annulments in the Archdiocesan Marriage Tribunal. Frances died peacefully on October 13th in the presence of her Community and staff at St. John of God Care Center. We are grateful to the staff of the Marian Residence in Rancho Palos Verdes, and to the staff at St. John of God, who gently accompanied her in her final days.



May she rest in Peace...

In Honor of... (those honored and remembered are in **BOLD**)

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Mr. Larry Harlan

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Matthew Krier

Mrs. Emma Senger

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Mr. & Mrs. J. Brian Murphy

My Children, Grandchildren, Family and Friends

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Helen & Paul Nebel

Mrs. Jean Ann Holbrook

Sr. Mary Angela O'Connor

Ms. Alexandra Selna

Phil Perrin

Mrs. Emma Senger

Sophie & Maria Petrelli

Rose Ave. Community

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Sr. Barbara Teresa Wright

Sally & Sue Nowinski

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In Memory of...

(those remembered are in **BOLD**)

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Alexandra G. Selna

Ms. Alexandra Selna

In Memory of... (continued) (those remembered are in **BOLD**)

Ed Senger

Mrs. Emma Senger

John Sheridan

Mr. & Mrs. Oliver Sheridan

Richard Shiffrar

Mrs. Suzanne Shiffrar

Jacqueline Simone

Ms. Lisa Kragness

Robert Solorio

Mr. & Mrs. John Solorio

Kicha Somsuvanskul

Sr. Helen Vigil

Kathleen Spain

Mr. & Mrs. James Hughes, Sr.

Patrick Shawn Sullivan

Mr. & Mrs. Patrick P. Sullivan

Al Torres, Sr.

Mr. & Mrs. Al Torres

Marie L. Valdez

Mr. & Mrs. Patrick P. Sullivan

Dorothy L. Van Nice

Mr. Robert L. Van Nice, Jr.

Victims of Warfare

Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Roberts

Anita Vigil

Sr. Helen Vigil

John Richard Vigil

Sr. Helen Vigil

Marie Agnes Watson

Sr. Sheila Lynch

Sr. Mary Walsh

Margaret & Raymond Welker

Matteo & Susan Costamagna

May Werth

Mr. Matt Graham

Jack & Florence Wildermuth

John Wildermuth

Rita Wilson

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Nielsen

Stevan C. Wood

Mrs. Margaret Wood

Eithne Wynne

Sr. Sheila Lynch

Joseph, Marjorie, & Bobby

Ziemba

Ms. Marla Ziemba

Nellie Zukauskas

Mrs. Louise Peralta

Rita Zukauskas

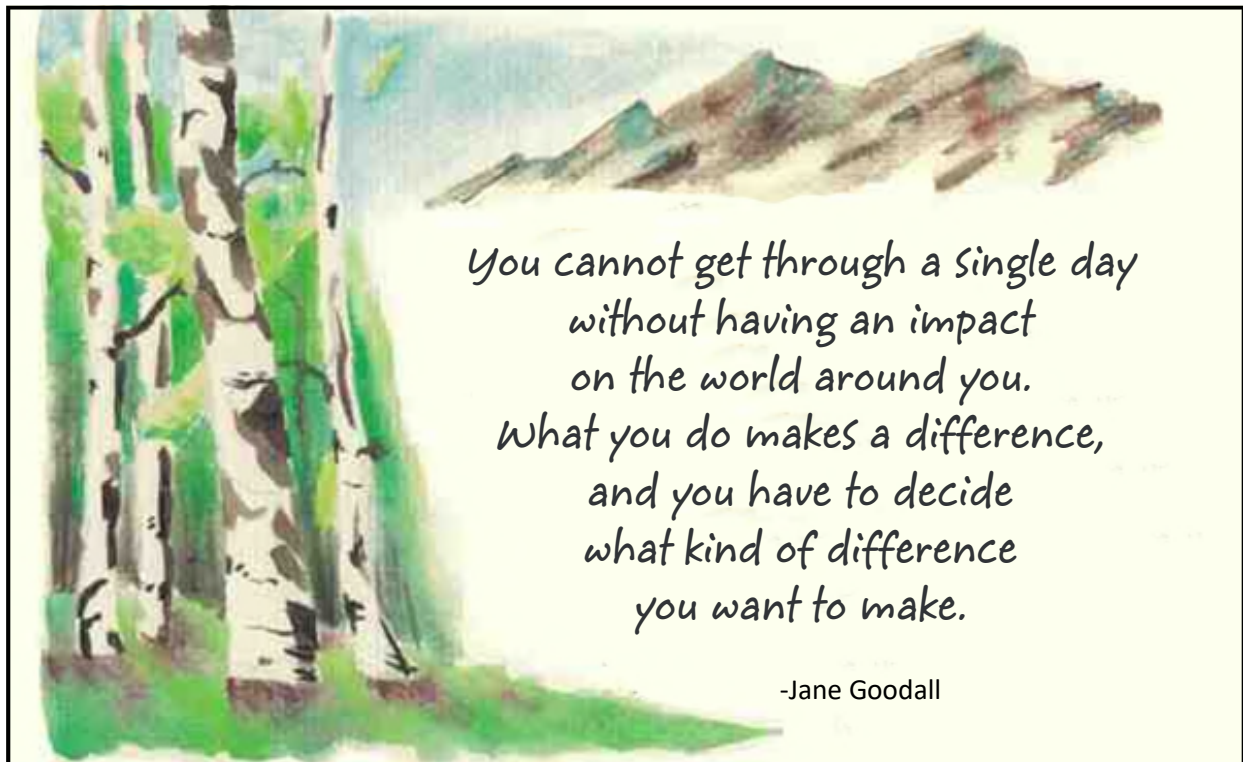
Mrs. Louise Peralta



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