

Daughters of Mary and Joseph • California Region • Spring/Summer 2020

May your life become a garden of opportunities for happiness... That in spring may it be a lover of joy; in winter a lover of wisdom. And when you make a mistake, start all over again. For only then will you be in love with life! -Pope Francis

# DMJlink

# Spring/Summer 2020

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**<u>DMJlink</u>** 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.

## FOUNDER'S PRAYER

Where shall I turn, O Lord, When I can no longer see you who are the light and the way. The beginning and the end of my existence? If I keep my gaze steadfastly fixed on you, I shall never strav far. In the overwhelming darkness of life's journey, I have to but put my faith and trust in you, O my God. You alone do I seek, vou alone do I see reflected in all creation. The fulfillment of your holy will is my sole desire. Even when pre occupied with the innumerable cares of my daily life, I am still united with you. Did you but cease to look on me with love, I should be unable to concern myself with these earthly matters And I would sink back into my very nothingness. O Lord, always assist me with your saving grace.

#### C.G.Van Crombrugghe



## 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."

<sup>o</sup> Msgr. William Van Crombrugghe, Founder

To our dear Friends and Benefactors,

May the blessings of Easter and spring be with you!

Truly the Easter message of *light, hope and New Life* could not be more welcomed during this unprecedented time of uncertainty and darkness due to the COVID-19 epidemic. Throughout the Scripture readings in this Easter season, we are reminded that God is constantly with us, no matter our situation: *"Do not fear for I am with you!"* (Is 41:10) *"Peace be with you!"* (Lk 24:36) *"Do not be afraid!"* (Mt 28:5) These phrases, while in stark contrast to what we are experiencing in the chaos, fear and insecurity of today's reality, provide us with comfort and courage, reminding and challenging us to renew our faith in God, to put our hope and trust in the promises of God.

Even though we, as faith communities, were not able to gather together to celebrate Easter, we are witnessing the message of Easter being lived each day by countless numbers of people, reaching out to those in need with all kinds of gestures and actions. We give thanks to God for the joy, courage and generosity of these *bearers of hope and New Life*!

You, our faithful friends and benefactors, have been *bearers of hope and New Life* for us throughout the years. We rejoice and give thanks for you, for your prayer, generosity and many acts of kindness which have supported us in so many ways. In this edition of *DMJ-link* we share with you reflections from some of our Sisters about how, through your graciousness, they have been enabled to live God's call.

During these strenuous times, let us continue to reflect together on the promises of Easter, that from suffering and death comes new life. Let us allow space for hope, trusting and believing that God's presence is truly among and within us. We pray most specially for you and your families, that you will know God's love, peace and care.

#### Sincerely, The Daughters of Mary and Joseph.



The new California Leadership Team: (left to right) Sisters Teresa Groth, Mary Walsh, Linda Peters, Linda Webb and Pascazia Kinkuhaire.



#### **70 YEARS AS A DMJ** Sister Mary Angela O'Connor

As I look back on my life for the last seventy years I recall: Entering in Castlecor novitiate in Ireland, it was difficult as my four companions were the first to enter and we had no idea of what was expected of us. In fact, when I was bored and lonely I ran down to the caretaker's home to play with his children. They kept me sane as I was very lonely.



When I left Castlecor for America there was no guarantee that I would ever see my family again. So, I told my mother (RIP) that I would see her in ten years. In fact, I saw her in eight years. We, the 1<sup>st</sup> five from the Irish Novitiate came to America by boat. It took us seven days to cross the ocean and six days to arrive in Los Angeles.

My first assignment was teaching 63 six year olds in first grade at St. Augustine School in Culver City. I was not yet trained as a teacher, but I managed to get all 63 of my students to read. In fact, I made sure that each of my students I taught were able to read when they left first grade. I taught and was principal at different times.

After my teaching career, my next biggest assignment was to go to Cherry Valley, a property of six houses with two bedrooms each which was donated to our community. There were a lot of tumble weeds on the property and I felt like a golfer as I started uprooting them. For many years we used the six houses plus the huge hall for the retreatants and other activities. Sr. Mary Philomena R.I.P and I were kept busy there. My work with the retreat centers did not end there. I was also assigned here at Mary and Joseph Retreat Center where I worked for some years until Marian came into existence. I started working with our retired sisters at Marian where I stayed and retired to be taken care of as I cared for those who were retired at the time!

At age eighteen, I told my friends that I was going to become a nun. Nobody believed me as I was a real "Tom Boy!" Some gave me a week in the convent while others gave me a day! 70 years later I am still a nun, thank God! My religious life had been up and down. I am so grateful to God for giving me my vocation!

Even though I am ninety-one years old, I feel God is calling me to do His will each day. I don't know what the road ahead will be like, but I know God will be there for me with His strength, courage, and enlightenment.

Dear Heavenly Father, I place all trust in you. Please look out for me so I'll be safe and happy with you in heaven one day. Amen

#### Sister Maria Sorahan—70 Years

When I came to St. Augustine Parish and School in 1981, I was looking forward to the challenge of teaching Second Grade. I had already been teaching in Morning Star School in San Francisco for 3 years and enjoyed the enthusiasm and work style of the students. I thought it should be the same here, but I discovered that the students here had a different approach to education. Their welcome and outlook surpassed anything I could have imagined. However, it was after I met with the parents that I really felt at home. We worked, shared and partnered together and I believe I learned more from them than they learned from me.

Looking back now, it was the cultural diversity at the parish that appealed to me. I saw it was one of our strengths and our greatest blessings. There was room and respect of traditions, values and customs of all people.

I came to St. Augustine before the computer age. I must admit I was threatened by the introduction of Writing to Read Lab into the curriculum. Technology was not one of my greatest strengths so much so that when Sister Sheila told me she was planning on getting a computer into each classroom, it was the final straw that broke the camel's back. I realized soon enough, I had to face the inevitable. So I put all my trust in prayer and took to heart to heart the advice of Mary Poppins: "In everything that must be done, there is an element of fun." Thanks to the parent volunteers at the time we were able to get running in the age of technology.

Fundraising was and always will be a challenge to keep up with but must be done to help with the increasing cost of education. We were lucky to have conscientious parents whose participation and leadership in the school and parish fundraising kept us moving forward.



It was at this time that I got tasked to handle the Bingo fundraiser. It became one of our greatest fundraisers in support of the school. Every Wednesday night during its run, I was escorted to the Convent flanked by two police officers. And I worked in the Bingo fundraiser until it was closed down for good 22 years later. Looking back I truly enjoyed handling the fundraising with all its challenges and setbacks. And it was also an added enjoyment meeting Sister Rose Waldron coming home from her ministry at the men's jail. That surely brightened up a long day.

#### One of the highlights:



During my time at the school, I worked in partnership with the parents to prepare their children for the Sacramental program. It was a profound opportunity to explore our own faith and journey together. We learned that we shared a common belief that our responsibilities and privileges are not to be taken lightly, and that the greatest gift we can give our students/children is to strengthen their faith and belief in God so that they can pass it on and share with others as they go through life. My experience at St. Augustine has been very positive. I can hardly believe the number of years that have passed since I came. I consider myself fortunate and blessed to have had the opportunity to be part of a community that continues the work started by my sisters who opened the school in 1926.



## Sr. Pascazia Kinkuhaire, DMJ 25 YEARS OF JOYFUL SERVICE AS A DAUGHTER OF MARY AND JOSEPH

My journey as a Daughter of Mary and Joseph began in Uganda-East Africa in 1991 when I entered as a postulant. I made my first commitment in March 1995, this year March 2020, I made it 25 years of committed service responding to the Founder's words; *"I have asked particularly for you that Jesus would send his Holy Spirit who enlightens, purifies, and sanctifies, that he would make of you instruments of mercy."* (DMJ Cons. # 7)

Of the 25 years, I have served in different countries: Uganda, Burundi, Ghana, Kenya and as a member of the Africa Province Leadership Team, I visited and shared in life the sisters in Cameroon, England, Belgium and Ireland attending meetings thereby being at the service of the Congregation and the whole Church.

As a response to our Founder's call; "Be there for the whole Church." (DMJ Const. #50) We are called to "a zeal for the apostolate, to an enthusiasm that does not weary but draws impetus from the love and mercy of God." (DMJ Const. #6) Here I am in California! It has been over 5 years since I arrived here in California. I must say that I have been around for many years; I first came to California in 2006 for fundraising, returned in 2008 and then 2011 for the same purpose. I guess those were years of come and see and the next time I came, I stayed! One wonders how God works. My call to religious life has been one full of challenges to learn and adapt; different countries, weather, food, language and personal challenges. Day by day, I grow in a faith that demands flexibility, availability and adaptability by being generous with the gifts that God gave me to put at the service of others and listening to the words of our Founder: "You are the instrument of the mercy of God, let no difficulty stand in the way of this ministry." I have come to understand that being open to the surprises of God is the game of responding to God's call.

Often times people ask me if I miss home! Over the years, I have come to understand and feel that home is where I am—where my heart is and surprisingly, home to me is where I am inserted for the good of God's people. I hear the words of our Founder; "Be there for the whole Church." I must say that God has blessed me with the gift of feeling at home wherever I am. With God's grace I bloom where I am planted. Thank you Lord!

God has also blessed me with living fully the charism of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, "Instruments of Mercy in God's Hand" as a secretary in an office, a teacher in a classroom, a farmer on the farm, a project coordinator, a formator for our newly entered candidates, a member of the Africa leadership team, a social worker in Africa and now with the formerly incarcerated in Downtown Los Angeles, a Board Member at Mary and Joseph Retreat Center, a member of the DMJ California leadership team and a spiritual director. I have always felt and continue to feel that I am supported by my DMJ sisters and by the wider community. Truly, God has and is continuing to use me as an instrument of mercy in his hand. Of this, I am very grateful and I say, Glory be to God.

May God bless all the Daughters of Mary and Joseph living and dead on whose shoulders I stand, and the people I have lived and worked with over the years.

May God bless all those reading this article of gratefulness to God. Please continue praying for me as I do the same.





Now that I am retired, I look back on my life and see it as a single journey taking me to places I would never have dreamed of - and I was always gifted with the graces and blessings and special people I needed.

On May 1, 1956, after my novitiate was completed, I left Brussels, and set out for California and stopping off in Ireland and New York on the way. Soon after my arrival, Sr. M. Chantal (aka Sr. Eileen Cotter) suggested that I major in Math. I was happy with the suggestion since it was my favorite subject. That opened the door to my teaching math at St. Bernard High School for 14 years. My claim to fame is that one of my students, Kevin Chilton, became an astronaut!

During the years that followed, I was introduced to the concept of a *pilgrimage*, not just seeing it as chance to travel, but as a possibility for inner transformation. In 1974 I went to ARC, a renewal program in Rome for sisters. I was delighted to find that it included pilgrimages to Assisi, Florence and the Holy Land.

While in Rome, a priest-instructor asked some of the participants why they came to the ARC program. They all shared lofty reasons for coming, except me. His response to my not knowing was, "I believe one day you will be called to be Provincial." Like Sarah in Genesis, I just laughed. Little did I know! A few years later, I began a six-year term as the Provincial in California.

I will forever be grateful for the support I received from my sisters during that time. I have fond memories of going to Africa and Brazil where our sisters were ministering. That was one of the perks I received! In addition, some years later, I retreated to a renewal center situated at the Mount of Beatitudes. I believe that my own renewal prepared me for my next assignment – serving four years as Executive Director of the Mary and Joseph Retreat Center.

Eventually, because of my earlier experience in Rome, I felt a call to work in a Parish. Among the parishes in which I served was one in the Diocese of Monterey. I stayed there for twenty grace-filled years! My ministry was in Adult Formation; it was rewarding to be with those who had a long deeper spiritual life. They were an inspiration to me. I am especially grateful for being part of the RCIA where people prepared to be baptized as Catholics. As I journeyed with them, I too was converted. They were so eager to become part of many of them serving in the ministry there.

During the years I was in Pacific Grove, I went on another pilgrimage, this time to Spain to journey on the Santiago de Compostela, also known as *The Camino*. It was something I had dreamed about doing after having seen a program about *The Camino*. We travelled its 500 miles on foot and by bus. That pilgrimage is one of the highlights of my life – walking through beautiful scenery, especially the Pyrenees, visiting churches on the way, admiring the other pilgrims who were walking the entire 500 miles. I am forever grateful for this opportunity.

In my retirement, I have had time to reflect on the past and do some reading. I also volunteer twice a week at the Presentation Center in South L.A. teaching English and Math. Our students hope to get their GEDs and are so eager to learn. I also maintain a connection with the Mary and Joseph Retreat Center as a member of the Board of Directors.

Finally, I am grateful for my life as a Daughter of Mary and Joseph. I hope and pray that I have been an instrument of mercy during these 63 years in the community. I thank you for being part of my journey.

Sr. Teresa McShane, DMJ

#### AKWAABA ......WELCOME....Sister Margaret Mary Haller!

On every door leading into the DMJ house, Mark's office, St Elizabeth's, Child Care and St. Clare's, I see a drawing welcoming me to the Padre Pio Rehabilitation Center and the lives of the wonderful people (young and old) who live and work at PPHC

I, Nana Margaret (Sister Margaret Mary, DMJ) would like to take you on a visit through the Center...introducing you to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph who live and care for the Center, the adults and children of St. Elizabeth's, the young students living at St. Joseph's, the administration Office and finally to St. Clare's the home for elderly leprosy sufferers.



Let us begin at the residence of the DMJs... The DMJ's have served the people of Ahotokurom (a place of serenity) since 1983 and today we are blessed to have 5 Sisters working at the Center: Sisters Pat (English), Monica (Irish), Gladys (Ugandan), Lydia(Ghanaian) and Juliette(Congolese). What a joy for me this past December to share with them their lives and work. Their home is open to all who come.... amazing the love and happiness they share with others. Before leaving the DMJs and continuing on our visit, I need to tell you of a very holy priest who shares his life and priestly work with the Sisters ....Father Philip Addo who last year celebrated 10 years of priesthood ....truly a miracle as Fr. Philip is a quadriplegic. As we leave the house, we will meet with Mark Mantey who is the Director of the Center. Under his direction, the Center has Solar Energy, Water Towers for collecting rain water, an irrigation project for the Farm and many other projects. Our Farm is completely organic and produces pineapples, corn, tomatoes, coconuts, cassava and other crops. We also raise chickens and goats plus hogs. The employees who work at the farm are local folks from surrounding villages.

As we leave the Office, we head for St. Elizabeth's Special Needs Day Care School. The children and young adults with various disabilities are picked up each morning in the school bus and brought to the school where a very highly motivated staff help to develop each child's potential and maintain a safe atmosphere for them. There are usually 45+ children using the facility where Sr. Juliette is the Director at St. Elizabeth's. Across the yard, we enter St. Joseph's which is occupied by 6 young students 4 quadruplets and 2 twins who attend St. Ann's Junior High School. They live at the Center because their families are too great a distance from Ahotokurom. During their Christmas break, they visit with their families.



Hopefully, you are not bored because now we are going to walk about a quarter of a mile to St. Clare's. There we will visit with some very wonderful men and women who are enjoying their later years. These men and women had contracted leprosy in their youth when a healing medication was not available and so they suffered the effects of the disease. They now live secure and comfortable at St. Clare's. Sr. Lydia is totally devoted to this mission. In helping Sister, there is a young man who recently graduated from college with a nursing degree. I call George God's gift to the Center because his caring for the people is a blessing. Well this is the end of our visit to PPRC I hope you know a bit more of the DMJ mission in Ghana.

Since 1989 when I spent 2 years in Ahotokurom with Sisters Pat and Monica, I have, through the generosity of friends, family, and my Community been blessed to spend at least a month (December) in Ghana at the Padre Pio Rehabilitation Center. Each time I speak about my visits, I realize how God has blessed me with this gift of sharing with my DMJ sisters. Over the years, I have learned much... Having little in worldly goods is not necessary for rejoicing in being alive to life. The children, in their innocence, helping me to understand that there is joy in adversity and that love and laughter go together, learning from the people we serve that "by the grace of God" all will be well. Every day matters and knowing this brings us closer together. Please God I will be able to visit again this year and share the joy of Christmas with the DMJ's, Mark and family, the children of St. Elizabeth's, the students of St. Joseph's and the wonderful men and women of St. Clare's. Hopefully, I will hear once more, **Akwaaba, Nana Margaret.** 



When you have acquired a taste for the dust, And the scent for our first rain, You're hooked for life on Africa, And you'll not be right again. Until you can watch the setting moon And hear jackals bark, And know they are around you Waiting in the dark.

> When you long to see the elephants Or hear the coucal's song, When the moonrise sets your blood on fire, Then you've been away too long. It is time to cut the traces loose, And let your heart go free, Beyond that far horizon Where your spirit yearns to be.

> > Africa is waiting—come! Since you have touched the open sky And learned to love the rustling grass And the wild fish eagle's cry. For the lion's rasping roar, To camp at last beneath the stars and be at Peace once more.



Author unknown

#### Sr. M. Enda Creegan

On a beautiful October morning in 1954, I saluted the Statue of Liberty, not from a Princess Cruise ship but from the top deck of *SS America*. Oh, yes, I was arriving in NY after a seven-day trip from Ireland and I was on my way to California, my first plane trip of 3,000 miles, to join other DMJ's teaching in Los Angeles. St. Sebastian's School was my first assignment and my sweet fourth graders were eagerly awaiting my arrival. At this time in Catholic schools, there was a DMJ in every class and at least 55 children in the seats; and also DMJ's wore a full habit regardless of heat/cold!



Our DMJ Sisters were transferred from one school to another on a regular basis.

And, so after three happy years in LA, I was assigned to teach fourth grade in Mill Valley. As I traveled north by car, I admired the scenery through my tears. But San Francisco won my heart, and I spent eight years there as a successful fourth grade teacher. Next I was assigned to St. Michael's School as principal, for a period of twelve years. During that time segregation and busing of San Francisco schools became an issue. At the time it was a painful experience.

Once more I found myself back in LA, having "left my heart in SF." Sr. Stella was awaiting my arrival to serve as coordinator for the newly established resource center at St. Paul the Apostle School. I adopted this project wholeheartedly.

As you know, in the early 60's we DMJ's opened a retreat center on Palos Verdes Hill...Mary and Joseph Retreat Center, affectionately known as MJRC. Of course, funding was a major issue. Sr. Mary Ignatius was assigned to spearhead this project. Since she herself did not drive, she needed a dependable driver on whom she could call as needed. You guessed it; I was the lucky one! We both made frequent trips to the bank and elsewhere. No need for GPS; Sr. Ignatius knew every street in the Westside.

Sr. Ignatius was very resourceful in getting people to help her. And in this project she was blessed; she welcomed a group of dedicated and knowledgeable ladies from the Westside. They became the Mary and Joseph League and they and Sr. Ignatius worked many miracles. I joined them as an assistant, learning many new things.

The Mardi Gras Ball was the first fundraising event. Very soon a King and a Queen, and Princesses made their appearance and a suitable location materialized. A miracle: the majestic Hilton Hotel was available at no cost. Sr. M. Ignatius knew the Hilton families had attended SPA School; that was a link. Among the notables of the Royal Court were Baron Hilton, Patrick Frawley, and Edwin Shipstead. June Haver McMurray and the famous designer, Jean Louis, were also supportive. A very strong relationship developed between these benefactors and Sr. Ignatius; they appreciated her for her kindness, her graciousness, and her deep prayerful spirit.

Over time MJRC developed a new system for financial support, but we will never forget those early days. We hold in our hearts and prayers our dedicated workers as well as the generous benefactors of our various DMJ schools.

I was assigned by our DMJ Leadership to replace Sr. Ignatius as League Coordinator. As a member of the MJRC Board I continue the work of Sr. Ignatius and I collaborate with the dedicated and committed administration and lay staff to live the DMJ charism, of "being there for the whole Church."

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To request enrollment forms please contact:

Sr. Linda Webb (310) 377-9968

Requests may also be made in writing to:

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# In Memory of...

#### (those remembered are in BOLD)

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# In Memory of... (continued)

#### (those remembered are in **BOLD**)

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You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. what you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.

-Jane Goodall

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