



DMJlink

Daughters of Mary and Joseph ▪ California Region ▪ Spring/Summer 2022



*The eyes of the future are looking back at us
And they are praying for us to see beyond our own time...
That we might leave room for the life that is destined to come.*

Terry Tempest Williams

Spring/Summer 2022

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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.

Our Founder experienced God as all-merciful, all-compassionate, and he calls us to reflect in our lives the merciful love of God, centered on the heart of Christ. We return love for Love, allowing God to use us as instruments of mercy in his hand.

By drawing close to Christ, gentle and humble of heart, growing in his attitudes of tenderness, humility and patience, we become flexible instruments of the mercy of God.



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

*“Behold! I am doing a new thing,
Now it springs forth,
Do you not perceive it?”
(Isaiah 43:19)*

Dear Friends,

During this time of the year when we are well into enjoying the brilliant colors of Spring and living in the hope and promise of New Life that we celebrate during this Easter season, the quotation above from Isaiah is certainly appropriate and right on!!

Sometimes it is easier to perceive this “new thing” in the flowers and trees that seem to be springing back to life after the cold and barrenness of winter. The multitude of colors splashed along our paths seems to bring freshness, vigor and newness to our lives!

Other times, seeing the “new thing” that is springing forth is a little more difficult. Certainly these past two years, during the dark and uncharted experience of COVID, many of the familiar things, which have made up the “normal” of our life-styles, have changed. We have been challenged to find new and innovative ways to express what is so meaningful to us—our faith, our relationships with family and friends, our ability to lead productive lives. We are also beginning to notice the emergence of new life, new energy, around us. Many people, both locally and globally, are working in small and great ways, “doing a new thing” by their acts of kindness, peace, love, courage, concern and generosity.

In this edition of “DMJ Link” we remember in gratitude the new life which has sprung forth over the years in the lives of our Sisters, Mary Rose Creegan (RIP), who is now experiencing the fullness of life, and in our three Jubilarians, Clare Miriam Briody, Ellen Mary Conefrey, and Catherine McShane, who are each celebrating 70 years of Religious Profession! We look at the present and towards the future as we share with you the life-giving visit of two members of our Congregational Leadership Team, Sisters Helen Lane and Paula Spark.

We also recognize and give thanks for all the ways you, our friends, are witnessing and participating in making newness spring forth each day. Through your many gestures of kindness, love, generosity, and concern, our faith and hope in God’s promise of New Life is made visible. We are most grateful for the gift of your friendship and support. We continue to remember all of you in our daily prayer that you, too, may continue to perceive and experience this newness of life each day.

With peace and gratitude,
Your Sisters,

The Daughters of Mary and Joseph



Sr. Clare Miriam Briody

Some 89 years ago, I was born in Dublin and was raised there with two brothers and two sisters. We were a family of good, hard-working Irish-Catholic stock. All of us were avid readers, loved singing together, and were fun-loving in the midst of everyday life. I loved learning, and that made it easy for me to excel in the many facets of school life. Those gifts in childhood, probably taken for granted when I was a youngster, prepared me well for my life's hopes and ambitions.



The prospects of entering a convent and becoming a nun were always present in my mind and heart as far back as I can remember. The Sisters of Mercy who taught me in school had a profound influence on the future I would pursue. At the same time, making that dream a reality seemed all but impossible. You see, my family was a regular, middle class one with few financial assets. Furthering my education past secondary school didn't appear to be a realistic goal.

When I was fourteen years old, my school principal introduced me to two Sisters whose ministry was vocation promotion. Blessings began to unfold in unexpected ways. The name of their religious community was Daughters of Mary and Joseph. These Sisters had been missioned to open a Juniorate and Novitiate in Ireland preparing women for the education of youth, their Order's main ministry. Those two Sisters, Mother Mary Frances and Mother Mary Kevin, left an indelible mark on my heart; I knew I did not need to search any further. That was where I wanted to be in following Christ as a teacher. I could see they really loved their Order. They had a motto from their Founder that really impressed me: "In the practice of cheerfulness, meekness, and politeness, show that you are happy to belong to Jesus Christ." It seemed to me these two Sisters were truly humble, kind, gentle, prayerful, and deeply devoted to daily Mass and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament -- all of which was coupled with a devotion to our Blessed Mother.

At the tender age of 14, after serious talks with these Sisters and with my parents, I entered the Juniorate program, living in a convent deep in the heart of Co. Longford called "Castlecor". I recall those two and a half years as times of much laughter and fun in the company of other young women who shared the dream of being a religious Sister. To my delight, my sister Nuala, at age 16, also joined the community. Four years later Nuala was assigned to a teaching position in Mill Valley.

In 1950, I received the habit and became a novice. The second year of my Novitiate, otherwise known as "the spiritual year," was spent in the Motherhouse in Belgium. Profession of my first vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience took place in July of 1952.

The adventure of grace in which I was engaged was only just beginning. I was missioned to the DMJ community at St. Paul the Apostle in Westwood, CA and would teach Grades 4 and 5 in an American school! Our Founder, Constant William van Crombrugghe, a priest-educator, had emphasized that we take a loving and gentle stance toward our students. It was my time to follow his counsel and make these school years a joy for the children.

As the decades wore on, I also taught at St. Sebastian's (W. Los Angeles), Precious Blood (downtown L.A.), St. Bernard High School (Playa del Rey) and Holy Redeemer (Montrose). I loved those years of teaching. Many of my former students still keep in touch with me.

Having received a Masters in School Administration, I was able to serve as principal at some of the elementary schools listed above. I developed a deep respect and love for the children and their parents alike.

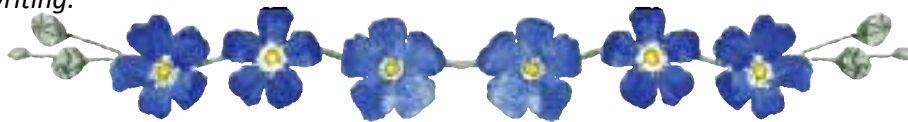
The crowning ministry assignment came toward the end of my active years in ministry. I oversaw the enrichment courses of the teachers and principals in the Diocese of Orange and was responsible for the upkeep of their records. My position was designed to assist the teachers and principals stay up to date in the field of education. All my earlier "school" experiences became a foundation upon which I could draw while in that position. I was in ministry heaven!

Around 2005, I experienced some medical issues and was advised to step back from the demands of active ministry. I did not look forward to leaving the "halcyon" days of an active life of service in the field of education. I cherish the memories woven from the various ministries of my past and all the wonderful people who blessed my life with their presence. Every day, I thank God for His fidelity to me throughout my life and for the joy of 70 plus years of being there for others.

Now in my formal retirement years, I am a resident at Nazareth House in Cheviot Hills. I am at peace here at Nazareth and have noticed that God offers me little opportunities for ministry every day. I feel deeply indebted to all my DMJ Sisters who have supported me in a happy community life so that I would have the energy and motivation needed for mission and, of course, to all of you who have contributed to the support of the many retired Sisters among us.

- Clare Miriam Briody, DMJ

**Special thanks to Karen Marie, DMJ for her editorial assistance and her questions that got me remembering and writing.*



Sr. Catherine McShane



Some time ago an interested observer casually asked Sr. Catherine McShane, "So, what are you doing now?" And a friend of Catherine's replied, "Come and I'll show you!" And there in all its glory was a beautifully crocheted masterpiece, the fruit of many hours of dedicated work - a piece of lasting beauty. And the artist is Sr. Catherine McShane.

Where did Catherine get this knowledge and skill? The answer goes back to her youth in Co. Longford, Ireland. On the long winter nights around a turf fire Catherine and her sisters plied their knitting needles. Their resourceful mother had secured a spinning wheel, where she spun local sheep's wool into yarn. Many beautiful sweaters and sturdy socks were produced. An added benefit was crochet. This "thread" runs through Catherine's life as she thrills her friends with knitted and crocheted gifts.

Catherine's vocation to religious life came through the call of two Ladies of Mary (DMJ's) inviting interested girls to join them for ministry in California. Catherine answered the call and after a Novitiate in Ireland and Belgium, she was on her way to Los Angeles in 1952.

At this time in the U.S., Catholic education was a high priority, with schools being built and filled with eager children. Our Daughters of Mary and Joseph had recently opened Our Lady of Peace Grammar School in Sepulveda. Sr. Catherine joined the five other DMJ's as a first grade teacher. She remembers well the 55 students in the class, and the "blazing" heat. In those days the Sisters were in full habit, and being always resourceful, these Sisters found a respite from the heat. The other DMJs considered them avant garde when it was rumored that they were learning to swim, and in the luxury of a friend's pool! Very soon these other DMJs followed suit. Catherine continued her ministry of teaching and administration in Diocesan grammar schools until 1977.

The Founder of our DMJ Community reminded the Sisters that they should be at the service of the whole Church. With that call in mind, Sr. Catherine joined a number of DMJ's to minister in New Mexico in 1978. This included work with native Americans, parish work, and teaching. Catherine was touched by the strong faith of the families, their simple living conditions, and particularly their hospitality. This reminded her of the hospitality of the families in her home town. One particular remembrance she has is of the young man, a Dodger fan. She gifted him with a plane trip to a Dodger game in L.A. - this being a memorable occasion for both.



In 1985 Catherine was once more back in L.A., an 8th grade teacher in St. Jerome School. This was the beginning of the Computer Age in schools. Anthony Garcias, an 8th grade student, was her computer assistant. He is now a priest in a Los Angeles parish. They both treasure their long friendship.

In the ensuing years Catherine was able to relax in New Mexico for a year's sabbatical. But she was also called to serve in Provincial administration, a demanding ministry, but she fulfilled it well.

Now, a time for a rest in 2001? No, from 2001-2014 she ministered in a Home for retired priests and Sisters in Los Angeles. In her earlier ministry she had taken care of her aged mother and her sick brother as they prepared for death. Now she brought the same gifts of caring and compassion to the new ministry. She was always on hand to attend to the needs of residents and families. She visited the residents in their rooms, moved among them in the dining room and talked to them. She was constantly looking for ways that would upgrade and improve conditions. She was known and loved for her kindness and compassion toward all.

Interwoven through Catherine's life of ministry has been her commitment to daily prayer. She refers to her early life, remembering that God was always at the center of the family life, and that her image of God has remained constant.

To conclude with a quote from Catherine: "As I sit here in Marian Residence recalling past memories, I feel very privileged to be part of a community where I can relax and think back over my good life of 91 years."



A cool day at the beach!



Sister Ellen Mary Conefrey

Sister Ellen Mary Conefrey was born on October 3, 1927. She comes from a family of seven: three girls and four boys. She is the fifth in the family. Her family comes from Corrglass, Moyne, Co. Longford. She received her early education at the local national school and her secondary education at Ballinamuck Technical School. After finishing school, Sister Ellen joined her aunt in her hardware and grocery business. Here, her sense of responsibility and devotion to duty were a wonderful asset. She also enjoyed her social life with many friends.

Sister Ellen always had a deep spiritual life and wanted to get even closer to God. Her cousin Anna Mary introduced her to a religious community who had just come to Longford from California to recruit local girls to join their order. Thus, in 1950, the Marian Year, her dream became a reality. She entered the novitiate of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, then called The Ladies of Mary, at Rosary Convent, Ballymahon, Co. Longford. She continued her formation in Brussels, Belgium, where she absorbed the Spirit of the Congregation.

In April 1952, Sister Ellen made her first vows and received her first mission assignment, which was to Morning Star School, San Francisco. She was blessed with an adaptable and willing disposition. The next 60 years saw her missioned to St. Augustine, Culver City; St. Anthony, El Segundo and St. Louis de Montfort, Santa Maria; where she was both teacher and principal. Her final assignment as a teacher was to Our Lady of the Rosary, Paramount, where she spent many fruitful years of ministry.

Throughout her life, Sister Ellen has been a power house of prayer. She has always had a keen ability to perform tasks with exactness and perfection; no half measures for her. She has endeared herself to both old and young and has always been a wonderful support to her companion religious Sisters and fellow teachers. Her sense of humor has made it a joy to share the daily ups and downs with her.



Sister Ellen has very strong family ties and has never missed an opportunity to demonstrate this to all concerned. She has received her family's gratitude and love in return. "Auntie" has always had a treasured spot in their hearts. Sister Ellen is a wonderful walker and liked to visit her sisters' homes daily over hilly and rough terrain. For her it was a just a delightful walk!!

Sister Ellen has been a treasure and blessing for our Community. We thank God for gifting us with this grace over her 70 years as a Daughter of Mary and Joseph!



The Congregational Leadership Team Visit

Congregational Leadership Team (CLT) is a new term for what we used to call our General Team. These are the Sisters who were elected in 2019 at a General Chapter (Assembly) to lead our congregation for the next five years. Our last visit from a CLT member was early 2018. So it was with great delight that we welcomed Sr. Helen Lane, our Congregational Leader and Sister Paula Spark a member of the CLT to our California Region on March 22, 2022. Sister Helen has a background in education both in Ireland and Uganda. Sister Paula has worked as a nurse in England including with homeless people in London.

Our Sisters look forward to visits from the CLT in a big way. They bring us news of our Sisters throughout the Congregation, in Ireland, England, Belgium and Africa. They visit our communities and those Sisters living alone, take part in Mass, prayer, meals, and set time aside for a private meeting with each Sister. In this way they get to see our day-by-day life.

During the course of their stay they joined the MJRC Board for their monthly meeting and became more familiar with the wonderful work being done by our retreat center despite challenging pandemic circumstances. They visited the Presentation Learning Center in South Los Angeles, where three of our Sisters, Linda Webb, Teresa Mc Shane and Helen Vigil, volunteer in teaching adults. They also visited Francisco Homes, which is run by Sister Teresa Groth. These homes help men transition from life in prison to life back in society.

On March 25 and 26 the whole region came together for March Days, which is one of two special weekends of meetings each year. That was a particularly joyful occasion for all of us, including our special visitors. Sister Helen and Sister Paula addressed how we were living out the theme of our past General Chapter "Letting Go to Let Come-- Co-Creating our Future with God". This included both a sobering and faith-filled look into the future.

On the Saturday night of March Days, after a beautiful Mass celebrated by Father Will Connor, we all came together for dinner. Sister Helen will be celebrating her Golden Jubilee (50 years) as a DMJ in August, so there was a special cake to anticipate that occasion. Special congratulations were given to Sister Helen and of course to Sister Julia Costello, her former Novice Mistress!

Although Sisters Helen and Paula were with us for only 3 weeks, their presence among us was enriching, affirming and most enjoyable. We were sorry to see them leave!! We thank God for the gift of our Congregational Leadership Team!



Sisters Mary Walsh, Paula Spark and Nuala Briody.



Sisters Helen Lane, Linda Webb, Mary Walsh and Julia Costello

Sister Mary Rose Oregan, - rest in peace. (1931-2021)



Count yourself fortunate if you met Mary Rose. She not only shook your hand, but she would take both your hands in hers and look at you with delight. You felt special. Even a casual encounter with her made you feel good about yourself and about life.

Mary Rose was born in Crott, Moyne, Co. Longford, Ireland on August 16, 1931. She was the fourth child in a family of seventeen children and grew up on a farm in the heart of Ireland. Her wise parents had a special gift of imparting to their children the importance of watching out for each other, helping each other and praying the Rosary together every day as a family. Such a foundation nurtured Mary Rose's deep faith in God and gave us the privilege of knowing her. A former student, Tad, in Uganda commented: "I will forever remember Sr. Mary Rose as loving, kind and sincere. Her general belief that everyone is good and means well will forever be with me."

Her skill in teaching First Graders and understanding their world is legendary. The Belgian priest who founded our Congregation was a born educator. Among his writings are a set of maxims for Teachers. They never lose their relevance because they highlight the teacher's relationship with the students. She came to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph with special gifts that were fully aligned with those maxims, one of which reads: "Once a teacher is known to the students as being a person who loves them and wishes for nothing more than their happiness in everything, then the teacher has gained the chief thing in education, possessing the key to their hearts."

Mary Rose's career was not always with 1st graders. After 30 years of teaching in CA and New Mexico, Mary Rose responded to her deep desire to go to our Missions in Africa. She went to Uganda where she was missioned to a Teacher Training College. Now her gift as a teacher was bearing new fruit, preparing others to teach. Later when the Training College became a seminary, Mary Rose was assigned to teach in an Elementary School in Kabale Diocese. Many times she told us heartwarming stories of the children. She loved them and marveled at their love for learning to the point of their wanting to give up recess and stay in class!

In her retirement years at Marian, Mary Rose continued teaching. She volunteered at a neighboring school as a remedial reading tutor. In her free time one would always find her walking the grounds at the Retreat Center praying her Rosary. She wrote, "In conclusion, I have to admit that I do realize that our God is never far from any one of us – all we have to do is TRUST the plans He has for each of us and try to be really OPEN."

As we bid farewell to Mary Rose, let us keep in mind her special belief that all people are good and mean well. May we carry that belief and her spirit in our hearts always. Mary Rose, remember us all from your place in Heaven.



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

Sr. Theresa Berry

Irene Kim

Sr. Sheila Collins

Mr. & Mrs. David Foley

Mary Cronin Courtney

Mr. & Mrs. Barry Blodgett

Sr. Enda Creegan

Ms. Julie Lynn Barker

Irene Kim

Jill & George Plumb

Mel Dangcil

Daughters of Mary and Joseph

Gerald Duddy (95th Birthday)

Sr. Louis Marie Hanrahan

Sr. Sheila Lynch

Sr. Catherine McShane

Sr. Frances Fisher

Mrs. Pat De Cristofaro

Mr. Patrick Johnston

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Sr. Margaret Haller

Peter Rice & Megan Haller

Sr. Louis Marie Hanrahan

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Fr. Charles Hofschulte

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Jan Nowinski

Sr. Sheila Lynch

Mr. Stephen Watson

Sr. Brigid Mary McGuire

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Walter Michalak, Jr. (80th B'day)

Nowinski Family

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Mr. & Mrs. Barry Blodgett

Mrs. Pat De Cristofaro

Sr. Teresa Groth

Mr. & Mrs. James A Hughes

Sheila Zacha

Sr. Catherine Sullivan

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Sr. Helen Vigil

Sr. Mary Carmel Walsh

Mr. & Mrs. James Bissin

Mr. Stephen Watson

Julie Walters

Mrs. Ann Walters

Don Wynne (80th Birthday)

Karis Say-Cavecche

In Memory of...

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Mr. & Mrs. Barry Blodgett

Mr. Mel Dangcil

Marie Alessandra

Ms. Mary Alessandra-Cook

Pam Alexander

Mr. & Mrs. John Massey

Irene & John Alling

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Michael Balderas

Mary & Joseph Retreat Ctr.

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Mr. Mark Jon Bluth

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Mr. Kevin Boethling

Anne Bowman

Mrs. Anne Buist

Sr. Mary Brendan

Ms. Marcia Eyherabide

Eufracio Brito

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Dan Buist Jr.

Mrs. Anne Buist

Emelda & Dan Buist Sr.

Mrs. Anne Buist

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Maureen Burbach

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Consuelo Cardenas

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Margaret & Joseph Doyle

Joan Doyle

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Sr. Stella Enright

Ms. Julie Lynn Barker

Mr. Thomas Brennan

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

Sr. Stella Enright

Mrs. Susan Welker Costamagna
Ms. Joyce Keeler
Irene Kim

Fern Ezzi

Mary & Joseph Retreat Ctr.

Sr. Catherine Marie Flynn

Mrs. Jaimie Korody

My Husband & Son

Mrs. Irene Foate

Dennis Franks

Mr. James McDermott &
Mrs. Cynthia Kurtz
Mr. & Mrs. Jim Hommes
Ms. Mary McDermott

Billie Jean Fults

Mary & Joseph Retreat Ctr.

Al Fumia

Sr. Helen Vigil

Paul Garcia

Mary & Joseph Retreat Ctr.

Monsignor Eugene Gilb

Mr. & Mrs. C.J. Ruona

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Mr. John A. Gonden
Michele (Gonden) Mackenzie

Greg Goodyear

Mr. John Becker

John Gordon

Mr. John A. Becker

Charles Griswald

Mrs. Jane Visser

Cecelia & Bernard Gunion

Ms. Mollie Gunion Couturier

Tony Haller

Mrs. Jean Haller

Jake & Rosemary Harper

Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Schulz

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Sr. Helen Vigil

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Jerry Jacobs

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Sr. Mary Jensch

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Sr. Brigid Johnston

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Ms. Helen Kawaguchi

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Ms. Vickie Keasler

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Mrs. Mary Starr Kelly

Phillip Kelly

Jan Kelly

Sr. Jean King

Mrs. Anne Behm

Rev. Thomas F. King

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Mr. Patrick Kinney

Sr. Pauline Knapp

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Rev. Robert Koemer, OMI

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Marten Kolster

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Nancy A. Ono

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Sr. Margaret O'Rourke

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Geri Overzyl-Baker

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Sandra Nutile

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Theresa Heinz

Paul Reilly

Ms. Theresa Reilly

Anna and Joseph Remsik

Ms. Annette Ranftl McGuire

Ingrid M. Roberts

Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Roberts

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

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Elizabeth Robinson

Mrs. Mary Barre Van Buren

Monica Robinson

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Maureen Roche

Mr. Terence Roche

Michael Ann Rockenstein

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Jacqueline Bradley

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Mary Ann Smetzer

Mr. & Mrs. Jim Hommes

George Socquet

Mrs. Jeanne Socquet

Robert Solorio

Mr. & Mrs. John Solorio

Deceased members of

St. Augustine 1953 & 1955

Mr. & Mrs. David F. Costley

Keith Stanisiewski

Ms. Darlene Graham

Patrick Shawn Sullivan

Mr. & Mrs. Patrick P. Sullivan

Jason Thirsk

Ms. Marydee Falque

Jean Thomas

Anglesey Thomas

Al Torres, Sr.

Mr. & Mrs. Al & Sylvia Torres

Robert & Marina Uy

Mr. & Mrs. David Uy

Marie L. Valdez

Mr. & Mrs. Patrick P. Sullivan

Stan Van Der Wegen

Mr. & Mrs. Michael Yerke

Dorothy L. Van Nice

Mr. Robert L. Van Nice, Jr.

Gene Vigil

Sr. Helen Vigil

Loretta Vincent

Ms. Marydee Falque

John Visser

Mrs. Jane Visser

Sr. Rose Waldron

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*Gratitude bestows reverence,
allowing us to encounter
everyday epiphanies,
those transcendent moments of awe
that change forever
how we experience life...
and the world.*

SARAH BAN BREATHNACH

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