

LADIES OF CHARITY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
S E R V I C E T T E

"To serve rather than to be served"



AIC USA®
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The *SERVICETTE* is a publication of the Association of the Ladies of Charity as a record of their activities in the USA

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MISSION STATEMENT

To provide Vincentian leadership to women acting together against all forms of poverty.

VISION STATEMENT

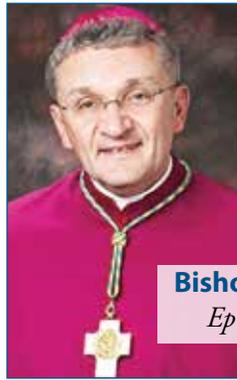
LCUSA-AIC provides Vincentian leadership of transformation assisting persons who are vulnerable to move from marginalization and despair to participation and hope.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

Individual members are supportive of the mission and purpose of LCUSA and participate in the ministry of the Ladies of Charity by prayer and/or service and pay dues prescribed by the board of directors.



400 Years of "Us"



Bishop David A. Zubik
Episcopal Chairman

A new television series has gathered a lot of attention this year. Called "This is Us," the drama tells the story of a family, but in a different way. It's an extended story of "triplets"— a twin white girl and white boy, then a black baby abandoned at the hospital on the day of their birth and taken in by the new family.

The whole context of the show is family- how we grow together, live together, love together and support together. "This is Us" is told through a living past, into our present, looking forward to the future.

I thought of "This is Us" as we celebrate the 400th anniversary of the beginnings of the Ladies of Charity. We grow together. We love each other. We show this love in service. We know our story. The Ladies of Charity was founded in 17th century France by the patron saint of all charity, St. Vincent de Paul. The Ladies of Charity went about their service with humility, searching out the face of Christ in the poor, while the poor saw Christ in them.

Daily prayer. Personal service. It has been that way for 400 years. It is that way today. In the United States, the first association was founded in 1857 in St. Louis. Today, nearly 6,000 women serve in 200 communities in 22 states. It is the gift of self. It is the gift of time. It is the gift of devotion. It is the gift of sacrifices. It is the gift of perseverance. This is us.

Back in my high school teaching days, I tried to help my students see the role our hearts and our feelings play in our journey in life. Building on the Greek word for feeling, pathos, I wanted my students to come to an understanding of the difference among three significant types of feelings: apathy, sympathy and empathy. Apathy is the opposite of love, having no feelings for anything or anyone at all. Sympathy is the experience of having feelings for someone. Empathy is the experience of having feelings with someone, to be able to identify with, to experience in a deep and heartfelt way what another person is going through.

Women of empathy, committed to service. Committed to those in need. As St. Louise de Marillac, your co-founder with St. Vincent de Paul said, "Be diligent in serving the poor. Love the poor, honor them...as you would honor Christ Himself." This is God's call in your life, his grace-filled invitation to your pilgrimage to heaven. This is you. This is us.

Enjoy, celebrate and serve in this 400th anniversary of the Ladies of Charity. God bless you!

SERVICETTE NEWS DEADLINE

The deadline to submit articles and photos for the next issue of the *SERVICETTE*:

Monday, July 31, 2017

Articles and photos can be sent by e-mail to: isiedlarczyk@stny.rr.com
 Articles and photos should be sent separately and not within the text document.

Please contact us for info.





Suzanne Johnson

LCUSA President

“And now,” cried Max, “let the wild Arumpus start.” (Maurice Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are*) Surely 400 years of existence is worth a wild rumpus, and many of our associations have chosen to mark this occasion with celebrations. Some associations chose to take the opportunity to use the 400th as a time to rededicate themselves at a special Mass on December 8th. How will your association mark this auspicious event? It’s not too late to start planning, as the official 400th year does not end until December 10, 2017. For more information on the 400th celebration, check out the website: aic.ladiesofcharity.us.

Celebrations aside, any kind of a milestone year (and surely 400 years is a milestone!) is a time to reflect on the past, take stock of the present, and plan for the future. What is our past? In 1617, women responded to St. Vincent de Paul’s homily by taking food to a family that was in poverty and suffering from illness. St. Vincent, recognizing

the need for organization, formed the first Confraternities, which were approved canonically on December 8, 1617. This group of women rapidly grew from a small group in Chatillon, France, expanding into Paris and then into Italy and Poland. Under the leadership of St. Vincent and then St. Louise de Marillac, the women were involved in caring for the sick, the poor and the orphaned. In the United States (1857), Catherine Harkins had dreams of St. Vincent de Paul gathering poor, neglected children from the streets. Catherine’s confessor advised her these were not dreams, but visions, and she should do the same as Vincent. Thus began the first Ladies of Charity in the United States.

Presently, there are almost 6,000 Ladies of Charity in the United States, in 57 Associations. We are involved in a multitude of works serving the poor — from food pantries and thrift shops to “Getting Ahead” and tutoring young children. Our efforts in the fight against poverty also include advocating for the disenfranchised, especially those women and children caught up in trafficking. Across the globe, there are over 200,000 women in 52 countries participating in AIC (as Ladies of Charity are known internationally). Their works are similar in form to our works here in the U.S. Additionally, we collaborate with other members of the Vincentian Family. This year we are

celebrating the 400th anniversary of the charism of St. Vincent de Paul — the moment he had his “aha” moment and knew God was directing him to work in service to the poor, as well as the 400 years the Ladies of Charity have been saying “Yes” to the call of St. Vincent de Paul.

Though we have made it to 400 years, it is not time to rest on our laurels! We need to think (and act) about how we are going to continue God’s work as Vincentians serving those in poverty. Though St. Vincent de Paul said, “The work of Our Lord is dependent less upon many workers, than upon the fidelity of the few He calls,” I am nonetheless disheartened when I say that not so long ago, there were over 30,000 Ladies of Charity in the United States working in 25 states in 230 associations. We are down to less than twenty percent! If being a Lady of Charity is meaningful to you, and the work we do is important to you, then each one of us should be compelled to reach out and invite others to join us. Especially invite those younger to join us. This may take some initiative on our parts to determine how to meet and work with those who are younger, and how to incorporate their “new ideas” into our ways of serving. I believe, with the grace of God, we can do it.

I am praying that we all experience God’s love in new ways as we journey into the next 400 years.

“To everything there is a season.”

My season as editor of the *Servicette* is ending with this issue. It has been a challenging and rewarding six years. I owe special thanks to my three editors-in-chief, Lucy Ann Saunders, Gayle Johnson and Mary Ann Dantuono for their guidance and support, as well as to Kathy Kavanaugh, Chair of the LCUSA Communications Committee, for her boundless enthusiasm and creativity. Suzanne Johnson has found the path to the future. Thanks also for critically-needed technical advice from Elena Miranda, Monica Watson and



Warren Lowe. Elena also led me to the *Associated Press Style Essentials*, a wonderful resource for any writer or editor. Any errors in style, abbreviation or punctuation have been my own. Special

thanks also to Bishop David Zubik and Sr. Carol Schumer, DC, who met every deadline. I could always rely on their contributions.

It has been a true pleasure to interact with so many Ladies of Charity and to learn about your activities. Every contact has been inspiring.

I know you will extend the same cooperation to our new editor, Irene Siedlarczyk. The *Servicette* will benefit from her new point of view as well as her professional skills, as LCUSA continues to move forward in every way.

Thank you.

Kathleen Sieracki



400th Anniversary Celebration & General Assembly

Mary Beth O'Brien

For a few unforgettable days in March, in celebration of the 400th anniversary of the founding of Ladies of Charity/AIC, nearly 400 members from 53 national associations in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe and North America participated in lectures, reflections, daily Mass and a tour of St. Vincent de Paul's heritage sites. Daughters of Charity and Vincentian priests from around the world provided spiritual reflections pertaining to the history and charism of Sts. Vincent and Louise de Marillac.



Delegates were invited to venerate the reliquary containing the heart of St. Vincent de Paul.

Fr. Tomas Mavric, CM, the 25th superior general of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity was the celebrant at the opening Mass on March 12. Msgr. Giampietro Dal Toso, Secretary of Cor Unum, delivered a letter from Pope Francis, in which the Holy Father noted that the true promotion of human dignity cannot take place



LCUSA President Suzanne Johnson receiving the new AIC Charter.

without the proclamation of the Gospel. He went on to say, "It is with joy that I am spiritually united to you to celebrate this anniversary and I hope that your beautiful work continues its mission of bringing an authentic testimony of God's mercy to the poorest."

One meeting was held at the parish of St. Andre in Chatillon, a place of very special significance, where St. Vincent was inspired by the Holy Spirit and he knew that his mission from that point would be to serve Jesus Christ through care of our brothers and sisters who live in a situation of poverty. After his homily on Aug. 20, 1617, Vincent also realized that "the poor suffer less from a lack of generosity than from a lack of organization." After working for a few months with the first AIC group which at the time was called the Confraternity of Charity, St. Vincent decided to write our First Rule as a guide to the work of these early volunteers. He produced it on Dec. 8, 1617.

Since then we have been following his example, updating the rule, and realizing "this document is a never-ending process." AIC decided to take the opportunity of the 400th anniversary to continue the process of updating the document and today the rule is called the AIC Charter, which was handed individually to all the national presidents as they were called. At the closing of the international assembly, each delegate received a copy.

It must be remembered that one man, just one man, cannot change the world, but can considerably change things and improve the lot of hundreds of thousands of individuals in

a specific way if we add up the centuries of Vincent's posterity. The lasting and always generous fruitfulness of Vincent's works has a rare global destiny and this fruit remains, from humans to structures, from institutions to practices, from history to sociology. As AIC volunteers we have had the privilege of being invited by God to continue this beautiful mission to "Serve Jesus Christ in the person of the powerless, following the example of St. Vincent de Paul.

How blessed and fortunate we are to have had the Vincentian experience, recognizing God as the giver of all gifts, receiving those gifts with gratitude and sharing them generously with others. "All I know of tomorrow is that 'Providence will rise before the sun.'"

Mary Nell Williams was also one of the LCUSA delegates and she found the opportunity to see, be with and touch the reliquary of St. Vincent's heart to be an unexpected surprise



Delegates from around the world gathered in France. Some LCUSA members are in the upper left section.

and particularly special.

Mary Ann Dantuono added, "What could be better than celebrating the 400th anniversary of an organization you love? Celebrating with nearly 400 women from 50 different countries and the people of a small village in southeast France where it all started! It is a privilege to be a Lady of Charity at this moment in history."

A Special Celebration in the Nation's Preeminent Marian Shrine

Lucy Ann Saunders and Toni Gaines

The Ladies of Charity Archdiocese of Washington, 175 strong in numbers representing all members of the archdiocesan ladies, gathered for the noon Mass at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception on December 8. The Ladies and LCUSA President Mary Ann Dantuono were recognized by Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, for their 400th Anniversary. December 8 is very important to the Ladies of Charity as the first association of the Ladies was canonically recognized by Rome on that date in 1617. Being present in the national basilica dedicated to Mary the patroness of the United States under her title of Immaculate Conception enriched this celebration beyond words. Members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society as well as Daughters and Sisters of Charity joined the celebration.

The Mass was televised on EWTN, and after viewing it, Lady of Charity Theresa Ward of San Francisco reflected, "Truly, following the Mass I found it quite challenging to find the words to express the depth of all of the Ladies' work as it relates to us as individuals, associations and as servants reflecting on 400 years of history."

After Mass, the Ladies gathered in the Miraculous Medal Chapel dedicated to St. Catherine LaBoure, St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, where they recommitted



From left, Sr. Claire Debes, DC; Rita Robinson; Mary Ann Dantuono; David Barringer of the St. Vincent de Paul Society; Viola Johnson-Robinson; and Lucy Ann Saunders, following the anniversary ceremonies.

themselves to the service of those less fortunate by saying, "In the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, we desire to be reflection of your loving compassion and of your tender mercy. Mindful of those who suffer many injustices, we will reach out to them in loving service."

Once the words of consecration were ended, a gentleman approached Lucy Saunders and asked with tears in his eyes

Continued — see p. 6 bottom

Society of St. Vincent de Paul Recognizes LOC 400th Anniversary

On March 25, during its mid-year meeting in St. Louis, the National Council of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of the United States (SVDP) honored the Ladies of Charity on the 400th anniversary of our founding with a donation of \$400 and a framed portrait of St. Vincent with a beggar. Mary Nell Williams represented LCUSA and her remarks follow:

“ I am Mary Nell Williams, vice president of the north central region of LCUSA of which St. Louis is a part. This is Joan Stanard, immediate past director, north central region and a member of St. Vincent de Paul Parish here in St. Louis.

Thank you Sheila (Gilbert, President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul who presented us with the recognition), Dave Barringer (CEO, SVDP), and all of you for this wonderful recognition of the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Ladies of Charity (Confraternities of Charity) This year also marks the beginning of the entire Vincentian Family. 1617 was a pivotal year for St. Vincent. In January, Vincent heard the confession of a dying peasant and realized that the priests in France were poorly educated to give absolution. That same month he preached a sermon in Folleville, France; he later recalled that both events were important to the founding of the Congregation of the Mission (the Vincentian priests). In August, 1617 Vincent listened to the concerns of his parishioners regarding a family who was in need of food as all of the members were sick and unable to help each other. Vincent gathered women to care for this family. He soon realized that,



From left: Mary Nell Williams, Joan Stanard and Sheila Gilbert at the SVDP mid-year meeting.

“In order for charity to be effective it had to be organized.” Thus began the Confraternities of Charity, known around the world as AIC (International Association of Charities) or Ladies of Charity in the United States. This founding occurred in Chatillon, France where I recently visited.

It is fitting that this recognition be given in this city, St. Louis, as it was in 1857 that Catherine Harkins founded the Ladies of Charity in the United States at St. Vincent de Paul Parish where the ladies continue to serve today. Joan is a member of that parish and of that association.

So, on behalf of the fifty-seven Ladies of Charity associations in the United States and the nearly 6,000 members, we again thank you.

On this, the Feast of the Annunciation when Mary said yes to God and accepted that she would become the Mother of Jesus, although she did not then understand exactly what that meant, let us all resolve and recommit ourselves to serving as Jesus, Vincent, Louise, Frederic [Ozanam, founder of SVDP] and Rosalie [Rendu, collaborator with Frederic] did.”

A Special Celebration

Continued from page 5



Ladies of Charity from the Archdiocese of Washington gather with Mary Ann Dantuono following Mass.

that the Ladies pray for his country of Venezuela. Lucy assured him that the Ladies would keep him and his country in prayer. It is now being asked of you, all of you as Ladies of Charity and Vincentian family members, to pray for this special intention so that peace and comfort will find its way to the country of Venezuela, especially to this man who heard us pray that we be mindful of those who suffer many injustices because we will reach out to them in loving service. What better way to respond to this man's humble request than to bring those words to reality through prayer.

Reflecting on this gathering that culminated with this unexpected request, December 8 encompassed all that is and has been happening in our lives as Ladies of Charity. Celebrating together in what is often referred to as America's Catholic Church whose surroundings entwines the fabric of the Catholic faith and the mosaic of our great nation was very spiritually rewarding. For the Ladies of Charity Archdiocese of Washington this is just the beginning of a pilgrimage for all of us to focus on prayer and thanksgiving for 400 years of saying “yes” to the call of St. Vincent.

Recommitment Ceremony in St. Louis

The Ladies of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in St. Louis, Mo., gathered for Mass on December 8 to celebrate the beginning of the 400th anniversary jubilee year. Fr. Ed Murphy presided at Mass and the Ladies' recommitment to service. Also attending were Daughters of Charity Patricia Bachmann, spiritual advisor of the association; Catherine Kline; and Carol Schumer. Adding to the significance of the occasion, the gathering took place in the church at which Catherine Harkins began the Ladies of Charity in the United States on December 8, 1857.

Joan Stanard



Ladies of Charity in Utah Held Anniversary Celebrations



The Diocese of Salt Lake City Association, St. Olaf's Parish in Bountiful (*above left*), along with their spiritual moderator, Sr. Germaine Sarrazin, DC, combined a recommitment ceremony with the rosary. The Salt Lake City Association, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, held their recommitment ceremony during Mass on December 11 (*right*).

Chris Young

Anniversary Celebration, Binghamton, N.Y.



The Ladies of Charity in Binghamton, N.Y., combined their annual Christmas program with a celebration of the 400th anniversary of LOC. On Dec. 8, the Aged Committee visited women who assemble Heart Bears for patients recovering from cardiac surgery, including smaller bears for the pediatric unit. The Ladies fund the supplies for this project. The Aged Committee also sends cards and flowers and visits formerly active members who are now confined, to be sure they know they are not forgotten. On December 12, members met to sort warm gloves to be distributed during Christmas week for men, women and children who are eligible for clothing vouchers at the Nearly New Shop. After the project, the workers shared a 400th anniversary cake, and each Lady received a votive candle with the LOC logo as a reminder of our mission.

Elaine Columbus, President

Left: Ladies visit women who create Heart Bears.



Ladies of Charity 400 Years of “Yes” to the Call of St. Vincent de Paul

37th ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 2017
KANSAS CITY, MO
September 7 – 10, 2017

Dear Ladies,

“It is very useful for all holy communities to meet together from time to time in some appropriate place to treat their spiritual advancement and...to treat the matters that concern the good of the poor and the maintenance of said confraternity.”

(St. Vincent de Paul, Rule of the Confraternity of Charity of Chatillon, November 1617)

It is our pleasure and privilege to invite you to attend our upcoming National Assembly and Celebration of 400 years of “Yes” to the call of St. Vincent de Paul. Our celebration will begin Thursday afternoon with an inspirational talk by Sr. Joyce Rupp followed by cocktails and banquet at the Marriott Hotel in Kansas City, Mo. The assembly will continue on Friday and Saturday with Mass, more inspiring speakers, interesting model programs from other local associations, best practices shared by members of the board of directors and a closing banquet. But most important is that you will be meeting, mixing and mingling with other Ladies of Charity from around the United States. The experience will certainly be a memorable one!

The Assembly will not be the same without you! Please register early (available online) and consider supporting the National Assembly with a program ad, underwriting donation, and gift card auction donation.

We are looking forward to celebrating with you in September.

In the spirit of St. Vincent and St. Louise,

Suzanne Johnson, President

Donna Montague and Ruth Noel, Co-Chairs

Recommitment Mass in Buffalo

Kathy Roseti

The Diocese of Buffalo Ladies of Charity marked the beginning of the 400th Anniversary Year with Mass at Queen of Heaven Church on Dec. 8. The celebrant was Fr. Gregory Faulhaber, the son of seventy-two-year LOC member Mary Faulhaber, who was unable to attend due to illness. She subsequently died in January at age 91 and will be greatly missed. Members participated in a recommitment ceremony following Mass. Current and past association presidents led the members along with Vincentian Spiritual Moderator Holly Walter and Fr. Faulhaber. Parish chairladies were honored at the luncheon following the Mass as a thank you for the many duties they perform. Buffalo



A recommitment service followed Mass on Dec. 8 in the Diocese of Buffalo.

LOC was honored to have in attendance three Ladies from the Binghamton Association: Irene and Molly Siedlarczyk and Margaret Hanson. Irene is the newly elected vice president of the northeastern region. The visitors also toured the Lots of Clothes store run by the Buffalo Ladies of Charity and learned about the group’s many ministries.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Ladies of Charity: 400 years of "Yes" to the Call of St. Vincent de Paul

Thursday, September 7

- ◆ Special Reception: 400th Appeal Donors (by invitation)
- ◆ Welcome by Bishop James V. Johnston, Jr., D.D., J.C.L., Diocese of Kansas City, St. Joseph
- ◆ Benediction: Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann, DD, Archdiocese of Kansas City, KS (pending)
- ◆ Cocktail Reception, Dinner

Friday, September 8

- ◆ Opening Liturgy: Rev. Richard Gielow CM Presider and Homilist
- ◆ Panel: The Call of St. Vincent—Saints in our History
- ◆ Showcase of Projects: LCUSA into the Future
- ◆ Regional Meetings

Saturday, September 9

- ◆ Best Practices Panel
- ◆ Presentation of Lay Vincentian Spiritual Moderators Certificates
- ◆ Business Meeting
- ◆ Closing Liturgy at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
- ◆ Concluding Banquet

Marriott Kansas City Downtown
200 West 12th Street, Kansas City, MO 64105
(816) 421-6800

September 7 to 10, 2017

Join us as we celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the founding of the Ladies of Charity by St. Vincent de Paul. This extraordinary anniversary is the beginning of our 5th century of serving God in people who are poor, frail or exploited. We celebrate our history as we anticipate a future that "Welcomes the Stranger" and brings about the reign of God through compassionate acts of charity and justice.



Plenary Speakers

"Women of Boundless Compassion"

(Thursday, September 7, afternoon, followed by cocktails & dinner)



Sr. Joyce Rupp is well known for her work as a writer, a spiritual "midwife," and retreat and conference speaker. She has led retreats throughout North America, as well as internationally. Joyce has a B.A. in English, a

M.R.E. in Religious Education, and a M.A. in Transpersonal Psychology. She is a member of the Servites (Servants of Mary) community and was a volunteer for Hospice for fifteen years.

"Welcome the Stranger," A Reflection on the Theology of the Laity"

(Friday, September 8, morning)



Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, D.D., Bishop Emeritus of Albany and former Episcopal Moderator of the Ladies of Charity

*I am a part of all of life.
Each one's joy and sorrow
is my joy and sorrow,
and mine is theirs.
May I draw strength
from this inner communion.
May it daily recommit me
to be a compassionate
presence
for all who struggle with
life's pain.*

© Joyce Rupp

1999-2008. Bishop Hubbard served as Bishop of Albany from 1977-2014. His tenure sought to achieve goals of collaboration, collegiality and shared responsibility. He was committed to outreach to other denominations and faiths.



“St. Louise, The Ladies and the Daughters: Collaborators serving the Strangers at the Margins”

(Saturday, September 9, morning)

Sr. Kathleen Appler, DC, Superioriess General of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. A native of Utica, NY, Sister Kathleen was elected Superioriess in 2015. Sr. Kathleen was also a Spiritual Moderator of the Ladies of Charity in Albany.



“Mettre la Table”

(Saturday, September 9, afternoon)

Sr. Paule Freeburg, D.C. is a Daughter of Charity of the Seton Province and is currently the Western Region Spiritual Advisor to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a religion consultant for the Diocese of San Jose, and works in development and public relations at a school for economically disadvantaged children. Sister holds a Masters in Theology with an emphasis in Scripture and has an extensive background in religious education for both children and adults. She is also a member of the Spirituality

Committee of LCUSA. Sister Paule lives with her community in Mountain View, just north of San Jose.



AIC International

(Saturday, September 9)

Alicia Duhne In 2017 Alicia was elected to a three-year term as President of AIC International. Alicia was born in Monterrey, Mexico and continues to live there. She has a Bachelor’s degree in Business, a Master’s in Management and a Master’s in Human Potential Development in Organizations.



Concluding Liturgy, Presider and Homilist

(Saturday, September 9)

Very Rev. G. Gregory Gay, CM, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, 2004-2016. A native of Baltimore Maryland, Fr. Gay became a Vincentian in the Eastern Province. As Superior General, his priorities were visiting the provinces of the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity, encouraging love of the Vincentian charism especially among the young, collaboration, and systemic change initiatives.

Kansas City, Here We Come

Several optional tours and outings designed to enhance our visit are available for everyone planning to attend the 2017 National Assembly, Sept. 7–10 in Kansas City.

On Wednesday, Sept. 6, you may choose either a tour of the Nelson-Atkins Art Museum or a tour of the World War I Museum. Both groups depart from the hotel at 2:30 p.m., and following their respective tours, will meet at the Alexander Majors Home, an antebellum structure, for a barbeque dinner catered by the area's Zagat rated premier JackStack Bar-B-Que.

On Friday evening, Sept. 8, there will be a choice of a night at the theater, including limousine transportation, dinner and a premier of "Between the Lines," a new musical based on a novel by Jodi Picoult; or a Kansas City Gangster Tour, a 90-minute interactive tour of K.C.'s old mob past and other features of the city's history. Dinner at a downtown restaurant



in the old Italian neighborhood is included. Both groups will depart at 5:30 p.m.

For more details about the tours, including costs and reservation instructions, consult the Assembly 2017 tab on the LCUSA website, <http://aic.ladiesofcharity.us/national-assembly-2017>

Lady of Charity Named Catholic Charities USA Volunteer of the Year



Eileen Nowak



Estelle Anderson, a Lady of Charity in the Diocese of Buffalo, has been named the 2017 Volunteer of the Year for Catholic Charities USA. The award was announced during National Volunteer Week in April.

When Estelle first encountered the Ladies of Charity Layette Program over 30 years ago, she found nothing but a few items in a donation box. An avid sewer and quilter, she agreed to deploy her skills for the program. Under

her guidance, the program blossomed into much more than a simple donation box. Today, in-need mothers and their infants are supplied with essential crib linens, clothing and diapers. At the helm, Estelle has aided an estimated 10,000 families in Buffalo and surrounding communities.

Now age 95, Estelle still volunteers 30 hours a month, assembling layettes and coordinating the donations received from baby showers held by both parish Ladies of Charity groups and others throughout the community. Items donated at the showers are stockpiled and distributed as needed. In addition, many volunteers meet weekly to sew needed items. She began another effort eight years ago in which she and others sew tote bags for home bound adults and grocery bags for patrons of eight Catholic Charities food pantries.

Estelle also gives educational lectures on quilting. She spent afternoons at area churches in February, Black History Month, discussing the connection between quilt symbols and the Underground Railroad. When asked what drives her to continue to volunteer and serve some of the most vulnerable people in Buffalo, Estelle says it is simply how she was raised, adding that she has always looked to the example set by her mother, who was the daughter of slaves. Estelle said her mother believed everyone has a responsibility to give back to their communities and to make it a better place.

Congratulations from LCUSA to Estelle on this well-deserved honor.



Estelle Anderson has been named Catholic Charities USA Volunteer of the Year.



THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Marge Cashin

On February 1, the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations provided a venue for a side event by the Vincentian Family at the United Nations (U.N.) for a presentation entitled: The Triad of Grass Roots Engagement, Advocacy, and Systemic Change in the Eradication of Poverty.

The speakers were His Excellency (H.E.) Ambassador David Donoghue, Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations; Dr. Linda Sama, Founder and Director of the GLOBE (Global Loan Opportunities for Budding Entrepreneurs) Program at St. John's University and a member of the Ladies of Charity, St. John's University Chapter; Dylan Corbett, Executive Director, Hope Border Institute, Ciudad Juarez/El Paso/ Las Cruces; Guillermo Campuzano, CM, U.N. non-governmental organization (NGO) representative for the Congregation of the Mission; and Joseph Cornelius Donnelly, Permanent Delegate to the United Nations, Caritas Internationalis. Teresa Kotturan, SCN, U.N. NGO representative for the Sisters of Charity Federation was the moderator for the event.

The original intention of having a side event dedicated to the eradication of poverty was to bring members of the Vincentian Family together in an organized way to show the many projects and outreach programs conducted by various groups of followers of St. Vincent and St. Louise.

Each presentation was received by an audience that was enraptured by the work being done to combat poverty on a global scale. Fr. Campuzano emphasized that we, as a group, must work on local, national and international levels with sustainable and systematic changes. Efforts must be made to keep the family together. This needs health care, education and support all of which the Vincentian Family is committed to in its work. He also stressed that the enemy is poverty, not the poor.

The presentation by Dr. Linda Sama spoke about the program at St. John's University that is committed to building a global community that contributes to "eradicating poverty within our lifetime." The program has been such a success for



Seated from left to right: Fr. Guillermo Campuzano, CM; Sr. Teresa Kotturan, SCN; Linda Sama, Ph.D.; Standing: Natalie Boone, Lady of Charity

the students and the people they have already helped. Over 150 loans have been made in six countries on three continents. The students work with the Daughters of Charity who identify potential borrowers. Dr. Sama was excited to announce that her program is being replicated in another university. Students making a difference will promote great results.

A very dramatic film presentation by Dylan Corbett about border crossings from Mexico brought home the plight of the persons trying to enter the United States for a better life. One indigenous person in the film commented "We did not cross the border; rather the border has crossed us." This really crystallized the situation for many families in Northern Mexico and Texas. Mr. Corbett responded to the idea of Mexicans bringing crime and terror into the United States when he announced that El Paso, Texas, a border city with many Mexican residents, is statistically the safest city in the United States.

The final presenter, Joseph Cornelius Donnelly, began his remarks with a verse of "The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor," and indeed it was a fitting way to wrap up the event, acknowledging that people in poverty are being served and we who are working in so many capacities, all under the umbrella of the Vincentian Family, must take courage and strength to keep up the work. Many women and men have followed the directive of St. Vincent de Paul when he first started the Ladies of Charity in France 400 years ago. He felt it was important not only to assist the poor but to do so in an organized manner in order to make the most of our efforts.

This event certainly was a display of what can be accomplished when many people are willing to be the out-stretched hand offering assistance to those who are less fortunate. Sr. Teresa thanked the presenters and the standing room only crowd for their participation in The Triad of Grass Roots Engagement, Advocacy, and Systemic Change in the Eradication of Poverty.



From left: H.E. Ambassador David Donoghue; Sr. Teresa Kotturan, SCN; Linda Sama, Ph.D.; Dylan Corbett

Lady of Charity Honored by the Archdiocese of Washington

Susan Wilson, President, Ladies of Charity Calvert County

Saint Anthony's Ladies of Charity in North Beach, Md., was established 49 years ago in 1968; a dozen years later its primary ministry, a food pantry, was begun. Initially the pantry served a few clients as needed from the church hall. About 20 years ago, the pantry moved to a permanent location in a 100-year-old house donated to the parish.

In 2015 Barbara Glover took on the leadership role of pantry manager role. She had big shoes to fill since she was succeeding several other dedicated Ladies who had managed the pantry through significant growth spurts.

The goals of the pantry are to serve people in need, to provide opportunities for the parish to serve, and to be recognized in the community as an organization that serves the poor. It now helps over 200 registered client households each month, including nearly 600 individuals. Client services include providing pre-packed groceries; bags of personal items and toiletries; choice of extra items such as eggs, coffee or deer meat; holiday meals for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter; firewood; weekend food distribution for needy children in the local elementary school; backpacks filled with school supplies for children in the client's household; and Christmas gifts for children in the client's household.

Since Barbara accepted the pantry manager role, she has "had her track shoes on." The number of families served has grown by over 50%. Innovations in client services have included adding an evening opening time once per month; startup of a mobile food pantry in the church parking lot with fresh produce from local farms during the warmer months; addition of bonus bags with personal items that cannot be purchased with food stamps; installation of an awning to provide a comfortable waiting area for clients; and offering of a cake mix and icing during the client's birthday month.

Barbara is quick to say that none of this would be possible without approximately 40 parish volunteers who weigh food and stock shelves; clean the pantry house; pre-pack groceries



Barbara Glover honored by Cardinal Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, D.C.

and bonus bags; pick up and deliver food from various sources; welcome and check in clients; and carry groceries to clients' cars. In addition, many parishioners and community members donate food and money to support the operation.

For her role in leading this beautiful ministry and providing an inspiring example to her parish and community, Fr. James Stack nominated Barbara to receive the Manifesting the Kingdom Award, established by Donald Cardinal Wuerl, the Archbishop of Washington, to honor individuals from parishes and Catholic organizations for exceptional service to the local church. Barbara received the award on Jan.8 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Meet Ashley Larsen



Hello everyone, my name is Ashley Larsen and I am the new Executive Administrator at the national office for Ladies of Charity USA. My family and I recently moved to the Kansas City metro area after leaving our home town of Salina, Kansas. I am very excited to be a local here in Kansas City as I have always loved the area.

I graduated from Sacred Heart High School and studied business management at Kansas State University at Salina. I

have worked as an Office Coordinator/Manager in previous jobs. I really enjoy what I do, as I thrive on structure, organization and multi-tasking. I am a mother of four; I have two boys, 14 and 7, and identical twin girls who just turned four in February. I am very excited to be a part of the Ladies of Charity family. I have searched very carefully for a job here in Kansas City that would be a right fit for myself and my family. I am so honored to be a part of a team that makes the world a better place! I hope to meet each one of you in the future, and am very excited to work with a wonderful team of people! Thank you every one for the warm welcome!

St. Bernadette Parish, Pittsburgh

Mary Diaddigo

Knoxville

Samantha Dunwiddie



Gabrielle Unbehaun and Samanta Dunwiddie at the ice cream social.

The Junior Ladies of Charity of Knoxville has nine active members who have been volunteering in various ways since their formation began in 2016. Plans for 2017 will accent “75,” for the 75th anniversary of Knoxville LOC, and “400,” highlighting the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Ladies of Charity.

The girls regularly assist in the association’s emergency assistance program. In addition, they will participate at an ice cream social in May at a housing unit for senior citizens, aiming to serve over 75 residents. The children’s book collection for summer reading will have a goal of 400 books to go to the “Books for Kids” program at Lincoln Park United Methodist Church. At their back to school clothing drive for teens in July and August, the goal will be to assist 75-400 teenagers find clothes. A solemn reception and winter gathering for a retreat are also planned.



Junior Lady and a family member delivering donations for the emergency assistance program.



Recruiting poster for the first meeting of JLOC at St. Bernadette Parish.

The Ladies of Charity of St. Bernadette Parish in Monroeville Pa. (Diocese of Pittsburgh) are happy to announce the launch of a new Junior Ladies of Charity group at their parish. Kay Schuetz, Peggy Bent and Chris Gurski met with diocesan JLOC co-chairs Nancy Bianculli and Mary Diaddigo in January. Their diligent efforts to recruit members met with success. Despite inclement weather, ten young women and their



Getting to know each other at St. Bernadette Parish in Pittsburgh.

mothers came to the first meeting in February. Barbara Collins, president of the parish LOC, attended along with a few other members. An opening prayer and presentation of a JLOC recruitment video were followed by a lively discussion. Several young ladies signed up that evening and many took extra applications for friends. When asked when they would like to meet again, one girl cried out, “Let’s meet in two weeks; we want to get started!” Kay Schuetz met with sixth through eighth grade students in the parish school to develop more interest. Formal investiture will take place in the autumn. It will be exciting to see what wonderful things this new JLOC will do.

St. John’s Prep

Kitty Prager

St. John’s Prep Junior Ladies of Charity in Astoria, N.Y., sponsored an annual coat drive in December. Over 125 coats were collected for distribution to various groups in Brooklyn and Queens. The highlight of the drive was the students’ visiting the homeless shelter sponsored by their neighbor Immaculate Conception Church in Astoria and seeing the joy the coats brought to the residents.

See photos on page 15



Above: JLOC St. John's Prep sort donated coats. Below: St. John's Prep Juniors arrive at the homeless shelter to deliver coats.



St. Mary of the Assumption Diocese of Buffalo

Marian Snyder

We are pleased to announce that as of February Kate Koscielniak has joined the Diocese of Buffalo Ladies of Charity and will be serving as an additional moderator for the Junior Ladies of Charity at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Lancaster, N.Y. We are very pleased to have Kate join our group as she will play a vital role in the continued success of the Junior Ladies of Charity in our diocese.



Former Junior returns to become a moderator.

Kate was an active member of our Junior Ladies of Charity from sixth grade thru senior high school and served as our group's president before heading off to college six years ago. She has completed college and is now living back in Lancaster and working as a speech pathologist.

One of Kate's early projects will be to help the current Juniors in their plan to serve cake to parishioners during a summer weekend as a thank you for their support and to publicize and celebrate LOC's 400th anniversary.

Kate Koscielniak Introduces Herself

I was a Junior Lady of Charity member from the sixth grade through my senior year of high school. During that time I had numerous opportunities to volunteer in the community. I enjoyed going to Response to Love Center, making holiday treat bags or crafts for St. Elizabeth's nursing home and buying Christmas presents for immigrant families. These are things the Junior Ladies continue to do today and I am excited to be able to be a part of it again! After my time as a Junior Lady I went to the University at Buffalo. I then went to Ithaca College to get my masters degree in Speech - Language Pathology. I am currently working at a speech pathologist at The Summit Center. I am very excited to become a moderator of the Jr. Ladies of Charity. I am happy to help out with all the events and volunteer opportunities the girls are working on. I am excited to be part of an organization that meant so much to me when I was in middle school and high school!



Right: New moderator remembers the joy of preparing Christmas gifts for immigrant families.



Dates to Remember

- **June 9-11, 2017**
Vincentian Family Gathering,
"Welcome the Stranger," San Antonio, Texas
- **Sept. 7-10, 2017**
LCUSA 400th Anniversary Celebration
and National Assembly,
Kansas City, Mo., Marriott Downtown

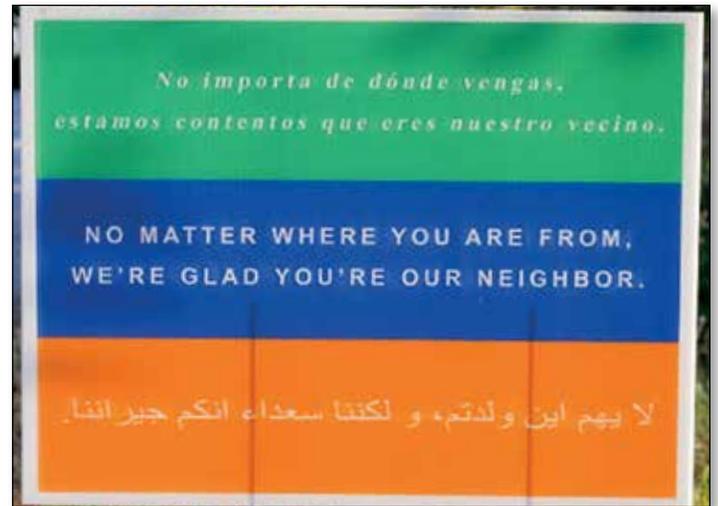
Joani Horchler

The fifth annual Sweetheart Charity Ball was held at St. Ambrose Catholic Church, Cheverly, Md., Archdiocese of Washington, in February. This potluck dinner-dance event benefits two charities: FAIR Girls, a local anti-human trafficking initiative, and the St. Ambrose Parish Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, which serves needy people in the Cheverly area with food and other assistance. The St. Ambrose Ladies of Charity is proud to play a part in starting and promoting this worthwhile initiative. Patrons of the Sweetheart Charity Ball have the opportunity to purchase Jewel Girls jewelry made by the FAIR Girls just in time for Valentine's Day.

FAIR Girls is a Washington, D.C. based group that provides care and opportunities to boys and girls who have experienced or are at risk of trafficking and/or sexual and labor exploitation. FAIR Girls provides the only safe house specifically for human trafficking survivors in the D.C. area. A second safe house may be opened in Prince George's County Maryland this spring through a partnership between FAIR Girls and the University of Maryland SAFE Center, which also helps trafficking survivors.

The St. Ambrose Ladies of Charity accepts donations year-round to help FAIR Girls and the St. Vincent de Paul Society, which provides food to the FAIR Girls' shelter and many other local individuals and organizations.

Members of Ladies of Charity, St. Vincent de Paul Society and Global Solidarity at St. Ambrose are involved in the creation of a new community coalition, "Bridges Not Walls-Cheverly," to help immigrants and refugees of all faiths. At



the first meeting, it was decided that the new association would be a coalition of local groups working to help people who are vulnerable because of their faith, ethnicity or other attributes. CASA, Vine Corps, Little Friends for Peace and Cheverly Women's Club are also involved. Members of the new group are doing research on local immigration law enforcement actions; the concept of sanctuary cities; the possibility of designating churches, schools or businesses to act as safe spaces; and Maryland state legislation. As an initial activity, the group designed and distributed yard signs printed in three languages with the message, "We're glad you're our neighbor." Follow the coalition's activities on facebook at "Bridges Not Walls-Cheverly."

In Memory of the Unclaimed Dead

On the second Sunday of November every year, the Ladies of Charity from the Diocese of Pittsburgh gather at the St. Vincent de Paul Memorial in Calvary Cemetery and lay a wreath in memory of all the unclaimed souls. This tradition started many years ago in commemoration of the founding of the Ladies of Charity in Pittsburgh.

Her name was Anna. She was a tiny old woman without a friend in the world. When she died in a Pittsburgh institution, no one mourned. Anna was as unimportant in men's eyes as a person could be. When Mass ended and the hearse drove off alone with the coffin, it should have been the end of Anna's earthly story. However, the church was not entirely empty that day. By some impulse, Margaret O'Konski decided to stay after attending the previous Mass. She watched unbelieving as the solitary funeral began. Afterward, she set out to do something about it. She began organizing a group of women to attend funerals of these unclaimed dead. Thus, the roots

of the Ladies of Charity in the Diocese of Pittsburgh were planted and the official organization was formed two years later.

This year the weather could not have been more beautiful as more than 100 ladies from throughout the diocese gathered and participated in a prayer service for the unclaimed dead.

Judy Weismann



A Heart Big Enough for Two Countries

Marie C. Fouché moved permanently to the United States from her native Haiti in 1968, but she has spent a lifetime working to give back to her home country. Most recently, she developed a program, *Renesansavo*, in collaboration with La Coalition Pour le Relèvement de L'Anse-à-Veau (CORA), to educate Haitian youth about community sustainable development and the Catholic faith. She has been a member of the Ladies of Charity at SJU since 2012 and serves as the Ladies of Charity International Representative (AIC) to the Vincentian Family Haiti Initiative Commission.

Fouché maintains a blog about her experiences in Haiti, *The Haiti Diaries: A Journey Through Haiti*. Her service to the country began in 1975, as a founding member of Haitian Americans United for Progress, Inc. (HAUP). Through HAUP, Fouché has been a strong proponent of Haitian and the Creole language. She has published Jean-Claude Martineau's book and record, *Flè Dizè*, and written plays that were performed as fundraisers for HAUP. She also co-hosted a Radio Tropical show on women's issues with Marie Therese Guilloteau entitled *Fanm Dayiti*.

Fouché has had a long and successful career first as an administrator at the European American Bank and the National Pastoral Life Center of the Archdiocese of New York, and then as a bilingual elementary school teacher in the New York City (NYC) public school system.

She is also a long-time active member of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Cambria Heights, N.Y. As part of her service there, she worked as an administrative volunteer for the National Haitian Apostolate Center, and chaired



Marie Fouché and friends open their hearts to the concerns of Haiti.

an advisory committee for Retired Auxiliary Bishop Guy Sansaricq.

In 2012, Marie attended a conference in Washington sponsored by the Committee on the Church in Latin America of the Catholic Conference of American Bishops about the earthquake devastation in Haiti. The conference made her want to do more to help her native country. "I looked around and thought, Why are they going [to Haiti] and not me?" After sixteen years in the U.S., she travelled to Haiti with a group of NYC educators to give workshops on teaching literacy and loved the experience of being with "committed people making a difference."

Fouché directs her current efforts at the diocese of Anse-à-Veau, where her husband was born. Anse-à-Veau will celebrate 300 years in 2021 and Fouché felt that the town needed some improvements before it would be ready for this milestone. "I looked around and didn't

see what young people would celebrate. The only people who can change this situation are the youth if given the opportunity." Fouché's program, *Renesansavo*, educates the young people of Anse-à-Veau about sustainable development and Catholic social teaching to attract tourism and revitalize the town. So far, the program has run through the summers of 2014 and 2015. Two graduate students of Ciné Institute in Jacmel, Haiti attended the second part of the program to film a documentary about the experience. In its third year, the program held a summer camp for 50 disadvantaged children in the rural area of Brossard, partially sponsored by the Ladies of Charity at SJU and Forgotten Children of Haiti. Some *Renesansavo* participants served as camp counselors for these children.

Editor's note: This information recently appeared on the website of St. John's University.

Cooking for a Cause

A group of Ladies of Charity and friends from Knoxville, Tenn., participated in the 11th Annual East Tennessee Chili Cook-Off benefiting Second Harvest Food Bank. The team was led by LOC's pantry volunteer and secret weapon Louise Di Felice, who dug deeply into her spice cabinet to help the team produce delicious chili. By participating in the cook-off, the Ladies helped support Second Harvest's shared mission of feeding the hungry and educated the public on Ladies of Charity's own emergency assistance program.



Susan Unbehaun



Members of Ladies of Charity in Naples following the induction of new members.



Naples LOC and their sneakers giving tree.



Diane Pesce (L) and Gloria Liatros at a St. Patrick's Day party at the Harbor Center facility.



Peggy Stanton, author, journalist and host on *Ave Maria Radio* and EWTN

A Busy Year in Naples, Florida

Julie Mann

The Ladies of Charity in Naples, in Southwest Florida, are a growing and busy group. In April of 2016, they inducted seventeen new members, and another nine women joined this spring.

In December their sneaker project at St. John the Evangelist Parish received over 600 pairs of sneakers which were distributed through Naples Park Elementary, Guadalupe Social Services and the Redlands Community Migrant Association in Immokalee, a city with many immigrant and migrant families who work as farm laborers.

Other community agencies provided additional help with the project. In February, sixty-two Ladies participated in the annual retreat on the Ave Maria University Campus. The theme was "Peace is Possible," and Peggy Stanton, author, journalist and host on *Ave Maria Radio* and EWTN, was the guest speaker. A Mass and tour of the Saint Mother Teresa Museum completed the day. On behalf of the association, President Marie Elaina Mullin wishes peace to all and promises prayers for all Ladies of Charity. Most recently, Ladies helped organize a St. Patrick's day party at Harbor Chase memory care senior living facility.



Changing Lives Through Education

Gayle Johnson

In November, the Ladies of Charity of Metropolitan Kansas City received the Founders Day award for their years of service to Cristo Rey Kansas City. Some of the Ladies of Charity who have been involved with the high school were present. The high school is sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. From opening day in September of 2006, the ladies have served as janitors cleaning classrooms, boards, restrooms, painting walls, tutoring students, helping in the student clothing center, providing office help, serving as Vincentian friends to students, helping with entry testing, working in the current literacy program and providing catering help for the first "Dancing with the Stars" fundraiser. In addition, financial help has been provided to graduating seniors so they could pursue a college education. Many of the students are the first in their families to attend college.

Left: Kansas City Co-Presidents Anita Dunn (left) and Eleanor Raggett receiving an award for LOC service to Cristo Rey High School



Sr. Mary Frances Hildenberger, DC, and her mother Eileen.

Generations of Faith

Linda Van Scooter

In September, Holy Cross Ladies of Charity in Lynchburg, Va., honored a special mother and daughter. Eileen Hildenberger, a mother of ten children and lifetime member of the Ladies of Charity, celebrated her 99th birthday and her eldest daughter Sr. Mary Frances celebrated her 50th jubilee as a Daughter of Charity. They were recognized after Mass and shared a celebration and cake afterward with the parish family. Holy Cross circles of Ladies of Charity are the only group in the state and have been active for well over 100 years.



Sharing our Best in Nashville

Yvonne Clemence

Sharing Our Best is the title of a new fundraising cookbook by the Ladies of Charity Nashville. A committee worked many months to produce the final product, a hard backed, three ring binder containing over 700 recipes. As a special selling feature, each cookbook comes with one free digital download, so essentially the purchaser is receiving two books for the price of one. The committee sold advertising space, raising enough money to cover almost 50% of the total cost. In late September, the finished cookbooks arrived and began selling like hotcakes. The remaining balance was quickly paid to the publisher. Members supported the effort by purchasing books both for themselves and for Christmas presents. Books were also sold at the consignment shop during the fall sale. With everyone's support, the cookbook was profitable before Christmas.

The Committee is grateful to the members for their support in submitting recipes, purchasing ads and buying the book. The cookbooks are still available by contacting Nashville LOC. Consult the LCUSA website, Resources/Members' Corner, for contact information.

MEMORIALS AND HONORARIUMS

Both the persons named below and the donors will be remembered at a special Mass said by LCUSA's national spiritual advisor, Fr. Richard Gielow, CM. Use the enclosed envelope to submit your own intentions.

† MEMORIALS †

<i>In Memory of</i>	<i>Bequeathed by</i>
Linda Dickman	Gayle Johnson
Deceased members of Ladies of Charity, Elmira, N.Y	Sr. Mary Christopher, SSJ
Mary Faulhaber	Kathleen Sieracki Marian Snyder Betty Wasielewski
Doris and John Hoag	Jack and Kathy Kavanaugh
James Puleo, MD	Jack and Kathy Kavanaugh
Betty Singler	Lady of Charity and Affiliates of the Daughters of Charity
John Hoag	
Anonymous	James LeCluyse
Jeanne Blanck	Michael Long
Dorothy Boehr	Albe McGurk
Sharon Brown	Elena Miranda
Carol Crowe	Donna Montague
Kenneth and Ruth Cundey	Stephanie K. Morgan
Lyn Cundey	Connie O'Brien
Cathleen Decina	Mary Beth O'Brien
Tama Dutton	Marvin and Lisa Kay Oller
Georgine "Jennie" Egan	Sharon Meyers Perry
Betty Gott	Shirley Peschke
Jo Ann Halterman	Charlie and Joyce Rossi
Doreen Haughton	Kathleen Sieracki
Janet C. Hoke	Carol Stenzel
Lanora Hughes	Theresa Ward
Theresa Jackson	Lee Ann Yartz
Gayle Johnson	Catherine Zitnik

† IN HONOR OF †

Sr. Rachela Silvestri, DC	Ladies of Charity, Morgan Hill, California
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<http://aic.ladiesofcharity.us>

"To serve rather than to be served"

Saint Gianna Beretta and Peitro Molla, Witnesses for our Day

Carol Schumer, D.C.

A mother who gave her life to save her preborn child and a father who reared four children alone, Gianna and Pietro Molla stand as credible role models for our time!

Born in 1922, tenth of thirteen children, Gianna Beretta experienced faith lived at home. Alberto and Maria, her parents, were devoted to each other and to their children. Third Order Franciscans and daily Mass attendants, they viewed rearing their children as the work of God. The family was immersed in love of God and sensitivity to persons living in poverty.

In 1949, Gianna, serving through Catholic Action and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, earned a medical degree and opened a clinic, specializing in Pediatrics with special attention to mothers, babies, those elderly and poor. However, she continued to question her vocation. Seeking direction, she traveled to Lourdes. Following this experience, she noted, "I ... ask the Blessed Virgin what I shall do: go to the missions or marry. I reached home ... and Pietro came in!"¹

Ten years her senior, Pietro was deeply impressed by Gianna. In March, 1955, he wrote, "The more I know Gianna, the more I am convinced that God could not have given me a greater gift than her love and companionship."² These sentiments are echoed in words from Gianna, "Dearest Pietro ... I have always been eager for affection ... Now you are here whom I love and I intend to give myself to you, to form a truly Christian family."³ They married in September, 1955.

Birth of three children, Pierluigi (1956), Maria (Mariolina, 1957) and Laura (1959); coping with two miscarriages, they found themselves pregnant again in 1961. A uterine tumor developed with three options: abortion, hysterectomy or surgical removal. They chose the latter. Complications continued. Gianna insisted, "I want them to save [our] baby."⁴ Their fourth child, Gianna Emanuela, was safely delivered by Caesarean

section April 22, 1962 while Gianna suffered greatly with septic peritonitis, dying April 28.

Pietro, single parent of four children, lived 48 years as "a pillar of faith, courage and devotion."⁵ He went to God in 2010. Mariolina died in 1964 at age six, from measles. The other three live in Milan. Pierluigi, a Financial Business Advisor, is married to Lisi with one daughter, Ortensia. They speak around the world about his mother, a woman of faith, courage, beauty and Christian values. Laura, a corporate executive, married Giuseppe Panutti. Gianna Emanuela, a medical doctor specializing in gerontology, lived with her father in Mesero until his death and now works in Milan.

Pietro with his three children was in St. Peter's Square May 16, 2004 as his wife became the last saint canonized by Pope John Paul II.⁶ The night before, Thomas Rosica, OSB, a dear friend, remarked to Pietro, "You are from a family of Saints and Gianna will not be the only one raised to the glory of the altar. You will follow." In his article, Rosica continues, "... the cause for Pietro Molla's beatification and canonization will be opened soon ... a powerful witness ... to the dignity and sacredness of marriage and family life!"⁷

Reflection: What can we learn and share from the lives of Gianna and Pietro Molla? As patron Saint of preborn children, how does Gianna challenge us today?

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⁴ "St. Gianna Beretta Molla" <http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.com/2013/04/at-aprils-end-doctors-are-in.html>

⁵ Ibid. Rosica

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