



SAINT CHRETIENNE ANNALS

Volume 32

Sisters of St. Chretienne Marlboro, MA

2024

PILGRIMS OF HOPE

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)

Is there a season for hope? Or is there a time when there seems to be no reason to hope? We see so many ongoing conflicts and wars that engulf more and more people in a cycle of despair. There are also extreme weather events that just seem to keep coming due to climate change, all types of disasters, and widening gaps between people in their opinions, political differences, incomes, health problems...

Where does our faith lead us? Can the God of hope fill us with joy by the power of the Holy Spirit? Can this be a joy that empowers us to sow seeds of goodness that will overcome sadness and evil?

We are on the threshold of our Church's Jubilee Year 2025. Every 25 years, we celebrate a Holy Year commemorating the coming of Christ into our world. Pope Francis is inviting many "Pilgrims of Hope" to come to Rome during the year, but we are all invited to experience the Jubilee in our local churches "as a moment of genuine personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, our Hope."

You will see in this issue of the St. Chretienne Annals that we have many reasons to hope. In May, we hosted the members of our General Council who were meeting in the United States for two weeks. Our Superior General, Sr. Elisabeth Michaely, and the leaders of each region - Europe, Africa, and



Canada - came to experience our life in community in the US as they spent time discerning the Spirit's action in our congregation as a whole. Since, at Marie Esther, we live with Sisters from four other religious orders, we wanted to have a gathering to welcome the Council members to our residence.

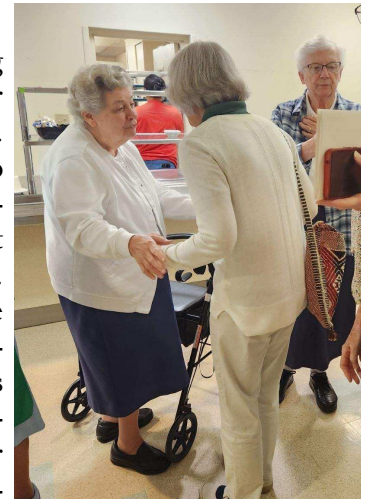
We invited each group to choose one Sister who would present a brief overview of her congregation. Gathering in



our Assembly Hall, we were awed by the good that God has done in the stories of each of these congregations: Sisters of St. Anne, Little Sisters of the Assumption, Sisters of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin,

Sisters of the Presentation of Mary, and Sisters of St. Chretienne!

Meals in our dining room were occasions for friendly conversations. Wine, cheese and also French bread were offered each noontime at our "SSCh French Café". All during the visit, the interaction of our General Council members with us and our companions at Marie Esther was an occasion for joyful hope.



(continued on next page)

PILGRIMS OF HOPE



The presence of Sisters Devota and Beatha from the African region was a great joy, given the many years we had aspired to receive our African Sisters in the USA. They came with gifts to thank us for our generosity through the years, supporting them and their projects. The most recent of these is the St. Chretienne Home in Kigali, Rwanda, where young women looking for a safe place to live while working or studying in the city can also have the experience of a faith community.



Pope Francis reminds us that “we need to recognize the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence.” The signs of the Spirit of Jesus are found in self-giving love, kindness, generosity, respect, selflessness; they bring forth fruits of joy and peace. May we all be tangible signs of hope for our brothers and sisters, especially those most experiencing the harshness of life. We know that you, our readers, are extending such hope to your families, your friends, those who depend on your kindness and whom God places on your path. We, Sisters, rejoice in your continued support and encouragement, and we promise you our prayers in return.

*“Let us dare to trust in the future.”
(SSCh Orientation 2022-2028)*

(Pope Francis’ letter, “Spes non Confundit”, May 9, 2024, is a Spirit-filled text announcing the Holy Year of 2025. It is Good News!)

Sr. Lisette Michaud, SSCh

ALLELUIA!!!

At the conclusion of her renewal of vows during the Mass celebrating her 70 years of religious life, Sr. Louisa Perreault spontaneously broke out with a triumphant “ALLELUIA”!!! In our crowded chapel, it seemed everyone was concurring by their smiles and applause! As circumstances would have it, Sr. Louisa and I were the only Sisters of St. Chretienne -- U.S.A. to be celebrating a jubilee in 2024. We were privileged (slightly nervous too) to celebrate during the extraordinary meeting of the General Council at Marie Esther. Indeed, the jubilee became the occasion for our American Sisters and Associates to rejoice together with our General Council representing our entire Congregation.



*Sr. Elisabeth Michaely, Superior General -
Sr. Cecile Berthiaume and Sr. Louisa Perreault*

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SANCTUARY PLACE: HOPE FINDS A HOME

In 2019, we had come to the difficult decision that we needed to sell our former provincial house in Wrentham. Since 1967, as we became a province, this house had served us well and held many memories: prayer services in our chapel, a meeting place for international gatherings, picnics for all our Sisters, and all that comes with planning and tending to the business of the province. With the passing of time however, the house had become too large for our needs.

During the selling process, we were directed to the Archdiocesan Planning Office for Urban Affairs (POUA), a non-profit social justice ministry that seeks the development of high quality affordable housing for people since its inception in 1969 in the time of Richard Cardinal Cushing.

In selling our property to them, **POUA** then contacted **Health Imperatives**, another “non-profit organization that improves the health and well-being of low-income or vulnerable families in south-eastern Massachusetts.” In 2021, Health Imperatives and the Planning Office received \$1.2 million in funding from the state to renovate the Wrentham property into a facility that would now provide shelter and support to victims and survivors of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. For people with complex trauma who are not eligible for traditional housing programs or supportive services, it would offer counseling, medical care, educational opportunities, emergency assistance and career development opportunities.



Our former convent, now renamed **Sanctuary Place**, opened in March of this year and welcomed its first residents: eight women who had never been given a fair chance and for whom this program would be a life-saving blessing. On May 15, on a beautiful

spring day, we, the Sisters, were invited to a special event where the staff and residents of Sanctuary Place hosted a ceremony to dedicate a lovely, peaceful garden to the Sisters of St. Chretienne. We were joined by the members of our General Council who were having their spring meeting at this time as well as the Nuns of St. Mary's Abbey.



Sr. Suzanne Beaudoin composed and led us in this beautiful prayer of blessing.

Good and loving God, we gather today to ask your blessing on this Peace Garden as we remember the past and look to the future. “There is a time for everything, and a season for everything under the Heavens...” (Eccl 3:1)

For 55 years, the Sisters of St. Chretienne lived here, worked here and prayed as they sent forth Sisters to minister to God's people in New England, Florida, Texas, Appalachia, Africa and Alberta, Canada. These were loving and peaceful endeavors in the name of Jesus. The Sisters sought to “speak Jesus Christ by their whole life” given in mission...

This season of our history has now ended for us. But a new season has begun for the women who will live and work at Sanctuary Place. O God, we ask that you bless this Peace Garden as a sign of your presence.

Bless the women with hope in their future and peace in their hearts. All of this we ask in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, always loving and merciful and always present with us as we walk in our respective journeys in the seasons of our lives.”

The Peace Garden is now a sanctuary within a sanctuary place where residents can go to find stillness and peace. The legacy of the Sisters of St. Chretienne lives on at Sanctuary Place. Our former home is now a safe and secure haven for survivors to heal, grow, and find their way forward.

Amy West (Health Imperatives) & Sr. Lisette



IN MEMORIAM

Sister Irene Ledoux

(Sr. Germaine)

1924-2024



Born in Amesbury, MA, Sr. Irene Ledoux grew up in Ashland. With the example of her great-aunt Sr. Norbert, Irene entered the congregation and made her vows in

1943. She taught the primary grades for many years in our parish schools and at the Academy. "I loved preparing the children for their First Communion and seeing the joy on their faces in receiving Jesus."

In her later years, Sr. Irene went to Ruskin, FL with Sr. Margaret Ebacher to help in a parish ministry with the migrant families. She was deeply moved by the harsh conditions the people endured in the tomato fields, but also their generosity towards the Sisters.

In Marlboro, Sr. Irene prayerfully supported women seeking help from Birthright as they tried to foster the life of their baby. She sewed for her Sisters and made beautiful needlepoint bookmarks. She called it "painting with floss and needle, each stitch an act of love for Jesus." She loved playing Scrabble and doing Word Searches.

80 years ago, Sr. Irene offered the Lord her generous Yes to do His will. We will always remember her for her generous service, and for being prayerful, loving and faith-filled.

In this past year, we also lost three of our ASSOCIATES. Each of these beautiful women had been with us for many years. They shared our charisma and 'proclaimed Jesus Christ' in their homes, their parishes and among those they cared for.



Jacqueline Blais

1927 - 2024

Jackie was born in Ste Marguerite, Quebec, the devoted wife of Alphonse Blais and mother of eight children. She lived close to our convent and was a member of our Marlboro Associate group. She loved participating, with her sister Elaine, another of our Associates, in the weekend retreats



Claudette De Donato

1940 - 2024

Claudette was born in Salem MA and was married to Albert DeDonato for 40 years. She was very devoted to her family and her parish, St. Anne's, where she spent her life volunteering. She was an ardent member of our North Shore Associate group, loved the retreats and Sisters' celebrations.



Shirley Dulude

1940-2024

Shirley was born in Central Falls, RI and was the loving wife of the late Joseph Leo Dulude. Shirley knew the Sisters for most of her life as a student and later as a teacher's aide at Our Lady of Consolation School in Pawtucket, RI. She loved being an Associate and joined the Sisters in 2007 on a trip to Metz, France for the Bicentennial of the Congregation.

We give thanks to the Lord for these devoted women of God. The bonds that we shared endure beyond death, and we rely on their prayers as we await the coming of the Lord Jesus and hearing him say: "Come, blessed of my Father; live forever in my joy!"

PRAYERGRAM MINISTRY

“Sister, will you, please pray for . . . “ Every Sister has heard this type of request. We are always willing and privileged to grant such a request, and also to pass requests on to the other Sisters for greater support.

Jesus says: *“Ask and you shall receive .”* (Luke 11:9) Jesus also tells us: *“Where two or three (or more) are gathered in my name, here I am in their midst.”* (Matt. 18:20) What greater gift can we hope for?

About twenty-five years ago, Sister Jeanne Larence, SSCh, proposed a form to be signed by the Sisters, who agreed to pray for individuals with health issues and/or other needs. This form, known as a PRAYERGRAM is sent to the person for whom we pledge to pray.

Sister Therese Bedard, SSCh, kept a record of all requests for many years - - too many to count! In faith we know that God remembers each petition, and answers our prayers according to His plans, which are always the best.

In the past, Sister Irene Ledoux, SSCh, spoke this intention at our daily Evening Prayer: *“Let us pray for everyone to whom we sent a Prayergram.”* This was a clear reminder to all of us to keep our promise of prayer.

In old age, we are blessed with time to schedule personal prayer each day. We know the joy, com-

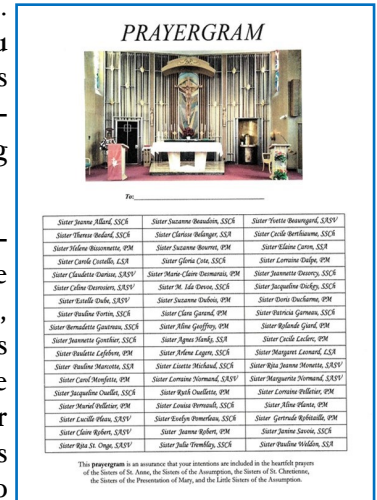
fort, peace and healing provided to family members, relatives, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances through our PRAYERGRAM MINISTRY.

There is, of course, no charge for requests for prayer. However, we are happy to hear from the recipients concerning progress, continued need, or perhaps even a healing. May I suggest that you who are reading this article, join us in prayer for those receiving prayerful support.

Now that we are residing in a health care facility at Marie Esther, we are expanding this Ministry, inviting the Sisters of the other four Congregations with whom we live, to sign in, strengthening the power of prayer. In the past, we signed each PRAYERGRAM in handwriting. We have now advanced to electronic signatures, but all are notified of each request. A sample of the PRAYERGRAM is illustrated.

Another message from our loving God as seen in Jeremiah 29:11. *“I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. . . plans to give you hope and a future.”* Let us offer praise and gratitude to God for his wondrous work among us.

Sr. Jacqueline Ouellet, SSCh



I am interested in contributing toward the needs and ministries of the Srs. of St. Chretienne

Retirement needs

Missions in Africa

\$100 _____ \$75 _____ \$50 _____ \$25 _____ Other _____

Your concern and interest are vital to us and any contribution will be greatly appreciated.

NAME _____ DATE _____

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Please make checks to: **SISTERS OF ST. CHRETIENNE**
and mail to: **Regional Office, 720 Boston Post Road E, Marlboro, MA 01752**

(continued from page 2)

The Jubilee Mass, celebrated by our Associate, Fr. Joseph Paquette, was the highlight of the day. It was greatly enhanced by Sisters Devota and Beatha ceremoniously and reverently carrying the offertory gifts to the altar while stepping to the rhythm of an African drum and chanting in their Swahili language. This was such a symbol of our common offering to God of the gifts we received, soon to be transformed in Jesus Christ and shared with the world.



The celebration continued with a festive catered meal to which our guests added specialty goodies with an international flavor. We, the Jubilarians, gratefully received gifts and cards expressing the prayerful solidarity among us. Outstanding among these were the artistic, hand-made gifts depicting African village scenes which Devota and Beatha brought us in the name of our African Sisters. They are now hanging in our rooms as precious souvenirs of our 70th Jubilee. *Deo Gratias!*

Sr. Cecile Berthiaume, SSCh

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