WE BELIEVE...

that we create the future
As we move with the Spirit
in giving full expression
to our giftedness as women in the Church
Sharing equally in its mission—
In living a life that is simple
prayerful
courageous and
compassionate—
in proclaiming with prophetic voice
the Gospel to all people—
in strengthening our corporateness
as women in community—
in demonstrating our belief
in the dignity of the human person
and the call to secure this dignity
for all women and men—
in expressing our solidarity
with the poor and oppressed.

IN FAITH AND HOPE
WE ACCEPT
THE CHALLENGES
THOSE BELIEFS IMPLY.

Sisters of St. Joseph • Brentwood, NY
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Featured in this issue

Seeds of new birth
Beyond the storm,
Beyond the winter
it ushers in,
we see the new
awakened world,
the birth of
all the seeds,
the outburst as of a
Spring in humanity.

— STOPFORD AUGUSTUS BROOKE, 1907
Adapted

Participants in the St. Joseph Worker program sow seeds of new birth.

Former Mary Louis Academy Convent became home for newly opened St. Joseph Worker program.
FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends,

During these days of winter, we rely on faith that the seeds buried beneath the frozen earth have the potential to grow and flourish when the warmth of spring returns. In this issue of Focusing you will find tangible signs of growth and new life. Seeds, sprung from our congregation’s tradition to welcome the neighbor, meet the needs of the time and foster unity with ever-expanding relationships, yield hope and new life in many different ways.

Committed to welcoming our neighbor, we have worked with a number of religious and civil organizations to build bridges counteracting fear, poverty and exclusion, especially for our immigrant brothers and sisters. Of course, we realize that we all can do more. Our ongoing commitment to protect our Brentwood land, held in sacred trust, has resulted in the discovery of a woodland treasure. You would be amazed at the wealth of life in these pristine woodlands demanding our attention and care.

The joy-filled opening of our St. Joseph Worker volunteer program is an exciting expansion of relationships with young people who are committed to service and developing their spirituality and leadership potential through the lens of our history and mission. Aware that many young adults hunger to gather and build relationships, our young adult ministry is offering opportunities for meaningful conversation, prayer, retreat time and ways to explore their faith and vocation.

Seeds planted by our congregation almost ninety years ago have borne fruit in the lives of young women at Academia Maria Reina. Supported by the outstanding contributions of so many, they responded to the devastation of Hurricane Maria by restoring and replanting ravaged areas. As our founding sisters taught Christian Doctrine in schools and prisons and opened the first Catholic Nurse’s Training School on the island, our sisters and students in today’s schools also have met new needs with enthusiasm and great joy.

It is from the smiles on their faces that all of our Sister Jubilarians enjoyed their special celebration in Sacred Heart Chapel. The 50th anniversary of Maria Regina was another outstanding witness to our mission of hospitality, healing and hope. As you enjoy this issue we hope that it will bring you some joy and engender hope that all of our endeavors are a source of new life for so many. We are grateful for your interest and support as you view the images of “Seeds of New Birth” depicting our new Solar Array and our presence at the UN. We pray that you experience hope and joy in your own lives.

Sister Helen Kearney, CSJ
Thoughts from the Garden

Heather Ganz, Co-Minister

I relish the opportunity to sift through the seed catalogs this time each year and choose the varieties that we will plant in our garden. As we browse through the newsprint pages, we are greeted by names like pink princess, bull’s blood, deer tongue, royal burgundy, bright lights, silver slicer, early wonder, blushed butter, sun gold, and glacier. These magical names are matched only by the carefully crafted descriptions of the plants that feel a bit like a conversation at the kitchen table over a cup of hot tea.

I feel such anticipation of the arrival of these seeds, and once they are at the garden, I itch to plant them. My response to seeds is almost always one that gazes into the future. Planting seeds is an act of hope for a tomorrow that is not promised but somehow believed. As I peer through this window into that tomorrow, something triggers a backward glance, and I see generations of window gazers, gardeners, seed savers and dreamers who came before me. Every seed is not only a tiny powerhouse of potential and possibility, but a tangible present from the past that is filled with the generosity, care and self-gift of the lives that came before.

I am holding some Long Island cheese pumpkin seeds as I write. These are seeds we saved from our own harvest this autumn, a harvest that was planted only because of the generosity of a friend who shared his seeds with us. Gratitude wells up within me when I recognize the abundance of generosity and forethought of our ancestors. I don’t know how far back this cycle of seed saving, growing, harvesting, saving, sharing and planting again goes, but when I reflect on all of the life that brought these seeds to my hands today, I can do little but pause in utter amazement.

The vulnerability of amazement opens the door to a deep sorrow. My grief is because of the knowledge that the majority of our global seed supply is controlled by only three major corporations and that the diversity of our seeds has dwindled significantly in just a couple of generations. To whom are we entrusting these sacred carriers of life that we borrow from our descendents?

As a gardener, as a teacher, and as a human being, it is one of my greatest responsibilities to plant seeds. This means I must nurture the soil and trust that the diversity of life within will be enough to sustain the seeds I plant. I know that despite my very best efforts, some seeds are not viable, some soil is not healthy, some seeds will be eaten and some will wither and die. I remember the ancestors who glanced through the window into an uncertain tomorrow, and as I sit here in that tomorrow with beckoning seeds in my hand, I glance ahead to a tomorrow that is equally uncertain. Some seeds will not survive, some will simply grow, and others will flourish. I plant them anyway.
The gifts of nature, once lost, are often gone forever. In the case of the pristine woodlands on our Brentwood campus, we have come to know that the loss would have far-reaching consequences. Formed by a unique set of geological conditions over the past 15,000 years, our 40 acres of woodlands overlie large quantities of pure drinking water on Long Island and boast a great diversity of trees, plants, and birds.

Two hundred years ago, pine tree woodlands blanketed one-fourth of Long Island, assuring a plentiful supply of clean water. Today, much of that land has been developed, and our water supply has been diminished. Our Congregation initiated the work to assure that our ecologically sensitive land will be preserved, as well as the drinking water supplies below, leaving Long Island with a pure supply of water for our neighbors and future generations. The work began by forming a new relationship with the woodlands and all of the land on our Brentwood campus.

“There are two things that interest me: the relation of people to each other, and the relation of people to land.”
—Aldo Leopold

Indeed, the relationships we have with each other and the relationships we have with places help to define our lives. We recognize the importance of relationships to our local neighbors and to the global neighborhood of Earth. Through the traditional ministries of service to humanity, our Congregation has a long history of caring for “the dear neighbor.” Now there is a growing appreciation for the web of relationships that connects all beings and awareness that a right relationship with Earth has the highest priority. This awareness led our Congregation to affirm a Land Ethic Statement in 2015 and to formally accept responsibility for the land that we hold in sacred trust.

“To love a person or a place is to accept moral responsibility for its well-being.”
—Kathleen Dean Moore

We love our Brentwood campus, known as the Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and we know many of you do too. We have always loved it for its history, memories, and influential impact on the lives of so many, but we have come to love it for the inspirational landscape, the birds and creatures that call it home, the native trees and vegetation, and the prime agricultural soil. Coalescing around shared memories and diverse perspectives, our voices and actions will help the land ethic continue its evolution, weaving it into the fabric of our Long Island bioregion through the many relationships in which we all engage.

“We commit ourselves... to research options such as land trusts, easements, deed restrictions, and the transfer or selling of development rights in order to determine the best way to preserve the land that we hold in sacred trust.”
—Sisters of St. Joseph Land Ethic Statement
Saving Long Island’s Premier Ecosystem

Our Brentwood land is a 212-acre parcel that contains significant natural and community resources. The Congregation chose to collaborate with the Peconic Land Trust (PLT) as we endeavor to protect the land that we hold in sacred trust. The PLT staff conducted an analysis of the land based on the soils, vegetation, woodland quality, built structures, and historical land uses. As they evaluated the special features of the land they recommended conservation options to protect the unique environmental features in the context of our Land Ethic Statement. In collaboration with Suffolk County, we are in the final stages of preserving 28 acres of working farms in perpetuity through a permanent agricultural easement on our property. Our farming initiatives have increased access to and consumption of healthy, organic, and locally-grown produce for our Brentwood neighbors and the surrounding community.

The mission to preserve the Brentwood woodlands is a continued response to our land ethic commitment to protect valuable natural areas with a vision toward a healthy and sustainable natural environment that supports the viability of our community and neighbors. The campus is located in a community designated by the state as an “environmental justice” area, a low-income and minority community that suffers from disproportionate exposure to potentially hazardous land uses. It is well documented that some of the most polluted environments in America are where people of color live, work, play, and pray.

“This area (woodlands) should be protected as a high priority. Fencing, buffer plantings, and trail systems should be considered to highlight this significant Long Island forest remnant.” —PLT Recommendation

New York State also designates significant natural communities throughout the state that contain high-quality natural resources, habitats, ecosystems, and other ecological areas. One such significant natural community is located less than a half mile to the west of our campus at the Edgewood Oak Brush Plains Preserve. This preserve is designated as a significant natural community because it contains three state-threatened and one state-endangered plant species. It was also designated by Long Island Regional Planning as a critical environment for its benefit to human health and its protection of the drinking water supply. Assemblyman Steven Englebright noted the work of the Sisters of St. Joseph and the unique characteristics of our woodlands at a NYS Assembly Hearing.

“Another thing you (the Sisters of St. Joseph) have done is inventory the woodland on your property. The shrub and herb layer of your forest is completely pristine and intact. It is a botanical rarity to say the least and for its size it is unique. It is the largest privately held vestige of one of the major terrestrial ecosystems of Long Island that still remains. And you are caring for it so lovingly that I just wanted to make comment and congratulate you. It is a part of our Pine Barrens known as the Edgewood Oak Brush Plains which is a Shrub Savannah and it is an ecological museum piece that you have labored to both understand scientifically and to protect for the long-term.”

—NYS Assemblyman Steven Englebright
The descriptive findings of a recently conducted Environmental Critical Issues Analysis study and the observations of Land Ecologist Rusty Schmidt are presented here as an overview of the pristine woodlands on our Brentwood campus. The parcels provide suitable habitat for general wildlife species such as small mammals and a limited number of reptiles and amphibians. The grey squirrel, which is adapted to mixed forests and suburban environments, is readily observed during a visit. Other species found in the parcels include eastern cottontail, white-footed mouse, eastern chipmunk, northern redback salamander, and garter snake. The woodlands are located within the range of the federally protected northern long-eared bat, a small bat that is distinguished by its long ears and recently listed (April 2015) as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The State of New York is in the “Atlantic Flyway,” a migratory route that generally follows the Atlantic Coast of North America. Several common species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act were identified in our Brentwood woodlands, including mourning dove, downy woodpecker, American robin, blue jay, northern cardinal, and mocking bird. A pair of resident red-tailed hawks was also observed within the trees!

The Brentwood campus has a 40-acre track of woods that is a high quality Pitch Pine, Oak, and Heath forest type with an understory of sassafras, huckleberry, and blueberry. High quality in that it is dominated by the native species found in that woodland type and has very few (< 10%) invasive species within its bounds. Ground cover species include spotted wintergreen as well as seedlings of the aforementioned tree species. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation lists spotted wintergreen as “Exploitably Vulnerable.” Protecting the diversity of the woodland that promotes healthy ecosystems, diversifies flora and fauna, becomes more sustainable toward forest disease, and represents what was on the campus prior to the Congregation will best preserve the high quality woodlands. Preserving the land from future development will also prevent fragmentation of the ecosystem making it dysfunctional in terms of drinking water protection.

“When the story of these times gets written, we want it to say that we did all we could, and it was more than anyone could have imagined.” —Bono

Supporting land preservation and protecting Long Island’s purest source of drinking water and most important habitat can become one of the many important legacies of the Sisters of St. Joseph. All of Long Island’s drinking water is drawn from aquifers that have been designated as the nation’s first sole source aquifer requiring special protection. Depth to groundwater is only 10 to 30 feet below ground surface. The threat to water quality lies on the land above the aquifers. Any contaminants that the rainwater collects will be carried with it into our drinking supply. The quality of our drinking water depends on how Long Island’s land is used. The more land used for homes, lawns, and business, the greater the contamination of our aquifers. As Long Island moves toward final build-out when all vacant land is committed to either preservation or development, the Sisters of St. Joseph are committed to the efforts that are underway to ensure the protection of a fraction of this ecologically sensitive land.

See article on page 23 about a $75,000 grant award from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.
The charisma of the Sisters of St. Joseph is alive and well as we discern the movement of the Spirit in our time and place. Some years ago, a group of sisters and friends explored the possibility of having volunteers in mission with us. Believing that our charisma is shared by others and in fact the charism is within many others, this group began to specifically study the St. Joseph Worker program begun in St. Paul, Minnesota in 2002.

In order to prepare for the opening of the program in Jamaica, Sisters Joan Gallagher and Theresa Scanlon, co-directors and S. Marie Mackey who serves on the St. Joseph Worker Advisory Committee, attended the Sisters Volunteer Collaborative in St. Paul, MN. The opportunity to gather with other religious congregations broadened our understanding of faith based volunteer programs and engendered broader support and sharing of best practices. By July 2017, we were sure of two workers and so we continued to ready the Mary Louis Convent apartment for the anticipated arrival of Jessica Brown from Portland, Oregon and Cheryl Cedillo from Katy, Texas.

The Catholic Volunteer Network has been working with programs for 40 years, providing assistance in recruitment and offering a gamut of services to assist and support new programs as well as existing ones. A national conference is held annually and local groups are gathered together in regions to share best practices for the four pillars: Spirituality, Leadership, Justice and Community.

As we began the SJW year in August 2017, we had many resources and much support to offer Jessie and Cheryl. During the week of orientation three days were spent with the two SJWs from Philadelphia and their director, S. Julie Fertsch, SSJ. Days of reflection and activities opened their hearts and minds to the critical aspects of the SJWP as well as to the charism and mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Each group ended the orientation with a commissioning ceremony at the respective St. Joseph Worker Houses. Ministry and service are the essence of the program and both Jessie and Cheryl have found that their ministry positions are challenging and rewarding; inspiring and moving; energizing and exhausting!! They have also commented on the deep commitment of their colleagues and their mentors. At present Jessica is teaching at St. Joseph High School and Cheryl is on the Hour Children staff.

Along with time spent at the service site, working through the other pillars of Spirituality, Community and Leadership has been unfolding. Monthly program days of Spirituality and service have been held, opportunities for building relationships and learning about each other as they share community are a part of each day. Weekly sharing of the heart with the co-directors, and with the local SJWs and more recently with the larger SJW group at the national gathering in Orange, CA, have brought Jessie and Cheryl to a deeper level of commitment and has enhanced their relationship with God.

The 2nd annual gathering of the St. Joseph Workers and the staff of the five sites was held in the motherhouse of the CSJ's of Orange, CA from January 12 - January 15. The young women had great fun and enjoyed getting to know 19 other young women experiencing the program according to the same aspects and according to the CSJ charism. The three days were well planned and there was a variety in the schedule each day: small group discussions, sharing breakfast at the SJW apartment in a wing of the Motherhouse, opportunity to see the beach, walking to the town, visiting the beautiful gardens on the grounds.

There were two special events. The LA Freedom Walk at Blessed Sacrament Church in Hollywood to “End Human Trafficking” and stand in solidarity with the interfaith leaders, parishioners, young people and survivors of trafficking was one special event. Afterwards, the group was treated to baked goods at the Homeboy Café in downtown LA where we met a young former gang member who had been arrested at 16 and was incarcerated for 16 years. When an acquaintance directed him to Homeboy Industries, he found hope and love. His story captivated us all. We celebrated his new found life and the work of the organization which has saved so many young lives. Homeboy Industries was founded by Father Gregory Boyle, SJ, the author of Tattoos On The Heart and it one of the ministry sites for the Los Angeles St. Joseph Workers.

In the next few months, our SJW planned days include The Enneagram Workshop with the SJWs from Philadelphia and four Franciscan Volunteers on Feb. 1; UN visit with other SJWs and S. Justine Senapati CSJ, the UNNGO for the Federation during the Committee on the Status of Women week in March; and National Catholic Sisters Week events also in March. Cheryl and Jessie have also been taking advantage of other networking opportunities including Theology on Tap, Time out Tuesdays and CatholicNYC.org. More details can be found at http://brentwoodcsj.org/ways-to-join-us/st-joseph-the-worker-program/ where monthly progress is posted! We can say our charisma is alive and well and living in our new St. Joseph Worker program.

At Homeboy Industries, LA
The Sisters of Saint Joseph did not coin the phrase “Build bridges, not walls.” But that phrase is a good 21st century adaptation of the mission of “Uniting all in God’s Love” which Sisters and Associates strive to live every day. As the year 2018 began and resolutions were the order of the day, I thought of the Gospel story that makes Jesus’ mission clear to us. (Luke 4). Jesus does not stray far from the image of building bridges, not walls, when he says of himself: “The Spirit of the Lord has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord and a day of defense by our God.” (Isaiah 61). Jesus intends to be Divine Mercy incarnate. Everywhere in the Gospel we see that Jesus clearly does not let those who want to build walls have the last say.

Let this article stand as evidence that Sisters of Joseph will go and do likewise - welcome the stranger and, in our time, secure reform of our immigration policies and practices. Mindful that our efforts in 2017 left more to be done, there are bridges to build and barriers to resist in 2018. See this article as more of a litany of commitment than as a list of good deeds. Feel inspired to respond to each action with the words: “We can do more in 2018.”

Sisters worked with each other to shape and ratify a statement of principles and practices that support our immigrant neighbors. Other public statements were crafted from this.

—We can do more in 2018

The Sisters of Saint Joseph continued to fund services for unaccompanied minors. Educating adult language learners at The Learning Connection continues as a sponsored ministry.

—We can do more in 2018

Sister Helen Kearney represented the Congregation on immigration issues at Congressman King’s Office.

—We can do more in 2018

Our interaction with other groups ran the gamut from prayer to celebration: gratitude for our gains and recognition of the community “heroes” in our midst.

—We can do more in 2018
Sisters got skills for “sanctuaryhood” - for being persons who offer safe space when immigrants are afraid and need support at critical times.

—We can do more in 2018

Sisters were willing to join public actions to speak up for people who fear for their lives and were a presence at the Women’s March in Washington and New York and at Unity rallies on Long Island.

—We can do more in 2018

Knowing that “geographic” margins are not the only way to shut people out, we acknowledged that poverty is the “great wall” that disempowers individuals and communities. It creates social exclusion, economic exploitation and frequently opens the path to incarceration. The Congregation co-sponsored the local Truth Commission Hearing on poverty in New York State and on Long Island.

—We can do more in 2018

Individually and as a whole, we were welcomed to participate with diverse communities of faith and action who share our commitment to inclusive love. We embraced the give and take of insights and resources that build the Beloved Community.

—We can do more in 2018

The Congregation became a member of Rural and Migrant Ministry in 2017 to end the exploitation of farmworkers locally and statewide. Their exclusion from labor rights intersects with immigration issues. We also advocated for the rights of supermarket workers employed by the Best Market chain.

—We can do more in 2018

The Congregation is, at times, both leader and responder in the immigration advocacy of the C/SSJ Federation and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. We are their presence on Long Island.

—We can do more in 2018

Individually, so many Sisters and Associates were part of the groundswell of outreach to our immigrant neighbors in action that heals divisions and protects from harm. A letter, a phone call, a gift of presence or goods, attending a meeting, being on a committee, is all it takes.

—We can do more in 2018

It is ever true that “Where a Sister of Saint Joseph is, there is the Congregation.”

—We can do more in 2018
Jubilee Mass of Celebration
June 11, 2017

Anniversary Luncheon,
Millerridge Cottage
December 1, 2017
In response to the constant pleas of Father Jesús Fernández, O.S.A., pastor of the church of San Germán, Puerto Rico, the newly elected Redemptorist bishop Aloysius Willinger endeavored to engage the Sisters for a school in San Germán. His good friend, Sister Alphonsa Maria Molloy, pleaded his cause with Reverend Mother Mary Louis Crummey. By early 1930, rumors spread throughout the convents in Brooklyn and Long Island that Mother Mary Louis was about to open the first mission outside the Diocese of Brooklyn.

Sister Rose Veronica Morowitz, an English teacher at Bishop McDonnell High School, was the first to volunteer. Sister Rosita Maria Cullum, a Latin teacher, and Sister Grace Edna Seiler, an elementary school teacher who had worked with orphans, also stepped up. A Council meeting was called. "Where is the fourth volunteer?" asked Reverend Mother. "Send her word to come to Brentwood immediately." The missing volunteer was Sister Maria Reparatrice Sebald. Having received no further word about Puerto Rico, she had gone to chapel and, trying to hide her disappointment, had prayed, "Dear Lord, today decides Puerto Rico. If you want me, you know where I am." Before nightfall, she was on the train from Coney Island bound for Brentwood. Her morning prayer had been unmistakably answered.

The four volunteers sailed on the S.S. Coamo on the feast of St. Ignatius, July 31, 1930—also, by strange coincidence, the feast of San Germán. Sister Jane Frances Dowling, acting for Reverend Mother, gave the eldest of the group—then 34 years old—money for their expenses. Two older Sisters accompanied them to Puerto Rico, Sister Saint Edward Murphy, directress of St. Joseph’s Academy, and Sister Saint Stanislaus Conroy, principal of St. Michael’s School in Brooklyn.

Their “new” convent, which they were to name San José, had a long history. Built over 150 years earlier, it was once the Hermitage of San Sebastián. It had also served as a barracks for soldiers during the Spanish-American war, a Carmelite convent, and lastly, a girls’ boarding school run by the Spanish Sisters of Charity who left following the devastating hurricane of 1928. The large building was considerably damaged, and all rooms bore evidence of heavy rains and exposure. Annals and histories record that it was a gloomy-looking, unkempt, forbidding house at the top of a hill surrounded by a ten-foot wall topped with broken glass for “security against marauders.” A huge broken archway led to stone stairs taken over by weeds. A thickly wooded banana grove had overrun the patio.

Over fifty years later Sister Maria Reparatrice, remembered the “heavy musty odor” that greeted them and permeated the whole building. They would soon find out its source. "Well, we finally said our night prayers and retired to our alcoves to enjoy the sleep of the just," she recalled. "Then started the aerial gliders in the inner patio. There were huge bats, smaller bats and small bats. It was they that caused the bad odor and that had stained walls and floor with their excrement. This unpleasant condition was to be endured for many years, as the number of bats was legion. They were harmless, however, and ate mosquitoes. Each night there was a bat fight. The Sisters shooed them away by swinging towels and rather enjoyed the pastime—except when one was struck with a bat before it reached the floor.”

After three weeks, Sisters Saint Edward and Saint Stanislaus sailed back to New York. “Before they returned to Brentwood,” Sister Maria Repa-
The foot of the hill stood a group of that we had to descend and at the church,” remembered Sister Maria habit and walked down to the of December we wore the white dress in white. Sister Jane Francis, Mother Mary Louis that the Sisters Bishop Willinger who suggested to their black wool habits. It was August 1932. “On the eighth received at her feast day celebration new habits with the money she re-served by the government, or who attended no school at all, the Sisters held doctrina classes on Saturdays and Sundays, and after hours on school days. It is difficult to imagine how isolated some of the districts were, and the Sisters each took a different area and traveled using any convenient conveyance: car, jeep, ox-driven cart, or sugar truck. They were not unlike their French predecessors or sugar truck. They were not unlike their French predecessors who, centuries earlier, were directed to “divide the city into various sections” and remedy the ills. The Sisters taught doctrina in the prison of San Germán, and may also have taught the lepers, whose isolated colony they visited, as reported in the early annals.

To reach the children who attended the little country schools provided by the government, or who attended no school at all, the Sisters held doctrina classes on Saturdays and Sundays, and after hours on school days. It is difficult to imagine how isolated some of the districts were, and the Sisters each took a different area and traveled using any convenient conveyance: car, jeep, ox-driven cart, or sugar truck. They were not unlike their French predecessors who, centuries earlier, were directed to “divide the city into various sections” and remedy the ills. The Sisters taught doctrina in the prison of San Germán, and may also have taught the lepers, whose isolated colony they visited, as reported in the early annals.

The Sisters took most things in stride, but the heat was unbearable in their black wool habits. It was Bishop Willinger who suggested to Mother Mary Louis that the Sisters dress in white. Sister Jane Francis, then Assistant Mother, paid for new habits with the money she re-ceived at her feast day celebration in August 1932. “On the eighth of December we wore the white habit and walked down to the church,” remembered Sister Maria Reparatrice. “Now there was a hill that we had to descend and at the foot of the hill stood a group of women and they exclaimed, ‘Las Palomas!’ The pigeons. The doves. The doves coming down.”

Sister Violetta Bagley, a nurse, joined the small community in June of 1931, and Sister Modwena Rochford followed in December, bringing the number to six. Bishop Willinger had petitioned Mother Jane Frances for three Sisters to assist in his project of staffing a children’s dispensary in Ponce, some 50 miles away, and she agreed. Sister Maria Reparatrice remembered it sadly: “Our first little community was severed. Sisters Rosita Maria, Violetta, and Grace Edna were chosen to go to Ponce. Their departure was like a funeral. The students, some in tears, formed a body guard as our three beloved Sisters walked through their files, to the car waiting to take them to their new mission…. Sister Violetta was the only R.N. among them. Sisters Rosita and Grace Edna immediately started their studies to earn their nursing degrees.” In addition to this work, the Sisters began a training school for nurses. Thus was begun the first Catholic Nurses Training School on the Island. For a multitude of reasons, the nursing school closed in 1948, but not before it had succeeded in putting nursing on a professional level in Puerto Rico.

In February 1933, six months after her election as General Superi-or, Mother Jane Frances made an official visit to Puerto Rico. The missionaries had waited two-and-a-half years for their first visitors from the motherhouse and it was the fulfillment of a long prom ise. Mother continued to make regular visits— even though on one such visit, she herself caught dengue fever and became very ill for ten days. Sister Violetta Bagley was the night nurse and Sister Grace Edna Seiler took care of her during the day. The annals record that “Although she recovered in two weeks, it was difficult to get passage in those days, so Reverend Mother was obliged to remain longer, while Brentwood worried.”

Though the hardships were many and the challenges daunting, the pioneers succeeded in laying the groundwork for the mission that continues today. “Where there is love and where there is joy, and where there is delight in your work, there is no sacrifice,” Sister Maria Reparatrice affirmed, “and that’s how we felt, in those first beautiful years in Puerto Rico.”
The recent hurricanes left Puerto Rico brown but after three months the greening of the island has begun. Academia Maria Reina still has repairs to be done on its campus but the school is up and running. Ariana Landrau, ’20 and Yaniris Figueroa, ’20, members of AMR’s Botany Club are doing their part to nurture the vegetation as they plant herbs and spices that can be used for both cooking and medicinal purposes.

On October 21 the community at AMR planted three trees in memory of S. Judy Burchyns. While needed repairs are happening in the Casita the art studio has been moved to a section of the auditorium.

When the generator is shut down to conserve its operating life and fuel, our sisters gather the community around the kitchen table. Some light is shared by battery operated flashlights and lanterns, but the real light comes from sharing the state of the heart! To date much of the island is still without electricity.

What do you do when spirits weary over the course of several months? As Sisters of St. Joseph you make a fiesta! Sisters Gloria Cruz, Minnie Torres, and Luz Viscot welcome family and friends to Maria Reina Convent for a party.

Solidarity and Support

JOAN GALLAGHER, CSJ/TARA ROGERS

The Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of St. Joseph Sponsored Schools have been working together to help sister school Academia Maria Reina in Puerto Rico, as well as its surrounding area, since Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated the island this past fall. Our efforts are aiding them, not only through daily prayer, but financially, so they can rebuild. We were relieved that all our Sisters in Puerto Rico are safe, and we have raised $189,475 to date to assist recovery efforts. At The Mary Louis Academy (TMLA) in Queens, donations were collected during homeroom and an online link for donations was created to enhance their fundraising efforts. At St. Joseph High School in Brooklyn, students sold water bottles and accessories for many weeks to raise funds. The Sisters and their supporters have been very generous with their donations towards relief efforts.

Sisters Jane Reilly and Joan Gallagher had the privilege to be with our Sisters and people of Puerto Rico in December 2017. The visit gifted them with the tangible witness of the deep faith, courage, resilience and hope that the Sisters and people demonstrate daily in their lives. The photos accompanying this article give you a glimpse and update on the continuing recovery and relief efforts after the hurricanes.
For Puerto Rico

The Sisters of St. Joseph Brentwood created and affirmed a solidarity statement for Puerto Rico in January 2018 which states as follows: We, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood, NY and our Associates, are inspired by the generous outpouring of time, treasure and talents extended by so many in the wake of the terrible devastation delivered by Hurricane Maria to the people of Puerto Rico. Our many decades of being in relationship with these strong and resilient sisters and brothers in our educational and pastoral ministries and in the dedicated lives of our Puerto Rican Sisters compel us to lament the absence of clean water and electricity and the slow pace of rebuilding and repairs to its infrastructure.

We recognize the contributions to the recovery by so many individuals, churches, schools, civic organizations, state and local governments, and those of the United States citizen Puerto Rican residents themselves. We condemn the political climate which has denied Puerto Rico the breadth and depth of federal assistance extended to disaster areas within the continental United States, which is having a significant impact on the physical and mental well-being of the Puerto Rican community and its sustaining ecosystems. We stand with all of those who acknowledge that the fabric of public trust demands that recovery efforts in Puerto Rico are and must be an immediate budgetary priority for the Government of the United States.

Anyone wishing to donate can donate online at brentwoodcsj.org, or contact the Mission Advancement office at 631.273.1187 x 150, and indicate that you would like the funds to go to our outreach in Puerto Rico.

Navidad en Puerto Rico means good food, preparing bacalaitos, singing, dancing and sharing stories with family and friends.

What better prayer of thanks but to share Eucharist with one another. As part of the celebration Padre Baudilio Guzman, SJ presided at a liturgy offered in memory of S. Judy Burchyns. S. Gloria Cruz offered one of the readings and S. Rosa, CSJ from Peru shared a Christmas reflection. After the liturgy gifts were distributed to all children, big and little, who were present.

On Sunday, we loaded the van with supplies to bring to 14 families living in tents at Luquillo and toured the island seeing the rains working hard over the El Yunque rainforest. It may take five years for the rainforest to be restored. Power lines still remain down, palm trees stand among the fallen, sands pushed up by ocean forces, strong winds that brought buildings down and blue tarps that cover roofs of houses were evident. Traffic is slowed by power companies working on restoring electricity.

The art work on a roadside wall expresses the spirit our sisters and brothers possess as they continue to work tirelessly to restore life. Puerto Rico will rise! Dios te bendiga!
S. Elizabeth Johnson gave the reflection at the Mass for those celebrating 50 and 60 years in the Congregation.

The 50th Jubilarians include (front l. to r.) Sisters Lucille Ann Aliperti, Helen Rooney, Virginia Elizabeth Down, Patricia Ann Dittmer, Joanne Marie Forker. (top row) Maureen Linda Sullivan, Katherine Theresa Burke, Margaret Ann Kelly, Kathleen Anne Loughlin and Helen Marie Kearney.

HONORING JUBILARIANS

The 60th anniversary celebrants are (front, l. to r.) Sisters Elizabeth Mary Gildea, Ann Marie Franklin, Mary Godfrey Majka, Stephen Mary Puglisi, Mary Eugenia Daley, Juliette Marie Houser, Paul Maria Filippelli, Saint Raymond Quinn; (middle row) Kathleen Mary McGonigle, Mary Ann Alice Connors, Mary Patricia Hurley, Joanne Amelia DeLaura, Angela Patrice Murray, Maryann Clare Flood; (top row) Joanne Feulner, Constance Kennedy, Angela Gannon, Patricia Anne Lynch, Barbara Mary Lynch, Maria Elisabeth Rypkema.
Those honored on their 70th anniversary are (front, l. to r.) Sisters Maria Martin Finn, Theresa Molphy, Patricia Ann Seaman, Dolores Katzenberger, Katherine Ann McLaughlin; (back row) Mary Ellen Noone, Mary Febronia Loewenstein, Margaret Theresa Maloney, Rose Lanzone, Maureen C. McDermott, Marie Lalande McMullen, Mary Florence Burns.

S. Mary Florence Burns reflected on the changes that have affected the lives of those celebrating 70, 75 and 85 years in the Congregation.

75 year anniversary Jubilarians are (front, l. to r.) Sisters Mary Margaret Daly, Kathleen Theresa Sullivan, Maureen de Lourdes Stock, Jean Philip Brady; (top row) Rose Ellen Gallagher, Virginia Chasas.

S. Edward Joseph Murphy (photo left) was honored in Sacred Heart Chapel on her 85th anniversary while S. Helen Kearney, President, brought the celebration to Maria Regina Residence where S. Francis Gerard Kress celebrated her 85th anniversary.
Young Adult Ministry and Vocation Ministry: Crisis or Opportunity? Both!

Marie Mackey, CSJ

Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics is the unprecedented report on why young people leave the Catholic Church based on the comprehensive national study conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University and St. Mary’s Press. The study surveyed and did extensive interviews with youth ranging in age from 15-25 who once identified as Catholic and no longer self-identify as Catholic. Faith and religious practice are seen as one option among many and most of the respondents made a thoughtful, conscious and intentional choice to leave Catholicism. This population is often referred to as “the nones.”

The researchers categorized their responses and found that three major groups became evident: the injured, the drifters and the dissenters. The authors also identified six major root causes: an event or series of events leading to doubt; increased cultural secularization; a new freedom after abandoning religious belief; a rejection of a faith that they believe was forcibly passed on to them; the conviction that it is possible to live an ethical life without religion; and a willingness to reevaluate their faith if presented with rational arguments or evidence.

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This study comes as preparations are being made for the Synod in October 2018 in Rome where bishops will gather to discuss concerns of the young. The theme, “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment, an expression of the Pastoral Care of the Church for the young, has as its aim to accompany the young on their existential journey to maturity so that, through a process of discernment, they discover their plan for life and realize it with joy, opening up to the encounter with God and with human beings, and actively participating in the edification of the Church and society.”

S. Marie Mackey, Director of Young Adult Ministry and Vocational Discernment for the Congregation, will be attending Cultures of Formation, an academic and pastoral conference at the University of Notre Dame, March 4-7, in anticipation of the 2018 Synod. The attendees of the conference will assess the pervasive cultural influences that form young people today as well as the end to which the Church’s evangelization and formation efforts are ordered. Also, under exploration are the possibilities for renewing the Church’s mission in forming young people for vocational discernment. Keynotes at Notre Dame include Bishop Robert Barron of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Nicholas Carr, author on technology and culture and 2011 Pulitzer Prize nominee, Katherine Angulo, Director of Youth Ministry for the Diocese of Atlanta and Joe Campo, Founder of Grassroots Films and director/producer of The Human Experience.

Congregational initiatives engaging with young adults include a program known as Time Out Tuesdays spearheaded by Karla Saltos (TMLA ’15). During her high school years Karla was a member of the CSJ Leaders Club, a volunteer at St. Joseph Villa in Hampton Bays and returned in August 2017 as a college mentor for current high school volunteers. Karla is also a Vocation Ambassador for the Congregation assisting S. Marie with young adult programs and social media to promote religious life. Time Out Tuesdays brings young adults ages 18-25, together for two hours about 2-3 times per month. The Fall Semester included evenings of interest in the areas of spirituality, relationships, communication, meditation and some social activities that included chocolate making and even two Paint Nights. Presenters included S. Patricia Hudson, S. Maco Cassetta, CND, Christina Sama Bommarito, Jenny Limberg Durkin, Lorraine Magee, Karla Saltos, and S. JoAnn Squitieri. St. Joseph Workers Jesse Brown and Cheryl Cedillo have also joined in when they are available. S. JoAnn also serves as Co-Coordinator of the program.

The CHARIS Retreat Program is in the process of being expanded to Suffolk County as well as Brooklyn. Average attendance at retreats is typically 25 young adults and local parishes are appreciative of the opportunities to offer something to their young adults that is affordable and substantive. CHARIS Retreats give the gift of the “forced pause” to young men and women: time off to think, reflect and pray and see where God is working in their lives at that very moment. CHARIS Retreats are rooted in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola and invite participants to share their own lived experiences and their histories with each other through talks and small group discussions.

NDVision 2018 and Faith and Service in the City: Vincentian Leadership Institute for High School Students at St. John’s University are two programs being offered to our high school students. These summer experiences are opportunities to explore faith, vocational options and put faith into practice by giving service to the “Dear Neighbor,” especially the poor. Both programs are residential and engage the students in prayer, reflection, theological topics, immersive faith experiences and growth in faith and leadership.

National Catholic Sisters Week 2018 will include a visit from students and Campus Ministers from the University of Southern California Caruso Catholic Center to New York. The group of 12 is participating in an Alternative Spring Break promoted by Vocations Alive! and involves meeting with women religious of various communities and doing service. The group of 9 college students and 3 Campus Ministers will be housed at the Mary Louis Convent, March 10-17. Their week will include a day at the St. John’s Bread and Life Soup Kitchen in Bedford Stuyvesant, a day in Brentwood learning about programs in organic farming and sustainability, a visit to Hour Children, a tour of the United Nations followed by a meeting with various NGOs and visitation with multiple religious communities.

The Congregation has been attentive to the reality of young adults and continues to roll up her sleeves and offer opportunities for discussion of pertinent issues, exploration of the human experience and vocational call as well as service to those in need. Please invite, encourage and welcome the Young Church. For further information on how you can support this ministry please contact S. Marie Mackey, csjmack@gmail.com.
On Saturday, November 4, 2017, the CSJ Associates gathered for their Fall Large Group Day. After reminding the Associates about the CSJ Land Ethic that was affirmed in 2015, S. Karen Burke gave a lively presentation of slides and discussion about the history of the CSJ Brentwood property, historical and area land uses, and of course, the memories of the sisters who lived there, who call Brentwood home. Of 212 acres, 183 have extremely rich soil -- amazing soil for Long Island -- and were being used to grow grass! Of 45 acres of woodlands, 25 are considered "pristine" -- meaning they have an understory of many generations of trees and plants, with no deer to nibble the vegetation! The land contains historical buildings, contemplative spaces, sewerage management, and the CSJ Cemetery.

Brentwood land use is indeed changing! Land was leased to 6 farmers, wells were dug for irrigation use, a farmers’ market was set up (that would accept WIC and certain food stamps and coupons, to promote healthier eating among the locals), and extra food was donated to the Island Harvest Food Bank to help the food-insecure. All of this resulted in 27 acres in full agricultural production -- including tomatoes for S. Clara’s famous sauce!

In addition, the land will be protected for agricultural use in perpetuity. Further, 4 acres were set aside for a solar array in the poorest-soil areas; that is expected to eventually generate 63% of the power consumed daily by the entire Brentwood plant. Constructed wetlands will handle septic waste; the CSJs are hoping to be approved for a Long Island pilot study for this "wetland method" of commercial waste management. A "Rain Garden" to capture and re-use rain water has been established, and a meadow habitat with space for pollinators is growing right now. Further, historic registry status is being explored, related to documenting the property for NY State history.

The leadership team is currently working with experts to create a master plan for these changing land use needs, to consider both CSJ responsibility to the sisters themselves and to the Long Island community in which they are rooted -- such that current use will not interfere with future use. The Brentwood grounds are part of the CSJ legacy and provide part of the definition of the CSJ identity.

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**Associate Anniversaries**

**Cathy Liberatori, CSJA**

CSJ Associates who made their formal commitments 20 and 30 years ago and the Sisters who have journeyed with them for 31 years are celebrated: Anna Damis, Donna Herrington, Maryanne Majeski, Tina Cafaro, S. Ruth Anne McHugh, S. Phyllis Esposito, Vernessa Gomez, S. Mary Pat Hurley, S. Anne Mollica, S. Joan Ryan.
BRINGING NEW LIFE TO OLD U.S. SAVINGS BONDS

With your gifts of financial support, you have been an “actualizer” of the mission and ministries of the Sisters of St. Joseph. You believe in the work they do, have been a partner in that work, and you wish to see it continue.

Because of your commitment to the Sisters of St. Joseph, I have been writing in this column of how you can make even a larger impact with your gift of support. Past articles have covered leaving a bequest, retirement accounts or securities to the Sisters. I have also talked about becoming a monthly donor.

Today, let’s talk about U.S. Savings Bonds.

Investors hold fully matured U.S. savings bonds because they don’t want to report large amounts of taxable interest on their income tax returns when they redeem the bonds. But if you hold the bonds until you die, your heirs will be hit with the tax bill. You could use a charitable donation to offset the tax bite while you are alive or spare your heirs from paying the taxes.

U.S. Savings Bonds may be subject to considerable income tax, especially upon death. Heirs who receive $100,000 in savings bonds from an estate may have to pay income tax on $50,000 or more of unreported interest. In addition, the full $100,000 could be subject to estate tax (on estates larger than $5.49 million in 2017), or state estate or inheritance tax.

How can I make a gift of my U.S. Savings Bonds?

There is no way you can avoid income tax on your bonds’ interest by giving the bonds to charity during your lifetime. U.S. Treasury rules don’t allow you to name a charity as co-owner or death beneficiary of savings bonds. And you can’t transfer ownership of your bonds to a charitable organization while you’re alive.

You can give your favorite charity a donation from your savings bond holdings by redeeming your bonds and giving the cash proceeds. You will have to add the accumulated interest to your taxable income, but you can offset most or all of that addition to income if you itemize on your tax return and take the amount you gave to the charity as a tax deduction.

You can leave your savings bonds to your favorite charity in your will. By doing so, your estate and your heirs will avoid taxes on the interest. To do this, you write a provision in your will that the savings bonds belong to the charitable organization when you die. Your estate administrator distributes the bonds to the charity for redemption. The bonds never count as part of your estate so there is no tax liability for your heirs. The charity reports the interest when it redeems the bonds, but because charities are tax-exempt there will be no tax due.

If you have any questions or would like to make a gift of securities, please call me, Jim Rennert at 631-273-1187 x150. I will be happy to help you, and all information will be held in the strictest confidence. *This article is not meant to be legal or tax advice. Please check with your attorney or financial advisor.*

James R. Rennert, CFRE
Director of Mission Advancement
Save the Date

Spring Luncheon

Liturgy at 12:30 followed by a Buffet Luncheon

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Award

TARA ROGERS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Sisters of St. Joseph Brentwood have recently been generously awarded a $75,000 grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The purpose of this grant is to combat an infestation of Southern Pine Beetle within our 40-acre track of pristine woodlands on our Brentwood campus. There are three areas within the woodlands that had trees infected with Southern Pine Beetle. It was necessary to fell and leave in place 100 trees in March 2017. The purpose of this grant is to remove additional infested trees, replace trees that have been felled, and thin areas to prevent future infestations.

Preservation of our woodlands is a crucial part of the ongoing environmental initiatives on our 212 acre Brentwood property. There are approximately 300 permanent residents living in the various buildings on the Brentwood campus and on any given day there are an additional 2,000 people on campus comprised of constituents, employees and visitors. Beyond the campus, there are 60,000 people living within the Brentwood community. One disturbing statistic is the number of people per square mile. Brentwood boasts 5,412 people per square mile, compared to 354 for the rest of New York State and 82 nationally. Removing and replacing trees affected by the Southern Pine Beetle and ensuring the preservation of our woodlands not only directly serves people on the Brentwood campus, but the benefits extend to those within the surrounding Brentwood community. Healthy woodlands will contribute to cleaner air and drinking water. This is especially important here in Suffolk County, where we rely on aquifers for our water supply. The woodlands also provide a habitat for wildlife. Its preservation is vital to the animal inhabitants that play an integral role in the local ecosystem. The availability of an outdoor recreational/nature area in Brentwood will serve as a respite for many nearby residents living in poor conditions. The open space will provide safe opportunities for communing with nature as well as engaging in physical exercise. In addition, the woodlands present an opportunity for outreach - educating the public on the topics of nature, wildlife and environmental preservation.

This fall, The Mission Advancement department welcomed Alisha Delisle as its new Grant Coordinator. Prior to joining the team in Brentwood, Alisha worked as the Grant Writer/Development Consultant at the Great South Bay YMCA for the past five years.

Alisha previously worked as the Director of Client Development for a marketing and public relations firm specializing in the non-profit sector; Grant Manager/ Development Associate for The Long Island Museum of American Art, History & Carriages in Stony Brook, and Project Administrator for the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City. She has a Bachelor of Arts from Stony Brook University and an MA in Visual Arts Administration from New York University. Alisha lives in Bayshore with her husband Douglas and two daughters, Amelia and Drew.

Alisha’s efforts compliment those of Grant Writer S. Mary Owen Mullaney, CSJ, who has tirelessly written and obtained grants for the Congregation for many years and continues to be a crucial part of the Mission Advancement Team. Alisha is pictured here with S. Mary Owen.
On February 1, 2018 S. Tesa Fitzgerald was a presenter at a conference at the UN entitled “A Human Dignity and Faith Perspective on the Eradication of Poverty As One of the Main Root Causes of Incarceration in the World.”

Alice McDermott (Sacred Heart Academy 1971) was awarded the National Book Award for the novel Ninth Hour, the story of a widow and her daughter and the Sisters who serve their Irish-American Community in Brooklyn.

Yance Ford (Academy of St. Joseph 1990) was nominated for an Oscar at the 2018 Academy Awards for the documentary, Strong Island. This investigation of the 1992 murder of a young black man becomes a personal journey since the victim, 24 year old William Ford, was the filmmaker’s brother.