Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends,

Beginning with this 2011 issue of Intercom the magazine will feature how and where the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati are ministering today in light of who we are as 21st century daughters of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and Mother Margaret George. We have a very clear appreciation of these two women; their journey was God-directed and their strength was in God. This then is our call, being true to the charism. We are to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus in all our actions, ever relying on the Providence of God.

Yes, this was present in our response to the Apostolic Visitation of this past year and demands our same attentiveness as we discern where we are being called now. In the Apostolic Visitation process we, as a Congregation, went deeper, identified with our truth, and responded from an inner strength and sense of integrity. Our discernment preparation for the April Chapter too can allow us to rise to what and who we are called to be for the future, ever relying on Providence. We desire to live authentically as women religious – as transformers in a world of change.

Our areas of involvement in ministry in 2011 have moved us beyond institutions and more traditional models of service to engage in new structures, where new needs are identified. This issue provides examples of evolving and ever-growing needs.

The five issues of Intercom 2011 will include glimpses into where we are serving and how we are adapting to emerging needs. As we do this we will be integrating the magazine with the Sisters of Charity Web site (www.srcharitycinti.org), providing additional articles, resources and photos on the site to complement the magazine pages.

We bring to this endeavor an awareness of the daily struggles people face globally against structures of injustice and dominance. Through our collective ministries may we continue to give Gospel witness and exercise more influence through our vision and voice, reaching those who hunger for kindness and care. The ministry of transformation calls us all. Like Elizabeth and Margaret, may we express our faith and love of God through our lives and our ministries, counting on God’s providence to sustain us.

S. Georgia Kitt, SC
Councilor
Mem-bits

This column by S. Benedicta Mahoney offers brief glimpses of the past, tiny bits of memories. Do you remember? Were you there? Did you know?

September 1969 – S. Ruth Jonas arrived in Upper Volta (formerly French West Africa) to begin a two-year study of the Mosi people. Her project, backed by the U.S. Office of Education, was referred to as “the twinned classroom approach.” In the ensuing 15 years, eight more Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati would do missionary work in one or more of these African countries: Upper Volta, Zambia, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Uganda.

July 18, 1972 – Cafeteria service in the Motherhouse dining room began today, replacing the traditional family-style service.

March 14, 1973 – The Mount St. Joseph Post Office moved to its new location on the first floor of Marian Hall in the former Academy gym. It had been across the hall since its opening in 1901.

Feb. 24, 1979 – S. Helen Michael Tuhacek was sworn in as a Delhi Township police chaplain. She was the first Sister of Charity of Cincinnati to serve on a police/clergy team.


In Memoriam

Please visit “In Memoriam” at www.srcharitycinti.org for biographical information on the Sisters of Charity and Associates who have died.

May our Sisters and Associates enjoy the fruits of their labor as well as peace with their God.

S. Anna Catherine North
November 16, 2010

S. Mary Cecilia Eagen
November 17, 2010

S. Marita Ganley
November 22, 2010

S. Mary Declan Browne
November 27, 2010

S. Agnes Patrice McGuiggan
December 3, 2010

S. Ellen Ann Gardner
December 5, 2010

S. Terese Sherritt
December 12, 2010

S. Mary Colette Hart
December 18, 2010

S. Armin Cooper
December 20, 2010

S. Mary George Forgach
January 5, 2011

S. Rose Adelaide Anderson
January 21, 2011
Three Honored with

Elizabeth Ann Seton Award

By Donata Glassmeyer

The Seton family motto, “Hazard yet Forward,” translates in two ways: In adversity, patience, In prosperity, kindness and At whatever risk; yet go forward. On Sunday, Jan. 2, 2011, Elizabeth Bookser Barkley, MSgt. John DeJonckheere, USAF (Ret.) and David Scharfenberger were honored with the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Award.

“We take this occasion to honor three people who have paid attention to the ‘Hazard yet Forward’ moments in their own lives,” said S. Barbara Hagedorn, president of the Sisters of Charity. “At whatever risk’ they went forward to carry out the spirit of Elizabeth Seton in unique and varied ways.”

Elizabeth “Buffy” Barkley significantly mirrors the life of Elizabeth Seton. She is “a model of faith and persistence,” S. Barbara said. Buffy was a Sister of Charity at the tender age of 17; yet, 10 years later she was called to be a wife and mother. She became a widow and raised her three daughters as a single parent. Like Elizabeth, Buffy is a teacher.

Those who nominated Buffy describe her as, “a professor of English and Modern Languages at the College of Mount St. Joseph, [a woman] who used her talents and creativity to develop courses related to spirituality in the Charity tradition. She and another professor worked with S. Caroljean Willie [the Sisters of Charity Federation’s NGO representative at the United Nations] to develop an interdisciplinary course which included a trip to New York and the UN. They integrated into this course an examination of the life and spirit of Elizabeth Seton, particularly seen through the landmarks of Elizabeth’s life in her native New York.” Buffy has written books and many articles about Elizabeth Seton, the Charity tradition and the Charity mission.

Several years ago S. Mary Marcel DeJonckheere’s brother John succumbed to multiple sclerosis. As the disease progressed, he became paralyzed from the neck down. Today MSgt. John DeJonckheere, USAF (Ret.) resides at the VA hospital in Detroit, Mich., which is where his close association with the Sisters of Charity ministries began.

S. Marcel describes her brother in this way, “John is a person who always enjoyed finding ways to make people happy.” S. Barbara remembered, “One day S. Marcel mentioned to John the needs of one of her students at Holy Family School (Price Hill). Three days later a check arrived to help the student. Then John started a fund that S. Marcel could use to respond to needs of the students and their families. John also had the idea to have S. Marcel’s students help him with his kind deeds. He sent her $10 for each student in her class. They were to use the money to bring happiness to someone’s life and then write to John to tell him what they, John and the students, did together.” In recent years, John also has made a number of contributions to Sisters of Charity ministries. John has contributed to Zafen, a Vincentian micro-loan program in Haiti, and he has supported an entire school in Haiti with tuition funding.

David Scharfenberger is one of the founders of Working in Neighborhoods (WIN), an organization that “harnesses the power of neighborhood leadership to build strong communities across Greater Cincinnati. Dave embodies the mission of WIN; he empowers people to make informed choices for themselves and their neighborhoods. He builds relationships that translate into working with the poor,” S. Barbara said.

“In recent years,” S. Barbara added, “Dave has spearheaded an initiative with the Social Action Parish Collaborative of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati to develop Catholic leadership around foreclosure prevention. In addition, he is involved in the Service Learning program at the College of Mount St. Joseph where he was an adjunct professor and the first director of the program.”

At whatever risk, yet go forward. Elizabeth Seton’s words reflect the spirit of Elizabeth Barkley, MSgt. John DeJonckheere and David Scharfenberger. May their actions continue to resound with St. Elizabeth Ann Seton’s prophetic statement.
Serve, Empower, Transform Family Medical Clinics (SET) of Colorado Springs, Colo., celebrated its 20th anniversary in October with a dinner and live and silent auction. Approximately 400 guests gathered to offer their gratitude and support for the nonprofit, founded by Sister of Charity of Cincinnati Barbara Counts.

SET was established to provide basic medical services and holistic health programs to uninsured and low-income people without discrimination. Since its beginnings, SET has expanded infinitely to include a senior wellness clinic, a family medical clinic and a homeless medical clinic. Throughout these 20 years SET has been a place where the people of the Pikes Peak Region can turn to with particular health care needs.

According to the organization’s Web site, at the celebration on Oct. 23 Catholic Health Initiatives President Kevin Lofton spoke to guests about the state of health care in America, and the need for the services SET provides. Vice Mayor Larry Small, on behalf of Mayor Lionel Rivera and the city of Colorado Springs, declared the week of Oct. 23, 2010, SET of Colorado Springs Week.

During the awards ceremony, S. Barbara Counts was recognized for her “energy and determination 20 years ago that launched SET Family Medical Clinics on this wonderful journey.”

“I was honored,” S. Barbara said. “It means a great deal to me, and it’s satisfying to see that 20 years later SET is still meeting the needs of the community. I am really proud of the people that have taken this so far. S. Barbara Jeanne Krekeler has been there for the past 20 years and she has played a great part in its success.”

S. Barbara Jeanne, director of operations, also was honored that evening with one of three legacy awards. Sister has been a staff member for the last 20 years, and “served SET in a selfless fashion. She is dedicated to improving the lives of the uninsured, under-insured and homeless people that SET serves.”

S. Marianne Van Vurst received the United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Cincinnati’s Gift of Hope Award at the organization’s December Snowball Gala. Sister was honored “for her years of extraordinary public service and outstanding contributions that helped turn hope into reality for countless individuals in need.”

“When I received the initial call I was flabbergasted to say the least,” said S. Marianne, who is president and CEO of St. Joseph Home of Cincinnati. “I do what I do for those who have different abilities because it’s simply the right thing to do. Will Rogers, humorist and social commentator, once said, ‘In order to succeed you must know what you are doing, like what you are doing, and believe in what you are doing.’ Whether it is ministering to the residents at St. Joseph Home, working with families, talking with individuals who are being served by Hamilton County Developmental Disabilities Services and its partners, or chairing the tax levies, I always know that what I am doing is helping individuals to realize their self worth and to encourage them to be all that they can.”

S. Marianne said her affiliation with United Cerebral Palsy began in 2009 after serving as the chairperson of the 2009 Hamilton County Developmental Disabilities Services (HCDDS) Tax Levy. The levy won by a 62.1 percent margin. St. Joseph Home residents, as well as many of the clients served by United Cerebral Palsy, use the educational and adult workshop services provided by HCDDS.

“It’s not about recognitions or awards,” Sister concluded, “but what truly matters is encouraging individuals to know that they can succeed if they only believe and trust in themselves.”
October 23, 2010, was a day long anticipated by S. Victoria Trinidad Anyanwu because on this day she publicly professed perpetual vows as a member of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. The day signaled a new phase of her journey as a woman religious begun when she left her native Nigerian town of Ihitte in 1995. S. Victoria’s spiritual hunger for membership in a religious community has taken her thousands of miles from her beloved mother. Yet, following her heart’s desire, God’s will inspired S. Victoria to persistently pursue her vocation. For this woman who shares a birthday with Elizabeth Seton, the Spirit has extended many gestures of grace and invitation. Looking back, she easily credits God with removing obstacles, stretching her vision, and giving her numerous helpful companions so she could realize her dream of being a Sister of Charity.

As a young woman, S. Victoria gained valuable experience and insight about service to others in her local village. Her father was Catholic, most likely the result of Europeans having settled about an hour away from S. Victoria’s native Ihitte. Since the arrival of Christianity, many social changes followed for the local Catholics. For instance, Catholics walked three hours to the nearest Catholic parish for liturgy. Cultural changes also were influenced by the coming of Christianity, and in particular in the Anyanwu family. The practice of men taking multiple wives, for instance, was not practiced by her father or other family members. They lived their Catholic faith with sincerity and devotion. S. Victoria learned about Creator God who was involved with all natural events and personal circumstances. This worldview stood in contrast to that of local tradition and rituals honoring many gods believed to be responsible for the world and its inhabitants. S. Victoria was always aware of both traditions and through the careful nurturing of her parents she became more and more confident in the power of the Christian God’s care and presence in her life.

In Nigeria S. Victoria worked as a social worker, gaining insight about social institutions and systems. She also experienced the many dimensions of service to others, helping those along the way to trust God’s activity in their lives. With the encouragement of local priests and women religious as well as Bishop Victor Chikwe she became a local spiritual leader for the children and teenagers, giving them instructions in their Catholic faith and supporting many outreach efforts coordinated by the Catholic parish. She discerned her vocation with the help of those who saw her potential as a woman religious and it was determined she should enter a community in Michigan. On the day S. Victoria left her family for the U.S., she planned for the car to pick her up during the night so there would no fanfare. But word spread quickly as the car arrived to take her to the first of four airports as she made her way to the U.S. Everyone quickly gathered for a grand sendoff. “There was crying as though I had died and they were attending the funeral,” recalls S. Victoria. Undaunted, she said her goodbyes and traveled 5,900 miles.

Of her family’s central role in her vocation and the public profession of perpetual vows, S. Victoria said, “I am especially happy and so blessed to be sharing this special day with my family members represented by Mr. Chibueze, my nephew, Mesomachi, S. Victoria Anyanwu (left) celebrated perpetual profession with family members.
my niece, and Mrs. Ngozi Anyanwu, my sister-in-law. Even though the rest of my family members are in Nigeria, Italy and Cameroon, they are all present here in spirit and are celebrating with me today wherever they are now. I am blessed with a wonderful family; they have been a precious gift to me. They gave me the unique insights into the essence of love, compassion and joy.”

Remembering first impressions of the United States, S. Victoria said, “the houses were all closed up and streets were quiet as a cemetery. This was nothing like home.” Seeing snow was also a startling first. She missed her native food. While many aspects of U.S. culture were fascinating and helpful, the distance from her family was a chasm of separation she prayed to overcome.

Initially S. Victoria planned to enter the community in Michigan where she could participate in a formation program with other Nigerian women as well as women from the U.S. and further discern her call. Ultimately, she planned to return to her native country and serve as a vowed religious. With her first community’s help, she studied, began visiting nursing homes and eventually completed a clinical pastoral education program at Children’s Hospital in Detroit. Her ministry experiences in Detroit spurred an intense desire to become a nurse.

The Spirit again surprised S. Victoria when she found herself living at Shrine Convent in Royal Oak, Mich., with a group of Nigerian sisters. Here she met S. Mary Alicia Bomya.

“I first met S. Victoria at Mass at the Shrine of the Little Flower,” S. Mary Alicia said. “One morning I was in the Shrine Convent kitchen making coffee and getting ready for a meeting when S. Victoria came into the kitchen and told me she was looking to enter a religious congregation. She then told me she was no longer a junior professed. I told her there were several religious orders here in Michigan. We talked for a few minutes. Then she asked me what order I belonged to and I responded, ‘the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati.’ Since I wasn’t sure she knew where Cincinnati was, I explained that we were located in Ohio. I brought some brochures to her about the Sisters of Charity.”

S. Mary Alicia invited her to visit Mount St. Joseph for a “Come and See Weekend.” She eagerly accepted the invitation. Of S. Victoria’s enthusiastic response to the Community’s charism and mission, S. Mary Alicia said, “I truly believe that it was an act of Divine Providence that put both of us in the kitchen that morning. We became good friends after our weekend trip to the Motherhouse. I am very happy and pleased that S. Victoria listened to the Spirit and is now a perpetually professed Sister of Charity of Cincinnati following in the footsteps of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.”

As S. Victoria made her way to Cincinnati, she was again blessed to meet a special companion in S. Mary Bookser. At the time S. Mary was the director of initial formation and recognized that they were about to venture into some new intercultural dynamics of call and response.

“S. Victoria pushes and expands our charism through her life experience, as a Nigerian woman and as a woman who lived among the U.S. Nigerian community during her early days in this country,” S. Mary said. “There’s a whole different approach to relationships and to life which can expand our understanding and acceptance of other cultures. For example, S. Victoria comes from a culture where things are dealt with through storytelling rather than a direct approach to an issue or concern. During my time as director I learned, through intercultural training as well as discussion with other directors who had international women candidates, that this is quite common among many cultures. Sometimes being too direct or pushing for an answer too quickly can lead to major
misunderstandings and even a lack of trust. There are deep familial relationships and ways of being and of celebrating and mourning life events which are different from our ways. There are cultural rituals which we need to respect as they are deeply embedded and provide stability as well as connection with her home and family. One key concept we learned early on is that sharing in a Nigerian meal is crucial for a feeling of acceptance.”

When her father died in Nigeria, yet another adventure followed when S. Victoria and her new initial formation director, S. Mary Kay Bush, quickly organized a trip home for the funeral. Her father was the primary instrumental supporter of S. Victoria’s vocation and she felt strongly about being there to commemorate his eternal life. S. Victoria’s family warmly welcomed S. Mary Kay, lovingly extending Nigerian hospitality. S. Mary Kay in turn reassured S. Victoria’s mother that her daughter was loved, cared for, and following a dream planted deeply by God.

S. Victoria has welcomed many firsts into her life as a Sister of Charity. She became a U.S. citizen in 2004. In 2006 she graduated from the College of Mount St. Joseph, having earned a degree in pastoral studies. She also pursued studies in nursing, moving into fulltime health care ministry in 2007 taking nursing positions with Drake Center, Cincinnati, and her current ministry at University Hospital, Cincinnati. To her delight, coworkers were able to attend the October 2010 celebration.

In the year leading to perpetual profession, S. Victoria met with a group of Sisters monthly to share their insights and answer questions related to vowed life, community, prayer ministry, and the future of religious life.

“The conversations with various topics were not only challenging but very affirming in the sense that we are on this journey together,” S. Sandy Howe said. “Being able to share experiences, insights and learn from the wisdom of all the Sisters has blessed me and hopefully my sharing has blessed their lives, as well.”

S. Annette Muckerheide added, “The ability and willingness of each person to share at such a deep and honest level made me grateful, glad and delighted to belong to the Sisters of Charity.” She continued by saying S. Victoria’s simplicity, her ability to question deeply in the search for the commitments S. Victoria treasures as God’s gift for their fidelity to call. S. Mary Jo was very much a part of S. Victoria’s special day.

During the past seven years, I’ve had the wonderful privilege of companioning S. Victoria as she discerned her call to religious life. The road has never been without challenge, but S. Victoria’s unrelenting desire to attend to the Spirit’s prodding is a remarkable testament to the simplicity of trusting that God will make all things well. S. Victoria has inspired me with her perseverance, directness, and occasional fun turn-of-a-phrase that animates her Nigerian soul in a uniquely articulate way. She is a 20th century woman of deep conviction, bringing to us the beautiful gift of Nigerian optimism that exudes confidence in the charism of charity.

At the beginning of the year S. Victoria visited her mother in Nigeria. A grand celebration of her profession of vows was planned with her Nigerian community. Her beloved friend Bishop Chikwe had planned to say the Mass, but his untimely death in October has left a void in the spiritual lives of all Nigerian Catholics. Demonstrating the continuity of faith in the midst of struggle so prevalent in Nigeria, S. Victoria imagined the power of Bishop Chikwe’s presence emerging during the celebration and beyond with new force, new hope, new life. Like the disciple Peter, S. Victoria chooses to emulate unwavering fidelity and trust in the sometimes stormy sea of living. In her unfolding Sister of Charity story, she chooses to cling to the ever-present Spirit of surprise, encouragement, gentle humor and relationship.

Editor’s Note: S. Marge Kloos was S. Victoria’s reflector during temporary profession. A slideshow of S. Victoria’s vows can be found at www.srcharitycinti.org/news.htm.
Pueblo Human Relations Commission
Honors S. Nancy Crafton
S. Nancy Crafton (left), with Sandy Daff, executive director of the Pueblo Human Relations Commission, was honored at the commission’s annual recognition breakfast Nov. 14, 2010. The commission is a nonprofit organization that celebrates, embraces and promotes the diversity of the Pueblo community. S. Nancy is the founder of Los Pobres Center in Avondale, Colo., which offers food, used clothing, limited medical care and other services to migrant workers.

Charity’s Sister – The Story of Sister Mary Joaquin Bitler, SC
Written by Mari Graña, the book is dedicated to Sister of Charity Mary Joaquin Bitler, who devoted her life to serving the sick and the poor. S. Mary Joaquin ministered as the supervisor of nursing, and later as administrator, of St. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe, N.M., which she built into a “state-of-the-art facility in its time.” She later opened a clinic in her hermitage in central Mexico to treat villagers. The book is “a testament to one woman’s profound strength of will, to one who always sought divine guidance in dealing with adversities in her own life and in the many lives she touched.”

Sister of Charity Alicia O’Connor’s engraved name, Alice M. O’Connor, was added to the Wall of Honor Monument in a ceremony Nov. 7, 2010, at the Delhi Township Veteran’s Memorial Park on Neeb Road. Prior to Sister’s entrance into the Community, she interrupted her high school education to serve in the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (W.A.A.C.) during World War II. She received the European-African-Middle Eastern Service Medal and the W.A.C.C. Service Ribbon. S. Alicia is memorialized with three other living Sisters of Charity – Mary Lou Anderson, Shirley Le Blanc and Francis Clare Pavioni – and 29 deceased Sisters of Charity, many who served as Civil War nurses.

On Nov. 15, 2010, five Sisters of Charity and one SC Associate arrived in New Orleans, La., to take part in the St. Bernard Project’s Nuns’ Build. With approximately 80 women religious from all over the country, Sisters Lois Jean Goettke, Joyce Richter, Winnie Brubach, Paula Gonzalez, Ann Hunt and Associate Elaine Krotine offered their time and their talents to help with the continued rebuilding efforts of the city – more than five years after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. The group painted, caulked, hung insulation and drywall, mudded, sanded, swept floors and helped a family move into their completed home. They stayed at the SC Federation House of Charity in New Orleans. Along with eight other Sisters of Charity from Nazareth, Ky., and Halifax, Nova Scotia, they prayed together in the mornings, and in the evenings, enjoyed meals and relaxed.

S. Roberta Westrick’s 18 decorative santos are finally home - adorning the reredos of the newly dedicated St. Pius X Catholic Church in Weslaco, Texas. Although Sister resides in Colorado Springs, Colo., she came highly recommended by St. Pius X parishioners S. Anne Darlene Wojtowicz and Associate Viola Elizondo.

“They was a most awesome event for me to see the saints that I had painted here in Colorado Springs, some 1,500 miles away from their eventual home, finally arriving and being so honored when they were installed in the church’s absolutely beautiful altar screen,” Sister said.

Crafted in Monterrey, Mexico, the reredos, as well as the altar and side niches, are made of lightweight concrete and covered with 22-karat gold. Each of the 18 saints is framed and attached.

November Nuns’ Build A Success

Santos Installed at St. Pius X

Book Dedicated to Sister of Charity

Associate Elaine Krotine

WINTEr 2011

9
Saying Goodbye

Villa San Bernardo

Step-sitting allows a 360 perspective.
I am a dot in the midst of profound beauty.
Majestic trees lift their hands to the heavens
While protecting next generations at their feet.
A canopy of light safely penetrates the breeze
Warming and greening myriad plants and flowers
Whose presence was sown by two or four-legged creatures
Inhabiting this oasis above, below and within.

Soft, strong hands – women’s hands
Gently crafted a hill into layered beauty
Entrancing visitors into paths of peace, rest,
Serenity, and oneness with the Architect.
Listen, hear their labor, feel the rolling sweat
Birthing beauty, shoring hillsides,
Laughing the laugh of the young
Dropping exhausted at day’s end.

Mystic intertwining of pioneer lives with mine!
Lacing us into earth’s evolving regeneration.
Humble – the touch of ages past to my present
And our simple dot in unending life anew.

S. Regina Kusnir, September 2009

In tribute to the wonderful women who transformed the Schatzinger Estate in Bedford, Ohio, into Villa San Bernardo, the home of the Vincentian Sisters of Charity from 1928-2004, then a residence for Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati until 2010. Their respect for the land and their tireless learning found them terracing a five-story hillside, pouring concrete walls, cutting sandstone for walls, designing the Stations of the Cross in the woods, visioning the Shrine of Our Lady of Levocha, building Lumen Cordium High School then transforming it into Light of Hearts Villa, planting myrtle and trees and flowers, creating an oasis in the city. All done with love and trust in Divine Providence.

Looking Back

S. Dorothy Ann Blatnica

“Five vivid memories come to mind as I think of Villa San Bernardo and, in particular, the Shrine of Our Lady of Levocha. These events touched my life very personally and were shared by many others who were present on these occasions celebrated under Mary’s watchful smile.

“As an eighth grader in 1960 at St. Pius X School in Bedford, I had been chosen by the students to crown the statue of Mary. The entire student body was transported to the Shrine for the annual May Crowning. Needless to say, it was an honor and privilege to be chosen, but little did I realize then that I would be celebrating there again in a few short years as a Vincentian Sister of Charity.

“The second and third occasions marked my reception into the novitiate of the Congregation on Aug. 15, 1964, and later my first vows on the same day in 1967. Hundreds of family members, friends and well-wishers gathered to honor Mary and to witness the commitment of fervent young Sisters at the Shrine.

“The fourth occasion happened several times during my years as assistant principal at Lumen Cordium High School. We celebrated Spirit Day each year with the students, and the day began with an outdoor liturgy at Mary’s Shrine. Hundreds of red and white balloons, our school colors, were released in honor of the Holy Spirit, our patron, who had so guided the life of Mary and who we Sisters prayed would do the same for these young women entrusted to our care.
Finally, our merger with the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati in June 2004 took place at Mary’s Shrine in the midst of hundreds of people who gathered with us to mark the beginning of our new venture. Our hope was to be faithful in following God’s call, as Mary had been, as we recommitted our lives and our futures.

S. Irene Hrosky

“We were the ‘old girls,’” S. Irene Hrosky recalls, when she and S. Dorothy Macey entered the Vincentian Sisters of Charity in February 1945. All other entrants were 13 to 15, and we were 19 and much more mature. They didn’t know what to do with us. We had finished high school and I had worked one year.

“As novices we did everything, even making roads on the Motherhouse grounds. We’d mix the cement and pave the road.”

S. Anita Maroun

“One of my favorite memories of Villa San Bernardo is on Christmas Eve. Our evening would begin with the Service of Lessons and Carols in the Chapel followed by a simple procession and singing of ‘O Little Town of Bethlehem’ to the Crèche. The Crèche, surrounded by thousands of angels, was set up in the conference room next to the Chapel. Once the Sisters all gathered, the Crèche was blessed.

“The Sisters, holding lighted candles and singing carols both in English and Slovak, proceeded down the steps to the dining room. Gathered there they blessed the Christmas tree and it was lit. For years S. Mary Ann Flannery wrote a reflection from the perspective of the tree, including where the tree came from on the property, what it saw on its journey to us, and what its hopes were for the coming year.

“The meal began with the blessing of Oplatky, a lovely Slovak tradition. Oplatky is similar to a communion wafer but is the size of a 4x6 index card. Each Sister found two on the plate before her drizzled in honey – to symbolize the sweetness of life. They were then broken and shared among the Sisters. A blessing was spoken as each piece of Oplatky was given away.

“This ritual was followed by Vincs (wishes). Several Sisters were asked to prepare these wishes ahead of time. We prayed for one another, for our families, friends and benefactors. We prayed for the poor and the needy. We prayed for peace throughout our world. And then the feasting began.”

S. Christine Rody

“One of my favorite memories is the planting of the myrtle hill. Villa San Bernardo sits on a rise and the property slopes steeply (almost perpendicular) to the sidewalk on Broadway Avenue from a height of about 15 feet to ground level, a distance of about 50 feet. When I entered Sisters Matthew and Ann Mojzíšik were the brave souls who mowed it with push mowers. They rigged up ropes to pull the mower up the hill and took their chances following the mower going down. Shortly after I entered (1958), it was decided to change the grass to myrtle so that life and limb could be assured to these two Sisters. The planting was the task given to the newcomers and we began with gusto. All the rest of my work time that first summer was given over to enthusiastically sharing the task with the other postulants. We had a glorious time out in the sun and shade planting and learning about each other. We continued the second summer as we admired how the previous summer’s work took root and bloomed.”

S. Regina Tevis

“In our Constitutions we stated, ‘We esteem Mary the perfect servant who surrendered herself that the Word of God might live through her.’ Mary, Our Lady of Levocha, stands looking upon our grounds, drawing many to her Son. Here pilgrims came by the thousands to honor her. They came with their trials, sufferings and petitions. They came singing hymns as they marched from the bus to the feet of Our Lady. Parents, grandparents and children came to receive blessings from Christ through Mary, His mother. There were confessions, masses, dinners, followed by devotions and a procession of Mary and the Blessed Sacrament around the lake. Children marched before Mary and the Blessed Sacrament wearing colorful capes. The day ended with Benediction, Blessings from Jesus, and the singing of the hymn: ‘O that I were bell. Mary’s name would tell. Ave Maria, Ave Maria.’ Pilgrims returned to their homes with a spirit of awe and with hearts filled with joy, great consolation and trust in God’s love and mercy. It was at one of these pilgrimages that Our Lady of Levocha was the source of my vocation to the Vincentian Sisters of Charity. Seeing the Sisters’ joy, reverend prayer and singing and all they were and did inspired me.”

To view a slideshow from the November 2010 Prayer and Remembrance Service held at Villa San Bernardo, visit www.srcharitycinti.org/news.htm.
The Love of Christ Urges Us

“Women religious are all over the place; in hard places; have long histories (in hard places); don’t leave when the going gets tough; do a lot with a little; and come to the table about issues that are not about us (women religious).”

— S. Carol Zinn, SSJ

In the spirit of Elizabeth Seton, the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati are dedicated to serving where the needs are greatest. We minister as teachers and religious educators, health care professionals and wellness providers of all types; social workers and counselors; environmentalists and consciousness-raisers in many areas of society. Sisters can be found working with migrants in Florida and Colorado; reaching out to AIDS victims in California; serving as pastoral ministers in Michigan and New Mexico; staffing clinics in Ohio and Texas; and educating adults in public housing projects and through innovative college programming. The love of Christ urges us.

In 2011 Intercom takes a closer look at the ministries of the Sisters of Charity. We will learn more about where our Sisters are ministering; their challenges and triumphs; their dedication to the people they serve; and their determination to meet the needs of our Church and world. This issue spotlights the field of health care.

S. Peggy Deneweth
Anapra, Mexico

Following in Elizabeth Seton’s footsteps, S. Peggy Deneweth says Elizabeth’s belief in empowering through education motivates and encourages her to carry out her ministry daily. Sister ministers at the Santo Niño Project in Anapra, Mexico, a ministry she and three other Sisters of Charity began in 2002 for poor children with special needs and their families. S. Peggy explains it all started after the women were asked by Columban Missionary Fr. Bill Morton to provide medical care to a neighbor of his. “One thing led to another and before we knew it S. Janet Gildea, a physician, was seeing patients in the kitchen of his house, and Sisters Carol Wirtz, Ann Dorenbusch and I were using his bedroom for massage therapy. Sometimes I think that is the way God works. He knows that if we just dip our ‘toes’ in the water we’ll get hooked.”

At the Santo Niño Project, S. Peggy helps the children with exercises and therapy while teaching their parents how to do the treatments at home. What she names as her most important role, however, is “being present, accompanying the women.” She calls it “a community where women can share their lives with each other in a safe and peaceful environment.”

“The women look forward to these days most especially now with the violence and death that surround them on a daily basis,” Sister said. “They have taught me so much about living in the moment and being grateful for each moment no matter what it holds.”

Serving on the U.S.-Mexico border is challenging. Although she is not afraid for herself, S. Peggy says she fears for those she has come to know and love.

The families’ strength inspires and compels her daily. Sister said she loves to see the spark in their eyes when they discover that they have the power within themselves to overcome adversity.

“Jacqueline, one of our Santo Niño children, came to us as a baby with cerebral palsy,” S. Peggy said. “Her development was slow and she could hardly hold her head up. I taught her mother and father some simple exercises to strengthen her neck muscles, arms and legs. I just said work with her here and in your home and she will progress. Jackie is almost 3 years old now and she runs all over the place. One day I saw her mom in the clinic and I said to her as her daughter ran by me, ‘She is a miracle and it’s because of you and your husband’s work with her!’ She smiled and her eyes sparkled. Her eyes said it all.”

S. Peggy Deneweth with Monserat, a child she works with at the Santo Niño Project in Anapra, Mexico.
S. Clarann Weinert
Bozeman, Montana

As the “living history” of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati in Bozeman, S. Clarann Weinert has found herself in uncharted territory as both the first Sister of Charity of Cincinnati to have a career as a nurse scientist, and the only woman religious in the city of Bozeman.

S. Clarann is a full professor at the College of Nursing at Montana State University (MSU). Since 1982, Sister has conducted nursing research, obtained sustained funding, and developed a recognized program of nursing research focused on the management of chronic health conditions in rural residents. She provides leadership for her research teams and actively engages in dissemination of findings in publications and presentations. In addition, S. Clarann serves in a variety of leadership roles in professional organizations, on boards, and as a consultant. She provides hands-on research experiences for undergraduate students, serves on thesis and dissertation committees, and mentors faculty and students at MSU and across the country.

Sister explains that her passion for nursing research was first realized while working on her master’s degree in nursing at The Ohio State University (Columbus). She pursued a master’s degree and Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Washington (Seattle), and following graduation, a position at MSU became available.

“My intent was to work here for a period of time, honing some teaching skills and beginning to conduct research, then move on to a more research-intensive setting,” S. Clarann said. “But God’s plan was not what I first thought.”

Her research began to blossom, and S. Clarann was able to obtain significant funding. She said she found herself growing into the role of a nurse scientist. Her rural nursing research program is now internationally recognized.

However, it was not always easy. “There had been a limited nursing research culture in the College of Nursing,” S. Clarann said. “The primary focus has been on preparing outstanding baccalaureate and masters prepared nurses, and [Montana State University] does that with excellence. Building in nursing science was not easy and sometimes a real uphill struggle. But we have reached a new level of integration and that challenge is much less prominent.”

As she reflects on St. Elizabeth Seton, Sister sees a pioneer who also found herself in uncharted territory, “with no well worn paths, yet with a deep belief that ‘God is so infinitely present,’” she said.

“In my ministry, I have often relied on the ever present and unconditional love of God,” S. Clarann said. “My program of research was developed where there were no paths. For the past 15 years we have been conducting the Women to Women program to provide support and health education using a computer-based intervention for isolated rural women living with a chronic illness. And hopefully we have made life better for these women and their families.”
As administrator of Mother Margaret Hall, the nursing facility of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati at Mount St. Joseph, S. Pat Saul says her ministry “is all about history.”

“Since its cornerstone, the ministry to our elderly Sisters has been our primary focus,” Sister said. “Through the years, we have had a legacy of quality care and presence to our residents. I find that a source of strength and comfort.”

S. Pat came to Mother Margaret Hall in 1999, and in 2000, she became administrator, managing the clinical and non-clinical care for its residents. Her responsibilities include the oversight of the annual budget, annual state survey, department managers, their programs and all daily functions to ensure that quality care is maintained in keeping with the facility's mission and state regulations.

“I most enjoy working with our staff to provide for the residents as best we can,” she said. “… Care of the elderly is a ministry. I don’t think it is a calling for everyone. There are days when the work and environment can be overwhelming.”

S. Pat explained elder care provides a different focus than acute care, saying with the latter there can be cures for diseases, recoveries, and new life being born. Long-term care allows staff members to get to know the resident, i.e. her interests, needs and medical condition. This enables staff to maximize programs, care and surroundings, so that each resident’s needs are met.

Sister says Mother Margaret Hall is blessed with a dedicated staff that cares deeply for its residents. As she looks to the future, with health care and financial components changing, S. Pat is challenged to continue to find individuals committed to the long-term care ministry – and the SC mission.

As staff and S. Pat continue the legacy of quality care and presence to Mother Margaret Hall residents, Elizabeth Seton’s spirit permeates daily life. “In caring for each other, I find a sense of Elizabeth’s own care and support that she gave to those around her,” S. Pat said. “I think as Elizabeth extended herself to current issues, she maintained her dedication to her family. Mother Margaret Hall is clearly an established home; yet, it is first and foremost a home for Sisters in such love and care as Elizabeth extended.”

Although she has ministered as director of pastoral and special ministries at Light of Hearts Villa in Bedford, Ohio, for more than five years, S. Regina Kusnir’s ties to the Villa go back to its very beginnings.

“When we [the Vincentian Sisters of Charity] closed Lumen Cordium High School in 1987, S. Helen Therese Scasny and I were asked to find another use for the building,” S. Regina explained. “We looked for people with needs not being met. We found there was a niche of seniors who couldn’t live alone but didn’t need full-scale nursing home services. Light of Hearts Villa was developed to fulfill that need.”

Along with S. Estelle Chopnak, SCN, S. Regina provides spiritual opportunities in formal and informal settings. Ministering at a faith-based residence, she focuses on the spiritual growth of each person. “Residents do not allow their health issues to become the focus of their lives,” she said. “We get to know them as people; and do things that let them see their gifts come out.”

As the needs of various generations continue to change, S. Regina said a number of their newer residents are more socially active and computer literate. This requires constant creativity on her end, and in the way Light of Hearts Villa delivers services, something she truly enjoys.

In addition, S. Regina says the Villa tries to engage seniors in the greater community to come in for the spiritual and interactive programs. “We are a neighborhood facility,” she said. “The Villa was founded to meet the needs that God lets us see (St. Vincent de Paul). That is the driving force behind
the way care is delivered, and what we look for in our staff.”

One of her greatest joys is experiencing the people at Light of Hearts Villa. “Our hope more than 20 years ago was that the Villa would become home and those entering would be light of heart when they are here,” she explained. “When people have to give up their independence it is a great sorrow, but if they can come to a place where they are welcome, where they can meet new friends, where they can be at peace and feel at home – what more can we ask for?”

Although there is deep sorrow felt after losing a resident, it is those lasting relationships that make the ministry for S. Regina. “One of the beautiful things Elizabeth expressed in her writings was relationships are based on faith and meant to be deep and true,” S. Regina said. “My experiences at the Villa, among the staff and residents here, are deep, faith-based relationships. It brings a sense of joy and trust and it allows for teasing and laughter. In all of that is where we experience God.”

S. Carol Wirtz
El Paso, Texas and Anapra, Mexico

S. Carol Wirtz lives and ministers near the Texas/Mexico border. Since 2001, S. Carol has assisted with the treatment of breast cancer patients using lymphatic drainage therapy in El Paso, Texas. In addition, Sister also works with children with special needs and their families at the Santo Niño Project in Anapra, Mexico.

S. Carol says the most important part of both ministries is being present. “Elizabeth Seton accompanied many women in their illnesses and was ‘mother’ to many more than her own children,” she explained. “I feel that she has drawn me into this service and accompanies me. I hear her say, ‘Only do your best and leave the rest to our dear God.’”

In El Paso, S. Carol begins the lymphatic drainage therapy once patients are diagnosed with cancer, even before surgery, chemotherapy or radiation. She focuses on prevention and treatment of swelling due to the cancer surgery and also on lessening the side effects of chemotherapy and radiation. She says many times she accompanies the patient and family in a supportive role, even through hospice care.

“I value developing the relationship and accompanying them as they journey through a difficult and often transformative period in their life,” S. Carol said. “I also really enjoy the science of the lymphatic system, how the drainage techniques can bring such relief to the women and restore normal function, and seeing them regain a sense of well-being when they get relief.”

“Young girls with cancer are often seen by others as ‘so sad and sick’ or looking ‘sick and sad.’ Yet, seeing the lymphatic drainage therapy bring back the joyous, healthy girl! I love seeing their smiles and hearing their laughter! What more can we ask for!”

“While I chose my ministry with breast cancer patients, the ministry in Anapra really chose me – or I should say it chose us,” S. Carol said.

She explains about nine years ago she and three other Sisters of Charity began providing basic health care and alternative therapies in a priest’s home in Anapra, Mexico, a poor colonia just across the border from El Paso. Eventually they built a tiny clinic, and as more people heard about the massage and other therapies they provided, more started bringing children with cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, autism and many other conditions.

“We discovered that there were few services for children with special needs and so the Santo Niño Project was born,” Sister said.

At the Santo Niño Project S. Carol performs lymphatic drainage and craniosacral therapy as well as massage and energy work. “I teach the mothers to do these techniques and coordinate their efforts as a team,” she said. “I also just play with the children, feed them, change their diapers, walk to the corner store to buy them treats…whatever needs to be done!

“I love seeing the smiles on the faces of our mothers and children as they tumble out of the van when they arrive at the clinic!” S. Carol continued. “I love hearing their laughter and seeing the moms who have never had any formal schooling providing wonderful healing therapies to their own and other children. My very favorite part of the Santo Niño Project is my own little angel named Reyna. She is 2 years old and has Down Syndrome; her mother, Tania, is herself an orphan at age 17. I feel blessed to have become like a mother to Tania and an ‘abuelita’ (grandma) to Reyna since they have no other family.”

S. Carol says the most important part of both ministries is being present. “Elizabeth Seton accompanied many women in their illnesses and was ‘mother’ to many more than her own children,” she explained. “I feel that she has drawn me into this service and accompanies me. I hear her say, ‘Only do your best and leave the rest to our dear God.’”

Developing such a connection with her patients makes it all the more difficult to see the violence and danger that the moms and children currently face in Mexico. “It’s hard to make the journey across the border and to see the military forces patrolling everywhere,” S. Carol said. “I see the poverty increasing as jobs disappear and the situation becomes more desperate. And it’s hard to know that I have the opportunity to return to a safe home when others that I know and love do not have that choice.”

S. Carol Wirtz with Reyna at the Santa Niño Project in Anapra, Mexico.
S. Delia Sizler  
Juneau, Alaska

“I had been to Alaska on a visit a couple years ago,” S. Delia Sizler recalled. “Last year I was in a discernment period about a position in the Cleveland, Ohio, area where I had thought I would be in ministry. Then I heard a voice: ‘Go to Alaska.’ It was as if God had been preparing me for that change without my even knowing it.”

According to S. Dee, Alaska has the highest incidents of domestic violence in the United States, in addition to alcoholism, unemployment and isolation. With her pastoral counseling experience and friendship with Associate Connie Trollan, who 20 years ago opened Wellspring Integrated Medical Center, “Everything just seemed to fall into place,” S. Dee said.

In January S. Dee began her ministry as part of the extended services at Wellspring, a for-profit clinic offering an integration of quality health care services. A licensed counselor for more than 25 years, she provides family pastoral services to clients seeking supportive guidance for personal, relational and spiritual issues. In addition, Sister ministers part-time at the AWARE shelter where she is present to women and children seeking safety and a place to begin recovery from abusive situations.

Although she traveled more than 3,000 miles from the Mount St. Joseph Motherhouse to her new ministry, Sister said she has found community with the Associates living in the area.

“Each Associate is a real witness of Charity and Gospel service,” S. Dee said. “I am discovering by being with them how the new paradigm of Church also parallels the new paradigm of SC community that is emerging here. It is very collegial. Mother Seton challenged us to be ‘daughters of the Church,’ and this seems to be a 21st century response. The Church does not have many ordained ministers here, and the laity takes responsibility for the development of their faith lives and spread of the Gospel message by study and companioning one another. I see SC Associates doing this where there are no Sisters present.”

S. Therese Dery  
Dayton, Ohio

As a Sister of Charity of Cincinnati, and like Elizabeth Seton, S. Terry Dery, a mental health therapist at Samaritan Behavioral Health in Dayton, Ohio, says her clinical practice allows her “to bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and release to prisoners. [Luke 4:18]”

“I tread lightly for I am on holy ground as I attempt to touch the fragile space in each client,” S. Terry continued. “I pray for God’s help in bringing them to an awareness that the kingdom of heaven is happening in their very midst as they heal, grow and find acceptance. In return, their resilience, trust and quiet courage are a blessing to me for I receive more than I give.”

S. Terry has been ministering at Samaritan Behavioral Health since 1986. She works with adults (individuals, couples and groups); most are Medicaid recipients or uninsured. Her responsibilities include accessing, diagnosing and treating mental and emotional disorders such as bipolar, anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress. Her clients also seek treatment to deal with grief issues, addictions, abuse, violence, financial stress and job loss.

“I minister to the broken-hearted who need to be restored to wholeness and health,” S. Terry said. “It’s a ministry of healing emotional pain whether through crisis intervention or referrals to psychiatrists for long-term clients who are in need of medication.”
Her sense of humor and no-nonsense approach serve S. Terry well when things become overwhelming. And she says the rewards far outweigh the challenges as clients get well, develop coping skills, and feel more positive about themselves.

“I often wonder how Jesus felt after curing the sick,” S. Terry said. “I use my teaching skills to develop treatment plans and walk with each client toward change, dividing assignments into achievable goals. For many the journey is painful due to years of being imprisoned by repressing psychic wounds or living amidst dysfunctional family systems and toxic relationships. I marvel at their survivor skills.”

S. Anne Darlene Wojtowicz
Edcouch, Texas

More than 1,500 miles from the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati Motherhouse, S. Anne Darlene Wojtowicz ministers in Edcouch, Texas. A nurse practitioner, Sister has been with Nuestra Clinica del Valle since 1991. Although the clinic has 11 sites, some of which she covers regularly, S. Anne Darlene mainly serves in Edcouch where she focuses on family practice.

Seeing approximately 20-30 patients each day, S. Anne Darlene, who has a dual license certification, says her patients range in age from two weeks old to 97 years old. “We do not refuse anyone,” Sister said, “Those who don’t have appointments, we see them in between. We don’t leave the office until we’re finished.”

The clinic is the community health center for Hidalgo County, which is considered a medically underserved and health professional shortage area. Although she originally said she would stay for five years, S. Anne Darlene has been there 18 years – long enough to see patients she delivered marry and bring their children to see her.

“They know they can depend on me,” Sister said. “They know they can ask me to pray for them if they are in the room or at another time. I try to be there for each individual. I try to be where they are at and not go beyond what they can understand or can do.”

The ministry has its share of challenges. Aside from the closest Sister of Charity being in El Paso, Texas, nearly 12 hours from home, Sister says there is never enough time to do everything that needs to be done. She adds it is difficult when she is not able to help her patients in the way that they need help, for example finding a specialist that can and will see a patient. S. Anne Darlene says many of her patients don’t know how to ask questions. If a patient sees a specialist, they may come back to Sister and not know what the physician did or said.

S. Anne Darlene believes it was God’s call that brought her to Texas in 1983. When she first arrived, she and three other women religious founded Holy Family Services, a birth center in Weslaco. The center became a place where women, especially poor women, could have their babies in a safe, comfortable setting. Today the center hosts a range of facilities, including six birthing suites, a clinic, a classroom, a chapel, medical storage rooms, and housing for staff, volunteers, students and visitors. Sister continues to serve on the birth center’s board. She also volunteers at the center once a week after work conducting well baby checks.

“Elizabeth went where the need was greatest,” she concluded. “I may not always like being moved around, but I too am going where the need is.”

To read more about the ministries of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, visit www.srcharitycinti.org/ministry/locations.htm.
Living the Charity Mission

By S. Maureen Heverin

St. Joseph Home of Cincinnati creates a home for non-ambulatory infants, children and adults who have severe/profound mental and physical disabilities. Attention to the individual’s medical, social, educational and spiritual development reveals the uniqueness of each person. The Home, a nonprofit ministry of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, offers a creative, loving environment for those in the residential and respite programs. Compassionate care and respect for the dignity of life are the hallmarks of St. Joseph Home.

– St. Joseph Home Mission Statement

The missions of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati and St. Joseph Home in Sharonville (Cincinnati) meld beautifully. Sisters Marianne Van Vurst, president, Lynn Heper, vice president, and Mary Catherine Faller, program director/dietitian, currently integrate these missions at St. Joseph Home, which are both committed to:

“giving compelling witness,”
“building loving relationships,”
“sharing congregational resources,”
“daring to risk a caring response.”

The ability to “risk a caring response” is demonstrated in the capacity to look ahead, to be on the medical edge in providing needed services. In 1976 there was a desperate need for care of medically fragile children and older individuals, and a program was initiated for those who are profoundly disabled, non-ambulatory and non-verbal. St. Joseph Home was licensed by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities as an Intermediate Care Facility. It is the only home in Hamilton County serving this unique population, currently 48 residents reside in the Home with a waiting list.

In the 1990s the need for temporary relief for families caring for medically fragile family members in their homes became apparent. S. Marianne, as well as St. Joseph Home’s board and staff, responded by establishing respite care. The Harold C. Schott Respite Center now has eight beds set aside...
in a fully staffed unit for this purpose. This has made possible restorative time for caregivers, a safe place for their child when there is a family emergency, or need for medical care for the caregiver and for family vacations. Children from all 88 counties in Ohio and several Northern Kentucky counties can participate in the respite program.

From the stance of always looking ahead there is the need for a tracheostomy/ventilator unit in the greater Cincinnati area. The possibility of St. Joseph Home being part of this venture is in the early stages of exploration with the ability to serve up to eight children.

All school-aged residents attend either a county special needs school or St. Joseph Academy, an on-site school program for those too young or too medically fragile to leave campus. Residents older than the age of 22 attend a specially designed adult workshop employment program provided by the county.

Basic values that are apparent at St. Joseph Home are:

This is home for the residents. S. Mary Catherine described it this way: “We are visitors in their home and need to respect them and this very sacred place.” The importance and respect for this reality are apparent in the warm, home-like, welcoming atmosphere.

Each resident is assessed and guided to reach their potential which may be as simple as drinking from a spill-proof cup, rolling over, or going to a workshop or school and earning a diploma. It is quite noticeable that staff and volunteers talk about the “different abilities” of the residents rather than their disabilities.

As S. Marianne observed, “We want it to be a place where residents thrive, develop to their full potential and are comfortable.”

Volunteers like S. Joan Carole Schaffner find a new sense of life here. She observes the staff always has time to talk to a resident, calling each one by name and engaging them in an “age-appropriate manner.”

“For most it’s not just a job but a ministry,” she said.

Respect for life is apparent in how all residents are treated from the moment they arrive at St. Joseph Home until their death. S. Lynn shared, “When our children die, staff do something special whether it’s picking out a favorite outfit, choosing their special music, reading at the service, or carrying balloons to the cemetery … Funerals are planned and led by staff with great attention to every detail. There is always a theme that fits the individual.”

There have been ducks and bubbles and favorite music from Rod Stewart or Jimmy Buffett and so much more. It is often a time when family and friends discover accomplishments of their loved one that surprise, always inspire, and offer comfort to those left behind who had loved them. These are often brought out in the Litany of Gratitude that is part of every funeral.

As the grandparent of a new resident noted in a recent letter, she enjoys feeling “tremendous relief” as she observes “the care and dignity [my grandson] receives from the direct care staff,” she said. “We’ve struggled for years to locate adequate care. St. Joseph Home addresses the reality of those struggles as well as takes action to meet these needs. It is important to me to acknowledge what I observe and experience as a positive environment for my grandson.”

It is evident to anyone who spends time here that “Compassionate care and respect for the dignity of life are the hallmarks of St. Joseph Home of Cincinnati.”
“If you build it, they will come,” went the line from the 1980s movie “Field of Dreams.” Even before we had the opportunity to build an eight-bedroom Congregational house in the cotton fields of southern New Mexico, Sisters Peggy Deneweth, Carol Wirtz and I took those words to heart.

Our first SC Associate in Volunteer Ministry told us, “I want the experience of living with women who are - you know - older, more mature.” We barely got past the shock of being described as older when we met her mother and realized that she was younger than two of us! So began our adventure of inviting young women to share SC community with us at the U.S.-Mexico border. We have made it a priority, and during the past 13 years we have welcomed more than 20 women for periods as short as one week and for as long as four years. They have been as young as 16 and as old as 32 and have come from various parts of the U.S., Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist and “Christian,” they have wanted to share in our common prayer, our ministries and the daily routines of our lives.

Some of the women were discerning a vocation to religious life. Others wanted experience in service as they discerned a career path. And some just needed a community of safety and support. We have learned about other cultures, younger generations and different faiths. They have helped us understand the reality of young adults making their way in our country and the Church today. We’ve taught them how to wash dishes by hand and they’ve taught us how to develop PowerPoint presentations. It’s been a good trade.

Currently we three Sisters live with one Associate in Volunteer Ministry and two Associates in Community. We have built some structure into our life to provide spiritual formation, education about the Charity charism, and to help the household function more smoothly, but this is definitely not “the olden days” of community living!

Romina Sapinoso teaches kindergarten at St. Pius X Catholic School in El Paso, Texas. When asked what living in SC community has meant to her, Romina said, “The world for a single young adult woman can be flashy, fast-paced, and quite frankly, deceptive as one is told what one is supposed to be. Being part of the Sisters of Charity Community has shown me an alternative to this alluring but not always honest way of living one’s life. The Sisters saved me from just going with the flow of the world, from a life foreign to serenity and reflection. Their greatest gift to me or anybody who becomes part of this wonderful Community is the space and opportunity to get closer to being who I truly am.”

For Tracey Horan, also a teacher at St. Pius X, “Living in community has given me a model of what it means to live prayerfully rather than pray when I’m not busy living. It has helped me to stay rooted in prayer and a growing relationship with God when my first year of teaching has challenged me physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. This is not to say that life has magically become peaceful; rather, community living has taught me to redefine peace as contentment that comes when we recognize God’s grace in the people, situations and beauty God grants us.”

“Life with the Sisters is a gift. I find myself surrounded by women who I deeply admire and who call me daily to be more,” said Tracy Kemme, who is an Associate in Volunteer Ministry at the Santo Niño Project in Anapra, Mexico. “We offer each other support and challenge, and have a blast! Living with them has helped me to see firsthand what life as a Sister can be: exciting, challenging, full of love, extreme in some ways and actually quite normal in others. It has offered me a space to continue to seek God in an environment where my community-mates are doing the same thing. At times, I am fearful and want to draw back, but that is impossible when living in community with the Sisters. It holds me accountable to my relationship with God and to what He is calling me. It is a good challenge. I think the best thing is that living with the Sisters has shown me that living Gospel values in today’s world is more than possible; it is essential, in any vocation!”

(From left) Tracey Horan, Romina Sapinoso and Tracy Kemme prepare for an “ugly sweater” Christmas party.
One-hundred years ago International Women’s Day was launched, and today, Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati and Associates are still advocating for women who are denied their rights. Women throughout the world rallied in March 1911, while today Sisters of Charity and Associates still gather and support women, still speak out for women, still march for women, and still celebrate women’s progress in Church and society.

The Gospel, the values of St. Elizabeth Seton, the United Nations Millennium Goals and the Sisters and Associates own experience of the need for dignity and human rights have made solidarity with all women an important ministry.

The following are just a few of the many ways women’s needs are still being met today. Through the Women’s Project in the Daniel Comboni Community Clinic in Mixco, Guatemala, S. Sarah Mulligan provides various services for women. The sewing project prepares women to take steps toward self-sufficiency. The nutrition program assists with the needs of women’s babies to avoid early illness and death.

Associate Lynnessa Gallagher of Albuquerque, N.M., has a psychotherapy practice where she helps women who are experiencing grief, trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder. In these times of violence, war, conflict, lengthy unemployment, loss of loved ones and separation, women sometimes need skilled help to get back their sense of self. Lynnessa walks this journey with them.

Sisters Mary Jo Gasdorf, Ann Hunt and staff have been speaking for women for 13 years through The Women’s Connection, a center for women in Price Hill (Cincinnati). The focus of the center is to provide support for change through education, empowerment and enrichment for women, children and families. This center has a large group of Latina women who attend classes and research employment opportunities.

After taking a Congregational Stand for women in the Congo, a committee of Sisters and Associates including Associate Christa Bauke, S. Katrinka Gunn and S. Catherine Mary Cohara has taken up the role of involving the Community in different ways to speak out, change legislation and exchange messages with the suffering women of the Congo.

S. Donna Steffen and staff of the Center Within in Milford, Ohio, gather some of the women from shelters to provide them a weekend of retreat. The women have the opportunity to find God in their personal journeys, to love themselves, experience nature, share with other women and change their lives.

In Lansing, Mich., S. Rose Izzo walks with women as they process their daily experiences. She helps them see healthy ways of living and relating to their world. In times of economic downturn, job loss and other kinds of crisis, Sister’s work helps women realize their own power.

Through the Sisters of Charity Spirituality Center many women have the possibility of retreats directed by various Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. Spiritual direction is provided by Sisters and Associates not connected to the Center but practicing individually or in other centers of spirituality. This ministry helps women to be grounded, find their power and the courage to speak their truth.

In 2010 the Sisters participated in the Apostolic Visitation, the Vatican investigation of religious congregations, claiming the wisdom of their experience as women of the Church. The Sisters took this opportunity to describe how they hoped their relationship with the Church hierarchy would evolve.

Sisters and Associates gather with other women in parishes to share stories, to pray, to celebrate their accomplishments and to help one another as they long for the day when their voices are heard and respected in society and Church throughout the world.

Until systemic change happens and women are fully integrated into the Church and society, these kinds of services will continue to draw women together to seek human rights for all.
Faith, Dedication, Zeal

By S. Mary Loyola Mathia

What is an Associate? The answer includes a wide variety of persons and their individual gifts. One common bond draws them together – the desire to know, live and express in their daily lives the ideals of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and Mother Margaret George. The Associates are women and men of faith, dedication and zeal who bring Gospel values into the “market places” where they live and minister. As joyful persons they live the charism of our founders. S. Delia Sizler observed, “Like the waves of the ocean their works have a ripple effect on the lives of those they meet.”

The following highlights a few of the Associates I have had the privilege to know and minister with:

Geri Anderson, Spring Hill, Fla.  
“Thirty-nine years ago I converted to Catholicism … I have been drawn to Mother Seton since. She is a saint with whom I can relate. We are both converts; we shared the vocation of marriage and motherhood and a love for helping others who are poor in spirit or poor in the material necessities of life.

“We have a Sister of Charity ministering in our parish, and a couple years ago, I found out that these wonderful Sisters share their journey with Associates. I was very excited to begin the formation program, and in May 2009, I was received as an Associate. It was a day, and an experience, I will never forget.”

Jane Burdette, Dunwoody, Ga.  
S. Mary Loyola said of Associate Jane Burdette, “She has been a great Georgia evangelizer. For her the Associates are an inspiration as they express the spiritual and corporal works of mercy to all whom they encounter in their daily living.”

Jasmine Coatney, Homosassa, Fla.  
“I started attending the Catholic Church with my family after my girls were born. I had a lot of questions about the traditions in the Catholic faith and that’s when my mother introduced me to S. Loyola. I joined the RCIA and it was all over for me. I realized that the Catholic Church was where I belonged. After I completed the program, I stayed on as an RCIA team member and continued to learn each year. My mother and I are both part of the Associate program, and it has been a wonderful experience! We have made friendships that will last a lifetime and the Sisters and Associates have welcomed us as family. It is a privilege to bring the spirit of the Sisters of Charity into our daily lives!”

Madeleine Davis, Crystal River, Fla.  
“It has been a privilege to share the good works of the Sisters of Charity for the last 25 years. I have always been grateful for my friendship with the late S. Francetta Hanlon. Besides creating banners, restoring statues, designing cards, and studying Chinese brush painting, I am a member of St. Benedict Altar and Rosary Society, as well as a former religious education teacher at St. Benedict’s where I taught kindergarten and Vacation Bible School with Associates Claire Wirt, Helen Duffy and Nancy DeLorenzo.”

Nancy DeLorenzo, Ridge, N.Y.  
“As one of the original [Associates], I have learned much and have been inspired by the lives of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. Vincent de Paul and Mother Margaret George. My first encounter with their lives came when S. Loyola asked at Mass at St. Benedict’s: ‘Is there anyone in the congregation who would be willing to serve as a lector?’ No one volunteered, so I timidly put up my hand. From that moment on there were many challenges which she placed before me. She saw more potential in me than I saw in myself…

“I now live in Ridge, N.Y., and have had the joy of being associated in ministry to the priests of St. Frances Cabrini Church in Coram, N.Y. The spirit of the founders still inspires me.”

Helen Duffy, Homosassa, Fla.  
“My husband and I moved to Florida when our children were grown. While working in Crystal River, I met the ‘Little Blue Nun.’ I wanted to die when she asked me to teach eighth grade CCD. Years later, she broke the news that I had been designated to take her
place as director of CCD at St. Benedict’s. I struggled through the challenge for more than five years but learned that I could do anything with God’s help.

“In the spirit of Saints Elizabeth Ann Seton and Vincent de Paul I have served the needs of the poor in various capacities, i.e. Habitat for Humanity, training others to assist in this ministry, and assisting S. Loyola in the CCD and RCIA programs.”

Rachel Edwards, Homosassa, Fla.

“While living in Columbus, Ohio, I became involved with RCIA. After leaving my Ohio church family and coming to Florida, I met S. Loyola. She directed our RCIA program at St. Scholastica and I became an RCIA team member. I have enjoyed watching and walking with so many people on their journeys to Easter Vigil the last 13 years.

“… St. Vincent de Paul was near and dear to my dad’s heart and I hope I can live a humble, charitable and loving life as Dad did.”

André Erlandson, Homosassa, Fla.

“I became an Associate because of my love of the Catholic faith and the opportunity to be able to live my faith more fully. It enriches my daily life and helps me bring God’s love and comfort to the sick and lonely patients that I visit [as an occupational therapist in the home health setting]. Two years ago I was able to go to Cincinnati, Ohio, and meet many of the Sisters and Associates there. Our group was so warmly welcomed and made to feel at home as we met with a number of the Sisters and learned about their calling and ministries. My oldest daughter also is an Associate and we are both blessed to be a part of this most special group of holy women.”

Pauline Gauthier, Crystal River, Fla.

“I came to Florida in 1993. At St. Scholastica I met and worked with S. Loyola in the RCIA program and later in the RCIC program. This was my introduction to the Sisters of Charity. Shortly thereafter, S. Loyola presented the possibility of joining the Associate program. It was not a difficult decision since she represented the best attributes of the Sisters of Charity. It has been three years now as an Associate; the rewards are numerous and the bonds of friendship invaluable.”

Jane Osterling, LaFayette, Ga.

“I have been an Associate for more than 20 years and my relationship with the Sisters of Charity has been one which has brought me guidance, consolation, direction and spiritual growth as well as very special friendships. I originally joined to be a support system for S. Loyola who lives away from her Mount St. Joseph convent and the spiritual nourishment I receive from my relationship with her. She has been a beautiful inspiration in my life and the lives of my family members. My husband and I have nurtured and raised 10 children (four on our own, two adopted, four whose parents were killed), and provided a home environment for a number of other children throughout the years.”

Katherine Plante, Homosassa, Fla.

“During a visit with my brother and sister-in-law, I learned about the Sisters of Charity. I was interested. I came from a Catholic family. We went to church every week, but I never knew the Lord in a personal way. Back in 1978 my sister-in-law led me to the Lord. With the help of S. Loyola and my sister-in-law, Terry, I became an Associate in 2008.

“I am in a better place. God gives me peace and a whole new attitude in life. It was in His planning from the time I said ‘yes’ to Him. Some things take a while. When the Lord takes you to it, He takes you through it.”

Claire Wirt, Crystal River, Fla.

“As one of the original Florida [Associates], I feel privileged to be a part of the Sisters of Charity. I was an active religious education teacher at St. Benedict’s, taught Bible School, and for the past 20 years have been in charge of the first Communion class. I also served on the parish council as president. In 1985 I worked with the St. Vincent de Paul Society to set up Daystar Life Center, an outreach for the needy. With Madeleine Davis and the Florida Associates we produced the ‘Hanging of the Greens’ to help with youth group activities. Although retired, I still find time to make baptismal robes for the parish, to visit the sick and to live the spirit of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.”
ResourceFull
By S. Mary Bodde

“T
he best place to work in the whole Motherhouse,” according to S. Rosemary Robers, is the Resource Center. She is seconded by S. Edward Rielage. The Resource Center, with its 3,000 books plus periodicals, is located on the second floor of the Mount St. Joseph Motherhouse.

Sisters Edward and Rosemary came seven years ago to help S. Annina Morgan, who wanted the Resource Center books classified by the Dewey Decimal System before she retired. S. Edward, a former librarian at St. Lawrence School, Cincinnati, Ohio, supplied that expertise and now also administers the finances, and S. Rosemary, the skilled typing. Both process the acquisition of books and periodicals.

S. Annina still helps with book selection, checking Amazon.com listings to get the best price. “She makes such good choices,” they both agreed.

Different locations and personnel tell the earlier story of the Resource Center. In 1989 S. Winnie Brubach was asked by the late S. Maryanna Coyle and S. Dolores Maureen McDonald to organize books and tapes on library shelves in the northeast section of the second floor of Seton Hall. S. Winnie catalogued books according to subject with a slim-colored band on the book’s spine. All books were shelved alphabetically within their categories. Pockets and cards were added to the back of each of the approximately 2,000 books shelved on one side of the room. The late S. Renetta Couch set up the audio and video tapes on the other side of the room. After three years organizing this lending library, S. Winnie left to work in the Communications Office.

With S. Winnie’s departure, S. Blanche Girard became the librarian with several volunteer helpers. When S. Blanche became ill and died suddenly in 1974, Sisters Annina and Therese Ann Reis began donating their free time. (Each had other part-time ministries.) Initially many books came from the Spirituality Center; others were donated from deceased Sisters. Containing more than spiritual subjects, the library was called the Resource Center.

S. Annina, with a minor in Library Science, and S. Therese Ann, a skilled typist, continued cataloguing and pasting pockets for sign-out cards in new books. They also made subject and author cards for a box on the librarian’s desk. In the mid-1990s S. Irene Luther, a librarian at Holy Name High School, Cleveland, Ohio, donated cards and catalog file drawers for a card catalog.

S. Annina remembers special Resource Center volunteers. For five years the late S. Mary Jerome Cremering and S. Pierre Habel replaced books that had been returned as well as dusted shelves once a week. Before taking on her current responsibilities, every summer S. Rosemary would help S. Annina go through the shelves removing books that had not been taken out in the past year. They were offered to the Cincinnati Public Library.

A visitor entering the Resource Center finds two rockers behind a round table displaying recommended new acquisitions. On the window behind the rockers is a stained-glass image designed by S. Mary Beth Peters. Handmade shelves in this former parlor contain biographies on one wall; lower numbered spiritual books on the next two walls; a special section on Sisters of Charity beginning with St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and Mother Margaret George; and pocket shelving for magazines. Back issues of the latter are shelved in boxes below other categories of books in the main library room where the card catalog and a work table for the two Sisters to process new acquisitions stands.

Today most second floor visitors stop by the Resource Center to check the “Joke of the Day” posted on the door by S. Rosemary. That is, if it earns S. Edward’s approval.

Editor’s Note: The Tape Library and S. Margaret Marie Anthony will be featured in the spring issue of Intercom.
For the past 15 years, S. Jackie Leech has enjoyed the privilege of ministering as chaplain at the Gardens at St. Elizabeth, a retirement facility in Denver, Colo. With approximately 230 residents in independent living, assisted living and memory care, she says the ministry has been “very enriching as I walk the spiritual journey with the men and women here.” In addition, S. Jackie serves as chaplain for the Denver Police Department. She rides with the police in the district, attends roll calls, assists at funerals, and gives invocations and benedictions at promotions. She also listens and counsels as she rides with the officer. Both ministries, she says, are equally enriching, but in such different ways. We took this opportunity to learn more about our Sister from the west.

What do you enjoy most about being a Sister of Charity?
When I reflect on my life as a Sister of Charity what energizes me and what gives me joy are the relationships and the connectedness I have with so many Sisters. I love going to Community meetings, to the Motherhouse and to big gatherings because I feel such a bond – that so many women wish to serve God and one another in this Community of Charity. That I belong to a community of women who care about one another and this world of ours gives me hope. As a chaplain in a retirement facility, and a chaplain for the Denver police, I’m quite aware that I represent a larger whole; I’m just one little piece of the whole.

What is the best thing about Community life?
In belonging to a Community and pooling our resources (“woman power” and finances), we are able to help others much more than independently. The support and concern I have received when I have been sick and have experienced deaths in my family have meant so much to me. The fact that I belong to a larger group gives me the desire to contribute to the building up of our community and to be a responsible, loving member.

What do you do for fun?
I love to do anything outdoors. I like to participate in hiking, biking, skiing and snowshoeing. During the summer S. Betty Voss, BVM (the Sister with whom I live) and I go tent camping for long weekends. There’s something about cooking, eating outside and sleeping in a tent that nourishes my soul. S. Betty and I take each other on “mystery trips” where the one only knows what to wear and if to bring money! We’ve had some great trips and picnics. Enjoying God’s creation is wonderful. I also like to read, play pinochle and do art work.

What is your favorite way to connect with God?
When I speak and act from my heart – from my very center where God resides – is when I connect with God and experience peace, joy and love. Centering prayer helps me, as well as spending time alone with God. I enjoy going on little weekend retreats or taking hikes in the mountains where it’s easy to connect with God. Philippians 4:4 is my favorite Scripture passage – I like rejoicing in the Lord and giving thanks to God.

What would people be surprised to learn about you?
I’ve always wanted to learn how to play the piano, so I’m teaching myself. I decided a few years back that the only person keeping me from learning is me, so I bought the book “How to Play the Piano.” I got a small keyboard, read and did everything the little book told me to do. I have graduated to John Thompson Grade 4. It’s very hard for me but I’m plugging along. I’m also teaching myself how to draw and paint in watercolor. I figure if I can read, I can teach myself. I’ll never be a concert pianist or a Van Gogh but I sure enjoy playing and painting.
 Those who simply drove to enter the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati have few adventures compared with those of the intrepid young women who traveled across country by train to an unknown place, the Motherhouse at Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.

Virginia Morgan (S. Annina) with Sisters Isabelle Abilar and Adele Baca left Albuquerque, N.M., Sept. 2, 1933, on their first train ride, a trip that took four days. Because she was already an aspirant, Eleanor Heaney (S. Maria Amadea), the youngest, was the chaperone. The Seton Guild in Denver, Colo., with daughters in the Community, made all of S. Annina’s clothes and sewed names on all the underwear and petticoats. A good thing, according to S. Annina.

Arriving in Chicago, Ill., they had hours until their train left for Cincinnati, Ohio, so after checking their suitcases, they went to Chicago’s World Fair and “had a ball. We rode everything,” S. Annina said. They even called S. Grace Elizabeth Meikenhous to ask to stay overnight — hoping to return to the fair the next day. Gently but firmly, she said they’d better go on.

When they went to retrieve their luggage, S. Isabelle had lost the bag checks. So they had to tell the authorities what was in them and identify the clothing. When the man saw the gingham aprons and long underwear with name tags, he quickly released the bags to their owners.

S. Isabelle then noticed she had a run in her silk stockings, and she was not about to go to the convent like that. She ran to a store for new ones. “We were so scared she would not make the train,” S. Annina recalled, “but just as the conductor called the last, ‘All Aboard,’ S. Isabelle came puffing up and got on just in time.”

They arrived at the Motherhouse at 10 p.m. S. Julianne Gribben, a novice, had their beds turned down. Allowed to sleep in the next morning, S. Annina was awakened by S. Julianne, who had water ready in her bowl and pitcher, helped her get dressed, and got her downstairs to breakfast. S. Annina gave her a good laugh when she told her, in all seriousness, this was a dream come true, to have her own maid!

Martha Jones (S. John Miriam) and S. Joan Crocker had a longer journey from Denver, Colo. — five days. In S. John Miriam’s words, “On Sept. 3, 1943, we gathered at the train terminal to board the City of Denver for Chicago. Mr. Crocker, with tears in his eyes, pulled me aside to tell me to ‘Take care of his little girl.’ Me?

“The train was filled with soldiers who found their way to our seats often on the overnight trip. In Chicago we stayed at the Palmer House and ordered hamburgers at a fancy restaurant. On Sunday we took a train to St. Louis, Mo., because S. Therese Martin McCarthy (whose ‘candidates’ we both were) was to come through bringing some young Sisters to Colorado from the Mount. We visited for a couple of hours and then returned to Chicago, with more soldiers.

“The following day when S. Joan took a short train trip to see a former teacher, I went ‘window-shopping’ at Marshall Fields. That evening we enjoyed Jane Eyre at a Chicago theater then traveled to Cincinnati where we stayed the night at the Netherland Plaza and had another hamburger.

“On Sept. 8 we went to see Nelson Eddy’s latest film. (I thought I might never have another chance). Afterwards we packed up our extra clothes and shipped our suitcases home. Finally we took a cab to the Mount, put on fresh lipstick, primped a bit, and walked into the front hall.

“By now it was 6 p.m., time for the great feast day dinner we had been told to expect, and we were plenty hungry. We were standing in the hall not knowing what to do when along came S. Ann Miriam Kramer, pushing the cart from the priests’ dining room. She took one look at us and said, ‘Uh, can I help you? You didn’t want to enter, did you?’ We told her we thought so, but we weren’t too sure at that point. She found S. Camilla,
who got us into postulant outfits, and fed us our late feast-day dinner – a fried egg and toast. Seems the whole house knew it had taken us five days to get there, but we’re still here and glad to be.”

A little background is needed for the journey of Antoinette Dow (S. Marie Evelyn), our “Evvie.” The only contact she had had with Sisters was with her first and second grade teacher S. Joseph Aloysia Phelan in Albuquerque who had made an indelible impression on her.

To make ends meet for his family of eight, Evvie’s father moved them to Tajique, N.M., a mountainous farming community where he opened a general store. Years later, after graduation, Evvie got the courage to talk about becoming a Sister of Charity to her parish priest. He put her in touch with S. Ellenora Hilbers at St. Vincent’s Academy who wrote to Mother Mary Zoe Farrell about this special case, and Mother wrote to her to visit S. Ellenora for guidance. At St. Vincent Academy, Evvie was treated like a queen and met young Sisters, including S. Emily Anne Phelan.

On Sept. 6, 1946, Evvie was on her way to Cincinnati, her first time out of her home state. She was seated day and night next to a nice young man en route to Washington, D.C. Changing trains in Chicago, she was delighted to see two Sisters of Charity. When she introduced herself to them, to her biggest surprise one told her, “Darling, you’ve met up with Mother.” It seems Mother Mary Zoe and S. Mary Alban Kennedy were just returning from China. Mother was so kind, telling Evvie to sit with her and asking about herself and her family.

Later Evvie was invited to lunch by the nice young man, but who should come through the dining car but Mother with S. Mary Alban. Mother nodded politely, and Evvie wanted to crawl under the table. As soon as possible she went to their car and explained. All Mother said was, “We meet very nice people when we travel.”

In Cincinnati Evvie was about to take a cab when Mother said, “Dear, you’re going in the car with us.” “Us” included S. Maria Corona Molloy, College of Mount St. Joseph president, and S. Alice Elizabeth Streit, Mother’s secretary. What a welcome at the Motherhouse! The novices in white veils and the professed Sisters lined the avenue, singing songs of greeting. Mother turned to Evvie and said, “Darling, not everyone gets this welcome. You’re just special,” and Evvie, dazed in this new world, naively believed her.

This story would not be complete without the epilogue. For days as soon as Evvie finished her duties, she went to Mother’s office for a friendly visit until finally Mother took her to S. Camilla and asked her to take good care of this little postulant. In instructions that afternoon they were told about boundaries – the sunporch up to the green carpet. No farther!

Not all roads lead to Rome and the Forum. Some like these lead circuitously but finally, happily, to the Sisters of Charity Motherhouse.
Community: (Front, from left) Tracy Kemme, S. Peggy Deneweth, Romina Sapinoso, (back, from left) S. Janet Gildea, S. Carol Wirtz and Tracey Horan are sharing community at the U.S.-Mexico border.

In Elizabeth’s Footsteps: S. Victoria Anyanwu professes final vows in front of president of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati S. Barbara Hagedorn (left), members of the Community, family and friends on Oct. 23, 2010.

Living the Charity Mission: S. Lynn Heper (right), with St. Joseph Home resident Beth and Beth’s sister, Katie, is one of three Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati ministering at St. Joseph Home of Cincinnati.