Connecting With Mother Margaret George

A total of 39 Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati are celebrating diamond, golden and silver jubilees this year. They represent 2,160 years of service in the Cincinnati area, in dioceses throughout the United States and in Guatemala and Mexico. As we remember our ongoing connections to Mother Margaret George in 2010, we asked our jubilarians the question: How have you connected with our founding mother? A number of their responses follow.

Diamond

“When I was a very young Sister, I was among five Sisters of Charity sent to open a school at St. John Baptist de la Salle in Chillum, Md. The school and convent were in the process of being built. The five of us lived with the Adrian Dominican Sisters at The Catholic University in Washington, D.C. We called ourselves ‘pioneers’ – no convent and no school to begin the school year. We taught in the basement of the church. Since this was my first year of teaching, I used to listen to what the other Sisters were teaching, and I would say the same thing to my students.

“We eventually moved into our convent and school, and I taught there for six years. The Lord’s ways are not always our ways!”

– S. Mary Alicia Bomya

“When I was first elected treasurer, serving in a ministry that Margaret embraced in the early days of the Congregation, I used the writings of Margaret for my reflections. What more appropriate person to serve as my model, mentor and confidant?

“I often thought of Mother Margaret George, who was a pioneer when she landed in Cincinnati, Ohio – a strange place with no convent and/or school, hospital to begin her work. She survived because she had faith in what she was sent to do. We, too, had faith in what we were asked to do.

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– S. Roslyn Hafertepe

“I admire more and more [Margaret’s] steadfast faith, hope and love. She certainly was a woman who needed to live up to her principles and to be willing to move in the direction that the Lord directed her.

“In losing her husband and child within a short period, her trust in God was tested; yet, she moved into the realm that she felt she needed to pursue. Later, in being a friend of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, and being given many responsibilities within the community, she was being prepared by God for her endeavors in Cincinnati.

“It really took courage for her to approach Bishop Purcell and to decide not to return to Emmitsburg when that community joined France. She needed faith to begin a new community in poverty – and with so few members, but somehow she managed.

“I see in Margaret a woman who speaks much to being older, ‘gracefully’ and graciously. I hope that I can imitate her in this regard!”

– S. Vincent Marie Willman

This year’s diamond jubilarians are (front row, from left) Sisters Vincent Marie Willman, Mary Laura Miceli, JoAnne Termini, Carol Joan McCarthy, Mary Grafe, Ann Christopher Joseph, (second row, from left) Zoe St. James, Rose William Herzog, Joan Patrice Flynn, Dolores Maureen McDonald, Therese Marie Moledor, Rosemary Schmid, (back row, from left) Mary Alicia Bomya, Michael Clare Mauntel, Roslyn Hafertepe, Barbara Huber, Mary Corrine Schmidt and Maria Dolorata Felix. Not pictured are Sisters Marita Ganley, Anita Marie Howe and Sue Verbiscus.
Born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, Sister of Charity of Cincinnati Joan Patrice Flynn attended St. William and Seton High School, and was taught by the Sisters of Charity throughout. “I was in a play about Elizabeth Seton,” S. Joan Patrice said, “and was very attracted to her life, which I decided to follow.” To read S. Joan Patrice’s entire biography, and the biographies of all our 2010 golden and diamond jubilarians, visit the Sisters of Charity Web site at www.srcharitycinti.org/news_events/jubilee.htm.

Golden

“I have always admired [Margaret’s] courage to ‘stick’ with Cincinnati and the wishes of Elizabeth Ann Seton. When I was a young Sister I lived with the ‘incomparable’ S. Sarah Mosgrove, like Margaret also from Ireland. Sarah was my ‘walking-talking’ Mother Margaret - funny, unassuming, never met a stranger and always willing to help. I prayed to both women for guidance and patience when I worked with troubled young boys. Margaret was committed to our orphans, and of course, ‘always something for the poor.’ I have always tried to emulate her example. There is a quote in the book, ‘Sister Margaret Cecelia George,’ that describes Margaret and her indifference to her personal appearance. It reads: ‘her cap was generally on one side, and her habit awry.’ That was me when we wore our habits!”

– S. Cookie Crowley

“I recall stories [of Margaret’s] close relationship with Elizabeth Seton and of her bravery in speaking up about what was important to Elizabeth. She knew Mother Seton’s heart and vision to remain an American congregation of women serving the poor. I saw courage and strong faith as two of Margaret George’s virtues as a Sister of Charity - not counting the cost of speaking up, separation and eventual isolation, and then pulling up stakes and settling in Cincinnati.

“As my years in community have passed, my understanding and appreciation have grown. I’ve come to admire Margaret’s real, human journey of dependence upon God in whatever she undertook. I learned of her great losses and her resounding faith and love of her God. It affirmed my need to continue to develop my relationship with God, and to rely on Him in the uncertainties of daily living. It is a real knowing that God loves me, is in charge, and will see all things through to their completion; that keeps my faith strong today.”

– S. Ann Hunt

Golden jubilarians are (front row, from left) Sisters Mary Marcel DeJonckheere, Josetta Marie Chu, Mary Lou Knapke, Joan Elizabeth Cook, Margaret Rein, Nancy Crafton, Barbara Jean Maniaci, (second row, from left) Regina Kusnir, Mary Ellen Murphy, Marie Pauline Skalski, Marie Karen Sammons, Louise Akers, (back row, from left) Ann Hunt, Cookie Crowley, Mary Caroline Marchal, Carol Bauer, Barbara Davis and Mary Jo Gasdorf.
"I am only coming to know Mother Margaret George. Her path seemed to unfold over the years, and her trust in Divine Providence led her in ways that must have seemed, in retrospect, unbelievable. As I reflect on these years, a poem breaks forth ...

Jubilee

Where winds the path I view with youthful commitment?
What journeys and destinations will the miles of life traverse?
All will be welcome adventure!
Thus, now I sit some golden years hence.
The rearview mirror holds tales innumerable in their diversity, unbelievable in their grace, profound in their meaning, and supported by thousands who join memory and celebrate.
If the looking glass of 50 years ago had been the rearview mirror of today would I have dared that sacred, ‘Yes?’
All I know is that God has graced every moment and that is cause for celebration.
‘Yes’ to the future!

- S. Regina Kusnir

“Margaret George continues to be, for me, a source of inspiration and courage. I frequently visualize her at the meeting in Emmitsburg...where she had to stand up before her Sisters there, and simply and clearly declare ‘I cannot.’

“In these days of such chaos within our Church, I continue to wonder what I will be asked to do in the future by the official hierarchy of our Church. I continue to wonder if I will have the simplicity and clarity of soul to know how to respond. I believe Margaret will help me with any decision that I may be called to make.”

- S. Mary Lou Knapke

“I feel I have connected with Mother Margaret George in the following ways ... As president of our Congregation I felt a kinship with [Margaret] and prayed for her insight and wisdom many times. Her beginnings were humble and meager, yet her sense of mission and hope were boundless and bountiful. Though short of stature, she seemed to stand tall in her fidelity to our God and her commitment to the mission of charity.

“As we face our own difficult and dark times, I look to her as someone who was not immune to the experience of darkness and confusion and yet seemed to respond with a cautious optimism yet ever faithful hope. What would be her words of encouragement to us today?”

- S. Mary Ellen Murphy

“Besides being my namesake, Mother Margaret George is a role model. She is a woman of courage and conviction. Having been with Elizabeth Seton in the beginning Margaret knew her thoughts concerning religious life in the new nation. She upheld these views even if it meant breaking with Emmitsburg and the Sisters of Charity community that she knew.

“Margaret also is a woman of faith and trust. At the age of 65 she began the Cincinnati Community with a small group of women. She placed all in God’s hands. I pray that we can imitate Margaret’s faith, trust and courage as we move into the future.”

- S. Peggy Rein

“I admire Mother Margaret’s conviction and loyalty to Mother Seton’s vision for an American community. Breaking ties with her Emmitsburg sisters was a great sorrow, but Margaret was able to put truth first, and from strength of character was born the American Sisters of Charity in Cincinnati. By the time Margaret celebrated her golden jubilee in 1862, at age 73, the Cincinnati Charities had established a growing novitiate, orphanages, schools, a hospital, and were nursing on the battlefields during the Civil War.

“Margaret, despite the tough decisions, obstacles and lack of funds, handed on Elizabeth Seton’s legacy to the Sisters who followed in her footsteps. Today I strive to live out that legacy with the same untiring love, devotion and commitment, and in turn, pass it on to future generations.”

- S. Marie Pauline Skalski
Silver

“I identify with [Mother Margaret George’s] connections to Ireland and Baltimore, Md., because these too are my roots. I love knowing that she and Elizabeth met through their acquaintance with the Sulpicians at St. Mary’s Seminary; I did my master’s in theology at the same seminary in Baltimore, many, many years later. Margaret’s time in Frederick, Md., only 40 minutes from Baltimore, inspires me. In the face of anti-Catholic bigotry, Margaret wrote in her journal: ‘Never, in any period of my life, have I felt so completely isolated and a stranger far from friends and home.’ And yet, she persevered and her faithfulness challenges me, as her daughter, to persevere in the face of whatever difficulties I might face.”

- S. Louise Lears

On Jan. 4, 2010, S. Louise Lears and her mother and three sisters celebrated Sister’s silver jubilee at the Chapelle Basse, Lower Chapel, at Paca Street in Baltimore, Md., where Elizabeth professed her first vows before Bishop John Carroll. S. Louise plans to celebrate with her Sisters in Cincinnati at the 9:30 a.m. liturgy on Sunday, Jan. 9, 2011, in the Motherhouse chapel.

Two Associates of the Sisters of Charity celebrated their silver jubilee in 2010. The two women live in different parts of the country; one in Cincinnati, Ohio, and one in Crystal River, Fla. The Charism of Charity, manifest in Mother Margaret George, also is evident in their lives as they raised their families and became involved in their parishes and communities.

Marian Boutet, “one of God’s special people,” as a Sister described her, suffered hardships throughout her life starting at a young age when her brother was killed in World War II. Through many losses and struggles with health issues, just as Mother Margaret George, Marian’s motto became “one day at a time.” Even in her job at McDonald’s she did her best to be patient with and caring to each person. Through her prayer and association with the Sisters of Charity, Marian has found a familiarity with God and has enjoyed a sense of belonging and acceptance.

You can see the creativity sparkling in Madeleine Davis’ eyes when you meet her. She has always loved to create, to paint, to restore statues and to design cards. She hasn’t pursued poetry like Mother Margaret but she has studied Chinese brush painting – expressing her creativity with symbols and colors rather than words. Artists, no matter what the medium, find beauty where many of us see none. Madeleine has grown spiritually during her time as an Associate and she has helped others in her parish and through the Altar and Rosary Society. She once wrote, “God, through the power of prayer and meditation, has led me to this time and place in my life.”

75 YEARS OF SERVICE
S. Mary Raymond Balash
S. Mary Catherine Kelsey
S. Carita Kemble
S. Anna Catherine North
S. Mary Rosaire Stadtmiller

70 YEARS OF SERVICE
S. Rose Adelaide Anderson
S. Teresa Chang
S. Patricia Marie Donnelly
S. Marjorie Farsing
S. Claire Foken
S. Helen Miriam Gunn
S. Jean Patrice Harrington
S. Mary Genevieve Hudacko
S. Bernardine Kandrac
S. Mary Kormanec
S. Mary Loyola Mathia
S. Ann Mojisik
S. Maria Fidelis Ritter
S. Mildred Shaver
S. Teresa Stadtmiller
S. Jane Vogt

65 YEARS OF SERVICE
S. Mary Alberta Bodde
S. Elizabeth Cashman
S. Michael Mary Eagan
S. Mary Cecilia Eagen
S. Rosemary Gornick
S. Pierre Habel
S. Rita Margaret Kroger
S. Florence Sliva
S. Therese Sliva
S. Mary Susanne Wittwer
S. Jeanne Marie Zugelder