

OUR RESPONSE — HOPE AND HEALING,  
PEACE AND JUSTICE

2015 LXXX 2

# MISSION



**“We must move forward together, as one, ... cooperating generously for the common good.”**

Pope Francis' Address to Congress

*Lord, make me an instrument  
of your peace.*

*Where there is hatred,  
let me sow love.*

*Where there is injury, pardon.*

*Where there is doubt, faith.*

*Where there is despair, hope.*

*Where there is darkness, light.*

*Where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive.*

*It is in pardoning  
that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that  
we are born to Eternal Life.*

*Amen.*

*Francis of Assisi*





**MISSION**  
LXXX 2, 2015

*Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament*  
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**Our Home**

**Our Responsibility**

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The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, founded in 1891 by St. Katharine Drexel, is a congregation dedicated to the interracial apostolate in the USA Jamaica and Haiti. Today SBS serve in elementary and secondary schools as well as at Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans. They are also involved in a variety of other services including pastoral and spiritual ministries, social services, counseling, religious education and health care, primarily but not exclusively among Black and Native American peoples. The Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament is in Bensalem, Pa.

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Those of us living in the Middle Atlantic States experienced an extraordinary moment in the history of our country and of the Church. Actually the moment was carried across the United States and even the world by people glued to television sets. Pope Francis — a humble, beloved man dressed in white — talked to US through Congress, the U.N. and homilies in the Cathedral and on the Parkway.

He ate lunch with the homeless in Washington, D.C. He stopped the car so he could greet a little boy in a wheelchair. He smiled and waved at people along the way. Calling to mind the values of our country's heroes — Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, St. Katharine Drexel — Pope Francis taught us concern for the common good, for the poor, and for those marginalized. He reminded us that the violence and radicalization in today's world can only be transformed by hope, healing, peace and justice.

In addressing the United Nations, the Pope spoke to the workers and then the nations' representatives. He called on the ideal of a united human family. He reminded us that the common good of all people relied on a healthy earth — one suffering now and in need of our active care.

Pope Francis left us with many areas of concern to be tackled privately and together. In this issue, I selected snippets from the Pope's speeches and found people — the retired, teenagers, parents, etc. — pooling their time and talents to bring Christian values to life.

The opening article reflects the joy the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, the volunteers and visitors experienced during the pilgrimages to the National Shrine of St. Katharine Drexel. They came from all over the world by plane, train, bus and car. Their interaction whether with those of the same tour group or strangers was delightful to witness. Patience, love and concern for one another predominated.

A group of Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament serve at St. Barbara Parish in West Philadelphia along with the pastor, Msgr. Wilfred J. Pashley. Two companion articles show the parishioners concern for every human person, especially the needy. The Sisters and several volunteers, mostly though not all retirees, packed and distributed boxes of food and bags of fresh vegetables so the needy in their neighborhood would have a joyful Thanksgiving Day meal.

Msgr. Pashley's volunteers were teenagers and three adults who cook a monthly Friday evening dinner for the homeless at a Drop-In Shelter in West Philadelphia. Most of the volunteers were graduates of St. Rose School where they were recruited by Msgr. Pashley. The food was prepared in the old, unheated St. Rose Rectory kitchen, then carried to the Shelter where the St. Barbara team served the guests.

Sr. Lynn Marie Ralph works at St. Martin de Porres Parish where she met 86-year-old Mary Cook. Impressed by her love for God and for people, Sister recognized her as was one of Pope Francis' "elderly persons who are a storehouse of wisdom forged by experience, and who seek in many ways, especially through volunteer work, to share their stories and their insights."



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# Earth Our Home *Shared by Each and by All*

“The common home of all men and women must continue to rise on the foundations of a right understanding of universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life, of every man and every woman, the poor, the elderly, children, the infirm, the unborn, the unemployed, the abandoned, those considered disposable because they are only considered as part of a statistic.

This common home of all men and women must be built on the understanding of a certain sacredness of created nature.

Pope’s Address to the U.N.



We ... believe that the universe is the fruit of a loving decision by the Creator, who permits man respectfully to use creation for the good of his fellow men and for the Glory of the Creator; he is not authorized to abuse it, much less to destroy it.

Address to U.N.



Be close to one another, respect one another, and so embody among yourselves this Organization’s ideal of a united human family, living in harmony, working not only for peace, but in peace; working not only for justice, but in a spirit of justice.

Pope’s Address to U.N. Staff



Sisters from Scotland

Father Rodolfo Vasconcelos, of Brazilian Apostolate, interviewed by Vatican Correspondent



Vietnamese Sisters from Texas

*"Aim at restoring hope, righting wrongs, maintaining commitments and thus promoting the well-being of individuals and of peoples. We must move forward together ... cooperating generously for the common good."*

Address to Congress



AT HOME ON OUR EARTH



Columbia



Ireland U.S.A.



U.S.A. Texas



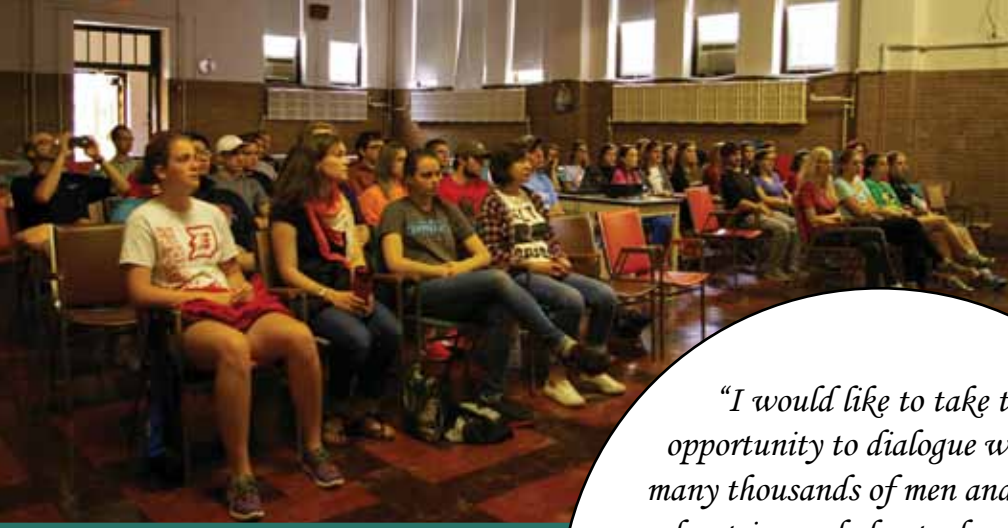
*The complexity, the gravity and the urgency of [today's] challenges demand that we pool our resources and talents, and resolve to support one another, with respect for our differences and our convictions of conscience.*

Address to Congress



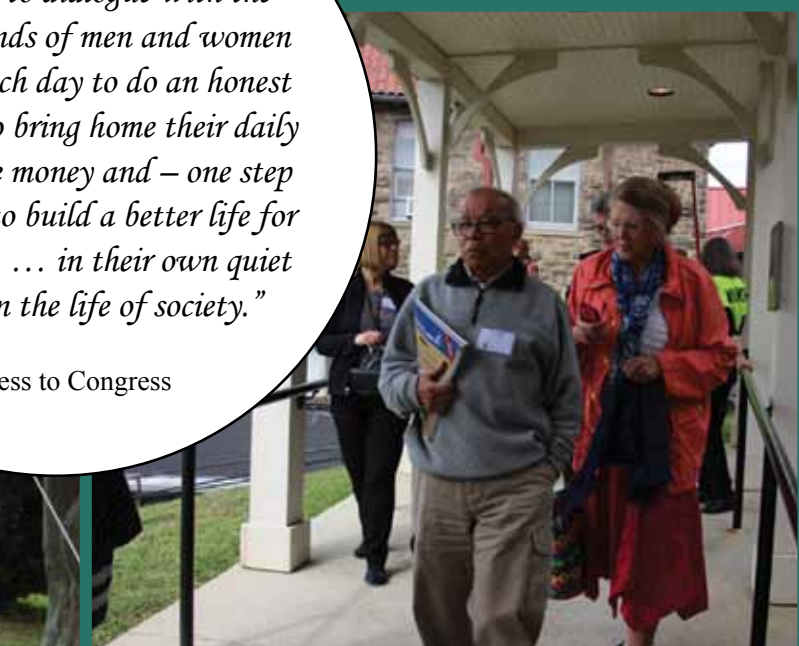
## POOLING TALENTS





*"I would like to take this opportunity to dialogue with the many thousands of men and women who strive each day to do an honest day's work, to bring home their daily bread, to save money and – one step at a time — to build a better life for their families. ... in their own quiet way sustain the life of society."*

Address to Congress





What about YOU?

## What about YOU?

*I would also like to enter into dialogue with the many elderly persons who are a storehouse of wisdom forged by experience, and who seek in many ways, especially through volunteer work, to share their stories and their insights. I know that many of them are retired, but still active; they keep working to build up this land.*

*Pope's Address to Congress*

For several years St. Barbara Parish and St. Rose of Lima worked cooperatively under one pastor, Msgr. Wilfred J. Pashley. About two years ago, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, burdened by expenses and a diminished number of priests, closed many parishes, assigning the parishioners to a nearby church. St. Rose of Lima Church and Rectory closed, but the elementary school remains open. The boundaries of the two parishes fused into one retaining the name of St. Barbara (which has no parish school). Msgr. Pashley moved from the old St. Rose Rectory to one at St. Barbara.

Sr. Barbara Specker is a parish minister there. Knowing that many poor people live in their area of West Philadelphia, she and volunteers met on Monday, Nov. 23, to fill 30 boxes of food for Thanksgiving. The boxes themselves with canned goods lining the bottoms were donated by the school children of St. Simon & Jude in Chester, Pa.

*Top: Fran Wright, Sr. Barbara Specker, Delores Pollard, Jessie Reliford and Sr. Patricia Suchalski.  
Right: Fran's smile lightens an otherwise tedious task  
Delores checks for articles needed for the box she is filling.*



These boxes lined one room in the rectory while a nearby room was piled high with needed supplies. Where did all this come from?

**“By pooling resources and talents,”** as Pope Francis urged. St. Barbara parishioners sponsored a food drive and the children of St. Rose School collected still more canned goods. The Knights of Columbus donated money to buy yet more staples. A group of women called the Trend Setters purchased fresh vegetables and fruit. When the boxes were picked up, each recipient would be handed a certificate for a turkey, courtesy of the Ladies of St. Peter Claver.

About 10 a.m. on Monday, Sr. Barbara and three women: Fran Wright, Delores “Dee Dee” Pollard and Jessie Reliford faced the pile of over-flowing boxes stacked in the back room. Sr. Patricia Suchalski joined them. There was a mountain of items to be added to the 30 boxes in the room behind them. A daunting task?

Not for these five women. Each box had a name and there was a list of items that needed to be added to each one. With the list in hand, a packer chose a box, found as many items as she could carry, added them, then returned for some more. One lady, noticing the name on her box, called out, “There are a lot of children in this family. I think I’ll put more food in this one.”

Back and forth went the women. They quietly checked to see if the box had stuffing, potatoes, cake, etc.. Box finished, on to another one.

Every now and then some one would remember a parishioner who was in the hospital. The others would express concern as they continued their march back and forth between the rooms. Laughter occasionally broke the monotony. In fact the job was done with such cheerfulness, monotony really had parked itself outside.

“I look forward to helping families. It’s fun,” claims Jessie.

“I just enjoy knowing people will benefit,” says Dee Dee.

“That’s what God wants us to do,” adds Fran.

They all agreed that working together for years has created “a nice spirit” among them.

Boxes all stuffed, now the fruit and veggies were bagged separately to be placed on top of each box when the recipients came on Wednesday.

The supply room now had lots of empty bags and boxes. “I’ll take that out to the dumpster,” came a voice.



*St. Barbara Parish Secretary, Sharon Albergotti, is one of the Trend Setters. She also helped distribute the boxes on Tuesday. Her friend Kenneth Ragins was on hand to help deliver packages.*

*Sr. Barbara and Doris Harris go over the list of those boxes that need to be delivered.*



It is important that ... the voice of faith continue to be heard, for it is a voice of fraternity and love, which tries to bring out the best in each person and in each society.

Address to Congress



*Agnes Parish was on hand to answer the telephone and door on Tuesday while boxes were being distributed.*

## PHILADELPHIA

### Poorest Big City in the U.S.A.

**Bad enough to have earned that title, yet even worse — Philadelphia also has the highest deep poverty rate: 12.2 percent, compared the U.S. rate of 6.3 percent.**

**People surviving in deep poverty live on **half** of the amount deemed the poverty rate!**

**They live with constant uncertainty about food, child-care and shelter.**

**Children often do poorly in school, are often ill, and later are less likely to hold a job.**

**Big box store jobs often pay the minimum wage and are reached by the poor by public transportation.**

### West Philadelphia

**In May 1914 Will Bunch of the *Daily News* wrote “Entire ZIP codes in North and West Philadelphia have been mired so deeply in destitution ... for so long, key civic leaders seem to have stopped talking about ideas to reduce poverty, let alone conquer it.”**

I would encourage you to keep in mind all those people around us who are trapped in a cycle of poverty. They too need to be given **hope.**

Address to Congress

Before long, the clutter was gone. The left-over cans and packages would be distributed by Sr. Barbara on Wednesday from Sr. Rose’s old rectory front door.

#### **Monday’s work — DONE!**

And it was only noon!

**Tuesday, Nov. 24**, the sun shone brightly on West Philadelphia. Inside the rectory Sharon Albergotti, Doris Harris, Sr. Patricia and Sr. Barbara were carrying the vegetable and fruit bags to the boxes waiting to be picked up. Agnes Parish was ready to answer the front door and the telephone since Sharon, the parish secretary, was helping distribute the packages. Pick up was between 10 a.m. and two p.m.

Before long a woman arrived and parked her car near the side entrance. She was not only picking up her own package, but also helping out someone who had no car. The woman had taken a prescription that morning and was feeling somewhat “woozy” after carrying one large box to her car. Agnes, just in the nick of time, had admitted Kenneth Ragins through the front door. Without hesitation he carried the second large box to the woman’s car. Then he found the box he was to deliver to another family and carried it to his car parked in front.

Many people who came to the rectory to set their own boxes, often picked up those for other people who lived near them. Thanksgiving Day was special for 30 families in 2015 because so many people “pooled their resources” and gave of themselves.

*Sr. Barbara makes sure that Cynthia Johnson has her fruit. Doris had been waiting for her friend Cynthia to arrive with a car. Both women picked up their own food supplies and each one also loaded another person’s into the car for delivery to families in their neighborhoods. Below: Sharon explains to the woman what bags go with what boxes.*



# Faith Lives

If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself if it does not have works, is dead.

James 2: 15-17

They made a commitment. Every fourth Friday of the month, Msgr. Wilfred Pashley, pastor of St. Barbara Parish in West Philadelphia, and a group of teens and some adults prepare and serve food for about 50 people at the Eastern Delaware County Drop-In Shelter. Different churches, mosques and parishes commit to one day a month. The shelter people are always assured of a healthy meal.

So by 4 p.m. on Friday after Thanksgiving 2015, Msgr. Pashley had already transferred from his car to old St. Rose Rectory kitchen dry spaghetti, precooked meatballs, large cans of vegetables and lots of bananas. By the time the photographer, Sr. Franceline, arrived, he was ready to start the spaghetti. Some of the pre-cooked meatballs were heating in the oven.

From top down: Msgr. Pashley, the first one to arrive at the old St. Rose Rectory, heats two large pots of water for spaghetti. Meanwhile he has put the meat balls in the oven.

Misha Wright, her first time helping out, opens the #10 cans of vegetables.

With no hot water from the old sink Jennie Reliford, the same one who filled boxes for Thanksgiving meals on Monday, cleans the pots.

In his ROTC pants, Lester Brown freshman at Claflin University in So. Carolina, home for the Thanksgiving Holidays, fills the pots with water.

Four girls, among the first volunteers to arrive, keep an eye on the spaghetti. Jordan Cooper, visiting from West Virginia, accompanied her Cousin Devin Pigford (tallest) and helped Sanya Walden and Misha Wright cook the spaghetti.

Devin's dad. Steve Pigford shows Arshon Edwards how to handle the hot and heavy containers of food while carrying them to the car.





*All set up and ready to serve at the Eastern All set up and ready to serve at the Delaware Country Drop-In Shelter from left to right: Arshon Edwards, Sharef Hamlette, Misha Wright, Sanya Walden, Shoshauna Baldia and her mother Jocelyn Jenkins and (inset) Jordan Cooper from West Virginia!*

The rectory had closed two years before. There was electricity but no heat in the building. The stove — a regular gas 4-burner model — occasionally had trouble staying lit. The sink

gladly poured out cold water, but don't ask it for hot.

While he started boiling water for 12 pounds of spaghetti, Monsignor said that he had spent \$300 that day at Restaurant Depot for the food, aluminum containers and paper products for that evening's meal.

Fortunately, an inter-parish celebration of St. Martin de Porres Feastday had donated \$1,653 to St. Barbara's program for the Drop-In Shelter. With the help of Sr. Barbara, SSJ, he also received a grant from the Sisters of St. Joseph to help fund the monthly meals.

The doorbell rang. Two sophomore girls — Misha Wright and Sanya Walden joined Msgr. Pashley and took over the spaghetti job. Before long Steve Pigford brought his daughter Devin and his niece Jordan Cooper to help out. Soon they were joined by Sharef Hamlette and Arshon Edwards, high school lads. Lester Brown, a college freshman, and adults Jen- nie Reliford and Jocelyn Jenkins and her daughter Shoshauna Baldia came ready to help.

When asked why they prepared and served a meal to indigent people at the Drop-In, the volunteers answers were similar.

"I'm here to feed the homeless," said Devin. Jordan, her cousin visiting from West Virginia, agreed to come because she too wanted to feed the hungry.

"I was working at camp in the summer and was asked if I wanted to help," explained Sanya, a member of St. Barbara's CYO.

Steve claimed, "I look forward to helping out, feeding the hungry. This is my favorite night of the month!"

Although now members of St. Barbara Parish, Steve as well as most of the young people had gone to St. Rose School, still in operation. Msgr. Pashley explained that in February, he tells the eighth graders about the meal program and invites them to get involved.

Jocelyn said she came one day with Monsignor. "It was fun. This is a great group of people. It's therapeutic. The people serviced are people of my community."

Spaghetti and sauce were placed in aluminum foil pans, covered to retain the heat. Then the meatballs and vegetables got their own trays. The lads grabbed the pans and the group headed out to the waiting cars. It was dark. The cars processed down 63rd Street to Market, with the photographer's car last so she could leave before the others.

**We educate new generations not to turn their back on our "neighbor" and everything around us.**

*Pope's Address to Congress*



The Drop-In guests are already seated. It's 6 p.m. The team pitches right in. Steve Pigford adjusts the temperatures. Sharef Hamlette and Arshon Edwards arrange the food in the trays.

Jessie Reliford dons plastic gloves. The others lay the hot foods and plates on the counter in front. Before serving, the Sr. Barbara's team leads the guests in grace before the meal.



Before the guests are served, Jessie and Shoshauna set aside covered dinner plates for the eight Drop-In workers and put them aside on a shelf.

Meanwhile, Msgr. Pashley gets a head start on the pots and pans. Do you think he is glad to feel hot water pouring out of the faucet into a wide stainless steel sink?



When the St. Barbara team arrived, about 42 people were seated along the tables lined up before the counter. Many kept their coats on and many were men. Some talked together while patiently waiting to be served. Others watched as the servers arranged the food and lined up to pass the plates. It was only a matter of minutes from the time the cars arrived until the food was served.

Since photos of the Drop-In guests were not permitted, Sr. Franceline slipped out. With the guidance of Jessie, she managed to back up into dark, congested Market Street and find her way home from an unfamiliar part of West Philadelphia.

## Catholic Youth on the Rez

by Sr. Zoe Brenner

“No more walls, no more chains, no more selfishness and closed doors. This is the time of the great jubilee,” the children sang at the 100 Anniversary Celebration of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Church in Fort Defiance, Ariz. People with tears in their eyes recognized the future of the Church in these children. What a powerful reminder that the Church lives!

Working with them, for me, was an enjoyable encounter. Children were enthusiastic, willing to learn and to be of service to our local community. It helped me realize Katharine Drexel's dream — that all children would hear about and get to know God.

We encourage our youth and ask them to be a part of parish activities. At inter-generational programs, middle and high school students usually help serve the snacks and meal. At times it seems we won't have enough food, but



when they serve, somehow we always have enough.

By acting out the Christmas

Gospel, the children gifted the community. Most of the youngsters were excited to be a shepherd, an angel or to take on another role. Asking middle school children, “Who would like to read?” can at times be daunting. What a surprise! They were ready and willing!

During the Navajo Nation Parade in September, two high school students acted as Franciscan Friars and a middle grade girl was Kateri Tekakwitha (see back page). At the end they were exhausted but happy. One of the young men actually wanted to keep the hooded part of the Franciscan habit.



Above: *The song sung by the children of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament in Fort Defiance added to the joy of the Centennial celebration.*

Left: *The community learned about Our Lady of Guadalupe's appearance to Juan Diego when the teens enacted a play about her. Afterwards, each adult presented a rose to Mary.*



Dear young friends.

If we want (life) to have real meaning and fulfilment, as you want and as you deserve, I say to each one of you,

“**Put on faith**”, and your life will take on a new flavour, it will have a compass to show you the way;

“**put on hope**” and every one of your days will be enlightened and your horizon will no longer be dark, but luminous;

“**put on love**”, and your life will be like a house built on rock, your journey will be joyful, because you will find many friends to journey with you.”

Pope Francis, World Youth Day 2013 in Rio de Janeiro

The young people of the Navajo Reservation have a friend and mentor in Christine Rayner. For many years Chris worked with them at St. Michaels, Fort Defiance, Sawmill and Navajo. Encouraging them to become part of their local faith communities, Chris gives them opportunities to be of service and calls them to a deeper life in Jesus.

A two-year Confirmation program brings teens together on Sunday evenings. Some return for even more years of instruction. As young adults many prove to be leaders.

Scattered through the year, four-to-six-hour retreats give the youth a chance to learn, sometimes with parents and sponsors, about the Church and about living a Catholic Christian life. Concern for others is vital to that life. The teens went to the nursing home run by the Little Sisters of the Poor to visit and to play games with the residents.

*Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Youth Group and adults worked together to present a play about Our Lady of Guadalupe. Sr. Zoe in the lavender top and Chris Rayner, second row on right, and Father Gilbert Schneider, OFM., in back, supported the teenagers' efforts to spend long hours preparing, then presenting the play and involving the parishioners at the conclusion.*



The teens' newest endeavor is to sponsor a party at Christmas time for those children whose parents are incarcerated. The local parishes' "Angel Trees" will provide the gifts. Parishioners take a slip from the tree and purchase the indicated gift. Santa Claus gives the children the gift "from their parents." So much more caring than just having the gift dropped off at the house!

The Youth Group assists teens to support one another in their faith journey. They need to see other teens who are serious about their faith. It is no easy feat for them to come on Sunday evening from 4-6 p.m. from the end of September until the end of April.

The hope of the OLBS staff and parish is that by involving youth, they will grow in faith, hope and love.



*The Centennial celebration took place on Thanksgiving Day. A number of Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and old friends were able to be present.*

*Right: Sr. Genevieve Allen got a chance to catch up on what was happening in a friend's life*

*Far right: Sr. Theresa Chato, who had served at Fort Defiance was glad to renew old acquaintances.*



*During the Centennial liturgy, Sr. Mary Walter Rochford proclaimed a reading, and Sr. Mary Hottenroth and Sr. Zoe Brenner presented the gifts of bread and wine to Bishop Wall.*



# Mary Cook

## *You gotta pray, and keep it moving*

by  
Sr. Lynn Marie Ralph

There is an old African proverb that says, “The strength of the elderly is in the ears and on the lips.” Mary Cook lives this proverb. For over fifty years she has been involved in Parish Social Ministry. She counsels people in need of a listening ear. “You gotta pray and keep it moving,” is her motto.

She believes that God has a purpose for everyone. At the age of 86 Mrs. Cook continues to be involved in ministry at St. Martin de Porres Church in Philadelphia,

Pa. The Bible is her inspiration, “We must feed the hungry and clothe the naked.”

To understand Mary Cook’s journey, let’s start at the beginning. In 1976 Fr. Victor Esback, pastor of Most Precious Blood Parish, proposed that she be the Parish Social

Minister. Mrs. Cook, being Mrs. Cook, was humbled by what he suggested. However, she had to seriously think about it. It did not take long for her to agree to his suggestion. She believed that God was calling her to do something new.

Change effected some of the parishes in Philadelphia. Most Precious Blood Parish closed. This did not end Mrs. Cook’s ministry. Again, as she would say, “You gotta pray and keep it moving.” She moved over to Saint Columba where in 1993 the parish was renamed Saint Martin de Porres.

The current pastor, Fr. Stephen D. Thorne, is extremely supportive of her ministry. He too knows the love and sincerity that she brings to the people.

Mary takes her ministry seriously as she witnesses to her faith through evangelization. Goals are important to her. However, she relies on God to direct her path.



Above; Mary Cook, Pastoral Social Minister for over 50 years.  
Left; Georgia Grant and Mary Cook working in the food pantry.



Clients come with different needs. Some lack food. Some need to find housing. Some need Mary to pray with them

She believes that if anyone comes to the door, she has to solve their problem. Even if someone comes without a referral, she will help that individual. Mary often says, “Everybody is somebody’s child. There is no problem that we all can’t solve. We have to take care of people in different situations.”

People may be on drugs and would like to get their lives back in order. Mary encourages them to get the help they need. She keeps them in her daily prayers. Once they have completed a program, they come back and thank her for her advice. Mary reminds them that anyone can change.

Some of the men and women who live in halfway houses visit Mary and volunteer their time for whatever needs to be done. One individual, who did well in a program, had a new beginning.

He was hired as a supervisor to help others living in halfway houses. This was a big responsibility for him. He had walked in their shoes. He took his job very seriously. He would visit Mary and give an update on how he was doing. He sent some of his clients to help Mary when something needed to be done.



Let us treat others with the same passion and compassion with which we want to be treated. Let us seek for others the same possibilities which we seek for ourselves. Let us help others to grow, as we would like to be helped ourselves.

Pope's Address to Congress

*Left; Rita Felder and Lenora Chappman look over some clothes that were donated for the thrift store.*

*Below; Some of our elders who help make a difference in the lives of others.*

Unfortunately, sometimes all does not go as planned. The gentleman relapsed. This broke Mary's heart. She asked others how he was doing. They told her that they had not seen him in awhile.

After many months he finally got up the humility to go back to see her. This man is not of average size. He is big and husky. Mary is a petite woman.

Imagine his walking into Mary's office and mustering up the courage to apologize to her. She told him not to apologize to her. He had to apologize to himself for what he had done in taking steps backward.

Mary was not finished yet. She told him to sit in silence with his arms stretched out. He did exactly what she asked him to do.

When he came back to her later, holding his tears back he apologized. Mary was very gentle with him. She prayed with him and told the him that she still had a lot of love for him.

After that he straightened out. He now works two jobs.

This is an sample of how Mary takes helping others very seriously. No one else had to do what that gentleman had to do. It was a lesson learned by many who love her dearly. You just don't mess with Mary.

The blessing that Mary gives to so many people is her gift of loving all God's children. She is a humble woman who

starts her day by reading her Bible and meditating. She draws strength from it. By encouraging others to read the Bible, she evangelizes them. She wants them to live life and to love life.

Because of her love and dedication, Mary Cook is known to many as "Ma." It is a fitting tribute to a woman who said "yes" to something new and challenging over fifty years ago.



What keeps Mrs. Cook going? It is the motto, "You gotta pray and keep it moving."



### **Sr. Damian Widmeier**

February 11, 1927 - August 15, 2015

*Jesus, my life; Mary my guide*

Constance was the youngest of five daughters born to Louis and Laura Widmeier in Camden, N.J. She was baptized in St. Joseph Church in East Camden and when she was twelve was confirmed at St. Cecelia in Merchantville where she attended Grammar School. She then went by her confirmation name, Madeline. She graduated from Camden Catholic High School in June 1944. In August she and a classmate (later Sr. Therese Mary Warner) entered the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. When Madeline became a novice on July 16, 1945, she received the name Sr. Mary Damian. On July 16, 1947, Sister showed her love for Jesus by vowing poverty, chastity and obedience. Her first mission assignment took her to St. Monica in New Orleans where she taught seventy-eight fourth graders. Her next mission was to neighboring Holy Ghost School. Meanwhile, on Saturdays and during summers, Sister completed her BSE from Villanova in 1954. Her mission life brought her to many parts of the United States: Cincinnati, Ohio; Port Arthur, Texas; Biloxi, Miss.; Sacramento, Calif.; Laguna, Pena Blanca and Santa Fe, N.M.; St. Michaels, Ariz., Lawtell, and back to New Orleans, La.; and to the Motherhouse in Bensalem, Pa.

Sister moved permanently to the Motherhouse in 2007. She loved to drive, but wisely stopped when failing eyesight kept her from driving safely. In 2013 due her faltering memory and unsteadiness on her feet, she became a resident of St. Michael Hall. By February 2015 she became noticeably more agitated and on March 2 was admitted to Holy Redeemer Hospital. Tests showed fluid on the brain. Because surgery was too risky, Sister returned to St. Michael under hospice care. She peacefully went home to God on the Feast of the Assumption, Aug. 15, Saturday evening.

### **Sr. M Karen Cunningham**

June 5, 1932 - August 27, 2015

*Jesus, I love you!*

Patricia was born on June 5, and baptized in Gloucester, Mass. at St. Ann's on June 26, 1932. She was later confirmed there on June 11, 1945. She attended Honey School, Central Grammar School and later Gloucester High School. After graduating from Boston's Regis College with a BA in 1954, Patricia began her missionary journey as a lay volunteer at St. Michael Indian School. Near the end of three years there, "Miss Cunningham," as the students called her, influenced by "the zeal and the example of the Sisters" as she herself wrote, applied to become an SBS. She entered on Sept. 3, 1957. Upon reception as a novice on Aug. 21, 1958, she received the name Sr. Mary Karen. She pronounced her vows on Aug. 9, 1960. Her ministry life began first at Holy Providence at the Motherhouse, then took her to Sante Fe, N.M.; later to St. Michaels, Ariz.; Sister completed her M.A. in August 1969 at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. From 1984 until 1990, she taught languages full time at Xavier Prep in New Orleans. Meanwhile, she studied to become a Licensed Practical Nurse and earned her certificate in 1989. Sister Karen then taught part time at the Prep and spent part time nursing. After 2000, Sister nursed full time in homes and in a rehabilitation center. In 2010 she moved to Xavier University where she lived for two years before moving into St. Michael Hall in 2012. In 2014 Sister was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. As her strength declined, she was placed on hospice care in April 2015. By the middle of August, Sister had trouble swallowing. Nurses noted a great change on Aug. 23 so the nursing staff monitored her regularly. During the early morning hours of Aug. 27, Sister quietly slept into eternal life.



### **Sr. M. Regina Therese Schwegler**

July 6, 1929 - Oct. 31, 2015

*All for Jesus with joy*

Born in Fairview, N.J., Agnes was baptized on July 28 in St. Joan of Arc Church. Sometime later the family moved to Philadelphia. She attended St. Edward School and was confirmed in the parish church. She briefly studied at St. Boniface Commercial School, then became an apostoline, earning a high school diploma from Blessed Sacrament High School at the Motherhouse. On Aug. 24, 1948 she became a postulant. When received as a novice on July 16, 1949, she became known as Sr. M. Regina Therese. Exactly two years later, Sister pronounced the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. While still a novice, Sister studied for a teaching career and did practice teaching at Holy Providence. In 1951 she was assigned to teach in Atlanta, Ga.; then in Beaumont, Texas; New Orleans, La.; New York City, N.Y.; then back to New Orleans. From 1965 until 1971, she was assigned to the Motherhouse. She briefly taught in Philadelphia, returning to the Motherhouse in December. In 1972, Sister did religious instruction at St. Edward in New Iberia, returning to the Motherhouse in December where she became assistant housekeeper and switchboard operator. Having talent in arts and crafts, in 1985 she managed the SBS Gift Shop. Sister Regina Therese became a resident of St. Michael Hall community in 1990. Over the years many Sisters enjoyed the beautiful cards she designed and decorated for their feast days. Later, she sat in the back of the chapel in a wheelchair during Mass and her times of prayer. When anyone helped her, she rewarded them with a lovely smile. On Sunday, Oct. 25, 2015, she was taken to Aria Hospital. Returning to St. Michael on Monday, she was placed on hospice care. Less than a week later, Sister went home to God on Saturday morning.





*Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament*

1663 Bristol Pike, Bensalem, PA 19020-5702

## Caring for our Common Home

*Abridged from an article sent by Sr. Mary Hottenroth, SBS, who lives and ministers in Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Parish.*

Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Parish in Fort Defiance, Arizona, in keeping with Pope Francis' recent encyclicals, "Joy of the Gospel" and "On Care for Our Common Home", we joined the Navajo Nation Fair Parade with a magnificent float. The theme of the parade challenged all to care for our common home. Joyfully we evangelized by pulling our float three miles down Highway 264 in the midst of approximately 40,000 parade watchers.

Marie Allen, a graduate of St. Michael Indian School, acted as St. Katharine Drexel. With her on the float were two high school youth dressed as Franciscan Friars and a child dressed as St. Kateri Tekakwitha.

The float was enthusiastically prepared by parish members under the direction of Maria and David Tsosie. The float speaks of the creative artistry of parishioners and their care for the earth. They collected plastic bottles and turned them into the colorful flowers lining the sides.

'Right of the environment' does exist. ... We human beings are part of the environment. We live in communion with it. ... [Man] can only survive and develop if the ecological environment is favorable. Any harm done to the environment, therefore, is harm done to humanity.

*Pope Francis Address to U.N.*



**If you think God may be calling you to become a Sister of the Blessed Sacrament, write to:**

**SBS Vocation Director  
1663 Bristol Pike  
Bensalem, PA 19020-5702**