Spirit Echoings

Illustration by Sister Mary Richard Mehelich, SHS

Holy Father Presents Challenge

This picture, drawn by Sister Mary Richard Mehelich, depicts our Blessed Mother holding Jesus. Many photos today which are seen on TV or in newsprint, depict parents, elderly people, and even children, holding babies and small children as they flee from their homes as refugees or fear separation from their families through deportation.

In Rome in February, at the Sixth International Forum on Migration and Peace, Pope Francis told the gathering that it is a "moral duty" to protect "millions of migrant workers, male and female – and among these particularly men and women in irregular situations – of those exiled and seeking asylum, and of those who are victims of trafficking." The pope said we have a duty "towards our brothers and sisters who, for various reasons, have been forced to leave their homeland: a duty of justice, of civility and of solidarity."

Pope Francis quoted from a message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees on August 5, 2013, "For us Christians, hospitality offered to the weary traveler is offered to Jesus Christ himself, through the newcomer: *I was a stranger and you welcomed me.* (Mt.25:35)" He went on to say, "a change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization – all typical of a throwaway culture – towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world".

It is a moral duty to protect our brothers and sisters.

Sister Seeks to Develop Culture of Encounter

John Flynn and John Ferguson on March for Life bus with Sister Cindy.

"Maybe your job is to remind the world to connect."

On October 11, 1998, Sister Cindy Ann Kibler heard those words on a television show, and they have impacted her life and ministries ever since. She said, "I have always believed that the saying meant connection to God and to one another."

For 5 ½ years Sister Cindy Ann was the Director of the Martina Spiritual Renewal Center. She called this "a grace-filled time of creativity, challenge, and aliveness which allowed for taking a ministry that was well-established by our sisters, and well-respected and loved by those we had served the previous 17 years into the next phase of Gospel hospitality and Catholic identity."

In 2008, at the invitation of Bishop David A. Zubik, Sister Cindy Ann assumed the position as Pastoral Director at St. Paul Seminary in Pittsburgh for the formation of seminarians and permanent deacons.

This entails several roles. As Coordinator of Apostolic works, Sister is a member of the seminary formation faculty and works closely with the rector to oversee the pastoral formation of seminarians in the college and pre-theology program which includes the apostolic works programs.

Amy Hirsh, secretary, Sister Cindy Ann, and Deacon Stephen Byers, Director of the Permanent Diaconate discuss day's agenda.

As Director of the Summer Pastoral Formation Experience Program for the men studying for the Permanent Diaconate, Sister Cindy Ann supervises and coordinates all efforts that relate to the Summer Pastoral Formation experiences of each candidate. This includes identification of institutions, organizations, and ministries for the pastoral experiences, selection and nurturing of appropriate onsite supervisors, and placement of the candidate. She ensures an elective evaluation and reflection process for the summer experience and shares any progress or concerns about those experiences with the Director of the Diaconate.

Sister Cindy and Father Brian Welding, Rector.

Father Brian Noel, Spiritual Director, and seminarians Jacob Gruber and Aaron Ledgerwood, with Debra Kubiak, secretary.

In answer to the advice of Pope Francis for the development of everyone "... towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world", opportunities for our Sisters to live those attitudes and to carry them to their respective ministries can be found. Where better than in ministry that involves preparation of men for the priesthood and the permanent diaconate who are called to lead others to Christ by who they are and how they collaborate to build a "more just and fraternal world". (Pope Francis)

Sister Cindy Ann once wrote: "Although I serve with many others in this precious ministry of formation, I have had the unique opportunity to be the feminine presence at the seminary to bring the dignity of womanhood, and in a unique way, the gift of my vocation to a male environment. My prayer and hope has been to help these men appreciate their own giftedness and the complementary partnership that women can offer in a very practical way in the Church. One of the ways I do this is through my presence at many seminary Masses, events and dinners, and through coordination of their apostolic/ pastoral experiences. These site experiences include: jails and prisons, homes for intellectually challenged adults and at risk children, nursing homes and hospitals, hospice, small and large parishes, youth and young adult ministry, Christian television, soup kitchens and food banks, homeless shelters, diocesan offices such as worship, catechesis, diversity, Catholic Charities' refugee services, St. Vincent de Paul sites, and many more opportunities to bring Christ to those in need of a kind word, a smile, a sense of hope to their lives. I visit the sites on a regular basis to see if the seminarians need my assistance and to encourage them to grow more fully in service. The time at the sites also gives me an opportunity to thank the site supervisors for their wonderful contribution to the formation of the seminarians and permanent deacons as well as to get feedback from the site supervisors regarding their adjustments and growth. A critical part of this ministry is discerning where these men should be assigned in order to help them become more and more like Christ in their hearts and in the ways they serve."

Gabriel Salibi at Seminarian Tournament.

Sister Cindy Ann also gives Apostolic Works Formation Conferences, and periodically, she meets one-on-one with seminarians to mentor them. In addition she serves on the following Boards: Seminary Admissions Board, Priestly Formation Board, Seminary Advisory Board, Deacon Formation Policy Board, and the Deacon Admissions and Scrutinies Board, and she is also on the Catholic Charities Board Program Committee.

Seminary moms (l-rt) Delia Egan, Heidi Potter, JoAnn Faix, and Diana Uzar preparing funeral meal.

A wonderful aspect of Sister Cindy Ann's ministry has been to be in close contact with the mothers of the seminarians and the wives of the deacon candidates. She sees them as courageous faith-filled women who are concerned that the men in their lives are doing what the Holy Spirit is calling them to. She said, "I have made it a goal to assist in making sure that these women are kept in the loop and have an opportunity to voice their support and their concerns. No man is ordained a permanent deacon unless he has the total support of his wife and family." To aid in that support, periodically the women gather as a group to pray and lend one another support. At their request, Sister Cindy Ann has also held retreats for the women.

Sister once stated, "Although there are many facets of my ministry.....the one thing that keeps echoing in my heart is that formation is from God, through God and others, to bring glad tidings to the poor. We reach the poor through both the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and therefore we are all called to aid in forming and supporting our future priests, deacons, spouses and families of these men so as to be one in Christ. I have relied heavily on the prayerful support of my sisters in community to help me be what the Holy Spirit wants of me at the seminary. I cannot imagine a priesthood nor diaconate without the integral presence and prayers of women religious and laity in their lives and mine."

Seminarians Tom Kadlick, Gabriel Salibi, John Flynn with Sister Cindy Ann at Fish Fry at Holy Apostles Parish.

Students Win Contests

Pope Francis has encouraged all of us to develop "attitudes based on a culture of encounter", and students at Saint Maria Goretti School are no strangers to winning awards that concern social and environmental issues, and scholastic achievements. The past several years have had many recipients of these awards. Entries into these contests have been encouraged by Sister Mary John Cook, principal, and by her very enthusiastic teachers.

On January 15 of this year, St. Paul Cathedral was the setting for three Saint Maria Goretti students to receive awards in the Martin Luther King Essay and Poster Contest which was sponsored by the Race and Reconciliation Dialogue Group of Saint Paul Cathedral. Following the noon Mass which was celebrated by the Very Rev. Chris Stubna, Sister Mary John and Ms. Christine Scuillo, 6th grade teacher, accompanied the students to the cathedral social hall where they, along with other diocesan students, were treated to a luncheon. At the conclusion of the meal, the students read their essays and displayed their posters, and awards were given to the winners. Ivy Jones, Grade 5, was a first-place winner in the poster contest. Ryan Quinn, Grade 6, received honorable mention for his essay, and Eve Rectenwald, Grade 6 won first place in the essay contest.

Ivy Jones, Eve Rectenwald, and Ryan Quinn with Sister Mary John.

Eve's essay especially touched the hearts of the audience. In reporting on this event in the PITTSBURGH CATHOLIC, Associate Editor Phil Taylor wrote:"...it was sixth-grader Eve Rectenwald who wowed the crowd while reading her award-winning essay." Eve is biracial. Her mother is from the Ivory Coast in Africa, and her father is German and Irish. In a segment of her essay, "The Race I'm Running", she related the following:

Once when I was younger than I am now, I was playing with a little girl I met that day. When my mother came to pick me up, the little girl said, "That's your mom?" I said yes and she proceeded to say things like, "she looks nothing like you" or "are you adopted". Now even at that age, I knew she was talking about our skin colors. I was embarrassed after that and was quiet for the rest of the day. I was lighter than mommy and darker than daddy and that was the first time I thought about it.

Eve's essay emphasized the role that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. plays in her perception of herself and of others. We applaud Eve and Ivy and Ryan for being such fine representatives of the values they are taught at Saint Maria Goretti School and of the wonderful attitudes they are developing.

Julia Nguyen and Ariauna Rose, winners in Helping the Homeless contest.

Students welcome visitors to a celebration of the Mass.

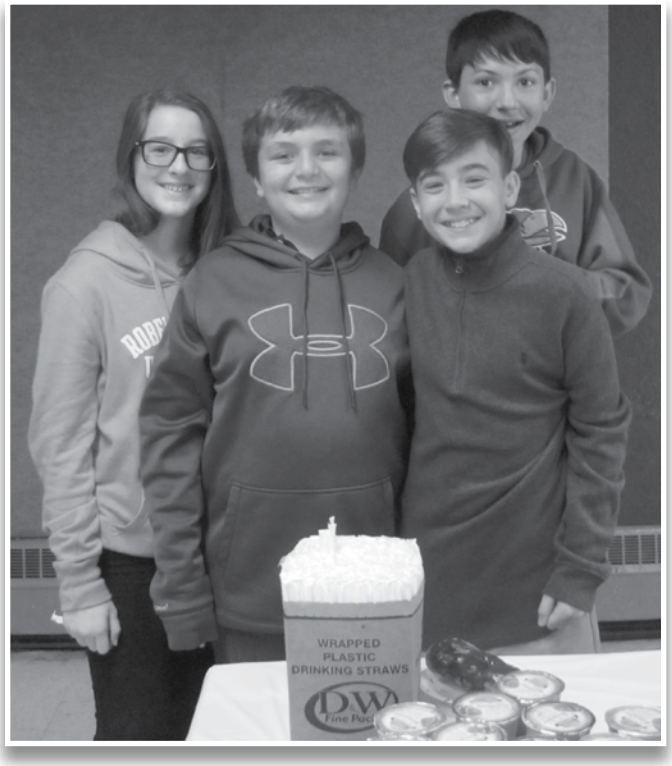
Saint Maria Goretti Students Involved

School year 2016-2017 has seen a number of creative initiatives by principal Sister Mary John Cook, and by students and faculty at Saint Maria Goretti School from Pre-K through Grade 8. **"Faith and Family"**, **"Service and Knowledge"**, and a **"Red Ribbon Week – You Only Live Once"**.

Students sign Drug Free pledge.

October 17-21 ushered in the Red Ribbon project, designed to discourage Bullying and Drugs. On day one, classes paired up with a buddy to trace one hand from each other onto a sheet of red paper. Having written their names on one side of it, the handprints were cut out to form a large red ribbon. That same day, each student was given a Hawaiian Lei to wear for the day to represent "Lei Off Bullying and Drugs".

Each day had a theme according to which the students dressed up. " Put a Cap on Bullying and Drugs", and "Sock it to Bullying and Drugs" had some cute results.



(L-R) Brianna Bogacz, Colin Hollihan, Matthew Khalil, and Anthony Klecha at Red Ribbon gathering.

Classes were invited to create a poster that followed the theme of Red Ribbon week: *YOLO...Be Drug Free, You Only Live Once*. These posters were displayed in the foyer of the church, and students and parishioners were invited to sign a drug-free pledge.

Catholic Schools Week in January featured a Multi-Cultural Concert, and a Grandparents and Special Person Day. The closing Sunday morning Liturgy with Father Regis Farmer, pastor, was followed with the congregation viewing the heritage display and proceeding to the cafeteria where refreshments were served. Words cannot convey the excitement and enthusiasm that filled the campus throughout the week and especially at the closing liturgy.

Sister Mary John labors diligently to make Saint Maria Goretti School one which welcomes the diversity of cultures from which the students and families are drawn. She is grateful to the pastor, faculty, staff, parents and volunteers who assist and support her efforts to make the "Good News" of Jesus alive and well in the students and parish community.

James Genco, Sienna Cicone, and Jorga Costa at cultural event.

Roman Ober, Timothian Utomo, and Veer Butoliya dressed in clothes of their heritages.

Amanda Polk shows medal to Maya Waruszewsk.

Olympic Gold Medalist Returns to Alma Mater

Amanda Polk talks to students.

Grey skies overhead on February 16th did not dampen the spirits of the students, faculty, staff, and friends of Saint Maria Goretti School as they eagerly awaited the arrival of a former graduate, **Amanda Polk, Gold Medalist of America's women's rowing team at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio.**

To the delight of the audience, Sister Mary John Cook, principal, welcomed Amanda to her alma mater. Following an opening prayer by Father Louis Pascazi, parochial vicar, Amanda captivated her listeners by an inspiring talk in which she recalled her days as a student at Immaculate Conception School, as it was named before the merger of parishes when it became Saint Maria Goretti School.

Amanda encouraged the students to pray as she related the decisions she had to make about her life and education and her interest in the sport of rowing. She credited God for leading her as she prayed and made choices that eventually took her to the Olympics in 2016, and she spoke about her travels to many countries where she was a competitor in her sport. Of special interest is the fact that Amanda holds the American record for rowing.

In a segment where she answered questions by the students, Amanda noted that her grandmother was her role model. In a touching reminiscence, she related how her grandmother and grandfather had come from Italy, established themselves in this country, and encouraged their family to work hard in order to achieve good results.

When asked about her other interests, Amanda said that she loves to dance. To help her teammates relax, she told the students that she had suggested that they make a music video. And now, *"Burnin' Up" Featuring Women Who Row a Lot*, can be viewed on U-Tube, with the producer being our own Amanda Polk.

As the students left the assembly, Amanda greeted each one, showed them her gold medal, and invited them to touch it. Before she left for the day, Amanda toured the school that she had attended prior to her graduation in the class of 2000.

St. Agnes Parish Celebrates 150 Years

Many of our sisters who had ministered at St. Agnes School over the years joined the parishioners of St. Agnes Parish in West Mifflin on Sunday, March 19, for a beautiful Eucharistic Liturgy celebrated by Most Rev. David A. Zubik, Bishop of Pittsburgh. Very Rev. Frederick L. Cain, Regional Vicar, joined Rev. Joseph R. Grosko, Administrator, Rev. E. Daniel Sweeny, Administrator (pro tem), and a large gathering of priests to concelebrate the Mass which commemorated the founding and life of this very vibrant and active parish community.

Sister Janelle rehearses Clare and Ruthann Talbott before Mass.

In his homily, Bishop Zubik complimented the parishioners as he reviewed the history of the parish which was begun on March 19, 1967. He also acknowledged the contributions made by the pastors and our sisters. Sisters of the Holy Spirit have served at St. Agnes since 1937. Two members of the parish entered our community: Sister Bridget Miller, SHS, and Sister Christina Marie Janusek, SHS.

Sister Grace Fabich, General Superior, Sister Christina Marie Janusek, daughter of the parish, and Sister Cynthia Wessel, principal of St. Agnes School.

Bishop Zubik incenses the altar.

Following the Mass, the congregation gathered in the social hall where refreshments were served and where many friendships were renewed as memories were recalled.

Today, Sister Cynthia Wessel, SHS, serves as principal of St. Agnes School and Sister Janelle Banko, SHS, ministers as teacher. She also directs an outstanding folk group that plays for parish liturgies and other events. Together the sisters are very active in engaging the students, faculty, staff, and parishioners in advancing education and social awareness in various kinds of service activities to the poor in their surrounding area. Their attention to protection of the environment, service to the poor and needy, and issues of justice are outstanding.

Samuel Smith prepares to join the procession.

Sister Dorothy, SHS

Sister Dorothy Strelinski, SHS

After a lifetime of loving service as a Sister of the Holy Spirit, Sister Dorothy entered into her eternal rest on November 4, 2016. The sixth of the nine children of John and Martha (Oshinski) Strzelinski, Dorothy grew up in a loving family in Glassport, PA, where she attended Holy Cross School. Her teachers were Sisters of the Holy Ghost (as we were known at that time).

After her entry to the convent in 1945, Sister Dorothy went on to complete degrees from Duquesne University: a Bachelor and a Master Degree in Science of Education and a Masters in Administration. An avid student herself, Sister Dorothy communicated her love of learning to her students. She thoroughly enjoyed her years as a teacher of junior high school students; she loved her students and they loved her. Sister Dorothy spent 35 years as a teacher and 7 years as a principal in schools in the dioceses of Greensburg, Youngstown and Pittsburgh.

A new string of ministries began for her in 1984 when she was assigned to work at Marian Manor Nursing Facility. There she ministered as sacristan, receptionist, and Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist for the residents. She was also a dedicated visitor to our sister residents at the Manor. During that time, Sister Dorothy was a catechist at a neighboring parish for 11 years, a ministry she loved.

Sr. Dorothy loved to travel. She made many pilgrimages to shrines in neighboring states, and on her many bus tours she proved to be the very 'life of the party'.

Sister Dorothy's prayer life was very special to her. She loved daily Mass and making retreats. She enjoyed praying the Rosary with the residents at the Manor, and she also loved to write poetry and to tat. For birthdays and special feasts, one might find a card from her with a poem she'd written especially for the occasion. A favorite saying of hers and one by which she lived was, "Jesus, Others, Yourself". This spells out as an acrostic to be "JOY". Once when she was asked how she wanted to be remembered, she said, "Just say I was happy, glad to serve the Lord, and tried my best."

And this is how we remember our dear Sister Dorothy. Well loved by her only surviving sibling, Rev. Ernest Strzelinski, by her many nieces and nephews, and by her Sisters of the Holy Spirit, we pray that her joy-filled spirit is now experiencing the eternal joy that only God can give. Rest in eternal peace, dear Sister Dorothy.

JOY
Jesus
Others
Yourself

"I was happy, glad to serve the Lord, and tried my best."

Sister M. Consilia Tonti, SHS

Sister Consilia, SHS

Hermina Grace Tonti was the child of Annibale and Kathryn Vernacchio Tonti who had emigrated from Italy. The youngest of four siblings, she experienced the death of her brother Leonard when she was six and her mother at age eleven. Her married sister, Yolanda Tonti Kachmar, now deceased, moved into the family home, worked in the family store, and became to her and her brother Leonard, as Sister Consilia once stated, "God sent" and " our mother in every sense of the word." Until her death on January 4th, Sister's brother Norman and her nieces and nephews were a source of support and great joy to her.

In 1955 Hermina entered our community, and a year later became Sister Mary Consilia. She often recounted that her desire to belong to Christ as a Sister goes back to "the promise I made on my First Communion day to someday belong to Jesus as a sister and tell others about his great love for us."

Sister Consilia was a very gentle and grace-filled woman who possessed many talents and gifts. Having obtained degrees in education from Carlow College and Duquesne University, she also studied art at LaRoche College and Carnegie Mellon University. This education was put to good use not only in schools in Pennsylvania and Ohio, but also at the Activity and Development Center in Pittsburgh, at Rohn Studio, and at the Western Penitentiary where she accepted the challenge of teaching a freshman course at the Rehabilitation Center. She found this ministry rewarding as she later recounted: "It seemed to give a glimmer of hope to men in a very difficult situation."

When our community was caring for Hmong refugees at our Motherhouse for several summers, Sister Consilia taught their children who, she said, were so anxious to learn. All the while, she continued to teach oil painting classes in the evening at the Motherhouse. For jubilees as well as for special occasions, Sister Consilia's gift of an oil painting was a sign of the affection she had for each Sister.

Eventually she felt the need to do another ministry, so when a position became available at Marian Manor Nursing Facility, she took the job in Medical Records and in Pastoral Ministry. There she visited the residents and created "Memory Books" for families of the residents who had died.

This compassionate woman spent her entire life giving of herself to God and others.

In 2003 Sister Consilia received the "Manifesting the Kingdom Award". Although she was very unassuming about her achievements and her generous life, that award acknowledged the life that she had promised at her First Holy Communion to give her life to Jesus and to help others to know that God loved them.

May her dear soul now rest with God whom she loved with a generous and unselfish love and which was reflected in her life of service to others.

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Sister Cynthia Wessel, SHS
General Councilor

Sister Madeline Horning, SHS
General Councilor

Sister Janelle Banko, SHS
General Councilor

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sistersoftheholyspirit.com

phone 412.931.1917
fax 412.931.3711

Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of the Holy Spirit of Pittsburgh, declare our mission is to be joy-filled disciples of Jesus, prophetically witnessing to the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit, aware of our call to work for the transformation of society into a Gospel community, reconciled with God and with one another.

Is God calling you to religious life?
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5246 Clarwin Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15229 412-931-1917

Sister Patricia Eleanor Myers, SHS | srpatty@verizon.net
Sister Mary Anne Ulrich, SHS | srmaryanne@verizon.net

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