



# Spirit Echoings



Our Lady  
of Fatima

## Pray For Peace

For months the world has watched and prayed as the people of Ukraine continue to suffer at the hands of Russia's invading forces.

On March 25, Pope Francis invoked the assistance of the Mother of God by consecrating Ukraine and Russia to her Immaculate Heart. Part of that prayer reads:

“...we solemnly entrust and consecrate ourselves, the Church and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine. Grant that war may end and peace spread throughout the world.”

May God have mercy on us and on the world and give us forgiving hearts to enable us to love and respect and protect all the people God puts in our lives. May God make us people of peace.

# from Sister Grace



Sister Grace Fabich, SHS  
General Superior

## Moments to Memories

A wise person once said, “We often do not know the true value of a moment until it becomes a memory.” This summer brings an end to my years in administration at Sisters of the Holy Spirit. I have to admit that I have learned much, been supported by the Sisters and many loving persons, made mistakes, lived with reality and questions, and always knew the support and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Life has been good to me and continues to be so.

We, Sisters of the Holy Spirit, face the future, the good along with the heartaches. While as we look forward to our new Motherhouse, we sadly face the leveling of our current Motherhouse, a large building over a hundred years old. Many memories of those years, some good, some not so good, will come alive again as we move from a five story building into a two story one. The persons, the stories, the events stand loud and clear in our minds and in our hearts.

Our new home will be simple. There will be a residential area, a living and office area, and a chapel. We have several months yet before the building, the demolition, and the site work are complete. During that time, clearing this Motherhouse keeps us busy and time passes quickly.

I ask many blessings for all who read these words and whose lives have touched and continue to touch each of ours.

**Life has been good to me and continues to be so.**

May the Holy Spirit be a constant companion for each one, a teacher of life, and a recipient of God’s unique and powerful touch.

May beautiful memories touch your day.

# When Life Presents Challenges

Some years ago, Father Cornelius Rijk said, “Living in a secular world we begin to understand that life itself is a pilgrimage in which we travel, seek and search spiritually. Life is an openness and willingness to follow the Lord, to travel a new way to fresh encounters with God.”

Certainly these past several years have proved to be challenges of various kinds: a worldwide pandemic, war, isolation, loss of loved ones and sufferings of many kinds. And yet with all of this we find ourselves called to “fresh encounters with God” and a willingness to follow the Lord as we travel new ways. Our hope is in the Lord our God, and it is to God that we turn in prayer for guidance and help.

Throughout this pandemic, Sisters have prayed and found creative ways to be open to ways of encountering God. Sister Mary John Cook reported that the “smiling faces of former students who are now enrolled in schools due to the closing of Saint Maria Goretti School, helped to lighten the burden of the pandemic for her and for some students as they could enjoy a weekly math class at Saint Maria Goretti Convent!”



Sister Mary John and student.

Every Friday evening was an enjoyable time for the students, some actually needing assistance in math, and a few who just needed to share conversation. Sister John said, “I loved the fact that I could offer educational assistance as well as a time of relaxation and support for the students.” And, although the pandemic has waned somewhat, students continue to reunite weekly with each other at the convent.

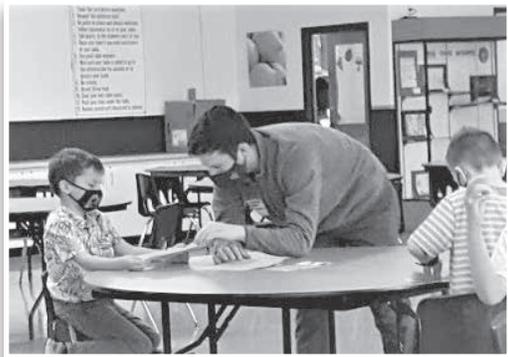
In addition to tutoring, Sister’s time was also given to three elderly women who needed to share their loneliness and at times their moments of depression. Solutions to those needs varied from inviting them to assist her at school in cleaning out lockers, cupboards, etc., to talking with them on the telephone and being a support for them in their being isolated.

continued on next page

## When Life Presents Challenges continued

Sister Cynthia Wessel added that she called elderly parishioners whose children live out of town to check on them and mostly to let them know they are cared about. She said that she also talked with people who questioned why God would let something like this (the pandemic) happen. She tried to comfort them and shared some of Pope Francis' thoughts and feelings. Having read Pope Francis' book *Let us Dream, the Path to a Better Future*, she shared some of those thoughts with others, especially those that related to Covid.

Although she wasn't able to do her usual work at the Food Bank because of the virus, Sister Janelle Banko taught throughout the pandemic. St. Theresa School was open for 180 days and she and the other teachers had to teach children in the classroom as well as those who stayed at home and attended virtually. Sister Janelle said that it was a huge challenge. Many children fell behind and that presents a concern for when they return to the classroom.



Seminarian Xavier Engles helping students.

Under pre-covid times our diocesan seminarians would have been assigned to nursing homes, hospitals, jail, soup kitchens etc., for their hands-on apostolic works by Sister Cindy Ann Kibler.

In her ministry to seminarians. Sister said that 'with all of the covid restrictions we were not permitted in these facilities and needed to become very creative with what could be done safely for all concerned.'

She said that it was through the inspiration of seminarian Matt Selzer "that remote teaching began to blossom." As Sister and the teachers reviewed the lesson plans created by the seminarians, Sister said that "it became clear that creative, high-energy, interactive, and upbeat plans were a good way to keep the children engaged even if it had to be through a computer. The last two weeks were spent with the students on the playground and in the classrooms at Holy Cross Academy. Sister Cindy Ann was thankful for the dedicated teachers who made this work possible.

Each week different small groups of seminarians helped out at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Food Pantry in Carnegie. Not only did they bag food and load cars, but they prayed with the other volunteers and those coming for the food.

One seminarian found an outdoor apostolic work that enabled social distancing. Sister Cindy remarked, "Who would ever have thought that praying for the deceased and cleaning up parish cemeteries would be so fruitful for the seminarians and their site supervisor Tom Berta." Not only did this manual labor create a bond between the seminarians, it also began a relationship with their supervisor and the staff of CPCA (Catholic Parish Cemeteries Association). Sister Cindy Ann said, "... even more importantly it was a way to show respect for those gone before us. The seminarians prayed for the deceased as they uncovered tombstones that were overgrown with shrubbery and learned how our faith treasures life from womb to tomb."

Since our retired priests live on the same property as our seminarians, the question arose as how best to reach the priests who felt isolated after having been used to helping out with Masses at parishes which were then closed until just recently. Groups of 2 seminarians at a time met outdoors or by social distancing in a conference room. Those gatherings proved to be enjoyable for the priests and seminarians and also helped the seminarians to learn more about what it means to be a priest.

Since Sister Cindy Ann was not able to gather in person with moms of seminarians and clergy, she held Zoom gatherings where they shared prayer, Thanksgiving traditions, and Stations of the Cross for Vocations. It was an opportunity to tap in to see how everyone was surviving. The annual retreat which had normally been held at the Martina Spiritual Renewal Center for the Women of the Diaconal Community ( wives and widows of Permanent Deacons) was shortened to a day retreat since many women were a bit apprehensive about staying an entire weekend. When the facilitator could not travel because of Covid, Bishop William Walterscheid graciously filled in and led the group in a lovely day of prayer. Sister said that even with masks on, the women “were elated to see one another in person and to enjoy the wonderful



Seminarians  
Loc Tran,  
Tung Nguyen,  
Nick Wyliaz,  
Peter Henkels,  
Gabriel Schoone  
adjusting  
headstone, with  
site supervisor,  
Tom Berta.

cooking and environment that is provided at our Martina Spiritual Renewal Center.

Sister Cindy Ann added, “Personally for many decades I have had a ‘card ministry’ “. Although her covid postage bill was higher than the norm, she continued to send cards of encouragement or made phone calls to those she knew were not able to be in their normal routines and missed having social interactions. She said, “Once some restrictions were lifted, it was such a joy to see how grateful people were to see one another.”

Prayer has led many people to assist others in need, to encounter God in everyday situations. All of these encounters with God continue to remind us that we are pilgrims on a journey.

We pray that we may be open to meet and follow our Lord wherever we are being led so that we may come to know, love, and serve Him ever more deeply in the people He puts in our lives.



Father Phil Przybyla  
with seminarians  
Brian Myler and  
Chris McMullen

Sister  
gathers  
litter.



## Sisters Join in Public Witness

Women Religious in the diocese participated in an “International Day of Action for Rivers” on March 14th during Catholic Sisters Week.

This served as a Day of Public Witness as Sisters stood together in the spirit of Pope Francis’ “Laudato Si”.

The Sisters met at Allegheny Landing in Pittsburgh at 1:00 PM. The program provided an opportunity to pray

together to thank God for the gifts given and to ask forgiveness for ways we have damaged and/or destroyed these gifts. This included a commitment to protect our water and our environment.

A River Trail Cleanup was the final feature of the day when those Sisters who were physically able, joined in cleaning up the area near our three rivers. They cleared 475 pounds of litter.

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## Sisters Place

In 1993 at a meeting of leaders of women religious, the subject of poverty and homelessness was addressed. The sisters, who represented 13 congregations in Pittsburgh and which included Sisters of the Holy Spirit, saw this as a problem especially for women who functioned as single parents. The Sisters decided to work together and began by purchasing and furnishing homes in Clairton, PA. A playground for the children was provided as well as child care which enabled time for the mothers to receive the supportive

services, education, and job training they needed. As families eventually advanced to the stage whereby they were able to get jobs and provide for themselves and their families, they moved on and other families moved in.

Recently Sisters Place moved from Clairton to Brownsville Road in Pittsburgh where Sisters Place, Inc., a non-profit organization is now served by a staff assisted by many foundations and individuals who carry on the work once founded by Catholic Sisters.

He is  
Not  
Here.

He is  
Risen!



# Pope Francis' Prayer For Peace

## Lord God of peace, hear our prayer!

We have tried so many times and over so many years to resolve our conflicts by our own powers and by the force of our arms. How many moments of hostility and darkness have we experienced; how much blood has been shed; how many lives have been shattered; how many hopes have been buried...But our efforts have been in vain.

Now, Lord, come to our aid! Grant us peace, teach us peace; guide our steps in the way of peace. Open our eyes and our hearts, and give us the courage to say: "Never again war!"; "With war everything is lost". Instill in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.

Lord, God of Abraham, God of the Prophets, God of Love, you created us and you call us to live as brothers and sisters. Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace; enable us to see

everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister. Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens who entreat us to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace, our trepidation into confident trust, and our quarreling into forgiveness.

Keep alive with us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation. In this way may peace triumph at last, and may the words "division", "hatred" and "war" be banished from the heart of every man and woman. Lord, defuse the violence of our tongues and our hands. Renew our hearts and minds, so that the word which always brings us together will be "brother", and our way of life will always be that of: Shalom, Peace, Salaam!

Amen.

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## 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?  
Would you like to join us in our work of Love and Joy?**

**Contact Sisters of the Holy Spirit - Vocations Office**  
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