Everything is connected.

Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.

*Laudato Si’* 91
Dear Friends,

As 2021 winds toward an end, it is a time to ponder. Many of us were praying that we would be experiencing a healthy world at peace. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has continued to mutate and grow stronger, and global peace remains a work very much still in progress.

This issue of inSpirit shares experiences of how Sisters of the Holy Cross and our companions on this journey of life continue to look to the future with hope. The stories give insight into lives seeking to embody an integral ecology as promulgated in Pope Francis’ Laudato Si’. Whether deepening faith, encouraging education, or protecting and upholding the rights of others, the people highlighted in this issue see that all life is created for wholeness, all creation is interconnected and interdependent.

Two adjectives speak to me of qualities desperately needed in today’s living: resiliency and vibrancy. Look to the people, places and gifts shared in these pages. They encourage us to be resilient, not just “bouncing back” into the past but “bouncing forward” to a new future; they encourage us to be vibrant with hope, seeing God’s love at work in the daily encounters of life. We need not fear for the future. Being people of resilience and vibrant hope helps us to mirror the truth of the words of Emily Dickinson’s poem: “If I Can Stop One Heart From Breaking.”

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

And so, I close echoing the wonderful question of another poet, Mary Oliver. “What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”

Sister M. Veronique (Wiedower), CSC
President

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About the Sisters of the Holy Cross
Founded in 1841 in Le Mans, France, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross is an international and intercultural community of women religious whose motherhouse is in Notre Dame, Indiana. The Congregation serves in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ghana, India, Mexico, Peru, Uganda and the United States.

Sisters of the Holy Cross are called to be witnesses of God's transforming love for the life of the world. Their ministries focus on providing education and health care services, eradicating material poverty and ending discrimination—giving witness to God’s desire for the transformation of human hearts, human relationships and all creation. To learn more, visit cscsisters.org.

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The Mark of Responsible Forestry
Our Pledge to Protect the Most Vulnerable

The Sisters of the Holy Cross publicly pledged their commitment to begin the seven-year journey to total sustainability that is outlined in the Laudato Si’ Action Platform. Laudato Si’, Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical on care for our common home, calls climate change both a social and an environmental justice issue. They are inextricably intertwined. Pope Francis calls this “integral ecology” and outlines seven goals that guide us to action.

We make this pledge because it is urgent and necessary, and because those who live in poverty are the most adversely affected by climate change. In committing to this pledge, we join the universal Church and all women and men of goodwill to lead the cultural transformation that our world urgently needs.

Now, we invite you — our readers, friends, supporters — to enter into your own commitment as an individual, a family, a community, to pledge to begin your own journey toward integral ecology. Visit the Laudato Si’ Action Platform, www.LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org, where you’ll find plans to help you map your journey, practical guidance on ways to take action, and a host of resources to develop trusted communities of practice. We will pray for you on this journey as we travel toward a better future.

Seven Goals of Laudato Si’

1. **Response to Cry of the Earth**
   A call to protect our common home for the well-being of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability. Actions could include the adoption of renewable energies and energy efficiency measures, achieving carbon neutrality, protecting biodiversity, promoting sustainable agriculture, and guaranteeing access to clean water for all.

2. **Response to Cry of the Poor**
   A call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on Earth. Actions could include projects to promote solidarity, with special attention given to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, refugees, migrants and children at risk, analysis and improvement of social systems, and social service programs.

3. **Ecological Economics**
   Acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere — our common home. Actions could include sustainable production and consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any activity harmful to the planet and the people, supporting circular economies, and prioritizing care labor and protecting the dignity of workers.

4. **Adoption of Simple Lifestyles**
   Grounded in the idea of sufficiency and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy. Actions could include reducing waste and recycling, adopting sustainable dietary habits (opting for a more plant-based diet and reducing meat consumption), greater use of public transport, active mobility (walking, cycling), and avoiding single use items (e.g., plastic).

5. **Ecological Education**
   Re-thinking and re-designing curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology in order to foster ecological awareness and transformative action. Actions could include ensuring equitable access to education for all and promoting human rights, fostering Laudato Si’ themes within the community, encouraging ecological leadership (students, teachers), and ecological restoration activities.

6. **Ecological Spirituality**
   Recovers a religious vision of God’s creation and encourages greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude. Actions could include promoting creation-centered liturgical celebrations, developing ecological catechesis, retreats and formation programs, and praying in nature.

7. **Emphasis on Community Involvement and Participatory Action**
   Encourages the development of cultures and policies that protect our common home and all who share it. Actions could include promoting advocacy and developing people’s campaigns, engagement with decision-makers, and encouraging rootedness and a sense of belonging in local communities and neighborhood ecosystems.

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Take Action: Your journey begins at www.LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org

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Our hotter, dirtier, deader planet is driving up the risk of suffering. The most vulnerable suffer above all.

—Laudato Si’ Action Platform

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**Take Action**

Your journey begins at www.LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org
Learn. Donate. To support techniques, such as chestnut, cocoa, of their forestry management plant species emerged as a product their fundamental role in shaping way, she adds. Research reveals their natural resources in a balanced owed historical credit for managing a preserved forest.”

“Mother Earth is as essential as life for the indigenous and they are the ones who know and really care for the environment. Where a traditional population lives, there is a preserved forest.”

Sister Michael Mary (Nolan), CSC

The violence goes far beyond just the land grabbing, however. In the first year after the presidential election of 2018, the number of violent incidents—murders, attempted murder, sexual violence and bodily harm—toward indigenous peoples increased 50 percent over the previous year. In 2020, Brazil ranked fourth in a list of countries with the most murders of land and environmental defenders, reports the nonprofit Global Witness. The number of suicides and infant deaths among the indigenous also are on the rise. Such violence seems to be condoned from the very top. The current president of the country, Jair Bolsonaro, systematically attacks the rights of indigenous peoples enshrined in Brazil’s 1988 Constitution. Offenses range from racist statements to the dismantling of FUNAI—the only government department in the world dedicated to the protection of indigenous peoples who have little or no contact with national society and other tribes. Under Bolsonaro’s watch, deforestation has hit a level not seen since 2012, according to the nonprofit Institute of Man and Environment of the Amazon.

The issues of violence and deforestation have ramifications beyond just Brazil. The world relies on rainforests to regulate the planet’s climate. As rainforests go, so goes the Earth. Sister Michael Mary knows these statistics only too well. As an attorney, she serves on the Indigenous Missionary Council of the National Bishops Conference in Brazil. She represents indigenous people who have been accused of crimes related to the struggle for land as well as the indigenous victims of land-related crimes. She also works with other groups of traditional populations on land and human rights questions.

“It is important to emphasize the contribution of native peoples to the preservation of the forest and all its biodiversity,” Sister Michael Mary notes. “Defending the indigenous peoples of Brazil is defending a near future where there is still the opportunity to breathe clean air and drink clean waters.”

Indigenous people who live in the city do not fare much better than those who reside in forests. Racism is prevalent and opportunities are few.

Clarice is a 33-year-old woman of the Pankararu tribe. In the 1940s, with their land diminishing from invaders, the Pankararu migrated to São Paulo, where they settled as minorities in favelas, or slums. In the favela where Clarice lives, the Pankararu Association strives to help their people. Sometimes donations of food and other items come in, and Clarice is responsible for receipt and distribution. Others in the neighborhood do not like that the Pankararu receive this assistance and see them as “privileged.” Clarice hasn’t experienced physical violence, “but verbal, for sure,” she says. “It’s not easy to deal with the prejudice because you are indigenous, a black woman, living in the favela. I can feel it in my skin.”

For Sister Michael Mary (Nolan), CSC, the spirituality of traditional peoples tests on a more humane and respectful relationship with Mother Earth. Yet their way of life, even their very existence, is under extreme threat in Brazil. “For traditional peoples, indigenous peoples, the relationship with the land is spiritual, not commercial,” says Sister Michael Mary, an attorney who works to protect the rights of the indigenous throughout Brazil. “The land is sacred and has no economic value. Mother Earth is as essential as life for the indigenous and they are the ones who know and really care for the environment. Where a traditional population lives, there is a preserved forest.”

In fact, indigenous peoples are owed historical credit for managing their natural resources in a balanced way, she adds. Research reveals their fundamental role in shaping South America’s biodiversity. Many plant species emerged as a product of their forestry management techniques, such as chestnut, cocoa, peach palm, babassu palm, cassava and the araucaria evergreen. But big landowners and illegal miners are desecrating land occupied by indigenous peoples. They seize the land, often violently and fraudously. Illegal land possessions, or possessor invasions—when an individual or group illegally occupies indigenous lands with the intention of stealing them—more than doubled in 2019. In 2020, more than 81,000 families had their land invaded, with nearly three-fourths of them indigenous. It was also the most violent year in Brazil’s rural areas since the restoration of democracy in 1985. The violence goes far beyond just land grabbing, however. In the first year after the presidential election of 2018, the number of violent
Among the Tripura tribal people of Bangladesh who are Catholic, the yearning to grow in their new faith is strong. Like newborns, they seek the pure spiritual milk of God’s Word that will help them grow into salvation. It is a bone-deep thirst.

But this thirst is not easily quenched. Illiteracy hinders their learning. Scattered among 35 wide-ranging villages, they live in an extremely remote, rugged and hilly region. Here, they lack the modern technology that could connect them to people and resources. And with only 0.2 percent (1 in 500) of the country’s population being Catholic, their source for teachers is limited.

Sister Semita Nokrek, CSC, recognized this desire to more fully embrace one’s faith and live its tenets. With a $1,000 Ministry With the Poor Fund grant, she purchased Bibles, song and prayer books, and religious articles. Accompanied by Sister Ahati Christina Tripura, CSC, and Sister Zita Rema, SSMI, they trekked to the villages, where they taught the rosary and other prayers, shared Bible stories, and sang songs.

“They seek God,” says Sister Semita, “and they are inspired to exercise their prayer life more and more.”

Courage to feel God’s love

In one village, about 35 people, mostly women, showed up. At the workshop’s close, the sisters held an evaluation. They asked questions to help the participants retain their lessons, which resulted in much joy and laughter. In addition, some of the women volunteered to serve as catechists, passing their new knowledge on to their Catholic family and friends.

The sisters found this effort both joyful and challenging. As they journeyed among the villages, they encountered a variety of languages and dialects spoken among the Tripura people. But the sisters embraced the challenge. “The beauty of diversity gives us courage to feel God’s love,” says Sister Semita.

Many priests also helped where they could, including Father Elias Palma, CSC, who traveled to the region from Dhaka. At St. John’s Catholic Church in Upper Parachara, the region’s main church, he facilitated a workshop for about 25 women. They listened to stories of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the importance and beauty of saying the rosary. In addition, the sisters formed a Legion of Mary, women volunteers who will serve as prayer leaders in the church.

Village by village, person by person, the thirst for understanding God’s love is being fulfilled.

Thank you

Your donations to the Ministry With the Poor Fund allow the sisters to carry forward God’s love and compassion to the margins of our world.
Alcoholism entered Audrey's life like a specter. She never noticed its presence while drinking casually on weekends or, later, when helping herself to her husband's bottles of liquor around the house. Not even when marriage troubles sent her out to drink in public. And after the divorce, the mother of four's frustration and stress seemed far more debilitating than consuming alcohol to cope.

Then came other losses—a business, jobs, family members. When a cherished brother died, alcohol was there to console her. When she finally secured a steady job, she stayed clean during the day but still drank every night. Only then, she says, "I realized I was addicted."

She tried backing off and, at times, made progress. But with the loss of her mother in 2020, she suddenly found herself drowning in her dependency. "I felt defeated, powerless, and I needed help," Audrey says. "I knew then that I could not do it by myself. I cried to God to help me."

**Treatment disparity**

The disease of alcoholism doesn’t discriminate. It draws no line at age, gender, race, religion, nationality or status. And yet, throughout much of the world, women face significant barriers to accessing treatment and are less likely to pursue it. Such is the case in Uganda, where Sister Mary Louise (Wahler), CSC, served more than seven years on the board of directors of Serenity Centre, a non-governmental residential rehabilitation facility in Kabalama. Noticing how few of the center’s residents were women, she became a conduit to services for Audrey and others. Still, she estimates that of every 100 people admitted annually to the facility, only 10 percent of them are women—a fact born out of cultural norms and taboos but also gender expectations and biases.

**Discrimination weakens families, community**

In Uganda, discontent attitudes about men’s and women’s alcohol use create a significant deterrent to women in need of services. A study published in the journal *Global Health Action* in 2016 about alcohol use among adults in Uganda notes that “alcohol use among men is associated with masculinity, social independence, and freedom from domestic responsibilities. Among girls, the use of alcohol is associated with a lack of respect and a defiance of the feminine ideals of domesticity, which can attract social sanctions.”

Additionally, societal norms that do not permit women to leave their communities, women's childcare and household responsibilities, as well as lack of transportation and the cost of treatment make it difficult for many women to get help they may need, says Serenity Centre’s Executive Director Emmanuel Mubangizi. What’s more, the shameful stigma that comes with being an alcoholic woman leads many to hide their disorder, shutting down any path to recovery. "If a woman has children, she will not leave home because she needs to care for the family, even though she is drinking," says Sister Mary Louise. "Since society here already looks down on women, this is another blow to them. Why waste money sending them away for help?"

**Paving the way to healing**

Of the women who have dared to seek help through Serenity Centre, its门 has accompanied them, listened to them, prayed with them, encouraged them—offering the societal imbalance by tipping the scale toward equity, justice and love. As residential treatment is around $2,000—a large sum for the average Ugandan family—she also appealed to the Congregation’s Ministry With the Poor Fund to help cover the cost of services. Serenity is funded by four religious congregations in Uganda—Society of Jesus, Congregation of Holy Cross, Missionaries of Africa and Mill Hill Missionaries—in partnership with the Archdiocese of Kampala.

Its mission is to provide a continuum of holistic services to individuals, families and entire communities affected by substance use disorders. Like Sister Mary Louise, the center holds to the ideal that healthy societies rest on the wholeness of every individual. But providing lasting healing at an affordable cost is a persistent dilemma for the center, says Sister Mary Louise. "Because Serenity depends totally on the fees of the residents, only those who have money can come. And I am especially concerned about women, since alcoholic women are truly outcasts."

Along with treatment and support, the women who seek help through Serenity Centre also learn how to make crafts and soap and bake bread to earn income to help support themselves and their families. But the true reward of treatment is reconciling with oneself and others—opening a door to a new, full life.

Stepping into the light

**... the center holds to the ideal that healthy societies rest on the wholeness of every individual.**

“Serenity has truly gotten into my blood,” says Sister Mary Louise. "I have seen for myself what a difference Serenity Centre has made in women’s lives. Those ostracized from their families are returning to begin anew. And their families are willing to help them to remain firm in their convictions. I listen to stories of people who were truly sick and have recovered, and that gives me hope.”

**Finding communion**

Disentangling from her alcohol addiction was difficult, Audrey admits. But through the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, sobriety lectures, counseling, spiritual guidance, prayer and meditation she encountered in Serenity Centre, she has experienced a transformation. While journeying toward sobriety, she says, she has also been “journeying toward heaven,” recognizing and accepting Jesus as her savior and receiving the Eucharist.

She has regained communion with the world—extending forgiveness, making amends with those she's wronged, counseling and encouraging others with addictions as they struggle to leave one life and begin another. "I want to live sober because the rewards of sobriety are beautiful and progressive... it’s like I am free from prison," Audrey says. "I can now control my resentments and anger, I can now share my feelings with others. I can now fellowship with others. Being honest with oneself is the turning point to recovery."

The road is long, Audrey adds, but, "It's a privilege to grow in sobriety one day at a time, bringing the message of hope to others as it was brought to me.”
Caregiver Coping

It is a unique burden, some would say a blessing, to provide long-term care for a loved one who is ill or aging. Whether burden or blessing or a bit of both, the tendency to give all of oneself in caring for another too often results in self-neglect.

It’s no wonder. According to a survey by the AARP, caregiver emotions can range from joy to despair. Although positive emotions far outweigh the negative, over half said they are stressed and many are overwhelmed.

Exacerbating the issue is that an aging population is caring for an aging population. In the U.S., of the 53 million unpaid caregivers, 79 percent are caring for someone over the age of 50—typically an aging parent. That translates to one in six Americans who are now responsible for at least one aging adult over 50. Yet the average age of caregivers is 50.1, a time of life when many are still working and dealing with their own health concerns.

As the country approaches 2026, when the first of the baby boomers turn 80, the role of caregiving will be borne by a steadily growing number of people.

Still, even with all the challenges, 90 percent of caregivers surveyed said that providing care to someone they love is worthwhile.

Lending support to caregivers

Sister Kathy Weber, CSC, has seen caregiver burnout time and again. For more than three decades, she has been conducting caregiver support groups each week through the Adult Medical Day Center of Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring, Maryland. She has seen the detrimental effects of burnout on those who try to do it all and do it alone.

In her groups, caregivers meet face to face, and heart to heart. Participants talk about their concerns and struggles and worries. When burdens are shared, they are lightened. Other group members offer suggestions or just convey kindness to soothe a troubled spirit. Sister Kathy moderates the group and gives witness to the journeys of those who attend.

Finding a support group

Sister Kathy earnestly hopes that caregivers learn the value of caring for themselves. She suggests checking with your local hospital or council on aging to find a support group where you live. If the only option is virtual, take advantage of it. Whether in person or virtual, the opportunity to speak with and hear from other caregivers is invaluable. Sister Kathy knows this firsthand.

When the COVID-19 pandemic erupted in March 2020, the support groups ground to a halt. Mandatory quarantines and social distancing changed everything. Meeting “screen to screen” instead of face to face wasn’t ideal, but it was the best they could do to keep the groups going. Some participants dropped out, not being able to adjust to the virtual format, but most stayed with it—and actually liked it. They no longer had the hassles of traffic, the challenges in leaving their loved one, and the time and expense in even a short journey.

Perhaps best of all, they found themselves opening up to a much wider group—geographically, that is. As group members told others about the virtual format, Sister Kathy found herself hosting people from Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, and even Spain and Italy.

“The virtual format has given us a much bigger outreach,” she happily notes. “I think they realized that when it comes to touching heart to heart, there really is no distance at all.”

Tips for Self-Care from Sister Kathy Weber, CSC

Compassionate and healing

God, help us to see your face in the faces of our sisters and brothers who are sick or injured.

Guide us to reach out to them with hearts of compassion and hands which serve their needs.

When they are anxious, help us to know how to reassure them.

When they feel confused, help us to listen and assist in finding answers to their concerns. When they need comfort, help us to communicate care and understanding.

When they feel dark or discouraged, help us find ways to refresh their spirits.

When doubt or darkness touches them, give your Light to guide them and lift them up.

Help us as caregivers to always turn to You as the source of our own strength and compassion as we seek to serve the needs of our sisters and brothers who are vulnerable.

Amen.

Source: Catholic Health Association

The Caregiver’s Prayer

Compassionate and healing

God, help us to see your face in the faces of our sisters and brothers who are sick or injured.

Guide us to reach out to them with hearts of compassion and hands which serve their needs.

When they are anxious, help us to know how to reassure them.

When they feel alone, help us to notice and be present.

When they feel confused, help us to listen and assist in finding answers to their concerns.

When they need comfort, help us to communicate care and understanding.

When they are weak or discouraged, help us find ways to refresh their spirits.

When doubt or darkness touches them, give your Light to guide them and lift them up.

Help us as caregivers to always turn to You as the source of our own strength and compassion as we seek to serve the needs of our sisters and brothers who are vulnerable.

Amen.

Source: Catholic Health Association
So how do you avoid caregiver burnout? Here are Sister Kathy’s 10 best tips—gleaned from 30 years of experience—on caring for yourself while caring for others.

1. **Realize that self-care is the most important part of caregiving.** “You can’t pour from an empty glass,” Sister Kathy and her support group participants are fond of saying.


3. **Use respite care to give yourself a break.** It’s okay to let someone else spend time with your loved one. That person may not do everything exactly like you, but that’s alright. You need a break whether you realize it or not.

4. **Have some fun to avoid feeling isolated.** Call and text friends. Make plans for a fun outing so you have something to look forward to. Stay social.

5. **Do not feel guilty.** Guilt gets you nowhere. It zaps your strength. If guilt weighs heavy on you, find a trusted person to talk to. Try to nurture an attitude of gratitude for God’s blessings in your life.

6. **Recognize when you feel angry or frustrated.** Anger and frustration are normal in trying situations. Remember that the problem isn’t how you feel, it’s what you do with those feelings. Share them, when possible, with someone who will understand.

7. **Keep your sense of humor.** Humor can sometimes be found in the most unexpected places. Give yourself permission to laugh and smile. Lean on Job 8:21. “He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy.”

8. **Avoid arguing with your care recipient because you will not win.** It can be tempting to try and make your loved one see your point of view, but often the pain in doing so are not worth any potential gains.

9. **Take one day at a time, one moment at a time.** This is Sister Kathy’s most earnest piece of advice. Do not live into the future, not even the near future. Pray and trust that God walks with you. Walk by faith, not by sight. Let whatever you do today be enough.

10. **Seek out a caregiver support group and start going.** A support group will connect you with others who are walking the same path, giving you support when you find yourself worn to the edge, and rejoicing with you over happy times.

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Knowledge, Compassion and Service

**Education “Not for School, but for Life”**

Gloria Larbi is pursuing a legal degree in the hope of helping people in need. A 2017 graduate of Our Lady of Holy Cross School in Kasoa, Ghana, she attributes her career path and strong moral conviction to the Catholic education she received from the Sisters of the Holy Cross—the founders of her school. Our Lady serves more than 1,000 children from nursery school through junior high and is where Gloria excelled, becoming the prefect for senior girls and valedictorian of her graduating class.

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Our Lady of Holy Cross School was founded in 2006. The school serves more than 1,000 students in nursery through junior high school grades and provides dormitories for distant students.

The quality of education delivered at the school is reflected in the high test scores received by students. In recent years, 100 percent of students passed the proficiency examination, qualifying them to enter the most selective high schools in their areas.

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My name is Gloria Aboagyewaa Larbi, a proud former student of Our Lady of Holy Cross School in Kasoa, Ghana. I was part of the very first batch of students the sisters had. I am indeed honored to be part of that story. I went through all the grades at Our Lady of Holy Cross, and the school taught me so much that will continue to stay with me for years to come. I received an education “not for school, but for life.”

The motto of the school is “Knowledge, Compassion, Service,” and it imparts values that leave a mark on every student. Moreover, as a solid and disciplined Catholic institution, the school gives its students training that teaches them about God, which goes a long way in shaping their young lives. These morals and training have helped me stand out wherever I go.

Life in high school was not easy. But because of the solid foundation I had developed at Our Lady of Holy Cross, I was prepared and didn’t feel too much stress. Now, I am a first-year political science student in one of the most prestigious universities in Ghana. Someday I’d like to join the legal profession and become an attorney because I want to contribute to the world and give back to society what I received at Our Lady. I care a great deal about people, especially those who have no one and cannot defend themselves. Therefore, my service to humanity as a lawyer will bring me fulfillment.

As I go along in life, I will never forget the school that made me who I am today and who I will be in the future. I am happy I passed through such a noble institution. Whenever I recall my time there, nostalgia kicks in and all I do is smile, for those were some of the best years of my life. I hope to make my school proud. — Gloria Aboagyewaa Larbi
SOAR Reaches Higher ... and Higher

The SOAR program started on a wing and a prayer—a dream to eliminate the mounds of plastic waste polluting the city of Kasoa, Ghana, and at the same time provide an opportunity for impoverished residents to earn an income.

Four years later, SOAR (Sisters Organizing and Advancing Recycling) has reached new heights. In eight months, the program more than doubled the amount of plastic waste collected compared to the previous 46 months. In addition, SOAR has expanded into two additional cities, with 33 collection hubs at six parishes and 11 schools. Several of the schools hold friendly competitions to see which can collect the most plastic waste.

Just as importantly, SOAR is striving to lift people out of poverty. Currently, 75 individuals are paid to collect, clean, sort, bag and haul the waste to a plastics processor.

A phenomenal program, SOAR has the potential to be replicated elsewhere. It is also aligned with the Congregation’s Carbon Footprint Reduction Fund, which in 2020 was singled out by the Vatican as a “good practice.”

There are new dreams on the horizon for SOAR, says founder Sister Comfort Arthur, CSC. She thanks the many partners who have made this ministry possible: the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, Loyola Foundation, Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters, Linehan Family Foundation, Dodds Family Charitable Foundation, and you—without whom her dream would not have taken flight.

Mass Reopens to Public

The sisters are delighted to again welcome fellow worshippers to the Church of Our Lady of Loretto at Saint Mary’s. After 16 months, public Mass resumed with a special outdoor event on July 4, 2021. Sprinkled about the church sidewalks and lawn, nearly 150 sisters and guests gathered for the joyous reunion.

And as of July 11, friends of the church and visitors have been able to attend a new 9:15 a.m. Sunday Mass inside the church, still the only Mass time open to campus guests. To ensure the health and safety of all guests and sisters, masks are required in the church and temperatures are taken at the door.

Profession of Vows, Celebrate with us!

We thank God for each of these women and their commitment to service and ministry with the Congregation and God’s people.

Seven sisters—from Uganda, India, Ghana and Bangladesh—made their initial profession of vows on June 19, 2021, at the Church of Our Lady of Loretto, Saint Mary’s, Notre Dame, Indiana. Back row, from left, are Holy Cross Sisters Dorothy Akreng, Lupa Hajong and Lydia Issah, and front row, from left, are Sisters Risha Mery Nonglang, Margret Kabasiza, Dalo D’Costa and Bethalain Langrin.

On July 17, 2021, Sister Martha Nambi, CSC, left, professed her perpetual vows with the Congregation at St. André Formation House Chapel, Jinja, Uganda.

Sisters Celebrate with a Virtual Jubilee Event

Sisters of the Holy Cross celebrated their 2020 and 2021 jubilarians in a global virtual event on July 17, 2021. Of the 10 jubilarians, four marked 50 years of consecrated life, and six celebrated 25 years. From the reaches of the world, thanks rang out for these sisters and their years of loving and dedicated ministry. Learn more about their lives and service and extend your good wishes for them at cscsisters.org/jubilee-2020-2021.
In loving memory...
These Sisters of the Holy Cross were called home to God since the last issue of inspirit. While we feel their loss, we rejoice in their newfound lives. To make a memorial contribution, please visit cscsisters.org/donate.
To read the complete obituary notice, please visit our website, cscsisters.org/in-loving-memory.

Sister Marie Julie, CSC (Helen Virginia Shea) May 4, 1917–May 13, 2021
Helen Virginia Shea attended St. Patrick’s Academy in Washington, D.C., which was known for preparing graduates for employment in federal government offices. But it was the love of God that surprised her. She was surprised there from the Sisters of the Holy Cross that formed her future and guided her to the convent at Saint Mary's, Notre Dame, Indiana. When Helen received the holy habit in 1937 she also received the name Sister Marie Julie. Following her initial profession of vows, she was assigned to the business office of The Academy of the Holy Cross in Washington, D.C. The next year she began her teaching career, later earning a bachelor's degree in history. She went on to teach business courses, religion and history. After serving at Dunbarton College and then as the vocation director for the Congregation, Sister Marie Julie was named principal of St. Patrick's Academy. After seven years, she moved to The Academy of the Holy Cross, where she served 28 years as a business teacher then as registrar before retiring in Kensington, Maryland. She moved to Saint Mary’s, Notre Dame, Indiana, in 2018, where she continued her prayerful and loving outreach to all until her death at age 104.

Sister M. Carolita, CSC (Vivian Bernice Hert) September 23, 1930–May 22, 2021
Vivian Bernice Hert was a convert to Catholicism in her senior year as a nursing student, inspired by the dedication and altruism of the Sisters of the Holy Cross who staffed the nursing college. Two years later, she entered the Congregation in 1955. She completed her bachelor's in nursing in 1957 and her master's in nursing administration in 1963.
Since 1957, she had worked in various Holy Cross-sponsored hospitals in health care ministry positions such as staff nurse, director of nursing, director of critical care, operating room nurse, emergency room nurse and staff development. Sister Carolita finished her nursing career as a family nurse practitioner in Salt Lake City, Utah. Her next eight years as a hospital administrator were split between Columbus, Ohio, and Mission Hills, California. In 1990, she was called to serve in what was called the Retirement Region for five years at the motherhouse. What followed was one of Sister Carolita’s most challenging roles, that of director of health affairs for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Sister worked with administrators of hospitals, health systems and nursing homes, and advocated for legislation to make health care more accessible, especially for the poor.

Sister Loretta Marie, CSC (Elizabeth “Betty” Jean Veldes) March 21, 1931—June 7, 2021
Originally from Austin, Texas, Betty Jean Veldes entered the Congregation on August 1, 1948. Upon reception of the holy habit on February 2, 1949, she became known as Sister Loretta Marie, a name she always bore with grace and dignity. From 1951 to 1962, Sister Loretta Marie taught in Catholic elementary schools in New York, Virginia and Maryland. A hearing impairment moved her out of the classroom into medical records administration at Holy Cross hospitals in Silver Spring, Maryland; Anderson, Indiana; and Columbus, Ohio. One of the most significant decisions of her life was to pursue a master’s in counselling for the hearing impaired, at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., “which in turn enabled me to accept my own deafness after avoiding it for 30 years.” She earned her degree in 1983 and thereafter was a counselor, advocate and coordinator at the Shiloh Senior Citizens Center for the Hearing Impaired at the historic Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. Sister retired to the motherhouse at Saint Mary’s in 2018. She worked as a secretary and then as a minister of prayer.
Sister Loretta Marie now enjoys the burning beauty of eternity with God and all her loved ones.

Sister Joanne Becker, CSC (Sister M. Clare Thérèse) July 24, 1942—July 5, 2021
“God invited me, Joanne Elizabeth Becker, into this world of beauty and promise.” Entering the Congregation in 1961 at Saint Mary’s, Notre Dame, Indiana, Joanne received the holy habit on June 10, 1962, and the name Sister M. Clare Thérèse—which she kept until customs changed in 1968. Sister Joanne earned her bachelor’s degree in elementary education in 1971 and favored teaching the third grade. She taught from 1966 to 1986 in Catholic elementary schools and parish religious education in Virginia, Washington, D.C., Texas, Illinois and Indiana. She then transitioned to library work in South Bend for 11 years and from 1997 to 2009 she served as the library assistant at Holy Cross College. In 2012, she took her final role and used her research skills in Congregational Archives and Records up until the Friday before her death.
Sister Joanne was gifted with a personality that was very sociable and was a welcoming presence wherever she ministered. She developed a circle of friends with the Holy Cross Associates, who support the Congregation’s mission through prayer and service. She was a good woman who was inclusive, gentle and reached out to so many.

Sister M. Carmen, CSC (Patricia Ann Davy) September 8, 1923–July 6, 2021
Sister Carmen entered the Congregation as Patricia Ann Davy from Fortuna, California, on July 12, 1941—just three years after her older sibling, Sister M. Carolita (Davy), CSC. She spent years caring for children at Holy Rosary Orphanage, Dhaka, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), and was engaged in social work with the Bengali poor and Garo Hill tribes in Jhalulta. Sister Carmen also was involved in the spiritual formation of women religious from several congregations in Africa and Asia. And later, she lived with and tutored young Sisters of the Holy Cross sent for higher studies in Shillong, Meghalaya, India.
At the age of 80, having lived 50 years abroad, she retired to a ministry of prayer at Saint Catherine by the Sea in Ventura, California. Eventually, Sister Carmen found her way to the rose garden and spent many hours of reflection thanking God for her fruitful years in the vineyard of Holy Cross. In 2008, Sister Carmen took a tumble and never fully healed. She moved to Saint Mary’s Convent in January 2009.
Sister Carmen was buried in Our Lady of Peace Cemetery next to Sister Carolita, who died of a sudden illness in 1952 at the young age of 32 years old.
I would absolutely recommend a DAF (donor-advised fund) as an efficient and prudent way of managing charitable giving. I have much love, respect and appreciation for how the sisters are bringing God’s love to the vulnerable among us.” — Curtis Theyse

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Consider including the Sisters of the Holy Cross in your list of grant recommendations. Let us know if you need ideas on what areas to support based on your personal values and interests. While you may choose to give anonymously, if you share your contact information, we’d be delighted to share our gratitude.

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Mail to: Sisters of the Holy Cross, Development Office—Saint Mary’s, 407 Bertrand Hall, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556-5000; (574) 284-5641

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**Sister M. Albertine, CSC**

*Emma Marie Kramer*

May 4, 1930—August 5, 2021

Emma Marie Kramer attended St. Angela’s Academy in Morris, Illinois, for her secondary education, where she met the Sisters of the Holy Cross. She graduated in 1948 and entered the Congregation that July. She received the holy habit at Saint Mary’s, Notre Dame, Indiana, on February 2, 1949, and became known as Sister Mary Albertine.

After years of classroom experience, she earned her bachelor’s degree in elementary education in 1965.

Sister specialized in science, especially physiology, based on later postgraduate studies at the University of Washington. From 1969 to 1980, she taught in Catholic elementary schools in the American Midwest and West, sometimes serving as a director of staff development in Anderson, Indiana. Eventually, Sister’s focus turned to pastoral care in Boise, Idaho, Tucson, Arizona, and Salinas, California.

Back in Indiana, Sister ministered as an education specialist in South Bend and later provided pastoral staff development at Saint Mary’s.

In 1998, she served at Saint Mary’s College, and in 2003, she was awarded the Saint Mary’s Belles Varsity Appreciation Award for her three years as chaplain for the basketball and volleyball programs. In May 2019, Sister Loisita was inducted into the Saint Mary’s College Athletic Hall of Fame, the first team chaplain to receive the honor.

Fondly remembered as “Sister Lou,” she was a vivacious presence who had inspired young women throughout her 63 years of vowed life in community as a Sister of the Holy Cross.

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**Sister M. Louisita, CSC**

*Mary Louise Welsh*

July 10, 1932–August 19, 2021

Mary Louise Welsh became Sister M. Louisita on August 15, 1956, and was involved in many facets of ministry throughout her community life. Three different times she was on the faculty of the Mount Carmel School of Nursing in Columbus, Ohio and served on their board of trustees until 1985.

She then worked in Maryland in medical-surgical nursing and as director of staff development in Anderson, Indiana. Eventually, Sister’s focus turned to pastoral care in Boise, Idaho, Tucson, Arizona, and Salinas, California.

Back in Indiana, Sister specialized in science, especially physiology, based on later postgraduate studies at the University of Washington. From 1969 to 1980, she taught in Catholic elementary schools in the American Midwest and West, sometimes serving as a director of staff development in Anderson, Indiana. Eventually, Sister’s focus turned to pastoral care in Boise, Idaho, Tucson, Arizona, and Salinas, California.

Back in Indiana, Sister ministered as an education specialist in South Bend and later provided pastoral staff development at Saint Mary’s. In 1998, she served at Saint Mary’s College, and in 2003, she was awarded the Saint Mary’s Belles Varsity Appreciation Award for her three years as chaplain for the basketball and volleyball programs. In May 2019, Sister Loisita was inducted into the Saint Mary’s College Athletic Hall of Fame, the first team chaplain to receive the honor.

Fondly remembered as “Sister Lou,” she was a vivacious presence who had inspired young women throughout her 63 years of vowed life in community as a Sister of the Holy Cross.

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**Sister Marietta Umlor, CSC**

*Sister M. Auberta*

February 18, 1943–August 19, 2021

News of the sudden death of Sister Marietta Umlor at Northwestern Hospital in Chicago came like a summer lightning strike to the Sisters of the Holy Cross and the faith community of Metropolitan Parish in Orland Park, Illinois.

After graduation from Mother McAuley Liberal Arts High School in 1960, she entered the Congregation at Saint Mary’s, Notre Dame, Indiana, receiving the name Sister Mary Auberta, and later reclaiming her baptismal name as Sister Marietta.

Her preparation in ministry in education included a bachelor’s degree at Saint Mary’s College in 1965, and a master’s from the University of Notre Dame in 1973. She served as a junior high teacher for 13 years then transitioned to religious education. In 1971, Sister Marietta was assigned to her home parish, Most Holy Redeemer, Evergreen Park, Illinois, for 15 years, then to St. Michael Parish in 1987.

While at the parish, she also served with the Angels Area retired sisters. She was keenly attentive to their needs, particularly their desire to grow in their spiritual life, says Sister M. Rose Edward (Goodrow), CSC. “Marietta was a great lady who was very devoted to her community as well as her family and friends.”
IRA Charitable Distributions
If you don’t need the income and are at least 70½ years of age, consider making charitable distributions directly from your IRA to charity. Such distributions count toward your required minimum distribution, are not counted as taxable income, and are not subject to withholding. This type of charitable giving has benefits that vary from person to person. Consult with your financial planner, CPA, or attorney to decide if this type of donation is right for you. If so:
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Memorial to St. Joseph a Gift for Workers
Making the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Pope Francis released the apostolic letter Patris corde (“With a Father’s Heart”) and proclaimed December 8, 2020, through December 8, 2021, the year of St. Joseph. Calling out Joseph’s “central role in the history of salvation,” the letter recognizes Joseph’s qualities as a father and his impact as an “ordinary” person. Drawing a correlation with the pandemic, the letter also celebrates the many “hidden ones” who “are praying, making sacrifices and interceding for the good of all.” In Joseph, Pope Francis says, they find their model. “Each of us can discover in Joseph—the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence—an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble.”

Anticipating the significant anniversary, several women in Imbaú, Paraná, Brazil, approached Sister M. Rose Martin (Tragesser), CSC, about doing something monumental. To help them honor their patron, she has been collaborating on the construction of the Oratory of St. Joseph the Worker. The site of tribute to the saint, she says, is “meant especially to affirm laborers in Brazil and to serve as a sacred space for prayer and peace for travelers.”

The oratory, featuring a towering statue of Joseph holding the infant Jesus and a saw—a carpenter’s tool—will be erected near a major highway and visible from either direction. Roughly 8,000 vehicles travel the route each day, and an exit will allow motorists to pull off to visit the site, where they can rest, unload concerns and troubles, and offer thanks. For Sister Rose Martin, the project has been an expression of her devotion to St. Joseph, but also her thankfulness for her religious vocation, her 60 years in Brazil, and for the people working alongside her. 

Sister M. Rose Martin (Tragesser), CSC, fourth from left, joins, from left to right, Jose, Ildo, Maristela, Father Manussueto and Eurides, council members of St. Joseph’s Parish, Imbaú, Paraná, Brazil.
Our prayer in a time of global suffering

God of wind and water, stillness and storm, you are our comfort and strength in times of crisis. Surround us now with your grace and peace. Give us faith to seek you in times of trouble. By your Spirit, lift those who have fallen, sustain those who want rescue or renewed, and fill us with the hope of your new creation. Through Jesus Christ our Lord and redeemer. Amen