Today, the sisters’ ministries of healing take place not so much in hospitals ... rather closer to the heart ... all across the globe.
Dear Friends,

As I write this opening reflection, it is Laudato Si’ Week, an invitation by Pope Francis to engage in the hard work of caring for Earth, our common home. In paragraph 92 of the encyclical, he reminds us that creation’s original vocation is to exist and flourish as a community of love, a web of interrelationships.

The stories explored in this issue give a vivid reminder that there is much work to do so that Earth may thrive and flourish. Our experience has taught us that this work always begins “at home” within each of us. Only then can we plant seeds of hope that will flower in the world in their own time. Whether beekeeping or purifying healthy drinking water, we plant seeds. Providing breakfast on the street imitates Jesus’ provision of breakfast on the beach after the resurrection, planting a seed of hope. Walking with parents as they grow into their children’s first teachers, or waiting with children separated from their parents, we plant seeds of transforming grace. Responding to the critical needs of the day, doing our part no matter how small, plants a seed of loving care.

Through prayer, each of us receives God’s grace of transforming love, and in return we intercede for Earth, planting seeds of communion. Benefactors, friends and employees collaborate to contribute time, talent and treasure to change inequities, planting seeds of hope that grow God’s reign of justice and peace for today and tomorrow.

We are immensely grateful to all who celebrate Laudato Si’ not just for a week but for a lifetime, a daily exercise of praise and giving thanks to the One who gifts us with hope in bees and science, in bread and clean water, in women and men open and committed to the transformation of Earth and God’s Reign of peace. What seeds will you plant today?

In solidarity,

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 teens, transported to Freeman Coliseum from where they arrived — when we got our first look at the border — 900-plus cots, kids — they were 15 or 16 years old. Really great kids and could see their individual personalities, the realization of their faith, hope and love. They liked to pray. We prayed for them and always for their families and for the other kids there. They were very polite and well-mannered, and funny and sweet as you spent more time with them. They lined up constantly for showers, meals, bathroom breaks, snacks, outdoor recreation, English class, COVID-19 testing, phone calls home.

There were no tables for games (no use of “gang related” colors), case management, transportation, with public health resources for medical and COVID-19 testing and care. All of us — teens, staff, volunteers — had to get tested every three days. Catholic Charities of San Antonio coached volunteers on how to reinforce English, how to pass the time in productive ways, and how to be a welcoming, friendly and affirming presence for kids away from home in a high-stress situation.

As we spent more time with the kids and could see their individual personalities, the realization of their situation became more clear — that they had left families, that to get from Salvador, Guatemala or Honduras they needed to travel through Mexico and were prey to potential assaults, extortion, threats, physical hardships, abandonment, hunger — and all that at age 15. Yet, the temporary nature of the Freeman facility did say to them that they would be going someplace else in the states — to a “sponsor” who could be their cousin or aunt, or mom! And they had that hope. So, we were with them in that little waiting space, and they could be their 15- and 16-year-old selves.

They have great faith. They liked to pray. We prayed for them and always for their families and for the other kids there. They were very comfortable praying. When they went to lunch, they put their lunch down, folded their hands, closed their eyes and prayed — not just a quick, “Bless us, O Lord,” but a good minute or two of silent space. It was in them to be with God. So, to bring a rosary if they were just sitting around was often a welcome gift or kneeler for them.

Need for comforts, discovery
Several boys in my pod had come from an education session on numbers and counting and wanted to do more, so for two days we counted to 100. Until we bought some flash cards, we made up sheets to practice counting and we counted out loud numerous times to 100, 200 to practice pronunciation — a challenge made more difficult by wearing masks that hide your mouth, lips and tongue.

We were also very conscious of the lack of contact with nature. They were outside maybe once a day for either organized physical education, or free play or walking to the showers — but that was it. No windows in the conference center, no trees, grass or birds. So, we bought flowers to set on the prayer table; a little bit of beauty to share space with La Virgen, and the many origami tulips and lilies, and notes with prayers and intentions on them.

Finding goodness in relationships
There are so many images or impressions from the week — I will be sitting with them or processing them for a long time. In general, I would say that they revolve around the goodness of people and the decency we find in one another. The moments become like sacraments of the goodness of people and the decency we find in one another. The moments become like sacraments of the goodness of people and the decency we find in one another. The moments become like sacraments of the goodness of people and the decency we find in one another. The moments become like sacraments of the goodness of people and the decency we find in one another. The moments become like sacraments of the goodness of people and the decency we find in one another. The moments become like sacraments of the goodness of people and the decency we find in one another.
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—Sister Mary Ann Pajakowski, CSC

Dissolving barriers

I was assigned to 24 boys, ages 13, 14 and 15. One boy spoke beginning English fairly well, the rest knew a few English words. This did not limit my interactions in a big way, as I made up my own sign language. Just being present with them, participating in some of their games and activities and leading them to the places they needed to go made them so happy. Knowing Spanish would have made a huge difference, but having a bilingual group leader at the pod helped a lot.

One morning, one of the boys just broke into tears because he felt he had been there far too long and wondered if the processing of his documents had been halted. The sadness and fear in his eyes hit me hard. I pray for him and the others as they hope for a better life in the United States. I believe the boys felt comforted, cared for and loved by our being with them. It was a satisfying experience to have had this opportunity. The memories of the experience will live on.

—Sister Esther Abo Adjoa Entsowah, CSC

How you can help

The Sisters of the Holy Cross express their gratitude to the Holy Cross associates, families, friends, and co-workers who continue to hold these children, their families and their situations in prayer.

To learn how to provide additional support, visit the Catholic Charities of San Antonio website, ccaosa.org.
You may also contact the following organizations:

Arizona
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Southern Arizona, Tucson
Teresa Cavendish, Director of Operations
phone: (520) 670-0800
email: teresac@ccdir.arizona.org

California
Catholic Charities, Diocese of San Diego
Nadine Toppozada, Director Refugee and Immigrant Services
phone: (619) 326-1974
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Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of San Antonio
Eddie Rocha, Volunteer Services
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Catholic Charities Diocese of Laredo
Becky Salas, Executive Director
phone: (956) 722-2443
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Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley
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The sisters served in the San Antonio, Texas, Freeman Coliseum, which is housing nearly 900 boys, ages 13–17.
A 2-year-old child’s emotions suddenly became out of control. A mom and her 11-year-old daughter were troubled by a past trauma. A new mother with postpartum depression struggled to get through each day. And a teenage girl pondered suicidal thoughts.

These are not the people and types of situations that the Parents As Teachers (PAT) program encounters daily, but they are not beyond the norm. In Utah, Holy Cross Ministries initiated the national Parents as Teachers program five years ago to help parents of high-risk children ages 0–3 learn how to embrace their roles as their young one’s first and most influential teacher in life. The experiences a child has in these early years influence how the brain processes information, impacting the child’s capacity for learning throughout life.

Supported in part by the Ministry With the Poor Fund, the program employs two parent educators who serve Wasatch and Summit counties. Each makes twice monthly home visits (now online) to 20 Latinx families, for a total of 40 families served. But sometimes the parent educators encounter situations in a family that are beyond their area of expertise.

That’s when they turn to another resource within Holy Cross Ministries.

Sister Verónica A. Fajardo, CSC, provides counseling to PAT families when a particular need is identified. Previously, she served with Peace House, a women’s shelter, where she helped women who were victims of domestic abuse and sexual trauma.

“As parent educators, we are not therapists. Sister Veronica is,” said Lizeette Zurita, PAT program coordinator. “She is an amazing human being who creates a unique relationship with every client. More than half of our families are referred to her.”

“I journey with the families to healing,” Sister Verónica explained. “I find joy in helping families flourish and seeing their resilience grow. They are physically lighter, where before, there was a heaviness.”

The value of Sister Verónica’s role in this program—unusual for the majority of Parents as Teachers programs across the country—is immeasurable. She is both bilingual and bicultural, a factor that is crucial to the success of this ministry and one that is too rare in the community. After working with Sister Verónica, families are no longer afraid to talk about uncomfortable issues. Hers is a healing voice.

“Where would we be without her?” Lizeette asked. “She is a trust entity in the community who is just a phone call away, a smile away, a heart away.”

Sister Verónica works with Parents as Teachers program in Utah

Sister Verónica

“I journey with the families to healing. I find joy in helping families flourish and seeing their resilience grow.”

— Sister Verónica

Sister Verónica also conducts two support groups each week for PAT clients as well as others. The Monday group works on issues of shame and building resilience. The Wednesday group deals with handling stress and anxiety. She and Lizeette also hold mental health webinars, which help combat the stigma of mental health in the Latinx community.

“Conversations on mental health are becoming more normalized,” Lizeette observed.

Sister Verónica shepherded the mom and daughter who experienced a trauma, the postpartum mother suffering depression, and the suicidal teen along the path toward healing. She also helped set the 2-year-old on a new trajectory for success. In addition to out-of-control emotions, the child had been backtracking on milestones.

“A month after Sister Verónica began working with the child, we noticed a huge difference,” said Lizeette. “Emotions were more under control and the child is sleeping through the night.”

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LEFT TO RIGHT: Toes might have been cold, but hearts were warm as “Santa” and her crew share drive-by holiday cheer with families in the Parents as Teachers program. Dad, mom, siblings and the young graduate—all celebrate when a family has successfully completed the program. Helping children thrive, Parent Educator Yuri Jenson counsels a mother and her child via video call in the program.
The University of Notre Dame’s Center for Social Concerns recognized Sister Judith Anne Beattie, CSC, on March 25, 2021, for her leadership in contributing to the vision and creation of the center, in partnership with Father Don McNeill, CSC, some 40 years ago.

According to Sister Judith Anne, “The center’s mission was to educate and form students through theology courses that focused on Catholic social tradition, various social justice issues, and service.”

Bill Purcell, acting executive director of the center and director of the Department of Catholic Social Tradition, spoke of Sister Judith Anne as an exemplar of social justice. He cited her deep spirituality and her various ministry positions—nurse, director of Volunteer Services at Notre Dame, where she organized student groups to take on projects in economically challenged communities, and co-director of the Center for Social Concerns, where she led the service-learning aspect of the center.

Sister Judith Anne shared that the inspiration for the center emerged out of the call in Micah to “act justly, live mercifully, and walk humbly with your God,” and the Vatican II document Gaudium et Spes, which “speaks of the baptismal call to discipleship of all believers, active participation of the laity in the life of the Church, and the challenge to read the signs of the times, including identifying the injustices present.”

Congratulations to Sister Judith Anne and to the ongoing continuance of the Center for Social Concerns.

Perpetual Professions

We rejoice with Sisters of the Holy Cross in India and Bangladesh on their perpetual professions. They have committed themselves to live a vowed life in the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross and in consecrated service to the Church.

From left, Holy Cross Sisters Nobina Rangsa Marak, Shadkmenlang Kharsahnoh and Isidora Dkhar professed their perpetual vows on April 17, 2021, at the Cathedral of Mary Help of Christians, Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

Holy Cross Sister Teresa Rebeiro, pictured right, made her perpetual profession on May 14, 2021, at Holy Rosary Church, Tegaon, Dnaka, Bangladesh.

Buildings Sold to the College

On March 10, 2021, the General Administration of the Congregation gathered in Bertrand Hall with Saint Mary’s College President Dr. Katie Conboy and members of her cabinet to complete the long-awaited sale of Congregation property to the college.

Sister M. Veronique (Wiedower), CSC, Congregation president, and Dr. Conboy successfully completed the transaction, which officially transfers ownership of Bertrand Hall, Bertrand Annex, Lourdes Hall and the Bertrand parking lot to Saint Mary’s College. The Congregation has taken this step to use their resources responsibly and to remain true to their commitment to become carbon neutral by 2050. “For more than 165 years, the sisters have held these buildings in what Sister M. Madeleva (Wolff), CSC, described as the relaxed grasp—we hold and cherish without grasping, so that we are ready to let go when it is time to take on the new gift,” said Sister Veronique. “Today we let go and hand these buildings over to Saint Mary’s College for them to hold for God’s service.”

By responsibly managing the building resources at Saint Mary’s, the Congregation can continue to expand their global work in Africa, Asia, North America and South America. The momentous shift follows the call of Pope Francis’ encyclicals Laudato Si’ and Fratelli Tutti, which compel us to care for our common home by recognizing our impact on the environment and living globally as brothers and sisters as we support and care for one another.

Sister Diane Cundiff, CSC, shared about the ministries of the Sisters of the Holy Cross around the globe and particularly in São Paulo, Brazil, where she has served for more than 50 years, during a March 25, 2021, webinar.

“Sisters have always dreamed big,” she noted, “moving forward, discerning the greatest needs, and always asking, how can we serve?”

Sister Diane was the featured speaker for the webinar hosted by Holy Cross Institute at St. Edward’s University, Austin, Texas. In introducing her, moderator Marco Clark, executive director of the institute, commended the sisters for being “purveyors of justice,” reflecting on the signs of the times, discerning needs, and responding.

View the webinar at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hy52-rrbEY4g.

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repercussions. After bringing her conviction before God and her local community of Holy Cross sisters, Sister Rose sought and received support from the Congregation’s Carbon Footprint Reduction Fund to create the apiary.

To attract bees to her hives, Sister Rose rolled out her hospitality. She smeared the hives with beeswax, smoked them with lemon grass to give them an enticing aroma, and sprinkled them with cassava flour, a delicacy for a great bee feast. “I didn’t order any queen bees,” Sister Rose says. “I made my hives attractive, and the next day, I found a new colony had already occupied one of them.”

Any fear she once had of bees has been dispelled with her education about them and the knowledge and skills she’s gained in managing the bee farm and learning how to extract the honey, without harming any bees. But the long-term success of her project, she realized, required sensitizing others to the value of caring for them as well.

Around the community, she extols bees’ virtues, relaying facts from local bee expert Steven Kunihira, whom she called in to lead a workshop about bees for all the Holy Cross sisters in Uganda. He shared about the many tangible gifts bees give: honey, royal jelly, propolis (used for medicinal purposes), candle wax and venom. But better still, he drew out how bees contribute to healthy biomes. He explained that bees, as well as other pollinators and insects, help keep insect species in check and support the life and diversity of native plants, which reciprocate by sustaining the insects. One small relationship helping to fulfill nature’s grand order — a testimony for the ages.

Every three weeks Sister Rose travels from Fort Portal to inspect the hives, gauge the colonies’ productivity, and look for any invasive insects that might eat the honey or endanger the bees. Locally, Sisters Catherine Magoba and Lillian Nyakaisi visit the bee yard every evening to make sure all is well with the bees and the hives. “I feel so grateful to God for inspiring me to care for bees in this way. I’m also happy that the project has inspired the sisters to love bees,” shares Sister Rose. They are co-contributors in this effort to help preserve nature’s balance, the sisters doing their part, the bees theirs. “They are my friends now, and they are very welcoming,” Sister Rose says.

When observing the activity in the hives, Sister Rose also sees a model of life pleasing to God. “There are millions of bees living, working and sharing a common life, and they are peaceful.” The relationship she shares with them brings her joy and a perspective that she carries out into the larger world. “I am so thankful to God for this beautiful creation; it is for everyone and every creature to enjoy.”

With smoke from burning sweet grass floating about her face, Sister Rose Kyomukama, CSC, carefully pries open the end of a weathered wood box and peers inside. She likes what she sees—the humming activity of hundreds of bees and the construction of a comb. In this forested area of rural Kyarusozi, western Uganda, Sister Rose’s apiary of 25 active beehives is accomplishing her plan and its purpose. The hives protect the bees, which benefit the region’s ecosystem, which contributes to the health of the planet. “It’s amazing to see the work inside the hives,” she says, expressing gratitude for the progress of her project and her marvel at the bees’ handiwork. “Taking care of God’s creatures is very enriching.”

It was during her visits to the forest for times of repose and prayer that Sister Rose heard the buzzing of bees and the call to create the bee yard. The bees were “just wandering all over, and they needed a home,” she says. In her neighborhood, she had often seen whole colonies of bees on doors, windows or trees wiped out in seconds with one shot of bug spray. It concerned her that people were killing so many bees and other insects, and contaminating the air with chemicals, without giving any thought to their actions, or the

A Holy Order

Becking grows sister’s appreciation for the natural world and her place in it
Healing Hearts

Sisters minister to health needs in war & peace

Nursing wounded and maimed soldiers in wartime was far from the minds of the first Holy Cross sisters who journeyed to Indiana from France in 1843. In fact, nursing wasn’t even a profession. Rather, the four young women knew they were to perform domestic duties for the priests and brothers at the fledgling University of Notre Dame, staff an infirmary for the boys, and “perhaps open a school” for young girls. And for close to 20 years, these labors occupied their waking hours.

Then, one October night, a pounding at the door of the motherhouse roused the sisters from sleep. It was Father Sorin from Notre Dame bearing a lantern and a message. The Indiana governor had asked that he rally 12 sisters to care for soldiers wounded on Civil War battlefields in Illinois and Kentucky. It is said that all of the sisters volunteered. Six were chosen to leave at first light, with another six to come later.

What awaited them were conditions of nightmarish proportion — men writhing in excruciating pain, blood-splattered walls, too many wounded, and too few to care for them. While they may have been appalled at first, the sisters did not shirk. They dried their tears, pinned up their habits, and set to work. In time, they transformed what were often dilapidated warehouses into hospitals worthy of praise. The facility in Mound City, Illinois, in fact, was said to have the reputation as “the best military hospital in the United States.”

Up through the close of the war, and beyond, these sisters and those who followed helped craft the profession of nursing almost from nothing. They insisted on proper staffing, sterile conditions, and a sufficient quantity of supplies and equipment. They also set the standard for character and conduct.

In their endeavors, the sisters held true the words of their founder, Blessed Basil Anthony Moreau, who in 1848 wrote: “Never before have there been more powerful motives for fervor in the service of God…. Shall we fail to answer the call? No! On the contrary, I trust that every one of you will remain at (your) post of duty and not be discouraged by the difficulties of our times.”

The sisters answered the call asked of them in 1861 — and they haven’t stopped since.

Heeding calls near and far

Whether it was a governor asking sisters to care for soldiers fresh from the battlefield, railroad managers requesting a hospital for their workers in the frontiers of the West, a pastor in New Mexico hoping for a tuberculosis sanitorium, or other congregations seeking assistance in serving the health needs of migrants during peak crop season, Holy Cross sisters have responded.

Sometimes the call has come from within their own hearts, as it did when two sisters in 1990 ventured to the poverty pockets of Southern Maryland, knocking on doors, discerning needs, and eventually building a free health clinic that carries on today.

Globally, too, Holy Cross sisters have braved devastating conditions. In the 1970s, Catholic Relief Services sounded the call for medical/health care assistance in Thailand, where thousands of Cambodian refugees were fleeing to escape the brutal Khmer Rouge regime ravaging their country. In one camp alone, 60,000 refugees crowded into one square mile.
Sisters have always bravely ventured into the unknown, finding strength and inspiration in the words of their founder, in Scripture — "Whatever you do for the least of my brethren, you do for me" — and in their own sense of the rightness of serving others.

The sisters didn’t seek recognition for their works, but accolades came anyway. During the Spanish-American War, Holy Cross sisters ministered in a typhoid ward, which was merely a tent in an army camp, toiling for 16 hours every day. Records note that an officer, speaking of the various orders of congregations at the camp, told a general that "one sister was worth 200 men nurses … . The work was hard, even disgusting, if one allowed nature to speak, but all worked willingly."

Often, the sisters had to be creative in finding ways to serve others and sustain their ministries. How to keep a new hospital serving miners and smelt workers financially viable in the late 19th century? Create a health plan, in which participants pay $1 per month while in good health, then receive free hospitalization when in need. How to continue serving the health needs of a community after relinquishing a hospital ministry in the 1990s? Create the promotora (health promoter) program, an innovative response to the varied needs of uninsured families that employs bilingual and bicultural staff and works in collaboration with low-income health clinics.

Through the decades, Sisters of the Holy Cross also opened schools of nursing to teach succeeding generations not only the clinical and administrative aspects of the profession, but also the spiritual. At the Holy Cross School of Nursing in South Bend, Indiana, they upheld this philosophy for their student-nurses, "The ideal of nursing rests in the precepts of Christ: in ministering to the mental and bodily needs of His poor, sick and suffering, we minister to Him."

Echoes into the future

Over the course of a century and a half, the Sisters of the Holy Cross have built nearly two dozen hospitals, several schools of nursing, and numerous health clinics that brought hope and healing to people in need. For many of these facilities, the sisters followed their philosophy of the "relaxed grasp," letting go of a ministry when circumstances dictated, so that others could carry on the work they had founded.

Today, the sisters' ministries of healing take place not so much in hospitals and nursing schools, but rather closer to the heart of their communities, meeting people where they are — on the street, in churches and in homes — all across the globe.

In Kula, Kailahun District, the Holy Cross Health Education Center gives people the tools and knowledge needed to take better care of themselves and their families. In South Bend, Indiana, a sister assists at an equine-assisted therapy program for individuals with special needs. A prison ministry in Lima, Peru, provides basic health services for incarcerated women and their children. The Kyembogo Holy Cross Health Centre in Kitinda, Uganda, serves a wide remote region where many people live in poverty. And in Silver Spring, Maryland, in 2021, two sister-nurses came out of retirement to administer COVID-19 vaccinations at the local hospital.

One knock on a door in the middle of the night, 160 years ago, echoes from century to century to century and will, with faith and Providence, continue to be answered as long as people are in need.
Holding Steady

During pandemic, sisters at the motherhouse cling to values honed and practiced

Four Core Values define life as a Sister of the Holy Cross: compassion, faith, prayer and community. With the onset of COVID-19 in early 2020, sisters around the world found themselves expressing these values in new and unexpected ways. This has been no less true at the motherhouse in Notre Dame, Indiana, where the community did not escape notice of a predatory virus. There, sisters—along with the entire world—faced the frightening and pervasive threat of infection, a months-long lockdown, isolation, fear, uncertainty, grief and loss. And like so many affected by this adversity, their defining values have helped sustain them.

Sister Judith Anne Prindiville, CSC, drew from her experience of caring for her mother to address the pressing isolation of the pandemic. When some sisters could move between floors in their conven home last summer, she picked up her practice of “pushing sisters around,” she says. She took sisters in wheelchairs to the first-floor fireplace, or to a window with a bird feeder, or for walks outside around the fountain. “Getting out means a lot to them, and doing this has become very important to me, too. Doing things together, this is how I’m connecting in community.”

As the pandemic wore on, sisters and staff continued to seek consolation and support in one another. Grief groups emerged, as well as sharing opportunities for staff. And kindnesses sprung up daily: notes exchanged with Saint Mary’s College students, special activities and efforts carried out by staff, connections with Holy Cross associates—all reminders of a loving community within and well beyond the convent walls.

The needs of the world and all suffering from the pandemic were held in the sisters’ prayers. The sisters prayed for the vulnerable and suffering, for those who lost lives, lands, homes, jobs, for those giving medical care and offering comfort, for nations and peoples in grave need of vaccines.

When sisters could not worship or partake in the Eucharist together, a way was opened to them. Video Masses were streamed into their rooms, and the sacraments brought to their doors. Video Masses were streamed into their rooms, and the sacraments brought to their doors. Sequestering opened space for contemplation and reflection. “The ministry of prayer for all of us is so important, and we’re so aware of it. And because sisters around the world have had to minister in place, they have found other ways to connect,” says Sister Joan Marie Steadman, CSC, Area of North America coordinator. “It’s calling us to a different way of being.”

For Sister Patricia Gantz, CSC, the pandemic has allowed her a look at life from another vantage point. “Life is something like climbing a mountain,” she says. “If you reach the top, you can stop to enjoy the beauty—a wider, expanded view of space. In the same way, lockdown during the pandemic was a challenge, but it also provided a new space to view life from a broader scope.”

In some ways, she believes, the pandemic has served as a catalyst to bring change to the world, offering the human family opportunities for awareness and compassion. For many, including the sisters, the last 16 months have certainly yielded a sharpened perspective—moments are ever vibrant, the mundane made precious, and gratitude is an interminable gift and offering.

Throughout this unsteadying season, those four Core Values have served the sisters well, acting as anchors that steady and guide them and hold them fast to their God, their community, and the world. “While there are still many challenges,” says Congregation President Sister M. Veronique (Wiedower), CSC, “we continue to experience God’s blessings and the generosity of his people.”

These graces, too, keep us motivated to continue serving as the hands and heart of Christ.”

LEFT: When some movement was allowed in Saint Mary’s Convent, Sister Judith Anne (center) escorted sisters to other areas in the building and outdoors, offering them a welcome change of environment. Seated from left are Holy Cross Sisters M. John Anthony (Linton) and Yvonne Arcand, who are holding notes of encouragement sent by other Holy Cross sisters living in the western U.S.

RIGHT: More than 200 sisters and staff at the motherhouse in Notre Dame, Indiana, received their first COVID-19 vaccinations in January 2021. The community of sisters in Marian Convent were all lined up and ready to receive their first dose. From left are Holy Cross Sisters Joan Carusillo, Kathleen Reilly, Ann Shaw, M. Veronica (Kerwin) and Joanne Bauer.

While walking on Christmas day 2020, Sister Ellen Mary (Taylor), CSC, took this photo when she came upon a rose in bloom, amid the cold of winter.
More than five million men, women and children from Venezuela have fled to neighboring countries in South and Central America since 2014. In an ongoing political, socio-economic crisis, Venezuela is seeing legions of hungry and desperate citizens who are emigrating in the hopes of making a better life.

Given the influx of Venezuelans into Lima, Peru, Holy Cross Sisters Mary Josephine DeLany, Lilma Cabín Collazo and Esperanza (Sullca Clemente) responded by drawing on the messages of the Congregation’s Corporate Stand on Migration and Pope Francis’ encyclical, Fratelli Tutti, which calls for more human fraternity and solidarity. Their reflections compelled them to take action to help the refugees in their city.

Offering brown-bag breakfasts

“We felt we needed to do something for these families, especially for the children and women, as some are pregnant,” said Sister Mary Josephine.

The three sisters cleared their dining room table, bought groceries and supplies, and began assembling brown-bag breakfasts to hand out on the street. Weekly, the sisters have walked the streets of Lima pushing two carts filled with 50 bagged breakfasts.

The sisters are focusing efforts on a large central market that encompasses a full square block. Housed in an expansive warehouse, the market consists of dozens of individual stalls where people sell vegetables, fruits, meats and other goods.

On any given day, there can be as many as 60 families begging around the market. The people on the street are at constant risk for contracting COVID-19 and face numerous other dangers.

To help them continue this ministry, the sisters appealed to the Congregation’s new St. André Bessette Emergency Relief Fund, funded by donations to Ministry With the Poor which allowed them to reach approximately 1,500 people over the course of six months.

Staples assembled for families

The sisters also received another grant, from the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which supports efforts that help alleviate hunger.

Now, Sisters Mary Jo, Lilma and Esperanza are purchasing grocery staples, separating them into bags, and distributing the goods to 25 refugee families. Each bag, costing U.S. $28, contains rice, sugar, milk, cooking oil, noodles, lentils, oats and tuna. The bags will be distributed monthly for seven months.

According to Sister Mary Jo, Peru received its first shipment of 300,000 vaccines in February. However, the country’s population stands at 33 million.

“This puts these families in a situation of great risk,” said Sister Mary Jo. “We think this food nourishment will help them until more vaccines are available for people.”

Let us not limit our interests to the narrow confines of a particular house, a Province, or our own country. This would be egoism and self-seeking. Rather let us be one with all our houses, and regard none as a stranger to the one in which we dwell.

— Blessed Basil Anthony Moreau

(Circular Letter 174)
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 Mary De Nardis, CSC
(Sister M. Alice Jean)
April 29, 1930–January 15, 2021
Sister Mary De Nardis died the evening of January 15, 2021, at 90 years old in Saint Mary’s Convent, Notre Dame, Indiana. Mary completed her primary education in Buhl, Idaho in 1948, then attended Saint Alphonsus Hospital School of Nursing in Boise, Idaho, which was sponsored by the Sisters of the Holy Cross. Upon reception of the holy habit on February 2, 1952, she became known as Sister M. Alice Jean and returned to her baptismal name when customs changed in 1968. After 12 years of nursing in Holy Cross-sponsored hospitals in the U.S, she was assigned to a new mission in Uganda in 1966. She then spent 43 years of her life as a nurse and midwife in Uganda developing community-based health care while training health workers and traditional birth attendants. In the best of times, those whom she cared for were mostly women and children needing basic health education and maternity care. In the worst of times, she and the others did the best they could ministering to the sick and displaced people under conditions of civil upheavals, abductions and gunfire. She was once asked if her ministry was contributing to systemic change and simply responded, “maybe eventually.”

Sister Maureen Rooney, CSC
(Sister M. Francis)
December 9, 1939–February 3, 2021
Maureen Rooney, the youngest of four girls, was born in Cranbury, New Jersey. After living with her maternal grandparents in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, the Rooney’s relocated to northern California, where Maureen first met the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Oakland at St. Bernard’s Grammar School. She later developed a close relationship with Sister M. Honora (Scott), CSC, who was a wonderful, caring teacher and a friend to support Maureen’s religious vocation. Three years post-graduation and against her parents’ wishes, she entered the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Notre Dame, Indiana, in 1960. Given her interest in mathematics and science, she earned several degrees that grounded her initial ministry of elementary education and, later, in administration. For 23 years, Sister Maureen ministered in parochial elementary schools in the western U.S. The last seven of those years she was a principal at two schools in California. Sister Maureen Rooney was an extrovert, curious, greener, a hard worker and an early adopter of technology. Over the years, she was quick to develop computer labs in schools and introduced computerized programs in offices. Sister Maureen retired to Saint Mary’s Convent in September 2014, where she died on February 3, 2021.

Sister Nora Gurnett, CSC
(Sister M. Vinceta)
September 25, 1937–February 7, 2021
Sister Nora Gurnett died at Saint Mary’s Convent, Notre Dame, Indiana. Nora called herself “the grand finale” of the Gurnett family, being born 16 months after her twin sister Sheila, shocking her parents and the doctor as well. Nora and Sheila followed their two older sisters to Holy Cross Central School of Nursing in Notre Dame, Indiana. At graduation, Nora wore the clothing of a postulant, having entered the Sisters of the Holy Cross on August 1, 1958. Nora received the name Sister Mary Vincenta on February 2, 1959. It was not until 1992 that Sister “Vini” returned to her baptismal and family names and became known as Sister Nora Gurnett. She practiced as a registered nurse in several Holy Cross-sponsored facilities from 1961 to 1982. After years as a seasoned health professional, Sister also became an information systems trainer using medical applications. From 2007 to 2012, Sister Nora served a “Sister Presence” at Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center in South Bend, Indiana. After a few years helping staff the mail room at the university, Sister Nora retired to Saint Mary’s Convent, where she had lived since 2015.

Sister Patricia Ann Thompson, CSC
(Sister M. Catherine Siena)
October 23, 1925–February 9, 2021
Born in Oxnard, California, Patricia Ann Thompson and her family were members of Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish in Ojai, where they lived as citrus growers. Patricia attended public schools until 1934, when she enrolled in the Academy of St. Catherine in Ventura staffed by the Sisters of the Holy Cross, graduating in 1943. She went on to attend Saint Mary of the Wasatch College and entered the Congregation at the end of her sophomore year. After receiving bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Spanish, Sister spent 32 years in the ministry of education teaching Spanish, French, English and religion. In 1976, she was one of the founding members of the Holy Cross Hispanic Ministries Committee and later founded the Brother André Center for outreach to the poor in Los Angeles, California. She returned to Ventura in 1997 as the superior to the retirement community of Saint Catherine by the Sea — back where she experienced her call to consecrated life. Sister Patricia Ann died in Mishawaka, Indiana, at 95. She knew the language of the heart and always found ways to reach beyond borders with humor, faith and friendship.

Sister Mary Clennon, CSC
(Sister Miriam Paul)
August 23, 1936–February 10, 2021
Sister Mary Clennon died in Fresno, California, with her sister, Sister Joanne Clennon, CSC, and others by her side. Mary Therese Clennon was raised on a farm southwest of Chicago as one of six children. Mary discovered her vocation while at St. Francis Academy in Joliet, Illinois, and joined her older sister Jeanne to enter the Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame, Indiana, in 1954. As a registered nurse, Sister Mary served in nursing, administrative and home care capacities from 1960 to 1979 before answering the call in Thailand, where Cambodian refugees had fled. She served a year in the camps helping with basic needs and using her administrative skills to set up rehabilitation wards. She continued serving in the U.S., Lebanon, El Salvador and even Germany, where she accompanied the Jenco family as Father Lawrence Jenco and other hostages were released by Islamic radicals in 1986. Sister retired in the fall of 2019. Sister Maureen Grady, CSC, wrote, “I was privileged to share several tours with Sister Mary in Cambodia and Lebanon. I knew Mary as grounded by faith, devoted to mission, gifted as a healer, fearless in danger, esteemed by colleagues, and cherished as a friend.”
Sister Dorothy Marie (Langlois), CSC
December 26, 1932–February 20, 2021
Sister Dorothy Marie was born Louise Langlois in Lynn, Massachusetts, and entered the Congregation in 1952. Seven months before initial profession in 1955, Sister Dorothy Marie had already been sent to St. Paul’s School in New York City to teach primary grades. She continued in elementary education through 1966 and completed her bachelor’s degree in elementary education in 1969.

For whatever reason, Sister Dorothy Marie moved out of the classroom and from 1969 to 2007 could be found cheerfully helping people in business and finance offices. In 1981, she completed her master’s degree in business administration from the University of Notre Dame and then served as a treasurer or business manager for a host of colleges, high schools and health care centers before becoming the councilor for finance at Saint Mary’s Convent in South Bend, Indiana, as the assistant supervisor and nursing administrator in the Moreau Region facility for retired sisters. In short, Sister Michael Marie brought her administrative skills to ministry in various positions of leadership, lastly in 2000–2005 as Area councilor for retirement communities and as administrative staff member at Saint Mary’s Convent until 2006.

In 1997, Sister Cyril retired from teaching high school but not from service. She spent 12 years at Angelo House, tutored numerous students in math and reading, and generously helped sisters who were getting their degrees.

We give thanks for how she opened minds and hearts to the wonders of learning for so many.

Sister M. Cyril (Dubala), CSC
February 26, 1926–March 20, 2021
“She is a very capable, industrious and honest young lady, willing to learn and doing so from her own initiative.” Sister Gregory, CR, the principal of South Bend Catholic High School, wrote these words in 1944 about Irene Dubala, who would become Sister M. Cyril—living a vowed life for 74 years.

Irene Dubala was 18 when she entered the Congregation. After making her initial profession in 1947, Sister Cyril accepted her first assignment to teach senior high school students and continued that work for 47 years. As a mathematics teacher, she was tireless in her desire to open the minds of her students and excite them about learning.

During at least 20 years of her ministry, Sister Cyril took classes herself and earned bachelor’s degrees in mathematics and chemistry and a master’s in the teaching of physics.

In 1997, Sister Cyril retired from teaching high school but not from service. She spent 12 years at Angelo House, tutored numerous students in math and reading, and generously helped sisters who were getting their degrees.

We give thanks for how she opened minds and hearts to the wonders of learning for so many.

Sister Michael Marie (Williamson), CSC
Mary Lois Williamson
December 23, 1924–May 4, 2021
Lois Williamson was a registered nurse when she entered the convent in 1948. She received the name Sister Michael Marie as a novice in 1949 and completed a nursing science degree in 1951. For the next 16 years, she instructed student nurses in Holy Cross while earning a master’s degree in nursing administration in 1964.

Sister’s primary assignment was Saint Mary’s Convent for 20 years as director of nursing services. From 1988 to 1996, she was assigned to Our Lady of Holy Cross Convent in South Bend, Indiana, as the assistant supervisor and nursing administrator in the Moreau Region facility for retired sisters. In short, Sister Michael Marie brought her administrative skills to ministry in various positions of leadership, lastly in 2000–2005 as Area councilor for retirement communities and as administrative staff member at Saint Mary’s Convent until 2006.

She then considered herself in “pre-retirement,” keeping company with her sisters and devoting herself to the ministry of prayer for the Congregation and its healing mission. The day before she died, those who had entered the convent with her in 1948 kept vigil for her in prayer.

2021 Christmas card
This year’s Christmas card features the charming artwork of Sister Risha Mery Nonglang, CSC. Inside is a haiku written by Sister M. Rose Edward (Goodrow), CSC.

Your cards will be personalized to tell your recipients that you have given a gift in their names and they will be remembered in prayer throughout the year. (The amount of your gift is not revealed.) Your tax-deductible donation will help our Ministry With the Poor. Order early; cards will not be mailed until after Thanksgiving.

To view and order the card online, go to cscsisters.org/remembrance-gift-cards. You may also order by phone (574) 284-5641, or mail using the form below.

Send a Christmas card to:
(please list additional recipients on separate paper.)

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☐ In memory of ____________

Donor information:
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Mail to: Sisters of the Holy Cross, Development Office, 407 Bertram Hall– Saint Mary’s, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556-5000. (574) 284-5641

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Name on the credit card (please print) __________________________
Signature for credit card __________________________

Names must be received by September 5.

September 15 is the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, a Congregational feast day when we celebrate the Holy Cross women who have gone before us. As we remember them in prayer and thanksgiving, we invite you to remember deceased relatives and friends who have paved the way for your life. Send their names to the Development Office and we will include them in our Circle of Saints.

Mail this form to the address at the bottom of the page or email your list to development@cscsisters.org with the subject: Circle of Saints.

Names must be received by September 5.
NEW! Development Office e-Newsletter

Have you seen the latest? If we don’t have your email address, or you have opted out of our email in the past, then you don’t know what you’re missing!

In March the Development Office sent its inaugural issue of “Ministries Update,” a new monthly email series that shares updates on how you are helping the sisters touch the lives of many around the world. In addition, each issue takes a look at a ministry from the past, shares spiritual poems from Sister M. Rose Edward (Goodrow), CSC, and keeps you updated on other timely news from the Congregation and its ministries. We expect the newsletter to evolve based on your interests so don’t hesitate to stay in touch and let us know what you’d like to hear from us!

How to subscribe or resubscribe
The easiest way is to use the new Stay in Touch button on our website. It can be found under Support Us or at the bottom of any page. Fill in your name and email address. Doing so adds you to our list, provides a series of three emails welcoming you to the list and provides consent to send you email. You can unsubscribe at anytime by using the link at the bottom of our email.

Moreau Garden Book
As the weather warms up, our thoughts turn to the great outdoors and the Moreau Garden Book of Remembrance adjacent to the Church of Our Lady of Loretto. You can add your name, or make a gift in honor or in memory of someone. To make it easy and fast, we now have a dedicated donation page for the garden book at cscsisters.org/support-us/#book. It’s a lasting gift to yourself, your honoree and the Sisters of the Holy Cross.

Tell us your contact preferences

My donations are Anonymous. Do not list my name.
☐ I have named the “Sisters of the Holy Cross, Inc.” in my will.
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☐ Please take me off your mailing list.

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

Clean, Fresh Water Flows at Our Lady of Holy Cross

It is rather unpleasant to turn on a faucet only to see muddy, rusty water flowing through, especially on a hot day when thirst runs high. At Our Lady of Holy Cross School and Girls’ Hostel in Barakathal, India, the water quality was continuing to worsen until drinking it began making people ill. The school and hostel are located in the far northeastern state of Tripura, which is part of the Himalayan ecosystem. The impact of climate change on this fragile ecosystem has contributed to a host of water quality issues across the region.

Headmistress Sister Khochem Moshang, CSC, knew something had to be done to keep the students, staff and faculty safe and hydrated. “We tried using a small filter,” said Sister Khochem. Unfortunately, it didn’t have the capacity to clean the amount of water that 300 students can consume over the course of a day. “Our land is very low, and the climate is very warm at times.”

Our Lady of Holy Cross School obtained a grant from the A.A. Beiro Family Foundation, which opened the way to a solution. The grant funds allowed for the purchase of a large water purification system. Two large water tanks—one at the school and one at the hostel—now provide cool, clear, life-giving water to all.

The system uses three layers of filtration to thoroughly eliminate dirt and rust and other contaminants. The fresh, clean water is a joy to the students, especially on hot days. “The children were more than excited to see the big water tanks. They no longer need to carry water from home. They fill up their bottles at the faucets on the tank, and they are very careful not to play with the water or waste it,” said Sister Khochem. “We share our gratitude for this generous donation. Students are now assured of their safety from water-borne disease.”

Headmistress Sister Khochem (right) supervises while the school children examine the new water filtration tank at Our Lady of Holy Cross School in Barakathal, India.
Our Mission Statement

We, Sisters of the Holy Cross throughout the world, are called to participate in the prophetic mission of Jesus to witness God’s love for all creation.

Compassion moves us to reflect on the signs of the times, discern needs, and respond. We stand in solidarity with the poor and the powerless.

Our life together enriches and strengthens us to foster community wherever we are.