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Cluny  
SISTERS

Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny  
Province of USA & Canada

# Connections

HAPPY  
Easter



NEW LIFE ...  
NEW  
BEGININGS



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**Alleluia! He is risen indeed!**

**T**he theme of this issue focuses on new beginnings and the new life we experience in the Congregation. We bring you some vignettes we hope you'll enjoy.

Here, in the northern lands, spring is in the air: the yellow forsythia and daffodils brighten the days as the sun grows warmer. At Javouhey House, in Newport, we continue to welcome a growing number of participants from parishes on Aquidneck Island and beyond. In addition to our long-standing Tuesday Bible study, we now have a Friday centering prayer group. During Lent, 15 women and men met weekly to reflect on God's great love for us in sending Jesus to save us. In April, the Emmaus Walk Easter Retreat is scheduled. The sisters in Pomona, California also bring news of their pastoral work, mission awareness presentations, and vocation talks. Although they are quite a distance from us, our sisters in West Africa also keep us up to date with their new projects. Our Associates in Hamilton sent an update on their efforts to raise awareness in parishes of needs for mental health awareness and on-going care.

As we continue to plant the seeds of faith and water them with the assistance of our many collaborators and supporters, we entrust the growth and development of life and faith to the power of our Risen Lord.

We wish you a most blessed Easter Season and a safe and relaxing summer. Our September issue will bring you more news, making Cluny connections around the globe.

*Sister Marie*

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## Javouhey House, Newport Retreat Participants Share Their Experiences

### 30-Day At-Home Retreat, A New Adaptation of the Ignatian Exercises



L to R: Sister Marie Cooper, Jamie Moore, and Kathleen Batchelor.

Saint Ignatius created a retreat for those who could live in a retreat house for a month. He also adapted it for those who would make the retreat “in daily life” over a period of months. Mark Thibideaux, SJ has provided a retreat “in daily life” designed as a 30-day at-home experience. Participants meet with a retreat guide to prepare for the retreat and then once a week during the retreat. Twice daily, they spend time in prayer on the Gospels, using Father Thibideaux’s guide.

Jamie Moore and Kathleen Batchelor opted for making this retreat last January. They not only enjoyed their personal prayer times, but they also looked forward to the weekly meetings for prayer and guidance. Here are some of their reflections on the experience.

#### **Kathleen Murphy Batchelor wrote:**

Completing the 30-day At-Home Retreat opened my eyes to the beautiful truth and power of God’s love for me and for the world. I have found so many opportunities for growth in both my silent and active prayer life here in community at Javouhey House, and look forward with joyful anticipation to whatever Sister Marie offers next.

#### **Jamie Moore shared the following:**

I am a believer that everything happens for a reason.

Sr. Marie Cooper offered the 30-Day At-Home Retreat at the perfect time for me to embark on a journey spending more time in thought-filled meditation and inward reflection.

Although a Catholic from birth including years of Catholic education, these past months have been more influential on my prayer life than my prior decades of worship. Possibly I am starting to realize my age—and my vulnerability—and appreciate that I want to converse with God on a regular basis.

With the guidance of Sr. Marie, who offers various methods of prayer, one can expand their personal spirituality and grow more deeply in the Christian faith.

I highly recommend making a retreat. It is very easy to put it off until “I find the time.” But we truly do always receive so much more than we give.”

**For more information about this retreat and other retreat possibilities, please contact Sister Marie at: (908) 728-0090 or [clunymarie@gmail.com](mailto:clunymarie@gmail.com).**

## New Beginings, New Life – Cluny Sisters in Pomona, California

Our sisters in Anne Marie Javouhey Community continue to explore their new parish and engage in a variety of pastoral care ministries. They were also happy to participate in the West Coast Religious Education Congress.



Sisters Agnes and Mavis with friends at the Congress.



Sister Vicenta visiting with a sick parishioner.



Left to Right: Sisters Mavis, Vicenta, and Agnes join with parishioners in a birthday celebration.

## New Beginnings, New Life – Cluny Sisters in Pomona, California (Con’t)

Eager to spread the Good News of the Gospel and to make the mission of Cluny Sisters more widely known, the sisters have given talks on evangelization and on the call to religious vocations in the Church.



Sisters Mavis and Agnes with Mary Star of the Sea High School students in San Pedro, California.



## Fostering a Culture of Encounter at Javouhey House, Newport: Volunteers Prepare Blessing Bags for Those in Need

How do you celebrate Valentine’s Day when it falls on Ash Wednesday? You make Valentine Blessing Bags for those who are in need.

A group of our friends gathered toiletries and other essential items for those who might be living on the street or who have fallen on hard times. Serafina DeAscentis, a gifted quilter, made 60 bags in bright joyful colors for dreary winter days. A blessing note

was inserted in each bag. When the bags were filled we prayed together for a blessing on all those who would receive them.

The bags have been offered to folks locally as well as in neighboring towns and near-by Massachusetts. A parish who learned of our project has also initiated one of their own!



Serafina at her sewing machine.



Stuffing Day – Left to right: Molly McGregor, Sister Marie Cooper, Mary Bunker, Laurie Ducey, Debbie Arnold, Mary Durgin



# New Beginnings, New Life in West Africa

## Communities in Ghana

### Catfish Hatchery



In 2023, the Domeabra community started a catfish farm project. After preparing the fishpond, we conducted a blessing ceremony. As the fingerlings appeared on the 19th of March, we sought the intercession of our patron Saint Joseph. We rejoiced to watch the fingerlings grow and develop.

When the fish were ready for harvesting, we steamed them, and many families responded to the advertisement. The surrounding community as well as the sisters enjoyed delicious meals prepared with the catfish. God be praised for the success of the first phase of the catfish farm project!

Above: Fish being steamed to prepare for market.

Right: Yield of tomatoes from one of the farms.



### Farming Projects

We are using the land around the convent to promote a green environment and for sustainability. We are grateful to God for blessing us with a bountiful harvest of okra, tomatoes, cassava, plantain, banana and beans which served our communities and school canteens.

## Nurturing the Faith in Kono, Sierra Leone

The Sisters engage in a variety of pastoral ministries, including conducting liturgies of the Word and Holy Communion, and religious education. With no car of their own, the sisters hop on to commercial motorbikes to bring Christ to the people of the villages.



Sisters Vivian, Marie and Elizabeth with the First Communion group.



Sister Rita with the children on the Feast of Blessed Anne Marie.

Our thanks to Sister Rita of the Kono Community for the photos and news items about Ghana and Sierra Leone.



## In Memoriam

### Maureen Brady

### Cluny Associate in California

1931-2024

Maureen Brady, of Harbor City, CA, was a long-time friend and Associate of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny. A loving mother and an amazing teacher, Maureen lived her faith day by day not only in worship and prayer, but also in her encounters with others through an amazing variety of interests. She is greatly missed by family, friends, the Cluny Sisters and Cluny Associates, who were privileged to know her.

## Cluny Associates - Hamilton

### Update on Efforts to Raise Awareness about Mental Health Issues

Therese Wallace, Cluny Associate

The response to our initial presentation of the Sanctuary Course for Catholics in September 2023 has been met with some interest in a couple of the parishes within the Diocese of Hamilton. The course offering itself is rich in content that may be presented in a variety of ways. As such, one parish has established a study group, using the facilitator and participants handbooks available as supporting materials, to guide their conversation about mental health and mental illness. Hopefully over time general reluctance to discuss this issue will be overcome by the sheer need to address the elephant in the room!

A tentative victory in our battle against euthanasia for the mentally ill was realized earlier this month when a moratorium was announced on the proposed legislation to expand Canada's existing legislation known as MAiD (Medical Assistance in Dying) until 2027. The temporary suspension came about largely due to the outcry from medical professionals protesting their unpreparedness for such a plan.



**Fr. Andrew Lopatniuk, Priest-Chaplain, with Terry in the Spiritual Center at St. Joseph's Health Care Hamilton, Psychiatric Facility on Ash Wednesday. Fr. Andrew and Therese co-led the 2024 Ash Wednesday prayer service and distribution of ashes for patients in the Spiritual Center, followed by visits to patients on all clinical units with ashes.**

Anecdotes about people seeking euthanasia for reasons of poverty, homelessness, lack of healthcare and social supports speak of the anguish and hopelessness prevalent in our communities and reflect poorly on our societal response to suffering. Masquerading as compassion and a human right, Medical Assistance in Dying remains a sinister threat to the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters, but we celebrate the reprieve and give thanks to God. God bless you for your prayers!



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*Bringing Hope & Compassion*



**Hilda says, "Thank, you, Sisters!"**

**We say, "Thank you, dear friends.  
Because of you, we are making a  
difference in the lives of many who  
feel forgotten in their struggles."**

## **ANNUAL APPEAL** **Bringing Hope and** **Compassion** **One Encounter at a Time**

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today, to help us respond to those in need  
throughout the New Year, 2024.

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Please remember the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in your will. Thank you.