



# Journeys

SISTERS OF ST. CASIMIR

Vol. XXXV No. 1  
Spring 2021

## BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE TO VENERABLE MARIA KAUPAS

by Sister Margaret Petcavage

It was a birthday tribute that Casimira Kaupas (later Mother Maria) surely would have never envisioned. After more than a year's work, "Miracle Hunter" director, Michael O'Neill, of "They Might Be Saints" series, completed the film, and Mother Maria's life story was broadcast on EWTN.

The half-hour TV documentary, splendidly filmed by EWTN's photographers, aired on January 6, Mother Maria's 141st birthday. A year earlier, most of the filming had taken place at the Motherhouse in Chicago, the place where Mother Maria had lived, and where she had died in 1940. Narration of the documentary is by General Superior Sister Regina Dubickas, Sister Margaret Petcavage, several dear friends who work with the Congregation's ministries in Chicago, and Fr. Marty Moran, Thomas Kardish, and Jake Betz in Pennsylvania.

The filming day was meaningful as Sister Margaret, program director, dressed Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius, SSC, playing the role of co-foundress Mother M. Concepta, in an original habit. "How did you ever make it on time for prayer?" was a common joke, as Sister was dressed in layer after layer of the clothing formerly worn by the Sisters.

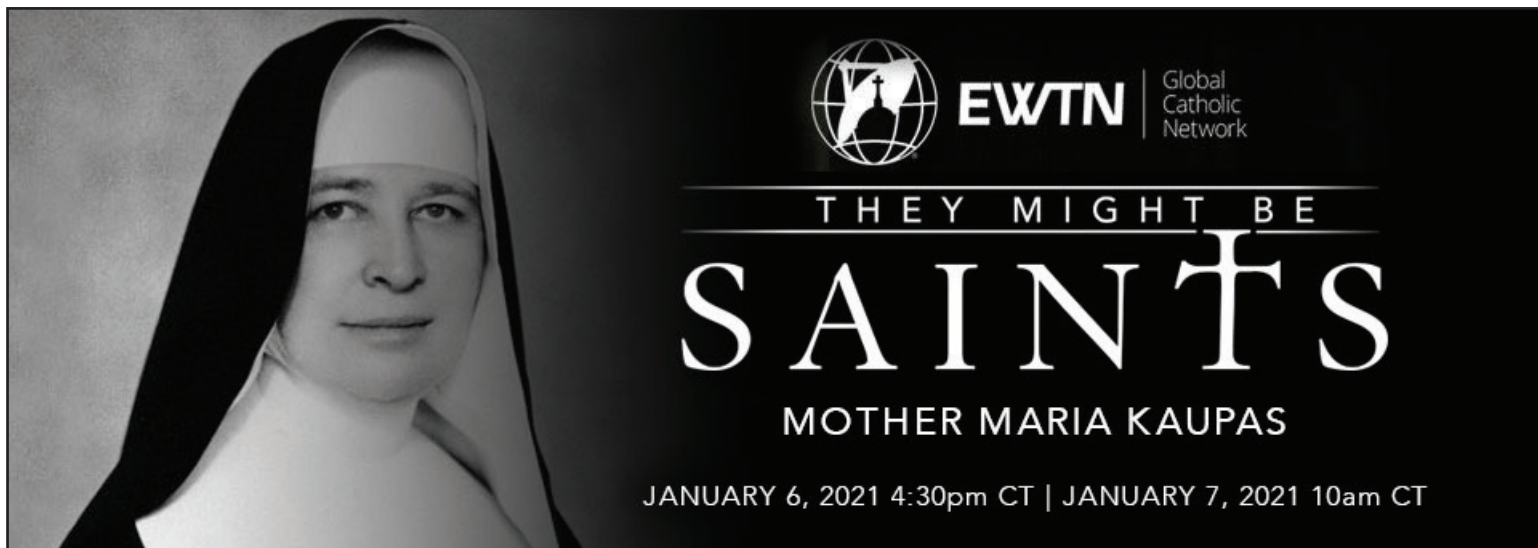


*Sister Margaret Petcavage, film narrator, discusses Mother Maria's virtuous life.*

Two actresses had been engaged to play the roles of Mother Maria and other co-foundress Mother M. Immaculata. Fortunately, three original habits had been stored away as mementos, and now helped give authenticity to the story. It was a bitterly cold January day for filming, but the three portrayed the outdoor scenes bravely.

Sister Margaret had engaged three priests of Lithuanian

*continued on page 3*



*Photograph by EWTN, used for social media and marketing for "They Might Be Saints" Mother Maria Kaupas documentary film.*

# A Message from Sister Regina



Dear Friends,

It is Easter! The greatest feast of our faith! We have made the 2021 Lenten journey, that grace-filled time to reflect more deeply on the readings of Scripture, to reflect on our lives, and to open ourselves ever more to God's unconditional love for us.

It is Easter! We celebrate the new life that surrounds us, the greening of once barren branches, stems of flowers breaking through the soil, people enjoying this special time of year that brings warmth and a spirit of rebirth.

It is Easter! We celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus. Alleluias resound in our hearts and in our lives. We need this sense of hope and joy, of God's presence in all the circumstances of our lives.

I love the stories of Easter and the heartwarming, as well as challenging message they bring.

The women who went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus were the first to hear the good news: "He is not here. He has risen." We respond with our whole heart, "Jesus has truly risen!"

Mary goes to the tomb looking for Jesus and recognizes Him when Jesus calls her by name. May we, too, hear Jesus call us by name and respond with the love and the joy that Mary felt at that moment.

Jesus appears to his apostles in the upper room with the greeting, "Peace be with you." Through that encounter their faith is strengthened, and they move from fear and the locked room to go out and proclaim the Good News with courage and joy.

In the Emmaus story, the two travelers felt their hearts burning within them as they made their way, listening to the "stranger" who accompanied them. They were so moved by Him that they pleaded, "Stay with us for it is getting toward evening." May our hearts receive God's word more fervently and allow it to "stay with us" and transform our lives.

Thomas doubted what the apostles told him about Jesus' appearance to them and said he would not believe until he himself would see and touch his wounds. Jesus appears to Thomas and we witness his response of faith: "My Lord and my God."

At some point, the apostles go back to doing what they knew how to do, fishing. Jesus appears to them

on the shore and invites them to come to breakfast. When they realize that it is Jesus, they exclaim, "It is the Lord!" May we find God in the most ordinary events of daily living. May we come to grasp more fully that it is always God who is looking for us, inviting us, nurturing us, loving us.

What a powerful encounter of Jesus with Peter. Jesus does not rebuke Peter for his denial of him but wants to know only one thing, "Do you love me?" How consoling for Peter and for us to know of God's tremendous mercy and love for each of us and God desiring our love.

It is Easter! And the message of Easter is one of peace and joy, hope and love! It is a message that also challenges us to live our lives faithful to the promises we have made to God and to one another, faithful to God's call. And throughout all the seasons of the year and of our lives, may we remember Jesus' promise, "I am with you always."

May you experience these spiritual gifts of the Easter season, and may the blessings of Easter find a place deep in your heart and in your life.

In this issue of Journeys we give thanks and acknowledge our benefactors. We pray daily for our benefactors and remain grateful and humbled by their support. Thank you and may God bless you.

Please enjoy this spring Journeys issue; meet the Sisters of St. Casimir archivist; learn more about the "They Might be Saints" documentary film; enjoy reading the reflections submitted by Villa Joseph Marie High School students, and thoughts offered by Thomas Kardish, president of VJM; and remember our dear Sisters who have entered eternal life.

Happy Easter! Alleluia!

*Sister Regina Dubickas, SSC*

Sister Regina Dubickas, SSC  
General Superior  
Sisters of St. Casimir





# 'THEY MIGHT BE SAINTS': MOTHER MARIA KAUPAS FILM

*continued from cover story*

heritage: Rev. Jaunius Kelpas, pastor of Nativity BVM parish and originally from Lithuania, Rev. Gediminas Kersys, associate pastor at Nativity, also from Lithuania, and a Chicagoan, Rev. Thomas Kasputis, a second-generation Lithuanian. The priests helped to re-enact the founding day of August 29, 1907, the day the three foundresses professed their vows and, thus, founded the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Casimir in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

There, under the care and training of the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, at Marywood, and most especially that of Mother M. Cyril, IHM, the founding Sisters and early members of the SSC Congregation received their formation as religious. Three years later, Chicago, then the location of the nation's greatest number of Lithuanian immigrants and Lithuanian parishes, became the Congregation's center. Fortunately, the Congregation grew quickly in number as teaching Sisters were desperately needed for the schools being built.

In the documentary, Sister Regina Dubickas related much of Mother Maria's early story, along with Sister Margaret Petcavage, Vice Postulator for the Cause of Maria Kaupas. The Sisters' accounting of the founding of the Congregation and its continual growth helped to memorialize the heroic spirit of Mother Maria as well



*Sister Regina Dubickas shares thoughts about the deep spiritual life of Mother Maria.*

as reveal her deeply spiritual life.

Msgr. Michael Boland, then CEO and President of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago, captured Mother's heroic work for the early immigrants and all others who came to her schools and hospitals. He aptly related how faithful the Sisters who joined the Congregation when Mother was alive – and then, those who later followed her – were to the spirit and work of Mother Maria, who gave her all, for God's glory and the good of others. Mother Maria's words, "I will not be selfish with God," resonated within the Sisters' hearts.

"They Might Be Saints" director Michael O'Neill had said that a healing through Mother's intercession should be recreated in the documentary. It was agreed that the remarkable story of Sister M. Cabrini Steber, of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius,

of Danville, Pennsylvania, would be featured because Sister M. Cabrini was alive to tell of her healing. Sister M. Cabrini was filmed in her Danville residence's chapel. Filmed in Chicago, Sister Deborah Borneman, SSCM, also a Sister of Saints Cyril and Methodius, portrayed the young Sister M. Cabrini when she had become ill.

It is fitting that these two Sisters of the Danville Congregation were available to portray Sister M. Cabrini's healing story because the connection of the two Communities goes deep. Mother Maria and many of the Danville Sisters' founding members were trained together in Scranton under the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters beginning in 1907.

The half-hour televised program was too short to portray Mother Maria Kaupas's entire story, spirit, and legacy. However, the abundance of phone calls and e-mails from all over the United States, which arrived shortly after the airing, was evidence that her story touched the lives of many – both former students, families, and friends.

The Sisters of St. Casimir fervently pray that Mother Maria will bring to the heart of our loving God the prayerful requests of those who have been deeply touched.

*To view the documentary film visit our website.  
Please share the link and the story of  
Venerable Maria Kaupas.*

<https://www.sistersofstcasimir.org/events/>



*Three priests from Chicago re-enact the SSC founding day, August 29, 1907. From left: Rev. Jaunius Kelpas, Rev. Thomas Kasputis, Rev. Gediminas Kersys.*

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*The Sisters thank all of their benefactors and apologize for any names that may have been inadvertently omitted.*



# St. Casimir Academy Maria High School

# Alumnae

Because of COVID-19, Reunion 2020, honoring those who graduated in years ending in 0 and 5, was cancelled with the hope of re-scheduling in the future.

Reunion 2021, honoring those who graduated in years ending in 1 and 6, is not being planned for this year because of the uncertainty that still exists around large gatherings. When it is safe to have a celebration, information will be made available.

In the summer of 2020, the SCA-MHS Alumnae office and database moved to the St. Casimir Center/Motherhouse. The St. Casimir-Maria Alumnae Association office was at the Maria Kaupas Center (MKC), and the MKC staff chaired the annual reunion for the past few years. Alumnae news had also been included in the MKC Newsletter.



*Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius, MHS '71  
sporting the alum sweatshirt.*

There are a limited number of sweatshirts available for \$30.00 which includes postage. Please make your check payable to: Maria Kaupas Center and mail it to:

Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius, SSC  
St. Casimir-Maria  
Alumnae Association  
2601 West Marquette Road  
Chicago, IL 60629-1817  
773-349-8065

[www.stcasimir-mariaalum.com](http://www.stcasimir-mariaalum.com)  
[alumnae@ssc2601.com](mailto:alumnae@ssc2601.com)

Please continue to update your contact information and send us your email addresses.

Some alums receive Journeys, and if you know of other alums who would like to receive Journeys, please send us contact information.

We plan to have alumnae news in future issues of Journeys, a publication of the Sisters of St. Casimir.

## Sweatshirt Order Form

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	First	Maiden	Last	Year of Graduation
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# Thoughts from VJM President and Students



Thomas A. Kardish, President

I often say I have the best job in the world. During my six years at Villa it has certainly been amazing to see the growth of the student body (next fall will see record enrollment), expansion of the curriculum with the addition of an Engineering curriculum, novel Social Studies and English courses, and a myriad of new extracurricular activities (crew, sailing, mock trial, rocketry, robotics) and service trips (Chicago and Haiti).

Our graduates are in demand and have achieved acceptances to the most selective universities in every corner of the country.

There is a lot in a name and, if you think about it, Villa can be translated as the house of Joe and Mary. It is a good goal. I think we all strive to make Villa a holy place where young women can discern about life and what God calls them to do. With the prayerful support of the entirety of the Villa Joseph Marie community, we have beautified the campus with the renovation of the front entrance, main hallway, and student lounge areas. Of course, the construction of an entire floor of state-of-the-art classrooms and the stunning Performing Arts Center made Villa even more beautiful, and I truly believe the Holy Family would be pleased.

As wonderful as all the accomplishments listed above may be, what I am most proud of is the way the young women of Villa embody the charism of the Sisters of St. Casimir and live the example of Mother Maria. Allow me to provide two examples:

One of the regular items in the Villa service calendar is the Thursday night trip to Sarnelli House, where the Villa students make tacos or ziti and serve the hundreds of homeless that call Kensington Avenue home. Of course, this year, COVID precautions have



precluded having the students serve, but we have record participation in the meal preparation.

Another highlight from the Villa service trips occurred when we had a conversion on a mission trip to the mountains of Haiti. It was during an Advent Mass when Fr. Bavon, our good friend and Missionhurst missionary, asked, in his energetic and entertaining sermon, if he could see a show of hands of who had been baptized.

The next question asked if there was anyone that wanted to be baptized? Siena, a senior at the time (she was 18), raised her hand and said she wanted to be baptized. So Ms. May, Social Studies department chair at VJM, and I became godparents, in addition to her Haitian godparents. What a joy to see a young woman, who may have come to Villa to get an excellent education, prove that she had learned how to be a Christian by following the footsteps of Mother Maria.

Both of these examples provide a fulfillment beyond description. When people ask me why I love my job, I often steal a line said to me by Sr. Regina Dubickas, SSC, General Superior: I have gone from having a job, to having a career, to now a vocation. What a blessing for me, and for everyone in the Villa community.

*Villa Joseph Marie students watched the Mother Maria Kaupas documentary film in theology class, and agreed to share thoughts with Journeys readers.*



Mary McAlpin VJM '24

The Mother Maria film took the viewer through Mother Maria's journey from her childhood, all the way to her death. This included her journey with the Sisters of St. Casimir and all

of the wonderful and amazing things she did.

The video helped me understand, truly, how impactful Mother Maria was on those around her. She was such a kind and caring person, and she did all she could for others around her. Mother Maria inspired me to be open to helping all those in need of help.

I would suggest this video to others, because it really helped me learn more about who Mother Maria, our foundress, really was. Before watching this, I didn't know much about her, but after this, I can truly see how amazing she was. I could understand more why she was such an important person to so many who knew her.



Alexa Beerhalter VJM '24

Mother Maria always said one of the greatest things is to do it with love. "Always more, always better, always with love" is the exact statement Mother Maria lived by. She inspired and continues to inspire others to do just this. She shows us how anyone can hear God's call and be a follower of Christ.

Something that sticks with me about Mother Maria is how dedicated she was to fulfilling God's plan as he called her to do so. She didn't question or reject this call, yet took this as an opportunity to be who she was meant to be.

This film sums up all of the unique, special qualities Mother Maria had as she carried along her faith journey. She always trusted that God had a plan for her and was guiding her day in and day out. Her dedication, faithfulness, and trust in God helps others to come to Christ as well.

Her only wish in life was for everyone to have equal chances to come to God. Her message continues to inspire young children like me to love, be kind, and stay true to who we are as God wants us to be.



# Thoughts from VJM Students



Erin Flatley VJM '24

The film "They Might Be Saints" about Mother Maria Kaupas was presented to my classmates and me in our theology class. As an incoming freshman, I did not know the complete story of Mother Maria and her affiliation with Villa Joseph Marie High School.

This film has taught me so much about our school and its foundress. I learned about her upbringing and her journey to the United States.

Her empathy for the Lithuanian immigrants and her determination to help those in need is inspiring. Mother



er Maria's unyielding faith in God, even during challenging times in her life, serves as an excellent example of how we should live our lives.

Throughout the film, it was clear that she never doubted God and His plan. She had the outlook of "For God, nothing is ever enough. I will give everything. I will not be selfish with God." This mindset allowed her to change the lives of so many people and bring them closer to God.

The video noted that Mother Maria's devotion to the Eucharist was evident to those around her and that she spent a substantial amount of time praying in the chapel. That goes to show how selfless she was. We can all learn something from her remarkable life.

One of Mother Maria Kaupas's say-

ings was, "Always more, always better, always with love." I have seen these words around our school, but I was not fully aware of what they meant.

From this video, I learned that it was a summary of Mother Maria's goal in life. She strived to do more for others, to better herself each day, and most importantly, to do everything with love. This film has taught me much more about the history of our school.

I have learned about the life of our foundress and her impact on the world. I can use her example of dedication and compassion as something to work towards in my own life.

I would recommend this film to anyone, even those who are not associated with the Sisters of Saint Casimir or Villa Joseph Marie High School, because it is eye-opening to learn about someone who lived such a charitable life.

## Mother Maria Film: Thoughts from Jake Betz

Being interviewed for the documentary "They Might Be Saints" was a great honor. Maria Kaupas' name does not appear in many, if any, general histories of our community, but it's a certainty that no one who lived in Mount Carmel ever came close to accomplishing what she did in her life.

I was touched as the video eloquently recounted how Maria Kaupas wanted to minister to newly arrived Lithuanian families in the Anthracite Coal Region. Lithuanians, and additional ethnic groups, were in great demand in the Region – as laborers in the mines, a very dangerous and often deadly occupation. I fear that, all too often, they were viewed by the establishment as second-class citizens, valuable only because their hard work made other people rich.

She and the other Sisters were signs to the immigrants that God was with them and cared about them.



Jake Betz interviewed in the documentary film, discusses life in Mt. Carmel, Pennsylvania.

I kept thinking of all the lives Maria Kaupas has touched over the last 114 years, personally and through the good works of all the Sisters, in classrooms, in hospitals, in parish ministry. There were many souls who came to know God's mercy and love.

As a lifelong resident of Mount Carmel, I realize how blessed our town was to have Maria Kaupas in our

midst and how, thanks to her and other women religious, the Catholic faith remained the most important part of immigrants' lives and in the lives, generations later, of many of their descendants.

The more you know about Maria Kaupas, the more you want to share her life's story with others, through the documentary and other ways.



*Maria Smith visits the historical timeline of the Sisters of St. Casimir in the Legacy Room at St. Casimir Center.*

## Sisters of St. Casimir Archivist: Meet Maria Smith

*New Project Archivist Maria Smith agreed to be interviewed and share insights into the world of archives.*

**When did you start working for SSC as the archivist? Please tell us about yourself.**

I started as the Project Archivist for the Sisters of St. Casimir in November 2020. I work in the Archives Room located in the lower level of the West Building at 2601 West Marquette Rd. Most of the time I am the only person in the Archives Room. Working independently is often a benefit because much of my work requires concentration in reviewing documents and creating metadata records. (*Metadata is a description documenting the identification, nature, use, and location of archival resources*). However, I often get visits from the Archives Committee members (Mary Beth McCarthy, Daina Cyvas, Sr. Immacula, and Sr. Margaret Petcavage) and other Community members, including Sr. Margaret Zalot and Sr. Elizabeth Ann,

which always brightens my day! Additionally, I am a member of several professional archivist organizations including: Archival Resources for Catholic Collections, the Chicago Area Religious Archivists, and the Chicago Area Archivists. In these groups I am able to engage with and learn from other archivists, who have encountered many similar challenges in their work as I have. As members of these groups, we work collaboratively to brainstorm solutions to problems that are common to many archivists working with religious collections. The organizations provide me with critical resources, and I am lucky to have these lifelines when I need them.

**How did you get started in this field?**

I felt driven to become an archivist because I believe there is nothing more valuable than the opportunity to learn from the experiences of people, places, and communities. As a histo-

ry major in college, I was compelled by a desire to sincerely understand the experiences and perspectives of people from the past. A history professor of mine at Albion College helped me to determine that archiving would be a great career path for me, and I pursued a master's degree in Information Science (specializing in Archives and Records Management) at the University of Michigan's School of Information.

While in graduate school, I came to more fully appreciate the critical role that archivists play in developing collective memories through the representation of people and communities in historical resources. Archival representation of organizations such as the Sisters of St. Casimir gives voice to women religious, immigrant communities, and to the many diverse populations where the Sisters served. Archival collections keep the incredible contributions of the Sisters alive, and moreover, document the efforts, accomplishments, and lives of the in-



dividual Sisters. I am so driven to ensure the lasting legacy of these women through historical collections.

### What do you like most about working with the SSC archives?

In my first few months working as the SSC Archivist, I have reveled in every opportunity to learn about the everyday lives and challenges faced by the extraordinary women that make up this community. I have discovered so many treasures in the archive that offer a distinctive portrayal of the Community's experiences. For instance, the scrapbook collection highlights celebrations and activities of St. Casimir Academy from as early as 1911. Tracing the Community's history through these time capsules demonstrates the amount of compassion, commitment, and security the Sisters provided to the academy students from the early 20th Century and on.

### Is digitization part of what you are doing?

Digitization is an important aspect. Currently, I am creating digital records for all the SSC archival material. These digital records will enable faster and easier discovery of those materials. Eventually, we will also digitize at least a portion of the collection for preservation and access purposes, such as the Congregation's historical photographs.

Day to day, I am creating digital records of historical items so that they can be located and used by people to learn about the SSC Community. Along with the SSC Archives Committee members, I am also planning for the long-term storage and preservation of the materials so that they remain safe, intact, and usable for years to come.

### Any great discoveries that you can share with us?

I have made so many discoveries in the archive that have excited and intrigued me! For instance, there is a folder of artwork by the three Found-



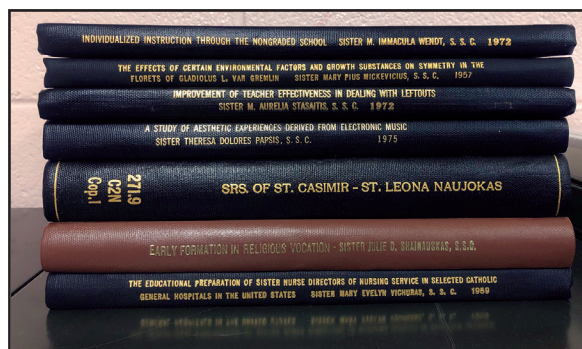
*Maria Smith surveys the scrapbook collection in the Archives Room.*

resses (Mother Maria, Sister M. Immaculata, and Sister M. Concepta) made during the time they spent at Marywood Seminary in Scranton, PA, from 1905 to 1907. The pastoral drawings and paintings provide a glimpse of the environment and experiences the Foundresses were having as they prepared to establish what would become a transformative Congregation.

I was also very interested to survey the academic dissertations written by the Sisters of St. Casimir. The range and depth of scholarship that has been undertaken by SSC members

is monumental. Across decades and institutions, the Sisters of St. Casimir have dedicated themselves to discovering, teaching, and sharing valuable knowledge to improve the conditions of marginalized communities by researching and providing insights in the areas of Education, Healthcare, and, of course, Religious Life.

I was also fascinated to find a series of letters in the correspondence files of Mother M. Josepha written to officials at the Lithuanian consulate in the United States in the late 1940s. In these letters, the General Superior was making every effort to ensure the safety and transfer of a group of Lithuanian refugee Sisters who had been driven out of their home country during Soviet occupation. I have found other evidence of the incredible efforts made by the Sisters of St. Casimir to help Lithuanian refugees, demonstrating the Community's enduring pursuit to serve people most in need.



*A sampling of the academic dissertations Maria surveyed: The Educational Preparation of Sister Nurse Directors of Nursing Service in the Selected Catholic General Hospitals in the United States by Sr. Mary Evelyn Vichuras, 1959; A Study of Aesthetic Experiences Derived From Electronic Music by Sr. Theresa Dolores Papsis, 1975.*



# At Journey's End — *Eternal Days Beginning*

**Sister Lucille Ann Bandyk**  
**(formerly Sister M. Joselle)**

**DECEMBER 13, 1932 – OCTOBER 23, 2020**



Lucille Ann Bandyk was born in the Southside Brighton Park neighborhood of Chicago in 1932 to Joseph and Barbara Bandyk. Having been born on the feast of Saint Lucy, she was given the name Lucille Ann. She had an older sister, Barbara, and a younger brother, Joseph.

The family's spiritual home was Immaculate Conception Parish, and it was at the parish school that Sister Lucille Ann first encountered the Sisters of St. Casimir. She got to know the Sisters better when she attended St. Casimir Academy, where she admired the Sisters' deep faith and compassionate hearts. Drawn to a religious life of prayer and service, Sister Lucille Ann decided, while still in high school, that her calling was to become a Sister of St. Casimir.

Sister Lucille Ann began her new life as Sister Joselle in 1949. She then made her first vows in 1952. Her ministry and service in the field of education took her to four states: Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Illinois. She earned a bachelor's degree in education from Marywood College in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and a master's degree in education from Loyola University Chicago.

She began her ministry as a teacher in the primary grades, then moved on to junior high school. During her last years teaching elementary grades, she was principal of St. John Vianney School in St. Paul, Minnesota, while teaching 8th grade.

Now as Sister Lucille Ann, she was called on to join the Maria High School faculty in 1969. While at Maria, she lived at the Maria convent where she remained for 40 years. During that time, she ministered in many capacities, including as a social studies teacher – teaching U.S. History as one of her specialties – moderator of the Father's Club, dean of students, administrative secretary, and local superior of the Community.

In all that Sister Lucille Ann did, she gave of herself totally and she made lasting relationships. Additionally, she was always eager to chaperone on school trips, which took her throughout the United States, Canada, and a few European countries. She was able to fill her social studies classes

at Maria with personal stories about these excursions.

As the technological age bloomed, Sister Lucille Ann refused to be left behind. Unafraid of using technology, she jumped at the chance to learn how to use a computer. She often put her skills to work creating beautiful cards for birthdays and feast days.

Reflecting on her Diamond Jubilee, Sister Lucille Ann wrote: "Now, after 60 years of service to the Church as a Sister of St. Casimir, I can only say, 'Thank You, Lord, for these special gifts of vocation and perseverance.' These years are not without their rewards. Most precious of all rewards was, and still is, the opportunity and time to develop and grow in prayer life, the love of God, and the personal relationship with Jesus. 'You are my love, O Lord; You are my joy.'"

Sister Lucille Ann felt blessed by the presence of so many loving family, friends, and Sisters in her life. She was eager to share family news and photos with everyone and enjoyed spending time with frequent visitors. She took special delight in offering treats to the youngest of her guests. She was so proud of them and ever grateful for their love.

Sister Lucille Ann was especially fond of the small community of Sisters with whom she lived at Our Lady of Victory Convent in Lemont. They helped one another through difficult days with wisdom, laughter, acts of kindness, and prayer. Sister Johanna Marie was always there for Sister Lucille Ann, to share and laugh together. Sister Juline often prayed with her and pushed her wheelchair wherever she needed to go. Sister Bernadette Marie cared for her with compassion and understanding of her needs.

May Sister Lucille Ann know the fullness of joy in God's presence forever.



# At Journey's End — *Eternal Days Beginning*

**Sister Lorraine Therese Siminas**

**(formerly Sister M. Doloria)**

**MARCH 29, 1934 - OCTOBER 24, 2020**

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Lorraine Siminas was born in Chicago in 1934 to Frank and Mary Agnes Siminas. She had two older brothers, Leonard and Richard. Her loving family was very involved in their Pilsen neighborhood with Our Lady of Vilna Parish. There, her parents introduced her to God.

In a reflection on her life, Sister Lorraine Therese wrote, “Besides explaining the pictures and statues to me in our church, my mother would take me there when she attended devotions. My father, too, took me to church when we would have a procession of the Blessed Sacrament.”

Sister Lorraine Therese was deeply moved by two encounters with Mother Maria, the first of which took place in her family’s candy store when Mother Maria stopped by for a visit. The second was her memory of accompanying her mother at Mother Maria’s final farewell in the Motherhouse chapel in April 1940. These encounters inspired and stayed with her for a lifetime.

With that strong faith foundation, Sister Lorraine Therese admired and identified with the Sisters of St. Casimir, who taught her at both Our Lady of Vilna and at St. Casimir Academy. She answered the call to join the SSC community in 1953 with the name Sister Doloria, bringing with it a talent and love for music which she put to good use in the Sisters’ choir.

Sister Lorraine Therese received her bachelor’s degree in education from Marywood College in Scranton, PA, preparing her for 42 years of full-time teaching, mostly in the primary grades. She taught in schools in Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Mexico, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. In Illinois, she taught at Holy Cross, Nativity BVM, St. George, Sts. Peter and Paul, Providence of God, Our Lady of Vilna, St. Bartholomew in Waukegan, St. Mary in Plano, St. Norbert in Northbrook, and St. Mary in Darien. While at St. Joan of Arc in Maryland, she served as principal for a short time. Her last assignment was at St. Bede’s in Holland, PA, where she taught from 1985 to 1996. After retiring from full-time teaching, she continued to tutor students in need of additional help.

In 1965 she co-authored with Sister M. Francine and

Sister Mary de Sales a student workbook, “I Want to Learn” and the accompanying Teacher’s Aid Manual, “We Want to Learn.” She was able to use well her education and her experience in the primary grades to prepare these works for publication.

Sister Lorraine Therese earned a master’s degree in religious studies from Mundelein College in Chicago, IL, in 1976. She was one of seven students chosen to present her thesis/project “Developing Faculty Justice Awareness” at a graduate colloquium to interested faculty and students at Mundelein. She also shared her thesis project with the community. On the special occasion of the U.S. Bicentennial celebration in July 1976, she prepared a day of prayerful reflection, penance, and fasting.

In 2005, she moved to the Villa Joseph Marie convent from St. Bede and offered her services as a substitute and tutor. She returned to the Motherhouse in Chicago in 2009. Of her 55-year ministry in education Sister Lorraine Therese wrote that the most rewarding experience was sharing God’s love with little children and through them with their parents. “I have also received and learned much from those little ones.”

One of Sister Lorraine Therese’s spiritual anchors was a devotion to the Blessed Mother. She journeyed to Medjugorje as well as other sacred places, returning home full of grace and excited to share her experiences.

All her life, Sister Lorraine Therese was a people person, who enjoyed telling and listening to stories. Her infectious laugh was welcome wherever she went, but especially at the after-Mass “coffee clutch” that enriched her days at Franciscan Village.

Upon her 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in 2013 she shared: “I am most grateful now for my spiritual development and the education I received as a Sister. As I found God in my family, I have also found God in the schools where I was missioned as teacher and principal. Most of all, I delighted in finding God in the children I taught. I think of them often and pray for them. I try to still bring God to others, as well as meeting God in others, as I go about my daily tasks. This gives me great joy because God has been good and generous to me. Holy is His name.”

# At Journey's End — *Eternal Days Beginning*

**Sister Mary Philip Ramoska**  
**JULY 26, 1920 - DECEMBER 17, 2020**



Sister Mary Philip (baptized Anna Mary) was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in July 1920 to Walter and Grace Ramoska, who were Lithuanian immigrants. It was the feast of St. Anne, and she was given the name Anna. The oldest girl of nine children, she enjoyed the blessings of a large family.

Sister Mary Philip first met Sisters of St. Casimir as a student at St. Joseph School, where Sisters were her teachers. She admired the Sisters and hoped to be like them. Several years later, after she had graduated from Johnson Trade School, this wish was reawakened. It was 1941 when Sister Mary Philip completed her high school education at St. Casimir Academy in Chicago and entered the Sisters of St. Casimir.

Sister Mary Philip made first vows on August 15, 1943. She had the joy of celebrating many Jubilees of her religious profession: her Silver Jubilee in 1968, Golden in 1993, Diamond (60 years) in 2003, and Diamond (75 years) in 2018. Another joy was that one of her sisters, Sister Lourdine Ramoska, also answered God's call to religious service with the Sisters of St. Casimir a few years after Sister Mary Philip had entered the community.

Sister Mary Philip spent much of her religious life caring for others, first as a cook for fellow Sisters, and next as a nurse after earning her LPN license in 1960. Between these two ministries, Sister Mary Philip provided loving care to others for 61 years, a true testament to her desire to do God's will.

From 1943 to 1959, Sister Mary Philip prepared meals for the Sisters in various locations, including Holy Cross and Loretto Hospitals in Chicago, Illinois; St. Joseph Hospital in Osmond, Nebraska; Holy Family Villa in Lemont, Illinois; and several convents in Nebraska, New Mexico, and Massachusetts, where the Sisters were teaching in parish schools. She also prepared meals at Villa Joseph Marie High School, Pennsylvania, from 1953 to 1955.

In 1959, Sister Mary Philip changed her focus and trained as a licensed practical nurse (LPN) at Sacred

Heart Hospital in Pennsylvania. She worked as a nurse at St. Joseph Home in Holland, Pennsylvania, from 1960-1981. She considered those 21 years a great blessing in her life as she was able to care for the elderly as well as her own mother for her last two years of life. In 1981, she returned to Chicago and worked as an LPN in the Motherhouse infirmary until 2005.

When Sister Mary Philip retired from full-time ministry after 62 years, she continued her ministry of prayer and presence at the Motherhouse, and later, at Franciscan Village. On her Diamond Jubilee, Sister Mary Philip reflected, "I consider my religious vocation as the blessing above all blessings in my life from Our Lord. It is indeed a privilege to be one of the so-called chosen ones."

Sister Mary Philip had a wonderful sense of humor. She was an avid sports fan and never said "no" to going to a White Sox game when Sister Immacula had tickets. But she also always followed her favorite Philadelphia Phillies, Eagles, 76ers, and Flyers. When she could no longer go to games, she often sent a note to those whom she thought might be going, saying, "I can't go anymore, but I want you to take this \$10 and buy yourself a hot dog."

When the Sisters moved to Franciscan Village, Sister Margaret Zalot sent a note listing various items that the Sisters might need. At the bottom of the list, where it said "other," Sister Mary Philip wrote, "a piano." An electronic keyboard was found for her, and she enjoyed playing it.

Sister Mary Philip wanted very much to reach her 100th birthday, saying, "I want to see what it's like to be 100!" She was proud of reaching that milestone. Despite Covid restrictions last July, her birthday celebration included many balloons, songs, and gifts. When a nurse walked into her room a few days later and commented on the balloons that clearly said "100," Sister Mary Philip promptly responded, "Not just one hundred, but one hundred and four days."

Sister Mary Philip proudly journeyed through a positive and joyful life of one hundred years, four months, and three weeks – including 77 years in religious life – before entering the greatest joy - eternal life.



# At Journey's End — *Eternal Days Beginning*

**Sister Milda Blinstrubas**  
**(formerly Sister M. Jacinta)**

**OCTOBER 2, 1932 – FEBRUARY 17, 2021**



Milda (Ann Marie) Blinstrubas, the daughter of Stasys Blinstrubas and Anna Marie Maurush, was born in Klaipeda, Lithuania, in October 1932. Milda and her family were forced to flee their homeland when she was 12 years old because the Russian army was closing in.

As Sister Milda was preparing for her Golden Jubilee of religious profession in 2001, she reflected: "I remember the bombs and the fires. I couldn't sleep nights and there was no peace. Living in Germany during the war years, I experienced the hardships of refugee life. The only bright spot in my life at the time was the sight of the Sisters who would come occasionally to the refugee camp to minister to the sick. I was fascinated by them and followed them at a distance."

She left Germany in January 1948 and arrived, unaccompanied, in the United States shortly afterwards. She traveled to Chicago, finding lodging about four blocks from the Motherhouse with Mr. and Mrs. Skelly, Sister M. Leandra Yerkes's aunt and uncle.

Walking around the neighborhood, Milda discovered the Motherhouse and tried to find a glimpse of the Sisters walking on the Motherhouse grounds. She wanted to be with them. And so, in September 1948, Milda Blinstrubas entered the congregation of the Sisters of St. Casimir as a postulant.

On August 15, 1949, Milda began her novitiate, receiving the name Sister Jacinta, and on August 15, 1951, Sister Jacinta made her first vows. Thus began her life of ministry and service within the church, which took her to six states – Indiana, Illinois, New Mexico, California, Florida, and Maryland.

She began as a kindergarten – then second grade – teacher. Discovering while teaching second grade that most of the children could not read, she found a mission: she would make sure every student she taught would learn to read, and she would do this with first graders. She did just that for over 50 years, touching countless lives.

Sister Milda received her bachelor's degree in education from Marywood in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in 1976, but she had much on-the-job training, seeing what

worked and what did not work with her students, and applying that to each new year and situation. All that she experienced proved most beneficial to her students, who all learned to read.

At first, Sister Milda taught kindergarten children, from 1951 to 1954, at St. Francis in Indiana Harbor, Indiana, and Our Lady of Vilna in Chicago, and second grade at Nativity BVM in Chicago until 1956.

Her mission of teaching first graders to read began in Clovis, New Mexico, at Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1956, and stretched to 2005 at Nativity BVM in Chicago, Illinois. During this time, Sister Milda's four longest, continuous assignments were at St. Casimir in Los Angeles, California; St. Joan of Arc in Aberdeen, Maryland; St. Clement in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida; and Nativity BVM.

Reflecting on her Diamond Jubilee, Sister Milda wrote: "I believe in the Chinese proverb: 'Give a person a fish, you feed him for a day; teach a person how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.' My proverb is: Teach a child to read and you have taught him/her for a lifetime. God in his wisdom knew that it was here (with the Sisters of St. Casimir) that I could best use my gifts to serve him and help others, especially children."

After Sister Milda retired from full-time teaching and was living at the Motherhouse, she tutored students as part of a special Archdiocesan program. Her supervisor, Leah Duszynski, wrote about Sister Milda's work in this program: "She most certainly was a very special lady. She worked with each of our children no matter how challenging the task and always met success."

But she still did more. Sister Milda never stopped offering her services: caring for church linens and doing various household tasks, assisting her elderly aunt, doing whatever was asked of her. Whatever she did, was done to perfection.

Sister Milda eventually had found family in the Chicago area with whom she became very close, including her uncle and aunt, Bronius and Eugenija Blinstrubai, cousins, nieces, and nephews. Wherever she ministered, she developed lifelong friendships. She enjoyed family gatherings, travel with friends, nature, and operas. She appreciated visits from those she loved and enjoyed life with them. Community, family, and friends stayed close to her during the five years she lived at Mother Theresa Home in Lemont, IL. She will be missed.

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The following is the welcome  
that greets you when you enter the  
Legacy Room of the Sisters of St. Casimir.  
We invite you to visit The Legacy Room virtually.  
[www.sistersofstcasimir.org](http://www.sistersofstcasimir.org)

You are standing on holy ground. The story you are  
about to experience is that of the Sisters of St. Casimir:  
their founding, the ways they have embraced their mis-  
sion to foster the life of faith, and how they responded  
with generosity and compassion to the needs of their  
time. It is our hope that, as you journey through this  
exhibit, you will be inspired by the spirit of love and  
dedication of the Sisters and their foundress, Mother  
Maria Kaupas, and will express this inspiration in the  
unique living of your own life. May the dream and the  
journey of faith and service continue through you.

Our story begins in the heart of a courageous young  
woman from Lithuania, who came to the United States  
and discovered her life's purpose.

*The Sisters of St. Casimir*

## They Might Be Saints: Mother Maria Kaupas

To view the documentary film go to:  
<https://www.sistersofstcasimir.org/events/>

