



# Journeys

SISTERS OF ST. CASIMIR

Vol. XXXV No. 2  
Fall 2021



*Sisters of St. Casimir 2021 Jubilarians celebrate with their community and a few friends and relatives at Franciscan Village. From left, 2020 Jubilarian Sister Margaret Zalot celebrates with Sister Lourdine Ramoska (75 years) and Sister Juline Revas (60 years) after Mass in the Franciscan Village chapel.*

## Jubilarians Celebrate Milestones

*by Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius*

Jubilee Celebration 2021, on Saturday, August 14, was a very special occasion for the Sisters who were celebrating a milestone anniversary. Sister Lourdine Ramoska celebrated her 75 year, Diamond Jubilee, and Sister Juline Revas celebrated her 60 year, Diamond Jubilee.

It was also a significant day for each of the other Sisters who were remembering that day when they made their First Profession, promising to live the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a Sister of St. Casimir.

The celebration also honored two 2020 Jubilarians: Sister Joyce Ann Dopkin's 60 year, Diamond Jubilee and Sister Margaret Zalot's 50 year, Golden Jubilee. Sister Nilda Varanauskas, who entered eternal life in May, was also remembered.

This is the first year that the Jubilee Celebration took

place in Lemont. Family, friends, and Sisters filled the Franciscan Village chapel for the Jubilee Mass, celebrated by Fr. Bob Lucas, a Vincentian priest, who is the Village's chaplain.

The Jubilarians, as well as all the Sisters who were present, renewed their vows during Mass, which was followed by a luncheon in the main dining room at the Village, complete with dessert, the famous lemon fluff cake from Wolf Bakery.

Relatives, friends, and Sisters who were unable to attend Jubilee in person had been invited to view the 10:30 a.m. Jubilee Mass by Zoom and were welcome to stay and chat following the luncheon.

May the Jubilarians receive many blessings and may their Jubilee joy extend throughout the year.

# A Message from Sister Regina



Dear friends,

Just when we thought we were coming to “a new normal,” with a lessening of some of the restrictions due to the spread of COVID-19, we are asked to continue with the mask wearing and social distancing and to encourage vaccination to control the spread of the delta variant. We are asked to do this out of love and care not only for ourselves,

but for everyone with whom we come in contact.

In March of 2020 our Archdiocese of Chicago called for a day of prayer to be said at five different times during the day. The church bells were rung at 9 a.m., 12 p.m., 3 p.m., 6 p.m., and 9 p.m. We were given a short prayer for each of those hours, remembering those infected with the virus and all who are ill, health care workers and those attending to the sick, first responders and essential workers, people of every nation and their leaders, and those who died that day. Many of us continue to say these prayers, and we would like to share them with you.

*See page 13 for prayers*

The highlight of this issue of *Journeys* is the celebration of the Golden and Diamond anniversaries of religious profession. Congratulations to our Sister Lourdine Ramoska, Diamond Jubilee 75 years; Sister Juline Revas, Diamond Jubilee 60 years; and to our 2020 Jubilarians Sister Margaret Zalot, Golden Jubilee; and Sister Joyce Dopkin, Diamond Jubilee 60 years. We remember in faith and prayer our Sister Nilda Varanauskas, who would have been part of the celebration but whom God called to her eternal home on May 20, 2021.

We rejoice with our Sisters, for the witness of their lives through, the ministries of education, health care, pastoral care, nurturing a life of faith and fostering community. It is so important to celebrate these milestones in our lives, to thank God for the many blessings, and to re-commit ourselves to continuing the journey with love and trust in whatever way our life is unfolding.

Another significant event took place in September at the opening-of-the-school-year Mass at which Dr. Karen Kenkel was commissioned as President of our Villa Joseph Marie High School in Holland, PA. She comes highly recommended in her experience in education and leadership. We

welcome her and the principal, Lauren Carr, who has done a superb job of keeping Villa open and safe for the educational and formative opportunities Villa offers to continue during a very challenging time.

The year at Villa holds some challenges and blessings once again: adhering to the necessary safety measures, integrating the group of students coming from one of the Catholic high schools in the area that was not able to continue offering its program, and continuing the Capital Campaign for the Performing Arts Center that was built and dedicated in 2019.

The Wall of Fame ceremony took place at Villa Joseph Marie on Saturday, September 11. This event honors women and men from the Villa community who have contributed to the mission of Villa and have made an impact on the world. We are happy to say that this year Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius is being honored for her nine years in the education ministry at Villa and her active involvement with student life. In addition to her years at Villa, Sister Elizabeth Ann has spent 40 years sharing her talents and creativity in Catholic elementary schools and at Maria High School.

With the passing of two of our Sisters in Argentina, Sister Jeanne Moceyunas and Sister Nilda Varanauskas, the community was left with three Sisters who continue to serve there: Sister Estela Risso is missioned in Cordoba at Bethel, a home for children who are in need of care, and Sister Joyce Dopkin and Sister Asuncion Costantini are missioned in Avellaneda. We transferred the house in Cordoba in which the Sisters had been living to the Claretians, with whom our community has a long history of working together, especially with the youth.

What a joy for us to welcome Sister Lenore Thomas, IHM, from Scranton, PA, to be with us in ministry to our Sisters at Franciscan Village in Lemont, IL, where most of our Sisters are now living.

These stories are found throughout this issue of *Journeys*. They are part of our journey as Sisters of St. Casimir. We are grateful to all of you for your continued love and support for our community and our mission. We remember you in our prayers, asking that God bless you with joy and peace.

*Sister Regina Dubickas*

Sister Regina Dubickas  
General Superior  
Sisters of St. Casimir



# Jubilarian Reflections

## *Sister Lourdine Ramoska*

### *75 Years*



As I look back over the last 75 years of my life, I am filled with gratitude to the good God for giving me the graces needed to persevere to this milestone in my life.

To me, a religious vocation means giving oneself completely in faithful service to God.

My many years of teaching religion in our schools and CCD classes, and preparing children to receive their first Holy Communion have been most satisfying and rewarding.

Often one sees a bumper sticker which says, "If you can read this, thank a teacher." When I recall the many little ones I have taught how to read and to know about their loving God, I rejoice, for I trust that they are in turn passing on their knowledge and helping to make this world a better place.

From my life experiences I have learned that life has its ups and downs, but we have "Someone" who is always available to us – God. Prayer is our bulwark of strength. We Sisters have touched the lives of so many people in a very positive way and continue to do this, especially praying for those who request our prayers and for our generous benefactors who support us.



*Sister Janine Golubickis presents Sister Lourdine Ramoska her corsage before Mass on August 14, 2021, at the Franciscan Village chapel.*

*God Bless  
All Our Jubilarians*



*Sister Lourdine Ramoska celebrates Jubilee 2021 with family and friends. Front row from left: Tom Flaherty, Sister Lourdine, Ann Flaherty, Sister Lourdine's niece from Scranton, PA. Standing: friends Sue Hatherly and Sean Wischhover and nephew, Tom Flaherty, Jr.*



*From left: 2021 Jubilarians Sister Lourdine, Sister Juline, 2020 Jubilarian Sister Margaret Zalot and Sister Immacula at the Jubilee Mass celebrated in the Franciscan Village chapel.*



# Jubilarian Reflections

## *Sister Juline Revas 60 Years*



*From left: Sister Nancy Streitmatter, Sister Juline Revas, Sister Dolorine Lopez, and Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius congratulate Sister Juline. Jubilee photos taken by Karen Strabel.*



*Sister Bernadette Marie Janus (right) presents a Jubilee corsage to Sister Juline Revas.*

Life is a gift from God and I try to live every day to the best of my abilities. Jubilee 2021 was a beautiful and wonderful experience and day. The renewal of vows is a wonderful remembrance of what I promised years ago. It is good for people to know about this.

I am grateful to God and the Sisters of St. Casimir.



*2021 Jubilarian Sister Juline Revas celebrates with current and former Holy Cross Hospital friends. Back row, from left: Dennis Ryan, Nancy Shotas, Debbie Johnson, Linda and Joe Raspante. Front row, from left: Sister Nancy Streitmatter, Sister Juline, Laverne Robertson, and Debbie Wohler.*





## Argentina A New Future for the SSC House in Cordoba

by Sister Estela Riso

It is not that it began with Sister Jeanne's death. For many years we had been discerning our future here in Argentina. We are few. We are aging. But we all felt we could continue our mission of making God's love present where we are.

Sister Jeanne Moceyunas' surprising death in 2018 left two Sisters in Cordoba and three in Avellaneda, a day's journey apart. For some time now the Sisters in USA had the door open for our return "home." But four of the remaining Sisters were Argentines and for them USA is not "home."

In April of 2019, Sister Immacula, General Councilor and Assistant to the General Superior, and Sister Elizabeth Ann visited Argentina, and it was decided that we close the house in Cordoba.

The Sisters helped us sort out important documentation for the archives and advised the Bishop of our decision; Sister Estela was designated to find a new home for the treasured contents of the house. Our lawyer, Herminia Rigutto, was to see to the sale of the house. Sister Elenisa Buzas prepared to go to the United States.

Father John Martinez, pastor of Our Lady of the Valley Parish, held a Mass of Thanksgiving and a social gathering on June 19, 2019, at which gratitude was expressed for the presence and service of the Sisters of St. Casimir over the years. The Lithuanian community in Cordoba, as well as the president of the Conference of Religious Women, were present and did likewise.

Sister Joyce spoke to the assembly in the name of the Sisters, thanking them for having walked in faith with us for over 60 years.

Sister Elenisa returned with the Sisters to Buenos Aires and in July traveled to Rosario where the Associates organized a farewell gathering for her. Teachers, parish members, associates and friends were able to say "good-by." They also expressed their deep appreciation for what the Sisters of St. Casimir were to them in their lives.

In November 2019, Sister Margaret Petcavage came from Chicago to accompany Sister Elenisa to the USA.

Time went on, and because of the economic situation in Argentina it was impossible to sell the house.

Sister Estela continued living there, serving in the parish and in Bethel, the home for needy children, founded by Father Luchessi. The Sisters of St. Casimir have been collaborating with the home for many years in many ways.

For two years Estela remained in Cordoba taking care of the house, trying to put it at the service of others. During part of this time Sister Angela of the Sisters of the Consolation, whose Congregation had closed their house in Cordoba, accompanied Sister Estela.

From time to time, the General Council would ask about the progress on the sale of the house until finally we began to look for other alternatives. Give it to the Bishop? Give it to another congregation?

One day Sister Estela commented that the Divine Word Fathers were looking for a place to use as a seminary. We didn't want to rent, but this was the starting point for another idea. We would offer the house to the Claretian Fathers, with whom we have had a close relationship over the years ever since first arriving in Cordoba.

*Continued on page 6*

*Continued from page 5* The Claretian Fathers were delighted! They were looking for a place to open a novitiate in Cordoba next year, and Father Francis San Martín who was among the first students of the Sisters in the founding years and member of the mission group organized by Sister Leandra, was to be the Novice director.

At that time the Fathers were rent-

ing a house for three professors, and their contract would run out on April 1, 2021. Miraculously, we were able to do all the paperwork and turn the house over to the Claretians by April 1, in spite of being in the middle of the COVID-19 shutdown.

At present the Fathers are using the house for their professors and for professors who come from other places to

teach at the Claretian Institute.

Sister Estela has taken up residence at Bethel where she has volunteered for the past six years. She is still trying to accommodate the space they gave her with kitchen facilities and computer accessibility.

We are happy that the house in Cordoba will continue to be used for the service of nurturing the faith.

## Father 'Panchi' Grateful for Missionary Vocation



*Father Francisco G. San Martín*

My name is Francisco (Francis) G. San Martín. My nickname is “Panchi” (Frankie). I am the second of eight (four brothers and four sisters). In the photo (at right) you can see me with my three brothers, Sister Dilecta and Sister Magdalita. I am the one whom Sister Dilecta is holding by the shoulders.

When we were at the age of starting school, the Sisters of St. Casimir came to our parish. The parish school (Our Lady of the Valley) was also starting.

My parents were members of the founders group. So they were very acquainted with the Sisters because they were the first teachers. Both at school and at the parish the Sisters prepared us for the initial Sacraments. During the first stages of my primary school, the Sisters opened “Escuelita Americana” (Little American School) where my brothers, sisters and I had the opportunity of learning English.

I remember Mother Theophila, and Sisters Dilecta, Judine, Angelica, Cordelia, Elenisa, and especially, for the influence in coming to know my missionary vocation, Sister Leandra. I am so thankful for this tool that later, in my missionary ministry, gave me



many opportunities of communication around the world.

A very important stage of my life was my high school. Sister Leandra invited some of the pupils of Escuelita Americana and my high school to integrate a missionary group to help in the places where the La Salette priests were working in the rural environment around the city of Córdoba.

I was fifteen years old, and until I was twenty two years old, I participated in the summer missions. We prepared ourselves during the year,

every Saturday, and during our summer holidays, we visited the small towns, gathering the children, youth and adults in different moments during the evenings and also visited every house.

There I discovered my vocational calling. Some Claretian seminarians also participated, and they helped me in my decision. I graduated in Agronomic Engineering from Córdoba University, and I joined the Claretians. As a Claretian seminarian, I shared for many years my apostolate with Sister Jeanne.

I always say that the Sisters of Saint Casimir have registered author's rights in my vocation.

Today, I am the parish priest of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in the city of Bahía Blanca.

Next year I will be assigned to be the auxiliary priest in our Novitiate in Córdoba city. I will be near the house that the Sisters left for us

Claretians. It is the residence of the professors of our Claretian Philosophy and Theology Center and also the place where the professors who come from other places can stay.

I cannot find the words to express my gratitude for the Sisters of St. Casimir. From them I grew in my faith, in my missionary vocation and in my priesthood. I love you all and pray for our dear God to send you graces to keep on witnessing His love for everyone.



## Education and Mission Work in Cordoba

The Sisters of St. Casimir ministry in Argentina began in 1941. The possibilities of opening a house in Cordoba, Argentina began in September 1956. The work in Cordoba officially started in 1959.

Over the years many of our talented Sisters lived and carried on the dream of Mother Maria Kaupas to open missions in Argentina and work in education and healthcare.



Born in Patagonia to Lithuanian immigrant parents, Sister Elenisa Buzas served over 50 years as a teacher and principal. For many years she was principal in Cordoba at Our Lady of the Valley school. Sister Elenisa resides at Franciscan Village in Lemont, IL.



Chicagooan Sister Leandra Yerkes ministered for 18 of her 34 years in Argentina in Cordoba. Sister Leandra shared wonderful stories about her mission work in the summer months with high school youth groups. Her work in education, pastoral care and catechesis was rewarding but not easy. Sister Leandra lives at Franciscan Village.



"I am eternally grateful to God for the wonderful and blessed nine years that I spent in Argentina from 1970 to 1979," explained Sister Margaret McTaggart. "The blessing far outweighed the challenges of crosscultural mission... and with the people aspiring to Christ's love visible in the world." Sister Margaret lives at St. Casimir Center in Chicago.



*Photo from SSC Archives 1970's. Front row, right; Sr. Margaret McTaggart. Third row, right: Sr. Elenisa Buzas.*



*Cordoba, Argentina: from top, clockwise: Sr. Alice Juskelis, Sr. Leandra Yerkes, Sr. Dilecta Krauciunas, Sr. Theophila Adomaitis, Sr. Leticia, Sr. Judine, Sr. Maria. Photo from SSC Archives.*



*Sisters Estela Risso, Jeanne Moceyunas (deceased 2018), Joyce Ann Dopkin, Nilda Varanauskas (deceased 2020), Asuncion Costantini, and Elenisa Buzas celebrate community time in Cordoba.*





## Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius Inducted into Wall of Fame

On Saturday, September 11, Villa Joseph Marie High School inducted two new members into its Wall of Fame: Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius, SSC, and former Physics teacher, Thomas Reardon. The evening included memorable reflections from the inductees themselves as well as from family, friends, and former colleagues. It was a wonderful celebration of these two remarkable individuals and the impact they had, and continue to have, on Villa Joseph Marie High School.

Joining Sister Elizabeth Ann for the event was Sister Immacula as well as several of Sister Elizabeth Ann's former students from Villa. Many well-wishers joined the celebration remotely via Zoom, including the Sisters of St. Casimir from near and far including Argentina! Congratulations to Sister Elizabeth Ann and Thomas Reardon as they officially join the Villa Joseph Marie Wall of Fame.

Sister Elizabeth Ann has been involved in the ministry of education for 40 years. More than half of those years were spent teaching high school girls, which began when she taught Theology, Algebra, Foods, and Sewing at Villa from 1983 to 1992.

Sister Elizabeth Ann was also the Theology Department Chair, and Moderator of the Freshman and Junior Classes, Student Council, and Christian Service Corp. Sister began the Maria High School Holy-Cross Hospital Volunteer Program which involved 100 students each year and in 9 years, volunteered over 46,000 hours.

She has been named to Who's Who Among America's Teachers, inducted into the Maria High School Alumnae Hall of Fame, and received the Archdiocese of Chicago Heart of the School Award for the Arts.

She has fulfilled her dream of working with infants by volunteering over 500 hours in the newborn nursery at Holy Cross Hospital, taking photos of the newborns and rocking babies that were born addicted to cocaine. She currently serves on the Leadership Team of the Sisters of St. Casimir, VJM Board, and VJM Mission Committee.

*Congratulations,  
Sister Elizabeth Ann!*



*Testimonial by Stephanie McCarthy,  
VJM Director of Mission and Ministry*

It is a blessing to know that Sister Elizabeth Ann is being inducted into Villa's Wall of Fame! Sister's love for Villa was evident from the moment I met her on my first immersion trip to Chicago in 2016. Sister was beyond excited to spend time with students from "the Villa," and her love was witnessed by her patiently teaching them how to sew. This was a highlight of the trip and is something the now-alumnae from this trip still connect over today!

Something that I find very impressive about Sister Elizabeth Ann is her ability to remember names of past students she taught at "the Villa" over 20 years ago. Not only can she retell their names, but she remembers what class period and seat they sat in. This is a model for me of the importance of celebrating the dignity of each student and creating a community that is nurturing, always remembering that without one part or one person the whole Body of Christ is not complete. Sister Elizabeth Ann, thank you for modeling this important lesson to me and to so many others. I am grateful to know you. Congratulations on being inducted into the Wall of Fame!





*Wall of Fame inductees Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius and Thomas Reardon after the ceremony at the Villa Joseph Marie Performing Arts Center with Sister Immacula Wendt (left) and Dr. Karen Kenkel.*

*VJM alumnae attend The Wall of Fame induction ceremony to honor Sister Elizabeth Ann. From left: Alice Sheerin Braun '90, Jennifer Bahm Becker '89, Jen Sweeney Gillespie '90, Amy Bentz '90.*



## Villa Welcomes Guests at Opening of School Liturgy

On Monday, September 13, Villa Joseph Marie High School welcomed Father Matthew Brody, Sister Immacula Wendt, and Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius to campus to celebrate the Opening of School Liturgy in the Villa Performing Arts Center. As Villa began a new chapter in the story of the school, special blessings were given to Dr. Karen Kenkel as new Interim President, to faculty and staff, and to the entire student body.

After Mass, Dr. Karen Kenkel was installed as the new President, faculty and staff were commissioned, and the students received a blessing, a special prayer card, and an engraved pen with a quote that reads: Let's pen a new chapter for Villa, "Always more, always better, always with love."



*Sr. Elizabeth Ann and Dr. Karen Kenkel distribute prayer cards and pens.*





*Welcome committee greets Sister Lenore at Franciscan Village, from left: Sr. Theresa Dabulis, Sr. Lenore, Sr. Immacula Wendt, Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius.*

## Sister Lenore Thomas, IHM, Introduces Herself

*by Sister Lenore Thomas, IHM*

In March Sister Mary Ellen Higgins, IHM, from our Leadership team asked if I would consider the position as Community Care Coordinator for the Sisters of St. Casimir. After walking and praying, walking and praying, walking and praying; the answer given me by the Spirit of God was, “why not?”

After several phone interviews and a virtual job interview with the Leadership team of the Sisters of St. Casimir, they invited me to come to Lemont, IL. I arrived May 17 after a long journey from Scranton, PA, (705 miles to be exact, but who’s counting).

Upon my arrival I found that Sister Elizabeth Ann and Sister Immacula had made one of the Garden Homes at Franciscan Village a beautiful setting, completely furnished and supplied with everything that one would need or imagine. Sisters Theresa Dabulis and Janine Golubickis were part of the greeting committee when I drove up to my new home on Saint Bonaventure Avenue.

All helped unpack my car and I was in this gorgeous Garden Home

within an hour or so. A wonderful quality of the Casimir Sisters is hospitality. I experienced that big time when I arrived, and it continues today.

With the help of technology, the computer supplied wonderful aerial views of the Franciscan Village grounds, so I was able to drive in with a pictorial view of the buildings in my head. I had never been in this area before moving to Illinois. I’ve visited several surrounding states, but never spent time in Illinois.

I was happy to see some mountains because my previous experiences in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Kentucky have provided beautiful landscapes. Outdoors makes up my prayer chapel. Since I was a kid, I found I connect with God in the beauty that is provided by all of creation, including animals. My birdfeeders are set up for birds, squirrels and chipmunks, or anything else that comes along.

Thus far I have met with each of the Sisters in Independent Living and Assisted Living; each has been

open and honest with her questions and concerns. I was delighted to hear all of their stories of faith, their life journeys and the challenges that they face as they make Franciscan Village their new home.

I have begun to work with the health care services provided for the Sisters, discussed transitions, made attempts to provide spiritual and pastoral services as needed. Each day brings its own opportunities. Each day is different, each day is a blessing.

I have prayerfully, and in humility, begun the physical presence of an IHM, the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the Sisters of St. Casimir, which began in 1907 between Mother Maria Kaupas, SSC, and Mother M. Cyril, IHM, at Marywood University in Scranton, PA.

My prayer is that God will grace me with understanding and a great love of the people I meet each day. We are in this journey together. Our communities have brought us together for the greater good as we travel with one another to the other side. *See page 13 for more about Sister Lenore.*





Front row, from left: Sr. Margaret Petcavage, Sr. Janine Golubickis, Sr. Theresa Dabulis, Sr. Immacula Wendt, and Sr. Theresa Papsis. Back row, from left: Sr. Deborah Romanuski, Sr. Mary Louise Andrulonis, Sr. Rita Marie Kerdock, and Rev. Tony Pizzo, OSA.

## Sisters of St. Casimir Presented the Fidelitas Award

by Kathy Headley

The Augustinian Friars celebrated the feasts of Sts. Monica and Augustine on August 28, 2021, with a special Mass in the St. Rita Chapel at the high school followed by a celebratory dinner.

During the celebration, the Sisters of St. Casimir were presented with the Fidelitas Award. This award is specific to the Midwest Council and is given to people with whom the province shares a special relationship

in the immediate area and in recognition of extraordinary service to the Midwest Augustinian Friars.

In presenting the award, the Very Rev. Tony Pizzo, prior provincial, remarked, "As they have done since the beginning under their foundress Venerable Mother Maria Kaupas, the Sisters continue to walk with us and show an incredible commitment to the neighborhood."

This particular award was bestowed

on the Sisters in part in thanksgiving for their immense help with the food pantry at St. Rita's during the pandemic last year,

The Sisters just about had time to get back home and hang up their plaque when it was time to celebrate Founders' Day. This year marks their 114th anniversary. While Founders' Day is usually marked with a big in-person event, this one was celebrated via Zoom.

## Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) Virtual Assembly

Sister Margaret Zalot joined nearly 1,000 people from across the United States and 14 other countries for a three-day virtual gathering, held August 11-13, 2021, that included presentations, panel presentations, and small group sharing.

Continuing to develop the five-year commitment to work on dismantling racism, Sister Elise Garcia, LCWR President, in her presidential address, drew upon the works of both contemplative Sister Constance FitzGerald,

OCD, and theologian Shawn Copeland to call women religious to "carve deeper grooves of conscious relationality in evolution" by:

- Learning and telling the truth of our history
- Dismantling artificial constructs of race and caste
- Knowing Christ crucified through the dark wisdom of the enslaved
- Walking the talk of our radical relationality as women religious

She challenged those gathered "to leave as a legacy for the future of religious life – and for the common good of our whole blessed Earth

community – permanent capabilities for creative communion and deep cosmic tendencies for transforming love."

A very poignant part of the assembly took place when Sister Elise was joined by the other three leaders of LCWR in a rite of repentance, acknowledging our complicity in racism and praying for forgiveness to all those harmed by actions of racism committed today and throughout the centuries.

We, as a Congregation, will continue to study Sister Elise's address, and see how we can address some of the issues she presented in future gatherings.



# *Along the Way*

## Mother Maria Kaupas Center Mount Carmel, PA Kaupas Camp Resumes in 2021

The 2021 Kaupas Camp for middle school students in the Mount Carmel Area School District, which was held this summer after a one-year hiatus due to COVID, was judged by the school district and community partners to be “the best camp ever” in terms of programming, attendance, and student enthusiasm.

The annual three-week camp was inspired and envisioned by the Mother Maria Kaupas Center in Mt. Carmel, Pennsylvania, as a summer vacation activity for students in fifth through eighth grades. The camp is sponsored by the school district and is held at school facilities, with the Kaupas Center and other community partners helping with planning and fundraising.

This year’s camp, the fifth held since

the event began in 2016, included a one-day visit to Bucknell University in Lewisburg, PA, in which children participated in leadership activities and enjoyed tours of the campus and the wrestling team’s practice facility. One of the features of the annual camp is athletic clinics conducted by Bucknell varsity coaches and their students athletes. Additional one-day sports clinics were sponsored by high school coaches.

The camp’s programming was augmented by activities in art, band, cheerleading and yoga. The camp also included daily STEM activities, a community service day at Mount Carmel’s public library and a swim day at the Mount Carmel Community Pool.

Because the school district lacks the financial resources to maintain the camp, the event is totally funded by private and public benefactors, including the Lifeline Association, a charitable organization maintained by long-term inmates at the state prison in nearby Coal Township.

In addition to helping plan the camp, the Kaupas Center defrayed the cost of T-shirts for students and staff and the cost of lunch during one day of camp activities outside the school complex. The Center also made a donation to Mount Carmel Borough in appreciation for the students’ use of the community pool.

Planning is expected to start in the fall for the 2022 Kaupas Camp.



*Kaupas Camp children pose for a photo in front of the Bison statue on the campus of Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.*



## Prayers and intentions for the Archdiocese of Chicago's Bells Call to Prayer

### • 9 a.m. - Prayer for those infected with the virus and all who are ill

Lord, place your healing hand on those who suffer illness.  
Bring them to full health and ease their anxious hearts.  
May our prayer and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary encourage them that they are not alone.  
We ask this in Jesus' Name.

*Amen*

### • 12 p.m. - Prayer for health care workers and those attending to the sick

Lord, we are ennobled by those who put their lives at risk in caring for the sick.  
Keep them safe and embolden them when they are weary.  
We ask this in Jesus' Name.

*Amen*

### • 3 p.m. - Prayer for first responders and essential workers

Lord, we pray for those who run to danger to keep us safe and those who serve the common good.  
Embrace them with your mantle of protection and comfort the fears of their families.  
We ask this in Jesus' Name.

*Amen*

### • 6 p.m. - Prayer for people of every nation and their leaders

Lord, the pandemic opens our eyes to see each other as brothers and sisters in one human family.  
We pray for people of every nation and their leaders, asking that they be inspired to seek the good of all and quell the voices of division.  
We ask this in Jesus' Name.

*Amen*

### • 9 p.m. - Prayer for those who have died today

Lord, we grieve the passing of our sisters and brothers who have died this day.  
We commend them to your tender mercy, confident that nothing, not even death, will separate us from your love.  
We ask this in Jesus' Name.

*Amen*



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## Sister Lenore Shares Work Experiences

See page 10 for Sister's introduction.



*Sr. Lenore Thomas, IHM  
SSC Community  
Life Coordinator*

My previous position at Oak Crest Retirement Village in Parkville, MD, has given me an insight into what is a Community Life Coordinator.

My interest in ministering to the elderly Sisters comes from some study of gerontology as an LPN and ministering at our Marian Convent (in Scranton, PA), which is now Our Lady of Peace Convent. My experience of work-

ing with the Catholic community of 600 Catholics out of the 2,000 residents at Oak Crest Village in Maryland represented a larger institution than that of Franciscan Village, but it is a similar facility.

For the past five years I have been ministering to adults with mental and physical disabilities while ministering to the staff as Pastoral Care Coordinator at Saint Joseph's

Center. I also visited our dying residents and their families and assisted families in planning funeral liturgies. I worked with the elderly Catholic Community in Maryland as Pastoral Care Coordinator. Previous to that I was Pastoral Coordinator in a parish and Dean of Students in a small Catholic grade school in the Lexington Diocese in Kentucky.

I spent six years ministering in Cleveland, OH. For two of those years, I was a residential councilor at Boys Hope Girls Hope in the Cleveland area. The other four years I was the Coordinator for Vocations to Consecrated Life in the Diocese of Cleveland.

Before moving to Cleveland, I was a Pastoral Associate for seven years at Saint Luke's Parish in Cheat Lake, WV. In the Altoona/Johnstown Diocese I was the Director of Religious Education in four rural parishes for twelve years. Prior to these years I was an elementary school teacher and an LPN at Saint Joseph's Center and our Marian Convent.

*Welcome, Sister Lenore Thomas, IHM*



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

## Sister Nilda Varanauskas, SSC

OCTOBER 24, 1939 – MAY 30, 2021



Juana Nilda Varanauskas was born in Capital Federal, Argentina, on October 24, 1939, the only child of Casimiro Varanauskas and Emilia Jokubkaite. Both of her parents were born in Lithuania and had emigrated to Argentina.

Nilda's family was part of Our Lady of Vilna Parish, a Lithuanian community in Avellaneda, where she became acquainted with the Sisters of St. Casimir of Chicago, who staffed the parish school. She was drawn to their way of life.

Her parents found it difficult to allow her to enter the Community because they knew she would have to leave her home and go to Chicago. She would remain there for at least three years for her religious formation before they would see her again.

On February 1, 1958, Nilda arrived in the United States and was received as a candidate to become a Sister of St. Casimir. At the time, she knew both Spanish and Lithuanian, but not English. That presented a challenge as she joined several other young women who had entered the community, some of whom only knew English.

She struggled, searching for just the right word or gesture to communicate what she wanted to say. But her happy, spirited disposition endeared her to all, and she was able to adapt and grow in the ways of community life.

On August 15, 1958, Nilda began her novitiate, receiving the name Sister Carmen, and on August 15, 1960, she made her first vows. After Vatican II, when the Sisters were allowed to return to their baptismal names, she changed her name to Sister Nilda.

Soon after her profession, Sister Nilda returned to Argentina to teach at Our Lady of Vilna School, becoming its principal in 1967. She remained at Our Lady of Vilna school for thirty-seven years.

She was well-prepared for her ministry, having received master's degrees in Education for Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry, a licentiate in Psychology, and special certificates in catechetics. She served as a very successful educator, bringing new ideas and programs to the school.

Under Sister Nilda's leadership, Our Lady of Vilna School became known as one of the best schools in the diocese. The children were well prepared for future studies and were given a strong foundation in their faith. Graduates of the school credited their success in future studies to the education they had received at Our Lady of Vilna School. Many of the graduates have gone on to become teachers, doctors, government officials, and successful in other professions.

In the community, Sister Nilda served in local leadership at the convent in Avellaneda. She was regional superior for the Argentine region from 1988-1997.

Her great gift was one of hospitality to all. Often, she and the other Sisters assisted Sister Joyce Dopkin, whose ministry was at the "villa," bringing clothes and other supplies, while joining in worship services and celebrations. Sister Nilda was also a great collaborator with the Lithuanian community in Madre de Misericordia Parish; they were grateful for her presence and support of their activities and gatherings.

In her last years, Sister Nilda had health issues that limited her ability to do all that she ordinarily did. She was lovingly attended to by Sister Asuncion and Sister Joyce Dopkin, who lived with Sister Nilda throughout their time in Avellaneda.

God called Sister Nilda to her eternal home on May 30, 2021, after a prolonged time of suffering marked by the world-wide pandemic. After her death, many people wrote notes of gratitude on Facebook, such as the following: "I will love Sister Nilda forever. She was my principal during my school days, and she was an inspiration to me. Her way of speaking with soft, gentle words touched me deeply."

On March 25, 1979, Sister Nilda wrote a beautiful note to the Sisters:

*"I thank you for the great privilege that I had in sharing life in Christ with all of you. Please remember me in your prayers. The love of God is always with us."*





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## Sister Kathleen Smith, SSC

DECEMBER 14, 1941 – JULY 14, 2021



Sister Kathleen was born December 14, 1941, the second of two daughters, to Michael and Ray Smith in Chicago, IL. Sister Kathleen attended CCD classes at St. Adrian Parish while she was a Chicago public-school student. She and her sister, Desly, remained close throughout their lives.

She first came to know the Sisters of St. Casimir when she attended Maria High School. While there, Sister Kathleen felt drawn to the community. When the school newspaper featured an article and photo about Mother Maria Kaupas, the foundress of the Sisters of St. Casimir, she recalled there was “something about the expression on her face” that spoke to her. Her decision was confirmed.

Sister Kathleen entered in 1959 and made first vows in 1962 and perpetual vows in 1967. She had the joy of celebrating her Silver Jubilee in 1987 and her Golden Jubilee in 2012.

During her ministry, Sister Kathleen received a B.S. in Elementary Education from De Paul University, an M. Ed. in Education Administration from Loyola University, and a Master's in Pastoral Spirituality. She also studied Art at the University of Illinois and the Art Institute of Chicago. These experiences enhanced her ministry and provided opportunities to develop her artistic talent and teaching skills.

She began her ministry by teaching first and second grades at SS. Peter and Paul School in Chicago; St. Anthony School in Cicero, IL; St. John Vianney School in St. Paul, MN; Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in Cleveland, OH; and St. Casimir School in Los Angeles, CA. Recalling these early years of teaching, she said she felt joy seeing how the first graders learned to read, spell, write, and do math.

In 1977, Sister Kathleen was assigned to Maria High School, where she remained, teaching art until 1995. Speaking of her art career, she wrote: “The very process of art makes one sensitive to details in God's creation... Being able to develop this in students and adults is immediately rewarding.”

Among the memorable experiences at Maria was her students entering Chicago's annual City Vehicle Sticker Contest. Designs by her art students were chosen as the winner five different times and had the honor of being displayed on the windshield of every car in the city. Sister Kathleen's love for art inspired some of her students to choose teaching and art as a career.

At a time when Sister Kathleen was caring for her mother in Michigan, she was hired for a full-time position teaching art at Michigan Catholic Middle and High School in St. Joseph. One year, St. Joseph purchased blank white carousel horses to be decorated for display throughout the city. Under her direction, Sister Kathleen's students worked, with an exceptional display of creativity, on the carousel horse that was placed outside the post office.

Sister Kathleen's love for Mother Maria inspired her to include among her artwork numerous paintings of Mother Maria at different stages of her life. For the community's Diamond Jubilee, she created a shadow box display of photos of Mother Maria's life that enhanced the special milestone of the Community's founding. She also designed many beautiful banners used in liturgical celebrations.

Although most of Sister Kathleen's ministry was in education, at one point, having completed a degree in Pastoral Spirituality, she volunteered at Holy Cross Hospital to serve patients through the Pastoral Care Department.

The last few years of Sister Kathleen's life were very difficult due to major changes in her health. She was lovingly cared for by her good friend Sister Wanda Marie Kamza, as well as other Sisters and personnel of Franciscan Village.

At the time of her Golden Jubilee, Sister Kathleen said that throughout her life she was inspired by many Sisters and other people, by “their unpretentious dedication, kindness, behind the scenes work, and their ready support when needed.”

Sister Kathleen's faith, talent, and deep commitment to her fellow Sisters and her students will never be forgotten.



*Journeys*  
Sisters of St. Casimir  
2601 W. Marquette Road  
Chicago, IL 60629

Non-Profit  
Organization  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
Permit No. 42  
So. Suburban, IL

JOURNEYS is published by  
The Sisters of St. Casimir

This publication is sent free of charge  
to relatives, friends and benefactors  
of the Sisters of St. Casimir. We thank you  
for the voluntary donations that you send  
to help us defray the cost of printing,  
postage and handling.

Editor:  
Daina Cyvas,  
Communications and Project Coordinator  
dcyvas@ssc2601.com

Editor:  
Fran Tenbroeck

Adviser: Sister Margaret Zalot, SSC

Contact us:  
773-349-8064  
[www.sistersofstcasimir.org](http://www.sistersofstcasimir.org)

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or call 773.349.8064 to schedule a tour.  
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