



# Journeys

SISTERS OF ST. CASIMIR

Vol. XXXVI No. 2

Fall 2022



*Sisters of St. Casimir 2022 Jubilarians celebrate with their community, friends and relatives at Franciscan Village in Lemont, IL, on August 13 and 15. In the photo above, SSC leadership team and Jubilarians gather for the official photo. Front row, from left: Sr. Margaret Zalot, Sr. Elaine Kuizinas (75 years), and Sr. Sylvia Puchoras (60 years). Standing from left: Sr. Immacula Wendt and Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius.*

## 2022 Jubilarians Celebrate

This years Jubilee celebrations took place August 13 and 15 at Franciscan Village in Lemont, IL. The beautiful ceremonies began as our jubilarians processed down the chapel aisle while those in attendance sang "Come, Thou Chosen of the Lord," led by organist and cantor Giedre Gia Martin and flutist Anna Belle O'Shea.

The Jubilee Mass celebrant and homilist was Father Robert Rizzo, former student of Sister Elaine Kuizinas, and concelebrant Father Bob Lucas, a Vincentian priest and Franciscan Village chaplain.

The festivities continued after Mass with a luncheon, greetings by Sister Immacula, memories shared and photos.



# Together for a Great Love



Greetings to you, dear Friends!  
It is a good day to have a good day!  
Spring was flowering out all over as  
you read the Spring 2022 issue of  
Journeys. Today we are seeing the  
signs of harvesting and rustling  
leaves falling from the trees. Oh,  
my! All the Sisters of St. Casimir  
hope that all these months were  
special blessings for you. Be assured  
that you were in our daily prayers.

*Together for a Great Love.* This has been our call. We, the Sisters of St. Casimir, today number 30, but together we continue to be powerhouses of prayer and give witness to God's love and goodness by our presence wherever we are.

In this issue of Journeys you will get a glimpse of all the ways this continues to be done. We said our goodbyes to three of our beloved sisters, Sister Regina Dubickas, Sister Marilyn Kuzmickus, and Sister Wanda Kamza, who were called home to God.

We still follow the COVID-19 restrictions when we visit our sisters in skilled care or assisted living areas. But we are also happy to have opportunities to meet for jubilee and feast day celebrations, welcome special guests, have get togethers for meetings and friendship, and venture out for special events.

*Together for a Great Love.* With each new day, aren't we all blessed to have each other? When we look all around and see our families, our friends, our neighbors and all those who come into our lives, how good it is to be "Together for a Great Love" in this way. Everyone is special – is God's beloved one. Can we not see and value each person as she or he is? What about going the extra mile to bring heartfelt presence to each other through deep listening and generous giving of ourselves in ways that are intentional, supportive and loving? All it takes is a smile, a wave, a friendly hi, a phone call, a card, note, email. What about holding open a door for someone? Doing someone's shopping? Paying it forward? We need to just believe! This will bring LIFE into our world! Can we "Together for a Great Love" begin to make a difference in the world. All it takes is God's greatest gift – Love!

Peace and blessings!  
Always, with love and prayers,

*Sister Immacula Wendt, S.S.C.*

Sister Immacula Wendt  
and all the Sisters of St. Casimir

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SSC Leadership team and Sisters of St. Casimir welcome the newly elected IHM Leadership team to Chicago, for meetings, sharing, tour of the legacy room, and trip to Lemont to visit Sisters at Franciscan Village, October 9-12.



As part of their visit, The IHM and SSC Leadership teams gather for lunch with the SSC Sisters who reside in the independent living apartments. From left, seated: Sr. Judy O'Brien\*, Sr. Kathryn Clauss\*, Sr. Immacula Wendt\*\*. Standing, from left: Sr. Theresa Papsis, Sr. Marilyn Karpovich, Sr. Lenore Thomas, IHM, Sr. Grace Surdovel\*, Sr. Janine Golubickis, Sr. Rita Marie Kerdock, Sr. Theresa Jordan\*, Sr. Deborah Romanuski, Sr. Margaret Zalot\*\*, Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius\*\*, Sr. Theresa Dabulis, Sr. Nancy Steitmatter, Sr. Bernadette Marie Janus. Back row: Sr. Virginia Gapsis and Sr. Margaret Petcavage. (\*IHM leadership team, \*\*SSC Leadership team).



# Jubilarian Reflections

*Sister M. Elaine Kuizinas 75 Years*



*Jubilarian Sr. Elaine Kuizinas shares a smile with Sr. Immacula Wendt on Jubilee day.*

Looking back over more than 75 years, I feel very grateful to God for my religious vocation. I met the Sisters of St. Casimir while enrolled in St. Casimir in Worcester, MA, our parish school, where my thoughts of becoming a Sister probably started. I chose to attend a public high school in Worcester, MA, to have a wider variety of experiences and to then verify that my desire to become a Sister was real. After graduation, I worked for a few months and only then, I was sure I wanted to be a Sister.

My teaching career began in grade schools, followed by Maria High School, Chicago, IL, where I greatly enjoyed teaching math. After many happy experiences there, I became principal of Villa Joseph Marie High School in Holland, PA, for the next 19 years. While serving on the Council, I enjoyed a new and different environment working at Holy Cross Hospital (Chicago) prior to moving to Franciscan Village (Lemont).

One of my most rewarding and important experiences was being an integral part of the "New Math" program, at (UICSM) the University of Illinois Committee on School Mathematics. Two of us Sisters studied under the developers and authors of the program to ensure its success at Maria High School. I was honored to then be the assistant professor to present the program to other teachers during summer institutes in Bellingham, Washington.

As principal of Villa Joseph Marie, we were blessed with an outstanding faculty and talented students. To meet their needs and enhance their high school experience, we introduced an expanded sports program in which VJM girls won state championships in several sports. As the enrollment grew, so did the need to offer more college prep and elective courses. These improvements culminated in VJM achieving the coveted Blue Ribbon School status, with the ceremony and award presentation in Washington, DC, in the presence of President Clinton.

I am grateful for a multitude of travel adventures including appreciating the natural beauty of 34 states, especially Alaska. I have wonderful memories of exploring Canada, Europe, Australia, South America, and the Holy Land. With special fondness I remember spending time with my brother and his family at their home in New Zealand.

The Jubilee was amazing! It was a joyful day made even more special as I was blessed to be surrounded by 2 of my nieces, a grand nephew, the Sisters, many friends, and 8 former students, one of whom was in my eighth grade class and the celebrant of the Mass.

I am grateful for my family, Sisters in Community, friends, former students, co-workers, Franciscan Village staff, and all who have been part of my life. You are remembered in my prayers.



*Sister Elaine at the Jubilee luncheon poses with family members, from left: niece Mary Romero from Florida, nephew Paul Lacont from Colorado and Ann Goldstein from Massachusetts.*



*Sister Elaine at the Jubilee luncheon poses with former students, front row, from left: Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius, Sr. Elaine, Father Robert Rizzo. Second row, from left: Karen Strabel, Nancy Shotas, Anna Belle O'Shea, Pat Haney, Maria Smilga, Nancy Recchia.*



# Jubilarian Reflections

## Sister Sylvia Puchoras 60 Years

How grateful I am to our loving God who has gifted me with 60 years in His service. God has blessed me throughout these years with so many faithful, wonderful Sisters within our community, a loving family, and special friends and coworkers who worked along with me for 25 wonderful years when I served as principal at Our Lady of Peace School in Darien, IL. Our holy foundress, Mother Maria Kaupas, had modeled the way of faithful service for our congregation and for that I remain deeply grateful.

*God Bless  
Our Jubilarians*



*Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius presents a Jubilee corsage to Sister Sylvia Puchoras.*



*Sisters gather after the Jubilee luncheon at Franciscan Village, Lemont, IL. From left, sitting: Sr. Elenisa Buzas, Sr. June Puishys, Sr. Elaine Kuizinas, Sr. Lawrence Puishys, Sr. Leandra Yerkes, Sr. Margaret Zalot, Sr. Zita Petkevicius. Standing, from left: Sr. Nancy Streitmatter, Sr. Mary Louise Andrulonis, Sr. Dolorine Lopez, Sr. Juline Revas, Sr. Janine Golubickis, Sr. Deborah Romanuski, Sr. Virginia Gapsis, Sr. Bernadette Marie Janus, Sr. Rita Marie Kerdock, Sr. Sylvia Puchoras, Sr. Theresa Papsis, Sr. Marilyn Karpovich, Sr. Margaret Petcavage, Sr. Immacula Wendt, Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius, and Sr. Lenore Thomas, IHM.*



*Sisters renew their vows during Jubilee Mass. From left: Sr. Elaine Kuizinas, Sr. Sylvia Puchoras, Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius, Sr. Janine Golubickis, Sr. Dolorine Lopez, Sr. Margaret Zalot, Sr. Margaret Petcavage, Sr. Bernadette Marie Janus, Sr. Theresa Papsis, and Sr. Mary Louise Andrulonis.*



# Jubilee Memories



*Jubilarians Sr. Elaine Kuizinas (left), and Sr. Sylvia Puchoras (center), share the joy of the day at Mass. Front row, right: Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius. Second row, from left: Sr. Lawrence Puishtys and Sr. Margaret Petcavage.*



*Father Robert Rizzo celebrates Jubilee Mass.*



*Flutist Anna Belle O'Shea accompanies the organist during Jubilee Mass.*



*Cantor and organist Giedre "Gia" Martin sings "Come, Thou Chosen of the Lord."*



*Father Bob Lucas, CM, shares a smile and words of gratitude with Sr. Elaine at the Jubilee luncheon.*



**St. Casimir Academy  
Maria High School**

**Alumnae**

T-shirts are still available for \$15.00.  
Please make check payable to:  
**Sisters of St. Casimir**  
Please mail order form and check to:  
**Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius, SSC**  
**St. Casimir-Maria Alumnae Association**  
**2601 West Marquette Road**  
**Chicago, IL 60629-1817**  
773-349-8065  
eayocius@ssc2601.com

Name: First Maiden Last Year of Graduation:  
Address:  
City, State, Zip  
Cell phone:  
E-mail:  
Size (available in L, XL)



# Sister Regina Marie Dubickas Posthumously Inducted into VJM Wall of Fame

by Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius

Sister Regina is loved by all the Sisters of St. Casimir and hundreds of people with whom she came in contact with in the schools she taught at, as a high school guidance counselor at Maria High School, as a psychologist at Michael Reese Hospital and in private practice, and in Congregational leadership.

Sister Regina had a gift of connecting with people and caring about them. She knew many, many people and the hundreds of cards, Masses, and donations received after her returning to God is in addition to the hundreds of cards, notes, gifts, and flowers that people sent her as she fought the cancer that was slowly weakening her body but was unable to weaken her spirit.

Sister Regina began serving in Congregational leadership in 1998 and continued on the Leadership team until her death in 2022, while serving in her second term as General Superior.

Sister had the ability to think and re-think various issues to arrive at possibilities that would be the best for those involved. She cared about the people who were served by the various ministries in which the Sisters were involved.

It was when Sister Regina was on the Leadership team that the Community was involved in transferring the sponsorship of Holy Cross Hospital and Maria High School as well as discerning that it was time for most of the Sisters to move from the Motherhouse to Franciscan Village in Lemont, IL, and to sell the Motherhouse to Catholic Charities of Chicago. The legacy of the Sisters of St. Casimir continues in each of those places through the ministries that continue to meet the needs of the people in the neighborhood.

In the midst of all this, Sister

## Villa Joseph Marie WALL OF FAME INDUCTION OF

Sr. Regina Marie Dubickas, SSC

Saturday, September 17, 2022



Regina's main concern was for the well-being of all her Sisters. She made phone calls and wrote countless cards and notes to Sisters on their special days or when they were experiencing health issues. When you stopped by her office to drop off something or just to say hello, she stopped whatever she was doing and a conversation began and continued. You were the only one that mattered at that time!

Sister Regina cared about Villa and was on the Board for many years, giving hours to reading, discussing, and evaluating what was best for the students. She participated via Zoom during the last 3 years, and was honored to have one of Villa's crew boats named after her in September 2020. Sister Regina truly enjoyed the Villa Service Trips, meeting the Jems, and getting to know them when they travelled to Chicago.

## Reflection

by Sister Kathryn Claus, IHM

For 115 years the Sisters of St. Casimir and Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM, Scranton) have experienced a strong and loving relationship. During this treasured time we have worked in a variety of ways with the SSC leadership teams and have developed friendships with the SSC Sisters.

For the last 20 years we have enjoyed the privilege of working closely with Sister Regina Maria Dubickas, SSC. During that time we heard her speak often of her great affection for Villa Joseph Marie. On occasions when she had the opportunity to brag about Villa, her face would light up. During her visits to Villa, she was particularly inspired by what she saw firsthand; namely, how students, administrators, teachers, staff and parents lived out the Catholic identity and core values. She believed that it was the commitment to these values that greatly influenced the educational, spiritual, and social culture of the school.

You inspired us, Sister Regina Marie, as you witnessed to and reflected the spirit of Mother Maria Kaupas, "Always more, Always better, Always with love." We remember you, Sister Regina, with deep affection and gratitude.







*The VJM staff pledge their commitment to Villa Joseph Marie during the Commissioning Mass (Sisters are seated in the front row).*

On September 19, the Sisters of St. Casimir Leadership team joined the Villa community for its opening school liturgy.

After the Mass, Jeanne Frawley, a 1994 Villa graduate, was installed as the school's new President, the faculty and staff were commissioned for the new school year, and the entire student body was blessed by the Sisters, faculty, and staff.



*From left: Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius, Sr. Margaret Zalot, and Sr. Immacula (far right), with Jeanne Frawley, (center) VJM President and alumna of the Class of 1994, with her parents Jim and Barbara Frawley and sister Christine Frawley Schrack, who is also a Villa alumna.*



*Sr. Immacula Wendt gifts Villa students with 90th Anniversary chocolate bars as they leave the Commissioning Mass.*



*90th Anniversary chocolate bars with Mother Maria's famous quote, "Always more, always better, always with love."*



*Sr. Theresa Dabulis with two Villa student volunteers at Villa's Casino Night Fundraiser.*





*Circle dance performance at the 16th Lithuanian Dance Festival, Liacouras Center, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.*

## 16<sup>th</sup> Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival Entertains

*by Sister Margaret Petcavage*

As America celebrated Independence Day, 4th of July weekend, Philadelphia hosted the 16th Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival. The Dance Festival, known in Lithuanian as “Šokių Švente,” has been a special festival in the United States and Canada and celebrated by the Lithuanian diaspora since 1957.

In that year, Chicagoan Bruno Shotas became the “founding father” and was the artistic director of the first North American Folk Dance Festival. His daughter, Nancy Shotas, former Maria High School student and two-time dance performer, remains active as a devoted patron of the festivals wherever they are held. It was through Bruno’s efforts and that of his wife, Lucille, and countless other groups that the first Folk Dance Festival held in Chicago was a rousing success.

Nine schools in the Chicago area staffed by the Sisters of St. Casimir took part in that memorable event. From those schools 793 students participated in the dances. Sister Margaret Petcavage (formerly Sister Joseph Marie) remembers to

this day helping to prepare 53 of the Lithuanian students from Immaculate Conception in Brighton Park for this first festival.

Over the years a few Sisters participated in the festivals. Sister Theresa Papis sang in two song festivals as a high school student, and later as a Sister she

sang in Lithuania’s song festival. Sister Elizabeth Ann danced in two Chicago festivals as a student.

The Congregation’s connection with Lithuanian heritage and its activities is a tribute to their foundress, Venerable Mother Maria Kaupas, as she and her Sisters, from the founding years,



*St. Andrew's church in Philadelphia filled with dance festival participants and guests.*





*After Mass four Sisters posed for a photo with distinguished guests in attendance at St. Andrew's. Front row, left: Raminta Urbonavičienė, Arvydas Urbonavičius, President of the Lithuanian American Community National Executive Committee, Irena Polikaitis, Sr. Janine Golubickis, Sr. Rita Marie Kerdock, Dalia Henke, President of the Lithuanian World Community, Juozas Polikaitis. Back row, from left: Sr. Margaret Petcavage, and Sr. Virginia Gapsis.*

endeavored to train the students and their parents to be faithful to their faith, culture, and traditions.

On Sunday morning, July 3, before the main dance event, a beautiful, prayerful Mass was held at St. Andrew's parish in North Philadelphia, a parish where Sisters staffed the school for decades. In the 1980s the former pastor, Rev. Peter Burkauskas, as a tribute to Mother Maria's holiness, had her picture painted in the dome



*St. Andrew's dome painting of Mother Maria Kaupas.*

above the altar, along with Blessed Bishop George Matulaitis, MIC. Two Lithuanian Saints!

The President of Lithuania, His Excellency Gitanas Nausėda and his wife, Diana, were present for the Mass and were warmly welcomed by the assembly. Monsignor Edmond Putrimas, from Canada, who serves as the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference Delegate for the Lithuanian Catholic Apostolate Abroad, was the



*President Gitanas Nausėda and first lady Diana Nausėdienė at St. Andrew's church.*

main celebrant, along with several other priests. After introducing the President and his wife, Monsignor said, "We have additional special visitors, the Sisters of St. Casimir, from Chicago" (Sister Janine Golubickis, Sister Margaret Petcavage, Sister Rita Marie Kerdock and Sister Virginia Gapsis). The entire church loudly applauded.

Sister Rita Marie commented, "It was an unforgettable opportunity to see the President of Lithuania and his wife at Mass sitting 4 pews in front of us. He is truly a world leader and spoke remarkably, as a NATO member, as to what he saw as his vision for Lithuania and all of Europe. It was also evident America meant a lot to him as he related that his grandfather had lived and worked in the USA for a few years before returning to Lithuania."

The 16th Folk Dance Festival, held at Temple University's Liacouras Center, was unbelievably beautiful, superbly



*Monsignor Edmond Putrimas*

*Sadly, Msgr. E. Putrimas passed away 11/15/2022.*

performed and so well enjoyed. Sister Virginia Gapsis commented, "As a second-generation Lithuanian American, I was thrilled to attend my first dance festival. Among many outstanding performances was the last, the "Malūnas" dance (the Windmill), to which the dancers enjoyably danced on and on. They didn't want the afternoon to end and neither did the audience."

Thirty-two "united" dance groups performed. They were from all over the USA, Canada and three groups from Lithuania. A total of 1,003 dancers, with their magnificent, traditional costumes filled the area with a variety of dances. What a remarkable feat! "The technology and choreography were outstanding, as everyone moved with grace, precision, and beauty. Here was professionalism at its best," commented Sister Janine.

The entire performance was woven together within a famous Lithuanian tale, called the "The King's Tale." On screen, a lovely grandmother told her grandson the story, and the performers gracefully danced it out! Exquisite! The use of brilliant technology and lighting made the entire dance festival a superb work of art.

Sister Janine remarked, "This performance was a visible testimony of President Nausėda's comment that the preservation of our faith, culture, and language, regardless of where we live, is what makes us all Lithuanians."

Kudos to the performers, but most especially to their directors and concert masters, who gave their all so that dance and song could continue to unite subsequent generations and root them into the shared Lithuanian cultural heritage, here in America and elsewhere.

The next festival will be held in Vilnius, Lithuania, in summer 2024.



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

Sister Regina Dubickas, SSC

JUNE 25, 1946 – MARCH 26, 2022



Danutė (Diane) Dubickas, the second daughter of Jonas and Veronika (Saldūnas) Dubickas, was born in Schleswig, Germany, on June 25, 1946. She was baptized in the small chapel of a refugee camp. Her younger sister, Genovaitė (Jean), was also born in Germany.

Eventually, the young Dubickas family was able to connect with a sponsor in the United States through the American Red Cross. In 1950, the sponsor arranged for their transportation to America, housing in Springfield, Illinois, and jobs for the parents. A short time later, the family moved to East St. Louis, Illinois.

The family understood that, eventually, they would be responsible for repaying the sponsor. Her mother worked cleaning the church, and her father worked for the railroad. Often, on Sunday afternoons, while her mother was busy with church duties, Danutė and her sister spent time in the parish convent watching “Lassie” on TV and reading the comics, which helped them learn English.



*Dubickas family photo from 1949.*

The family belonged to Immaculate Conception Parish, which ministered to Lithuanian immigrants in East St. Louis. It is there that Danutė made her first communion and confirmation. It is there that she tried to change her name to Diane because her teachers and other students said “Danutė” incorrectly. Her mother did not care what they called her, but she said officially her name was Danutė and that she must use it on all her papers.

Growing up, she was very involved in her parish community, the Lithuanian youth group “ateitininkai”, and her high school community at St. Teresa Academy. She was very proud of her work as editorial editor of the school’s paper as well as high school correspondent for the city newspaper.

All the while, the seeds of her vocation were being planted – through her contact with both the Franciscan Sisters in her parish and her teachers, the Sister Adorers of the Most Precious Blood, at St. Teresa Academy. In fact, she applied to enter the community of the Adorers, but, when she went to her pastor, Msgr. Deksnys, for a letter of recommendation, he asked her if she had ever considered a religious congregation of Lithuanian heritage.

He suggested that she visit the Sisters of St. Casimir in Chicago. She and her mother went to Chicago to visit the Sisters of St. Casimir. After the visit, she said to her mother, “I think I am going to come here.” And she did. The year was 1964, and on September 8 she entered the Congregation as a postulant.

After completing one year as a postulant, Danutė became a novice on August 14, 1965, receiving the name Sister Regina Marie. Then, on August 15, 1967, Sister Regina Marie made her first vows. Thus began her life of ministry and service within the Church, ministering in Illinois for 54 years. During that time, she began by serving as elementary school teacher, high school guidance counselor, formation director, and psychologist.

Sister Regina began serving as a Congregational leader when she was elected as General Counselor in 1998. She then followed as Assistant General Superior (2003-2013). She continued to serve on the Leadership Team until her death in 2022, while in her second term as General Superior (2013-2022).

*I embrace the life which  
does not die and I kiss it;  
His spirit is in me,  
and I can no longer die but live,  
Because it is a spirit of life...*

odi di salomone



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

Sister Regina was well prepared for her ministries. She received her B.A. in Theology from St. Xavier College in Chicago and completed a year of studies for formation ministry at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She also earned a Licentiate in Psychology from the Gregorian Institute in Rome, Italy, and her PsyD in Clinical Psychology from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

In all the schools where Sister Regina ministered, she is remembered as an excellent teacher and guidance counselor and a faith-filled, loving, and caring person, who helped her students to grow and become their best selves.

She taught in three elementary schools in Chicago: Immaculate Conception in Brighton Park, Nativity BVM in Chicago Lawn, and Providence of God in Pilsen. She also ministered as guidance counselor at Maria High School in Chicago, and psychologist at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago and in private practice in Westchester, Illinois.



*The SSC Leadership team (elected in 2018) from left: Sisters Margaret Zalot, Immacula Wendt, Regina Dubickas and Elizabeth Ann Yocius.*

In her role of leadership, Sister Regina had a very wide circle of people with whom she related professionally and, more importantly, personally: Holy Cross Hospital Board of Directors, HCH Catholic Monitoring Committee, Maria High School Board of Directors, Maria Kaupas Center Board of Directors, Southwest Organizing Project, Illinois Catholic Health Association, Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Villa Joseph Marie Board of Directors, Cluster of Parishes on the Southwest Side of Chicago (Deanery V-A), and the Mother Maria Kaupas Center in Mount Carmel, Pennsylvania.

In addition to these organizations, Sister Regina had wonderful relationships with many Sisters from other Congregations, especially the IHM Sisters in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius, from Danville, Pennsylvania.

In 2017, Sister Regina celebrated her 50th anniversary as a Sister of St. Casimir. In her reflection on that occasion, she wrote: "It has been a wonderful journey, and I

am grateful for all that God has done for me and through me for the good of others...I am grateful to all who have been part of my life and from whom I have learned so much and been inspired by their commitment and love for their sisters and brothers and their desire to make a difference in our world."

The words on Sister Regina's jubilee remembrance card sum it all up: from Ephesians 3:20, "Glory to God whose power at work in us can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine."

Little did Sister Regina know what God would be asking of her. She had first been diagnosed with breast cancer in 2016. She had surgery and was treated with radiation and chemotherapy. And all was well. But not really.

She was diagnosed with stage 4 metastatic breast cancer in the fall of 2018. She was treated with various chemotherapies and radiation, but the cancer still grew and spread – to her bones, to her skin. Her journey became different. Sister Regina gave several of us a quote to ponder: "We're all just walking each other home." - Rumi

### *Excerpts from Sister Regina's letters –to family, sisters, associates, faithful friends.*

#### **March 4, 2022**

*I have learned much about what illness can teach us; I have experienced love and sacrifice on the part of caregivers and have thanked God for every day as it is a gift. I am grateful to each of you for your prayers, your understanding, your love. We continue the journey together for a great love! There is always hope! Miracles still happen and they are happening all the time, maybe not in the way we wanted or thought, but in the way God gives.*

#### **March 18, 2022**

*I ask you to continue to keep me in your prayers and want you to know that I continue to pray for each of you. I love you and truly feel that "we're all walking each other home." (Rumi)*

*Thank you for being with me on my journey.*

*Regina*

The outpouring of love and support that has come after Sister Regina's death has been overwhelming and speaks so much of Sister Regina's faith in God and deep love for others – on all the people she connected with wherever she was until her dying day. She often mentioned that a cloud of witnesses was surrounding her with their love and their prayers. That was so true.

Sister Regina, you have finally arrived home. May God be praised and thanked for the gift and blessing you have been to so many! We have been blessed to have been able to walk with you on your way home.



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

Sister Marilyn Kuzmickus, SSC

JULY 15, 1938 - APRIL 30, 2022



Nita Kuzmickus was born on July 15, 1938, to Anton “Curly” and Helen Kuzmickus in Waukegan, Illinois. The oldest of three daughters, she attended St. Bartholomew Grade School in Waukegan. Nita grew up in a family where faith and love flourished.

After graduating from 8th grade, she left home to become an aspirant with the Sisters of St. Casimir and to attend Maria High School in Chicago, which opened its doors September 8, 1952. On February 2, 1955, Nita became a postulant. She graduated from Maria in 1955, having taken classes during the summer to complete her high school course work in three years.

On August 15, 1955, Nita was received into the Novitiate and was given the name Sister Marilyn. On August 15, 1957, she made her profession of temporary vows, and on August 15, 1962, she made her final profession as a Sister of St. Casimir in Chicago. Sister Marilyn had begun her 50 years of ministry in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Sister Marilyn ministered for her first 11 years as an elementary school teacher in grades 4 through 8 in Chicago at St. George School (Bridgeport, 1957-59), Immaculate Conception School (Brighton Park, 1959-66), Sts. Peter and Paul School (West Pullman, 1966-67), and Providence of God School (Pilsen, 1967-68). She also taught religion from 1977 to 1978 at Maria High School. During the summers of the early years, Sister Marilyn was able to complete her B.A. in Education in 1964 from Marywood College in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

In 1968, Sister Marilyn was asked to study at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where she received her M.A. in Spirituality in 1971 in preparation to become Formation Directress for the new members of the community – postulants, novices, and temporary professed sisters. She served the community as Formation Directress from 1971-1978. Sister Marilyn also became a member of the Religious Formation Conference in the Illinois region, serving as chairperson in Illinois, and she was a member of the National Board.

Sister Marilyn was also an instructor in the inter-community novitiate program and was often called upon to be a guest speaker for various religious communities. The groups of those entering were smaller than in the past, so Sister Marilyn worked with nearby communities so

that the novices and temporary professed had larger groups with whom to interact. She maintained contact with some of the Directresses of the other communities throughout her life, including the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago and School Sisters of St. Francis of Christ the King in Lemont, IL.



*General Council 1988-1993. From left, front row: Sr. Immacula Wendt, Sr. Margaret Petcavage, Sr. Marilyn Kuzmickus, Sr. Agnesine Dering. Back row, from left: Sr. Margaret Zalot, Sr. Mary DeSales Sokol, and Sr. Teresita Miksas.*

In 1978, Sister Marilyn was elected as Assistant General Superior, a position she held for ten years. During these years, Sister Marilyn coordinated the process of revising the Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Casimir as called for by Vatican II.

Shortly after Sister Marilyn became Assistant General Superior, Sister M. Joanela Fayert, General Superior at the time, asked Sister Marilyn to begin working on the beatification Cause of Mother Maria. With much research and numerous interviews with people who knew the foundress, she and Sister M. Agnesine Dering became the co-editors of the book, “The Founding of the Sisters of St. Casimir,” Mother Maria’s account of the Congregation’s founding.

Sister Marilyn shared her new insights on Mother Maria with the Congregation in her *Light and Life* Institute as well as *Light and Life* publications. While focusing on the Cause of Mother Maria, she directed that emphasis be placed on Mother Maria’s distinctive spirituality as a means to deepen the Sisters’ life of prayer, community, and service.

Eventually, Sister Marilyn became the postulator of the beatification Cause of Mother Maria until she was elected General Superior in 1988, an office which she held until 1998.



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

Sister Marilyn's years in leadership were very challenging and changing times. The uncertainty and instability of these times required a depth of spirituality, a capacity for discernment, and a new vision, and Sister Marilyn brought these attributes to the Congregation. She represented the Congregation well in professional circles and was respected by many.

Throughout her leadership roles, Sister Marilyn was an active member of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). She participated in annual assemblies and made connections: with other communities with Lithuanian roots, (Pittsburgh Franciscans; Sisters of Jesus Crucified, Brockton, Massachusetts; and the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Putnam, Connecticut). These communities would meet annually. Additionally, when she was at LCWR Assemblies, she made it a point to connect with the IHM Sisters from Scranton who were there.

Sister Marilyn was also a member of the Women Religious Executive Committee, initiated by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin to begin the process of dialogue among women religious in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Sister Marilyn loved her family. She enjoyed spending time with them and having them visit her. She enjoyed seeing her sisters' children and grandchildren grow. One of her nephews, John Heintz, lived in California, and she often

wrote to him. This was one way she could stay connected.

Sister Marilyn loved celebrations and most of her milestones in her religious life were just that: On August 15, 1957, her first profession day, Samuel Cardinal Stritch was the celebrant for the Mass because it was also the Golden Jubilee of the Congregation. In 1982, her silver jubilee coincided with the 75th anniversary of the Sisters of St. Casimir – with a special homecoming with speakers focusing on the spirit and charism of Mother Maria Kaupas. And in 2007, Sister Marilyn celebrated her golden jubilee as the Congregation celebrated its Centennial.

Her care for the mission and ministry of the Congregation was evident throughout her life. She had a deep faith in our God, which enabled her to continue when life became difficult. Her gentle, understanding ways helped her to look compassionately and with love upon all she met.

Sister Marilyn loved life. Her warm smile and sense of humor captivated those she met within the community, her family, and so many others.

In 2014, Sister Marilyn moved to Franciscan Village in Lemont, Illinois, where she shared her prayer and presence with our Sisters there as well as the residents and caregivers. Eventually, as her health needs became greater, Sister Marilyn moved to Mother Theresa Home, where she could get the additional care that she needed. On the morning of April 30, 2022, God called her home.



*Sister Marilyn Kuzmickus, General Superior, of the Sisters of St. Casimir, (seated, far right) and her Leadership team, from left: Sr. Agnesine Dering, Sr. Teresita Miksas, Sr. Margaret Zalot, Sr. Immacula Wendt, Sr. Mary DeSales, and Sr. Margaret Petcavage (Postulator for the Canonization/Beatification Cause), met with Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, on June 1, 1994, at the Chicago Archdiocesan Pastoral Center. They presented the materials that the Historical Commission had completed for the Beatification Cause of Mother Maria Kaupas. These materials told her life story and were the foundation for Mother Maria being named "Venerable." Cardinal Bernardin had signed the papers and sent them by special envoy to the "Congregation of Saints" in Rome. Rev. John Kuzinskis, (seated left) the first Postulator for the Cause, was also a member of the Historical Commission along with Sr. Agnesine (far left) and Sr. Margaret Petcavage, (far right). Additional Members of the Commission, not shown, were Bishop Jerome Listewski, Rev. Conrad Borntrager, OSM, Rev. August Belauskas, and Rev. Augustine Kulbis, OSM.*



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

Sister Wanda Marie Kamza, SSC

AUGUST 11, 1935 - AUGUST 1, 2022



Wanda Marie Kamza was born August 11, 1935, to John and Marie Petrauskas Kamza in Gary, Indiana. Wanda was the third of four children, all of whom belonged to St. Casimir's Parish and attended St. Casimir School. These included her two older brothers, John and Ronald, and her younger sister, Dolores. The family was actively involved in the parish, especially Wanda, who

helped the Sisters of St. Casimir with church work, even taking over for them when they were not there in the summer.

Wanda entered the community in August of 1952 as a postulant. Shortly after she entered, Janine Golubickis from Gary entered as an aspirant. That completed the group of "Gary girls" to enter and become Sisters of St. Casimir with a life-long bond to each other. The oldest of the group, Sister M. Deotilla, wrote a warm letter of welcome to Wanda when she entered the community. The others from Gary included Sisters Agnita Sabokas, Irene Rukas, Rosalinda Grigonis, Evelyn Vichoras, and Damien Margis.

Wanda, who became Sister M. Stephen, made first vows in 1955. Soon afterwards, she began her life of Ministry and Service within the church, which took her to four states: Illinois, Florida, Ohio, and Michigan. In 1960, having completed 5 years as a primary grade teacher at St. George's in Bridgeport, she made her perpetual vows. Later in her life she would have the joy of celebrating her Silver Jubilee in 1980, Golden Jubilee in 2005, and 60th Diamond Jubilee in 2015.

She was well prepared for her ministries in education, having received her B.S. in Education from Marywood College in Scranton, PA. In all the schools where Sister Wanda Marie taught, she is remembered as an excellent teacher and a wonderful person who helped her students to learn well.

She was a very loved teacher in the places wherever she taught. In 1961 while she was at St. Peter and Paul in Rockford, Illinois, Sister Wanda won an award titled, "The Teacher who Helped the Most."

We have received beautiful tributes attesting to how she contributed to the life of the school community as well as the parish community. St. Norbert School and parish is such an example.



*Sister Wanda Marie pictured with one of her classes.*

One colleague, Annemarie Rand wrote:

*Sister Wanda was my grade level partner when I first started to teach at St. Norbert School in 1990. We both taught 4th grade. I don't know what I would have done without her help and guidance. She was truly a gift from God. In the following years, when I moved up to the 6th grade homeroom and teaching Jr. High Science (a job I still hold at St. Norbert School today), we used to good naturedly tease each other. I would sneak into her classroom and move her stapler a quarter of an inch on her desk to see if she would notice. She always did! We'd burst into laughter.*

*She and Sr. Mary Grace taught me how to direct the students in Living Stations of the Cross. When they both left the school, they passed everything on to me, and I continue to direct it for the school the way they taught me with one exception: Sr. Wanda used to bang two aluminum pans together to make the sound effect of a storm at the station when Jesus dies. Since then, the church organ has the capacity to make a good storm sound.*

*Oh, the memories are flooding back! Students used to try to run down the hallway, but once they got to Sr. Wanda's door, they would stop and walk past. Once clear, they would run the rest of the way. We called that the "Sister Wanda speed bump." Students also knew that they better have their shoelaces tied when she was around! Oh, she was delightful and such a fun person. I loved her very much. I will never forget what Sr. Wanda taught me in my first years of teaching at St. Norbert.*

Annemarie put the announcement of Sister Wanda's death on her Facebook page and the following are some of the comments which surfaced:



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*Sister Wanda was a great person, friend, and was hysterical.  
Sister Wanda was a great teacher for my kids.  
It's so hard to lose someone who has made an indelible mark  
on one's life.  
Sister Wanda was a wonderful teacher, mentor, and friend.  
And perfect penmanship—the best penmanship of anyone  
I ever met.*

*I remember crying when I found out she would be my 4th grade teacher because she was "mean and scary." And I'll be honest, she was a little scary at times! But only because she expected a lot of her students. She knew our potential and wanted us to reach it. As the years went on, I got to know her sweet side. She did things like deliver a loaf of her homemade zucchini bread at lunch when I could not make it to the Christmas bazaar to buy some just because she knew it was my favorite. She was an amazing person who will be missed so much. And I know she was welcomed today with a hug by Sister Mary Grace.*

*Yes!! She was just the sweetest, but she did have high expectations and that is one of the things that made her so great. She and Sister Mary Grace taught me so much about what it means to teach in a Catholic School. Every year I draw from what they taught me. I love them both so much and hope they are having a wonderful reunion.*

*I remember Sister Wanda and think of Sister Mary Grace. In my mind they were a duo.*

*The dynamic duo. Watch out, God. You have them both. Put them to good use. They are back together.*

Anything taking place in the parish, Sister Wanda was there – the Christmas Bazaar, the Whale of a Sale (huge flea market) – she would bring homemade bread from the Motherhouse to sell, she would bring some of what was left to the Motherhouse to use for Summerfest. After the event was over, she would help pack up the clothes and kitchen items for new mothers, people in need. Sister Wanda and Sister Mary Grace were indeed a dynamic duo.

On the occasion of Sister Wanda's Diamond Jubilee in the community, Sister Regina Marie Dubickas shared the following:

*In Sister Wanda's reflection at the time of her Golden Jubilee, as she thought about her ministry of teaching for 46 years, she said the most rewarding experience was to be able to prepare the children for the sacraments. For several years Sister Wanda worked in our Food Pantry with our Sister DeSales. Through Sister Wanda's efforts, the people of St. Norbert's embraced our Food Pantry and our community through their generous donations.*

Not only in the classroom, but also in the convent, Sister Wanda was a very caring and faithful companion and homemaker in the truest sense of the word, to a number of Sisters with whom she lived. Sister Mary Grace Winslow was a recipient of Sister Wanda's love and care. Sister Kathleen Smith, with whom Sister Wanda lived in Michigan for 10 years, was also grateful for the many ways Sister Wanda cared for her. Sister Regina even said: "How wonderful it would be for everyone to have a Sister Wanda in their life." In a very kind and unassuming way, Sister Wanda offered assistance wherever it was needed, helping to make the place truly a home and welcoming those who came to visit.

We are grateful to God for Sister Wanda and the many talents God gave her. May she now enjoy the fullness of life and peace in God's presence forever.



*Sister Rita Marie Kerdock (left) and Sister Wanda selling treasures at the SSC Auxiliary Bingo.*



*Eternal rest grant unto them,  
O Lord, and let Your perpetual light  
shine upon them.  
May their souls and the souls  
of all the faithful departed  
rest in peace.  
Amen*



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We invite you to visit the Legacy Room of the  
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located in the St. Casimir Center  
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Please email [dcyvas@ssc2601.com](mailto:dcyvas@ssc2601.com)  
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