



# Journeys

SISTERS OF ST. CASIMIR

Vol. XXXVIII No. 2  
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## Rooted in Love – Grown in Grace Transfer of SSC Governance Blessings and Memories



*Sisters of St. Casimir celebrate the transfer of Congregational Leadership. From left: Sr. Ellen Maroney, IHM, Congregational Leader, Sr. Immacula Wendt, SSC, Advisor, Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius, SSC, Advisor, Sr. Bernadette Marie Janus, Sr. Deborah Romanuski, and Sr. Nancy Streitmatter*

### *Sister Ellen Maroney, IHM Rooted in Love – Grown in Grace*

These words beautifully embody the blessed relationship that exists between the Sisters of St. Casimir and the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, for the past 117 years and was evident throughout the transfer of the SSC governance

celebrations on August 29<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. These ceremonies marked the next steps in the deepening special bond of love the two communities share.

It was wonderful to experience the outpouring of thanksgiving and friendship for the Sisters of St. Casimir from so many people who have shared mission and ministry

with them. The spirit of love and gratitude was overwhelming! The presence of so many Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was profoundly moving because of the significance of this next step in our shared journey. Almost 50 IHM Sisters, traveling by plane, bus, and car, were present for this extraordinary

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# Walking Together – Embracing the Transfer

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***Sr. Immacula Wendt, SSC  
and Sr. Ellen Maroney, IHM***

and deeply moving moment in our congregations' shared history.

Words cannot adequately describe the emotions of the day: awe, gratitude, joy, respect, love, compassion, pride. Perhaps the most poignant parts of the two ceremonies were the recessions when SSC and IHM Sisters walked side by side holding hands – a visual statement of this exceptional moment.

This special relationship between the Sisters of St. Casimir and the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is rooted in a friendship born at the founding of the SSC Congregation in Scranton in 1907 when now Venerable Servant of God Mother Maria Kaupas and two companions received their religious formation under the watchful eye of Mother Cyril Conway, IHM, and other IHM Sisters at the Scranton Motherhouse. The IHMs were the first general superiors, formation directors, and educators for the SSC Sisters until Mother Maria was elected as the first SSC General Superior in 1913. The bond of friendship between Mother Maria and Mother Cyril continued to grow and deepen even after Mother Maria moved to Chicago, and it became the basis of the heart and soul connection between our two congregations. Meetings, celebrations, and trips to Lithuania over the years were shared opportunities to strengthen our friendship and trust.



***Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary join hands with the Sisters of St. Casimir  
at the conclusion of Mass at St. Casimir Center (Motherhouse) Chapel.***



***Sr. Kathryn Clauss, IHM (at left) and Sr. Immacula Wendt side by side  
at the conclusion of Mass at Franciscan Village Chapel.***



# Walking Together – Embracing the Transfer



In 2010, the IHMs unanimously agreed to a request from the SSCs to form a *Covenant relationship* with them in which both communities sought ways to collaborate in order that each be able to fulfill its mission and founders' vision into the future.

In 2018, the formal *Covenant agreement* and plan was officially accepted by both congregations. During these years and even to the present day, the roads and skies between Chicago and Scranton have been busily traveled by SSCs and IHMs as we continue to build on the foundation of Mother Maria's and Mother Cyril's special bond in envisioning the shared future.

The transfer of governance is the next step in this SSC-IHM journey so carefully and wisely prepared for by the Sisters of St. Casimir. As they made many difficult decisions of "letting go" over the last decades, they have been steadfast in their commitment to remain Sisters of St. Casimir rather than merge or transfer to another congregation.

This decision is upheld in the *Covenant agreement* which directs the IHMs regarding their oversight for the future care of SSCs and for the governance of the business of the congregation. The appointment by Rome of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, PA, as *Commissary and*



*Sisters gather for a Leadership Team photo at Franciscan Village after Mass. Sitting from left: Sr. Ellen Maroney, IHM, Commissary Delegate/Congregational Leader, Sr. Kathryn Clauss, Pontifical Commissary, President, Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Standing from left: Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius, SSC, Advisor, and Sr. Immacula Wendt, SSC, Advisor.*



*The SSC Leadership Team from left: Sr. Immacula Wendt, Sr. Ellen Maroney and Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius embrace with Sr. Kathryn Clauss after the commitment entrusted to them to serve the Sisters of St. Casimir.*

*Delegate* ensures that the wishes of the SSCs will be honored to the end because of the profound relationship.

This transfer of governance is an act of trust and love encircled in a sacred friendship inspired by the Spirit:

***Rooted in Love – Grown in Grace.***

We have grown together – the SSCs always thank the IHMs for

agreeing to walk with them on this journey, and we IHMs are so grateful for showing us and so many others how to travel into the future.

We trust God's presence with us as we together follow the lead of the Spirit.

*Always more,  
always better,  
always with love*



# Blessings and Memories



*Sisters of St. Casimir and Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary celebrate the transfer of Congregational Leadership.*

*Sister Kathryn Clauss, IHM, PhD, Pontifical Commissary, President, Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*

It has been just two weeks since we gathered to honor the founding of the SSC Congregation and to mark the transfer of governance to the Pontifical Commissary. That day was profoundly meaningful as we celebrated our sacred history and stood together, trusting in our shared future. As I reflect on the significance of August 29<sup>th</sup>, I remain deeply moved by the courage of the Sisters of St. Casimir who were willing to be led by God into an unknown future – one that challenged them to ask questions of deep significance about their lives together and their future.

Now, we see that this unknown future held a grace-filled opportunity for both the Sisters of St. Casimir and the

IHM Sisters to continue walking with one another as they step into their shared future. This journey will be shaped by our Covenant and strengthened through a new relationship fostered by the Commissary, the Delegate, and the Leadership Team.

As we step into the next chapter of our shared future, I trust that God will continue to guide us. As poet Mary Oliver so beautifully reminds us, we must "keep some room in our hearts for the unimaginable." It is in that sacred openness that we will deepen our appreciation for our shared past and remain attentive to the unfolding path ahead. Moving forward, we will strive to live by the words of Mother Maria Kaupas: *"Always more, always better, always with love."*



*Sisters of St. Casimir and Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Leadership Teams. Seated, from left: Sr. Ellen Maroney, IHM, Sr. Kathryn Clauss, IHM. Standing from left: Sr. Grace Surdovel, IHM, Sr. Judy O'Brien, IHM, Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius, SSC, Sr. Suzie Armbruster, IHM, Sr. Terri Jordan, IHM, and Sr. Immacula Wendt, SSC.*



## Blessings and Memories



*Crossbearer Dennis Ryan and candlebearers Loretta Ezerski and Ginger Madden (SSC Associates) at Franciscan Village Chapel.*



*Sr. Kathryn Clauss, IHM, blesses Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius, SSC.*

I have had over two decades of involvement with the Sisters of St. Casimir and have witnessed many examples of their commitment, industriousness, generosity, humility, and kindness.

The transfer ceremonies demonstrated that the Sisters are part of an expansive group of women who have had the courage to face real challenges, willingness to work through new options, and the grace to open new paths for the future that will be helpful to further an enduring mission of faith.

The Sisters of St. Casimir are examples of how many of us might approach life challenges.

*Dennis Ryan, special friend of the SSCs and Vice President, Mission Effectiveness and External Affairs at Holy Cross/Sinai Chicago Hospital*

I do not know why I continue to be surprised and awed by the faithful – no, joyful – acceptance with which the Sisters of St. Casimir acknowledge and then execute the changes they have had to confront over the past several years. I have witnessed it several times: the transition of Maria High School to Catalyst Maria charter school; the moving of the Sisters to Franciscan Village; the selling of the Motherhouse; the closing of the Maria Kaupas Center (MKC) in Chicago, and finally, the appointment of a Commissary.

Time and time again, the Sisters have been grace personified as they skillfully navigated what (to me) must have been sad and distressing times.

But these are women of strength, foresight, and most importantly, faith. Considering my friends – the Sisters of St. Casimir – and their approach to life, I am struck by the concept of Kairos, which is known as God's time, and is concerned more with quality than with quantity.

Perhaps their equanimity in the face of such extreme change stems from their faith that they have served God and executed their mission with passion, dedication, and most of all, love for all these years. The quality of their service is more important than the quantity, and over 117 years, it has sown seeds that will reap benefits for generations to come.

Initially, I thought that the Commissary event would be sad. But instead, it was a glorious celebration of a grateful community that has always embraced and trusted God's plan. Thank you, dear Sisters, for once again providing an example of how to face the torturous twists and turns of life with confidence and gratitude. I hope I can finally learn the lesson you have so fully mastered.

*Cheryl Tolish, special friend and volunteer*



## Celebrating a New Chapter

*Excerpts from Sister Immacula's welcoming remarks at St. Casimir Chapel (Motherhouse)*

What a joy to have you with us and we thank you for coming to praise God with us, as we, the Sisters of St. Casimir, filled with hope, trust, and peace, celebrate a new chapter in the life of the Congregation.

On Thursday, August 29<sup>th</sup> being approved by the Dicastery of Consecrated Life in Rome, the governance of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Casimir was officially transferred to the Pontifical Commissary, Sister Kathryn Clauss, IHM, President, and her successors. Sister Ellen Maroney, IHM, being nominated and approved, then accepted her appointment as Delegate for the Commissary to serve as the Congregational Leader for the Sisters of St. Casimir.

Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius, SSC and Sister Immacula Wendt, SSC, recommended by our Sisters, accepted the call to serve on the Leadership Team as Advisors to Sister Ellen. Together we promised to serve the Church and the Sisters of St. Casimir according to our SSC Constitutions.

We cannot help but feel so



*Sisters Immacula, Ellen and Elizabeth Ann share smiles after the blessing of the new Sisters of St. Casimir Leadership Team.*

blessed, as once again, our IHM Sisters are faithfully and lovingly committed to support and accompany us on this important and historic journey.

### ***Rooted in Love – Grown in Grace***

For the past 117 years, we, the Sisters of St. Casimir, have been faithful to our call to follow Jesus and to share in His mission by bringing an awareness of God's presence and love into the lives we have touched.

Each one of us, the 24 members of the Congregation, have professed our vows, and have faithfully lived our lives in service to God and the Church. Strengthened by our life

of prayer and supported by our Sisters in community, we have journeyed toward a gospel vision of a peaceful, loving, and just world.

Today, we remain Sisters of St. Casimir. Today, we, the Sisters of St. Casimir, unwaveringly and confidently filled with faith and joy, courage, peace, and trust in the Lord, will continue to be open to the challenges of our times as we live our lives responding to the Spirit with generous hearts.

The Lord has given us so many blessings. It is in this spirit that we 24 SSCs, individually and congregationally, recognize, accept, rejoice, and surrender wholeheartedly to God's continued loving presence in our lives. It is with one heart and one mind, that we, her Sisters, live Mother Maria's words: "God loves us and nothing happens to us without His knowledge. Persevere in His love."

Today, we praise and glorify our God. And today we have gathered to celebrate. It is with gratitude and joy that we are so delighted you are here, continuing to share your lives with us.

It gives me great pleasure to recognize 20 Sisters of St. Casimir and 50 IHM Sisters who are here.



*Sister Immacula surrounded by her family.*



## Celebrating a New Chapter

*Excerpts from Father Tony Pizzo's homily at St. Casimir Chapel.*

In the past century, the narratives are countless...

The joy, hope, the sadness, and challenges are what make up the 117 years of faithfulness.

Your commitment to stand as witnesses in our Southside of Chicago neighborhood working alongside local residents and leaders to address the social issues and the needs of our neighbors exemplifies your dedication to the SSC ministry.

Love of God and love of neighbor creates an institution of minds and hearts whereby the Gospel message becomes flesh and blood... the power of Christ is alive and well, transforming lives and giving hope.

Your joy and hope from this moment on remains contagious for all of us who have journeyed with you, not only this current generation, but also the previous generations.

To the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we are grateful to you for accompanying the Sisters of St. Casimir from this moment on, as they journey toward their future with grateful hearts rooted in love and continuing to grow in grace!

*St. Casimir, pray for us!*

*Mother Maria Kaupas, pray for us!*



*Fr. Tony Pizzo, OSA leads the blessing of the new Sisters of St. Casimir Leadership Team.*



*Sr. Rachel Terry, IHM conducts musicians Leanne Stoterau Hahn, organist; James Hahn, trumpeter; and Anna Belle O'Shea, flutist.*



*From left: Fr. Tom Kasputis, Fr. Jason Malave, Fr. Tony Markus, Fr. Tony Pizzo, OSA, Fr. Paul Whittington, OP, Fr. Tom McCarthy, OSA and Bishop Daniel Turley, OSA.*



## Blessings and Memories



*Blessings and prayers for the Leadership Team.*

It has been an honor and a privilege to have worked for and with the Sisters of St. Casimir. I came to the Sisters with a broken spirit. I left many years later with a full and grateful heart. My time at the Motherhouse and the continued relationships and friendships that have been made are such a blessing!

As do many, I have a long history with the Sisters of St. Casimir. They taught my mom at Nativity BVM and St. Casimir Academy. And later, they taught my brothers and sisters at Nativity BVM as well. The three girls graduated from Maria High School. I feel that I've known the Sisters for a long time. Yet it wasn't until I got to know them in a more mature way that I came to appreciate their faith, sense of service, and joyful spirit.

I have admired the forethought and planning that went into the decision to form a covenant with the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Scranton. Many years of prayer and discussions culminated with a Commissary being named and a celebration planned. I expected this to be rather bittersweet. Instead I was caught up in the Sisters' joy.

Yes, another new chapter for the Sisters of St. Casimir has begun! As the Sisters say, "God is good."

*Paula Staisiunas Schultz*



*Blessing Sr. Kathryn Clauss, IHM.*



*Grinny Walton and Sr. Theresa Dabulis at the offertory.*

I felt deeply honored, blessed, and grateful to have participated in and to have witnessed this joyous occasion! Besides the unity that was present, I felt God's love embracing us all! Calling us all to the fullness of relationship with God and with each other!

May God continue to bless the SSCs and IHMs.  
*Tony Ferro, (SSC Administrative Assistant)*

What a beautiful and touching experience to share with the Sisters. One of the most touching memories for me was when Sister Immacula and Sister Katie were head to head during the blessing at the August 29<sup>th</sup> Mass.  
*Grinny Walton (SSC Associate)*



## Blessings and Memories

“We showed up for Jesus” was the cry of over 50,000 people who attended the 10<sup>th</sup> Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis this summer. This very same response echoed within the hearts of the Sisters of St. Casimir the past 117 years and over 179 years from the Scranton Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Congregation. It was this IHM Congregation who lovingly trained our foundress, Mother Maria Kaupas and her two companions, in 1907 for religious life.

In that year the courageous young Casimira took on the call to found a Congregation and dedicated her life to helping the Lithuanian immigrants and thousands of others throughout the United States, Lithuania and Argentina through education and health care.

Through steadfast prayer it was the wisdom of the remaining SSC Sisters, to follow the directives of Rome to seek another Congregation's assistance for governance. Who else to ask but our founding friends, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Scranton.

Their acceptance culminated in two glorious August Masses, blessing and strengthening the Sisterly bonds, as Sister Kathryn Clauss, IHM, Sister Ellen Maroney, IHM, and SSC Sisters Immacula and Elizabeth Ann promised to continue as the SSC Leadership Team. The days were an “awesome and moving event” exclaimed so many Sisters of St. Casimir and IHM Sisters who traveled to be present. In essence it was a joyous and fun-filled sisterly celebration.

Various communities of Sisters invited for the Masses and banquet congratulated the Sisters of St. Casimir for being “forerunners” in this move.

Faithfully, the Sisters of St. Casimir pray daily for all who continue to “Show up for Jesus” since “We’re all just walking each other home.” (Rumi)

*Sister Margaret Petcavage, SSC*

What a special moment this is! Our hearts overflow with awe, peace, and wonder, and we can't help but lift our voices in praise: *Glory be to you, our God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Today is truly a day for us to rejoice and be glad! Thanks be to God!*

The August 31<sup>st</sup> Mass was very moving. I felt the power of the vision, of the love, and of the wisdom of the Sisters of St. Casimir, both those present and those no longer with us. So many years of preparation to seed the future of their mission and legacy. So much grace! I saw many with tears as the Mass ended. I also saw joy at the sealing of the new covenant with the IHM Sisters, and at the opportunity to be present to such a powerful moment.

*Jeff Bartow, Executive Director  
Southwest Organizing Project*

We watched the ceremony and Mass livestream and imagined ourselves there. Once again, the Sisters prepared every detail with such care. Tears came when the Leadership Team embraced with such trust and affection. The applause reminded us of the perpetual acclaim at the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event. The sound echoed the gratitude and deep love your friends and associates feel for you. We hope this means a lessening of work for you in leadership, but probably not, just a variation on the theme. Beautifully done!

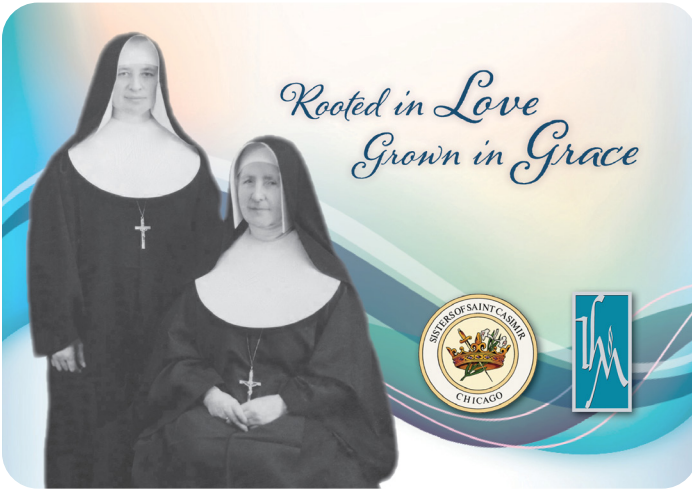
*Jean and Jack Zilliox (sister and brother-in-law of  
Sr. Regina Marie Dubickas)*



*Applauding the new Leadership Team.*



## Celebration of Sisterhood



The liturgical celebrations of the SSC Transfer of Congregational Leadership were visible signs of the Spirit living in our midst. The fruits of the Holy Spirit – love, joy, hope, gratitude, respect... shone through. Unity and oneness were obvious. Together we are all one Church – religious communities of professed women and men, laity, deacons, priests, and bishops. Truly, the Holy Spirit stirred the hearts and lives of all those present.

*Sister Marilyn Karpovich, SSC*



I firmly believe that our journey is of God – what the future holds, we can only imagine. But when we journey together – we will get there – wherever God wants us to be. We are all blessed and graced.

*Sister Donna Korba, IHM*



The liturgies for the Transference of Governance of the SSC congregation were awesome and so moving. I was so touched after the transfer of governance ceremony as the SSCs went to greet Sisters Kathryn, Ellen, Immacula and Elizabeth Ann to offer our love and support. At the end of Mass our IHM Sisters escorted each of the SSC Sisters out of the chapel.

*Sister Rita Marie Kerdock, SSC*

This was a historical event made memorable with so many of our IHM Sisters in attendance. It's difficult to describe the emotions of love, joy, and peace that were felt as the governance commemorative words were repeated and accepted by the SSC and IHM Leadership.

My most memorable moment that touched my heart was when Sister Kathryn Clauss accepted the appointment as the SSC Pontifical Commissary and the transfer of the SSC Governance had a new beginning.

And so, just as Mother Maria set out on an unknown road 117 years ago we joyfully begin our new journey with our IHM Sisters accompanying us.

*Sister Virginia Gapsis, SSC*

The blessed event on August 29<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> brought together so many of our Sisters, family, friends, associates and others sharing our ministries both in person and livestream, that it was unbelievable and a real testimony of how we have lived, ministered, and touched lives since our foundation in Scranton with the IHMs and the promise of support, as we move forward with each other and with the IHMs as companions. May God be praised!

*Sister Margaret Zalot, SSC*



## Celebration of Sisterhood

The connection with the IHMs is a Grace of God. After more than 100 years we come back to the same roots. God teaches us that the road should continue and we unite with the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton to continue the mission.

"Always more, always better, always with love"

*Sister Asuncion Costantini, SSC (Argentina)*



Journeying together – working together is what the Commissary means for me. We are a small group but we are together. We help each other and we are missionaries.

*Sister Estela Risso, SSC (Argentina)*

As we come into a new stage as Sisters of St. Casimir with a Congregational Leader who is not a Sister of St. Casimir, my mind goes back to those early years when our first General Superior was a Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The IHMs held our hands when we began to walk and we are grateful that they will do the same for us now.

*Sister Joyce Ann Dopkin, SSC (Argentina)*



The ceremony and experience of the transfer of governance with the SSCs and IHMs had bittersweet overtones. The realization of change and loss along with the recognition of new life and hope was truly moving.

Over the years in the depths of our hearts and the roots of our souls the relationship of our two congregations has forged us truly as Sisters. As Sisters united we have become an expression of God's deep desire that all may be one. I loved the experience and rejoice to have been part of this beautiful moment in our evolving history.

*Sister Eleanor Mary Marconi, IHM*



## Celebration of Sisterhood



*Sr. Margaret Zalot guides the IHM Sisters through the Legacy Room.*



A testimony of God's goodness and faith was what I witnessed! I participated in the celebration of the Eucharist through a livestream and watched with excitement from Lithuania! The beautiful words, scripture readings, hymns, prayers, and blessings deeply touched me. From the hymn: *Walk with Us*

by Jan Novotka

"As companions we feel blest,  
for your heart of love lives in us.

Blest are we who receive from your heart!"

*Sister Ramute Budvytyte, SSC (Lithuania)*

The planning for our days together was designed to welcome our Sisters from Scranton, and provided opportunities to laugh, talk, pray, and celebrate our histories. The IHM Sisters arrived from the long trip by planes, bus, and automobiles to the very moving and meaningful gatherings for the celebration of our new way of governance with the installation of our Commissary. We are standing side by side with our Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The friendship and support was visible and touching.

Truly we were united as were our foundresses, Mother Maria Kaupas and Mother Cyril Conway, as they began the community so many years ago. The gifts we received from the IHMs with the quote from Rumi were particularly meaningful, for, as we all remember, Sister Regina Marie Dubickas loved that quote. She had it on her door, and used the words, and showed us how to walk home with deep trust, peace, and love.

How thoughtful and caring of the IHMs to give each one of us a plaque as a gift. The calligraphy done by Sister Cor Immaculatum, IHM, and the photo taken by Sister Jan Marie Kalyan, IHM, highlight the words reminding us of Sister Regina's love for all of us.

Thank you, to all who made this eventful gathering possible, and the greatest of thanks for the beautiful memories, love, and support that accompany us into our future.

*Sister Theresa Dabulis, SSC*



The bonds we all share as women and men religious were on full display. How blessed we are!

*Sister Dolores Clerico, SSJ*



# Celebration of Sisterhood





## Celebration of Sisterhood



*Mary Smithson, Villa Joseph Marie Board Chair, Sr. Elizabeth Ann, Jeanne Frawley, President of VJM, and Sr. Immacula*



*From left: Sr. Margaret Zalot, Sr. Deborah Romanuski, Sr. Asuncion Costantini, Sr. Estela Risso, Maria Sandoval (Associate), Sr. Virginia Gapsis, Sr. Rita Marie Kerdock, and Sr. Giovana Fuentes Bendivez, IHM*





## Celebration of Sisterhood



*Sisters of St. Casimir, Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Associates and friends gather in the St. Casimir Chapel*



*2024 Sisters of St. Casimir group photo*

*Front row, from left: Sr. Mary Louise Andrulonis, Sr. Margaret Zalot, Sr. Lawrence Puishys, Sr. Leandra Yerkes, Sr. Elenisa Buzas, Sr. Dolorine Lopez, Sr. Juline Revas, Sr. Bernadette Marie Janus, Sr. Margaret McTaggart. Second row: Sr. Janine Golubickis, Sr. Margaret Petcavage, Sr. Estela Risso, Sr. Marilyn Karpovich, Sr. Joyce Ann Dopkin, Sr. Theresa Dabulis, Sr. Deborah Romanuski, Sr. Asuncion Costantini, Sr. Theresa Papsis, Sr. Immacula Wendt, Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius, Sr. Sylvia Puchoras, Sr. Virginia Gapsis, Sr. Rita Marie Kerdock, Sr. Nancy Streitmatter*



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