



Journeys

SISTERS OF ST. CASIMIR

Vol. 39 No. 1
Spring 2025

Rooted In Love



Sitting, from left: Sr. Ellen Maroney, IHM, Sr. Margaret Petcavage, SSC, Sr. Immacula Wendt, SSC, Sr. Katie Clauss, IHM, and Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius, SSC. Standing, from left: Sr. Janine Golubickis, SSC, Sr. Asuncion Costantini, SSC, Sr. Eleace King, IHM, Sr. Rita Marie Kerdock, SSC, Sr. Virginia Gapsis, SSC, Sr. Estela Risso, SSC, Sr. Theresa Papsis, SSC, Sr. Deborah Romanuski, SSC, Sr. Theresa Dabulis, SSC, Sr. Nancy Streitmatter, SSC, (Scranton, PA July 2024).

Grown in Grace

The Unfolding Story

Don't be satisfied with the stories that came before you; unfold your own.
Rumi

When the poet Rumi wrote these words in the thirteenth century, he could not have known how the Sisters of St. Casimir would embrace his challenge to leave the well-worn and known path to chart a new, unknown course for their future. In so doing, they fashioned a remarkable legacy for religious life and our world. For over 117 years, members of the Sisters of St. Casimir congregation have faithfully carried forward the dream of their foundress, Mother Maria Kaupas, to care for the most vulnerable in our society through healthcare, education, and dedicated communal witness to the principles of justice, peace, and equality for all. Through their presence, leadership, creativity, and perseverance, the Sisters have positively impacted the lives of tens of thousands of people while embarking on a bold new course to ensure that their vision and mission would continue into the future.

In the early 2000s, facing an uncertain future due to a lack of vocations and an aging population, the Sisters of St. Casimir began to take courageous steps to reshape their vision for their future. With prayer and bold foresight, the Sisters carefully made difficult decisions to "let go" of ministries and property. Fundamental to this planning process was the steadfast commitment of the Sisters to remain, Sisters of St. Casimir, rather than merge or transfer to another congregation. This decision led to a rekindling of a relationship with the (IHM) Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, PA.

In the early 1900s, Mother Maria Kaupas received her religious formation in Scranton under the tutelage of Mother Cyril Conway, IHM. Their friendship deepened even after

Mother Maria moved to Chicago and became the foundation of the special connection of love and respect between our two congregations.

In 2010, a Covenant Relationship was established between the Sisters of St. Casimir and the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary congregations. In 2018, a formal Covenant Agreement was accepted, thus ensuring that the wishes of the Sisters of St. Casimir will be followed regarding their future. The most recent step on our shared journey occurred last August in a sacred ceremony marking the Transfer of SSC Governance to the IHMs.

Because of the close relationship between the SSC and IHM Sisters, strengthened over the last fifteen years while preparing our Covenant Agreement, the IHM presence with two SSC Sisters on the current SSC

Leadership Team has seemed almost seamless. Since August 2024, the SSC Leadership Team has met regularly in person or via Zoom to conduct the administrative, spiritual, and pastoral responsibilities associated with religious congregation civil and canonical governance. Sisters from both congregations continue participating in discussion groups, prayer services, and presentations. We share our congregational news and updates with one another and with our respective associates and friends. In short, the deep bonds of friendship continue to guide our journey into our shared future.

The following quotes are from the previous edition of *Journeys* by two Sisters describing the meaning of the ceremony for the Transfer of Governance:

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. (Sr. Virginia Gapsis, SSC)

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. (Sr. Eleanor Mary Marconi, IHM)

The SSC Congregation story intersects with the IHM story, and we are truly blessed by this relationship. In truth, the SSCs have been our mentors, trailblazers, inspirers, courageous partners, and wisdom figures.

**Always more,
always better,
always with love.
May it be so!**

*By Sister Ellen Maroney, IHM,
SSC Commissary Delegate*



*Mother Cyril Conway, IHM
and Mother Maria Kaupas, SSC*

Our Calling To Repair The World

God is writing you into the story of the world's healing.

In her February 22, 2025, *On Being* post, Krista Tippett recalled a conversation she had with Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen on June 2, 2022. Dr. Remen shared an ancient Hasidic story told to her by her grandfather—one that speaks beautifully to the Jewish imperative to "repair the world."

In the beginning of creation, the light of the universe was shattered into a million pieces, which lodged as shards inside everything and everyone. Our calling, as human beings, is to look for the light from where we stand, call it out, gather it up, and, in so doing, help repair the world.

As I reflect on this story, my heart turns immediately to our celebration with the Sisters of St. Casimir on August 29, 2024. For 117 years, they have lived this sacred work of repairing the world through their lives in community, their ministries in education and health care, and their steadfast presence in pastoral

and justice work. They search for the light in others, nurture it, and bring it forth with relentless love.

The SSC ministry continues in the steady ways they accompany those around them. Their presence at Franciscan Village and Villa Joseph Marie High School radiates a warmth that calls forth goodness in others. Their generosity of spirit, their kindness, their simple and profound acts of care—all of it is part of gathering up the light, piece by piece, to help heal the world.

Kate Bowler's prayer poem, *For Who You Might Become*, found in *The Lives We Actually Live* (2023), paints a beautiful image of God's response to the generous service and tender care offered by the Sisters of St. Casimir:

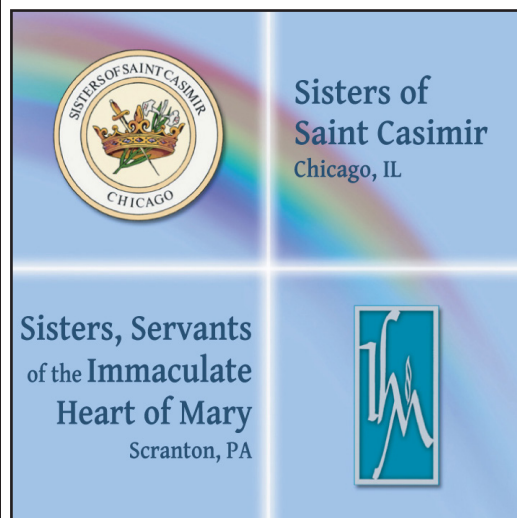
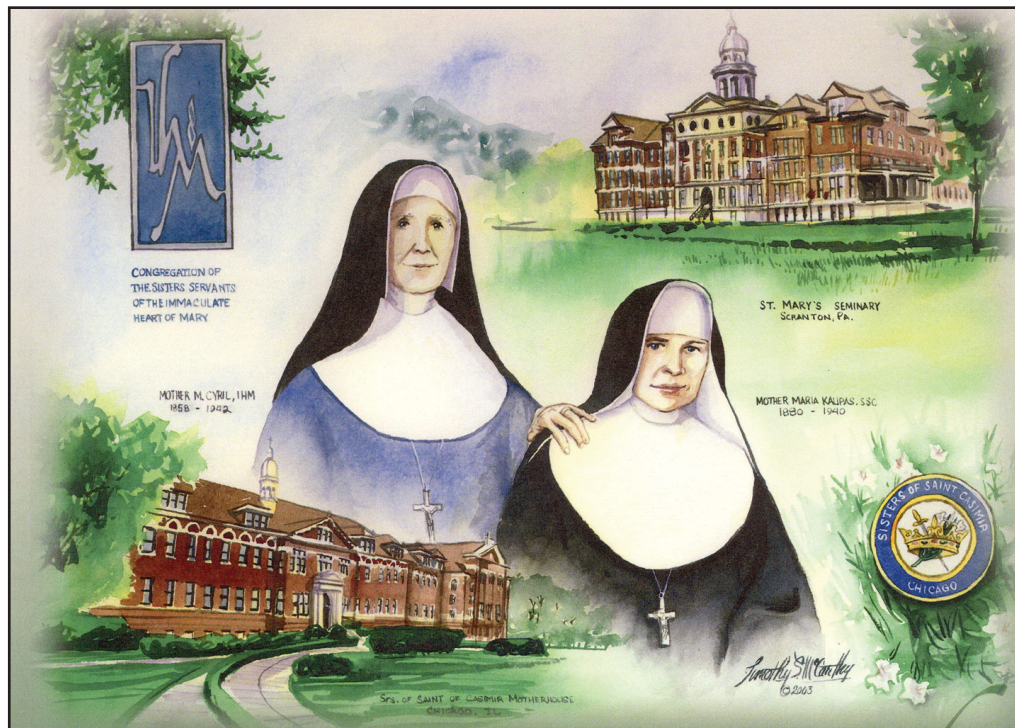
Never doubt it.

God is writing you into the story of the world's healing and your own.

The ongoing journey of the Sisters of St. Casimir and the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is a shared blessing and a testament to God's providential care. In our mutual companionship and accompaniment we strengthen and uplift one another.

Mother Maria Kaupas, SSC, and Mother Cyril Conway, IHM, saw the light in each other and allowed that light to nourish their friendship. If they had a message for us today, I believe they would encourage us to continue to live into the wisdom found in the Hasidic tale: *pay attention, look for the light in others from where you stand, call it out, gather it up, and in so doing, continue to help repair the world* person by person, situation by situation, and in the spirit of Mother Maria - Always more, always better, always with love.

By Sister Kathryn Clauss, IHM, President, SSC Pontifical Commissary.



A Message From The SSC Leadership Team

The transfer of SSC Governance to Pontifical Commissary Sister Kathryn Clauss, IHM, and her successors and the appointment of Commissary Delegate Sister Ellen Maroney, IHM, haven't changed the daily lives of the Sisters of St. Casimir, but they have added a dimension to leadership that will provide care and decision-making for the Congregation into the future.

Community has been and is one of our SSC core values and an aspect of our lives that is a focus for our Leadership Team. We value times when we are together and schedule opportunities for prayer, meals, and meetings. Sisters Immacula and Elizabeth Ann join the Sisters monthly at Franciscan Village for Mass, coffee, and lunch, followed by an update of events and experiences in which they participated. It is a special day when Sister Ellen is in town and can join us for gatherings.

In February, for Valentine's Day, milk shakes were the treats for our afternoon time together. This continued a tradition that started during the pandemic, when in 2021, we were unable to visit our sisters at Franciscan Village. Milk shakes were delivered and were such a treat, that they became a tradition!

In March, we gathered to welcome Lisa A. Lori, JD, the 13th President of Marywood University in Scranton, PA. Most of our Sisters received their bachelor's degrees from Marywood, and had IHM Sisters for their teachers. Lisa A. Lori shared some of Marywood's future plans, and our Sisters shared some of their Marywood memories.

In March, we gathered to remember our Sister Regina Dubickas on the anniversary of the completion of her earthly life and her return to our



Sr. Immacula Wendt, SSC, Advisor, Sr. Ellen Maroney, IHM, Commissary Delegate, Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius, SSC, Advisor.

God. The SSCs were together for Mass at Franciscan Village Chapel, coffee, and Sister Theresa Dabulis's homemade blueberry muffins.

Since our Sisters in Argentina, Sister Joyce Dopkin, Sister Estela, and Sister Asuncion aren't able to gather with us in Lemont, we have been having monthly Zoom meetings to visit, update them on what we have been doing, and hear about them and their activities. They celebrated the feast of St. Casimir with a procession from the church to their convent chapel, the recommitment of their SSC Associates, followed by refreshments.

We are looking forward to our next Mass, which will be on Saturday, April 26, at 9:30 a.m. in our Motherhouse Chapel. We will pray for the beatification of our foundress, Venerable Mother Maria Kaupas, and

also anticipate the 100th anniversary of the dedication of our Motherhouse Chapel, which was on May 17, 1925.

August 15 is also the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the day that most of our Sisters made their Profession of Vows, so it is our Anniversary Day. For milestone anniversaries, we celebrate Jubilees.

Plans are beginning for August 15, 2025, when we will celebrate the 70th Anniversary of Vows, the Jubilee Day, for Sister M. Dolorine Lopez, Sister Bernadette Marie Janus, and Sister Rita Marie Kerdock.

We continue to be open to the Spirit as we live daily life and walk in faith with the assurance that, in the words of Mother Maria,

***God is here.
God wills this,
and nothing will happen to us
without His knowledge.***



SSC/IHM Prayer

**Holy One, Journeying God,
You accompany your pilgrim people
into an unknown future.**

Here, one thing only is certain:

Your constant and abiding love.

Your provident care brought together

**Mother Cyril Conway, Mother Maria Kaupas,
and all our foremothers.**



*Mother Cyril Conway
Mother Maria Kaupas*

Sr. Mary Persico

Sr. Marilyn Kuzmickus

*Sr. Immacula Wendt
Sr. Therese O'Rourke*

Sr. Kathryn Clauss

Sr. Ellen Maroney

Sr. Regina Dubickas

**We pray that this same tender presence,
rooted in love and grown in grace,
will continue to inspire our
SSC/IHM Leadership Teams.**



*SSC Leadership Team
From left,
Sr. Immacula Wendt
Sr. Ellen Maroney
Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius*



*IHM Leadership Team
From left,
Sr. Susan Armbruster
Sr. Grace Surdovel
Sr. Terry Jordan
Sr. Kathryn Clauss
Sr. Judith O'Brien*

**We ask that you shape our lives together as
blessing for our beautiful yet wounded world.**

**We trust that you will lead us through
holy mystery, across time and space,
and into the place of spaciousness of heart,
always more, always better, always with love.**

May it be so!

We invite you to pray with us.

Sisters of St. Casimir Pastoral Visitor

Sister Eleace King, IHM



Sister Eleace King, IHM agreed to be interviewed and share her thoughts about her ministry as the SSC Pastoral Visitor at Franciscan Village in Lemont, Illinois.

Sister Eleace King was born and raised in Greenport, New York, a small fishing village on the east end of Long Island. Her parents owned a small luncheonette where Sister Eleace and her siblings worked.

She has a bachelor's degree from Marywood University in Pennsylvania, a Master's degree from Yeshiva University in New York, and earned a Doctoral Degree in Education from Johns Hopkins University in Maryland. In the words of Sister Eleace, "Education degrees are keys that allow you access to things and places that you didn't have access to."

Among the life experiences and ministries included in Sister Eleace's resume: special education; ESL educator; caregiver for her parents in New York; senior researcher at CARA (Center for Applied Research in the

Apostolate), in Washington, DC; the director for persons with disabilities, Diocese of Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Sister Eleace shared that she lived in a Dominican monastery for two years. And yes, it was a cloistered monastery.

Explain what a Pastoral Visitor is?

I would describe the role of Pastoral Visitor as that of companion, accompanying the Sisters and trying to meet their needs: spiritual, physical, and psychological. As the Pastoral Visitor I do what needs to be done.

When did you start working as the Sisters of St. Casimir Pastoral Visitor?

I arrived in Chicago (and Lemont), in August of 2023. On August 26, 2023 the Sisters of St. Casimir celebrated Founders' Day and at that Mass was my missioning.

The word missioning refers to the act of being sent out by a religious group to spread faith, provide services, and fulfill their religious purpose.

What is your connection with the Sisters of St. Casimir?

The connection is historical and personal for me. The historical is the connection between Mother Maria Kaupas, SSC and Mother M. Gabriel

Donnelly, IHM. In 1911, St. Casimir Academy in Chicago was opened under the direction of Mother M. Gabriel, who served as its first Principal and the first Superior of the Sisters of St. Casimir.

In 1913, Mother Maria Kaupas was elected first General Superior of the Sisters of St. Casimir, a position she held until her death in 1940.

My personal connection with the Sisters of St. Casimir started in 2014 when the SSCs came to Scranton for an assembly. When they moved from the Motherhouse in Chicago to Franciscan Village in Lemont, the IHMs assisted with the move. In 2018, I had more interactions with the Sisters of St. Casimir and in 2023 I received a letter and job description about the opening with the Sisters of St. Casimir.

A few weeks later during the season of Lent, I invited an IHM Sister for my vegetable lasagna and I told her there was something about the Casimirs that's attractive and it was gnawing at me. She responded, "you can't escape their prayers, they are praying for you!" From that moment I knew I was coming to Chicago.



Sr. Eleace visits with Sr. Elenisa Buzas.

Photos by Karen Strabel

Sister Connections In Lithuania

Mother Maria Kaupas, foundress of the Sisters of St. Casimir, provided the spirit and charism for the Sisters both in America and Lithuania.

In late 2024, Sister Janine Golubickis, Sister Theresa Papsis, Sister Deborah Romanuski, and Karen Strabel had a marvelous adventure connecting with the Sisters of St. Casimir in Lithuania.

Pažaislis Monastery is the center for the Sisters of St. Casimir in Lithuania. Founded in 1664 as a hermitage for the Order of the Camaldolese Monks, its fascinating 360-year history is portrayed in an interesting museum on the premises, drawing pilgrims and tourists from around the world. Many faithful attend the Sunday Liturgy and prayer opportunities in the beautiful marble-decorated Baroque Church, which is home to the miraculous painting of Mary, Mother of Fair Love.

Approximately 20 Sisters, many under 70, minister with prayer, presence, and warm hospitality. Each month, they host *Marijos Radija*, a radio program transmitted to the entire country and available online worldwide. The Sisters work in religious education and parish ministry. One is a physician, one a pharmacist, and another the principal of the Jesuit High School in Vilnius.

The Sisters accompanied us on several adventures, including an inspiring visit to the Shrine of Our Lady of Šiluva, where the Blessed Mother appeared to children tending their sheep in 1608. Šiluva holds a special place in the hearts of the Sisters of St. Casimir.

The Hill of Crosses in Šiauliai, is a sacred hill with over 100,000 primarily wooden crosses. This unique site is a stirring destination for pilgrims and tourists. Cross-Crafting and Cross-Symbolism in Lithuania are included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In 2020 Lithuania issued a commemorative 2 euro coin featuring the Hill of Crosses.

An engraved granite memorial stone preserves the site of Mother Maria's homestead in Ramygala. St. John the Baptist Church, where Mother Maria received the sacraments and grew in faith, is visible in the distance across a beautiful field.

A visit to Lithuania is incomplete without praying in the St. Casimir chapel in the Vilnius Cathedral, where his remains are venerated. Mother Maria and St. Casimir gather us in a common bond.

Our visit to Lithuania was impressive, and the most memorable is the time we shared with the Sisters. We enjoyed many great meals together, exchanged impressions and stories, and just relaxed in comfortable, harmonious company.



Chicago and Lithuania Sisters gather in Pažaislis. From left, Sr. Virginija, Sr. Dovyda, Sr. Deborah, Sr. Janine, Sr. Edita, Sr. Silvija, and Sr. Julita.



Sr. Theresa Papsis celebrates her birthday with relatives in Vilnius.

Photos by Karen Strabel

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JANUARY 1, 2024 – DECEMBER 31, 2024

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Mother Maria Kaupas Center in Mount Carmel, PA Celebrates 10th Anniversary

By Jake Betz

The Mother Maria Kaupas Center in Mount Carmel, PA, holds a monthly holy hour in the Center chapel to reflect on the life and legacy of Maria Kaupas and pray for her beatification and eventual canonization.

Of special significance to the attendees is Mother Maria's proud place in the history of the Catholic Church in Mount Carmel, PA.

Holy hour attendees reflect on the fact that her initial mission, and that of the Sisters of Saint Casimir was the founding of a school at Holy Cross Parish in 1908. The school was the first Catholic school established in the United States for the children of Lithuanian immigrants.

The January event doubled as a "Maria Kaupas Birthday Party" in honor of the 145th anniversary of Mother Maria's birth on January 6.

The February Holy Hour was dedicated to the Sacred Heart, in thanksgiving for Mother Maria's devotion during her formation and at all other times of her life.

The Kaupas Center is looking ahead to celebrating its 10th anniversary.

The Mother Maria Kaupas Center in Mount Carmel, PA, will celebrate its 10th anniversary with a Mass Sunday, May 18 in Divine Redeemer Church.

The Center, a ministry of Divine Redeemer, was officially established April 15, 2015, with a special Mass and a dedication ceremony officiated by Bishop Ronald Gainer. The dedication date coincided with the 75th anniversary of the death of Mother Maria Kaupas on April 17, 1940.

The current bishop of the Diocese of Harrisburg, Timothy Senior, will be main celebrant and concelebrants are Rev. Bernard Wamayose, current pastor, and two former pastors, Rev. Martin Moran and Rev. Ryan Fischer.

Father Moran, who was pastor at the time of the dedication, envisioned the Kaupas Center as a way to honor the life and legacy of Maria Kaupas while revitalizing the faith life of the Church in Mount Carmel.

Over the last decade, the Kaupas Center has hosted weekend service retreats for college students and other groups and conducted a winter program for college students from the Mount Carmel and Kulpmont areas. The Center currently sponsors a monthly diaper program.

From 2015 to the present, the Kaupas Center has partnered with Bucknell University's Coal Region Field Station in fostering collaboration between the Bucknell community and Mount Carmel organizations in experiential learning programs.

Following the anniversary Mass, a reception will be held in the parish's Divine Mercy Hall. Visitors will have the opportunity to tour the Kaupas Center and learn more about Mother Maria Kaupas, the Sisters of Saint Casimir, and the mission and programs of the Kaupas Center.



Meet Valerie Prucnal - Principal of Villa Joseph Marie High School



Villa students and SSC Leadership Team gather for a photo with Valerie Prucnal. From left, Principal Valerie Prucnal, Sr. Ellen Maroney, Emily Schmidt '25, Meredith Czyz '25, Lily Chacko '25, Isabelle Glunz '25, Sr. Immacula Wendt and Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius.

With nearly twenty-four years of experience in independent, Catholic girls' schools, Valerie Prucnal, Principal of Villa Joseph Marie High School, is dedicated to inspiring, empowering, and unlocking opportunities for students, so that they may lead the changes the world needs. In teaching and leading in schools throughout the country – from Chicago, IL, Memphis, TN, the San Francisco Bay area and most recently, just outside of Philadelphia, PA, Valerie has the skills to launch new initiatives and engage the community in Villa's vision.

Valerie holds a B.A. in History and a B.S. in Chemistry from St. Xavier University, along with an M.A. in Teaching and Learning from DePaul University, and an M.A. in Educational Administration from St. Xavier University.

She is currently pursuing her M.B.A. from Eastern University. Her diverse academic background allows her to blend the analytical and contextual aspects of decision-making as she builds on strong traditions while steering Villa Joseph Marie High School into the future.

Lisa A. Lori, President of Marywood University visits Sisters of St. Casimir



President of Marywood University tours the Legacy Room at St. Casimir Center in Chicago. From left: Mary Beth McCarthy, Sr. Elizabeth Ann Yocius, Lisa A. Lori, Sr. Immacula Wendt, and Tony Ferro.

At Journey's End — *Eternal Days Beginning*

Sister M. Lawrence Puishys, SSC

MARCH 26, 1931 – OCTOBER 7, 2024



Sister M. Lawrence was born on March 26, 1931 in Worcester, known as the heart of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Her parents, Peter and Anna (Ackalitis) Puishys, named her Anne. Sister M. Lawrence was the middle of seven children having three brothers and three sisters: Joseph, Dorothy, Helen (Sister June, SSC), June, Robert, and William.

She attended St. Casimir School, staffed by the Sisters of St. Casimir in Worcester for the elementary/junior high grades, followed by Classical High, where she graduated in June 1949. She wanted to become a Sister as far back as she could remember having been inspired by one of her teachers, a Sister of St. Casimir. She had so much compassion and love and always wanted to share it with others. She chose to attend a public high school instead of a Catholic one because she did not want her parents to think that the Sisters in the high school were pressuring her to become a Sister. She wanted it to be her own choice, which it was.

On June 15, 1950, a year after she graduated from high school, she entered the Sisters of St. Casimir in Chicago. Her studies continued after her profession in 1953. She received her Bachelor's degree in education and social studies from Marywood College in Scranton, PA, in 1960, and her Master's in education from Loyola University in Chicago, IL, in 1968. In 1977 she participated in a continuing education program in ministry to the aging and became a certified nursing home administrator.

Sister M. Lawrence made her reception as a novice on August 15, 1951, first vows on August 15, 1953, and final vows on August 15, 1958. She had the joy of celebrating her silver jubilee in 1978, golden jubilee in 2008, and diamond (60 years) in 2018.

Sister M. Lawrence began her ministry in education in 1953, shortly after she made her first vows, having been assigned to teach 2nd grade at St. George's School in Chicago. Her ministry went beyond the classroom to include school and health care administration, health care patient advocacy, and ministry of prayer and presence.

In addition to teaching 2nd graders at St. George School. She went on to teach 7th grade at St. Clement School in Florida; 7th and 8th grade at St. Casimir School in Chicago Heights, IL; 7th grade at St. Joseph School in Chicago; 8th grade at Providence of God School in Chicago.

From 1970 until 1977, she was the principal of Immaculate Conception School in Chicago and from 1977 until 1983, she was the Superior at the Motherhouse in Chicago.

After a year of study and living at Immaculate Mary Center for Rehab and Healthcare in Philadelphia, Sister M. Lawrence began a new ministry at St. Joseph Home for the Aged in Holland, PA, as administrator of the Home and Superior of the local community. She served there until November 1999. The newsletter from the Home contained a warm farewell: "Through the many efforts of Sister Lawrence and her co-workers, a family unity among Sisters, residents, employees, and friends was created. Perhaps the greatest aspect of Sister Lawrence's administration was how she warmed our hearts with kindness and love and brightened our days with friendship and laughter, especially how she always made the residents laugh with her many toys. This always brought a great balance to St. Joseph's."

In 2000, Sister M. Lawrence returned to the Motherhouse in Chicago to live and minister at Holy Cross Hospital as a patient visitor, where she was much loved. Wherever Sister M. Lawrence ministered she brought: her life of prayer, contemplative view of life, warm smile and delightful laugh, thoughtful notes – including one she wrote to her sister Helen (Sr. June) on the day she entered the community, and her genuine interest in people, especially those who were hurting. So often, when she was administrator of St. Joseph Home for the Aged, she would sit by a patient's bedside, especially when the patient was near death. Sister M. Lawrence loved to recite poems including "Trees" by Joyce Kilmer and "Lovely Lady Dressed in Blue" by Mary Dixon Thayer. She was also famous for clever and engaging jokes.

- Her pocket always had pictures of pride and joy, which she wanted to share, especially with patients, visitors, and staff at Holy Cross Hospital. She would ask: do you want to see my pride and joy? After a yes response, she dug into her pocket and pulled out pictures of "Pride" furniture polish and "Joy" dishwashing detergent, always bringing smiles to all she shared this with, even when they knew what to expect!

- Her beautifully braided palm crosses, palm doves, and palm roses, which she made each year at Easter time, were shared with Sisters, family, and friends, all of whom eagerly awaited new ones each year.

- Her watchful eye that earned her the nickname "hawk-eyes" and enabled her to see what her students were doing, even when she was not looking directly at them.

- Her ability to work jigsaw puzzles systematically, even during her waning weeks with dementia – smaller puzzles with fewer pieces, but she could still do them.

- She could find 4-leaf clovers amidst a field of green and then make and distribute cards that read: "Bless this billfold, Lord, I pray replenish it day by day. May the bills blow in and out blessing people all about. Help me

earn and wisely spend. Show me when to buy and lend. Thank you, God, for bills to pay for the things I need each day. When it is empty put in more from Thy vast abundant store."

Sister M. Lawrence was faithful to her life as a Sister. On her golden jubilee, she wrote: "As far back as I can remember, my only desire was to be a Sister of St. Casimir. I prayed that it would happen. My prayers were answered! Here I am, 50 years as a Sister of St. Casimir. I never regretted my decision. My family supported me and helped me to achieve this goal. On July 22, 1953 my mother wrote, 'Be a good nun – that we may be proud of you always...' I tried to obey her exhortation."

In 2015, Sister M. Lawrence moved to Franciscan Village to independent living and later to assisted living. While living at Franciscan Village, she celebrated her 60th jubilee. She wrote: "As I reflect on my 60 years as a professed Sister of St. Casimir, I am grateful to God for helping me enjoy being a teacher and an administrator, not only in educating children but also in caring for the elderly. One of my special blessings now is living with my sister, Sister June, and our SSCs. I've learned that God's will is what counts, not mine! God knows what is best for me and all of us."

Sister M. Lawrence's most recent move was to skilled care at Mother Theresa Home. While there, she could be seen in her wheelchair moving down the hall, stopping in most rooms, checking to see if the patient was okay, and sometimes even trying to help.

Lovingly prepared by Sister Margaret Zalot, SSC



Sr. Immacula (far right), celebrates with the Golden Jubilarians. From left: Sr. M. Lawrence, Sr. Lorraine Therese, Sr. DeSales, and Sr. Agnese.



Srs. Lawrence, Joanela, Juline, Aniceta, Christine



Sr. M. Lawrence and her sister Sr. June.



At Journey's End — *Eternal Days Beginning*

Sister Lourdine Ramoska, SSC

OCTOBER 16, 1922 – MARCH 5, 2024



Sister Lourdine was born on October 16, 1922, in Scranton, Pennsylvania. She was given the name Matilda by her parents, Walter and Grace (Nececkas) Ramoska. Sister Lourdine had a brother John and four sisters, Mary, Aldona, Frances, and Sister Mary Philip who left home in 1940 to become a Sister of St. Casimir in Chicago. Sister Lour-

dine attended the primary grades at Kosciuszko School in Scranton and transferred to St. Joseph School where she was taught by the Sisters of St. Casimir. She attended North Scranton Junior High and Technical Senior High School. Following the path of Sister Mary Philip, she left home in 1943 to become a Sister of St. Casimir.

While a postulant, she finished her high school education at Saint Casimir Academy (Chicago) and graduated in 1944 along with several other young women studying to become Sisters of St. Casimir. She received her BS in Education from Marywood College in 1962 followed by an Intermediate Teaching Certificate for Religion in 1972.

Sister Lourdine made her first vows on August 15, 1946, and had the joy of celebrating her Silver Jubilee in 1971, Golden in 1996, Diamond (60 years) in 2006, and Diamond (75 years) in 2021 – a beautiful and long life of faithful service as a Sister of St. Casimir.

Sister Lourdine's ministry began in 1946 when she was assigned to teach 1st grade and kindergarten at St. Casimir School in Gary, IN. She continued teaching in the primary grades in five other states:

- Pennsylvania (Sacred Heart, New Philadelphia; Holy Cross, Mt. Carmel; St. Casimir, Philadelphia; St. Bede, Holland; St. George/Annunciation, Shenandoah; St. Francis of Assisi/Holy Redeemer, Minersville)
- Maryland (St. Alphonsus, Baltimore) – grades 2, 3, 4, and principal
- Illinois (Sts. Peter and Paul, Rockford; Our Lady of Vilna, Chicago; Nativity BVM, Chicago; St. Norbert, Northbrook)
- Florida (St. Clement, Fort Lauderdale)
- Minnesota (St. Vianney, St. Paul)

While teaching full-time, she was involved in the life of the parish – teaching CCD classes and preparing children to receive their first Holy Communion. Reflecting on her life at the time of her 60th jubilee she wrote: “When I recall the many little ones I 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 the world a better place.” After Sister Lourdine retired from teaching full-time, she worked part-time in several schools as a tutor and office assistant. She enjoyed meeting parents and others while still being a help to the children who came to the office.

In 1999, when she retired from ministry in the schools she moved back to the Motherhouse where she assisted in the Treasurer's office and volunteered in the SSC St. Elizabeth Food Pantry.

In 2014 Sister Lourdine moved to Franciscan Village where her new ministry was “prayer and presence.” She was also “her sister's loving keeper” as she helped Sister Mary Philip who was in assisted living. Every afternoon Sister Lourdine brought coffee and other treats to her sister's room and shared updates and stories from the past until Sister Mary Philip died in December of 2020 at the age of 100.

While Sister Lourdine was adjusting to the loss of Sister Philip she was also struggling with the loss of her eyesight. Graces still abounded in her life due to a heightened sense of hearing enabling her to recognize people by their voices and shadows, and the ability to listen to tapes for the blind. Amazingly her mind was sharp to the end. She was unable to read prayers from a book, but surely held many in her memory and used them when she prayed in the assisted living community. She had a beautiful way of making you feel welcome and appreciated. One day in a small group meeting, they listened to a song by Sister Kathy Sherman, CSJ, Have You Ever Thanked the Angels in Your Life? Sister Lourdine had more “angels” than anyone else – everyone who walked into her room and did anything for her. Each act of kindness to her was always followed by a thank you!

For her 60th Jubilee reflection she wrote: “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.” On reflecting with her on “Our Lady Undoer of Knots” she shared some of her life challenges that she wanted represented on a green ribbon, the color of hope.

On March 4, (feast of St. Casimir) while Sister Lourdine was dying, Sister Eleace King, IHM, SSC Pastoral Visitor, shared another related image with Sister Lourdine – God was now untying her knots and she would have no challenges as she let go and said “yes” to God's call to her at her final moment. The next morning, while the Sisters at Franciscan Village were gathered for Mass, Sister Lourdine was called home.



Sr. Janine Golubickis presents Sr. Lourdine her corsage.



Sr. Lourdine (far right) at her Golden Jubilee with members of her profession class: Sr. Maureen Juozapavicius, Sr. M. Josine Vendzelis, Sr. Margaret Mary Mazgelis, Sr. Ann Barbara Wilim, Sr. M. Angela Balchunas. Also in photo (center in back) is Sr. Marilyn Kuzmickus.



Sr. Lourdine with her cousin Alexis Sulinski.



Sr. Lourdine celebrates her 75th Jubilee with family and friends. Front row, from left: Tom Flaherty, Sr. Lourdine, Ann Flaherty, Sr. M. Lourdine's niece from Scranton, PA. Standing: friends Sue Hatherly, Sean Wischhover, and nephew Tom Flaherty, Jr.



Siblings! Sr. Lourdine and Sr. Mary Philip loved puzzles!

Journeys

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Save the date!

Saturday, April 26, 2025 at 9:30 a.m.

August 30, 2025

December 6, 2025

Mother Maria Masses

praying for the beatification of Mother Maria Kaupas

at St. Casimir Center Chapel

2601 W. Marquette Road

Chicago, IL 60629

