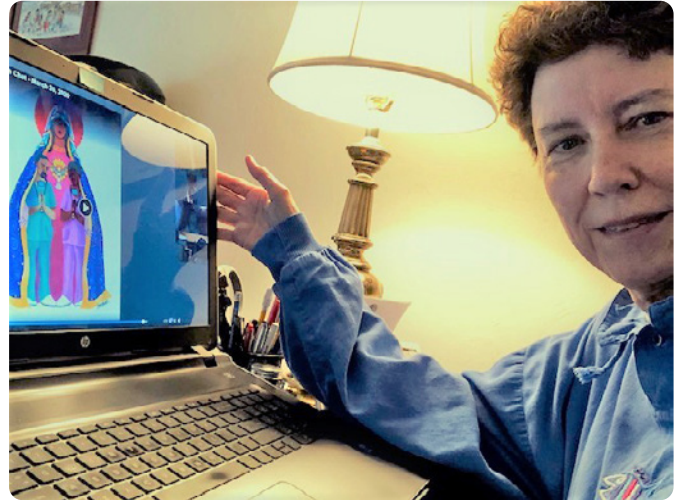


USPN



At left, Sister Jo shares an online art project she's working on from afar with her students in Texas. At right, Sister Carol Ann shares an art link with her students, who all received black and white copies of Brother Mickey McGrath's latest drawing of Our Blessed Mother protecting doctors and nurses. The students were encouraged to color them in and send them as thank you notes to doctors and nurses they know.

The Learning Must Go On

In the uncertain environment created by the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important that learning continues, even if it can't happen in person. That's why our sisters working in education – along with their fellow faculty – are using best practices and online learning resources for students to work remotely. Needless to say, they've come a long way from the days of chalkboards and ditto machines.

Sister Carol Ann Papp, who teaches religion and art at Northside Catholic Assumption Academy (NCAA) in Pittsburgh, connects daily with her classes via Google Classroom. Lessons are posted, then students view them and respond with inspirational thoughts and feelings during these trying times.



Sister Maria Derecola connects with her students from the comforts of her bedroom at St. Matthias Convent.

"I was having a very bad day, and after viewing the religion link and listening to the song you sent, I felt so much

better," one student wrote. "Thank you!"

Rosanne Kwiatkowski, NCAA principal, meets weekly with faculty via Zoom to discuss procedures and how to reach those families in most need. The biggest challenge was getting laptops to the 30 NCAA families who had no technology in their homes.

Sister Maria Derecola's second grade students at St. Matthias School in Somerset, N.J., have their own homework website where assignments are posted daily. Completed work is then sent back via Sister Maria's email for grading. Various online formats are used throughout the school, including See-Saw and Google Classroom.

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AN EGG-CELLENT IDEA

Sister Carol Ann Papp's eighth grade religion class at Northside Catholic Assumption Academy in Pittsburgh eagerly began working on a special service project on March 13, at the request of **Mary Swindal**, pastoral associate of the Northside Parish Grouping. The children set out to make 50 cards and decorate 50 ornamental eggs to be distributed to senior citizens throughout the cluster parishes, but their efforts were abruptly halted by the COVID-19 pandemic that has closed all schools in Pennsylvania. The sisters at Little Flower House stepped in to finish the project during their down time together indoors. The completed cards and eggs were picked up by Mary on April 4 and will be delivered in time for the senior parishioners to enjoy!



SURE SIGNS OF HOPE

"Since the gardeners aren't coming, the wild flowers are having a field day," says **Sister Nancy Celaschi**, who shared this photo after a walk around the grounds of the Generalate in Rome.

CREATIVE PURSUITS

Sister Barbara Ann Webster had been preparing for a spring craft show when the social distancing guidelines went into effect last month and postponed such events for the foreseeable future. But that hasn't kept her from exercising her creative muscles in crafting unique crosses from clothes pins of various sizes and specially folded paper. She and the other sisters at Mt. Assisi Place have kept at their favorite activities during the pandemic.





Sisters Kathy Kudlac, Elaine Hromulak, Adelina Garcia, Yolanda Escamilla, Hilda Marotta, Pat Brennan and Jo Goolish had a productive cluster meeting in Texas on March 10.



Sisters Patricia Ann Mahoney and Cecilia Jacko connect from Mt. Assisi Place in Pittsburgh via the wonders of technology with Sister Nancy Celaschi in Rome.

Community Collaboration

During recent cluster meetings in Bethlehem, Pittsburgh and Texas, our sisters demonstrate great spirit of collaboration on special days of preparation for the 2020 Chapter this fall.



Sisters Carol Ann Papp, Mary Lou Metro, Marian Sgriccia, Joyce Burkhart and Norberta Kralosky discuss how mission radiates outward during the Pittsburgh-cluster meeting on March 14.



Sisters Rosaria Shina, Donna Pusch, Barbara DeStefano and Ann Marie Yenca hard at work at Monocacy Manor during the Bethlehem-area cluster meeting on April 4.



Sisters Anne Kutch, Marguerite Stewart, Marie Bernadette Kelleher and Mary Xavier Bomberger filled the breakfast room at Monocacy Manor with the spirit of collaboration.



Sisters M. Virginelle Makos, Loretta Motko, Francine Garganta and Anita Kuchera couldn't help but share a smile while filling in the bands of the mission exercise at Monocacy Manor.

The Monocacy Farm Project runs on mission and the efforts of (from left) Sister Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster, project director; Eli Stogsdill, project manager; Amy Baringer, marketing and events coordinator; and Bob Drake, board member. Photo courtesy of Fig.



A FRUITFUL PARTNERSHIP

FIG SELECTS MONOCACY FARM PROJECT AS SOCIAL MISSION PARTNER

Good news is in bloom. *Fig* magazine in Bethlehem, Pa., has selected our Monocacy Farm Project (MFP) as its Social Mission Partner for 2020, positioning the farming ministry at the center of the magazine's efforts to spotlight all that's good in the surrounding community. More than a magazine, the Fig Industries publication strives to connect people, businesses and communities to strengthen local economies.

"At Fig, we believe in the power of a community that works together to identify needs and find solutions – and is passionate about helping its neighbors," the magazine wrote in its Spring 2020 issue. "We believe in the mission of the Monocacy Farm Project."

As Mission Partner, Monocacy Farm Project was featured in *Fig's* spring issue and at the magazine's Spring 2020 launch party on March 10. Such exposure helps to heighten community awareness about the project's stewardship of the earth, community involvement, educational opportunities and service to the poor. Increased philanthropic support for MFP began almost as soon as the partnership was announced last week.

MFP was chosen from among a large number of local nonprofits nominated for the mission partnership honor this year. The selection solidifies MFP's standing as an impactful community resource in the Lehigh Valley. Among its good works – distributing fresh produce to the needy through partnerships with about a dozen community organizations.

"In shining a light on the Monocacy Farm Project, *Fig* also illuminates the urgent needs of underserved communities and of the Earth – our common home," says **Sister Bonnie Marie Kleinshuster**, project director.

The farm hosts educational workshops for all ages, sponsors a "pick you own" program for local residents, and offers pre-tilled community garden spots for rent throughout the growing season. All this is in fitting with Franciscan tradition.

"This is such good news for us," says Sister Bonnie Marie. "We can't thank *Fig* enough for the support and the opportunity. This makes the year ahead all that much more exciting."





Sisters from San Damiano Convent and Little Flower House took part in Pittsburgh's Illumination Ovation on April 7. Residents stepped outside their buildings and homes at 8 p.m. to applaud frontline workers for their tireless efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our sisters incorporated a bell from South Korea and a whistle from Peru in solidarity with folks around the world.

Spiritual Strength in Trying Times

Our world is living through history right now, enduring the physical, emotional and spiritual challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Celebrating a Holy Week without services or Masses, our sisters living in community are finding unique ways to connect with God, nature and each other in circumstances not seen during their lifetimes and not since the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918.

Rome

Our sisters in Italy saw the effects of the pandemic weeks before we did in the U.S. "The streets are empty and nothing is opened – only grocery stores, pharmacies and the tobacco stores," says **Sister Jeanne Marie Ulica**, who has left the Generalate in a mask only to pickup prescriptions.

The daily schedule has been modified so that the sisters there pray on their own and have an evening Mass conducted by one of three students who are priests.

"I have found myself spending more time on Facebook – posting updates and real information about the situation here in Italy, sometimes a bit of humor, and try to inject a bit of spirituality," says **Sister Nancy Celaschi**, who has seen several of her scheduled Franciscan pilgrimages canceled by the pandemic.

Somerset

Like many of our sisters, **Sister Marie Therese Sherwood** is staying in touch with family, friends and community via text message. Her family recently coordinated a video chat to celebrate her niece's birthday. "Eleven of us were present to sing *Happy Birthday* and

watch her blow out the candles. It was uplifting for me to see our family and connect with them that way," Sister says.

She and **Sister Maria Derecola** continue to pray office together, lifting up everyone in prayer. Each day, Sister Marie Therese takes a contemplative walk. "I am spiritually nurtured by creation – the new buds, daffodils and robins, as well as the song of the cardinals."

But she also takes times to appreciate the silence. "I have been spending a good amount of time sitting in my room, enjoying the quiet," she says. "I feel God close by as I pray for my loved ones, our sisters, parishioners, and our world.

The pastoral staff at St. Matthias Catholic Community is communicating twice a

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week via Zoom and will be recording Holy Week and Easter liturgies to share remotely with parishioners.

San Antonio

In San Antonio, **Sisters Jo Goolish and Yolanda Escamilla** remain busy with work. Sister Jo is teaching remotely, while Sister Yolanda still reports daily to Living Days Adult Day Care to teach arts and crafts. The pair walks about 2.5 miles daily at a local park to experience nature. "This fills us with hope and peace," Sister Jo says. "Our holy hour each day also is a source of great strength."

Bethlehem

With all retreats canceled for the foreseeable future, St. Francis Center for Renewal has rescheduled its spring Star Struck Gala until August and has begun *Bless This Space Between Us*, a new ministry for the homebound that operates via Zoom. Staffers **Gena Tallarico** and **Maryann Kearns** had the program in the works anyway, but social distancing has made this new form of spiritual delivery more timely than ever.

The first session on April 7 drew 40 online participants and generated lots of positive feedback. **Nan Merrill's** Psalm 143 was highlighted to contemplate opportunities to face fears, trust in the Lord and surrender to the flow of new life. The next program is set for April 21, with plans to host more future sessions during the Tuesday timeslot normally occupied by the Center's popular onsite *Simply Prayer* program.

Sister Barbara Brown's ESL classes also are suspended. Her students may be out of sight, but they're not out of mind. "I spend some time every day praying for the safety of my students and their families. My mantra: 'I am with you on the journey and I will never leave you. I am with you – always with you.'"

Sister Jean Makovsky says she is using these extraordinary times to downsize papers and clothing, do picture and word puzzles, send greeting cards, call people who live alone, and to pray, pray, pray. "I keep reminding myself about a Jesuit reflection: 'God is with each of us. We are not alone,'" Sister says.

Sister Margaret Stewart was inspired by a social distancing story from her

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Sister Yolanda Escamilla and her colleagues at Living Days Adult Day Care in San Antonio remain on the job in their essential functions.



Sisters Eve Blostic and Lois Jean DiFalco pass some time with a game of Scrabble in the sisters' community room at Mt. Assisi Place in Pittsburgh.



Sisters Marie Therese Sherwood (left) and Jeanne Marie Ulica head out for a walk in Somerset, N.J., and to the pharmacy in Rome, all decked out in their protective masks.

niece in Mechanicsburg. "Last Friday, the director of my niece's housing plan called every resident and asked them to come out onto their sidewalk at 11 a.m. and wave to each other. Some waved, some bowed, some danced a little, some called out," Sister recalls. "It was a little thing, but it really lifted their spirits."

Like their counterparts around the Province, the sisters at Monocacy Manor have married tradition with technology for daily Mass. They watch Allentown **Bishop Alfred Schlert** each day on a TV monitor atop the altar in the White House chapel.

Keeping 'Busy'

Sister Lorita Kristufek, who assists annually with the Busy Persons Retreat at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh, did so this year through the wonders of technology. Sister led the retreat for five of the 22 participating students, discussing and praying with the *Scripture of the Prodigal Son*.

Mt. Assisi Place

Dinner table conversation among the 12 sisters at Mt. Assisi Place in Pittsburgh often quotes from *Living Lent with Laughter & Love*, the book shared with the sisters by **Sister Frances Marie Duncan**. The sisters make time to visit the chapel individually and watch daily Masses on TV and various websites.

The sisters also keep busy doing crafts, playing table games, making puzzles, research genealogy, sewing, reading, watching TV and connecting with family and friends via phone and computer.

"Personally, I have decided to call, email, send a message or send a card to family members and friends who are living alone or in nursing homes," says Sister Roselyn. "I do a few a day."

San Damiano

At San Damiano Convent in Pittsburgh, the sisters share holy hours and watch Mass via the internet together, share wonderful cooked meals and evening time in community.

"I'm enjoying wonderful music and spiritual presentations on the internet – such beautiful music of all kinds to just listen to and enjoy," says **Sister Georgette Dublino**. "It's a nice opportunity to share via cell phone with my family and friends and to send out encouraging and caring emails to so many."

Inconvenience & Inspiration

Despite faith in God and their own best efforts, our sisters do sometimes experience the fear and loneliness that has accompanied this time of extended social distancing. Funerals for **Sisters Connie Frank** and **Rose Ann Rovnak** remain in limbo and all community

events have been postponed for the foreseeable future.

"Some days I am 'living the dream' – no schedule, deciding what I want to do and when I want to do it," says Sister Nancy. "Sometimes it is a 'nightmare' – no going out to the museums or churches I love; a virtual meeting with the parish family with whom I worship; seeing the same people day in and day out. I guess it's all in the way I look at it – seeing it as a dream or a nightmare. However, I hope we get back to 'normal' soon."

"At this time of crisis, what we have most of is time – time to be more mindful of our neighbor and his or her needs," says Sister Pat Marie. "Every minute of the day, there are hundreds of minutes. It is a time to evangelize by tiny things, a time to be Jesus for one another. By doing this we bless the whole world."

Solace can be found in the words of **Father Abraham Orpankal**, pastor at St. Matthias: "Let us keep taking all precautions and keep praying, because though we do not know what the future holds for us, the good news is that we know who holds the future!"

Special thanks to Sisters Roselyn Kuzma and Carol Ann Papp for their photo contributions to this story and to all the sisters throughout the Province who shared notes and reflections.

"It is impossible for the Church to remain on its feet if it doesn't get on its knees. Prayer is the answer." – Anonymous



Sister Francesca Parana prays for our community and our world.



A TV monitor for watching Mass has been placed atop the altar at Monocacy Manor.



Sister Ancy Francis wears protective gear to care for residents at Mt. Assisi Place.

Happy BIRTHDAY

APRIL 9

Sister Jo Goolish

APRIL 21

Sister Kevin Berdis
Connie Taschner

APRIL 23

Sister Adelina Garcia

APRIL 24

Mary Ann Tkacik

APRIL 28

Sister Barbara Ann Webster

MAY 3

Elisa Clay

MAY 5

Sister Rosalia Giba

BASKET OF LOVE

In keeping with our mission to help the poor and otherwise needy, our sisters in San Antonio, Texas, have been building baskets filled with household and toiletry items for needy families and those experiencing hard times in the San Antonio area. The basket just finished by **Sister Jo Goolish** at right went to a family with seven children whose house recently burned down.



Happy FEASTDAY

APRIL 16

S. Marie Bernadette Kelleher

APRIL 23

Sister Georgette Dublino

APRIL 25

Sister Pat Marie Buranosky

APRIL 29

Sister Karen Bucu
Sister Gracy Kundukulam

MAY 8

Sister Grace Chermack
Sister Jean Makovsky



ORANGE YOU GLAD I CAME?

While visiting San Antonio in March, **Sister Elaine Hromulak** enjoyed some laughs while picking fresh oranges with friends, alumnae and Associates **Janie Delgado, Armandina Garcia** and **Mary Helen Cerna**.

MAY MILESTONES

Our community sends special early birthday blessings to **Sister Francesca Parana**, who turns 90 on May 14, and to **Sister Yolanda Escamilla**, who celebrates her 70th on May 23.



The Learning Must Go On

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Eileen Brett, school principal, frequently sends out updates to faculty and parents and also connects with staff through Zoom meetings.

As a teacher at St. Gerard Catholic High School in San Antonio, Texas, **Sister Jo Goolish** also is tapping into technology to continue teaching her college-level, high school and middle school art classes.

She posts a lesson online in Google Classroom. The students do the assignment, photograph their artwork and send it to back to her for a grade. She also uses Zoom to connect directly with her students and address any questions.

Although online education has made great strides in recent years and our sisters in education are up to the challenge, they all agree that they miss their students and look forward to returning.