

CARE FOR EARTH & CARE FOR PEOPLE



POOR HANDMAIDS OF JESUS
CHRIST

_100th CELEBRATION

Center at Donaldson 4

_60TH JUBILEE

Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ 6

_SPREADING THE SEED

PHJC Associates 18

IN THIS ISSUE

- _03 INTRODUCTION
- _04 100TH CELEBRATION RECAP
- _06 60TH JUBILEE
- _10 LINDENWOOD:
NOURISH TO FLOURISH
- _13 ST. JOE FOUNDATION
- _17 AFRO-LATINO AND AFRICAN
FAITH, JUSTICE, AND
DEVELOPMENT
- _18 SPREADING THE SEED: PHJC
ASSOCIATES CELEBRATE 40 YEARS

CHECK OUT EVEN MORE WITH

WORD GATHERING ONLINE!

To view a digital version of Word Gathering along with additional stories, videos, and more, visit us online. **WG.PHJC.ORG.**



Editorial Board

Barbara Allison
Alicia Hammonds
Sister Deb Davis, PHJC
Sister Linda Volk, PHJC
Mark Burkholder, St. Joseph Community
Health Foundation

Word Gathering is published three times a year by the American Province of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ of Donaldson, Indiana for Sisters of the Province, Associate Community, members of the Fiat Spiritus Community and friends. Contents of Word Gathering are not official, nor do they necessarily reflect the views of PHJC Provincial Leadership.

Contact Information

Word Gathering
P. O. Box 1
Donaldson, IN 46513
www.poorhandmaids.org
ahammonds@poorhandmaids.org

 [PoorHandmaidsofJesusChrist](https://www.facebook.com/PoorHandmaidsofJesusChrist)
 [poorhandmaids](https://www.instagram.com/poorhandmaids)

Paper

The paper used to print Word Gathering is certified through the Forest Stewardship Council. We care about all of creation. Please recycle.

Share our stories
with others by
sharing **Word
Gathering** with
friends and family.



CARE FOR EARTH & CARE FOR PEOPLE

By Sue Wilhelm, Mission Integration Executive Director

We continue our journey in this issue of Word Gathering to see how the intersection of care for the earth and care for all people intersect on every level. It's a plunge that draws each and all of us deeper into the Divine reality of just how the Gospel excludes no one, and that all creation is sacred.

Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* draws us deeply into this reality showing us time and again throughout the encyclical that we are inter-dependent and inter-related with one another and with creation. Perhaps reality around us makes that difficult to see. We rush from here to there, we are surrounded by noise and a myriad of voices, our calendars are full, we have difficulty keeping up with the latest of anything. Is it possible to find our humanity and our relationship to God, one another and the environment in this chaos? It is. And it must not only be chosen but also celebrated.

Five years after *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis wrote *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*. Pope Francis looks at the world as a whole and all the social dynamics that affect everyone—from the environment, to economics, to politics, to all the interactions of society. He urges us on every level to pause and consider how these interactions affect others, not just our neighbor next door or co-worker in the hall, but also those engulfed in war, suffering discrimination,

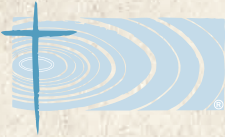
fleeing as refugees, or children caught in the cross-fire of conflict throughout the world. We are part of a world community and each of us must look beyond our comfort zone to the larger reality we are part of.

In this issue, we have celebrations as well as invitations that allow us to engage and take part in this larger world. The PHJC Sisters celebrate 100 years of presence in Donaldson and the dedication of the beautiful chapel where all are welcome. Justine Johnson, DEI director, shares her exploration of Earth Week with the Sisters, co-workers and residents. We will hear about the immigration network that St. Joseph Community Health Foundation is sponsoring and Sister Nkechi will share her Mexico presentation.

I invite you to not only read, but reflect on these articles in light of our relation to one another and the world and how we might continue to live out more deeply the values of Saint Katherina Kasper: attentiveness to the Spirit, community, simplicity and respect and dignity for each person.



Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ



Partners in the work of the Spirit

BLESSINGS
GRATITUDE
CONNECTION

100
years



By Barbara Allison, Communications

POOR HANDMAIDS CELEBRATE CENTENNIAL IN DONALDSON



It was a fitting welcome, filled with blessings, gratitude, and deep connections that Sister Shirley Bell, PHJC Provincial, extended to guests at the Centennial Celebration Mass May 21 in Ancilla Domini Chapel. The day was the culmination of nine months of careful preparation and planning to mark a century of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ's presence in Donaldson.

"Let's acknowledge those who've joined us today," Sister Shirley said. "As I acknowledge each group raise your hands. You can even raise your hand more than once if that applies." She welcomed PHJC Associates, former Sisters and their families, Ancilla Domini High School students, Maria Center residents, neighbors, coworkers, volunteers, and board members. "Raise your hands," she exclaimed after welcoming each connection as audience members regarded and applauded one another.

In his homily, celebrant Father John Zemelko, former long-time PHJC Chaplin, asked those gathered to place their right hands over their

hearts. "Connect that with the spirit that came many generations ago...and proclaim, 'God mounts his throne with shouts of joy,'" he said. "Your throne is where your heart is. Can you feel it?" he added, echoing Psalm 47 from the Mass, urging attendees to use their gifts for the greater good. "Saint Katharina Kasper experienced God's gifts, put them to good use, and look what we have today," Father John added. "These wonderful Sisters here for 100 years in Donaldson."

At the conclusion of Mass, coworkers Alicia Hammonds and Arleen Peterson presented Sister Deb Davis, who led the planning committee for the celebration, with a stunning bouquet and wrist corsage to thank her shepherding the day into fruition. "Now I'm going to the prom," she laughed as she gazed at the flowers in shades of PHJC blue. Sister Deb said that 350 guests had been invited to the dedication in 1923, and over 700 people attended. A century later, about 500 guests attended both the Mass and the festivities that followed.



"In the past, we had very few lay people running the operations," Sister Deb noted. "All the work was done by Poor Handmaid Sisters." She noted of the early days here. "Now we have a large group of coworkers who've caught the Spirit of Saint Katharina Kasper and are committed to the mission." Many current and past coworkers attended that day, including six members of the Glose family, who's father farmed the Poor Handmaids' property at the southwest corner of Lake Galbraith. Sons Vincent and Siegfried Glose, and daughter Mary Glose Boiner stood near a portrait of their dad from the 1920s in Ancilla Domini Chapel after Mass along with three of their own children. Vincent Glose, an agricultural advisor for

Purdue University in West Lafayette, spoke of his 20 years of farming on the Sisters' land during the storytelling event after Mass. He told the attendees about traveling the Yellowstone Trail with his dad to sell grain in Hamlet, Indiana." It was one of the country's first coast to coast highways," he said.

Guests also enjoyed apple dumplings, made famous by the late Sister Agnes Muelhenfeld, in Emmaus Café, bingo, face painting, tours, pontoon rides, storytelling, and two mimes, Sister Mary Baird and Claudia Swarthout. "We're grateful for the blessing of the many people who gathered to reconnect with our community and celebrate the day," Sister Deb said.

"WE'RE GRATEFUL FOR THE BLESSING OF THE MANY PEOPLE WHO GATHERED TO RECONNECT WITH OUR COMMUNITY AND CELEBRATE THE DAY."

-Sister Deb



FOUR POOR HANDMAIDS CELEBRATE 60TH JUBILEES

By Barbara Allison, Communications

Four Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ Sisters celebrate their 60th Jubilees this year. The 2023 Jubilarians are Sisters Annemarie Kampwerth, Coletta Wrasman, Roberta Christianson, and Virginia Kampwerth. Each professed her vows as a Poor Handmaid on August 6, 1963. That's an astounding 240 years of combined joyful, dedicated service to God's children, especially the poor and underserved.

A native of Breese, Illinois, Sister Annemarie Kampwerth said, "I came from a loving family - my parents, two brothers and two sisters. I had two aunts in the PHJC community and several cousins, and they, along with my great PHJC teachers, introduced me to the congregation."

Sister Annemarie has ministered in the areas of Education, Administration, and Pastoral Ministry in the Diocese of New Ulm and St. Cloud, and the Archdiocese of Minneapolis-St. Paul in Minnesota; Gary, Ft. Wayne-South Bend, in Indiana; and in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Sister Annemarie Kampwerth



Of one ministry, she said, "Working 15 years at HealthVisions Midwest introduced me to the health needs of the poor and powerless."

From 1985-1991, Sister Annemarie served as Provincial Councilor and from 1991-1997 as Provincial for the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ in Donaldson, Indiana. In 2013, she was elected to the General Leadership of the Poor Handmaids and served in Dernbach, Germany until 2019. "One of the highlights of my life was getting to know our Sisters around the world and the wonderful works they were doing while I was in General Leadership," she reflected.

Sister Annemarie resides in East Chicago, Indiana and currently volunteers at Ashley House and at Saint Catherine Hospital, both in East Chicago where she also serves as a board member.

Sister Coletta Wrasman, born in Delphos, Ohio, grew up in a family filled with faith and music. "My mom and dad were involved in church groups and ministries. Prayer and simple living were part of our life as a family, which nourished each of us. We all played our part in life on a farm. Living simply readied me for life as a Poor Handmaid of Jesus Christ," she said.





“I LOVED THE PHJCS AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER”

Sister Coletta served in the ministries of vocation, liturgy and music, and spiritual direction, in the Diocese of New Ulm in Minnesota; in Ft. Wayne-South Bend, Gary and the Archdiocese of Indianapolis in Indiana; Belleville and Springfield and the Archdiocese of Chicago in Illinois; the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau in Missouri; and in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Sister Coletta has shared her gift of music wherever she has ministered, noting, “I am grateful for the gift of music and piano lessons which Mom and Dad enabled me to receive. Sister Angelita taught me to play the organ. In almost every parish where I lived, I played the organ for Mass and other services.

Sister Coletta Wrasman



Sister Coletta currently resides in Donaldson. She directs the Avita Library on the Poor Handmaids’ campus in Donaldson and serves as an organist and spiritual guide.

Sister Roberta Christianson is a native of Mishawaka, Indiana. “I loved the PHJCs as far back as I can remember,” she said. “My dad, on occasion, had business at the convent of Saint Monica (in Mishawaka). I was not yet in school, but he always took me with him. I was surrounded by kind, happy, and loving Sisters. All I knew was I wanted to be just like them.”

Sister Roberta ministered in the areas of Education, Administration, Childcare, Transportation, and as a Sacristan in the Diocese of Gary, Lafayette, and Ft. Wayne-South Bend in Indiana; and Belleville and the Archdiocese of Chicago in Illinois. She also served in Diocese of Limburg in Dernbach, Germany for nearly two decades. “One blessing I received was that I loved every place I was missioned to. The parents and children found a way into my heart.

Sister Roberta Christianson



My 18 years in Germany was like a conversion for me," she said. "They were not always easy years, but I sure learned a lot. The relationships begun there still hold fast." Sister Roberta currently resides in Donaldson, Indiana and is the Sacristan for Visitation Chapel at Convent Ancilla Domini.

Sister Virginia Kampwerth, also born in Breese, Illinois, celebrates her 60th Jubilee along with her cousin, Sister Annemarie. "A wonderful memory is hearing my dad sing when he was milking the cows in the evening," she reflected. "He loved farming and the outdoors, so I think that my love for nature was inherited from my dad."

Sister Virginia has served in the ministries of Education and Administration in the Diocese of Ft. Wayne-South Bend and Gary in Indiana and in the Diocese of Belleville in Illinois. She was President of Ancilla College from 1983-1995 and a Provincial Leader of the Poor Handmaids from 2005-2013.

A prolific writer, Sister Virginia is the author of *The Rhythm of the Waves: 150 Years of Ministry of the American Province of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ*. "Understanding more and living out of the awareness of creation spirituality continues to be the challenge our loving God shares with me each day," she said. "Ministry is always about bringing the presence of God into that part of the world in which we are blessed to live."

Sister Virginia currently resides at Catherine's Cottage on the PHJC campus in Donaldson and serves in the ministry of prayer.



Sister Virginia Kampwerth





As the Poor Handmaids move into their internationality, Sister Annemarie looks toward the future of the PHJCs: "We have a wonderful international congregation. One of my hopes is that we will continue to grow in our understanding of being an intercultural group of Sisters and appreciate the gifts that each Sister brings to our congregation."

POOR HANDMAIDS OF JESUS CHRIST 60TH JUBILEE

***CONGRATULATIONS,
SISTERS!***

**WE HAVE A WONDERFUL
INTERNATIONAL CONGREGATION**



NOURISH TO FLOURISH: JOURNEY OF FAITH AND TRANSITION

By: Weslee Aristor, Retreat Development Manager



It is an honor to share my remarkable journey of trust and faith that has led me to become the New Retreat Development Manager at Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center. My life took a transformative turn in 2015, a pivotal year that changed my plans and opened my heart to a greater purpose.

After I graduated from the University of Florida in 2014, eagerly awaiting my LSAT results to embark on my journey to Law School, little did I know that a New Year's Eve visit to my sister's church would set the stage for a divine encounter. I received a pamphlet that contained a 15-day guided prayer booklet, accompanied by fasting, a practice I had never engaged in before.

Feeling a strong urge, I committed myself to this fast, following the prayers diligently. Within those 15 days, I heard a resounding thought that reverberated through my being: "You aren't meant to go to law school." Initially, I questioned this divine message, especially when my LSAT results arrived, and my score was more than sufficient for admission. However, the inner voice persisted, guiding me away from my well-planned legal path.

Placing my trust in God's plan, I declined my best friend's encouragement to still apply and continued to fervently pray for guidance. Through introspection, heartfelt discussions with my relieved yet hesitant parents, and personality assessments, I discovered a deeper calling within me; the desire to help youth before they enter the juvenile justice system.

I then took a bold step and visited a local high school without an appointment, seeking insight from a high school counselor. Surprisingly, a young woman allowed me to delve into her journey and role as a counselor. It was a perfect match for my passion and skills, and I realized that Orlando offered one of the nation's top counseling programs.

In a whirlwind of activity covered in God's favor, I prepared myself for admission to the Master's in Counselor Education program at the University of Central Florida. While initially intending to focus solely on school counseling, I decided to pursue courses in both Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling. During my studies, I embarked on a life-changing study abroad experience in Botswana, Africa, where I lived at a boarding school with middle and high school aged students in an impoverished area.

This experience changed my life and I am forever grateful for this month that enriched a soul-stirring encounter. I extended my African travels and had a conversation with God at the top of Table Mountain that changed the way that I saw myself when I took a Solo trip to Cape Town. I realized the importance of disconnecting from the everyday cycles and noise of life, and in retrospect my passion for retreats was birthed. In addition to my prayers and biblical readings, I began to frequently take time to quiet my world to heal, to hear, and to recharge with the Holy Spirit.

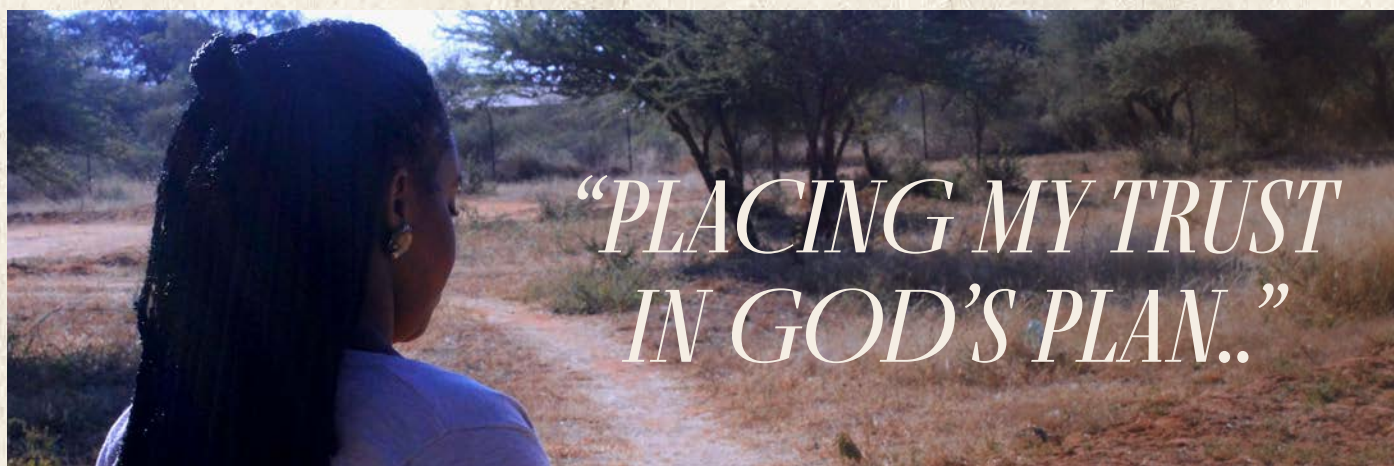
After graduating, I dedicated myself to serving as a high school counselor for 3.5 years, pouring my heart into my students, and I began community groups sharing my knowledge of mental health teachings while encouraging contemplative practices. I found myself fulfilled and comfortable in my everyday life.

Then, in December 2021, during one of my routine spiritual practices, I embarked on a fast, unaware of the profound change it would bring. Once again, I heard that familiar voice of God whispering, "Your time as a high school counselor has come to an end."

Wrestling with the idea of resigning in the middle of the academic year, I sought solace and guidance in the book of Matthew, finding reassurance in the fishermen's willingness to follow Jesus, relinquishing their plans for a greater purpose.

With faith and peace in my heart, I took the leap, trusting that God would care for my students and guide my next steps. During this courageous period of transition, I devoted myself to a year of service; building the ministry that God had placed upon my heart. I became more involved in my church community by becoming a minister, became a new godmother to two beautiful blessings, and continued group, and individual sessions with those seeking healing and freedom through the Holy Spirit. You have to understand my shock when I came across the Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center position in October of 2022 and sensed God's calling to venture out of state! After a period of contemplation, a December 2022 fast confirmed the path God had set before me, I accepted the position in another act of faith and moved from Florida to Indiana on February 8th 2023.

Now three months into my position, I am thrilled to share my story and testimony of trust and faith as the New Retreat Development Manager at Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center. My purpose is deeply rooted in helping others experience healing and forge healthy relationships with themselves and others. Through the power of forgiveness, awareness, and the Holy Spirit, I aim to diminish shame, guilt, and embarrassment, allowing individuals to embrace a newfound sense of freedom, love, and joy in their lives.



RELINQUISHING PLANS FOR A GREATER PURPOSE

Retreats hold a special place in my heart because they provide an essential opportunity for individuals to disconnect from the noise, lies, and misconceptions that surround us daily. This is why I was honored to serve our PHJC staff in our Nourish to Flourish event, which was my first experience showcasing my passion and skills. Five departments came together, and we spent the morning in the greenhouse connecting with fellow co-workers as we serviced the gardens. As we uprooted potatoes, pulled weeds, and picked peas, we not only cared for the garden but also embarked on a journey of self-reflection. Later that afternoon we uprooted the unhealthy norm of emotional numbness and planted seeds of emotional security and freedom, embracing a new definition of authentic expression to better our work atmosphere and everyday relationships.

Similarly, the Building a Faith Community in the LGBTQ+ retreat scheduled for later 2023 is another meaningful endeavor. It provides a safe haven for individuals seeking to explore their faith without the burden of guilt or shame led by our very own Andrew Jennings. My ultimate goal for those who participate in a retreat hosted by Lindenwood is for them to leave feeling encouraged and more accepting of who they are. I aspire to inspire them to move forward on their journey of personal growth, nurturing an overflow of love for themselves and others. Each retreat I curate whether virtual or in-person will be meticulously designed to create unity, acceptance, and personal transformation. I believe together, we can embark on a journey of healing, building stronger connections, and rediscovering the joy and authenticity that lie within us all and it is my honor to bring this through Lindenwood.



EMBARK ON A JOURNEY OF SELF- REFLECTION





Integrated approach to caring for **MOTHERS AND BABIES** **FOUND AT ST. JOE FOUNDATION**



By Mary Tyndall, St. Joe Community Health Foundation

Allen County, Indiana, in the northeast corner of the state, faces significant challenges when it comes to the health of mothers and their babies. Annually 5,000 babies begin their lives in the county and more than half of those are children of single mothers, many of whom are struggling to make ends meet. These circumstances lead to a high infant mortality (death) rate. One zip code located in Allen County has one of the highest rates in the state of Indiana.

Because challenges such as high infant mortality rates are complex and interrelated, the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation takes a holistic approach to addressing them. The Foundation supports organizations and programs committed to helping vulnerable populations with health and wellness needs in Allen County, Indiana. One priority area is prenatal and infant care, and several strategies are employed to address the needs.

First, the St. Joe Foundation supports local non-profits that address the needs of pregnant women and children in a variety of ways. Some of the services that are funded include: case management and counseling for pregnant teens, free parenting and wellness classes for pregnant women, access to medical interpretation for pregnant women whose first language is not English, healing and recovery services for mothers with substance use disorder, housing and counseling for homeless pregnant women, education on safe sleep practices and good nutrition, doula care and many more. Because lasting solutions demand an integrated approach to combating poverty and restoring dignity to those who are marginalized, the St. Joe Foundation also works as a convener to bring together health care institutions, government agencies and non-profit organizations so they can share information and approach services in collaborative manner.

"Through our Prenatal and Infant Care Network (PIC), the St. Joe Foundation helps improve services to pregnant women and children by offering educational and networking opportunities to local care providers enabling them to be better informed and to coordinate services to ensure all mothers and babies are cared for and respected," says Meg Distler, executive director of the Foundation.

A third strategy includes distributing free Allen County Prenatal & Infant Care Resource Directory responding to over 8,000 requests annually. The 40-page booklet shows how to access over 90 free or low-cost resources and services available to new families.

Collectively, these integrated strategies strengthen our community partners and most importantly, new families. For example, since 2015, the St. Joe Foundation has significantly supported Lutheran Social Services of Indiana's Education Creates Hope and Opportunity (ECHO) program. Most recently, the Foundation awarded ECHO a \$20,000 grant during the fall 2022 grants cycle for case management services. Below is a story ECHO recently shared to demonstrate the impact of the work they are doing with the help of the St. Joe Foundation and others in the community.

"When Christine began working with the ECHO program, she was homeless and looking at housing options for herself, her child, and her boyfriend.

They eventually had to move in with family. This continued to be a very stressful time for Christine. She was taking online classes to complete her high school education but began to fall behind. Christine realized that online classes were not the best option for her and turned to her case manager for guidance. With the support of her family and case manager, Christine made the decision to go back to school, in person, for the remainder of the year.

Christine had many questions around parenting, healthy relationships, going to college, and living on her own. Christine and her case manager discussed her parenting skills and set goals. Her case manager was able to provide parenting education as well as child development information. In addition, the case manager made sure Christine's baby was up to date on his doctor well-check appointments and immunizations. Christine learned how to work on her time management skills and set goals on how she could prioritize her responsibilities. Her case manager helped her with financial literacy, education, and life skills to keep her focused.



MOTHERS AND BABIES AT ST. JOE FOUNDATION

“ONE PRIORITY AREA IS PRENATAL AND INFANT CARE, AND SEVERAL STRATEGIES ARE EMPLOYED TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS”

Christine faced many challenges but was determined to graduate from high school. Her case manager encouraged her to stay focused on school, and they began to talk about college. ECHO staff also maintained regular contact with Christine’s guidance counselor to ensure she was staying on track with her credits and classes.

Due to the support and encouragement she received from the ECHO program, Christine graduated from high school, found a job in the healthcare field, and is in her second semester of college. She was able to purchase her own car while working, going to college, and raising her son. She still meets with her case manager, and they continue to work on her parenting goals while balancing college, work, and developing the skills necessary for long-term stability.”



In 2003, with the encouragement of two of its volunteer Board Members, the St. Joe Foundation also began partnering with the Women’s Care Center. A grant from the Foundation in the fall of 2022 supported the construction of the ultrasound room at a new location on Lake Avenue. The space had to be completely re-wired and re-plumbed and a new exam table and cabinetry were needed. The ultrasound machine, which is only a couple years old, was moved from the Wayne Street location.

With the new, larger location, Women’s Care Center hopes to reach more individuals like Alexis. Alexis made 12 visits to Women’s Care Center for education and support during her pregnancy and after her baby Gianni was born.

Alexis shares that “It was so nerve wracking coming for my pregnancy test. My biggest fear was being a mom. I didn’t know how I would bring another life into this world when I felt barely able to take care of myself. But Gianni is what I

“I FELT SO LOVED”



needed. I couldn't do it for myself, but I could do it for him. He is the best thing ever. I want to give him everything, so I'll do whatever I need to.

"The ultrasounds were always a relief and made me feel more capable. The ultrasound tech would always tell me how perfect his little features were. I felt this was a place where I could be myself without any criticism or judgment. I felt understood.

"I didn't feel like a mom until he was born. As soon as he got here, everything was different. He is everything to me. The Women's Care Center was the highlight of my pregnancy. It was the happiest time in my pregnancy. I felt genuine joy and was excited for him to get here. I felt so loved. I just kept looking around and saying to myself, 'all these people really care about me and this baby that I am about to bring into the world.' I really felt special. At the Women's Care Center, I met a lot of generous people who were so willing to put me on a path to be a good mother."

“I MET A LOT OF GENEROUS PEOPLE WHO WERE SO WILLING TO PUT ME ON A PATH TO BE A GOOD MOTHER.”



AFRO-LATINO AND AFRICAN FAITH, JUSTICE, AND DEVELOPMENT

By Sister Nkechi Iwuoha, PHJC

The Workshop and Festival called Re-existing! gave continuity to a process that began in 2019 with the conference Resist! in Mexico City. It received the support of different regional groups and organizations.

This international cultural encounter fostered listening and thinking together about the aesthetic narratives of the peripheries of the Global South and her people scattered all over the world. And they continued to create new paths for life from diverse spiritualities, creativity that emerges as a “new style of life with a Gospel flavor” (Fratelli Tutti 1).

At this workshop, Sister Nkechi Iwuoha, PHJC spoke about the need to enter dialogue and listening sessions based on Fratelli Tutti and synodality through a process of encounter between people who are bonded through ancestral roots and the common experience of being the dismembered body of Christ. The conversation Sister Nkechi offered focused on the bonds between Africa and Afro-Latinos who still struggle with identifying as Black. In Pew’s survey, only 18 percent of Afro-Latinos said they were Black, compared to 39 percent who identified as white. One in four Latin Americans identify themselves as people of African descent. They are one of the largest, yet least visible minorities in the region, comprising over 133 million people, the majority living in Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, and Venezuela.

Despite significant gains over the past decade, Afro-descendants still are overrepresented among the poor and are underrepresented in decision-making positions, both in the private and the public sector. Sister Iwuoha’s lecture helped to highlight and deepen conversation in the region’s empirical understanding of the drivers behind the persistent exclusion of the afro-descendants, as one of the steps to design appropriate solutions. In this way encouraging social movements, communities in

diverse resistances and people from academia around the knowledge and spiritualities that inspire the care of our common home and the precarious life of our brothers and sisters in these times of systemic violence that assumes the form of a “socio-environmental ecological crisis” (Laudato Si’ 139) to get involved. As a result, Sister Nkechi proposed an exploration of the lived synodality of the people of God located on the peripheries and crying out for life.

Sister Iwuoha’s presentation invited people to be aware that each cultural narrative contributes to a better understanding of the wisdom that emerges as the expression of diverse peoples in their cries of anguish and celebration of the presence of the God of Life.

The workshop engaged people in a roundtable discussion group and was made up of people from different countries, social, popular movements, organized civil society, academia, media and journalists.





SPREADING THE SEEDS

PHJC Associates Celebrate 40 Years

By Libby Riggs, Director Associate Community



The Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ took the Vatican II proclamation "THE CHURCH OF THE LAITY" to heart when they began discussions on looking into how to invite and involve laity as a part of the church and as part of their community. This year marks the 40th Anniversary of the Associate Community of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ that encouraged the call of laity to connect, to lead and to thrive.

What began as family and friends of the Sisters who helped with the annual bazaar, has transformed over these 40 years into a deeply spirit filled group of individuals who feel called to the shared commitment of living the charism of Saint Katharina through the four core values of Simplicity, Community, Openness to the Spirit, and Dignity and Respect for all. What started those many years ago as "The Associate Program" evolved into a more fitting title for the relationship known today as "The Associate Community".

Over the many years, Associates have been drawn to the charism in many different ways, through lived experiences, relationships, and a shared desire to connect and journey with people searching to deepen their faith and provide service to others. Associates realize that their commitment is not simply friendships with, but rather a further call to enveloping these values in all aspects of life. It also calls forth through our differing vocations ways in which we can live out our commitment to these values much differently than a vowed woman religious. This calls us in our vocations as single or married, mothers and fathers, grandparents, co-workers, community members, parishioners, and many others to not only live into these values

but to carry the light of the attentive ear and courageous heart of our foundress, Saint Katharina.

We often use the visual of a dandelion spreading seeds in the wind. As each of us go about our daily lives, each moment, each encounter, is a call to spread the seeds of love and compassion. Thanks to the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ and to our foundress Saint Katharina who envisioned and named "Associates" in her early years – all who planted the seeds of today.

Forty years (and even the hidden grace of Covid – ZOOM use) have opened possibilities and expansion. It has allowed our Associate Community to broaden to 140 members in seven different states. Associates gather in small groups throughout the year in various ways but then are also invited to come together a couple times each year to the motherhouse as community to learn with and from, to pray together and support one another. These community gatherings enrich and enliven us. The energy we share in community with one another is rejuvenated and allows us to return to our lives with a renewed sense of purpose and connectedness. Not all Associates are Catholics, therefore in many ways, it allows a sense of taking our faith outside the four walls of any one church to connect with and serve all of God's people.

Congratulations to another PHJC milestone – Happy 40th Anniversary Associates!

If you are interested in learning more about the Associate Community, please contact me at lriggs@poorhandmaid.org, PHJC Associate Office, PO Box 1, Donaldson, IN 46513, or by calling (574)-935-1733.

IN LOVING MEMORY

Sister Catherine Ann Schwemer

Sister Catherine Ann Schwemer, Poor Handmaid of Jesus Christ, died on February 22, 2023 surrounded by Sisters and family.

As the oldest of eight children of Donald and Gloria Schwemer, Sister Cathy was born in Chelmsford, Essex, England. Her parents, brother Johnny and sister Debra all preceded her in death. Sister Cathy is survived by her sisters Jackie Graham, Betty Homan, Vicki Schwemer and brothers Donald and Timothy, as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Sister Cathy entered the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ on August 17, 1986 and professed vows on September 3, 1989.

She received an Associate's Degree from Muskegon Business College, a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies from Mundelein College in Chicago and a Masters of Arts in Pastoral Study from Washington Theological Union. With a focus on collaborating with partners and serving in whatever ways, she was needed, her varied ministries included the following:

Pastoral Associate/Director of Religious Education at St. Mary's Church in Trenton, Illinois; PHJC Associate Director; Coordinator for Sisters; Executive Director of North American Conference of Associates and Religious; and Marketing and Program Coordinator at Lindenwood Retreat Center. Most recently, Sister Cathy offered freelance retreat work and spiritual direction.

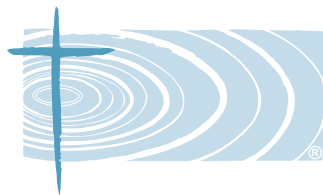
Sister Cathy expressed her spirituality and creativity as an iconographer and often gave the reflective images of saints to others as gifts. Her icons helped us pause and pray.

When reflecting on her Silver Jubilee in 2014, Sister Cathy said, "I have been blessed by the sharing of my life with a variety of people, family, friends, community members, co-workers, and mentors. Each one has left an imprint on me as I have journeyed through my life; some good, some painful, all teaching me and molding me into the person I am today."

Memorial contributions to the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, P.O. Box #1, Donaldson, IN 46513 or on poorhandmaids.org.



Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ



Partners in the work of the Spirit

Word Gathering

Ancilla Domini Sisters
PHJC Communications
P.O. Box 1, Donaldson, IN 46513

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Donaldson, IN
Permit No. 17

HONORING LOVED ONES IN OUR MEMORIAL PRAYER GARDEN



CREATE A LASTING TRIBUTE

Preserve cherished memories with a personalized Memorial Brick in our tranquil Prayer Garden. For \$100, secure a 4" x 8" brick, honoring loved ones with up to three lines of lettering (12 letters per line). Or choose an 8" x 8" brick for \$175, offering more space for a unique tribute. Your contribution maintains the garden's beauty and brings solace to all.

www.poorhandmaids.org/prayergarden