

The Good News

Autumn 2011

Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity
Holy Name Province, Inc.



CORPORATE COMMITMENT TO PEACE

The Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, gathered in June of 2003 at Stella Niagara, N.Y., discussed ways they could make a more visible corporate commitment to peace.

As a result, the Provincial Council (governing body of the Sisters) has been empowered to financially support the work of Franciscans International and Pax Christi USA and each sister and associate of the community is encouraged to do the same.

The leadership may endorse documents for peace written by Franciscans International, Pax Christi USA, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the Franciscan Federation and/or the other provinces of the Sisters of St. Francis throughout the world. To spread this message, materials on peace are included in the various publications of the Congregation.

Sisters and associates make personal commitments to working for peace in their ministries. The leadership of the sponsored institutions of the Sisters are challenged to implement this commitment.

Newly Elected Provincial Council Installed August 21, 2011

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of Stella Niagara, New York, held our 21st Provincial Chapter from June 27 – July 1, 2011. We gathered together in chapter to pray, discern directions for the next four years and elect new leadership. The movement of the Spirit was truly evident during our time of chapter. Our days were filled with many blessings, much goodness, and joy.

The leadership team was elected for a four-year term beginning August 21, 2011.

Edith Wyss, osf	Provincial Minister
Diane Gianadda, osf	First Assistant
Mary Serbacki, osf	Provincial Councilor
Nancy Zelma, osf	Provincial Councilor



(L-R): Sr. Nancy Zelma, Sr. Diane Gianadda, Sr. Edith Wyss,
and Sr. Mary Serbacki.



Dear Friends,

During the time of the Feast of Thanksgiving, I am reminded of one of my favorite quotes: “Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow”.

Melody Beattie

How often our good God has provided for all that we need! This past summer the sisters gathered in Chapter and as a result of our discussion, prayer and discernment, the group affirmed proposals that will help us “create a vision for the future.” Though only four sisters are elected as the provincial council, there were a significant number of sisters willing to serve in this ministry...“what we have is enough, and more.” At our closing prayer, each sister and associate committed herself in specific ways to continue to live out the theme of the Chapter, *Being Gospel...Bringing Hope*.

The annual Tribute Dinner on October 12 was a wonderful gathering of friends and family members of the sisters. The chair, Frank Offermann, reflected on his time at the cadet school at Stella Niagara from 1935-39. He said that it was the happiest time in his life, second only to his 62 years of marriage to his wife, Anne! We are so grateful to all those who came to share in the feast as well as so many others who supported the “Be An Angel” Dinner, by being just that...an angel.

This will be a year of remembering and celebrating for us as we commemorate the 25th anniversary of our Associate Program in 2012. We are so grateful for those men and women who believe that their own Christian life is enhanced by sharing with the sisters in the spirit of Francis of Assisi, Clare of Assisi and Mother Magdalen. The lives of the sisters have been richly blessed by the presence, sharing and enthusiasm of the associates!

Know that we are very grateful to you, our friends, as we share our “Good News” and hold you and your intentions in prayer.

Peace and all good,

Sr. Edith Wyss, ofc



Current Provincial Minister Sr. Edith Wyss, bottom left, is seen with past provincials: (L-R) Srs. Corinne Halsema, Dorothy Mueller, Claudia Steger, Mary McCarrick, Christina Pecoraro and Paula Fox.

Peacemakers Abound

By Jean Becker, OSF

When I think of peacemakers, the first person who comes to my mind is our beloved Francis of Assisi. He lived in harmony with creation and knew in fire and wind, earth and air, his brothers and sisters. At a time when the church was granting indulgences to Crusaders for killing Saracens, Francis journeyed to the Saracens, met with their Sultan and talked with him in mutual respect and openness. Francis considered his encounter with a leper, to whom he gave alms and embraced in a kiss of peace, as a major conversion in his life.

I also think of modern peacemakers like Oscar Romero, Archbishop and Martyr. He gave his life for the sake of peace and well-being for the poor and often violently assaulted people of El Salvador. With sentiments similar to Francis', he wrote, "If we could see Christ as the needy one in each human figure so shamefully thrown by the roadside, we would pick him up like a medal of gold to be kissed lovingly."¹

I think of Rosa Parks who, as Martin Luther King said, "was anchored to her seat on the bus by the accumulated indignities of days gone by, and by the unbound aspirations of generations yet unborn."² This risky non-violent

action landed her in jail yet sparked a revolution for peace and justice.



I also think of YOU—Benefactors, Graduates of our schools, Volunteers who help in our ministries, Friends, Associates and Sisters. I am inspired by the ways you bring peace through your countless acts of love, forgiveness, generosity and joyfulness in family, workplace, church, community and beyond. As advancement director, Barbara Johnson, says of her encounters with you, "It's the warm hospitality of the people that immediately breaks down barriers, opens dialogue, heals past wounds if they were there, and forms friendships." What a wonderful testimony to your peacemaking!

Finally, I think of the one who inspires us all, Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who reached out to lepers, welcomed the outcasts, healed and reconciled, forgave and loved. He is the one who assures us that we have what it takes to be peacemakers for he says, "Peace I leave with you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give; this is my gift to you."³

1. Oscar Romero, The Violence of Love
2. Martin Luther King, Jr., Stride Toward Freedom
3. John 14:27



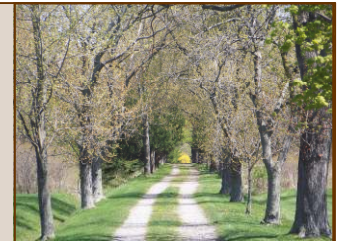
When you look at the inner workings of electrical things, you often see small and big wires, new and old, cheap and expensive, all lined up.

Until the current passes through them there will be no light. That wire is you and me. The current is God.

We have the power to let the current pass through us, use us, produce the light of the world. Or we can refuse to be used and allow darkness to spread.

Mother Teresa

With God In Another Way



SISTER KATHLEEN (Mary Catherine) COST

October 25, 1914-June 6, 2011

A graduate of St. Rose School and St. Aloysius Academy in New Lexington, Ohio; St. Joseph's Teachers College, Buffalo (B.S.Ed) and St. Bonaventure University, Olean, NY (M.Ed), Sister Kathleen was a dedicated elementary school teacher and principal for over forty years. Then for 22 years she joyfully served as a pastoral minister at St. Leo, Columbus and at Sacred Heart, Charleston, W. Virginia. Her ready smile, her spunk, her unwavering interest in current events and her love for card-playing endeared her to all.



SISTER HELEN (S. Mariella) FLOWERS

August 20, 1914-June 24, 2011

A native of New Lexington, Ohio, Sister Helen professed her first vows at Stella Niagara in 1935. After her first teaching assignment at St. Francis Indian Mission in South Dakota, she went on to teach for over fifty years in many elementary schools in New York, Ohio, West Virginia and New Jersey, serving as principal in several places. In retirement, Sister Helen kept in contact with a number of former students. When her eye-sight failed, she continued in her gentle way to show interest in the world around her.



SISTER CLARA (Cecilia) GALLAGHER

July 13, 1927-June 27, 2011

Born and raised in Buffalo, Cecilia entered the novitiate of the Sisters of St. Francis at Stella Niagara in 1946. As Sister Clara, her teaching career took her to New York, New Jersey and West Virginia. She fulfilled a life-long missionary dream when she taught and ministered for six years (1965-1971) in Bukoba, Tanzania, and was instrumental in making it possible for girls to attend classes. Even as her health failed in her final years, Sister Clara retained her calm, gentle manner and her ever-present smile.



SISTER MARCYANN (S. Jonathan) KOWALCZYK

June 6, 1938-July 14, 2011

Born in Buffalo, Sister Marcyann was educated at St. Joachim's and Stella Niagara Seminary. She earned a B.S. at Rosary Hill College (Daemen) and an M.A. at St. Bonaventure University. A high-school history teacher for over fifty years, forty-two of them at Sacred Heart Academy, Sister Marcyann was known for being strict but fair, with an engaging sense of humor. She was an avid swimmer and cross-country skier. The many SHA students and alumnae who attended her funeral attested to their deep love and respect for her.

Annual "Be An Angel" Tribute Dinner Offers New Opportunities

Fun and fabulous are fitting words to describe this year's event held on October 12th at The Buffalo Club, in Buffalo, New York.

161 guests filled the hall to bid on fabulous auction items, including a week's vacation at a luxury beach front home in North Carolina! The silent auction was the most successful to date and overall, the event raised more than \$56,000.



Frank Offermann, honorary co-chair with his lovely wife, Anne, provided humor and reflection with his opening remarks noting his years as a Cadet at Stella Niagara. Soon afterward, the friendly and efficient staff at The Buffalo Club served a sumptuous meal of autumn squash soup (so good!), assorted greens with herbed-crust goat cheese, pan seared



filet with shrimp and chef's vegetables, and finished with the Club's famous cinnamon ice cream and hot fudge! No waist line went away unhappy on this fine night!

New this year was a chance to make a donation to sponsor activities for our sisters in the Health Center. Each activity was chosen by the sisters as something they would like to do when the opportunity becomes available.



The activities include: an afternoon excursion with lunch to the Botanical Gardens in Buffalo; a big band matinee concert at Artpark in Lewiston; Saturday night pizza and wings social; a summer lunch outing to the Silo—a local Lewiston favorite; an afternoon entertainer to visit the convent; a picnic at Fort Niagara's park; an excursion to the Niagara Falls Aquarium; afternoon high tea parties! If you would like to help sponsor any of these activities, please send your tax deductible donation, payable to the Sisters of St. Francis Development Fund, to the Office of Advancement, 4421 Lower River Road, Stella Niagara, 14144.

All of this will help continue to provide quality care in a Franciscan tradition to the infirm and elderly sisters in the Health Center at Stella Niagara. Thank you and may God's blessing be with you!



Guests enjoyed cocktails and hors d'oeuvres from 6 p.m. until 7:15 when they were called to the dining room. Stunning fall centerpieces, donated by Atrium Florists of America, were featured at each table, and music was provided by pianist, Larry Eason.



A Change for the Women's Respite Programs

Sister Diane Gianadda, Director of the Women's Respite Programs, announced that due to her election to the congregation's Provincial Council, she will need to have a much smaller role in the Women's Respite Program.

Starting October 1st, **Teresa Maciocha** is assuming the role of program coordinator, taking on major responsibilities of leading the Women's Respite. Teresa is a social worker with a deep commitment to our program. Her welcoming presence, creativity and caring spirit will be a gift to the women who participate in this unique experience.

The Women's Respite Programs serve low-income single mothers, grandmothers raising their grandchildren, and women with cancer diagnoses. They are referred by various Western New York agencies and supported by grants and donations.

The slogan of the program is so appropriate: **Restoring Hopes, Refreshing Bodies, Renewing Spirits**. Here's what some of the guests had to say about their participation:

"I am raising a 10-year-old with ADHD and sometimes it gets to be very challenging. My daughter was murdered in 2009 and that has turned our lives upside down...being here this weekend and sharing some of the other grandmothers' stories, I felt I'm not alone..."

"The program helped me relax and calm down and helped me come out of my depression. The place is beautiful and relaxing. All the activities are wonderful. I was able to talk to others with similar problems. I was able to reconnect with God..."

For more information, please contact
(716) 893-0931
womensrespite@yahoo.com
www.womensrespite.wordpress.com



Not wanting to wait until their 50th year, the **Stella Niagara Class of 1964** held a reunion at Stella Niagara in May.

Classmates came from across the country and as far as

Puerto Rico to enjoy each others' company and reconnect with the sisters. After Mass and a delicious brunch, Sr. Mary Michael caught up with Patricia McSweeney Swindells and the class posed for photos on the staircase.



SUMMER REUNIONS



What began as an idea for a Class of '74 reunion soon blossomed into a general reunion for all alumni of **St. Joachim's School in Buffalo**.

It was a hot day in July as friends and classmates, along with many of the sisters gathered on the lawn to exchange stories and renew friendships. Spouses, children, parents and friends were all united through the common bond of this very special school.

FRANCIS CENTER IN NIAGARA FALLS, NY



In addition to the after school Help With Homework Program, each Friday from October through May, Francis Center provides sessions in the fine arts to children living in the inner city of Niagara Falls. Funded by a grant from the Bryce Family Foundation, the program allows children who have difficulty with reading and math in school a chance to “shine” in these simple art classes. This year these sessions were given by Christy Truesdell, an artist and teacher from the Carnegie Art Studio in North Tonawanda. The lessons in painting consisted in self portraits and still life. The children also did leaf printmaking, monoprint landscapes, block printing, repeated image prints and geometric shape printmaking. Papier-mache masks were a particular favorite of the children.

On Thursday, May 19, Francis Center had its annual Open House and Children’s Art Show where their work was matted and beautifully displayed. The children provided a short musical program consisting of songs on character development learned during their music sessions. Everyone was proud of the children’s accomplishments!

July was a busy month at Francis Center because of the Summer Enrichment Program, made possible through grants obtained from the Almar Family Foundation and the Martha Beeman Foundation. Running weekdays from 9-3, the morning program was devoted to reading and language arts reinforcement and the afternoon to arts and crafts, indoor and outdoor games, gym and swimming activities.

The children who came were referred by

teachers from three large inner city schools, each reporting poverty levels of 80% based on federal government lunch and breakfast eligibility guidelines. The referred children were doing poorly in reading and writing skills; therefore, it was especially important for them to continue reading and writing during the summer so they would not lose the skills they had acquired during the school year.

Teachers tell us that one of the primary reasons children have difficulty reading and writing is because they have such limited life experiences. Many of these children come from single parent, low-income families where education is not always a priority due to complicated family situations. Others come from families and neighborhoods where drugs and violence are prevalent, or they are living in situations where there is limited verbal and intellectual stimulation.

The program helps to broaden their limited experiences by providing a series of fieldtrips and correlating these with age appropriate books and writing activities, plus carefully focused lessons. These experiences include trips to the Aquarium and to the Zoo, a special lesson on coyotes at Whirlpool Park and live theatre at Niagara University, visits from a poet, live animals, and Kids on the Block (a program presenting people with special needs). A ride on the Maid of the Mist, compliments of the Glynn Family, was a special treat. In addition to Sister Betty Neumeister, Sister Diane Bernbeck and Dolores Kosinski, an associate of the Sisters, assisted with these lessons. Another associate, Noreen Nirschel, came to talk to the children about service animals and how to care for pets.

ARTS IN MEDICINE

Sister Caroline Golden's "Art Kart" strolls up and down the Comprehensive Treatment Unit (CTU) unit of University of Miami Health System. The cart is described as a Santa Claus sack of art supplies, and is an integral part of Sister Caroline's "Arts in Medicine" program. It's also part of a growing, nationwide movement that uses art in the health care system to enhance the experience of patients, families and even staff.

Sister Caroline first became interested in Art Therapy after seeing the positive effects of art on people who are homeless, as well as those who have been through the hurt of divorce, loss or grief. This prompted her to attend an intensive summer certification program at the University of Florida so that she could begin arts in medicine activities in a health care setting. She did this even though she already held a B.A. in Art Education and an M.A. in Religious Education.

Comments from patients include, "The Arts in Medicine program brings me joy in the midst of a dreadful day," and "Caroline is very caring...and helps get you into a calm, spiritual feeling, which is so important in this disease."

Her "Art Kart" takes her to approximately 80 patients in the CTU each month. The goal is for the program to help them deal with the emotional and spiritual conflicts that come with a cancer diagnosis.

"My hope is that as they need it, people will come to a peace within, a deep peace, and it cannot happen with words," says Sr. Caroline.

Margaret Suppa, the head of Hospital Programs, says: "Sister Caroline has been invaluable in spreading the message of hope and healing through art."



Maureen Harris, ofc, 2011 Franciscan Federation's Peace Award Honoree

In her role as Spiritual Care Outreach Coordinator for the Central Buffalo Cluster Parishes in Buffalo, N.Y., Sister Maureen exemplifies the criteria for this year's honoree. When, in 2009, she began her work for the parishes of Buffalo's poor East Side, Maureen provided and developed spiritual care and outreach on behalf of the sick and shut-ins.

Moving forward, she has sparked interest and enthusiasm in the area of evangelization, working with and facilitating the developing relationship among area clergy, pastoral staff and other key personnel. She is involved with both the Faith Focus Committee and the Family Support Network project of the Catholic Urban Outreach Network. This Network was formed so that there could be a Catholic presence in the neighborhood where parishes were closed.

Maureen also supports and works with residents of Gerard Place, a local LCWR-sponsored project which provides transitional housing and supportive services to homeless, single-parent families. In addition, Maureen has worked for many years with formation of our province associates. Through all her efforts Maureen truly strives to "empower others to become more."



MINISTRY APPEAL HELPS MANY

Each year, the Sisters of St. Francis mission appeal supports a different ministry in which one of our sisters is involved. In 2011, we asked our friends to help with two ministries: Providence Place Franciscan Ministries in Pike County, OH, and the West Virginia Institute of Spirituality (WVIS) in Charleston, WV.

As we expected, our donors responded swiftly and generously.



Sr. Christina Kraus shares her gratitude for your help and offers this update:

Life has become more difficult in Ohio, especially in poor rural areas of the state.

For many years we have made efforts to provide for the basic needs of large families living in small villages and hallows of Appalachia, USA. Thanks to the generosity of the "Povarello Fund" we managed to secure a place in Pike County which we supplied with food, clothing, and furniture. Our center was located in the rear of an old school building which had been closed and replaced. We rented a section of the building and opened it to those with needs. All went well until the heating system failed. We continued to deliver but began looking for another place.

One of our friends, Libby Jackson, a helper of many years, made a contact with a small church in the Waverly area where our ministry began many years ago. We made a trip to visit the small church whose pastor offered us the use of his building for our outreach. He stated that the members of the small parish no longer had personal funding for the needy who frequently came for help. They had been praying for six months for help for these people. He stated that we were God's answer for their ministry. Last Sunday he announced that "the nuns are coming" and the poor would be assisted.

Part of the ministry involves taking food, clothing, and supplies to the community that live under the bridge of the Scioto River. These people are homeless and live in total poverty.

Our new outreach is taking shape.... We are eager to discover what can be done. Finding a place was due to Libby Jackson who has lived in the area her whole life. Because of generous donations of the Development Fund we plan to sponsor outreach to all of the needs of Pike County. We are grateful to all who have encouraged and assisted us in this Franciscan venture. We serve in the name of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity. May God reward you!



Sr. Molly Maloney offers her own words of gratitude to our donors' generous response to our appeal:

Greetings to you from the hills of West Virginia. The donation from the 2011 Ministry Appeal arrived today, on the Feast Day of the Archangels! Coincidentally, it happens to be the Feast Day of the Congregation of Divine Providence, of which Sr. Carole Riley, CDP is a member. She is also the Executive Director of The West Virginia Institute for Spirituality

We are grateful for the generosity of our donors which enables us to continue to provide spiritual resources and spiritual formation for the people in West Virginia as well as those who come for spiritual enrichment from so many places within and out of the country.

Through the co-operation and charity of our donors, the words of our General Constitution are enlivened; "Walking in the footsteps of Jesus, Francis recognized the dignity of every person. He could serve both sultan and leper with the same gentle courtesy... Whether we minister among people who are materially poor, those who are impoverished by false values, or those who are made strangers and outcasts by society, it must be in this spirit." GC 19

Our benefactors are remembered in our prayers of thanksgiving. Heartfelt gratitude!

Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness ~ Seneca

TRANSITION AND TRANSFORMATION

At various stages of our lives, the Lord works in us in different ways.

General Constitutions #31

We ask ourselves, how are we transforming from this creation to the new creation?

People who bury the glowing coals from the day's fire by covering them with ashes during the night, have a quick starting fire in the morning. Benedictine Sister, Joan Chittister, uses this image for religious life in America today.

In Holy Name Province, the coals are glowing brightly. Sisters are keeping the values of our founders alive, and preserving the coals which will shape the equality of the new fire of religious life for the future. They are doing this in the face of a rising median age, as they continue to serve the people of God in whatever way their strength allows. Declining membership due to deaths and few new vowed members, does not stop them from entering into or supporting even new ministries.

Sisters are also involved in mutual companionship with our Province's Associate Members who are helping to keep the coals burning. There are close to one hundred Associates who are spread across all areas of our Province. Women and men, single and married, they minister in their families, their churches and beyond. In many cases they care for the neediest of God's people such as immigrants, elderly, physically-challenged, the sick and the dying. In love with our Franciscan charism, they witness to us through their commitments, and bring us joy as we walk together in the footsteps of Jesus.

Written by Sr. Jean Becker for the Fall 2011 issue of *Glance*, a publication for the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Generalate—Rome, Italy.

Franciscan House of Discernment and Hospitality



Are you desiring an experience of Franciscan community life?

Are you open and willing to enter into an experience that will assist you with your vocation questions?

Do you desire a life that challenges you to live the Gospel and your Christian vocation in a deeper way with other women?

Do you desire to discern if vowed religious life is for you?

If your answers are YES...Contact us!

Sister Theresa Schneider, OSF
613 Enfield Road
Columbus, OH 43209
614-725-0784
stheresa48@woway.com

Mass cards in honor or memory of a loved one are available from the Advancement Office by calling 716-754-2193.

The recipient will share in the prayers of the Sisters including a remembrance in Masses offered in the Sisters' Chapel at Stella Niagara, N.Y.



+ Peace
and all good

CENTER OF RENEWAL RETREAT & CONFERENCE CENTER

4421 Lower River Road, Stella Niagara, NY 14144

2011-2012 Retreat Schedule

To register or request further information, please call 716-754-7376, ext. 2.

February 22, 2012: “Lent, a Time of New Beginnings and Contemplation day retreat with Sr. Karen Allen, OSF (Pre-register by 2/8/12)

March 23-25, 2012: “Touching the Master’s Cloak: Healing through Faith-Imagery” weekend retreat with Fr. John Mergenhagen. (Pre-register by 3/9/12)

April 3, 2012: “Dying and Living the Paschal Mystery” day retreat with Sr. Karen Allen, OSF (Pre-register by 3/20/12)

May 21-27, 2012: Preached Retreat Week with Fr. Tom Hartle, OFM and Sr. Colette Rhoney, OSF. (Pre-register by 5/7/12)

June 7, 2012: “Awareness of the Holy” day retreat with Sr. Karen Allen, OSF (Pre-register by 5/24/12)

November 2-4, 2012: “Be Still & Know” Contemplative Prayer weekend retreat with Fr. John Mergenhagen. (Pre-register by 11/19/12)

ADVANCEMENT DIRECTOR’S VISIT TO WEST VIRGINIA RECALLS CLOSE TIES WITH SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

By Barbara Johnson

“The warm hospitality of the people” was so evident when I visited West Virginia in May. The sisters have a long history here, and it’s a joy to meet our alumni and visit the ministries. I particularly connect with what I feel are all things Franciscan: peace, faithfulness, charity, hospitality, and kindness.



Photos, clockwise from top left: Statue of Francis at the Big Laurel Learning Center; Sr. Gretchen Shaffer, CSJ, Sr. Jeanne Laufersweiler, Bob Miller, and Sr. Molly Maloney at Big Laurel; Joe Cook’s

“Chipmunk Clubhouse;” Charleston Catholic alumni, Guy Erwin and Joe Cook; Barb Johnson with Bobbie Casey; Bob Miller, Barb Johnson, and Srs. Joan Marie Coleman and Frances Kirtley.

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under compulsion,
for God loves a
cheerful giver.*

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2 Corinthians 9:7



JOIN THE CLUB! Giving even a small amount each month can add up in a big way.

We invite you to join with us in ministry through our monthly giving club. These gifts provide a steady income to assist the sisters with their greatest needs. It's so easy to do—simply contact the Advancement Office at 716-754-2193 and provide your credit card information, the ministry you wish to support and the amount you would like to donate each month. We'll take care of the rest and you can be assured that you may make a change at any time.



Sister Christa Blersch had the following to say when questioned about this photo which appeared in the dining room at Stella Niagara during the summer's Jubilee celebrations:

In the old days (Pre-Vatican II) it was a custom for the Postulants to have a picnic at Niagara Falls before our reception into the Congregation.

On June 17, 1959, this group put their names in a small bottle and threw it over the Falls — symbolizing a transition from our old life to a new one.

On Reception Day in August, we received new religious names.

Current sisters in this photo are: Sr. Christa Blersch, standing with bottle, Sr. Kristen Corcoran on left and Sr. Geraldine Warthling, 4th from right.