

The Marianite

A publication from
The Marianites of Holy Cross

*United with
Mary standing at the
foot of the cross, we,
Marianites of Holy
Cross, are apostolic
religious, women of
prayer and compassion.*

*Our mission,
energized by our life
in community, is to
incarnate the love and
compassion of Jesus
Christ. Called to be a
prophetic presence in an
ever-changing world,
we resolutely stand with
those who are excluded.*



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3. Sr. Juanita Wood and an immigrant family
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SSP photo

a message from our Congregational Leader



DURING THE 1849 CHOLERA EPIDEMIC IN LE MANS, FRANCE, FATHER MOREAU WROTE TO THE FAMILY OF HOLY CROSS:

"Prayer is like a health zone which we must set up around our homes and schools. Moreover, it can heal souls. It is this spirit of prayer which gives me confidence that the plague will spare Holy Cross, which is so visibly under the protection of Divine Providence. Put your confidence in prayer, therefore, but at the same time, do not neglect the precautions recommended by doctors and other officials."

Dear Friends,

Today in the last day of March! Where has the month gone but more especially has it really been almost three weeks of "not knowing". The Stay at Home mandate has certainly offered time for reflection and a glimpse into contemplative living. Lately, I have come to believe that there are numerous opportunities in these days. Wasn't that true earlier?

How we look at life and the world has changed, I believe. I find gift in a slower pace and the sound of the birds. Guess I never took time to listen!

I have spent time in my office going through files and remembering. I need to hold on to this practice!

There is a schedule that we follow for prayer, meals and sharing that we hold to as sacred time. May we nurture what we have learned!

There is an awareness of the gift of friendship and a need to be in touch. Let us continue to reach out in the future.

Simple living is possible!

Prayer is a necessary part of life that calls us to search our inner being!

"My life is not about me. It is about God. It is about a willing participation in a larger mystery. At this time, we do this by not rejecting or running from what is happening but by accepting our current situation and asking God to be with us in it. Paul of Tarsus said it well: 'The only thing that finally counts is not what human beings want or try to do, but the mercy of God' (Romans 9:16). Our lives are about allowing life to 'be done unto us,' which is Mary's prayer at the beginning and Jesus' prayer at the end."

(Taken from a Reflection by Richard Rohr)

May we say with Jesus and Mary- Thy Will be done,

Sr. Ann Lacour, MSC
Congregational Leader

EMAILS NEEDED: CONNECT WITH THE MARIANITES!

We are trying to build our email database in order to stay connected with you. If you would like to receive monthly messages from the Marianites, please submit your email to: adminasst@marianites.org



Attentive to the Needs in an Ever-Changing World

The Legacy Taskforce : Sisters Judith Gomila, Marjorie Hebert, Kay Kinberger, Beth Mouch, Sue Pablovich, Chris Perrier and Regina White working with the Congregational Leadership.

Commitment, Compassion, Courage; Let ministry continue!

Bridging two continents...

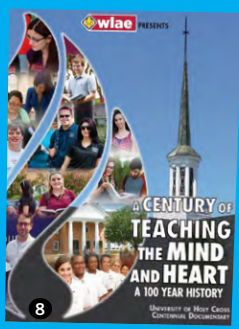
IN PRÉCIGNÉ, FRANCE:

Précigné is a tiny village south of Le Mans that has and will continue to play a part in the Mission of the Marianites of Holy Cross. Originally a seminary, the Marianites were gifted a group of buildings that served as the Motherhouse and a site for ministry. In 1955 the Motherhouse was moved to Le Mans, France and ministry continues in Précigné to this day.

Over the years the Marianites ministered to the excluded at the Tuberculosis Care Facility and later Nursing Home which became Centre Médico-Social Basile Moreau caring for people of all ages. The Medical Center remains in Précigné and has moved to new buildings. Recently, a collaborative project of the village, the Academy of Music and the Marianites was begun that will give life to 13th century buildings; housing local homeless elders along with the Academy of Music which will move from Liesse, France. Plans have already begun for the village, Medical Center and the Academy to share services.

This intergenerational project will provide a future for the village but more especially a home and a future for God's people. To learn

1. *Our Mother Mary, Solitude, LeMans*
2. *Sr. Beth Mouch at St. Jude Center, New Orleans*
3. *Logo, Our Lady of Prompt Succor Nursing Facility, Opelousas*
4. *Historic buildings at Précigné, France*
5. *Sr. Barbara Schreier with students Trenton Catholic Academy, NJ*
6. *2019 Holy Cross International Session attendees*
7. *Sr. Marjorie Hebert with a Padua Community Services client and teacher*
8. *University of Holy Cross poster 100 years' anniversary*
9. *Celebrating our legacy in Decade of Days*
10. *Sr. Nell Murray and parish school of religion youth, St. Rita, Alexandria*



Decade of Days: 2020
 January 20
 (Feast of Blessed Basil Moreau) —
 January 29
 (Anniversary of Death: Mother Mary of Seven Dolours)
**AUTHENTIC, INTEGRAL,
 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT:**
Our Challenge! Our Joy!





Daily Prayer to Stop Human Trafficking

MARIANITES OF HOLY CROSS
The Missionary Sisters

WE PRAY...

- ...for the women and children that will be sold today.
- ...for the enslaved restaurant workers in our community.
- ...for those who survived for they will show us courage and hope.
- ...for the young men and women who are enslaved in the garment industry.
- ...for the men who teach their sons to be respectful of women.
- ...for ourselves that we recognize trafficking in our midst.
- ...for those who are abducted at sport's events.
- ...for caregivers and law enforcement.
- ...for those enslaved in agricultural fields, mines, and factories.
- ...for the boys lured into gangs who become pimps.
- ...for the conversion of hearts for those who are traffickers.
- ...for the children exploited through pornography.
- ...for the victims' strength and resiliency.



more visit: Academie Musicale - www.academiemusicaledeliesse.fr and Basil Moreau Health Center - www.cmsbm.org
IN OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA:

In July, 2019 Sr. Kay Kinberger reminded the Legacy Task Force that the convent in Opelousas was designed to become an Assisted Living Facility when it was built in 2004-2005. The Leadership Team began dialogue with the Administrators and the Advisory Board members of Our Lady of Prompt Succor Nursing Facility. Today both the convent and the C'est La Vie Independent Living Facility are being evaluated as potential Assisted Living options. We know the need is there and we believe that in Opelousas where the Marianites are known and loved there is a responsibility to address current and future needs. A consultant, an architect and a committee began work on this project. But along came COVID-19 and all things were put on HOLD. What we will do in the future remains unknown but of this we are sure – the Marianites will address the needs of today with an eye on tomorrow...

In 1899, Mother Mary of Seven Dolors, our 1st Superior General wrote: "The cross is a sign of salvation; therefore, it must not be feared too much, nor should we complain about its weight, because it is a forerunner of the eternal glory we await. Here below let us suffer, since suffering is the way traced by Jesus Christ himself who was the first to pass this way; we have but to follow him. This path is sufficiently beaten down now- the saints have walked this way after Jesus".

1. Srs. Marlene Labbe and Charlotte LeBoeuf
2. Sr. Pauline Drouin, Burkina Faso, Africa
3. Sr. Gretchen Dysart promoting recycling
4. Sr. Marie Noel and Fr. Tony Rigoli at Reconciliation Service
5. Sr. Marie-Jo Gruau and Sr. Thérèse Lasne; Sr. Lorette Bigard in background, LeMans
6. Human Trafficking Prayer card
7. Extended Members (former Marianites) and sisters
8. Srs. Margaret Cronley and Vincent Dornbush, St. Mary's Assisted Living, NJ
9. Congregational Leadership: Srs. Renée Daigle, Ann Lacour and Stephanie Brignac
10. Sr. Joyce Hanks, Holy Angels Apartments, New Orleans
11. Srs. Immaculata Paisant, Rochelle Perrier and Fr. Charles Beniot, OSB

RECOGNIZING PATTERNS

My experience has taught me to trust stepping stones.

The stones behind me form my life's path. I do not see the stones ahead, for I have just arrived here.

I make this stone home, yet eventually I sense that something is shifting and time for change is near. I pay attention in prayer, asking God to show me the way – show me the next stone I am to inhabit.

After a while, it is time to pick up my foot, knowing I am not to stay here, yet not seeing clearly the stone I am to reach.

As surely as I put the question, the openness, the trust out there, God gives me the answer. I have been shown without a doubt what is mine to do, as daunting as it may seem.

And knowing that next stone is on the solid ground of God's providential care, I make the step.

The recognition of this pattern in my life is gift. While I sometimes feel in the dark and unequipped, my experience, my faith, my relationship with our All-loving God tell me that there will indeed be light for my first steps, and for all of my steps.

Renée Daigle, MSC

Sr. Renée Daigle is part of the Leadership Team of the Marianites of Holy Cross. She also serves as a Campus Minister at Southeastern Louisiana University where she has ministered since 2008. Sr.

Renée's article first appeared in (LCWR) *Leadership Conference of Women Religious' Spring, 2020 Reflection Journal: You Will Have Light for Your First Steps.*



These have been hard times for all of us! A guest column for the Times-Picayune/ New Orleans Advocate on April 2 by Tanya Tetlow, President of Loyola University New Orleans reminded us that we can draw helpful lessons from the tragedy of hurricane Katrina in dealing with COVID-19. (Reprinted with permission: The Times-Picayune | The New Orleans Advocate | Nola.com)

WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS, JUST AS WE DID BEFORE

Katrina prepared us for this, as tired as we are of being prepared.

Fifteen years ago we learned, the hard way, that it matters how quickly we break through the fog of denial and react. We learned that there are dramatic moments when the earth laughs at our plans (all of those important plans) and reminds us of the awesome power of nature. We learned humility. We learned that we cannot know what the future holds.

We had hoped never again to drag out that tired word "resilient," but that is our hard-earned scar tissue. The rest of the country has far less experience with having the rug pulled out from under them overnight. Most do not yet understand the sorrow, nor the strange joys, of going through an epic crisis with your entire community.

We remember the feeling of being dispersed and yearning for the preciousness of our community. This time, weirdly, we are separated from each other in our own homes, with the power still on and the sun shining. We reach out to each other now with technology that did not exist a decade ago, with social media and video calls, attempting to find connection in the midst of echo and frozen faces.

For those of us without access to expensive equipment and internet, we return to a time before air conditioning, sitting on the stoop and greeting each passing neighbor with new urgency. We've replaced our hugs with calling each other "boo" and "love" from a safe distance.

We reach out to each other reflexively because we understand — deep in our bones — that we are in this together. We know that the wounds we suffer will change us, and that we will lose people precious to us. We understand that full recovery may take years, but that we will recover. The struggle to regain our foothold, our economy and our community will require everything we've got. Again.

When the pandemic ends, as it will, we will have a surge of economic activity. Those who still have income to spend will support local businesses and musicians with abandon, desperate to make up for lost time and connection. But, it is important to admit, most of those economic losses will never be recovered, and those losses risk deepening our economic divide forever.

After hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, we worked to fix systems with a determination to learn from our suffering, to make it matter. Those cracks will now begin to break through the repairs we made, demonstrating the work left to be done.

For those not on the front lines of health care and public safety, for those who have more time on their hands right now than they ever wanted, let's start dreaming about the grassroots efforts we will found. Right now we are in the Cajun Navy phase, sewing homemade masks for health care workers. Soon we will move to the rebuilding phase, turning our energy to tackling problems that once seemed too big to solve. We've done it before.

And when we are able to come blinking out of our homes, whenever that blessed day comes, we will mourn those we have lost properly. We will hug everyone for months – our friends and family, the bus driver and the cashier at the grocery. Just like we did when we first got to come home after Katrina and Rita. And just like we did that night the Saints won the Super Bowl.

In the Winter 2020 issue of the *MARIANITE*, Sr. Kateri Battaglia shared her life story in an article entitled *Living a Grateful Life*. She told of her work with care providers of those suffering from Alzheimer's dementia. Below is a follow-up article.

HAVE COURAGE AND BE KIND

"Have courage and be kind" is one of those wonderfully memorable quotes that I have come to appreciate in my own life. If you saw the 2015 action version of the Disney film, *Cinderella*, you may remember those words spoken to Cinderella by her dying mother. Like Cinderella, it is good advice for all of us. It can have a way of soothing us in times of trials, pushing us through tough times, and keeping us believing that, with God's help, all things are possible.

If you are a caregiver and your life has been touched by a neurodegenerative disease called Alzheimer's dementia, you know how much courage and kindness it takes to support someone who has had a shift in the way he or she now experiences the world. I believe they are aware of the serious deterioration in their mental functions. With this progressive disease, their memory, language, orientation and judgment are being compromised. Every day, they face disrupted connections not only biologically but disconnections with the people they love. They need us to recognize them as whole persons, not demented persons. They need us to help them to better connect with the world around them and we need to find new approaches to better connect with them. So, where do we begin?

A place to start, although difficult, is to learn how to leave behind our need to ask questions, to fact-find and to try to force them into our reality. They now live in a different world where logic and reason are diminishing. Their emotions seem to take center stage and they need us to validate them. For example, when Josephine, a person with Alzheimer's dementia asks for her mother, instead of correcting her and saying, "your

mother died many years ago," you would validate her feelings by saying, "it sounds like you are missing your mother. Tell me about her."

Learn how to prepare yourself when communicating with persons with Alzheimer's dementia. Try to imagine yourself entering the unknown, a sacred space, with no agenda. There may be little or no conversation. You are just sitting with them, holding a hand and sharing time and space. Also, it is good to remember that persons with Alzheimer's dementia are doing less, remembering less and saying less. They just want to be and there is so much to be said about the value of being. They could teach us a lesson or two.

Try not to compromise their deep inner silence by laying your burdens on them. They need you to be fully present to them and to try to fully listen to their needs. When you are able to meet their needs, while offering reassurance, you will feel more peaceful. However, if their needs are not being met, they become anxious and their anxiety can lead to catastrophic behavior.

This is what we don't want to happen. So, allow them to express themselves. Be quiet, listen intently and be kind. Remember, "Listening in silence is not passivity; it is whole attentive presence." (Nancy Pierce: *Inside Alzheimer's: How to Hear and Honor Connections with a Person Who Has Dementia*.)

Only when we have learned to calm our minds will we begin to understand the words of Christine Bryden, *In Dementia Beyond Drugs*, when she states that persons



Mirvat Addi, Doctoral Student in Counseling at UHC meets with Sr. Kateri.

Elena Cambre, Poydras Home; Alida Wylar, Marianite Health Care Coordinator; Amy Sprout, St. Margaret's at Mercy; Sr. Renée Daigle, Sr. Kateri and Shameka Royal, Anointed Hands CNA at a two-day training meeting.



with Alzheimer's dementia are making "an important journey from cognition through emotions into spirit." They are no longer connected to a world dominated by memories, facts and logic. Instead, having retreated from an intellectual existence, persons with Alzheimer's dementia now move to a place of inner peace and spiritual freedom. They can now connect heart to heart rather than mind to mind. Just think how rewarding it would be if we understood how to make these connections with persons with Alzheimer's and related dementias.

Caregivers need support when caring for a person with Alzheimer's dementia. Sadly, it is not always easy for some people to ask for help. They may feel that doing so is backing away from their responsibility as a child, a spouse, a sibling, or a significant other. They may think that no one else can do

it the way they would do it, or that they won't be happy if someone else cares for them. Instead of putting so much pressure on yourself, remember that caregiving is an ongoing, longer-term commitment so LET OTHERS HELP YOU, even if you only allow them to do a small thing at first. Just know that reaching out to others doesn't mean you're not doing a good job, instead it means that you'll be able to continue in that role.

Without a doubt, Alzheimer's and related dementias takes a toll on caregivers. So, if you want to be a healthy caregiver who is less stressed, learn to take care of yourself. Find out what community resources are available to you; learn relaxation techniques; eat healthily; get physical activity; find time for yourself and become an educated caregiver.

Above all, have courage and be

kind and remember, in the words of Maya Angelou, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

For the past eleven years, the Louisiana legislature has mandated dementia training in all nursing homes, assisted living and independent living facilities. Sister Kateri has a state-approved Dementia Train-the-Trainer program that serves more than forty facilities. Her hope is that more facilities will take advantage of her training program. In addition, she has valuable information about the neurodegenerative diseases under the umbrella of dementia; how to communicate more effectively with persons with dementia; and how to reduce disruptive behavior as well as learning the importance of self-care. For more information, contact her at 2200 Halsey Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70114.

Expectant Madonna

ex·pect·ant: adjective. Having or showing an excited feeling that something is about to happen, especially something pleasant and interesting...

In 1944, Caryll Houselander published her book, *The Reed of God*. Within its pages she depicts the intimately human side of Mary, Mother of God, as an empty reed waiting for God's music to be played through her. Houselander's meditations are rich and reveal more than what you might typically consider; reflection on the pre-natal Jesus in the womb of Mary is just one example

For years, a statue of the Expectant Madonna resided at Holy Angels' Convent in New Orleans; sent long ago as a gift to the Sisters in Louisiana by the Marianites in France where the Congregation began in 1841. Many who saw her seemed mesmerized by this unusual but profound portrayal of Mary, expectant and full of grace.

Today the original statue has a place of reverence at the Congregational Center in Covington. A replica of the Expectant Madonna is available for purchase for/by those particularly affected by her: mothers, grandmothers, mothers-to-be, new mothers, women with problem pregnancies, and those desiring new life in their family relationships. Also, in a much wider sense, the Expectant Madonna speaks to all women and men confronted by the mystery of God's designs in their lives.

May Mary, under the title of the Expectant Madonna, draw you closer to her Son, Jesus.

To make inquiries or to place an order, please contact Virginia Randazzo at 985-893-5201 ext.229.



I know the plans I have for you... Jeremiah 29:11

Sister Regina White, MSC

Somehow throughout my life's journey whenever I wound up in some kind of "ditch" - a place or situation in which I was uncomfortable, there was always someone who would enter in and provide a ray of light /encouragement/insight/help/support to pull me up and out to another level of clarity and acceptance.

One such time was the day I entered the Marianites of Holy Cross. It was September 8, 1959 when my Mom and Dad, my sister Arlene and my little brother Richard embarked on a memorable trip from my family homestead on Staten Island, New York over the Outerbridge Crossing and on to the MSC Provincial House in Princeton, New Jersey. It was a day filled with very mixed emotions. I was excited. I was scared. I was sad about leaving my family, relatives and friends. I was also happy about starting a new adventure.

It was time to go. With my Dad at the wheel and my Mom beside him, Arlene and Richard joined me in the back seat. As I watched the familiar landscape disappearing from view I was wondering to myself: "Do I really want to do this? Is God actually calling me to enter the CONVENT? I don't really know the Sisters who live in Princeton. I have no idea what to expect or if I have what it takes to make it. Maybe I should postpone this day for a while longer? After all, I always dreamed of getting married and having a large family like the one I grew up in. Maybe I'm not so sure this life is for me."

My pondering was abruptly interrupted when an animal ran into our lane and my Dad swerved to avoid hitting it. Well, the car wound up in a ditch on the side of the road a few miles from the Provincial house. We were shaken up, to say the least! We were in the midst of farmland and not sure how far we were from finding help. I was visibly upset. (Of course we didn't have cell phones at that time.) How could I let Mother Victor, the Provincial, know why I was going to be late? What a great first impression! Luckily a farmer who was driving a tractor saw us and went back to his farm and returned with ropes. Between the farmer and my Dad, they managed to get the car out of the ditch in a position where it could be driven instead of towed to Our Lady of Princeton. I was so relieved! I was imagining it could have been quite a sight to behold. The Sisters waiting for the new postulant to arrive and instead there's a parade with a small tractor pulling a car up the convent road with the five of us still inside!

Even though we arrived safely, I was embarrassed. I just wanted to forget about the whole entrance thing and go back home. I figured this was my sign from God. However, my Mom and Dad encouraged me to give

it a try. All the Sisters were happy to see us. Thus my journey in the convent began. Only in hindsight did I sense that the kind farmer was probably an "angel in disguise"!

After three years of initial formation as a Postulant and Novice I was prepared for Temporary Vows and ready to move on to active ministry and a new living experience. For the next twenty-two years I ministered in various educational positions as a teacher, associate principal and guidance counselor. I then left the world of academia to begin parish ministry. The timing was right; I needed a new lease on life.

During interviews with the pastor, he outlined goals and plans to get to know the parishioners and to create a vibrant faith community. He wanted to be sure I was on the same wave length. He explained that I would be responsible for the coordination of various ministries with lay volunteers. I was fine with what seemed like a long list of ministries. However a red flag arose when he mentioned daily visits to parishioners in the hospital. It was at that point I quickly raised my hand. "I don't do hospitals! That is the one area I prefer not to handle." He asked me to explain.

I told him that ever since I was a high school sophomore I dreaded going to the hospital. On the day my Mom was due to come home after giving birth to my youngest brother, my Dad asked me to go along to pick them up. I was very excited! When I looked into the nursery window the nurse pointed him out. All I could see was his tiny face. He looked so precious. Then we went to see my Mom. She was in great spirits and anxious to get home. All of a sudden I started to feel very uncomfortable with the heat, the sounds, the whole hospital environment. When the nurse brought

Sr. Regina greets children during a visit to Burkina Faso





With so many white capped, black robed nuns around, it took Richie White of Staten Island, a while before he recognized his big sister. Mom convinced him that it really was Janet, with a new outfit, a new name and most important, a new life. The occasion was the vestition of the Marianite Sisters of Holy Cross at Our Lady of Princeton, Princeton, New Jersey. These Sisters staff St. Louis Academy on Staten Island and French Hospital here in New York. (SSP Photo)



S. Regina with her mother, Emily White

Clipping from a local newspaper on the occasion of Sr. Regina receiving the habit.

the baby in to prepare him for his trip home, I took one look at him and I passed out cold! Apparently I caused quite a commotion and I actually left the hospital in a wheelchair! What a big help! Needless to say I never lived it down! From that time on I avoided visiting hospitals and would only do so when absolutely necessary!

After patiently listening, the pastor shared some practical ways to approach the patients and encouraged me to give it a try. I agreed and was hired. As time went on I became more comfortable and confident with each visit. I realized I had to focus on the patient and not on myself! The multiple experiences I had visiting the hospitals re-enforced my interest in pastoral care. Little did I realize at the time that this was paving the way for future hospital ministry. My pastor helped me "to get out of the ditch of fear" and discover a hidden potential. I then took part in a collaborative Holy Cross ministry and community experience, and a teaching assignment with the Sisters of Mercy before finally pursuing CPE.

I was accepted for a fulltime supervised internship in a Clinical

Pastoral Education program based at NYU Medical Center.

This very intense and demanding experience strengthened my desire for hospital ministry. Verbatim reports on patient visits were pulled apart to critique how encounters were handled in order to improve skills in listening, pastoral presence and staying with people in their suffering. Weekly theological reflections, attending lectures, presenting a major case study to medical staff, along with supervised patient visits were part of the internships at a medical center, a psychiatric hospital, and a rehabilitation center. Upon completion of my internship I was hired to be part of the Pastoral Care Departments at a hospital and at a cancer center.

In 2007 while participating as a delegate to our Congregational Chapter in New Orleans my life took a very unexpected turn. I was elected for a five year term as First Assistant to Sr. Suellen Tennyson, our newly elected Congregational leader. This involved leaving my beloved diocesan ministry and local community in New Jersey and moving to New Orleans where the Congregational Offices were located. Needless to say I was anxious about all that was involved with this position. My "YES" meant this "yankee" from New York was moving South! Lots of prayer and spiritual direction, along with the assistance and patient support of

the Sisters helped me to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I made up my mind to try my best to enter in, to listen, to learn each step of the way what was involved in administration of an international Congregation. Since our Mother House, La Solitude du Sauveur, was located in Le Mans, France, I was looking forward to interacting with all our sisters and experiencing the rich cultural diversity in France, Canada, and United States.

My return to New Jersey in 2012 led me, once again, to pastoral ministry and to ministry with the bereaved, homebound and hospital pastoral care. When I opted to leave my staff position I continued ministry on a volunteer basis up to the present time.

Henri Nouwen once wrote: "Every human being has a great, yet often unknown GIFT – to care, to be compassionate, to become present to the other, to listen, to hear and to receive. If that gift would be set free and made available, miracles could take place."

My experiences have created many miracles in my life as a Marianite ...

- *Each place I was assigned to provided challenging life-changing situations and growth.
- *All the people I ministered to and with and befriended over the years taught me about faithfulness, love and resilience.
- *The varied educational and pastoral experiences were sources of enrichment and professional empowerment.
- *The letting go, being stretched and beginning over again and again provided multiple transformations.
- *I have been sustained by PRAYER, my Sisters in Community, my family and forever friends through the ups and downs ("ditches") of my life.
- *I am humbled and filled with gratitude as my journey as a Marianite of Holy Cross continues.

msc|associates

A Conversation with the Brahams



LOVE IN EVER-WIDENING CIRCLES

When Laura and John Braham accepted our Associate Steering Committee's invitation to be featured in this issue of *The Marianite*, we asked them what they'd like to share with our readers...

Laura began by telling us that she was born at Opelousas General Hospital and was raised in Lawtell, Louisiana. After graduating from St. Edmund High School, Eunice, she attended Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama and the LSU Medical School in New Orleans. After completing her residency in Family Medicine in Lake Charles, Louisiana, she returned to Opelousas to practice Family Medicine at The Family Clinic.

"I was born in Manchester, New Hampshire," said John. Since my father worked for Delta Airlines, we moved a number of times, finally settling in Atlanta, Georgia. After graduating from high school I also attended Spring Hill College. I began my teaching career in Jefferson Parish and then moved to St. Louis Catholic High School, Lake Charles. I also taught one year at St. Edmund in Eunice before finally landing at Opelousas Catholic School where I am currently teaching Theology and am serving as Campus Minister at the school. I also coach football, golf and softball. I have been at Opelousas Catholic School for seventeen years."

With her "wife/mama genes" obvious, Laura continued, "John and I have been married for almost twenty-four years and have three wonderful children, Madeleine (19), John Paul (17) and Mary Claire (12). We could do a book on the joys of parenting and the juggling that family life requires!"



Marianite Associates attending a retreat in Opelousas



The Braham family

"While attending St. Edmund's, I developed a wonderful friendship with Sr. Philip Schexnayder who taught me French" Laura says. "We kept contact including my time in Medical School in New Orleans. I visited Sr. Philip often at the Our Lady of Holy Cross (today UHC) and later at St. Joseph Convent. When I returned to practice medicine in Opelousas at The Family Clinic, I began to see many of the Marianites as patients. I have been on the Board at Prompt Succor Nursing Facility for many years and have continued to work with Sisters Kay Kinberger and Stephania D'Souza with various projects. I love going on the retreats that are offered there and I now proudly serve as a Marianite Associate."

"Laura introduced me to the Marianite Sisters" said John. "I found them to be amazing women who had a strong desire not only to be examples of faith and demonstrate unique love of the cross, but I admired their willingness to reach out to the surrounding community to assist those in need. Teaching Theology at Opelousas Catholic School, I learned of the rich history the Marianites shared establishing our school, the hospital and St. Landry Church. It has always been a desire of mine to reincorporate the Marianites into the education system of the school they helped establish. The school dedicates part of 'Founder's Day' to the Marianites and includes them in our celebration. We

have also started a program with our Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors for helping with Prompt Succor Nursing Facility. Pre-COVID 19, every Thursday, we brought a class over to play games, dance and visit with the residents. Marianites help organize these activities for the students and residents and we have a blast. Just this past year I made my commitment to become a Marianite Associate."

They continued, "We have always had a great admiration for the Marianites and find it amazing how they totally give of themselves in order to make people feel loved, valued and appreciated. We both considered it a great honor to be asked if we would have an interest in joining the Associate program. Who wouldn't want to be a part of a group of amazing people – like the Family of Holy Cross - whose only desire is to make the 'ever-changing world' a better place and

do it in the mission of Christ of loving and serving as Jesus did."

Together the couple reflected on how they developed a bond of love and friendship with the many sisters of the Marianite Congregation. They adapted the phrase "badge of honor" to describe their Associate relationship and agreed that they both carry values deeply into their daily professional lives. "We want to share the message of love and hope that are modeled daily by Sisters," affirmed Laura.

As members of Our Lady Queen of Angels Parish, Laura and John help lead the Couples' Group which assists in children's liturgies as well as youth and family ministry events at the parish. John assists with high school religion classes giving presentations and motivational talks of faith while balancing the influences of the world around them. As Campus Minister at Opelousas Catholic, John orchestrates multiple faces of faith formation. A consultant for Our Sunday Visitor publishing company, John travels the country giving presentations which help teachers and catechists reach the youth in schools and church parishes.

Clearly, Laura and John continue to demonstrate love in ever widening circles beginning with a love of God and one another, embracing family and friends, professional ministries and the Marianites of Holy Cross.

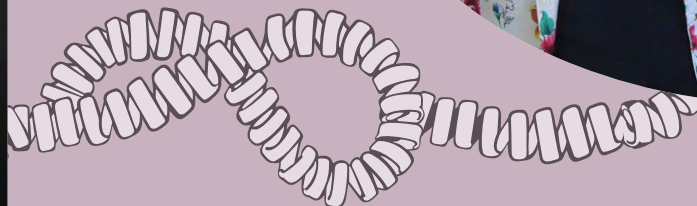


EDITOR'S NOTE:

Our editors decided to practice social distancing for this issue's photo.

We hope you will follow their good example.

Keep safe!



Stay in touch at www.marianites.org

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The Question of Fire

PENTECOST—MAY 31, 2020

Stories from the Old Testament recall that Moses before God experienced the burning bush. That bush on fire never burns up. Then there was a cloud by day and pillar of fire by night as the Israelites wandered the desert. Later came the fires of invasion, the torches of the enemy, the blazing ruins of a nation defeated.

In the New Testament, did you ever wonder what God was thinking as the followers of Jesus sat in that upstairs room waiting? God sent tongues as of fire—fire and not fire. Burning and not consuming like that bush. Maybe the tongues of fire offered a sign of God's leading and protection, as in the desert, no matter how grueling the journey or how rocky the way would become? Could God have been thinking of how fire had purged the people, burning off their idolatry and sinfulness, making them needy before their God?

"Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them..." Acts 2:3

Tongues of fire resting on each of them. What did it mean? Why send the Holy Spirit in fire?

Jesus had promised the Holy Spirit to make all things new. Pentecost was given to those first apostles and to us in order to comfort us in darkness and bless us with hope rather than despair. A new thing began that first Pentecost with the distribution of the Gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

So we remember the fire, God's passionate call to us, and the steady flame of Divine Providence. We know in confidence that no matter how painful our journey, God is tenderly shaping us into something new. Then, too, we are aware that with our personal talents and gifts, we must be "Tenders of the Fire" – fire that will dispel the darkness and transform the world. There's no question, that's the nature of fire.

Pentecost was given to those first apostles and to us in order to comfort us in darkness and bless us with hope rather than despair.