

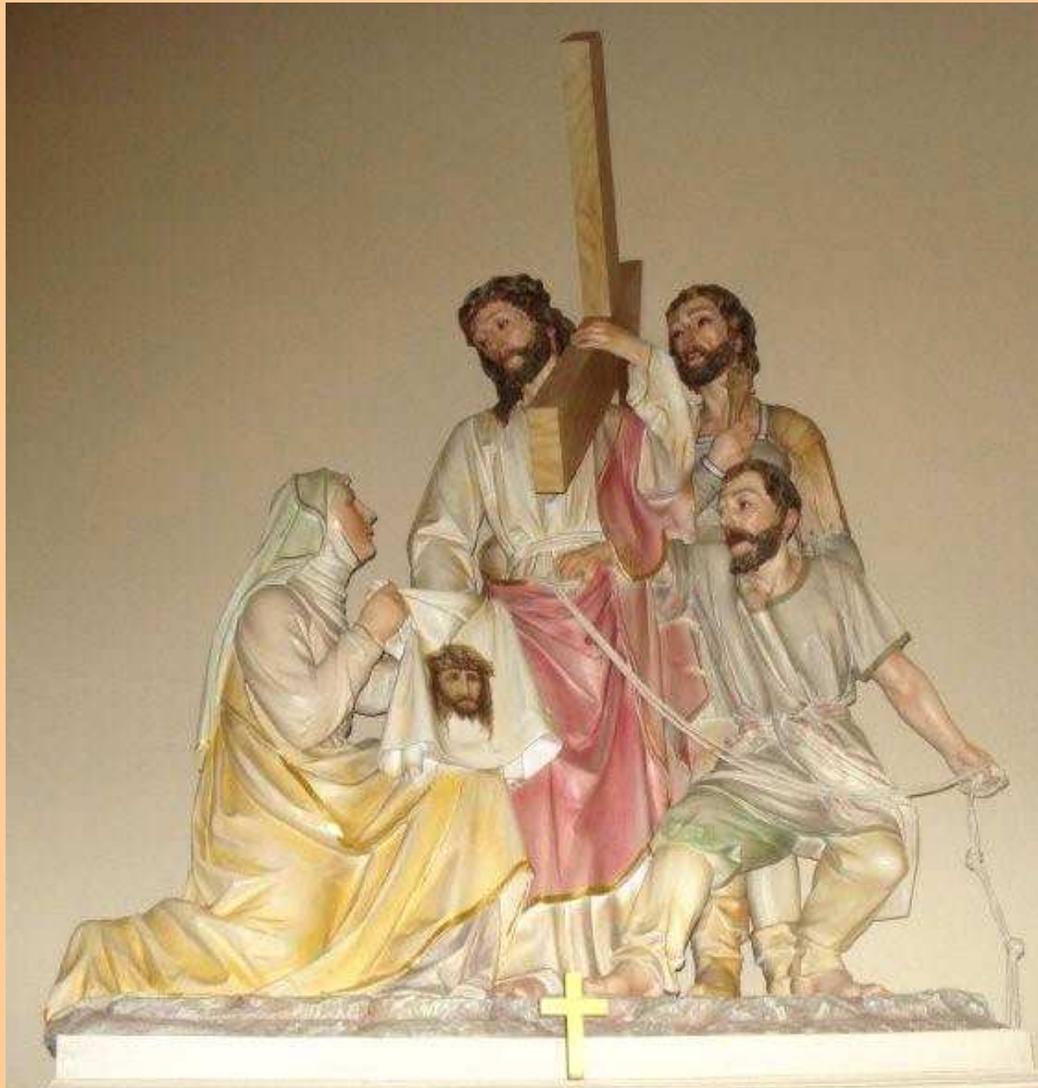
The Vine

Volume 4, Issue 1
Spring 2010

A newsletter of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

I am the Vine, you are
the branches. Whoever
remains in me and I in
him will bear much fruit,
because without Me you
can do nothing.

(John 15:5)



*We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You,
because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.*



*Letter from Mother Ryszarda Wittbrodt, SSCJ
Provincial Superior*

Dear Friends in Christ,

Time is a precious gift given to us and we often notice how quickly it passes. Since the last issue of our newsletter, much has taken place in the life and apostolates of our Province, some of which I would like to share with you here.

In observance of this Year of the Priesthood, our Province was pleased last October to welcome our local Ordinary, Bishop Joseph Adamec, Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown and his fellow priests for Evening Prayer followed by an Appreciation Dinner. During this celebration, our Sisters shared a poem on the priesthood (found in this issue of *The Vine*) as well as a play on the Curé of Ars, St. John Marie Vianney, patron of priests.

In December, we were privileged also to have as our guest Bishop Neil Teidemann, CP, Bishop of the Diocese of Mandeville, Jamaica, where three of our Sisters are serving as missionaries working in the areas of education, catechesis, and health care.

Regarding health care, like our John Paul II Manor in Cresson, Pennsylvania, our Sisters in Kamesznica, Poland serve the sick and elderly at our John Paul II nursing home. Our Sister Rafala Golonka came to our Province and visited some Polish communities in Pennsylvania and Michigan to promote this apostolate and

the building of their new addition. We are grateful to all who responded so kindly in receiving our Sisters. Additionally, at Our Lady of Consolation Parish in Philadelphia a concert was held for this cause, organized by our Sr. Mary Daniel Jackson with the Emmanuel Chorale and through the kindness of the Pastor, Father Dennis Carbonaro.

Also at the end of this past year, our great joy was to see the opening of a new house of our Congregation in a special

With greater awareness and conviction, we can claim anew Christ and His Kingdom

place chosen by our Lord, Paray le Monial, France, where St. Margaret Mary Alacoque became God's instrument in promoting the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, source of God's infinite love for all of us.

At Christmastime, we shared the tradition of the Polish Christmas Eve *Wigilia* supper with some of our friends as well as with the Franciscan Friars of Loretto, Pennsylvania who serve at our Provincialate and novitiate houses.

With the arrival of the New Year with its plans and hopes, we look forward to keeping in touch with you to help each other with mutual prayer and support.

Among the good things to come, we anticipate the beatification of our late Holy Father John Paul II, recently declared Venerable by Pope Benedict XVI, and since Sisters from our Congregation were blessed to serve in the household of the Servant of God during his episcopacy and pontificate, we hope that many

of our Sisters will have the opportunity to participate in that celebration, hopefully in the very near future.

As we live this Lent and are reminded that it is a special time of conversion and meditation on God's love for us –particularly revealed in His Sacred Passion, one of the greatest experiences for me is the observance of the Holy Week Triduum and within it, the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday, when we have the opportunity to renew our Baptismal Promises. I always look forward to this moment when, with greater awareness and conviction, we can claim anew Christ and His Kingdom. May this time of Lenten journey be for all of us our answer to Christ's call, "Repent and believe in the Gospel" and may all of us come to the joys of His promises of salvation, in His victory of life over death. May God bless you always!



In the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

M. Ryszarda Wittbrodt, SSCJ

Mother Ryszarda Wittbrodt, SSCJ
Provincial Superior

The Cross is the pulpit of the Divine Master and the book from which we learn the ways of God and the Christian virtues.

~St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, Founder

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The Life of our Sisters in Wilmington, Delaware

In our past issues of *The Vine* we have been sharing with you about the life and different apostolates of our Sisters who are engaged in the areas of health care, education, parish ministry and mission. In this issue of our newsletter we would like to “take you on a tour” of our Sisters’ apostolates in Wilmington, Delaware where three of our Sacred Heart Sisters are serving in the Ministry of Caring, a non-profit, charitable organization which for the past three decades has been serving the poor and the needy.



During our Mother General’s visitation in Wilmington, from left: M. Ryszarda, M. Agnieszka Kijowska, SSCJ, Fr. Ron Giannone, Sr. Asst. Auxilia Felisiak, SSCJ

In the plan of God’s providence and through the kind invitation of Father Ronald Giannone, OFM, Cap., our Sisters came to Wilmington four years ago and presently reside at St. Francis of Assisi Convent, undertaking different works within the Ministry of Caring. Let us introduce them to you:

Sister Monica Marie Scodari, SSCJ serves as local superior for our Sisters’ community in Wilmington. Sister works as a teacher’s aide with toddlers, many of whom are from low income, single-parent families. She



Sacred Heart of Jesus Oratory, Wilmington, DE

helps with the children’s personal needs and training, practicing the alphabet, numbers, colors, and other activities with them. Sister spends much time playing and singing with the children, incorporating learning opportunities as much as possible. And, as all little children have need of love, much is provided.

Sister Margaret Mary Hill, SSCJ is a caregiver at Il Bambino infant care center. Babies are her specialty! Feedings, changings and quality time in holding these little ones are all a part of Sr. Margaret Mary’s day. This ministry provides working mothers with a safe and secure, loving environment to which they can entrust their baby during their workday. When Sister is not at Il Bambino, she fulfills other responsibilities at the convent.



Prayer sustains our work: from left: Sr. Mary Daniel Jackson, SSCJ and Sr. Superior Monica Marie Scodari, SSCJ

Sister Mary Daniel Jackson, SSCJ, as Director of Sacred Heart Oratory, Wilmington, is responsible for the operation of the Ministry of Caring’s Center for Evangelization. Her apostolat involves Liturgical preparation, scheduling and maintenance of sacramental records; preparation of the Sunday bulletin; outreach through visits to the sick in hospitals, private homes and nursing facilities; catechetical instruction for those in sacramental preparation and Scripture and faith sharing

opportunities for the residents of the homeless shelters and AIDS hospice; fundraising for the Oratory and various devotional practices. In addition, Sr. Mary Daniel is the music director of the Oratory and directs several choirs.

What is unique about our Sisters’ community in Wilmington – is the diversity of works our Sisters are ful-



Sr. Margaret Mary Hill, SSCJ at Il Bambino

filling under the patronage of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus at Sacred Heart Oratory and in the spirit of St. Francis. Babies, children, families, the elderly, the poor, the dying -- these are the ones our Sisters are called to serve in Wilmington, Delaware. By prayers and support, we hope that many will become cooperators in these undertakings, and we also hope for new vocations to join us so that we can expand the Kingdom of God’s love in this post and everywhere!

Your Hands

Poem dedicated to our priests in the Year of the Priesthood

Look at your hands, dear Father What is there you see? They are the hands of a little boy Who once was only three	Your hands pour water on a baby And release the soul from sin No longer licking batter— You touch vessels where Christ has been
That always tried to lick the bowl When mom was making cake The hands you traced at Thanksgiving When turkeys you would make	You trace the sign of sacrifice On the foreheads of the dying Your hands embrace the sorrowing And wipe the tears of the crying
Those same hands more than once Slicked back your teenage hair Or while gazing in the mirror Straightened your tie with utmost care	Each time you look in the mirror When you put on the vestments of Christ You prepare yourself for Mass And straighten your collar twice
These hands one day were folded When you recognized your call In silent contemplation You chose to give your all	Each Mass your anointed hands Hold the Anointed One Your hands created by God Hold the Creator and the Son
Your hands wrote your application To enter Seminary And you used them to take notes And write papers until you were weary	You spend so many long hours Writing the perfect homily Hoping to touch the hearts Of the Church, your family
Then came that awesome day While prostrate on the floor You rose again anointed Belonging to yourself no more	Now at each ordination Your hands rest on a young man's head The Holy Spirit rushes down As the sacred words are read
Your hands alone have no power They are but flesh and bone But they are the hands of Christ Consecrated to Him alone	But far more important Than all your hours of ministry Are the moments you hands are folded In silent reverie
The next time you use your hands Remember the Lord above Who uses your hands as His own In an awesome gift of His love	So lift up your hands, dear priest As we lift ours in gratitude with you That God may bless the sacrifice of your hands And by His Hand, your life renew

~Sr. Brigid Prosser

*Paray-le-Monial:
Place chosen by the
Sacred Heart of Jesus*

At Paray-le-Monial, France, the Visitation nun, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690) received the message and mission to spread devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Between 1673-1675, the Lord Jesus revealed to this humble religious the Mystery of the Love of His Heart and His call for humanity to respond to this love with devotion and reparation. He said, "My Divine Heart is so passionately in love with people that it can no longer withhold the flames of Its burning love."

St. Margaret Mary is honored by our Congregation as one of our patrons, particularly our model in zealously promoting devotion to the Divine Heart, so needed in our world since it proclaims the profound message of God's love for each of us.

In another of his apparitions to the Saint, the Lord Jesus said, "Behold this Heart that has loved men so much that It has spared nothing...in order to testify Its love; and in return, I receive from the

Nuns on Wheels Program

Would you like to donate a used vehicle...car, truck, van, as is? While we may need to sell it or trade it, this donation will be a great help to us and you can claim its value as a charitable gift and tax deduction to the extent the law allows. The Sisters will be grateful.

greater part only ingratitude." As Sacred Heart Sisters we are called to lead others, especially girls, children and youth, the elderly, sick and needy, to experience and respond to God's love.

It was our special joy then that on November 11, 2009 our Congregation opened a new convent in the very city where the apparitions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary took place. This convent will be primarily a place of prayer for our faithfulness to our charism and for more and good vocations. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be ever praised, adored and loved!

A Vocation Story

A vocation is a calling written deep within one's heart and quite difficult to express in words, yet I will attempt to express how the Lord in His mercy led me to the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I can't say I have a typical vocation story. Although I grew up in a good Catholic family on a farm in Southern Pennsylvania and was surrounded by others who were seeking and striving for God's will, my typical Irish stubbornness and a lack of trust in God took me literally around the world seeking His will before I ended up in Cambria County, Pennsylvania.

I can't remember when the thought first occurred to me to live my life completely for God; however, in first grade I distinctly remember my teacher reading the story of the woman in the temple



Sr. Maria Anna Mellody, SSCJ and Sr. Brigid Prosser in Washington, DC—March for Life

who gave a small coin to God which was all she had and I wanted so much to give God all I had. Over the many years of Catholic School, my heart gradually grew to love God more and more and I therefore desired to serve Him in whatever way He desired.

As often does, as I grew older, I allowed the noise of the world to drown out the voice of God, yet my burning desire to serve God was never extinguished and I became very involved in a variety of ministries both at Church and school. I filled my time serving the God whom I saw so distinctly in others. In high school I also got my passport and took my first international trip to Rome and Assisi. While in Assisi I fell in love with the *Poverello's* humble imitation of Christ and I prayed that God would "make me a Franciscan."

I had a great desire to imitate Jesus

in His missionary spirit and His healing ministry and so I went to Franciscan University of Steubenville (Ohio) to become a missionary nurse. The thought of entering religious life would come at times, but I had an endless arsenal of excuses for God. I am so grateful that God is patient with His children, but I am sure He got quite a few good laughs at my reasoning that I knew better than He did. At college, with the help and example of my peers, my prayer life began to blossom. The more I was filled

God took me literally around the world seeking His will...

with God's love in prayer, the more I needed to share that love with others through a total outpouring of myself. Again I immersed myself in service and spent Spring break every year on mission trips to New York city, Ecuador, and Mexico. The medical mission trips to the Amazon confirmed my desire to serve the poor of Latin America as a missionary nurse.

Upon graduation, I headed to a small town in Honduras to serve at a clinic for a year with nothing but a suitcase and a conviction that it was God's will. Almost overnight I went from nursing student to practitioner, diagnosing and treating the many families that came to the clinic. Although I spent my time serving and giving my all at the clinic, the pharmacy, running brigades, and teaching first aid and public health classes, I still wasn't completely satisfied and I knew something was lacking. I went to God in prayer and enumerated all the things I had given up to serve Him and asked what more He could possi-

bly want. He reminded me He still wanted me, all of me, to be totally His.



Sr. Brigid Prosser on the day of her reception to the Postulancy Feb. 2, 2010

When I returned, I wanted to become a better nurse and went to work in the emergency department in inner-city Baltimore. While I enjoyed serving the most vulnerable, I continued to seek God's will in prayer. I was led to date for a time, but soon ran out of excuses not to seriously pursue religious life. I visited a number of beautiful orders, but didn't really feel at home until I came to Cresson.

Even after my first visit with the Sisters, I visited most of our convents in the US, our Motherhouse in Cracow, Poland and some of our houses in Bolivia before being completely convinced of the call. I knew Jesus was drawing me to His heart and asking me to let go of my desire to be a medical missionary in Latin America so that He could use me to be a missionary right here and heal not only peoples' bodies, but their hearts and souls as well by bringing them to greater knowledge and love of His Sacred Heart. Now, after only 6 months in the Congregation, I feel the Sisters have always been my second family. I am so grateful for God's gentle guidance at every step in my life, that He remained faithful to me and gave me the grace to know and do His will wherever in the world it took me.

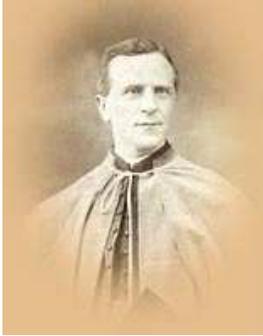


Sr. Brigid with Sr. Asst. Mary Joseph Calore, SSCJ, her Postulant Director

Sr. Brigid Prosser

AN INVITATION TO THE DIVINE HEART

With this issue of the *Vine* we are presenting a new series of meditations on the Sacred Heart of Jesus based on the writings of our Founder St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar (1842 – 1924).



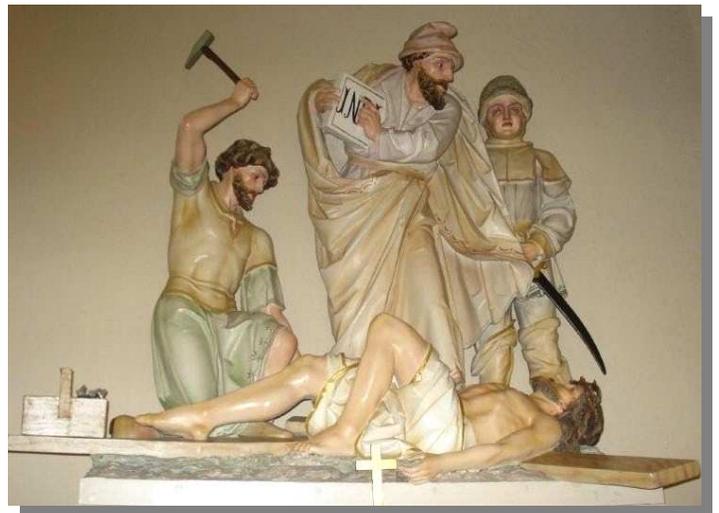
Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest (Mt 11:28). Thus does the voice of God call us with a joyful word, inviting us here and now to a profound union with Himself through perfect love. God desires that throughout our entire life we would bear all difficulties and sufferings in union with Him, for only then will such burdens become easier. He especially invites the ones who experience difficulties; those who suffer –not only physically but spiritually; and sinners –and who can say he is not a sinner? The Heart of the Savior invites each and all. He calls everyone to Himself for He desires by means of such an encounter to reveal Himself and to thereby give Himself to us.

Our assent to this invitation opens before us the vast possibilities of discovering, knowing and experiencing true love and happiness. It also introduces us into the mystery of suffering, something difficult for us to both understand and accept. It is completely dependent upon us whether we will take up His offer.

St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar writes: “Do not excuse yourself on the grounds that you are unable to know the truths and ways of God, for the Lord has given you a heart capable of love. So that your heart would truly love, He discloses His love to it and bestows upon it His grace. Even the simple one is able to love perfectly, and, in the school of love, can become wise in the things of God.”

As St. Margaret Mary has said, the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is like an open book from which it is easiest to learn the art of love, particularly when one reads it beneath the Savior’s Cross, in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament, or after Holy Communion. Why is it so difficult for many to see that everything that a person most needs or for which he most longs, is to be found within the Heart of God? Perhaps it is because we think of this Heart as a mystery far removed from the affairs of everyday human life. While people like to discover and learn the unknown, or to conquer what is difficult, still they lack the essential connection between life and faith –lacking faith in God’s love and in entrusting themselves to this love unto the end. Nevertheless, there are countless visible and actual proofs of this love of God that He shows in so human a way. *God is Love* (1Jn 4:16), the beloved disciple of the Heart of Jesus reminds us. In this name of God is contained His very essence. *Whoever is without love does not know God* (1 Jn 4:8). We must continually learn this love, since such knowledge leads to greater love.

St. Joseph Sebastian places these words upon the lips of Mary as she stands beneath the Cross: “Sons of men, since you have already caused suffering to my Son, hasten quickly at once and find in His wounds healing for your own. See His hands extended to you, behold His opened Heart. Come then with your hearts to this Heart – He will forgive you. I intercede on your behalf, but I also beg you: Do not crucify my Son again, but love Him greatly with me.”



*This photo and cover photo represent the VI & XI Stations of the Cross
From St. Mary’s Church, in Wilkes-Barre, PA*

Developing a Relationship

Robert J. Allen

We are living at a time in history when society says, “God’s laws are not for me. I have my rights and if it isn’t good for you, too bad.” Unfortunately, this could well have been said at the time of Jesus when He came with the Good News – but it didn’t match their concept of what they wanted in a King.

God promised to send a Redeemer and He came not to judge

us but to save us. As we walk with Christ in these next 40 days, let us be mindful that our life is a gift from God. We will not be judged by the standards of Wall Street – how much do I have – but by the standards of loving God who tells us in Saint Matthew’s Gospel chapter 25: You will be judged by how you treat others.

Let this Lent be a time to ask yourself two questions:

“What do I own?”

“What owns me?”

Accept the answer in the spirit of humility.

A truthful answer will be a very rewarding and uplifting spirit of grace - the grace to fill your life with a new peace. The peace we seek in the love Christ has for each of us will determine our relationship with God for eternity.

LENTEN OBSERVANCE

Lent is a special time of grace in which we recall the infinite love of God for all of us in the mysteries of salvation. These 40 days afford us greater opportunity for prayer, works of mercy, silence and recollection, and for participating in the penitential and devotional practices to which the Church invites us during this holy Season. As this year has been designated in our Congregation as the “Year of the Bible,” we will try to meditate more deeply this Lent on the sacred prophecies and narratives of our Savior’s Sorrowful Passion. While we remember our friends, family and benefactors in our prayers throughout the year, Lent is a time when the Sisters intensify these prayers for the needs of all our dear ones and everyone who is in need of our prayer.

Stations of the Cross

The Franciscan custom of the Stations of the Cross is particularly dear to us. During Lent, the Sisters gather in community each Friday for this devotion and individually try to pray the Stations of the Cross daily.

Chaplet and Crown to the Mercy of God

Our Sisters try to frequently offer the Chaplet to the Divine Mercy as well as our Congregation’s own Crown to the Mercy of God – praying that many souls will return to the Sacraments in making a good confession during this holy Season.

Gorzkie Zale, in Polish meaning *Bitter Sorrows* or *Lamentations* is a devotion of poetic hymns and chants in honor of the Passion of Christ that originated in 1707 when it was first conducted at Holy Cross Church in Warsaw. *Gorzkie Zale* is usually sung before the Blessed Sacrament and accompanied by a sermon on the Passion of Christ. We observe the singing of Lenten Lamentations in English at our Provincialate Chapel, Cresson, PA, on the Sundays of Lent at 7:00PM preceded by all-day Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

The Fridays of Lent have a special character for us as Sacred Heart Sisters, as we recall the

Love of the Heart of Jesus for all of us and particularly the moment when His Most Sacred Heart was pierced and opened wide to us.



Please remember us when making or revising your will.

*Our name is:
Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus*

*Our federal ID # is:
75-236-912*

Our Sisters observe the *Sacred Triduum* in silence and recollection. We pray in a very special way for all priests on Holy Thursday; for the conversion of sinners on Good Friday; and are united with the Blessed Mother on Holy Saturday, anticipating the Resurrection of our Lord.

Rays of Merciful Love

Lay Associates of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus



A group of Lay Associates at St. Jane De Chantal Parish in Easton, PA

The members of the **Rays of Merciful Love** as a Lay Association of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus fulfill the mission to serve as rays of love and mercy to all persons whom they encounter in their homes, work-places, social commitments, etc. As rays cannot exist of themselves but radiate from and return to their source—the **Rays of Merciful Love** united to the Heart of Jesus, Fount of Love and Mercy, find their source and object in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and seek to direct others to His Kingdom of Love. The Lay Associates particularly endeavor through prayer and sacrifices to promote and strengthen vocations to the priesthood and religious life particularly those called to the Congregation of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

**The Participation of the Lay Associates
in the Sisters' life of Prayer:**

1. Praying the Litany of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus daily and striving to more closely resemble His Heart, especially by gentleness, humility, patience and compassion, in a spirit of joy and simplicity as modeled by St. Francis of Assisi;
2. Praying daily one part of Holy Rosary to imitate Jesus and Mary and to become more sensitive to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit;
3. Striving to attend the Holy Eucharist each day, or at least once during the week, preferably on Fridays;
4. Striving to make an hour of adoration before the Most Blessed Sacrament weekly and/or meditating for at least ten minutes a day on the Holy Scriptures (especially the Holy Gospels.) Studying the Catechism of the Catholic Church;
5. For those whose schedule permits, striving to pray at least one part of the Divine Office.

**The Spirituality of the Lay Associates
is characterized by:**

1. An ardent devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus;
2. A deep trust in the Divine Heart of Jesus who is all powerful and full of mercy and goodness; *If God is for us, who can be against us (Rom.8:31).*
3. A devout participation in Holy Mass and reverence toward Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, for example, making conscious and proper genuflections upon entering and leaving a church or when passing the Most Blessed Sacrament;
4. Frequent and reverent reception of the Most Holy Eucharist in reparation for the sacrilege and indifference the Lord Jesus receives in this Sacrament;

A generous love for God in making the intention to offer their daily prayers, works, joys, and sufferings for those who do not love or serve Him.

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Thank You!

We would like to express our thank you to all those who remembered the Sisters on their trip to the store in purchasing needed paper products. Please know how helpful this is for us. We always appreciate your donation of:

- Kleenex
- Paper Towels
- Napkins
- 8 1/2 x 11 White Copy Paper
- Address Labels
- #10 Envelopes
- Bathroom Tissue
- Paper Plates

Be assured of our prayers and gratitude

THANK YOU to all who worked so hard to prepare for our First Annual Dinner with the theme "Getting to Know the Sisters." We are very grateful especially to Mrs. Betty Sloan, the Dinner Chairperson and her Committee all the sponsors, and volunteers. You are wonderful! We will share more with you about this event in our next issue of *The Vine*.