

Volume 26, Issue 1
Easter/Spring 2023
A newsletter of the Sister
Servants of the Most
Sacred Heart of Jesus

The Vine

*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. Jn 15:5*

Glory be to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

THIS IS MY BODY...GIVEN UP FOR YOU.

**THIS IS THE CHALICE
OF MY BLOOD
... Poured out for you
AND FOR MANY
FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.**



**We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection
until you come again.**

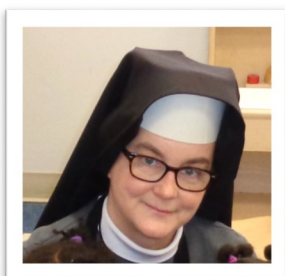
Fr. Thomas Acklin, OSB at our Sisters' Annual Retreat (2022)

Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus



Letter from Mother Klara, SSCJ Provincial Superior

Glory be to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus



During Lent, one of our Sisters explained to her small students the Stations of the Cross. She talked about Jesus' love and suffering. She became sick, so another Sister took over her classes. When she explained the XIII and XIV stations, she said: "But it is not the end of this story. After three days

Jesus came to life again, and He will never die".

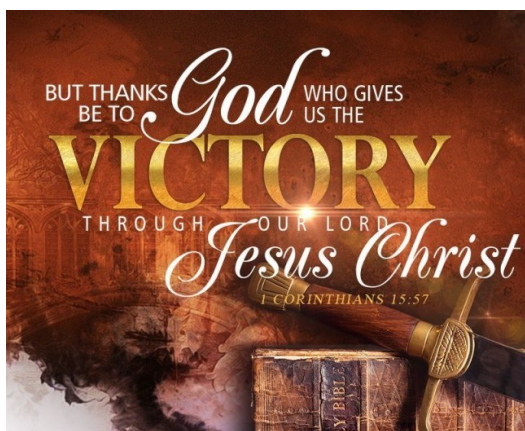
The children listened with excitement, and one of the boys asked: "Sister, does the other Sister know about it? She was so sad that Jesus suffered! We have to tell her!"

I think with tenderness of these little children, of their eagerness to share the good news. What kind of apostle am I? Is my life a sign of Christ' resurrection?

Many people ask us for prayer. They pray themselves, but sometimes they are covered with darkness. My heart aches for them. They see addiction destroying their child; a deadly disease taking a loved one from them; a broken home; a lost job. How to explain to them, that there is the Loving Presence of our God, that we are hidden in His Heart? How was Mary, the Sorrowful Mother, able to witness Her Son'z suffering and stand under His cross? What was in her heart? Perhaps she can guide us through our time of sorrow, through our passion. I strongly believe in the Resurrection and that God is stronger than any darkness. I put myself, all my Sisters and friends in the hands of Mary, Mother of Jesus, and ask Her to be our refuge. Her Son not only destroyed death; He has the power to overcome any darkness in our world.

Sr. Klara Slonina, SSCJ

Sr. Klara Slonina, SSCJ
Provincial Superior



THE ROSARY WITH BLESSED KLARA LUDWIKA SZCZESNA

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

1. The Agony in the Garden

The power of Jesus' prayer to the heart of God the Father manifests itself in this mystery. What about Mother Klara's prayer? In our home on 10 Holy Cross Street, she was absorbed in lengthy prayer every evening with her face bowed to the altar steps or she knelt there in a position full of humility and rapture. Her great faith, love and abandonment to Jesus might have been observed during individual or common prayer. She was strengthened and consoled with a vision a few days before her death. According to her description, St. Joseph came to her. He was her beloved patron saint.

2. The Scourging Jesus endured the scourging from human hands. He accepted it as a punishment for our sins because He loved us very much. A religious following the Sacred Heart of Jesus, desires His love, wants to experience poverty, contempt and suffering. Therefore, she also has a contempt for the wicked world and all vanities.

3. The Crowning with Thorns The tormented thoughts in Jesus' throbbing head were centered on every being, on me too. What occupies my thoughts most frequently? Do I resemble the ideal religious described by Mother Klara? A spouse of Christ is so closely united with her Bridegroom that both of them have the same fears, the same thoughts, the same knowledge, the same desires and the same love.

4. The Carrying of the Cross Jesus did not look at His Cross. He saw other people's crosses in future generations – especially the crosses belonging to those people who are responsible for many persons. Mother Klara wrote the following in her meditation on obedience: Let us try to lighten our superiors' burdens. Their responsibility is tremendous. Let them not command us with anguish and anxiety. Let them be sure that they will find holy and sincere love for God in us. What is love? Obedience!

5. Death on the Cross Standing under the Cross, the Sorrowful Mother offered herself wholeheartedly in union with the sacrifice of Jesus. Let us think of what would be an appropriate gift to offer to our Mother. What kind of gift on our part would please her and make her offer it to the Sacred Heart of Jesus? What does she expect from us? Perhaps better care of a sick Sister? An expression of forgiveness – offering, as the Lord Jesus did—an act contrary to the harm done to us? Perhaps mortification for those who do not know what they are doing? Or greater openness towards others?



Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus



From the Writings of our Founder ST. JOSEPH SEBASTIAN PELCZAR (1842-1924)

JESUS CHRIST, SOURCE OF SUPERNATURAL LIFE, SANCTIFIES THE SOUL WITH GRACE

If you want to know Jesus Christ, meditate on His Life. Pray for interior light, which will help you to penetrate the secrets of His Sacred Heart, and give you a deeper insight into divine truth.

To imitate Jesus Christ is to follow Him, to walk in His footsteps; that is, to think, desire, speak, act, and suffer like Him. One may put it in another way – to conform your life to the life of Christ. All Christians are obligated to this imitation of Christ due to their Christian vocation and name. Through Baptism, we have become one with Christ.

The faithful imitation of Christ sanctifies our actions. From Christ flows sanctifying grace and the inner spirit that gives supernatural value to each action. Whoever wants to be holy should unite himself with Jesus through His grace, enter into His Heart and submit to His Will.

Grace, in general, is any good gift coming from the Father of Light, whether it is of the natural or supernatural order. In particular, grace is a supernatural gift of God, which He bestows, through the merits of Jesus, that we might achieve salvation.

Among the graces which directly sanctify the soul, the first place is occupied by sanctifying grace, which is supernaturally infused. In this habitual state of soul, the Holy Spirit Himself internally purifies, justifies, sanctifies, renews and brings us to the supernatural state, to participation in God's nature and union with God.

Sanctifying Grace flows from the divine Person of Christ, through His human nature, through His Sacred Heart and bursts through His five wounds, as five flowing fountains, forming a great stream at the foot of the Cross, from which seven rivulets, that are the seven Sacraments, pour out upon the Church the Water of Life, purifying the sinner and sanctifying the just.

Sanctifying grace not only transforms the soul into the temple of the Most Holy Trinity and enables it to enjoy a participation in the nature of God, but also enables the soul to become His friend, His spouse. Who can express the glory of the pure and holy soul possessing grace in the high degree? Such a soul, immeasurably blessed by God, is elevated beyond all human comprehension.

Our soul is like a small boat heading for the port of eternity where God is waiting. The boat is supplied with

food and oars; that is, sanctifying grace and infused virtues. It would be extremely difficult, however, to navigate toward God, if the Holy Spirit did not fill the sails, on which stands the symbol of the Cross, with the Wind from above to push the boat. He does this by the grace of His gifts.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are necessary for salvation because only those who are governed by the Spirit are the true Sons of God and the heirs of heavenly glory.

Among the most precious and desirable fruits of the Holy Spirit is love. From love comes joy...and the perfection of joy is peace, dependent on the possession of God. If some outside force threatens this peace, love must practice the virtue of patience; if love meets with obstacles and must wait, it must practice the virtue of long-suffering. Toward the neighbor, love is benevolent, wishes him good, is quiet, bears hurts and irritations, is faithful, open and simple, far from malice.

Besides sanctifying grace, we need actual grace. Sanctifying grace is a state of soul, in which the soul is made holy and enabled to do good; actual grace is what impels us to perform a good act.

The effects of sanctifying grace differ from those of actual graces. Let me explain with some examples. It's not enough for the eye to be healthy to be able to see; it also needs light. It's not enough to till the soil; heat, humidity and water are needed. It's not enough to prepare a boat for sailing, to raise the sails, etc; wind must fill the sails. Light, heat, water and wind – these exemplify actual graces for the soul.

Grace does not destroy nature, but rather purifies, perfects, and exalts it. Grace bestows on nature some powers and energies which the soul otherwise would never possess. Finally, grace does not restrict the will but gently and firmly assists it.

The teacher who guides the hand of the student does not force the pupil to write. Yet the student starts to write. The writing is the result of the effort of both the teacher and the student. In the same way grace does not coerce the will to act. The will may still resist. But the will, sensing the divine impulse, cooperates and this results in an action issuing from both divine grace and human effort. It is necessary to remember this: the very cooperation of the will is already a fruit of divine grace.

Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus



Prison

By Sr. Jana Paula Sloboda

On the first day of the New Year 2023, Fr. Aron Maghsoudi, a prison chaplain at Laurel Highlands State Prison, Somerset, Pennsylvania, with three Sacred Heart Sisters went to visit his charges. This unusual meeting was organized by Fr. Aron and Sr. Mary Joseph Calore, and Sr. Jacinta Miryam Hanley and Sr. Jana Paula Sloboda joined them in the visit.

To enter the prison, we had to fill the necessary documents, allowing for a single visit. After obtaining such a permission, we were allowed to enter this rather unusual place and meet the inmates.

At the beginning, we were carefully registered and checked out whether we are not bringing anything inappropriate for this place. After going through various procedures, we obtained the official name tags with the inscription: Visitor.

Fr. Aron and Sr. Mary Joseph, knowing the place well (they work as chaplains of this prison), took us through the various rooms available to visitors. In prison, inmates participate in social rehabilitation programs and therapies, attend work and various activities assigned to them. During the day, convicts may also take advantage of the visits they are entitled to with relatives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, such "visits" turned into online meetings, and the prisoners could see their loved ones through a camera. The inmates recalled the amazing experience and the emotions accompanying them during these virtual meetings as they were able to see their family homes again.

The first place of our New Year's meeting was the dining room, and that's where we waited for the prisoners to greet them and get to know each other as much as possible.

I have many memories from this New Year's visit, but I will mention one interesting conversation. The first question I asked each prisoner during the small talk was: "Why are you here?" The reaction of the men was the same - they all burst out laughing. So I changed the question to a slightly different one: "How long do you have to stay here?" Then, emboldened by my simplicity and openness, they felt a little more at ease and answered me honestly, giving time periods of their stay in prison.

The next point of our meeting with the inmates was singing carols together. I remember it as a very nice experience. We sang the Christmas carol *Lulajże Jezuniu* with the Sisters in Polish.

Photo Courtesy of PA Dept of Corrections

After caroling, we moved to another room to participate in the Holy Mass, celebrated by Fr. Aron Maghsoudi. With undisguised surprise and joy I watched the residents of the facility as they hung up the cross on the wall, brought the altar, as well as the image of Merciful Jesus and liturgical paraments. The cross was high, made of wood, and two long chains were attached to it, which were held by two nails on the wall. To hang this type of Cross we needed several well-built men. I will never forget this image.

During the liturgy, the Sisters took care of the musical setting, and the inmates took care of reading the Word of God and serving at the altar. After the Eucharist, we met the prisoners again for a short conversation and thanked them for the time spent together.

When I looked at these prisoners, I didn't see them as criminals, but people who look just like people who are free. Among the prisoners here, there are fixed-term detainees who are waiting to be released from prison. But there are also those who will stay in this place for the rest of their lives.

In the dining room, each of them could say a few words about himself, and it was an amazing

experience for me to share the faith in God who transforms human hearts. Many of them no longer want to go back to their previous lifestyle. I remember one gentleman who came to this place several years ago and will stay here forever. I was deeply touched by his testimony as he spoke of his experience of God's love and acceptance of the present state of affairs. He also noted that he had achieved inner balance, which is why he was waiting with peace of mind to meet God. I admit that I did not think that in such a place you can hear such words, full of faith and trust in God. I thought that these huge walls contained a lot of hatred and disgust, but here I experienced extraordinary miracles of conversion.

With God's help and thanks to the apostolate of Fr. Aron and Sr. Mary Joseph, many convicts put in their cells a picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a copy of the image from the chapel of our provincial house, painted by our Sister Bernarda. 35 prisoners are preparing to receive the sacraments (just a year ago, 4 men attended the Holy Mass, now there are over 30 of them). It is a great joy for us, for which we thank God's Heart. We entrust them to the care of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



Image from our Chapel in Cresson, PA



Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

*By Most Reverend William J. Waltersheid
Auxiliary Bishop of Pittsburgh*



I remember as a little child going to Mass and, as I knelt in the pew, my eyes were fixed on a large and beautiful crucifix that was in the sanctuary of my home parish. Just as the stained glass windows in the medieval cathedrals (and in our own churches today) were ways of forming the faithful by the truths they proclaimed artistically, so, too, that image of the Body of Jesus on the Cross formed my own heart and mind in the truth of God's love manifested to us in the very Body of his Son.

A similar moment has come to me recently as I went to the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown to preach an eight-day retreat to the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. In the sanctuary of their chapel there is a very large and beautiful crucifix. As I knelt in prayer my eyes were drawn to the Body of Christ on the Cross and my heart was stirred to think about "the three bodies" so important in the Church today.

During this retreat every day I exposed the Blessed Sacrament on the altar from about 11:00 am until Benediction at 8 in the evening. In my time of personal prayer as I looked at the monstrance that contained the Body and Blood of Jesus substantially present, I saw above the altar this amazing image of Jesus' Body. It was a powerful affirmation of the constant teaching of the Church, since the night of



the Last Supper, that when we adore the Sacred Host or receive Holy Communion at Mass, we have before us Jesus who is present in the most supreme of ways.

If this is true (and it most certainly is) from His Body, truly present in the Holy Eucharist, flows forth life for the world. His Eucharistic Presence, His Body and Blood, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, is the "source and summit of the whole Christian life" (Lumen Gentium 11). As I was praying, I saw again that His Body made present at Mass in the Sacred Host is the source of my life. I cannot live without His Eucharistic Presence. I cannot fully understand anything else in the Church and in my life if I do not clearly see and profess that! His Body was offered on the Cross in love so that I could know that I am as a child of the Father, that my life is a pilgrimage to the Kingdom of Heaven, and that it is imperative to love the Lord and my brothers and sisters. Why else would He have taken on our flesh so that He could truly give His Body to us.



Polish Heritage

On Monday March 13th 2023, Mother Klara Slonina, assisted by Sr. Jana Paula Sloboda, presented a class on the Polish language for 64 people at All Saints Parish in Boswell, Pennsylvania at the invitation of the pastor, Fr. Aron Maghsoudi.

The Parish Church was originally dedicated under the patronage of St. Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr and was historically built by Polish immigrants and staffed for many years by Polish Conventual Franciscans. There are a great number of parishioners who are of Polish descent and who enjoy the customs of Polonia which their pastor keeps alive—such as the singing of Christmas carols (koledy), the celebration of Our Lady of the Gromniczna on Candlemas Day, the blessing of Easter foods—and who join with Father Aron's other two parishes for Lamentations (Gorskie Zale) in Central City, PA and Mass of the Resurrection in Hooversville,



Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

The dream of Mother Amabilis become reality: John Paul II Manor

On October 15, 2005, the John Paul II Manor opened its doors as a Catholic personal care home, owned and operated by the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. A long held dream of the late Mother Amaibils Debicka, Mother envisioned a home-like environment where our Sisters and lay staff could serve the needs of the sick and aged in an atmosphere of love and compassion.

Since March 10, 2022, with the return of Manor administration under our Sisters' leadership, it has been a year of growth and improvement. Every room was made resident ready and our census was increased to capacity. With the help of CPA Bob Hess and his team at Hess and Marino in Altoona, our Manor financial records were brought up to date and payroll was streamlined. Maintenance and nursing staff organized general and nursing storage areas. Filing cabinets were purchased and the filing system was updated.

There was a great deal done to make the Manor an elegant but comfortable home for our residents. The library was organized to include a game room replete with a new pool table and foos ball game, a movie area and computer corner.



Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

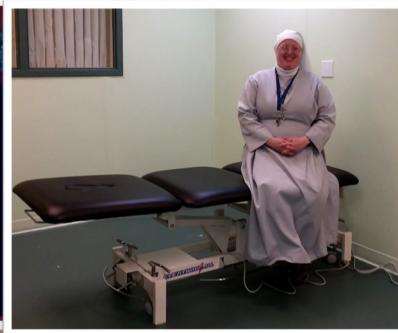
The Garden Room was transformed into a PT room with a new PT table and equipment. The doctor's office was organized and its exam table renovated and restored; a conference room was built in the lobby allowing for an area of privacy for Sisters, residents and staff. Aesthetic improvements were made in the chapel and throughout the Manor.

Another major project was that of resident bathroom renovations: walk in showers replaced dangerous tubs and bathroom doors were turned around to open safely into the bedrooms. A water line break during the winter polar vortex showed the need for re-insulation of much of the building, and that project was just completed. The final project to be undertaken will be sidewalk installation in the garden and a back-up generator purchase as funds become available.

The addition of two Daschund puppies, Lolek and Lena, has boosted morale and provided untold happiness to our residents. These little happy friends fulfill an important mission of pet therapy to brighten our days .

Our Manor paid off its large mortgage with savings, so we now go forward practicing prudence in fiscal management while beginning to organize a Manor development program of support by past resident families and Manor vendors.

We are tremendously grateful to our Sisters and lay staff of the John Paul II Manor who work very hard to make this facility of true home for our precious residents, as the dream of Mother Amabilis has become reality.



Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

CAN WE PRAY FOR YOUR INTENTIONS?

Please call our Sisters with your prayer intentions — 814.886.4223 or send us word via our website www.sacredheartsisters.org.

Is God calling you?

Do you want to leave everything behind, and offer yourself totally to Him? Are you brave enough to love and suffer, to fall and get up, to smile and cry, and pray? Do you want to join us, the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and proclaim the Kingdom of Jesus' Love everywhere? If your answer is yes! come visit us, experience the spirit of silence, prayer and sisterly life in community.

Our Congregation is

- ◆ Pontifical ◆ Franciscan ◆ Contemplative-Active
- ◆ Devoted to the Sacred Heart
- ◆ Founded by St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar & Bl. Klara Szczesna in 1894 in Krakow, Poland

PLEASE SEE OUR WEBSITE

www.sacredheartsisters.org

to join our weekly Zoom meetings with other young women who are discerning God's will and call to holiness for their lives. There is an online form to register for our weekly sessions with our Sisters.

To contact us:

**Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
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The Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, founded in Krakow, Poland in 1894 by St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar and Blessed Klara Szczesna are devoted to extending the Kingdom of Love of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus by prayer, community life and apostolic work in the areas of

Teaching * Catechesis * Music Ministry
Nursing & Personal Care * Parish Work
Retreats * Youth Ministry
Prison Ministry * Missionary work

Internationally, the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus serve in the following countries

- ◆ Poland ◆ Ukraine ◆ Italy
- ◆ France ◆ Bolivia ◆ Argentina ◆ Jamaica
- ◆ United States

The United States Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is represented in the Dioceses of: Altoona-Johnstown, Buffalo, Columbus and Grand Rapids and in Mandeville, Jamaica, West Indies.

Are you seeking residential, personal care for your loved one? Please consider our **John Paul II Manor in Cresson, PA**

where our Sisters offer 24-hour care in a loving and secure environment.

For information, please contact:

814-886-7961

www.johnpaul2manor.org

