Sisters Minister to Reduce AIDS in Africa

Sister Mayon Sylvain, RSM, has two quotes that inspire her life and her faith: Her motto, “Yes!” which is inscribed in the ring she received at final profession and the handwritten quote that is taped to her computer, “Try unconditional love today!”

When she said yes! to her current ministry as an associate director at the All-Africa Conference, Sister to Sister four years ago, she felt God was nudging her to use her public health background to help religious sisters who deal with the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa on a daily basis.

With a PhD in public health and 25 years of healthcare experience, Sister Mayon focuses on five countries in Africa—Cameroon, Malawi, Nigeria, Zambia, and Zimbabwe—and helps comfort the sorrowful and be present to people in distress, especially women and children. She works with four other Sisters of Mercy from the U.S., founders Sister Margaret Farley, RSM, and Sister Eileen Hogan, RSM, development director Sister Joanne Lappetito, RSM, and Sister Rosemary Jeffries, RSM, who will be joining the conference as the executive director in September, 2016.

Together they minister in a “sacred space” in Africa for religious sisters from all over the continent. The “sacred space” is not an actual place, but annual gatherings of women religious working and living in Africa to develop ways to educate, influence and empower each other to help reduce the devastating prevalence, and ultimately eliminate, this deadly disease. In these meetings, the sisters pray together, network, share resources, connect spiritually, and explore the role of faith and culture in this pandemic. “Their faith sustains their work,” says Sister Mayon. “They often find God in the difficult, challenging work that they do.”

When not in Africa, Sister Mayon works in a former convent in the Bronx at the offices of the All-Africa Conference, planning and evaluating conferences, providing support for sisters in Africa, and helping to raise money to continue the program. “This program brings sparkle to the eyes of others through the works of Mercy and helps people in need realize their own giftedness in spite of their country’s poverty, discrimination and violence and the stigma of their disease.”

One of nine children, Sister Mayon grew up in Guyana in South America and developed the passion to serve others at an early age from her father. “My dad worked two jobs to support our family. An electrician and a butcher, he was forever doing things for others,” says Sister Mayon. “He provided free meat to people in need and gave away his entire government pension to build a road that was needed in our town.”

After graduating from Ursuline High School in Guyana, Sister Mayon knew she had a religious vocation, but could not decide what congregation to enter. “Every day on my lunch hour, I would go to church to pray for the wisdom to decide what congregation to join,” says Sister Mayon. “I decided on the Sisters of Mercy because of their incredible joy and commitment of service to others.” She entered the novitiate in Guyana, but later moved to Dallas, PA, outside of Scranton, to study nursing at Misericordia University.

Today, working with other Sisters of Mercy, she has helped to provide needed services to over 300 religious sisters in five countries in Africa and given unconditional love every step of the way.
A Message From the President

Dear Friends,

“Whenever we do something together, something good, something beautiful, everyone changes. All of us change in some way and this does us good.”

How well we know these words of Pope Francis to be true, as we continue to reach out to do something good together.

The Year of Mercy has encouraged us to move out of our comfort zone, as Catherine McAuley did. We look to make mercy happen not only in our own neighborhoods and in the familiarity of our own home, but wherever the need is greatest and unmet.

In these pages you will read about such a work of mercy, begun by Sisters Margaret Farley and Eileen Hogan. The All African Conference: Sister to Sister addresses the need for the empowerment of sisters in Africa to improve the lives of the suffering from HIV/AIDS. You will see how this program gains its strength from sisters supporting one another.

During this Year of Mercy we celebrated when four young women, Sisters Jennifer Barrow, Mary Beth Berretta, Danielle Gagnon and Marjorie Tapia, professed vows as Sisters of Mercy. Rejoice with us as we celebrate their commitment to Mercy and see Mercy continue to grow into the future.

Finally, we thank each of you for your friendship and support, for your fidelity to the Sisters of Mercy and the mercy you practice in your daily lives. We believe the motto of the Year of Mercy has carved itself in all of our hearts as we continue to be merciful as our God is merciful.

In Mercy,

Sister Patricia Vetrano, RSM
President
Mid-Atlantic Community

PRAYER TIME

Loving God, you have heard the cries of your suffering people. Open our eyes to see the immensity of your love for us and the wonder of what you have done for us.

Give us the courage to be your hands and hearts for those who are in pain.
Give us the wisdom to speak out for justice and righteousness. May your will be done in us today and always. Amen

(Taken from International Women's Day prayer)
Sisters In The News

Mercy Neighborhood Directors Join Statewide Network

Executive Director Sister Ann Provost, RSM, and Program Director Barbara Coleman of Mercy Neighborhood Ministries of Philadelphia, Inc., were chosen to be Ambassadors for the Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network. As part of this network, the two administrators will have the opportunity to increase their understanding of the legislative process, sharpen policymaker engagement skills, and learn how to use the media to bring attention to the benefits of afterschool programs in the community.

Mid-Atlantic Sister Receive the Catherine McAuley Medal

Sr. Patricia McCann, RSM, Ed.D., professor emeritus at Misericordia University, center, flanked by Sister Martha Hanlon, RSM, and The Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L., Bishop, Diocese of Scranton was awarded the Catherine McAuley Medal at Misericordia University in Dallas, PA, during the commencement ceremony on May 21, 2016. The medal is conferred in recognition of significant service to others in the spirit of Catherine McAuley.

Sister Receives Neubauer Fellowship

Sister Susan Walsh, RSM, a member of the Mid-Atlantic Community and principal of Mercy Vocational High School in Philadelphia, PA, has been named a Neubauer Fellow, selected for her “wisdom, expertise and twenty-seven years of ministry in North Philadelphia.”

Sister Receives 2016 Peace Award

Founders of Siloam Sister Bernadette Kinniry, RSM, a member of the Mid-Atlantic Community, and Father Donald Reilly, OSA, are recipients of the 2016 Peace Award, awarded annually by the National Shrine of St. Rita in Philadelphia. Sister Bernadette and Father Donald created Siloam, a mind/body/spirit organization, in 1995 in response to the needs of the HIV/AIDS community.
Four Women Profess Temporary Vows

Four women recently professed their first vows as Sisters of Mercy in the Mid-Atlantic Community at the chapel at Mount Saint Mary in Watchung, NJ.

Sisters Marybeth Beretta, RSM, who serves on a school administrative team, Jennifer Barrow, RSM, an attorney, Danielle Gagnon, RSM, an executive director of a non-profit, and Marjorie Tapia, RSM, a geriatric nurse practitioner, professed temporary vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, and service to people in need.

Over 370 sisters, associates, friends and family members gathered on Sunday, June 12, 2016, for the Eucharistic liturgy. Reverend Kevin DiPrinzio, OSA, from Villanova, PA, presided over the liturgy. Sister Patricia Vetrano, RSM, the president of the Mid-Atlantic Community, presided at the profession ceremony and questioned the women regarding their vocations and received their written vows.

These women first encountered the Sisters of Mercy in various ways. Sister Jennifer Barrow, a Boston College alum, spent a year in Laredo, TX, with Mercy Volunteer Corps, serving as a bilingual case manager in the Hachar-Cigarroa Women’s Clinic. She currently ministers at Brooklyn Legal Services, specializing in issues concerning housing.

Sister Marybeth Beretta, RSM, currently serves as the dean of students at Gwynedd-Mercy Academy High School in Gwynedd Valley, PA. She first encountered the Sisters of Mercy while attending Salve Regina University in Newport, RI.

Sister Danielle Gagnon met the Sisters of Mercy when she worked for Medicines for Humanity, a non-profit organization that operates maternal/child health projects in developing countries. She now serves as executive director of St. Patrick’s Center in Wilmington, DE, a non-profit center that provides emergency services for people in need.

Sister Marjorie Tapia discovered the Sisters of Mercy while attending Mount Saint Mary Academy, a private Catholic girls’ high school, in Watchung, NJ. During high school, Margie volunteered at McAuley Hall, the sisters’ retirement facility on the school’s campus. A graduate of Boston College’s nursing school, Margie became a Mercy associate in her junior year of college. A geriatric nurse practitioner and a nursing home administrator, she now serves as director of healthcare/aging services for the Religious Teachers Filippini in Morristown, NJ.

For the next three years, these four women will work in full-time ministry while continuing discernment and living in community. This is the last step on the journey to becoming a Sister of Mercy prior to making final vows.
We Remember...

Sister Catherine Kealey, RSM
Sister Catherine ministered as an elementary and secondary teacher and principal in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, PA, and also in the Diocese of Richmond, VA. In her later years, Sister was a merciful presence as a parish minister to the elderly in St. Laurence Parish in Upper Darby, PA. Sister Catherine brought integrity and singleness of purpose to all her ministries. She was confident, diligent and had the ability to get the job done. She was an inspiration to all as she managed her illness in her final years, fully accepting her limitations with graciousness and faith. She is now one with the God whom she served so faithfully these many years.

May 29, 1930 – February 22, 2016
First Profession: March 10, 1951

Sister Marian Rufe, RSM
Sister Marian's ministerial life was varied and included service in elementary education at Merion Mercy Academy in Merion, PA; hospital duties at Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital in Darby, PA; and parish visitation in two parishes in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, PA. Sister Marian was quiet and unassuming and was gifted with a generous spirit, always ready to help in any way possible. At McAuley Convent in Merion, PA, where she lived in her later years, she took great pride in arranging the flowers for chapel, and seemed to be especially in tune with God when playing the organ. May she be enjoying the same peace and well-being she offered to all at McAuley Convent through her music and her kindness.

December 20, 1933 – February 22, 2016
First Profession: August 15, 1954

Sister Anna Donofry, RSM
Sister Anne, as she was often called, was a nurse through and through. Prior to her entrance to the Sisters of Mercy in 1953 she began her nursing ministry in the operating room at Misericordia Hospital, now Mercy Hospital of Philadelphia, PA. Sister Anne was highly respected by her colleagues at Misericordia, Fitzgerald Mercy Hospital in Darby, PA, and, in her later years, at Mercy Suburban Hospital in Norristown, PA. After earning her doctorate in nursing, she is credited with having had a profound influence on the accreditation process for the School of Nursing at Gwynedd Mercy University in Gwynedd Valley, PA. She was a formidable member of the faculty and always worked to uncover the best in each one of her students. Sister Anne was a good and faithful friend who always enjoyed a good time. She was an avid reader and took her responsibilities in the community seriously, always contributing where she could. When there was a party at the Convent of Mercy in Merion, PA, Sister Anne volunteered to assist as the head bartender. No doubt she is now toasting all from heaven.

December 26, 1926 – February 25, 2016
First Profession: July 2, 1955

Sister Mary Colman O'Loughlin, RSM
Sister Colman spent many years in the education ministry, beginning at the elementary level in both the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, PA, and in Williamsburg, VA. After further study, which included time in Cuba studying Spanish, Sister taught at Gwynedd Mercy University in Gwynedd Valley, PA. She also served as academic dean for almost 50 years. Sister Colman was a gentle, loving woman with a wonderful sense of humor. Everyone who met her found her delightful. She will be greatly missed, especially by sisters at McAuley Convent in Merion, PA, where she spent her later years.

April 15, 1923 – March 14, 2016
First Profession: August 16, 1944
To be One with Jesus and Mary.

Sister Marie Chabanel Erzal, RSM
A buoyant, optimistic, and truly compassionate woman who was deeply committed to living out her vow of service, Sister Chabanel (known as Chab) was a pharmacist by profession. She ministered for many years at Mercy Hospital, Johnstown, PA, and Mercy Hospital, Scranton, PA. Following her departure from traditional health care, Sister Chabanel joined Project Remain, an inner-city ministry in Wilkes-Barre, PA, where she counseled elderly residents on medication usage and their side effects. As a pharmacist, Sister was admired for her keen intelligence and expertise. As a Sister of Mercy, and a woman of great faith, she was loved for her warmth, wisdom, and simplicity.

August 2, 1935 – April 3, 2016
First Profession: August 16, 1958

“To be One with Jesus and Mary.”

“Jesus, Only You.”

Sister Anne Frances Pulling, RSM
Remembered as a person who possessed Irish charm, Sister Anne Francis’s blue eyes danced as she shared stories from her own heritage and her work with the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Central Islip, NY. A teacher, historian and writer, she authored a series of books focused on the towns and cities where she served in ministry over the years. Among her writings is the history of the Sisters of Mercy in Cresson, PA. Her positive attitude toward life was a gift she shared with all who knew her.

July 9, 1930 – May 14, 2016
First Profession: March 12, 1951

“To be One with Jesus and Mary.”

“Jesus, Only You.”

Sister Agnese Mikolaj, RSM
A successful elementary school teacher and principal in the dioceses of Pittsburgh and Altoona-Johnstown in Pennsylvania for many years, Sister Agnese also brought her boundless energy and enthusiasm to the low-income housing ministry when she served as housing director and project manager at Valley Pike Manor, Johnstown, PA. Sister brought a willing spirit and a generous heart to everything she did. Throughout her life, Sister Agnese exemplified a strong commitment to living her vow of service.

May 18, 1929 – March 29, 2016
First Profession: March 12, 1950

“In Him I trust.”

Sister Ann Hazuda, RSM
For more than 50 years, Sister Ann was both a teacher and principal in Catholic schools in the diocese of Harrisburg, PA. She was elected to community leadership for the former Dallas regional community and served as a provincial councilor for three years. For the past two years, Sister Ann was a member of the ministry of prayer and presence at Mercy Center in Dallas, PA. She will be remembered as a generous person who was always ready to help when the need arose. Her kindness to all and her spirit of gratitude were the hallmarks of her life. Sister Ann was the sister of Sister Juliana Hazuda, RSM, who died last year.

April 19, 1922 – April 22, 2016
First Profession: March 12, 1943

We Remember...
We Remember...

Sister Anne Elizabeth McLaughlin, RSM

A former associate professor and chair of the religious studies program at Misericordia University in Dallas, PA, Sister Anne Elizabeth, also known as Doatsie, recently served as academic dean and director of the Doctor of Ministry program at Washington Theological Union in Washington, DC. At the time of her death, she was the project leader for a publication initiative celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Sister Anne brought a light touch and gentle manner to her ministries. Passionate about the integration of theology and human experience, she also valued service-learning across the curriculum. As an educator, she was encouraging; as an administrator, she was a visionary; and as a Sister of Mercy, she was the epitome of gracious hospitality and tender courage.

January 2, 1942 – May 23, 2016
First Profession: August 16, 1964

“Sweet Jesus, I love you.”

Sister Juliet Ferrari, RSM

Sister Juliet was the administrator of the Sisters of Mercy retreat and vacation facility in Sea Isle City, NJ, a position she held for the past ten years. She was instrumental in designing the renovations at Trocaire Convent in Sea Isle as she always wanted the facility to be accessible and comfortable for the sisters. Over many years, Sister Juliet served in secondary education in the schools of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, PA. She also served as coordinator of the Convent of Mercy in Merion, PA. Sister will be especially remembered for her humility, kindness and extraordinary dedication to the Mercy Community. Sister Juliet was pre-deceased by her sister, Sister Rosalie Ferrari, RSM.

April 1, 1941 – July 9, 2016
First Profession: June 25, 1965

“To do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with my God.”

Sister Joan Broderick, RSM

Sister Joan served as both an elementary and secondary teacher. With a special interest in human development and behavior, she also served as a therapist, career and pastoral counselor, an educator in healthcare issues and, eventually, as director of human resources. In recent years, Sister Joan participated in the prayer and presence ministry at Mercy Center in Dallas, PA. As her health declined, her family and friends kept vigil with her as she prepared for her new life.

First Profession: August 16, 1959

“Lord, That I may Love.”

Sister Patricia Joseph Corkery, RSM

Sister Patty Jo, as she was fondly known, was a gifted educator, beloved spiritual director and talented musician. She served on the Merion Community leadership team which shepherded the Merion mission to Peru in the early 1980s. Sister Patty Jo participated in the Better World Retreat Movement, traveling throughout the country and the world. She is best known in the Mercy world for her portrayal of Mother Catherine McAuley. A loyal and loving friend, Sister Patty Jo will be remembered for her passion for justice, her love of family, all things Irish and her gracious acceptance of life’s final chapter these past few years.

January 7, 1922 – August 12, 2016
First Profession: April 27, 1946
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Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Yurkanin
Ms. Dorothy Zeiser
Mrs. Elizabeth B. Ziegler
Deacon & Mrs. Joel M. Ziff
Ms. Mary Zorzzi
Mr. & Mrs. William A. Zuccarello
Ms. Kellyann Zuzulo
Mr. & Mrs. Theodore L. Zwiebel
Two Sisters Receive Papal Award

Mid-Atlantic Sisters Lisa Gambacorto, RSM, and Mary Kerwin, RSM, the current and former directresses of Mount Saint Mary Academy in Watchung, NJ, are recipients of the Cross of Honour, for distinguished service to the church and the Diocese of Metuchen.

They received the “Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice” on June 13 at a special evening prayer service at the Cathedral of Saint Francis of Assisi in Metuchen, NJ. This was one month before the death of Sister Mary. Earlier this year, Bishop Bootkoski of the Diocese of Metuchen, NJ, petitioned Pope Francis to bestow pontifical honors on members of the clergy and laity “whose work and witness have been especially valuable to the mission of the church” during his years as its fourth bishop.

Coincidentally, Sister Mary, taught Sister Lisa theology when she was in high school at Red Bank Catholic. Both sisters have been very active in educational ministries, serving as teachers and administrators. Sister Mary volunteered in various diocesan offices after she retired from educational ministries. For the past ten years, Sister Lisa served on the Diocesan Commission for Catholic Education and is currently the chair.