Sister Grace Ministers to Hospital Staff

When Sister Grace Agate, RSM, visited St. Joseph/Candler Hospital in Savannah, Georgia, for the first time on September 24, 2015, she was amazed that everyone kept wishing her Happy Feast Day in honor of Our Lady of Mercy in a city where only eight percent of the population is Catholic.

“The Sisters of Mercy are held in such high esteem in this area,” says Sister Grace who now serves at the hospital as the workplace spirituality coordinator. “In their eyes, I stand on the shoulders of the Sisters of Mercy who came before me and started this hospital in 1875 in response to the need for health care for sick sailors.”

Now Sister Grace is one of four sisters from the Mid-Atlantic Community who minister at the largest health center in Southeast Georgia. Sisters Nancy Donovan, RSM, and Veronica Kovach, RSM, serve as chaplains. Sister Patricia Kennedy, RSM, ministers as a palliative care liaison.

Originally from Brooklyn, New York, Sister Grace was an elementary school teacher for eleven years, served as a director of religious education for six years, taught high school religion for seven years, worked as a spiritual director for five years and served as a pastoral assistant for five years at various parishes in the Brooklyn Diocese. “God is a God of surprise,” says Sister Grace. “Everything I did previously prepared me for this job without me ever even knowing it.”

“Initially I went to Savannah to visit one of my former parishioners who now works at the hospital,” says Sister Grace. “While I was there I met the chief executive officer and he unexpectedly offered me a job! I had no thoughts about moving to the South. I had never worked in a hospital. After my visit, I went home to Long Island and thought about it and prayed about it and decided God was calling me to take this position and share the mission of Mercy with people who work in this large healthcare facility.”

So Sister Grace moved to Savannah in January 2015, joining 23 Sisters of Mercy from across the country who also live and minister in the area. In her ministry, she tends to the pastoral care of over 3,000 staff at these two faith-based, not-for-profit hospitals. “I am a religious cheerleader,” says Sister Grace, “I practice the spiritual and corporal works of Mercy every day in some shape or form.” She meets with staff, attends
A Message From the President

“If we love God, we will undoubtedly love our neighbor also; they are cause and effect.”

– Catherine McAuley, Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy

Dear Friend,

These simple words, repeated in many contexts by Catherine McAuley during her lifetime, remind me of each of you, our steadfast Mercy friends and benefactors. How openly and generously you show your love of God through your prayers and gifts for the benefit of God’s people. The great outpouring of your love is evidenced by the many names you will see printed in this fall edition of Mercy Mosaic; printed in recognition of your love of God, through your generosity to us and those we serve. Thank you so much.

We are happy to share with you in this issue of Mercy Mosaic an example of the love of our brothers and sisters as expressed by Sisters of Mercy through our ministry in the field of health care. St. Joseph/Candler Hospital, founded in 1875 and still operated by the Sisters of Mercy in Savannah, Georgia, is but one example of the outstanding Mercy mission and commitment to caring for the sick. In these pages you will also read about the ministry of Sister Eileen McDonnell in New Jersey, whose ministry makes a vast difference in the day-to-day lives of people living with disabilities.

As we strive to continue Catherine McAuley’s focus of serving the poor, sick and uneducated, we are conscious of your role in helping to make our ministries a reality. It is truly because of your generosity by prayer and financial support that our sisters are able to continue the work of Catherine McAuley, whose invitation continues to be to love God by loving all people.

In Mercy,

Sister Patricia Vetrano, RSM
President
Mid-Atlantic Community

Sister Grace Ministers to Hospital Staff

Continued from front page

wakes and funerals of their loved ones when possible, provides spiritual direction, develops prayers and rituals, and prays with coworkers when in need. “I am present for them,” says Sister Grace. “I am humbled by the joy, pain and sorrow they share with me.”

“My inspiration in this ministry is Catherine McAuley,” says Sister Grace, “the founder of the Sisters of Mercy. Her quote, ‘When or how are we expected to take up our cross and follow Christ, if we are not to meet with it in those with whom we are associated?’ guides my work every day.”

Prayer Time

Lord, You invite all who are burdened to come to you.
Allow Your healing Hand to heal them.

Touch my soul with Your compassion for others;
touch my heart with Your courage and infinite Love for all;
touch my mind with Your wisdom, and may my mouth always proclaim Your praise.

Touch gently the lives which you have created, now and forever.

Amen.
Sisters Receive Educational Awards

Two Mid-Atlantic sisters were recognized May 16, 2017, at Saint Joseph’s University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Sister Rosemary Herron, RSM, president of Mercy Career & Technical High School, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and principal Sister Susan Walsh, RSM, received the Molyneux-Lilly Award during the university’s Celebration of Catholic Education night. The award recognizes innovative and transformational education for the greater service of God’s people.

Gwynedd Mercy University Commencement Honors Sisters, Associates and Students

Sister Marie Michele Donnelly, RSM, delivered the keynote address at Gwynedd Mercy University’s Commencement on Saturday, May 13, 2017. She challenged the graduates to Make Mercy Real! “One clear and significant way is to perform the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy—actions that include feeding the hungry, instructing the ignorant, welcoming the stranger, comforting the sorrowful, visiting the sick—and the newest Work of Mercy, added by Pope Francis this past September—caring for the Earth.”

Associates Dick and Kathy Target were the recipients of the Beacon of Mercy Award, which recognized their unassuming servant-leadership approach to enhancing the well-being of Gwynedd Mercy University students and the school community.

Sister Recognized for Contributions to Formation Ministry

This spring, the Board of Directors of the Religious Formation Conference announced that Sister Mary Pat Garvin, RSM, would be the recipient of the 2017 Mary Emil Penet, IHM Award. This award honors an outstanding individual who has made a significant contribution to the development of formation ministry on the national and international level. Past recipients include Sandra Schneiders, IHM, Mary Daniel Turner, SNDdeN, Lynn Levo, CSJ, Anthony Gittins, CSSp, and Janet Mock, CSJ. Sister Mary Pat was nominated for the award by her colleagues in the Delaware Valley area. She will receive the award at the Religious Formation Conference Congress in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in November 2017.
We Remember...

Sister Anne DeConcini, RSM
Sister Anne was an educator who taught at all levels: elementary, secondary, and college. Her real passion was as an advocate for the poor and disenfranchised, especially in the parish ministries in the inner city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and its suburbs. For the past seven years, Sister Anne enjoyed her ministries with McAuley Prayer Guild and the West Philadelphia Prayer Ministry which she began.

March 16, 1942 – March 21, 2017
First Profession: April 15, 1963

Sister Marie Fidelis Donnelly, RSM
An elementary educator in several dioceses, Sister Fidelis’s favorite ministry was working with the people of St. Raymond Parish in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where she ministered for 30 years. She served as the school librarian and later became most proud of her ministry with the poor and elderly in the parish. Being a Sister of Mercy, her health and her family were counted among her many blessings in life. She had a particular devotion to the Blessed Mother. The Hail Mary was her favorite prayer.

September 17, 1926 – April 3, 2017
First Profession: March 11, 1950

Sister Mary Jane Stapleton, RSM
Sister Mary Jane was an elementary and secondary educator in the Archdioceses of Philadelphia, Miami and Atlanta. In 1971 Sister Mary Jane began her long and beloved ministries in Georgia as teacher, principal, pastoral associate, elementary and family diocesan consultant and director of religious education. She traveled throughout the archdiocese of Atlanta introducing and teaching the religious education program to catechists.

September 17, 1928 – April 6, 2017
First Profession: March 11, 1950

Sister Mary Horgan, RSM
A Sister of Mercy for 67 years, Sister Mary had a great love of children, which she demonstrated as both an elementary school teacher and principal in New York, Pennsylvania, and Iowa. As a reading specialist, she assisted hundreds of children over the years. In her later years, she became a home health aide to tenderly care for the sick. An extrovert, Sister Mary enjoyed talking to other people. At the time of her death, Sister Mary lived with her sister, Sister Ann Horgan, RSM, who is also a Sister of Mercy.

July 7, 1932 – April 19, 2017
First Profession: March 12, 1953

Sister Corinne Ritchie, RSM
Sister Corinne’s lifelong ministry was in elementary education as teacher and principal. A mentor to many educators and principals as they began their ministry, Sister was a loving, gracious woman of mercy who cared deeply for her family, friends, faculty and students. Her last ministry was as principal of St. Margaret’s School in Narberth, Pennsylvania. She resigned this position when diagnosed with a terminal illness, but continued to volunteer at this ministry that had been so life-giving to her. Sister Corinne will be lovingly remembered for her unassuming spirit, gentleness, great faith, and deep love of her God.

January 15, 1939 – May 3, 2017
First Profession: June 30, 1959
Sister Charlene Kelly, RSM

One of 15 children, Sister Charlene was proud of her roots in western Pennsylvania. A graduate of Mount Aloysius Academy and Mount Aloysius College, Sister Charlene returned to her beloved Mount where she ministered for 25 years as registrar and academic advisor. For many years following her retirement, Sister volunteered at the Mount. Her daily presence on campus brought joy to faculty and countless students. Sister Charlene embraced all of her ministries and relationships with great energy, contagious enthusiasm for Mercy life, and an abiding awareness of the goodness of her God. At Mercy Center in Dallas, Pennsylvania, where she resided for two years, her characteristic zest for life, spirit of generosity, and unflagging sense of humor were evident to staff and residents alike. In addition to her other siblings, Sister Charlene is survived by her sister, Sister Jane Kelly, RSM, and her cousin, Sister Veronica Kovach, RSM, both Sisters of Mercy.

May 14, 1931 – May 6, 2017
First Profession: March 12, 1952

Sister Susan Marie Nowalis, RSM

From her earliest years, Sister Susan was a lover of classical music. She majored in music as an undergraduate and earned advanced degrees in music at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, and Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. She specialized in 19th-century French symphonic music. Drawn to beauty and precision, she found them as a college professor, a director of development, director of the Guyana Mission Office, and archivist for the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy, a ministry she loved more than any other. Her last years left Sister physically debilitated, but she never lost her zeal for conversation and community. On what would be the final evening of her life, Sister Susan enjoyed the annual summer picnic at Mercy Center in Dallas, Pennsylvania, surrounded by her close friends with whom she laughed and enjoyed summer’s bounty.

October 22, 1933 – July 27, 2017
First Profession: August 16, 1961

Sister Mary Jane Schellhammer, RSM

Following her novitiate, Sister Jane was assigned to manage laundry services for the large number of sisters, postulants, novices, and professed who resided on the college campus of Misericordia in Dallas, Pennsylvania. Working with Sister Jane in the laundry was one of the coveted positions for canonical novices, in spite of the 5 a.m. start time. In her later years, Sister Jane ministered in health care as a licensed practical nurse and worked in pastoral outreach in Bellwood, Pennsylvania, and as support staff at Blair Senior Services in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Humble, generous, and wise, Sister knew that God’s grace flowed through the perfection of ordinary actions. Her life journey eventually brought her to Mercy Center in Dallas, Pennsylvania, where her enthusiasm for life, and all things related to the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Pittsburgh Steelers, will be missed by residents and staff.

September 22, 1932 – May 18, 2017
First Profession: May 2, 1999

Sister Elizabeth Powell, RSM

An educator for many years in both elementary and secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Sister Betty spent a total of 19 years at what is now Mercy Career & Technical High School. As a program director at Project HOME, she exhibited a great love for women and men who were homeless. Her quick wit and steady presence brought stability and genuine care to all she encountered. Sister’s gift of hospitality and love for the shore were evident when she served as facilities coordinator at the retreat/vacation house in Sea Isle City, New Jersey. In her later years, Sister Betty ministered as a physical therapy volunteer at McAuley Convent in Merion, Pennsylvania. Her final ministry was to witness how to die with grace and gratitude and with exquisite sensitivity to others. Sister Betty was the younger sister of Sister Rita Powell, RSM, also a member of the Mid-Atlantic Community.

March 20, 1932 – August 11, 2017
First Profession: March 12, 1952
Caring for People with Disabilities

“I always listen to where God calls me,” says Sister Eileen. Recently she felt the call to return to serving people with disabilities at The ARC. “This is a population with no voice,” she says. “Thanks to medical advances, people with disabilities live longer, but as they age they have more health issues. I help them deal with these concerns and end-of-life issues.”

“Nursing is so much more than dealing with medical issues,” says Sister Eileen. “It is the person-to-person contact, the chance to alleviate pain and suffering, the opportunity to be a caring, compassionate presence to people in need.”

Through this ministry, Sister Eileen helps serve 88 people in twelve residential settings and 150 people in five different day centers. “Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, was committed to the suffering needs of people of her time and responded with compassion, joy and a sense of humor,” says Sister Eileen. “I strive to do the same.”

Before Sister Eileen became a nurse, she worked with people with disabilities as a social worker, program director and in residential services. She felt the call to become a nurse after witnessing the mistreatment of an AIDS patient in the 1980s. “The caretakers would just leave the patient’s tray of food on the floor afraid of contact. I felt compelled to nurse differently, with compassion, so I enrolled in an accelerated nursing program and became a visiting nurse on a dedicated AIDS Team at Christ Hospital in Jersey City, New Jersey, for three years.” She worked for various hospice organizations for the next 22 years.

“Sister Eileen McDonnell, RSM, RN, the associate director of health services at The ARC of Monmouth in central New Jersey, feels that she walks on holy ground every day working with adults with intellectual and developmental delays.

“The people I serve are humanity without masks; they are who they are,” says Sister Eileen, a registered nurse who works for this nonprofit in a non-traditional nursing setting in a corporate center. Sister Eileen helps educate caregivers of people with disabilities about medical issues, accompanies people with disabilities to critical medical appointments, offers nursing support, teaches healthy living skills, and acts as a health advocate.

Sister Eileen McDonnell, RSM, RN, (left) shows Tiffany Cubbage (right) the most effective way to brush her teeth.

Adele Hunt (right) learns about her medical records from Sister Eileen McDonnell, RSM, RN (left).
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Promoting Health, Sharing Mercy

“Catherine left her comfort zone to help people,” says Sister Anna Marie. “She went where she was needed.”

Today, Sister Anna Marie helps people in need at St. Helena’s parish in the Olney section of Philadelphia. She is part of a three-nurse holistic healthcare team serving primarily a Vietnamese, Hispanic and older English-speaking community. She promotes healthy living, operates a food bank and provides health education. She also gives pastoral care and visits parishioners who are sick. “I love when seniors feel recognized and connected to the church through my presence,” says Sister Anna Marie.

A parish nurse for the past 22 years, Sister Anna Marie initially was a teacher and principal before embracing nursing as a ministry. One of her first nursing assignments was in Chulucanas, Peru, where she served for six years. For the past four years, she has ministered at St. Helena’s.

“I see God at work in each and every one I encounter here,” says Sister Anna Marie.

Sister Anna Marie Lesutis, RSM, RN, (center left) reviews nutritional information with Ana Marie Carmonia, Mercedes Reyes and Catalina Almeida (left to right).

In her work as a parish nurse in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Sister Anna Marie Lesutis, RSM, RN, feels a great affinity to Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy.