

VATICAN II FIFTY YEARS LATER

When Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council on Oct. 11, 1962, he said, "We have every confidence that the Church, in the light of this Council, will gain in spiritual riches." Fifty years later, people throughout the Catholic

Church — and, in fact, the world — continue to reflect on those riches, and the power and promises of Vatican II. In the October 2012 issue of The Messenger, we presented four very different reflections. In this issue, we offer two more — very personal thoughts from two Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia.

The question they were asked was this: *Who am I today compared to who I was as Vatican II began? Or, another way of putting it might be, How did Vatican II change the way I have lived and matured as a Sister of St. Joseph?*

'Ferment of openness' leads to life of social justice

I was older than most of the other novices when I entered in 1959. In fact, I already had a college degree. After we made temporary vows and went to Marymount College in Salina for our second year of novitiate, my study there included a course of Methods of Teaching in High School, Practice Teaching and a second foreign language.

The atmosphere of study in a Catholic setting was a wonderful place to be at this time.

The academic dean suggested to our congregation's leadership that I should go to St. Louis University to prepare to teach at Marymount. Luckily I went from one wonderful atmosphere to another just as Vatican II opened.

I was privileged to be in this ferment of openness. We had wonderful teachers, good speakers and other women and men in religious life who were ready to listen through these newly opened windows. The St. Louis Jesuits who adapted music to new liturgy all contributed to my enthusiasm. I believe that enthusiasm is why I am still a CSJ today.

Our community did all of the things that the Vatican Council asked us to do. The opportunities seemed almost limitless for works of justice.

Besides teaching I helped political candidates and briefly worked in a gover-

nor's administration. I helped the first woman to serve as governor of Kansas and later supported another woman elected to that office. Other sisters joined me in these endeavors, and most of the clergy sent congratulations when our candidates won; my friends at Marymount helped when the governor asked for a first draft of a veto for a death penalty bill.

In 2012 my ministry is much the same, yet really very different.

Primarily I remain a teacher, but rarely in a classroom. I still am involved politically, by keeping up with the issues and candidates, and by serving as a local precinct leader. I still work for justice. Others may view it differently, but getting out the vote *is* a work of justice; to aspire to help change our political culture *is* a work of justice.

I believe that I am called to love my sisters and brothers.

I am so proud of the leadership and staff of NETWORK, who do research and advocate for us on justice and peace issues. It is imperative that we follow



SISTER JEANNE MCKENNA was born in Kingman, Kan., and was received into the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia on March 18, 1960. Today she lives and serves in Topeka, Kan.

their leadership, and our conscience.

Some of you may not know of the important work of NETWORK. Our Concordia sisters were at the birth of this justice organization. If

my memory serves me well, Sister Bette Moslander was one of the early board members. She urged Sister Mary Agnes Drees to be a first board member. Mary Agnes urged me to take her place at the end of one term. Today there is another Concordia CSJ on the board: Sister Regina Ann Brummel.

NETWORK has just celebrated its 40th anniversary. It is more inclusive in its organization than it was when it first started. It not only has women and men who are not religious or Roman Catholic on its board, but this summer it sponsored the "Nuns on the Bus" tour, and its executive director, Sister Simone Campbell, spoke at both Republican and Democratic national conventions. She told some of the stories of the folks they met on their tour way who also are inspired to help their neighbors. She did not ask the audience to vote for Barack Obama or

Mitt Romney, but rather to think about who had the best plan to help.

Recently I attended a function that included friends of different faiths, and the first question I was asked was, "Were you one of the Nuns on the Bus?" They were disappointed I had not been.

I have lived and ministered in Topeka, for the last 30-plus years.

Before retiring a few years ago, I worked for Let's Help, a not-for-profit social service agency, for more than 15 years. All of us who taught there have helped many of all ages attain their high school diploma, as well as learn English as a second language. Most of our language students have been Hispanic, but I once tutored a Chinese couple who had two babies during the time they studied with us. I helped teach their first baby to speak American English. I learned from the students, as much and more than they learned from me. Mostly they taught me about diversity.

Now, among other things I volunteer at the Kansas History Center in the archives. Most of the time it is like working in a monastery — there is profound silence.

One of the staff (not Roman Catholic) wrote me recently to thank me for the "Catholic education," and for "continuing your teaching career with a student body of me."

A search for community & meaningful ministry



SISTER MARILYN STAHL was born in Plainville, Kan., and was received into the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia on Aug. 15, 1959. Today she lives and serves in Wichita, Kan.

It was a challenge to make the change to appropriate 1960s attire with our negligible budget for clothing. Far more important to me than clothes was the permission to once again use my feminine baptismal name instead of being addressed by two male saints' names.

These changes and more did not come without real suffering for many sisters. I think some felt that the changes after Vatican II were too drastic and too sudden. They may have been dismayed that the practices spelled out in our customs book were no longer deemed relevant. Many sisters asked for dispensation from their vows for one reason or another.

I have no real knowledge of why so many left religious life after the Council. I never asked reasons and no one confided in me. My feeling is that only God truly understands the mysteries of our hearts at any given time. Vowed religious or no, we've remained friends and allies on the path to sanctity. Our lives have been enhanced by knowing and caring for each other.

The effects of the exodus in the 1960s and '70s are still with us. It was a veritable brain drain of educated and talented women, many of whom had outstanding leadership qualities.

As a result, many religious communities were no longer able to staff the parochial schools or hospitals with sisters who had only received a stipend instead of a salary. Gradually many schools and hospitals either closed or changed ownership. We were no longer guaranteed an assignment each year from our major superior to a specific school, hospital or nursing home.

Worldwide, the liturgical changes began with the liturgy in the vernacular, the celebrant facing the congregation during Mass and the gradual involvement of the parish community as cantors and lectors. All of these changes made our lives more spiritually meaningful and enriching. They had practical results, too. I no longer had to drill 80 altar boys with Latin responses to the Mass: Deo gratias!

When I look back at the last 50 years, probably the most significant and worrisome issues for me were:

- 1) how to live in community when I no longer lived with sisters, CSJ or otherwise, but instead lived alone in an apartment; and
- 2) how to find a meaningful ministry that was faithful to the Gospels and the



Sister Marilyn Stahl joins the discussion during a recent congregational Assembly at the Nazareth Motherhouse in Concordia as Sister Carm Thibault, right, listens.

charism of our Congregation.

Once I no longer worked at Marymount College in Salina, the search was on.

Happily, God led me to three positions near the Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Many religious women resided there who had backgrounds similar to mine. They had been former teachers who were ready for a change and wanted to make a difference. Like me, they found positions in not-for-profit Catholic social service organizations. Many lived in a large apartment complex near Catholic University, and I became friends with sisters from many religious congregations including Sisters of St. Joseph from various motherhouses around the country.

Though most of us lived alone, we were able to be together for liturgy, celebrations of birthdays and holidays and for enjoying the myriad cultural, historical and tourist attractions in the greater Washington area. I lived there for 14 years and it was a happy and fulfilling time.

I worked for three different organizations: the Christic Institute, which successfully argued the Karen Silkwood case before the Supreme Court, the Center of Applied Research for the Apostolate (CARA) as conference center director and the U. S. Professional Development

Institute as director of training.

After 14 rewarding years, I made a concerted effort to find a position with religious women.

Thanks to a ministry website, I found an opening for the motherhouse administrator for the Sisters of the Presentation in New Windsor, N.Y. The seven years with the dear sisters at Mount St. Joseph were among the happiest in my life.

After living on the East Coast for 21 years, I realized in 2004 that it was time to return to Kansas. I applied for and accepted a position to coordinate a parish-based program for senior Catholics in the Wichita Diocese.

The people in the parishes welcomed me wholeheartedly and together we prayed, celebrated and bonded with each other. I traversed the Flint Hills and highways and by-ways of the 20,000 square miles of the diocese.

Though I can't say now that religious life has ever been easy, I rejoice that I was surrounded always by wonderful people. I never felt alone. God and the congregation have always been with me in friendship and loving support.

As we mark Vatican II's 50th anniversary, I give thanks to God for the great gift the documents have been to the Church and to all of us.

FROM THE MARYMOUNT COLLEGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Eternal rest grant unto them, O God!

Members of the Marymount family we've lost

Clara Riedel of Topeka	Died Sept. 13, 2012
Mary Amelia Simpson Hight of Northridge, Calif.	Died Oct. 27, 2012
Sister Jane Guenette of Concordia	Died Nov. 11, 2012
Sister Louise Marie Vaughan of Concordia	Died Nov. 12, 2012
Ilene Hart of Delphos, Kan.	Died Nov. 29, 2012
Sister Jackie Kircher of Concordia	Died Dec. 6, 2012
Margaret E. Kelley of Salina	Died Dec. 27, 2012
Alma Jane Gillispie of Salina	Died Jan. 5, 2013

Alums! We can stay in touch with Facebook, Messenger

By JACI WALSH
Marymount Alumni Board

The Alumni Association Board will need to get together soon to decide the next steps regarding future college reunions, need for the office space and future of the association itself. We will

keep you updated.

In the meantime, we can all stay in touch through our Facebook page — Marymount-College-of-Kansas.

Sharing pictures really can start the memories flowing. I'm always surprised by who all joins in!

For The Messenger, you can send

information about class reunions (individual groups), requests for prayer, or death notices of alumni you know about to Sarah Jenkins at sjenkins@csjkansas.org.

You can send any address updates or requests to my email address g1j2w@aol.com.

“I’ve been looking for this my entire life,” says Susan Klepper, who professed her vow Nov. 11 as an Agrégée Sister of St. Joseph of Concordia.

By “this,” she means “something everybody seems to say: A closer and deeper relationship with God, and believing that happens in community.”

By “my entire life,” she means from when she and a childhood friend played “school” with the girl’s nephews and Susan was the nun-teacher.

But the path that brought the 72-year-old St. Louis native to the Nazareth Motherhouse in Concordia was not a direct one. Yet for all its changes of direction, she says now, it felt inevitable.

As an eighth-grade student in parochial school in St. Louis, she met a Sister of St. Joseph for the first time. “She was more like a mother than a teacher,” Susan says of the Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet. “She made a great impression on me.”

Then, at 17, she entered the Carondelet sisters in St. Louis as a postulante. But after only three or four months, she left the convent and went home “due to some family conflict.”

She never returned. Instead, at 19 she got married and began a life that would include two daughters in the next few years.

Susan was just 26 when her husband died.

A handful of years later, she remarried and her family grew to include two stepsons and a third daughter.

Along the way she earned a bachelor’s degree from Webster University in St. Louis and then an MBA from Fontbonne University, also in St. Louis. She also received training through Washington University, and built her career as an adult medical nurse practitioner.

But the call to religious life never really went away. In 1999, when Pope John Paul II visited St. Louis, her husband Jerry teased about it, saying, “You still like the idea of being a nun.”

A couple of years later, when Jerry became critically ill, the idea returned. “I thought about what I would do with the rest of my life,” she says.



Fulfilling a lifelong need

After her husband’s death in 2002, she talked with the Carondelet sisters, “But I was told ‘no,’ I was too old.”

Instead, the Carondelet sisters told Susan about CSJ Associates — women and men, married and single, who share the spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph without becoming vowed members. She became a candidate and finally a CSJ Associate in 2008.

It was through that connection that Susan read an article about the agrégée form of vowed membership that the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia had re-created a few years earlier.

The Carondelet and Concordia congregations have shared roots going back to the original Sisters of St. Joseph in 17th century France, but are separate and autonomous communities. They are among more than

a dozen separate congregations of Sisters of St. Joseph in the U.S. and Canada.

But all Susan knew were the Carondelet sisters in St. Louis.

So she contacted Sister Bette Moslander in Concordia to learn more and then came to an “Agrégée Information Day” in the fall of 2010.

Among the Concordia sisters she found “such kindness and love, and such a sense of belonging. This is the community — the aura of community — I had been looking for without even realizing it.”

In November 2010, Susan became a candidate for agrégée membership and has spent the last two years studying the history and charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

“You can sit and pray and meditate or go on retreats,” Susan explains, “but these two years have been so powerful; I’ve grown so much.”

After her profession ceremony, Sister Susan returned home to St. Louis, to her six grandchildren and two great-grandsons, to her dogs Buster and Sugar, to St. Vincent de Paul Parish and to her service as a hospice volunteer.

But, she says, it has all changed in a subtle yet powerful way.

She had asked that a special hymn, to the music

of “Danny Boy,” be played during her profession.

The music is testament to her Irish heritage, Susan says, and the words are testament to her journey to Concordia.

“‘He looked beyond my faults and saw my need’ — and my need throughout my life is what I’ve found with the sisters in Concordia.”



ABOVE: Newly professed Sister Susan Klepper, center, faces the altar at the end of Mass with her agrégée mentor Sister Loretta Jasper, left, and Sister Marcia Allen, president of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia.

LEFT: After the solemn profession ceremony, Sister Susan finally smiles with relief when she returns to her seat during the special Mass on Nov. 11 at the Nazareth Motherhouse.

Agrégée numbers continue to grow

With Susan Klepper’s profession, there are now nine women who have entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia as agrégées since 2006.

In November, another four women joined the three others who are currently candidates for agrégée membership.

The term agrégée — pronounced *ah-gre-ZHEY* — comes from the French word for “attached to” or “aggregated with,” and it dates to the religious order’s founding in France during the mid-17th century.

Based on research into the original constitution and rules for the congregation, written by founder and Jesuit priest Jean-Pierre Medaille, the sisters now recognize that in addition to the canonically vowed members of the order, there were also “agrégées.” While an agrégée did not make vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, she did profess a vow of fidelity to God and to the congregation and lived according to the rules of the Sisters of St. Joseph. As an agrégée, she was recognized by the local people and the local churches as a sister.

As the modern Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia studied their origins and their original spirituality, they revived that early practice based on what they learned. The Senate of the Concordia congregation approved agrégée membership in 2006.

The first modern agrégée — Rosabel Flax of Ness City, Kan. — professed a vow of fidelity to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia in 2008.

The other agrégées are:

- » **Sister Ann Ashwood** of Grand Junction, Colo.
- » **Sister Rosemary Foreman** of Topeka, Kan.
- » **Sister Lorren Harbin** of Fruita, Colo.
- » **Sister Sharon Hayes** of Kansas City, Mo.



Agrégée sisters, candidates and team members gather for a group photo in November. **FRONT ROW**, from left: Sister Virginia Pearl (Agrégée Team Member), Sister Jan McCormick (Agrégée Team Member), Sister Jean Ann Walton, Sister Carm Thibault (Agrégée Team Member), Sister Bette Moslander (Agrégée Team Member) and Sister Ann Ashwood. **MIDDLE ROW**, from left: Sister Pat McLennon (Agrégée Team Member), Sister

Rosbel Flax (Agrégée Director), candidate Virginia Flax, candidate Christina Brodie, Sister Lorren Harbin, candidate Denise Schmitz, Sister Susan Klepper and candidate Crystal Payment. **BACK ROW**, from left: candidate Beth Weddle, Sister Sharon Hayes, candidate Kathleen Stairs, Sister Marcia Allen (Agrégée Team Member), Sister Kathy Schaefer, candidate Teresa Hernandez, Sister Dian Hall and Sister Rosemary Foreman.

- » **Sister Susan Klepper** of St. Louis, Mo.
- » **Sister Jan McCormick** of Chapman, Kan.
- » **Sister Kathy Schaefer** of Augusta, Kan.
- » **Sister Jean Ann Walton** of Augusta, Kan.

The current agrégée candidates are:

- » **Virginia Flax** of Wakeeney, Kan.
- » **Crystal Payment** of Douglasville, Ga.
- » **Beth Weddle** of Concordia

Sister Dian Hall of Cartersville, Ga., came to the Sisters of St. Joseph as an agrégée candidate, but has now entered the community as a novice and will eventually profess canonical vows.

The agrégée candidates received in November are: » **Christina Brodie**, who moved to Concordia to serve as the volunteer coordinator of the Hands Across the Community anti-poverty initiative. She is a just-retired advertising executive from Jensen Beach, Fla.

» **Teresa Hernandez**, a Salina native who graduated from Marymount College in 1986 with a bachelor’s degree in music education. She is a cellist who recently began a second career in the field of social work and counseling. She lives in Salina.

» **Denise Ann Schmitz**, who was born in Plainville, Kan., and has spent most of her life in the Norton, Kan., area. She has worked for USDA Farm Service Agency for 26 years and has one grown daughter, Shelley.

» **Kathleen Lee Stairs**, who was born in Bakersfield,

Calif., and raised in Fresno, Calif. After moving to Denver, she married Charles Stairs in 1958; he died in 2011. She spent the majority of her working career with United Airlines before retiring in 1999. She now lives in Elizabeth, Colo.

Agrégées are defined as mature, single Catholic women who commit themselves to active and inclusive love of God and the dear neighbor as expressed in the spirit and spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia. In almost every aspect, they are viewed as full members of the congregation, meaning they have a voice and a vote on most congregational issues.

There are three significant differences, however.

» “Canonically vowed sisters” profess the canonical — meaning governed by Church law — vows of poverty,

chastity and obedience. As part of the vow of poverty, an individual sister relinquishes all personal wealth and income; at the same time, the congregation assumes responsibility for her economic well being for the rest of her life.

» “Agrégée sisters” profess a vow of fidelity to the congregation, but it is noncanonical and is instead a private vow between that sister and the Concordia congregation. It also means that the agrégée does not relinquish her finances to the congregation, and the congregation assumes no financial responsibility for her.

» Also, canonically vowed sisters begin their religious life with a formal “formation” that includes a postulancy and novitiate that are, together, about three years. During this time, they have left their previous life, but haven’t yet taken up their works as a Sister of St. Joseph.

For agrégées, the period of being a candidate may be about the same length of time, but they do not leave behind their outside lives. Instead, they meet with mentors and study around their regular work and life schedules. And once they have professed their vows, they return to that work and life schedule.

Other congregations of St. Joseph have developed similar definitions or are doing their own studies, but the Concordia congregation is the first to recognize agrégées as sisters who are part of the community.

COMING EVENTS



» **Saturday February 2** — “WINTER SPIRITUALITY: GOD’S VALENTINE” at Manna House of Prayer, 323 E. Fifth St., Concordia. Presenters: Sister Janet Lander. Send yourself a valentine this year. Indeed, you are God’s Valentine! The day will include contemplative writing and time for personal and communal prayer. From 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Registration (includes lunch) \$45.

» **February 8-10** — “STRIP SCRAPPY” QUILTING RETREAT at Manna House. Join guest teacher Linda Henderson during this fun-filled weekend, taking a Jelly-Roll strip set and turning it into a beautiful Strip Scrappy throw. Begins Friday at 5:30 p.m.; ends Sunday at 1 p.m. Registration (includes room and meals): \$145. Non-refundable deposit: \$25.

» **Monday, February 4** — “FIRST MONDAYS AT MANNA.” One of 12 special monthly fund-raising meals honoring our heritage, prepared and served by our sisters at Manna House. In February, the menu features a New Orleans meal for Mardi Gras. Donations are welcome and reservations are required a week in advance; call 785/243-4428.

» **Friday, February 15** — READING WITH LEADERS at Neighbor to Neighbor, 103 E. Sixth St., Concordia. “Hot Rod Hamster” with Tony Miller and Carol Ruud. Storytelling for children ages 3-5, with a free book for your child to take home. Registration is required: call Sister Pat McLennon at 785/262-4215.

» **February 15-18** — “PROPHETIC CALL FOR WOMEN LIVING IN CHALLENGING TIMES” at Manna House. Come explore your call at a special three-day weekend retreat. Designed especially for single, working women in their 20s and 30s, you will spend time with a vibrant group of Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia. The weekend will give you the opportunity to explore, pray, discern and experience the joy of community life. Registration (includes housing and all meals): \$100; scholarships are available.

» **February 22-24** — MEDITATION AND MOVEMENT RETREAT, at Manna House. Presenters: Sister Julie Christensen and yoga instructor Shanell Mergerson. The weekend program will be a mixture of meditation, movement (yoga) and reflection. There will be formal and informal help with the physical postures of yoga, as well as how to integrate meditation into your life for both beginners and the more seasoned. Begins Friday at 7 p.m.; ends Sunday at 3 p.m. Registration (includes housing and meals): \$170.

» **Saturday, February 23** — “DEEPENING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROSARY” at Manna House. Presenter: Sister Betty Sulther. We will explore the contemplative dimensions of the mysteries of the rosary and how they open us to the mystery of Jesus. There will be time for input, reflection and praying the rosary together. From 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Registration (includes lunch): \$45

» **March 1-3** — SCRAPBOOKING WEEKEND RETREAT, at Manna House. Love to scrapbook? Love to get away for weekends? Join host Joni Wahlmeier for blissful hours of scrapbooking, making new friends, leaving your routines at home and pampering yourself! Begins Friday at 5:30 p.m.; ends Sunday at 1 p.m. Registration (includes room and meals): \$145. Non-refundable deposit: \$25.

» **Monday, March 4** — “FIRST MONDAYS AT MANNA.” One of 12 special monthly fund-raising meals honoring our heritage, prepared and served by our sisters at Manna House. In March, the menu features an Italian feast in honor of St. Joseph. Donations are welcome and reservations are required a week in advance; call 785/243-4428.

» **Friday, March 8** — READING WITH LEADERS at Neighbor to Neighbor. “Alexander and the Terrible Horrible No Good Very Bad Day” with Sister Marcia Allen and Dr. Paul Nelson. Storytelling for children ages 3-5, with a free book for your child to take home. Registration is required: call Sister Pat McLennon at 785/262-4215.

» **March 8-10** — “TRIP FOR TWO TO BOSTON” QUILTING RETREAT at Manna House. Guest teacher Christina Bloom and her quilting partner Charlotte Grell will demonstrate this fun class, where two buddies work together, one cutting and the other sewing. At the end of class, they have completed two different quilts. Registration (includes room and meals): \$145. Non-refundable deposit: \$25.

» **Saturday, March 16** — “EXPLORING THE SPIRITUALITY OF TEILHARD DE CHARDIN” at Manna House. Presenter: Sister Carolyn Teter. The most lasting contribution of this French philosopher and priest lies in the strength and attraction of his spirituality and the inspiring way in which he lived his Christian faith. We



2013 Institute focuses on Vatican II’s impact



SISTER CATHERINE MCHAUD

Reserve a spot now for the 2013 Theological Institute, where the focus will be “Understanding Vatican II.”

Sister Catherine Michaud, Ph.D., is a Vatican II theologian who will lead a challenging look at the documents that make up the heart of the Second Vatican Council, plus offer an indepth exploration of their impact 50 years later.

She lives in St. Paul, Minn.

This year’s institute at Manna House of Prayer in

Concordia begins Thursday, July 25, at 5:30 p.m., and ends Sunday, July 28, at 1 p.m.

The registration fee of \$275 covers the entire seminar plus room and meals.

Also available at the end of the institute is a four-day Contemplative Retreat, from 7 p.m. July 28 through 1 p.m. Aug. 1.

Retreatants will have the opportunity to participate in contemplative dialogue and in communal centering prayer. The registration fee of \$275 includes room and meals.

Contact Manna House or register online (see information box below).

will explore different aspects of Christian spirituality, guided by the inspiration and concerns found in Teilhard’s thought. Begins at 9 a.m.; ends at 3:30 p.m. Registration (includes lunch): \$45.

» **March 17-22** — “ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK: A PILGRIMAGE FOR THE SOUL” at Nazareth Motherhouse, Concordia. Make your 2013 spring break a soul pilgrimage with Christ! Spend a week living and praying with us, deepening your relationship with God and with yourself. Begins at 5 p.m. Sunday; ends noon Friday. Registration (includes housing and meals): \$125. For information, contact Sister Beverly Carlin at srbev@csjkansas.org or 785/220-7996, or Sister Janet Lander at janetmarcsj@yahoo.com or 785/243-4428.

» **Sunday, March 17** — ANNUAL SPAGHETTI DINNER at the Motherhouse, serving from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. For details, see page 3.

» **Friday, March 22** — READING WITH LEADERS at Neighbor to Neighbor. “The Giving Tree” with Dora Whitney and Myrna Shelton. Storytelling for children ages 3-5, with a free book for your child to take home. Registration is required: call Sister Pat McLennon at 785/262-4215.

» **March 24-30** — HOLY WEEK RETREAT: “THE GIFT OF GRATE(GRACE-GRACIAS) —FULLNESS” at Manna House. Retreat begins with 11 a.m. Mass on Palm Sunday and ends with the Easter Vigil on Saturday evening. Retreat director Father Don Larmore is a native Nebraskan who attended St. Thomas Seminary in Denver and was ordained in 1963. Father Don now lives in Tucson, Ariz., and is currently working with the Roncalli Institute of Convivenza. This is a residential retreat with housing and meals at Manna House and the Nazareth Motherhouse. Registration (includes housing and meals): \$450.

» **Monday, April 1** — “FIRST MONDAYS AT MANNA.” One of 12 special monthly fund-raising meals honoring our heritage, prepared and served by our sisters at Manna House. In April, the menu features a vegetarian feast for Earth Month. Donations are welcome and reservations are required a week in advance; call 785/243-4428.

» **April 19-21** — “COME AND SEE RETREAT” at Nazareth Motherhouse. We invite you to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit and join us for this retreat to uncover more deeply if God is calling you to be a Sister of St. Joseph. Register with Sister Beverly Carlin at srbev@csjkansas.org or 785/220-7996

» **Saturday April 20** — “SPRING SPIRITUALITY: OPEN ALL WINDOWS TO GOD” at Manna House. After the cold of winter passes, how wonderful it is to throw open all our windows! Our spiritual lives go through winters, too. Perhaps your spirit is ready for spring’s fresh air. Join us for a day of contemplative writing and personal and communal prayer. Presenters: Sisters Janet Lander and Liberata Pellerin. Begins at 9 a.m.; ends at 3:30 p.m. Registration (includes lunch): \$45.

» **Sunday, April 21** — 35TH ANNIVERSARY OPEN HOUSE at Manna House. No reservations needed for this very special event — just join us from 1 to 4 p.m. on this special Sunday to celebrate our birthday! This is a chance to learn more about Manna House of Prayer and the history of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia while you visit with us and enjoy tours of the historic building, refreshments and conversation.

» **Monday, May 6** — “FIRST MONDAYS AT MANNA.” One of 12 special monthly fund-raising meals honoring our heritage, prepared and served by our sisters at Manna House. In May, we’ll celebrate Cinco de Mayo with a Mexican feast. Donations are welcome and reservations are required a week in advance; call 785/243-4428.

» **May 30-June 1** — DISCOVER CAMP 2013, at Nazareth Motherhouse. An opportunity for young girls entering sixth, seventh and eighth grades to deepen their relationship with God, learn more about themselves and connect with others — while we pray, serve others and have fun! Begins at 3 p.m. Thursday; ends at 8 p.m. Saturday. Registration (includes housing and meals): \$75. A limited number of scholarships are available; for information, contact Sister Beverly Carlin at 785/220-7996 or srbev@csjkansas.org. Registration form online at www.csjkansas.org/for-kids!

» **Monday, June 3** — “FIRST MONDAYS AT MANNA.” One of 12 special monthly fund-raising meals honoring our heritage, prepared and served by our sisters at Manna House. In June, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our mission in Brazil with a South American feast. Donations are welcome and reservations are required a week in advance; call 785/243-4428.

» **June 13-15** — CAMP BE-YOU-T-FULL, at Nazareth Motherhouse. Each of us is created to be unique, and this camp is designed to help high school girls understand that as they continue to discover and become ever more FULLY the person God calls them to BE. Registration (includes housing and meals): \$75; a limited number of \$25 will be available. Contact Sister Beverly Carlin at srbev@csjkansas.org or 785/220-7996 to register or for more information.

» **June 18-June 25** — “MAKING LACE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY” at Manna House. This retreat is designed to give individuals and experience of the practice of making bobbin lace in a contemplative setting. No previous experience in lacemaking is required. Together we will ponder how the contemplative practice of lacemaking fosters a life shaped by beauty and devotion, by creativity and presence, and by sustainability, service and compassion, as surely in the present century as it did centuries ago in France. Lacemaking instruction is a part of this retreat. Each lacemaker needs a lace pillow and a 12-pair set of bobbins. If you need to rent or buy these items from us, please call us at 785-243-4428 in advance so we can make sure we have enough on hand. Presenters are Sisters Ramona Media and Janet Lander, both accomplished lacemakers and artists. Begins at 5:30 p.m. June 18; ends at 1 p.m. June 25. Registration (includes room and meals): \$525

ONLINE REGISTRATION IS NOW AVAILABLE FOR PROGRAMS AT MANNA HOUSE OF PRAYER!

Go to mannahouse.org

Or, for details on any program, call 785/243-4428 or email retreatcenter@mannahouse.org.



Sister Jackie Kircher: Aug. 21, 1931-Dec. 6, 2012

VIGIL: Dec. 9, 2012, Nazareth Motherhouse, Concordia
EULOGIST: Sister Marcia Allen

“Her personality is very pleasant so that she gets along well and easily with her companions. In every respect I find Miss Kircher a splendid example of good Catholic womanhood and thus I readily vouch for her in every way. I do sincerely believe that the young lady has a religious vocation and will prove herself easily in her calling.”

This quote from a letter of recommendation by Father Matt La Violette of Gladstone, Mich., in July 1949, was high praise, indeed, for he was a man who would waste no words on insincerity.

For herself, Jacqueline Kircher said, “I am committed as far as humanly possible to live an exemplary Christian life in Concordia as a religious and as a responsible citizen.” (Mission Statement, 1993-94)

Jacqueline Anne was born Aug. 21, 1931, in Escanaba, Mich., the daughter of Louis and Evangeline McGee Kircher. She grew up in Gladstone, Mich., and was taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia. She entered this community in 1949, making her first vows on March 19, 1951, along with 14 other novices. She was given the name Sister Mary Lorian but eventually returned to her baptismal name, going by the nickname Jackie. Seven of her original band members remained in the community. Her surviving band members are Sisters Rita Ann Mazanec, Mary Jean Assell, Alice Marie Stalker and Therese Richstatter.

Jackie taught for 20 years. Her missions included Clyde, Salina, Cawker City and Aurora, Kan., and Monet, Mo., and Fairbury, Neb. She earned her bachelor’s degree in English from Marymount College, certification in accounting from Wichita Business College, and a bachelor’s degree in Education and a master’s in Business Education from Emporia State University.

She taught for 10 years in the Wichita Business College and worked as an accountant for the Big Brothers/Big Sisters organization.

With this background she began her tenure in the business office of Nazareth Convent and Academy where she worked as bookkeeper and accountant. She served in this capacity from 1982 until her retirement in 2008.

From 2008 until her death she was active in craftwork of every kind.

Her mission statements stated what was perhaps her greatest desire. She said in one way or another that she wanted to be a Christian, to be an example of what it meant to be Christian. The most frequently used term was “exemplary Christian.”

In her life review she describes her mother as an example: “wonderful, good, religious and wholesome.”

She gives her mother credit for any good found in herself. Perhaps this was the source of her desire to be a person who communicated the meaning of Christian.

Her friends describe her as pious; she watched EWTN, appreciated the televised Mass when she couldn’t attend in person; had favorite speakers, including Mother Angelica herself.

At the same time one could hardly describe her piety as divorced from real life. Jackie had a realistic view of life and all of its heartaches and expressed this in a down-to-earth manner. Of her own suffering she did not complain. She lived seeing the humor in situations — her own and that of others.

As an accountant, Jackie was a success and she acknowledged it. She was precise and a perfectionist. She loved numbers. She was at home and happy in numbers! She took a great deal of pride and pleasure in working in



HOMEcomings

the Nazareth Convent and Academy finance department. She derived a great deal of personal satisfaction in solving a problem. And she loved problems!

Her affability and patience made her an easy person to approach. Her door was always open. She was ready for any kind of request for assistance. The more tangled and complex the problem, the more welcome it was. Jackie was an investigator and she would dog a problematic situation until its solution became clear. While she was methodical she was also creative and rarely failed in her sense of humor. These three qualities helped her through many a frustrating circumstance.

In her later years, she took up arts and crafts with her usual playful seriousness. She liked to paint and was good at it (witness the Nativity scene at the west entrance). She was a prolific crafts woman, working with her partners and best friends, Sisters Susan Marie Stoerber, Leah Smith and Cecilia Green. They sold their products during the Concordia Fall Fest and the pre-Christmas sale that they held each year at the Motherhouse.

At one point, she explained the importance of this work. First of all, it is in the tradition of the Sisters of St. Joseph who at their origins were lacemakers. Secondly, she and her partners began to help fund our sisters’ mission in Brazil.

She also tracked their venues — first at Cese’s shop, which they outgrew the first year, then to the south dining room, to the auditorium and once in the front parlor.

They had many helpers with their products such as: crocheted and knitted items, all types of needlework, woodwork, jewelry, quilts and aprons, plants, baked goods, homemade noodles, candy, home canned goods and dried apples. Their rule of thumb for the sales was “You bring it, and if it is homemade, we will try to sell it.”

Eventually, her eyesight began to fail and she found it increasingly difficult to do the precise work that some of the crafts demanded. It became more and more difficult for her to get around. She did, however, maintain a faithful presence at Mass at Mount Joseph. Her task there was to ring the bells at the consecration. That this was a prized contribution was made evident when she was in the ER waiting to be admitted. Talking was difficult for her but she managed to ask, “Who will take care of the bells?”

That was Jackie. A caring, responsible, kind, good-natured person, patient, compassionate, open to others, and always concerned that responsibilities were honored. In community she suffered grave misunderstanding from time to time. She never projected her hurt on anyone else. She never blamed or put anyone down. Whereas she was professional in the workplace and at home she was respectful, uncomplaining, honest. It was difficult to upset her; she kept a positive attitude, was even-tempered. She could do just about anything and would take on any task that was put before her. She could cook (make “divine” fudge), sew, play the piano and organ, loved a party and was a jill of all trades. She was patient and good humored. She was generous and ready to assist others without prejudice. These, said one who lived with her, were her hidden virtues. She had about her “a quality of life that comes from inner suffering well-accepted.”

“I feel confident,” she wrote in 1954, “that with the grace of God and cooperation on my part I will persevere. . . .” This she did, right up until her death just after midnight on Thursday, Dec. 6, 2012.

It is difficult to do full justice to Jackie’s life. She was a complex personality and her life reflected that. When she was 4, she heard about kindergarten. At the beginning of the school year she sneaked off to school and got away with attending until the teacher finally figured out that she hadn’t been registered. After talking with Jackie’s mother it was decided to allow her to go.

From a precocious child to a woman of many interests on a road to becoming Christian. Jackie, as we contemplate your life so well-lived, we can assure you that you obviously have reflected for us and modeled an exemplary Christian. Thank you!



Sister Louise Marie Vaughan:

March 29, 1929-Nov. 12, 2012

VIGIL: Nov. 18, 2012, Nazareth Motherhouse, Concordia
EULOGIST: Sister Marcia Allen

“My hope is that God will continue to grace me with a positive attitude toward life with its joys and sorrows.” (From Sister Louise Marie’s life review.)

This amazing desire, coupled with her continuous concern that she be of service, describes the life of Sister Louise Marie Vaughan.

Mary Lee Vaughan was born on March 29, 1929, in Oklahoma City, three minutes before her twin, Martha Lou. Their parents were Harold Edward Vaughan and Louise Elizabeth Knaup Vaughan.

The twins attended parochial schools in Oklahoma City and Concordia throughout their grade and high school and entered Marymount in 1947. In February 1948, they entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia. At their reception in August 1948, they became known as Sister Louise Marie and Sister Miriam Edward.

Nothing was more precious to these two than their “twinship.” They experienced a deep connectedness of love and confidence. Even though their paths parted once they were through their early formation their union of mind and heart never faltered. Louise Marie followed a path that she had desired since the age of 3, that of nursing.

After making temporary profession in August 1949, Louise Marie was sent to St. Anthony’s Hospital in Sabetha, Kan., to continue her pursuit of professional nursing, then to St. Joseph Hospital in Concordia, earning a diploma in 1953 from the Marymount School of Nursing. By May 1954 she had earned a bachelor’s degree in Nursing. For the next five years she served as Instructor of Nursing and Assistant Director of the Marymount School of Nursing. She taught theory and clinical practice at St. John’s Hospital.

In 1959, she was sent to Catholic University of America and there earned a master’s degree in Nursing in June 1961 and a PhD in June 1963. During the 1962 summer session, she taught Curriculum and Research Courses for master’s level students in the School of Nursing. She was asked to join the faculty of the Higher Education Department within the School of Education at the University; however, the community wished her to return to Marymount.

There she led the establishment of a baccalaureate nursing program. The first class in September 1964 admitted 30 students. Besides being chair of the Marymount Nursing Program, she also served as Academic Dean for three years. She directed the Marymount Institutional Research and authored the scientific report of this research on which changes in the college’s policies

and curriculum were based.

From 1971 to 1980 she was also the chair of the Marymount Division of Health Sciences, professor of Nursing and an accreditation visitor for the National League for Nursing Department of Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs. Marymount administrators, faculty and students voted her the faculty member to receive a Special Service Award for Excellence in January 1980.

At that time she resigned from the college and with her sister, Miriam Edward, was appointed by Bishop Daniel Kucera to the position of Advocates and Court Experts for the Salina Diocesan Marriage Tribunal. They continued this work until May 1995.

Louise Marie was a brilliant student, and she loved learning. Throughout her life she took advantage of every conference relating to her profession that was possible. Coupled with that was anything she could learn about religious life, especially that of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Her personal love of learning was accompanied by reading scholarly works in her profession, and in her later life, books and tapes about the spiritual life



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and guides to prayer.

A brilliant career, filled with appointments and awards. A brilliant woman, motivated by the highest values – the desire to be the best nurse, the best administrator, the best teacher.

Her eminently distinguished career, however, is not the real story of Louise Marie’s life.

Several months after her arrival in Sabetha in 1949, she was diagnosed with Simmond’s Disease, a dangerous and rare disease, which affects the pituitary gland. She eventually recovered from that and continued her nursing studies. Within the next decade she began to experience symptoms that led to a diagnosis in 1959. She had a combination of two serious diseases that caused debilitating pain. The first is described as acute pain which usually comes at night and is similar to a “charley horse.” The pain becomes progressively worse until the patient either is writhing in pain or lying motionless afraid to move lest she cause an exaggeration of the pain. The sharp excruciating pain lasts from five to fifteen minutes and when it leaves the patient experiences relief and fatigue.

The second disease is characterized by sudden onset

of acute muscle spasms such as one gets with a leg cramp. Trigger mechanisms set off the spasm that travels to other muscles. The pain from the first was acute — sharp, viselike and stabbing. The pain of the latter was chronic — regular and throbbing. This was her physical existence since the late 1950s until her death, 50-plus years later.

She moved to the Motherhouse in 1993 and retired from the Marriage Tribunal in 1995. By that time her physical condition had deteriorated considerably. Eventually, she moved to Mount Joseph Senior Care Village. For many years I had the privilege of accompanying Louise Marie in her journey toward wholeness. She never asked, “Why me?” She never complained of the pain. She amazed me about the matter of fact way she approached what was continuous acute suffering. It was part of her life. What she really wanted was a life in union with God and if this suffering were part of that, then she would befriend it. She spent her nights awake with pain. She regarded these nights as opportunities for prayer.

During the early 1980s she worked with The Institute of BioSpiritual Research under Ed McMahon and Peter Campbell. There she learned a special kind of focusing, a method that led to new levels of integrated human consciousness by balancing body-knowing (felt sensing) and head-brain-knowing (abstract thinking). This, she said, led her into a contemplative prayer life. This focusing method also enabled her to see through her intense pain to what she desired most – consciousness of God’s presence. Her practice was to “offer her suffering as prayer in union with the sufferings of Christ.” Once she had made this offering she was able to simply rest in God’s providence. In her Spiritual Autobiography, she says that her deepest peace came from knowing that God made her; God loved her and God cared for her. She spent much of her night time in deep, silent presence with the one she called “Lover” while her body raged with pain.

She ends her life review this way: “I want to express deep sentiments of gratitude and joy for the ‘gift of life’ and all the blessings and graces I have received. I hope that God will continue to grace me with a positive attitude toward life with its joys and sorrows. I believe I will be able to go through my period of physical dying with peace as this last period will release me from the material world so I can truly go to my God.” She did, indeed, live with a positive attitude and she went to her God on Nov. 12, 2012.



Sister Jane Guenette: May 22, 1915-Nov. 11, 2012

VIGIL: Nov. 13, 2012, Nazareth Motherhouse, Concordia
EULOGIST: Sister Mary Savoie

I think that for many of us, when we hear the scripture passage, “Let the little children come to me,” we think of Sister Jane Guenette. Why? Because her whole life on this earth was dedicated to ministry on behalf of children.

Sister Jane, a gentle, soft spoken, calm, prayerful and committed Sister of St. Joseph, has completed her journey on this earth. A statement she repeated so often to the many children she taught was: “Stay close to Jesus.”

Jane lived that statement each day of her life among us. And now, without doubt she is not only saying those words, but is in reality close to Jesus.

She was born in Dryburg, Mich., on May 22, 1915. At her baptism her mother, Rubia Savoie, and father, Leonard Guenette gave her the name of Jane Alexina.

She was the fourth of 15 children — nine brothers and five sisters: Sister Marie Therese, Lucien, Albert, Albertine, Leo, Isadore, Ernest, Theodore, Joseph, Oscar, Gerald, Therese, Noella and Marie. Eleven have preceded Sister Jane in death. One brother, Gerald and two sisters, Therese and Noella are still living.

Sister Jane many times said of herself, “I am a cradle Catholic, baptized when I was 8 days old and raised in a family where religion was always a priority. I grew up loving God from an early age.”

Jane Alexina completed her elementary education in a one-room country school near her home. She completed her high school in a boarding school in Sault Ste Marie, Mich., a school operated by the Loretta Sisters.

On July 30, 1933, at the age of 18, Jane Alexina Guenette made the long trip from Michigan to Concordia, Kan., and requested membership with the Sisters of St. Joseph. On March 19, 1934, she was admitted to the novitiate, taking the name of Sister Mary Noella.

A year later, on March 19, 1935, she pronounced her temporary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Three years later, on Aug. 15, 1938, she made her final commitment as a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, Kan.

In the process, she earned an educational degree from Marymount College and a degree in the Montessori Method of teaching children.

This makes it sound as if Sister Jane had a smooth and uninterrupted beginning of her five years as a Sister of St. Joseph. However, as she so often repeated to me and also wrote in her life journal, all was not so.

Shortly after completing her novitiate, about two years after coming to Concordia and at the early age of 20 with a high school education only, she was sent to Chicago to teach first grade at St. Joseph & St. Ann

elementary school. She wrote: “I felt lost. Even though I grew up in a family caring for young children, I had no idea what to do here as a teacher.

“So I wrote a letter to Mother Bernardine who was my principal during my school days in Sault Ste Marie with these words: ‘As a 20 year old with no teaching experience or know how, I do not have the faintest idea of how or what to teach these little children. Please advise me.’

“Mother Bernardine wrote back immediately saying, ‘I cannot tell you how to teach young children, but here is what you need to keep before you at all times, those who teach will shine in heaven for all eternity.’”

Jane’s response to this advice?

“Well, that did not help me much in teaching but it did at that time give me the courage to go on.”

And go on she did! Sister Jane taught young children in Chicago for 16 years.



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Following that assignment, she taught primary grades in Fairbury, Neb., and in the Kansas Catholic schools in Beloit, Junction City, Herrington, Damar and Kansas City.

These 54 years of ministry to and with children certainly provided daily opportunities for Sister Jane to teach not only the academics required during the primary years of education, but also to demonstrate by her life and teaching the virtues and values so important to Christian development during the early years of one’s life.

Of her many years of teaching primary grade children, Sister Jane said, “Teaching children during the primary years of their education was like being a gardener. I planted the seeds by showing children how to break open the seeds, that is, how to break apart the sounds of words. By spring of each year, the children blossomed like flowers and with joy and excitement told everyone around them, ‘I can read all by myself.’”

At the time of her 50th anniversary as a Sister of St. Joseph, Sister Jane wrote this about her ministry experience of teaching at Cure of Ars School in Kansas City: “For some reason, I was nervous about again teaching in a large city school after so many years of teaching in small rural schools. So, before coming to Kansas City, I asked to make an eight-day retreat. The last evening of this retreat, following several hours of heavy rain,

I noted a full beautiful rainbow in the sky. It was as if God was saying to me, ‘Jane, see this rainbow, its beauty gives hope and courage. Go and fear not. And remember, I go with you to teach my little ones how much I love them.’”

Those years in Kansas City were Jane’s last of her 54 years of formal classroom teaching.

In 1987, Sister Jane moved to the Motherhouse where she continued teaching reading to children on a one-to-one basis. She said with excitement, “Now, I continue to teach phonics, teaching children how to unlock words.”

In one of Sister Jane’s recent commitment statements she wrote, “I commit myself to pray more since I am retired, to pray for my family and friends, for all the children in my classes and for their parents, and for my community. I also work at seeing God in all I meet each day.

“God has blessed me with many graces through thick and thin. Maybe at the low times I didn’t appreciate God’s blessings, but as I look back over my life I realize that God has showered me with great love and care. I hope and pray that I have been able to pass on this love to others, especially to the children in my classes.

“I have loved and enjoyed our community and have never regretted coming back to retire at our Motherhouse. My coming back to live here is what I call the vestibule of heaven. I am trying each day to practice what I used to tell the children in my classes: Stay close to Jesus!”

In conclusion, let me paraphrase a statement from I John 2:18-22 that I think Sister Jane would like us all to hold in our hearts: *This world’s last hour has come for me, but one last time I say to all of you, Stay close to Jesus.*

Thank you, Sister Jane, for showing us through your life and ministry the true meaning of these words.

And, as many of you know, Sister Jane was involved during the later part of her life with what is called Project Linus. This is an international organization dedicated to providing seriously ill or traumatized children with homemade security blankets; providing love, a sense of security, worth and comfort.

The number of such hand-crocheted and knitted blankets made by Sister Jane for these children is too numerous to count, but here is one of those you made, Jane. Take it with you to heaven.

(Sister Mary then placed one of Sister Jane’s small blankets on her casket.)





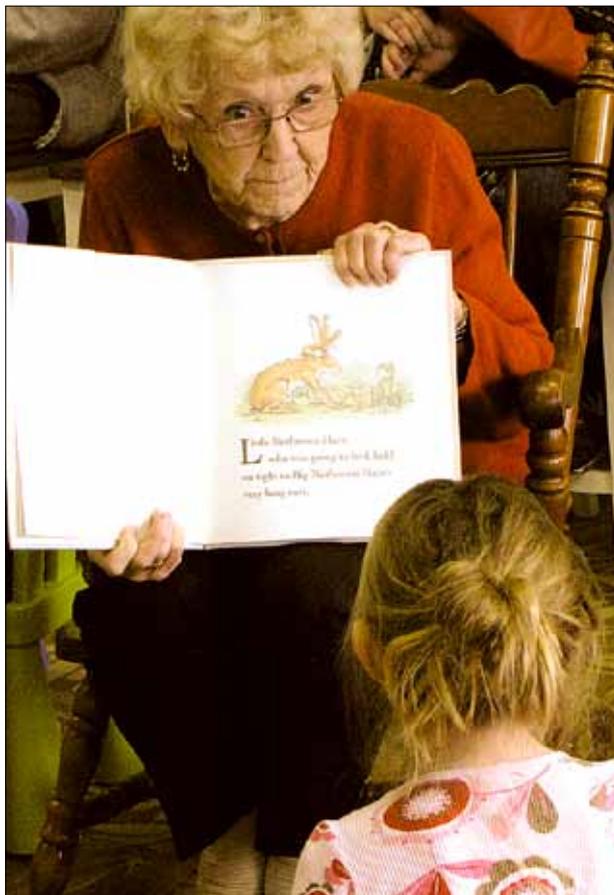
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

All the news that didn't fit

Snapshots of events at the Motherhouse and Mama House of Prayer



Vol. 34, No. 1 JANUARY 2013

LEFT: One preschooler gets up close to listen as Marilyn Johnston shares "Guess How Much I Love You" during the Nov. 30 "Reading with Leaders" program at Neighbor to Neighbor in Concordia.

ABOVE: Sister Margaret Nacke gives a presentation on human trafficking at the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kan., on Dec. 4 as part of the Kansas Town Hall series. Sister Margaret recently launched a website — bakhitainitiative.com — to help sisters and the public become more educated about human trafficking.

TOP RIGHT: Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger, right, chats with Father James Hoover before celebrating Mass with the sisters at the Nazareth Motherhouse on Christmas morning.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Santa Claus dropped in at Neighbor to Neighbor Dec. 19 to deliver special gifts to each of the children who had come to the morning's holiday party.

Keep track of all our events & projects
at <http://www.csjkansas.org>

