



focus



## New members affirm renewal in religious vocations

They are men and women who can awaken the world. What a profound portrayal of women and men who respond to God's call to religious vocations! Pope Francis invoked this image when he proclaimed 2015 as the Year of Consecrated Life:

*Consecrated life is prophecy. God asks us to fly the nest and to be sent to the frontiers of the world... This is the most concrete way of imitating the Lord...*

The Year of Consecrated Life will launch in November 2014 and coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. Pope Francis has called for this special yearlong observance to celebrate the joy, holiness and vitality found in religious vocations. While numbers of sisters, brothers and priests have declined in the 50 years since Vatican II, women and men who choose to follow Christ in this special way share a strong sense of hope for growth in religious vocations. The newest members of our Salvatorian Sisters' congregation give testimony to that hope, and have found their personal "leaps of faith" affirmed in their lives of service to God's people.

**Sister Debra Breese, SDS**, professed her first vows three years ago. She renewed her temporary vows recently and reflects on how her ministry fulfills her faith life:

*Living by faith and not by sight is very much a part of my ministry with elderly people entrusted to my care. Every day I pray for and with Tivoli residents and staff at Divine Savior Healthcare in Portage, Wis. Trusting in Jesus has opened so many doors for me. I see Jesus behind those doors, in the faces of people throughout my day. There could not be a better picture of Jesus than in my ministry and the people I serve. I have become a part of His mission and ministry, continuing what Jesus started so long ago. I prayed that Jesus would allow me to be His hands, feet and eyes in dedicating myself to His purpose. A little bit at a time, I have come to know the talents the Lord has given to me.*



**Sister Janice Hartman, SDS**, has journeyed alongside Sister Debra since their first year of formation. She shares:



*In my ministry at St. Anne's Salvatorian Campus in Milwaukee, I help residents live with dignity by showing them love and providing quality care until they move on or reach the end of their lives. Serving as a certified nursing assistant and resident care associate, I have come to learn that each resident has his or her own beliefs and way of living. This is where my life as a Salvatorian Sister helps me to show the goodness and kindness of our loving God and His Son, our Divine Savior. I try to honor each life, knowing we all belong to God.*

**Sister Sally Anne Leyda, SDS**, professed first vows in August this year and now continues her studies at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee to earn a certificate in lay ministry. Sr. Sally cherishes the young children, families and elderly people she came to know during her Apostolic Novitiate year, which included four months living in Sri Lanka:

Dear Friends,

A gentle smile. A bouncy step! A warm greeting. Isn't it obvious when you meet people who know who they are and feel at home with themselves? Paving the way for 2015 as the Year of Consecrated Life, our fall Salvatorian News shares reflections from our newer members and tributes to our 2014 Jubilarians who celebrate milestones of vowed commitment. A common thread among them is the joy and peace of women at home in their religious vocation.

You'll also meet Meg Kissinger, who we will honor with our 2014 Woman of Faith Award. Meg's investigative reporting for the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reveals her compassion for people in our society living with mental illness. Those who know Meg attest that the passion she brings to her work flows from deep within the person of faith that she is.

We are grateful for the contributions of Marquette University student Megan Gilbert, who interviewed many of our sisters and wrote their Jubilee profiles while she continues to discern the gift of religious life. Finally, we extend our thanks to you, our faithful friends and partners in our mission.

In the Savior,

*S. Carol Thresher, SDS*

Sister Carol Thresher, SDS  
Provincial Leader

# JUBILARIANS ~ 25, 50, 60 YEARS

*Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly*



Sr. Patrice Colletti, SDS

**25** **Sister Patrice Colletti, SDS** credits the late Sister Irene DeMarrais, SDS with inspiring her outreach to people struggling on the margins of society. “The very places,” Sr. Patrice says, “where the reign of God is blooming.” In school and at play growing up in North Bellmore, N.Y., Sr. Patrice was encouraged to embrace diversity. Her 20-plus years in social services have nurtured her ministerial gifts to foster a sense of community among diverse peoples. She played a vital role in acclimating residents to a new apartment complex designed for persons with special needs. As the inclusion coordinator, Sr. Patrice says, “I helped to weave a social fabric among people who led very rugged lives due to poverty and disability and had never before felt a sense of belonging.” Sr. Patrice also ministered in special education among the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate) in South Dakota. Now she is developing a program that brings together Salvatorian religious and lay members to collaborate with the tribe. She also advocates online through Virtual Ability, Inc., to enhance the lives of persons with disabilities through electronic communication and activities. Carrying on Sr. Irene’s legacy, Sr. Patrice ministers on the margins as she weaves vibrant threads in God’s social fabric.



Sr. Karlyn Cauley, SDS

**50** **Sister Karlyn Cauley, SDS** (formerly Sr. Peter Claver) saw God in Salvatorian Sisters who taught her at Divine Savior High School in Milwaukee. She recalls, “I loved the sisters for their great sense of humor and joy and the time they devoted to us.” She entered the congregation upon graduation in 1961, and gradually confirmed her heart’s readiness for Salvatorian religious life. Sr. Karlyn earned history and theology degrees from Marquette University and taught second grade at Wisconsin parish schools. Encouraged by Sr. Helene Patefield, SDS, she earned a master’s degree from the University of Wisconsin, and returned to Divine Savior Holy Angels High School (DSHA) to teach art. She has also served in vocation ministry. Today, a converted wing at DSHA serves as a studio/gallery where Sr. Karlyn creates, displays and sells her art. Many of her paintings portray diversity, inspired by experiences with young Salvatorian Sisters in Colombia, South America, her neighbors in Milwaukee’s central city, and her ecumenical relationship with Immanuel Presbyterian congregation. Sr. Karlyn thinks that if Jesus were on earth today, “He might be an artist, sharing about His kingdom through illustrations.” She imagines Him among the people at art fairs proclaiming the good news.



Sr. Betty Vetter, SDS

**50** **Sister Elizabeth (Betty) Vetter, SDS** (formerly Sr. Kenneth) entered the convent after eighth grade, and considered a life path teaching chemistry or practicing nursing. Entrusting the decision to her congregation leaders, Sr. Betty found her gift in nursing. She worked at St. Mary’s Hospital in Wausau, Wis., and earned a master’s degree as a clinical specialist in cardiovascular nursing from The Catholic University of America. In 1983, she interviewed to become a nursing instructor at Presentation College-Eagle Butte, S.D. and instead was offered the directorate. Sr. Betty used her quick wit and problem-solving skills to build a successful nursing program. International ministry took Sr. Betty to Philippines and India, where she served as formation director for new Salvatorian Sisters, and helped develop their educational programs as well as their local ministries. Returning to the U.S., Sr. Betty carried on the legacy of Salvatorian Sisters who first came to North America to provide home health care. As a hospice nurse, she supported families and their loved ones who were near death. Now, Sr. Betty’s ministries include guiding her Salvatorian Sisters through medical issues. Her encouragement and gentle nature put them at ease as she shares God’s comforting message, “Be not afraid.”



Sr. Marie Ensslin, SDS

**60** **Sister Marie Ensslin, SDS** (formerly Sr. Mary Richard) loved teaching, especially math. Her creative teaching style made learning accessible and fun, and she credits her students’ imaginations as her source of inspiration. Today, Sr. Marie assists the Mission Advancement Office with handwritten messages of gratitude to faithful supporters of our Salvatorian mission. She also reflects on shaping young minds in her longtime teaching ministry, saying, “We often create more than we realize.” Even the mathematician cannot calculate the fruits of her years of service.



Sr. Alice Gindt, SDS

**60** **Sister Alice Gindt, SDS** (formerly Sr. Herman Joseph) began her ministry in teaching and then served as a licensed practical nurse at Divine Savior Hospital and Divine Savior Nursing Home in Portage, Wis. Later, through Milwaukee’s Interfaith program, Sr. Alice helped seniors remain in their homes by assisting with errands and household tasks. Interfaith clients often became friends, and her supervisor saw Sr. Alice’s humility and selflessness as the reason, saying, “She visits people no one else on the planet cares about and washes their feet.” Living at Salvatorian Sisters Residence (SSR), Sister Alice is still one of the first to offer help when a need arises, says Sr. Virginia Honish, SDS, SSR care coordinator. “And,” Sr. Virginia adds, “she has a delightful sense of humor.”



Read the full stories online at  
[www.sistersofthedivinesavior.org](http://www.sistersofthedivinesavior.org)

# JUBILARIANS ~ 65-75 YEARS

## Celebrating A Lifetime of Service

**65 Sister Elaine Czarnecki, SDS** (formerly Sr. Cor Marie) was drawn to the Salvatorian Sisters' simplicity and worldwide mission. She ministered in teaching, as a school principal, and as a chaplain in hospitals and nursing homes. In Tanzania, Sr. Elaine founded a secondary school for girls now run by the local people. Her passion for justice also led to social service ministry in Mississippi. Sr. Elaine sees God's gift of unfailing love manifested in her lifelong vocation.

**65 Sister Mary Ruth Dittman, SDS** cared for the most vulnerable people in her midst. She cuddled newborns, consoled grieving parents, and attended funerals of indigent people disowned by their families. A tiny ad in *Sacred Heart Messenger* drew Sr. Mary Ruth to the Salvatorians, and her life affirms the faith and hope she found in her vocation.

**65** As a librarian, **Sister Alexis Lucas, SDS** ministered to Milwaukee's cross section of humanity—young and old, students and dropouts, professionals and street people. Even after retiring, she continued reaching out to sick, lonely and destitute people in the local community to whom she offered rosaries, scapulars and ongoing prayers for their needs.

**65 Sister Louise Rausch, SDS** (formerly Sr. Felice) reveals the gift of humility in her ministries. Teaching adult literacy filled her with gratitude for opportunities to inspire others. Tutoring English as a second language through Milwaukee Achiever widened her cultural awareness. Providing beautician services at St. Anne's Salvatorian Campus and Salvatorian Sisters Residence, Sr. Louise found her reward in helping others feel good about themselves.

**75 Sister Frances Marie Lendle, SDS** (formerly Sr. Agnella) helped launch a program to support young parents in their "sacred" role as teachers in the Kalamazoo, Mich. Diocese. As diocesan director of religious education in Birmingham, Ala., she led the way with catechetical formation and parish-based adult education. Sr. Frances Marie also helped Mobile's Spring Hill College establish a Birmingham campus offering a master's in theological studies, showing her zeal for religious education at all levels.

**75 Sister Joan Stanczak, SDS** "multitasked" before it was even a word, often serving as both teacher and principal in her 33 years of education ministry. When she took a new path as head of pastoral care at St. Mary's Nursing Home in Milwaukee, Sr. Joan felt helping others on their spiritual journey drew her into a deeper relationship with God.

**75 Sister Germaine Vandenberg, SDS** fondly recalls her 31 years as a registered dietitian at St. Mary's Hospital in Wausau, Wis. A high point in her life was serving in Rome as a dietetics consultant to Salvator Mundi Hospital. Sr. Germaine later ministered at Salvatorian Mission Warehouse in New Holstein, Wis., packing medical supplies for shipping overseas to developing countries.



Contact the Mission Advancement Office below to send a greeting to your favorite Jubilarian or honor her with a gift.

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### Our Mission As Sisters of the Divine Savior

Make known the goodness and kindness of Jesus, Savior of the world, and foster awareness of a loving God among peoples in whatever place and by whatever means the Spirit of God inspires.

As women of faith striving to be given over to the Father and open to all peoples, we collaborate to promote justice and improve quality of life in our world with a preferential option for the poor.



Larry and Linda Houk

## Heartfelt letters return kindness to Salvatorian Sisters

Linda and Larry Houk live less than 30 miles from our Provincial headquarters in Milwaukee, but their kindness toward the Sisters of the Divine Savior comes via U.S. mail. Larry's handwritten letters are as much a gift as the Houk's faithful support of our mission for the last 23 years. A blend of humor, sadness, joy, and the minutiae of daily life, Larry's letters show a deep trust and genuine affection for the Salvatorian Sisters that has grown over time. It began when he settled his mother Ruth's estate after she passed away. The Houks made a donation to honor Ruth's longtime support of our Sisters and were touched by the letter they received in return.

Now, when Larry claims victory in Sheepshead, he joyfully shares his winnings with the Sisters. And when the going gets rough—be it with loved ones or health issues—he asks for his family's needs to be remembered in our Apostolate of Prayer Ministry. Larry says, "The Lord will never ask me how much I've won, but He will ask how much I've given." Linda adds, "We know the Lord is watching over us. Sharing with the Sisters is our way to give thanks." Time and again, the couple says, their gifts to the Salvatorian Sisters come back in blessings. ☩

# 2014 Woman of Faith advocates with Christ-like compassion

It was 27 years ago that Meg Kissinger wrote her first article about mental illness. Her passion for the subject has deepened over the years, along with her compassion for people who cope with it every day. Meg's friend, Maureen Kolb, nominated her for our 2014 Woman of Faith Award, saying, "Meg's dedication to changing the world for people living with mental illness comes from her pursuit of truth in a Christ-like manner—with passion and kindness."

Meg's longtime investigative reporting for Milwaukee's *Journal Sentinel* newspaper is compelling. Her managing editor, George Stanley, says, "Meg has done her most high-impact work yet with 'Chronic Crisis,' a series that shows in heart-wrenching detail how Milwaukee's Mental Health Complex, like most of its patients, never gets better." George shares about his awakening to the plight of persons living with mental illness.

"Most of us try to avoid people who have obvious mental illness—crossing to the other

side of the street, avoiding eye contact. We behave exactly as the people in Jesus' day treated people with leprosy. In editing Meg's stories over the years, I have gradually come to realize that people suffering from mental illness are the lepers of our age. Meg does not avoid these people—she helps them and shows the rest of us what is going on."

In her investigative series, "Abandoning Our Mentally Ill," Meg reveals how Milwaukee County residents often ended up homeless when left to fend for themselves after release from mental hospitals. Her powerful reporting brought local political adversaries together to seek solutions. George Stanley credits Meg's reporting for the bipartisan support of legislation that transferred oversight of Milwaukee County's mental health care system from politicians into the hands of mental health professionals.

In recommending Meg for the Woman of Faith Award, George writes, "When I think of Meg's work, I think of Mark's Gospel

*"This honor means the world to me—especially in these shaky times when the Pope has asked us to step it up and evangelize our faith, which I find very difficult to do. I consider faith both a gift and a very private relationship with God, but I am thrilled to think I might make a difference with my work."*



— Meg Kissinger

when Jesus was confronted by a man with the exact symptoms we might see today in a person with severe mental illness."

*The man lived in the tombs and no one could secure him because he had often been secured with fetters and chains, but had snapped the chains and broken the fetters, and no one had the strength to control him. All night and all day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he would howl and gash himself with stones. (Mark 5:3-5)*

George concludes, "Jesus did not use his disciples as a shield from the man. He did not cross to the other side of the road. He looked him in the eye, asked him his name, listened to him, and then healed him, just as he healed the blind, the lame and the lepers. This is how Meg Kissinger has improved the lives of so many of our neighbors and their families—by looking even the least lovable among us in the eye, listening to them, telling their stories and seeking a better way to help them heal." ☩



## WOMAN OF Faith AWARD

Please join us to honor  
**Meg Kissinger**

*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* investigative reporter

Compassionate advocate for persons living with mental illness

**Thursday, September 18, 2014 • 7:00 p.m.**

**SDS Community House • 4311 North 100th Street, Milwaukee**

Reservations for this free event are requested by September 12.

Please reply to [missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org](mailto:missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org) or call 414-466-7414.



Learn more online

[www.jsonline.com](http://www.jsonline.com)

## Religious Vocations *continued from page 1*



This past year, my ministries in Sri Lanka and with the refugee resettlement program through Milwaukee Catholic Charities have called me to step out of my comfort zone and reach out to some of God's neediest people. While walking with them in search of a better life, I have tried to bring the message of love and joy that comes in knowing the kindness of Jesus, our Savior.

Prayers for religious vocations and to sustain women and men in their commitments to religious life are vital. Even after professing final vows, our sisters continue to discern God's call and how they can best use their gifts to carry out our Salvatorian mission. ☩



New SDS Candidate, Patria Bermudez, feels called to the Sisters of the Divine Savior as an apostolic and international congregation. Pope Francis' call for evangelization speaks to Patria's desire to go out into the world to teach the good news of our Savior.

