CSA: Looking to the Future

Change is not foreign to anyone living in the 21st Century. We know that the only constant in our lives is “change.” Some of us remember Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima. Many remember John F. Kennedy’s assassination and Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream...” speech. All of us remember September 11, 2001, and the death of Pope John Paul II. Some changes just happen. Others, we plan for.

Fifty years ago the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine (CSA) moved from an over-crowded motherhouse in Lakewood to Mt. Augustine in Richfield. Regina Health Center, which opened fifteen years ago, began to serve retired CSAs, and members of other religious congregations, priests, and laity. Each of those changes called us to be attentive to realities of the moment; those changes also required us to consider the needs of people who are affected by what decisions we make. CSA, as a congregation, is now facing the future. As a small, diocesan, apostolic congregation of women religious, we are questioning what God’s Spirit is asking of us. In a process we call “discernment,” we will begin to consider what options are open to us and which option will best serve those connected with our mission and ourselves. The Strategic Planning Committee began working in June, 2006, with the help of a facilitator, Sister Mary Jo Nelson, a Victory Noll religious. All the sisters will become engaged in a communal discernment. In small groups, sisters will listen to each other, respond honestly, and consider what has been said. Finally, the community will decide its future course.

Such a discernment process is not unique to the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine. Most communities of women religious in the United States are looking for ways to continue their mission and ministries as their numbers diminish. Locally, the Vincentian Sisters of Bedford chose to merge with the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. The Sisters of St. Joseph on Rocky River Drive chose to form a union of seven other congregations that follow the charism and traditions of the Sisters of St. Joseph. The Cleveland Ursulines and the Akron Dominicans are in similar conversations. Our congregation will consider three options: First, we could unite with other congregations to give birth to an entirely new community. Second, we might merge with another congregation, taking on the identity of the other group. Third, we might “stand alone,” revitalizing ourselves as we are able. Once a decision is made, our Strategic Planning Committee -- Sisters Kathy Andrews, Mary Ann Andrews, Marian Durkin, Miriam Erb, Evelyn Flowers, Joan Gallagher, Judith Ann Karam, Cheryl Keehner, and Catherine Walsh --will continue working with the facilitator to determine how the decision will be implemented.

We know how serious our discernment process is, and that the result will mean change. We ask you to support us with prayers that our process will be guided by the Spirit.

Sister Joan Gallagher
"One big mat" is the way Sister Sharon Anne Yanak sees the world. On that "mat" are all the people of the world. Among the most important to her are the children. Her love of the little ones began in sixth grade at St. Francis de Sales School in Parma, Ohio, where she participated in the "Pagan Babies" program that raised money to adopt a Chinese baby boy. Sister remembers being the one to name the boy, John, after her parish priest, Father John Kline. Later at Holy Name High School on Broadway Avenue, she volunteered at DePaul Maternity and Infant Home on Woodland Avenue in Cleveland. There she tended the babies who, at the time, were awaiting adoption. Working with the newborn babies and becoming acquainted with Sister Lenore of the Sisters of Charity eventually led to her entrance into the community of CSA in August of 1955.

During her years in the community, Sister Sharon Anne taught in grade schools including St. Luke, Lakewood; Assumption, Brookpark; Holy Family, Stow; and St. Joseph, Cuyahoga Falls. From 1975-81, she was principal at St. Luke School. Then Sister was elected to the Council, a group of CSA leaders and planners, where she worked in administering the works of the community from 1981-85.

A seminal moment for her was a trip to Mexico with GATE (Global Awareness Through Experience) where she saw poverty in stark terms. She saw small children rap on taxi windows, selling Chiclets. She witnessed people living among the garbage at the dumps, and homes of the wealthy nearby. Seeing these sights touched her heart and truly began her concerns for social justice. She became involved in CCSA (Catholic Commission on Social Action) in Akron. There she learned of the "two feet" of the Church's teachings: one being charity, the other being justice. This image confirmed the start of her drive to work for justice as a Sister of Charity.

An early conference at St. Bernard's Church in Akron, given by Ray Borges, was about SOA Watch (School of the Americas), the organization he founded to build awareness of the U.S. military institution set up in Georgia to train the Central and South American military. Ray emphasized the abuses that had crept into the program as the militaries of these countries suppressed their populations. In 1998, Sister joined a peaceful march in November to protest what many see as the wrongful use of our military.

Along with other efforts to make officials and institutions aware of the need to foster justice, Sister visited Overlook Farm in Rutland, Maine, where she saw firsthand the work of Heifer International, the organization which raises livestock for individuals in places like Kenya, Thailand, Peru, Guatemala and Tibet. At the farm -- every two hours night and day -- Sister fed triplet lambs, abandoned by their mother. She heard, too, from a Ugandan woman who told about a heifer received from the program that enabled her to educate her four children and attend college herself.

In addressing the crisis in Sudan, Sister Sharon Anne went to Washington, DC with a Jewish and African-American-sponsored group which advocates for the plight of those in Darfur.

Sister's advice to those sharing her passion for social justice, based on her own activism, is to get involved in at least one social justice activity, believe in the good will of most people, pray and reflect, and be aware of the direction being taken by our local and federal officials. Most important is claiming the outlook expressed in a saying from Madagascar: "All who live under the sun are plaited together in one big mat."
Inspired to Act: Social Concerns

The windows in the Chapel have inspired CSAs since Mt. Augustine was built in the late 1950's. These stained glass treasures illustrate the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, naming her “virgin most pure,” “prudent woman,” “mother of the Redeemer,” “cause of our joy.”

Symbols in the windows likewise have offered inspiration. Through the years, the heart, the dove, the lily have served not only to celebrate Mary, but also to promote Mary as a model of fidelity to hundreds of aspiring religious.

Looking at the windows fifty years later, we still notice the heart, the dove, and the lily. Now we are likely to notice as well the globe, stormy waters, an anchor, and the invocation to Mary as Queen of Peace. How powerfully the symbols in the windows speak to us of our commitment to promoting justice while continuing our works of charity.

Currently the sisters have pledged to support the CSA Health System’s efforts to address access barriers for the poor in obtaining health insurance coverage, prescription medication, and the primary medical care which so many of us take for granted.

A very active Social Concerns Committee has diligently provided the sisters, Regina Health Center residents, parish groups and others in our ministry with up-to-date material on social issues and suggested actions that call attention to critical needs.

In concert with other lay and religious groups, we have signed petitions, written letters, made phone calls, “prayed the news,” and welcomed speakers who are able to motivate us to make a difference by making our voices heard.

Currently Sister Joan Gallagher is speaking to groups about the minimum wage issue; Sister Marian Durkin has been promoting a moratorium on the death penalty in Ohio; and Sister Catherine Walsh is helping us understand the plight of the immigrants and the need for comprehensive immigration reform. And always there are prayers for peace. Sisters Marietta Rohr, Regina Fierman, and Rosella Holloman welcome the members of Pax Christi East into their home in Cleveland Heights on the first Friday of each month.

Won’t you choose an issue, find your voice, and join us in transforming the world?

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Sr. Ruth Ann Patrick and Sr. Cheryl Keehner
Two Jubilee Celebrations took place this fall commemorating the anniversaries of ten Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine.

The September 17 Liturgy honored the 50-years of Sisters Eileen Keating and Mary Patricia Barrett.

The 70-years of Sisters Margery Freese, Juletta Murray and Beth Pierik and the 60-years of Elizabeth Schur, Catherine Browning, Rene Doyle and Mary Edna Lodge were celebrated at the October 1 Liturgy.

**Sister M. Margery Freese**

After her mother became ill, Sister Margery helped her dad, who ran Freese Hardware, raise her siblings. Entering the order from St. Clement Parish, it may have been her experience in cooking that lead to her career in dietary. Sister spent time in facilities in northern Ohio: St. John Hospital, St. Thomas Hospital, Parmadale, St. Vincent Charity Hospital, Timken Mercy Hospital, DePaul Maternity Home and Mt. Augustine where she spent 10 years. Leaving the kitchen in 1982, she began part-time office work and was house treasurer for a number of years. Always pleasant and willing to work, she collated, stuffed envelopes and did any small task she could. She died on September 6, 2006.

**Sister M. Juletta Murray**

Coming from St. Patrick Church in Cleveland, Sr. Juletta has spent a majority of her religious life teaching first and second graders. Entering the order in 1936, she moved between several CSA schools, including St. Augustine Academy, Sacred Heart of Mary School in Harrisburg and St. Joseph School in Maximo. She taught at St. Luke School for 13 years, and served as principal for two years. Assumption School in Cleveland then benefited from sister's gentle manner with young children, as she taught grade two for eleven years. For 13 summers, Sister was a cook at Camp Isaac Jogues. Retired and living at Mt. Augustine, Sister keeps in close contact with her family by phone and email.

**Sister Mary Edna Lodge**

From Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Sister Mary Edna made her final vows in 1952. During her years as a Sister of Charity, Sister has served in many of the institutions of the community doing housekeeping, laundry work, and cooking. Sister's ministry in Lakewood was at St. Augustine Academy. After that, Sister moved to Mount Augustine and worked in Regina Hall, acting as meal supervisor and assistant to the patients there. Sister Mary Edna retired in 1988.

**Sister Elizabeth Pierik**

Baptized at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, and entering CSA from St. Ann Parish, Sister Beth became a professed sister in 1952. Sister taught in the elementary grades at many of the parish schools staffed by CSAs from 1939 until 1968; she taught at St. Augustine Academy until 1974. For the next ten years she ministered to the elderly in St. Luke Parish, then headed the RCIA program at St. Christopher Parish. During her retirement, Sister volunteered at St. Augustine Towers and at the Adult Day Care at Lakewood Hospital. In 2003, Sister Beth is retired at Mount Augustine.

**Sister M. Corinne Baker**

Sr. Corinne showed an affinity for business and as a result spent most of her years working in the business offices at various CSA institutions. Beginning at St. Vincent Charity Hospital as a cashier, Sister moved to the position of Treasurer and Secretary at St. John Hospital. When assigned to Mt. Augustine, she spent 23 years processing medical claims. Retiring in 1991, Sister moved to Mercy Medical Center in Canton and worked with Native Americans for three years. Moving back to Richfield in 1994, Sister stays active, participating in Regina Health Center resident council meetings, and painting. She has won several ribbons at the county fair for her entries.
Sister M. Catherine Browning
Coming from Youngstown, Sr. Catherine entered the Sisters of Charity after living in Cleveland and attending St. Columbkille parish. Sister was first assigned to Mercy Hospital in Canton as an assistant bookkeeper. She worked her way up the ranks and was named treasurer of the business office where she continued to work for 10 years. In 1967 she moved to St. Thomas Hospital in Akron where she served as Assistant Director of Administration in Medical Services. While there she also served as Assistant Administrator – Vice President of Finance. Upon leaving St. Thomas, Sister moved to Mt. Augustine and drove other sisters to appointments. She retired in 1991 at Mt. Augustine where she keeps busy and in contact with friends.

Sister M. Rene Doyle
Arriving at the Sisters of Charity convent from St. Peter Church in Columbia, South Carolina, Sister Rene's ministry throughout the years has been in CSA hospitals. After completing school, she began working in the x-ray department of St. Vincent Charity Hospital moving on to an internship in the x-ray department at Mercy Hospital. Sister spent 6 years at St. John Hospital and was the chief x-ray technician and supervisor of the x-ray department. Leaving there in 1958, she was assigned to Providence Hospital, and spent 20 years there, working mainly in the x-ray department, then in pastoral care. Coming back north, she spent a short time at Timken Mercy Hospital and St. Thomas Hospital before retiring to Mt. Augustine, where she keeps in touch with family and friends.

Sister Elizabeth Schur
Originally from Akron's St. Bernard Parish, Sister Elizabeth, once know as Sister Marie Bernard, has spent most of her years with the Sisters of Charity in the classroom teaching. After spending four years at St. Joseph School in Cuyahoga Falls and one year at St. Luke's, Sister joined the faculty at St. Augustine Academy. Her ministry there as an art teacher lasted 40 years. Leaving the school in 1993, she joined the Activities Department at Regina Health Center and worked with the residents for several years before becoming a caregiver at the Holy Family Learning Center in Lakewood, where she still volunteers.

Sister Eileen Keating
Having a strong Irish heritage and a large family, Sister Eileen became a professed sister in 1964. From 1960 – 1973, Sister Eileen taught first grade at five different parish schools and Parmadale. In 1973, Sister became CCD Coordinator at Assumption School until she moved in 1979 to Holy Family Parish in Stow where she was Director of Religious Education and Pastoral Minister. In 1987, she moved to St. Martha Parish in Akron as Pastoral Minister. In 2001, Sister served a four-year term as Councilor. Today Sister Eileen is a spiritual caregiver in Rosary Hall at St. Vincent Charity Hospital.

Sister Mary Patricia Barrett
Born of Irish immigrant parents, Sister Mary Patricia entered the CSAs as a graduate social worker. Before making her final vows in 1962, she had already begun to work in social service in several of the community's hospitals. Later, Sister was Director of Social Service at Parmadale and then Assistant Administrator from 1967-1971. In the 1970s Sister became a Councillor, then Major Superior from 1973 – 1981. In 1982, she established the CSA Health System. From that time till the present, Sister Mary Pat has worked on the boards of hospitals and has more recently served as Chairperson and Special Assistant to the President at the CSA Health System.
“I’ve been delighted by the opportunity to do my painting and be independent. I never imagined the change of the Motherhouse into a nursing home with so many varied residents. We do get good care (at Regina Health Center), but I wish I was totally well.”

Sr. M. Corrine Baker

“People are so generous with the residents. I pray to God and Mary, his mother, that they will guide us into the future.”

Sr. Mary Edna

“The community has been changing ever since I entered. I noticed it right away when some older nurses joined our group. They had the courage to question the Novice Mistress and to speak up, asking for permissions we’d never even thought of!”

Sr. Juletta Murray
"I am inspired by those who can gracefully accept change. Praying helps me accept change."

Sr. Rene Doyle

"I was surprised and threatened by the changes after Vatican Council II: changing the habit, giving up my religious name, no longer being separated from the laity. But through years in ministry since the Council, I have grown to treasure Baptism and unity with all who live out that commitment in so many different ways."

Sr. Eileen Keating

"Being an optimist, I have always looked forward to change. But I never dreamed that I would be living alone in a cozy little apartment and still feel so closely connected with our Sisters. I rely on the Lord to be my constant companion and I find great satisfaction in being able to study, pray, volunteer, and gather with others socially and on committees. I am deeply thankful for all the blessings of Jubilee."

Sr. Elizabeth Schur
The CSA Associates see themselves as “members of the Body of Christ called to share the love of God with those around them.” Begun in 1986, the program includes 46 members: single women, men and married couples, ranging in age from 20 to 90.

Members ordinarily want to join because they know, or are familiar with, a Sister of Charity or a ministry of the sisters. What draws them into the program is a desire to live a more profound spiritual life and to connect with a community of people who share their desire to live a fully Christian life.

Members commit to participate at one of three different levels. “Core” members are the most active and participate in most of the activities. “Supporting” members participate in as many activities as they can, but may be limited by family obligations or for health reasons. “Prayer” members support the entire group spiritually through prayer.

The current director, Jeanne Burrige, formerly, was a member of the Sisters of Charity. For three years she has helped to set the direction for the program. She is a gentle, soft-spoken person who seems to encourage the Associates to do much of the planning.

Activities of the Associates include attending liturgical functions, workshops, prayer days and retreats. They meet in small groups that pray together, read and discuss books, or plan functions. Interests of the Associate Committees center around ecology, social concerns, vocations and communications. Some members participate in the ministries of the Sisters of Charity, volunteer at Regina Health Center, work in an office or gift shop, or assist at CSA functions, like the Jubilee.

Joan Weist became an Associate when the program started. After teaching at Immaculate Heart of Mary School in Cuyahoga Falls for 13 years, then serving as Director of Religious Education for the parish, Joan joined the Associates at the invitation of Sister Mary Lois Phillipp. Joan says that it was her admiration for the CSAs’ openness and “welcoming spirit” that made her accept the invitation to join the program. Joan is a wife, mother of four, and grandmother of eleven. Living a very busy “somewhat retired” life, Joan says that becoming an Associate has been “wonderful”; it has “given direction” to her life. She has made good friends and “developed a greater affinity for goals of peace and justice.” Being an Associate, she says, “has kept me on a spiritual path.” Her involvement as an Associate includes a couple-year stint as director, a close involvement in the Falls/Akron regional “prayer and share” group; and prayer days and retreats held at Mt. Augustine and elsewhere.

Another Associate, Elizabeth Wendling, describes her life as a “journey.” A convert to Catholicism at 17, as a single woman, Liz supported herself at a number of jobs in various U.S. cities, including one in New York State as a phone company cable splicer. Her physical stamina and strength allowed her to climb 18-foot telephone poles for line repair. Not her favorite job, Elizabeth tried others and even spent a short time in a religious community. What brought her to the Associate's Program was a visit to Mt. Augustine to attend Mass in early 2001. She recalls meeting Sister Eugenia, now deceased, sitting in a pew that morning. Elizabeth stopped to ask where she should sit and was warmly invited by Sister, “Sit anywhere you like.” These welcoming words were the start of many friendships with the sisters and an active involvement with the community at Mt. Augustine as a volunteer. Elizabeth obviously loves her role as an Associate, but also loves being free to work part-time at Pine Valley Nursing Home and volunteer at the Metroparks, doing trail patrol.

An orientation of monthly meetings occurs between January and September, every other year, depending on whether a sufficient number enroll. Anyone interested in becoming an Associate can request a brochure at 330-659-5100.
Chapel Donors

The Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine wish to acknowledge and thank all those who so generously contributed to the Chapel renovation between January 1, 2006 and October 30, 2006.

Donations of $5,000 and over
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Donation in honor of D'Arcy O'Neil
Secord
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Donations in honor of the all the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine who celebrated their Jubilees in 2006
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Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine residing at St. Vincent Charity Hospital
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Sr. Mary Frances Murray

Donation in memory of Sr. Evelyn Schroeder
James & Dolores Toth

Donation in memory of Sr. Annella Treber
Rev. David Bline

Your generosity has helped us achieve 75% of our goal. May God bless you abundantly for your goodness.
Glimpses

Regina Health Center

◆ Received a deficiency-free survey during the Ohio Department of Health annual inspection on January 3-6, 2006.


◆ Received an award by the National Association Director of Nursing Administration in August, 2006. Those receiving the award were Janet Cinadr, R.N., Director of Nursing, and Sherri Marcuz, R.N., Assistant Director of Nursing.

Providence Hospitals

◆ Received Gold and Silver Wallies for a HeartBeat educational television program on the Women’s Heart Center, one of its print ads, a brochure and magazine ads.

Healthy Learners Program

◆ Received the Achievement Citation, the Catholic Health Association’s highest program award at the 91st annual Catholic Health Assembly in Orlando, Florida, in June 2006. This excellent ministry has for fourteen years provided health care and supportive services to tens of thousands of low-income South Carolina children.

◆ Received the NOVA Award from The American Hospital Association in July, 2006, for addressing the health needs of the communities served.

◆ Received the Howie Best in Show Award for an article in the Foundation’s Fatherhood Brochure, “Changing Labels on Absent Fathers.” The American Institute of Graphic Arts gave the award.

Saint Vincent Charity Hospital

◆ Was recognized in 2006 by Solucient, a nationally recognized leader in quality standards measurement, as one of the nation’s top 100 hospitals for consistent performance improvement leadership with the Top 100 Hospitals Performance Improvement Leaders, 2005 award.

◆ Received the Healthgrades 2006 Distinguished Award for Clinical Excellence, an honor that places the Hospital within the top five percent in the nation for hospital-wide clinical excellence.

The Cleveland Center for Bariatric Surgery at Saint Vincent Charity Hospital

◆ Was recognized as a Bariatric Surgery Center of Excellence by the American Society for Bariatric Surgery for exceeding standards for quality, safety and outcomes.

Mercy Medical Center in Canton

◆ Was acknowledged in 2006 for continued excellence in clinical services.

◆ Continued to lead the nation in its Heart Center by establishing a state-of-the-art cardiac catheterization lab within the Mercy Emergency Department.

◆ Received full Cycle II accreditation with Percutaneous Coronary Intervention from the Review Committee of the American Society of Chest Pain Centers. This important achievement means that Mercy is Ohio’s and Stark County’s only Chest Pain Center accredited to perform angioplasty on a 24/7 basis.

St. John West Shore Hospital

◆ Received the Distinguished Hospital Award in 2006 for clinical excellence.

◆ Health Grades, Inc. cited SJWS Stroke Care and Cardiac Services as being rated among the best in the nation.

◆ Chest Pain Center received full accreditation from The Society of Chest Pain Centers. SJWS is the only fully accredited Chest Pain Center in Cuyahoga County.

Bishop Michael J. Murphy, from Erie PA, attended Sister Mary Patricia Barrett and Sister Eileen Keating’s Jubilee Celebration.
Sister Judith Ann Karam received the 2006 Distinguished Service Award from the Ohio Hospital Association on June 12, 2006. Her nomination cited her achievements demonstrating innovation, leadership, and dedication to the community. An avid Cleveland Indians fan, Sister Judith Ann threw out the first pitch at Jacob’s Field on August 25 before the Cleveland-Detroit game.

The Sisters of the Holy Family in Fremont, California, invited Sister Miriam Erb to explain the CSA community’s discernment process. Part of a taped panel, Sister Miriam discussed options for the future of religious life.

Sister Joan Gallagher attended Retreats International at Loyola University in Chicago in summer of 2006 and studied Ecclesiology and Leadership in Pastoral Settings. At its Fifth Triennial Conference in Ft. Mitchell, Kentucky, Congregations of Women Religious installed Sister Mary Denis Maher as President of Archivists. She also serves on an advisory committee for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) project, “Pioneers, Poets, and Prophets: Catholic Sisters in America.” A traveling exhibit in collaboration with the Smithsonian, will tell how sisters played a vital role in shaping American life from before the earliest days of the republic and throughout its history.

Sister Nancy Hendershot was one of thirteen women honored by the Columbia SC YWCA during its annual Tribute to Women in Industry Awards. Sisters Miriam Erb and Judith Ann Karam received similar YMCA awards in Cleveland.

Sister Marian Durkin was honored as a “local hero” in a ceremony of healing by the spiritual leaders of the gay/lesbian community. The honor reads, “Sister Marian Durkin in the late 1980’s began what she considers her ‘most important work’...and, for the next nine years, she and her staff offered loving care and support to persons with AIDS.” She recently co-facilitated the Seventh Annual Emmaus Retreat for gay and lesbian Catholics in Cleveland at the Jesuit Retreat House. In August, Sister gave the opening prayer at the Football Hall of Fame weekend in Canton, Ohio.

Sister Mary Patricia Barrett received the President’s Award from Hospice of the Western Reserve in 2006.

Sister Cheryl Keehner will chair the Executive Committee of the Conference of Religious Leaders (CORL) for the next two years.

Sister Loretta Spotila traveled to Hungary with her brothers, Jim and Jack, and Aunt Lillian Kosley. They spent about 10 days there this summer, eating food that tasted like her grandmother made it and looking for relatives. They may have found some cousins. They spent a couple days in Budapest then traveled to Budimer, Slovakia where their mother’s parents were from.

Several sisters who reside at Regina Health Center participated in the 2006 AOPHA (Advocate for Not-For-Profit Services for Older Adults) Art and Writing Exhibition. After placing in the top four in the regional competition, their entries went to the overall state competition held in Columbus in September. Receiving a 1st place for “Mosaic Madonna,” a bead mosaic, were Sister Helen Mary Frank and Sister Ruth Kerrigan.

Artwork with the theme of potted spring flowers was submitted by Sister Petrina Scelfo and Sister Ruth Kerrigan where they received 3rd place. 2nd place winners for prose themed “Love at Any Age” were Sister Petrina Scelfo and the late Sister Mary Virginia Wampfler.

Requiescat In Pacem

Sr. M. Ancilla Ellinger
Sr. M. Margery Freese
Sr. M. Annella Treber
Sr. Evelyn Schroeder
Reflection

In this fall season of slowly but persistently changing leaves, the cycle of nature does not stop at the brilliant reds and vibrant yellows. Rather, it begins the slow process of letting go, dying, then re-birthing and flourishing; the seasons pass through fall, winter, spring, and summer.

In humans we see the same: birth, growth, maturity, then slowing to death and eternal life. In organizations, we observe a similar reality: startup development, expansion, then closure or movement in a new direction. In Religious Life, a community is called into existence through the vision of an individual; its ministry grows, and, in time, the special purpose is accomplished and the community disbands or continues in a new form. The Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, in their 155-year history, have developed, expanded, and accomplished much good. Now we are ready as a community to discern our vision for the future and develop a plan of action. This discernment requires that we use our life experience as individuals—and our experiences in community and in mission—to look at things in a new way.

On August 27th the Sisters of Charity and Associates gathered for prayer and were "missioned" into discernment. In the fall, we began to pray, discuss, and reflect on our options for the future.

As we near Thanksgiving, we have many reasons to be grateful. God has blessed our lives, past and present. Our families have given us support and encouragement; and our partners in ministry, with their dedicated lives, have helped us make a difference in the world.

We thank you and wish you a Happy Thanksgiving! May you take time to look over your lives and be thankful for the many blessings God has showered on you. Finally, we ask you to join with us and pray our congregation's prayer in this time of our discernment.

Sr. Miriam Erb, CSA

Prayer of Discernment

Holy Spirit, ever present Light, the spark of your inspiration has been with us every moment of our lives and is always available to lead and guide us.

May the clear light of your guidance be a source of effective discernment and decision-making.

Open our hearts to hear your voice and attend to your wisdom.

Give us a passion for what is vital and deserving of our enthusiasm.

Expand the horizons of our limited imaginations and awaken in our souls dreams for a new tomorrow.

May your patient endurance be ours as we wait for the unknown to be revealed.

In all of this and at all times, we praise and thank you. Amen.