Features:

Mission Haiti
Our Hearts, Minds, and Thoughts Woven Together

Fabric of My Life
A Reflection

Always Taking the Next Step
The Path toward Citizenship

Hospitality Woven of Love
enflamed

with the compassion of God, we, Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston, women of the Church, rooted in the Gospel, together with our Associates are impelled by the active, inclusive love of God to:
- deepen our relationship with God and the dear neighbor without distinction;
- foster prophetic communion;
- and journey into the future with Sisters of St. Joseph and Associates, throughout the world and with all God’s Creation.

We, Sisters of St. Joseph, are women receptive to the stirrings of the Holy Spirit of Love. Together with our associates we are called to live in right relationship with all creation. We are a community of women whose mission is to realize the prayer of Christ that all may be one. In community and prayerful contemplation, we listen to this Spirit and move always toward profound love of God and love of neighbor without distinction.
In reflecting on the state of our country and the current world situation the lyrics from a Dionne Warwick song came to mind:

“What the world needs now is love, sweet love,
It’s the only thing that there’s just too little of,
What the world needs now is love, sweet love,
No, not just for some but for everyone.”

Though this song was released over fifty years ago, the message is current and the theme timeless. Love extended to everyone and not just some is what we, the Sisters of St. Joseph, associates and co-partners in ministry seek to be about as we try to weave a loving presence in our world. Our CSJ Constitution calls us, “…to strive in every aspect of our lives to be for others a visible sign of God’s presence and active love.”

What does it mean to be a visible sign of God’s inclusive love? Personally I believe it is in simple and ordinary gestures that we actively manifest being a loving presence in our world. In many ways it is about doing the simple and ordinary in a gracious and generous manner.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu in *The Book of Joy* speak of love as a sense of generosity of spirit. “We people who care must be attractive, must be filled with joy, so that others recognize that caring, that helping and being generous are not a burden, they are a joy. Give the world your love, your service, your healing, but you can also give it your joy. This, too, is a great gift.”

The Archbishop “used a beautiful phrase to describe this way of being in the world: ‘becoming an oasis of peace, a pool of serenity that ripples out to all of those around.’ When we have a generous spirit, we are easy to be with and fun to be with. We radiate happiness, and our very company can bring joy to others.”

In closing let me share a Haiku version of Maxim 55 of the Sisters of St. Joseph which expresses the manner in which we are invited to relate to the world:

Assist all with love.
Seek no reward for helping,
Except pleasing God.

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1 CSJ Constitution, Spirit and Purpose, p. 24 #3
3 Ibid
4 *The Maxims of the Little Institute in Haiku*, #55, Frances Agnes Blake, CSJ, © Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston, 2014
Ur journeys weave in sacred step... as threads weave a fabric drawing many into one.”¹ With “threads” as the theme of our Fall/Winter issue of the MORE... and “fabric” as the theme of the current issue, these words – part of a song I wrote years ago – keep echoing in my mind and heart. As I began to write, I glanced at the bookcase in my office and noticed the bright yellow cover of *The Art of Possibility*² by Rosamund and Benjamin Zander. What was the message of these ordinary experiences for this issue of the MORE...?

The articles in this issue do weave a fabric that draws a diversity of individual stories into one fabric that connects in the ever-widening circle of those who find resonance with the mission and spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph. It is a story of “a universe of possibility,” where, as the Zanders say, “a person stands in the great space of possibility in a posture of openness with an unfettered imagination for what can be.”³

This is the story of Archange’s determination to become a citizen and provide for his family in a country where he believes there is space for possibility. It is the story of Pat Donovan, whose healing process after a double lung transplant wove a fabric of giving and receiving throughout our Motherhouse and beyond.

Each story in this issue has its own unique design that contributes to the fabric but each is connected to a wider whole. I am reminded of the words attributed to Chief Seattle, “Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.”⁴

As you read the stories in this issue of the MORE..., consider the unique fabric of your life. What is it becoming, how is it changing, and where are the spaces of possibility drawing you in the days ahead? 

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¹ *Journeys Weave*, words and music by Joanne Gallagher, CSJ, © 1989
³ Zander, p. 19
⁴ Words attributed to Chief Seattle, 1855
Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Spring edition of the MORE…! This issue invites you to reflect on the concept of weaving – the combined strength of many different fibers interlacing to create something of beauty and much stronger than the individual elements. When your support and generosity “interlaces” with our sisters’ commitment to mission and ministry we are so much stronger and can do so much more than each of us alone. Thank you for being our strong and supportive partners!

I thought you would enjoy seeing some photos from our Living the Dream 2017 dinner which was held April 19th at the Seaport Hotel. It was a wonderful evening. The enthusiastic committee spearheaded by Joe Baerlein and Joe Nolan exceeded the evening’s goal and raised over $900,000 (an amazing all-time high) to fund the ministries of our sisters and to support those sisters in need of care. Honored that evening was Jim Judge, President and CEO of Eversource and his family for their charitable work and their resonance with the values and charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Our guest speaker was Debbie Chausse, a former sister of St. Joseph whose life and work reflect a dedication to the “dear neighbor” and whose enthusiasm is infectious. Thank you to all who made this evening a huge success. Please save April 25th for Living the Dream 2018 dinner. More photos of this event can be found on www.csjboston.org.

As is our custom in the Spring issue we have published a list of those persons who have been remembered with a tribute gift celebrating a loved one or an “in memory of” gift honoring those who have died. These names can be found on our website, www.csjboston.org. On our website we also have the latest news, photos and videos to keep you up-to-date about our Sisters.

God bless you all!

Carol Mack
Director of Mission Advancement

Celebrating at Living the Dream 2017 dinner

Standing L-R Jack Connors, Co-Chairs Joe Nolan and Joe Baerlein. Seated L-R Eileen Connors, Emcee Karen Holmes Ward, Keynote Speaker Deb Chausse, Rosemary Brennan, CSJ.
Like a tapestry of richly colored threads intertwined, Sacred Threads weaves its story!

Sacred Threads represents a ministry of giving back in gratitude for gifts I have received. It is the realization of a shared vision and dream: to create a space of grace, a holy space of peace and security, an inclusionary space – a place for women to find a spiritual home. Rosemary Mulvihill, CSJ, and I envisioned a life-space of healing and fulfillment, a home for the heart, an invitation to a deeper connection with self, with others, and with God! We dreamed of an opportunity to walk life’s journey with others, unravelling their stories, loosening the tense threads of so many tightened knots, offering spiritual accompaniment and support. Thus, like a tapestry revealing its story from so many interwoven strands, the ministry of Sacred Threads emerged!

Carol Hiller’s richly intricate tapestry reflects the evocative metaphor of lives – individual strands creating unique stories: strong, vibrant threads; snarled, tangled knots; worn, threadbare spaces; frayed, broken strands laced with anxiety; fragments spiraling out of control; hidden undersides dark and obscure...

Sacred Threads invites women to walk that tapestry of life’s journey together: gathering to share hospitality, stories, and prayer, making connections, to bond – circles of women recognizing and accepting their gifts, garnering strength and confidence, leaving the shadows, and finding hope for healing and fulfillment; women moving toward a space of joy and following the flame of the Spirit.

Circles have become sources of shared insight, wisdom, energy, and discovery. On a weaving loom of trust, compassion and grace, stories assume a sacred dimension. When women find the courage to share their personal stories and discover the sacredness of their lives, a new lease on life happens. Continually, we are inspired by the transformative power of sacred stories shared in a sacred space!

As Rabbi Rami Shapiro reminds us, “The work of Sacred Threads – weaving together diverse people, sharing a common quest for wisdom – is both an expression of and vital to the great work of the spirit alive in our time. Ours is an age of axial turning and transformation that requires open hearts and courageous souls.”

Thus, Sacred Threads evokes its tapestry of ministry: to nourish, connect, and inspire women. Offering a variety of inspirational programs, events and shared experiences, Sacred Threads projects a vision of hope and new life – spinning sacred strands, and weaving spirituality into everyday life.

1 Sacred Threads is a recipient of the 2016 CSJ Ministries Grant for Unity and Nonviolence.
In our November issue, I summarized the usual ways that we CSJs and Associates respond to current issues, then described in more detail one less familiar method of response: socially responsible investment. As you can imagine, since November, the calls for action for or against a whole range of issues have become intense and constant.

In early March, I attended a convocation of Justice Promoters from religious congregations affiliated with LCWR entitled “Which Roots Will We Water: Systemic Change and JPIC Ministry.” The keynote speaker was Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, Professor of Theological and Social Ethics at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Given the theme of this issue of the MORE…, I’d like to convert Dr. Moe-Lobeda’s image of roots/water into a weaving image: warp/woof. In the work of weaving a tapestry of a just society, we might consider the warp (the longitudinal threads) the traditional sources of our theological/moral call to action, and consider the woof (the horizontal threads) the various methodologies we employ in our “weaving.”

The warp, then, consists of our biblical roots, Catholic Social Teaching, and our CSJ Mission and Charism. When we respond to a particular issue, we rely on Gospel values such as Jesus’ words about feeding the hungry, visiting the sick or imprisoned, sheltering the homeless; on CST “pillars” such as the dignity of the human person, the common good, preferential option for the poor; and CSJ values such as love of the dear neighbor without distinction.

Into these bedrock threads we weave the woof: the means by which we try to address the issues we face. Dr. Moe-Lobeda listed ten of these, and stressed that each is important and necessary. The following are a few that have been prominent in our responses these past few months.

A key trio for us since the 1960s has been education and consciousness-raising, leading to advocacy. This fall and winter, issues around immigration, climate change, anti-human trafficking, health care, respect for Muslims, and support for the Dakota Sioux at Standing Rock were among those we were asked to address. Requests for action, accompanied by reliable information, provided opportunities to respond (usually online) to make our voices heard to influence the outcome of the issue.

Another important thread for us is public witness, such as the annual Anti-Trafficking vigil, the Women’s March in Boston, and individuals’ participation in visits to public officials and legislators, presence at neighborhood events, and work within various social justice organizations. We know that our presence on these occasions is highly valued.

A third thread, deeply woven into our practices of justice-making, is prayer/worship/theological reflection. Opportunities included International Peace Days (September and January), World Day of Prayer and Awareness vs. Human Trafficking (February), and a day of prayer for all immigrants and migrants on December 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, as well as our communal and personal prayer.

Direct service, of course, is vitally important. We do this through our ministries, volunteer work, and interpersonal relationships. However, service is just one of the many ways that we fulfill our commitment to “weaving” a society built on justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

1 Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation
Mission Haiti Project – Rebuilding Haiti Through the Empowerment of Girls

Soon after the earthquake hit Haiti in January of 2010, Sister Griselda Martinez Morales, CSJ, then Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) representative for the Federation of the Congregations of Saint Joseph, sent a request to various sisters involved in justice work in the global Joseph family asking how we might respond to the tragedy in Haiti. The justice coordinators in the US and Canadian Federations expressed interest in this request and have collaborated in designing a response.

Rebuilding Haiti through the Empowerment of Girls is a projected 10-year commitment to Mission Haiti, Inc., that is providing education for 10 Haitian girls from primary through secondary school; three (3) years of technical education for 10 girls; assisting in the salaries for and certification of teachers; and providing partial financial assistance for building Rose de Lima Secondary School. March 2017 brought together sisters, associates, and Mission Haiti staff for another look at this initiative of the US and Canadian Federations. Mary Ellen O’Connell, CSJ, was part of this trip. She reflects on her experience in the accompanying article.

On March 13, 2017, twelve CSSJs, Associates and three teenage daughters of one of the Associates undertook an adventure that would change our lives forever. Under the guidance of Shelley Butler from Mission Haiti, Inc. and Jean Garry, our van driver, we traveled from Port-au-Prince to Leogane, the epicenter of the 2010 earthquake that left 2.3 million Haitians homeless. Here, Mission Haiti has partnered with the Companions of Jesus, a religious community of women who lead two schools: Annunciation Primary School and Coeur de Marie Secondary School, a residence for elderly women called the Village of Jesus, and a sustainable farm.

How exciting to see the students at the schools so happy and eager to learn! We are so glad to know that our CSSJ Federation has made a 10-year pledge to sponsor the education of ten girls who are presently 4th and 5th graders, ongoing teacher development and building improvements for the next 10 years. At the Village of Jesus where we massaged hands and feet and gave manicures and pedicures, we were greeted by delighted smiles of gratitude.

In addition, visits to The Wellness Center (Mother Teresa’s Orphanage) and Santa Chiara Children’s Center were treasured moments where happy children are cared for, nourished and loved. We fed, played with, or simply held the children. It was hard to leave, but we knew that they were in good hands.

A visit to the unfinished Earthquake Memorial was a somber experience as we reflected on the mass burial site for most of the 300,000 earthquake victims. The devastating effects of that event are everywhere: crumbling buildings including the National Palace and Cathedral; abandoned homes – some in the process of rebuilding; and inadequate roads. Efforts to rebuild have been hampered by recent hurricanes.

Haitian artistic talent is seen in paintings, metal works, craft shops, as well as on walls, buses, and tap taps (taxis). Many sell their art or fresh produce on the streets to better their lives.

1 Information in the sidebar for this article was provided by Cecelia Rupell, of the SSJ Philadelphia Communications Office.
The enthusiasm, hospitality and generosity of Sister Alta, provincial of the Companions of Jesus, Father Andre, president of University of Notre Dame in Haiti, Ecarlotte, at the Children’s Center, and Jean Gary were overwhelming. They embodied the warmth and love that permeates the country. In the Guest Houses and at the airport, we met families, adults, religious groups, and organizations from across our country coming to work hand in hand with the Haitian people in schools, orphanages, clinics – building and rebuilding. Their joy and commitment was obvious. Our hearts, minds, and thoughts were woven together in a desire to create a better future for the children and people of Haiti. “We are all one.”

St. Joseph Day at St. Damien’s Pediatric Hospital was an experience to remember. After a tour of the hospital with Sister Judy, Father Rick Frechette blended Creole and English, Haitians and Americans, Compline and Eucharist, song and readings, in a celebration of Joseph. We prayed that Joseph will guide the hands of laborers, builders, growers, and artisans to overcome the devastation of the past, and lead the youth of Haiti into a future full of hope!

A trip like this to Haiti can help you to put perspective on life! But children are the same everywhere – eager to have their pictures taken, laughing and dancing, excited to get some stickers, and eager to blow bubbles. The older students shared their dreams of going to the university and becoming a doctor or nurse, a diplomat or a teacher, and more.

Since returning home, I have tried to reflect on my personal response to this experience. How have these days changed me? What am I called to do? In the light of God’s inclusive love, what is my responsibility? 

Mary Ellen O’Connell, CSJ, far right, and other members of the Mission Haiti trip, with the 10 Haitian girls whose education is being funded by the CSSJ US and Canadian Federations.

Mary Ellen O’Connell, CSJ, with students
Threads woven by humans, by nature
strong fragility / fragile strength
hope even in the midst of brokenness

Where do we find strength?
Where do we discover hope?

Photo and reflection by Ann Marie Grady, CSJ
Color! Fiber! Yarn! Threads! Pattern! Loom! Needle! Stitch! Woof woven through warp! These were essentials learned immediately as I began to weave a visual image of my life to date while on retreat in the summer of 2002.

The “how-to’s” challenged me while the quiet reflective/contemplative time enticed! Silence enveloped me as I recalled from memory persons, places, events in my life, and then selected colors and threads to represent them. Vertically stringing a single basic color on the wooden loom created the warp, the foundation, of the weaving to be done. Over and under, through and against this background, threads, brighter or darker, thicker or thinner, were thoughtfully woven as the woof! The intricacy and flair of the stitches chosen to represent each relationship or event reflected its nature and degree of importance in my life, as weaver.

Those relationships in vibrant colors and lovely fibers were comfortable, stable, smooth, and steady and my weaver’s hand deftly depicted their nature as valued and welcomed while others revealed darker times, relationships suddenly broken or sadly unfinished. Events and other life circumstances are woven similarly. The emerging pattern, while not directly intended, reveals the mystery of life as inspired by God with its invitations, challenges, adventures, obstacles – and loose ends!

Areas of darkness, intensity, or entanglement illustrate some hardships or questionable facets of life that may as yet be problematic or unresolved while experiences of smooth sailing are more evenly represented. Calm or pleasant times are patterned as such while others that overwhelm distinctly contrast by the depth of color or the unevenness of intersections. Pompoms, loops, threads, dangle freely, defying capture by the woven fabric as do some life-giving or chill-inducing incidents. Knots and uneven twists invite touch and questioning – wonder? Delicate beaded finishing fringe with more open space provides less interest as it simply offers a fairly nondescript though graceful conclusion to the piece.

The created fabric as-a-whole stimulates contemplation. Revisiting persons, places, and events in the past in a reflective manner requires resilience and the ability to re-live the sorrowful and painful as well as to delight in myriad blessings and happy encounters. Where has God, the Master Weaver, been in all these? What have I done with the graces and opportunities offered, welcomed, accepted or rejected? Where do I reckon are those times of blessedness, sickness, and sinfulness, and how have I grown from and through these? Some 15 years after its creation, this fabric continues to reveal lessons to be grasped, thoughts to be pondered, actions yet-to-be undertaken, and peace to be exchanged. 

Weaving by Peggy Sullivan, CSJ
My prayer and my drawing weave the fabric of my life and the choices I’ve made personally, professionally, and as a Sister of St. Joseph. I often pray while creating mandalas as a way of weaving my life together. All that I am and do as a Sister of St. Joseph is a way of weaving my life together.

My father was a structural engineer for the U.S. Government. We traveled all over the country. We were mostly between the states of Washington and Massachusetts. As a result, I had been in nine schools by the ninth grade. My sister is five years younger and we always seemed to find ourselves in the back seat of the car weaving our way across the country while being home-schooled, or perhaps “car-schooled,” by our mother.

When it was time to enter high school, we were living in Cochituate and attending St. Zepherin’s Parish. It was here that I learned about Marian High School and the Sisters of St. Joseph. I managed to get a job at a donut shop to pay tuition and became part of Marian High’s first graduating class. I recall sitting in the Marian Convent chapel one day and saying to myself, “This is what I want.” Sister Ursula was my homeroom teacher and she became my sponsor when I entered the congregation. Eventually, I took care of her mother at Bethany – there’s a lot of weaving of relationships here!

Graduating from Boston State College with a degree in education prepared me to work at Walnut Park School. Sister Josephina had the vision for Walnut Park to become a Montessori School. At the time, the Montessori Method had not started in the United States. We received long-distance training through the St. Nicholas Montessori Centre, an internationally acclaimed Montessori center in London, England.

I’ve been at Walnut Park Montessori for almost my entire teaching career. During that time, I trained many teachers – some of whom continue there today. Now I’m part time, but I’ve seen a lot of weaving. I’ve even taught some of the grandchildren of my students.

In 1976, I left for a few years and went to the Art Institute of Boston. Sister Marie DeSales also helped me with art. I began by studying photography at the Art Institute. Eventually they hired me because most of the professors weren’t trained educators. My teaching background enabled me to help many people at the Art Institute. Photography is about getting a message and communicating it. Being able to do this was what I liked about The Art Institute.

Aging has changed me. I’ve loved everything I’ve done and I love the memories I have from these experiences. I often feel that, now, I’m looking at the fringe. Many threads wove the fabric of experiences together in a way that enables me to see the connections and relationships that tell this story.

Rosemary Michalski, CSJ, works on a reflective drawing.
As I reflect on the fabric of my life, my Hope is that my parents would be proud of my tapestry. Their example initiated that fabric! I admire how they followed their dream, moving from the Bronx to Northern Westchester, New York in order to raise their children and assume ownership of a thoroughbred horse stable. Because they dared to live their dream, my childhood was blessed with Opportunities others could only imagine! It was an exhilarating environment, surrounded by people of diverse backgrounds and circumstances. Opportunities to meet many people formed the basis of my tapestry: my appreciation of hospitality and my attitude of respect for all; thus, initial strands of my hospitality blanket were designed!

My own weaving began in earnest when I moved to Massachusetts to attend college. It was a time of growing, and a beginning of lifelong friendships. That natural Smile and congenial Personality that enabled me to appreciate my childhood now supported me as I wove new experiences and ministries into the fabric of my life – connecting with people from all walks of life as I embraced careers, at first in health care and, subsequently, in the hospitality industry.

Personal growth and my love of people expanded my professional horizons, drawing me ultimately to Bethany Health Care Center [BHCC]. This was a blessing in disguise! At that time, I was not considering a position in long-term health care! However, God had other plans, placing me with the right person at exactly the right moment! Although my professional title at Bethany is that of Program Director, my mission is to love and honor the women who now call the second floor their home. On the surface, our facility resembles many other sites; however, Bethany is a place like no other! Staff members are filled with love, and hallways are filled with invisible angels who guide us along each day’s journey.

My Interest in people has enhanced my understanding that Teamwork and Accommodating the needs of others truly reflect the fabric of God’s work! My Love for others and for life is Interwoven with the fabric of my faith. And I am Thankful!

Some of the most profound threads of my tapestry intertwine the fabric of family, godchildren, and friends! They have allowed me to incorporate my ministry into the fabric of their lives. Now, I am blessed with an even larger family: You, the Sisters of St. Joseph! You have invited me to become part of a community that enhances my zeal to do God’s work. As I bring this spirit to my commitment as a CSJA, I look forward to embracing the richness of textures that God has designed for the fabric of my life! 🧵
My name is Archange Santus.

I am a Haitian immigrant. My wife, Ginette, and I are the proud parents of Angela, age 6, and Angie, age 4. I came here in 2010 after the big earthquake. My house was fine but houses near me were down. The earthquake killed a lot of my family members.

My mother and sister were in the United States. In 2003, they applied for me to come. After seven years, the embassy called me for an interview but, when the earthquake happened, I had to wait another seven months. I came in September 2010 and left Ginette who was three months pregnant. It was hard for both of us. Angela was born in March 2011. For her first year of life, I knew her only through Skype.

In Haiti, I had studied accounting but it’s not easy to find a job there. As soon as I came here, my sister found an English class at Gardner Pilot Academy where I studied for six months. My first job was as a Stop and Shop Peapod night clerk. I had to earn enough to care for my family and send money to Haiti so I also worked...
at Shaw’s and put studying on hold.

I found that I could do “distance learning” courses online at Notre Dame Educational Center [NDEC]. While taking these courses, I was also learning about life in the U.S. I left Shaw’s and went to JVS\(^1\) in downtown Boston. They set up programs and help people build careers. I took CNA\(^2\) classes and worked with the American Red Cross to finish this training. There were lots of tests to pass but I kept taking advantage of available resources. First, I worked at Benchmark Senior Living. Then the Harvard Workforce helped me and now I’m at Beth Israel/Deaconess Medical Center.

When I came here, I worked and helped my family. My next step was citizenship. My sister, Estelle, met Sister Pat Andrews. I’m so thankful for Sister Pat. She helped me with the 100 questions needed for the citizenship test and some of the paperwork too. Because of donors who wanted to help The Literacy Connection, she was able to assist with costs. I also liked the way she taught the class. Thanks to her, I was totally prepared for the citizenship test. I’ve sent five other Haitian friends to The Literacy Connection citizenship classes.

After five years, I applied for my family to come. The first time, I was denied because one document was missing. I finally found it. My mother raised money for the visa, about $530 for my wife. Because my kids were under 18, I didn’t pay for them. Citizenship application and fingerprinting cost $680. The translation costs of birth certificates were $30 each. Now I’m working on certificates of citizenship for the girls. Those cost about $600 each and require a lot of paperwork.

My daughters went to ABCD in Brighton and now attend the Baldwin Early Learning Academy. It’s a big step for them too. They speak English well and I’m learning from them. They help my pronunciation. I’m lucky we live in Massachusetts because this state is very strong. As a result of my becoming a citizen, my children under 18 can become citizens. My wife is taking English classes at Gardner and distance learning at Jackson Mann. Next year, she will be eligible for citizenship and will come to Sister Pat’s classes.

You must have determination to reach your goal. Before I came, I said I’d come and not go to school. But when I came, my opinions changed. I saw what I needed to do to go the next step. I didn’t just stay there. I went further. And I asked people for help. \(\blacklozenge\)

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\(^1\) JVS Jewish Vocational Service http://www.jvs-boston.org/
\(^2\) Certified Nursing Assistant

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As you read Archange’s story notice procedures and expenditures as he kept taking the next step to become a citizen, reunite his family, and petition for citizenship for his minor children. His story is not unlike many immigrant families who come to the United States.
Of Blankets and Buttons and Building a Life

By Galina Tonkov

As children living in Russia, my sister and I didn’t have much. My mother made our clothes and, therefore, we created our own “brand.” I have always believed in recycling. Many of my sweaters are made of yarn from Russia. I’m able to unravel the yarn and give it new life – a second chance. These sweaters are like my life. When I came from Russia, I unraveled my life and started over. I had nothing except the belief in the possibility of a better life. When I brought my family here, I didn’t know what was waiting but I wanted to take that risk. I think everyone’s life is tangled. I wish more could be given a second chance – a chance to unravel life and create something new.

Several years ago, I discovered a children’s book titled Something from Nothing. It’s the story of a boy whose grandfather was a tailor and made a baby blanket for him. When he outgrew the blanket and his mother wanted to throw it out, the boy said, “Grandpa can fix it.” Grandpa refashioned the blanket into a jacket. Through the years, Grandpa gave that blanket several additional chances as a vest, a tie, a handkerchief, a button, and finally a wonderful story. We all outgrow our childhood “blankets.” What endures is the comfort of their memories, and the stories those memories create. It’s like what I’m trying to do with my children – give them the security of love and home so they can believe they can try anything. But they have to be original. They can create their own brand.

We didn’t have a lot of toys growing up but we had the security of a loving home. My great-grandparents were tailors and we had lots of buttons. We played with buttons, creating something out of nothing. I think my love for buttons comes from this experience. Buttons have personality. Of itself, a button is nothing. But when you have a button and an idea, you’re able to create something new.

Coming to work with the Sisters of St. Joseph was one of those “buttons.” I had just come to America…I had my education, a few years of experience and a four-year-old daughter. I knew it would be a miracle if I were hired and I needed a miracle. I explained how much I needed this job and how much I believed in myself. My words came straight from the heart and I was listened to with an open mind. I was given a chance.

The minute I arrived for the interview, though I didn’t know what this place was, I knew I wanted to stay. It was my intuition. In working with the Sisters of St. Joseph, I’ve never felt as if I don’t belong because I’m Jewish. I believe every person has God inside. God doesn’t have nationality or color. God is love…and an open mind, and a hope, and a belief that the possibilities to create are endless. All you need is something to start with. It could be just a little button.

1 Galina Tonkov has worked in the CSJ Boston Finance Office since coming to the United States from Russia in 1995.
2 Gilman, Phoebe, Something from Nothing, © Scholastic, Inc, 2008
There are many facets to this gripping story of a simple Irish girl from Queens, New York. Her upbringing, like so many of ours, was typical for the times. The hub for her spiritual and social life was the parish. The seed for her vocation was sown when she began high school at Stella Maris Academy. A visiting bishop spoke to the young women of becoming missionaries in far off lands, especially Central America. Maura’s faith was broadening – encouraging her to look outward at the needs of those around.

Maura listened to the inner voice of God inviting her to be open to change and share her love with God’s people wherever needed. That whispering inner voice led her to enter Maryknoll in 1950. Thus began her journey of transformation.

Maura’s early formation in religious life was very formal and resembled that of other religious orders. The focus was on growth and efficiency. Individual ideas were not encouraged. Her entire day was framed in prayer – with prayers to accompany almost every action. The idea of sacrifice guided her days.

After an initial teaching assignment in the Bronx, Maura’s dream of mission was finally realized when she was sent to Siuna, Nicaragua. This was the beginning of radical change for her. It was also a time that led to sweeping revolution in religious life. After Vatican II, religious congregations were asked to return to their roots and renew the core of how they lived their mission and charism.

Maura was facing questions about the needs of the people she was serving and how she could minister to them. She often struggled with fear and uncertainty. However, that sacred Voice, so deeply woven within in the fabric of her life, inspired her to be one with the people – sharing in their hopes and dreams. She encouraged them to speak their truth in the reality of their daily lives. She also found her own voice to speak courageously for her brothers and sisters with whom she lived.

The humble Irish girl from New York became a passionate proponent for justice. Years later, when confronted by the National Guardsman in El Salvador who told her to go back to her convent, Maura shouted at him, “This is my convent!” It was her passion, her unwavering dedication to those she served that eventually led to a shallow grave near San Salvador. With her companions, she is forever a witness to the dignity of all peoples.

This is a compelling story of a woman deeply in love with God – a woman who was able to do great things.
The Japanese art of wabi-sabi finds beauty in the authenticity of that which has been part of life – the broken and mended teacup, the tapestry that has been rent, then with care and love darned, patched, mended.

The mended area is not considered a flaw; it is considered to increase the beauty and strength of the weaving. ♦

Our sisters have been privileged to be part of the “mending” of the tapestry of Pat Donovan’s life. By offering hospitality and prayers to Pat and his family during the diagnosis, operation and recovery from his bi-lateral lung replacement, they helped weave a beautiful patch to be forever part of his tapestry.

See the letter and photos from Pat’s family at right.

Thank you, Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston.

It was in March, 2016 that Pat and I first traveled from Maine to Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston to begin the process that led to his life-saving bi-lateral lung transplant on July 3, 2016. As the first anniversary approaches, we are reflecting on all our blessings.

The generosity and welcome of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston contributed significantly to Pat’s successful early recovery. You welcomed us and our family into your home. You greeted us warmly, fed us, prayed for us, and showed us care and compassion in so many ways. Pat walked the long halls to regain his strength and confidence in his new lungs. We were so grateful to attend Mass surrounded by your beautiful singing. We often marveled at how fortunate we were to have had a place to be “at home” where all of Pat’s needs would be met.

After we were able to return home to Maine, we still needed to come back to Boston for weekly, and now less frequent, check-ups. Each time we return we encounter a sister in the hallway, in the parking lot, or at the door who treats us with such kindness, it has been a privilege to share your wonderful home. You truly helped us make ourselves at home.

The outpouring of prayers, donations, encouragements, well-wishes – in a word, love, that we have received from you has truly been a huge blessing to our family. We hold your community in prayer and continue to be grateful for all we have been given.

In gratitude,

Kim & Pat Donovan
Choosing our cards is a generous way of celebrating the lives of relatives and friends. Throughout the year, those you honor with a card are remembered in prayer by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston and Associates.

At the time of a death, we encourage our donors to request that family members and friends remember the Congregation by sending donations “in lieu of flowers.” All donations are acknowledged by the Office of Mission Advancement of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston. If you wish to make a donation, know someone who would like to do so, or are in need of cards for a relative or friend, please contact Robert Tamulis, Mission Advancement Coordinator, at 617-746-2114 or email robert.tamulis@csjboston.org.

To make a donation online, visit www.csjboston.org and find the “make a gift” box. The cards here are a representative sample. More designs are available at: www.csjboston.org/join-our-mission/donate-now/memorial-and-all-occasion-card-programs/

Card Order Form

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___ Get Well ___ Thinking of You (1)
___ Happy Birthday ___ Thinking of You (2)
___ In Your Honor (1) ___ Tulips (Blank)

Please write the number of cards you desire in the space to the left of the card description. After you have made your choice, clip the form and mail it to:

Robert Tamulis
Mission Advancement Coordinator
Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston
637 Cambridge Street
Brighton, MA 02135
The videographer from Cramer Studios poses Sisters Ann Marie Grady, Betty Cawley, and Denise Kelly overlooking the city of Boston as they discuss their ministries on our video “One Foot Forward.” See this short video on our website www.csjboston.org as well as a slide show of photos from the Living the Dream 2017 dinner where this video premiered. More about Living the Dream 2017 can be found on page 5. Be sure to save the date April 25, 2018 for Living the Dream 2018 dinner!