For Such a Time as This
The Consensus Statement, drawn from the central ideas of our founding spirituality states, in part, that we approach life “with an orientation towards excellence (le plus) tempered by gentleness, peace, joy.” The French “le plus” translates into English as the MORE…
Each year in early October the Sisters of St. Joseph celebrate Founders’ Day, a commemoration of our Boston founding which occurred on October 2, 1873, when four sisters, under the leadership of Sister Regis Casserly, journeyed from Brooklyn, NY to Boston to minister among newly arriving immigrants in this diocese.

This year as I reflect on our origins and our history, two contemporary events find parallels in our own history, events which brought the sisters into action to address urgent needs. In 1918 the Influenza epidemic was wreaking havoc in the United States. Boston was a center of the illness. Cardinal O’Connell requested volunteers to assist medical personnel in responding to the multitudes of victims. Eighty sisters, including some who were trained nurses, stepped forward to care for the ill neighbors within the parishes where they were already ministering. The work of Catholic sisters was recognized publicly in the Boston Traveler (Oct. 18, 1918). Seven sisters are known to have succumbed to the influenza.

The pandemic of 2020 presents a different need that we have been able to meet, that of offering personal connection and support to people whose lives have been seriously disrupted and distorted by job loss, illness, isolation and more. Through prayer, spiritual direction, charitable giving, continual outreach and more, sisters, associates, agrégées, and partners in mission find new ways of ministering to the dear neighbor in times such as these.

A second contemporary event that finds parallel in the past is the struggle for racial justice. The civil rights struggle of the 1960s called many sisters to participate in marches, and to consider new ministries. Sisters ministered in Alabama, Mississippi, and cities throughout Massachusetts, where they could more directly support people in their daily struggles for justice. Civil rights and voting rights laws encouraged hope that racial equality would become a reality. In the decades since much has changed and much has not.

The spring and summer months of 2020 have revealed how much farther we must go to root out systemic racism in our country and racist attitudes or behaviors in our own lives.

The voting and civil rights guarantees under the law have been eroded in some places and the struggle for justice continues. We are, once again, called upon to actively engage in this struggle through participating in prayer vigils and marches, joining conversations that challenge assumptions, taking visible stands with signs, banners and social media engagement, and so many other ways as we seek “unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God.” In the words of our CSJ Constitution, “…we engage in spiritual and corporal works of mercy so that justice and peace, freedom and human dignity may prevail.”
In some mysterious, even mystical, way this issue of “the MORE…” has been writing itself for a number of years. Lately, words and phrases like “new normal, pivot, unprecedented times” have seeped into our daily conversation. Yet in our deepest souls we are aware that we are part of a cosmic unfolding, that our universe is born out of chaos and continues to bring forth new waves of chaos which call us to ongoing transformation. Life as we thought we knew it consistently draws us forward into “the more” of life and like Esther in the Bible, perhaps we have come to this moment for just such a time as this.¹

If the past months have taught us anything, it’s that we can’t always pick the events that will call us to “the more.” Who among us would have chosen twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racism as vehicles for deeper reflection, awareness and transformation? Our response to these events have been simmering throughout our world for some time. COVID-19 has brought the frenetic pace of our lives to an abrupt stop, or at least to a halting pause. It has called forth an outpouring of compassion, dedication, and care for the most vulnerable. The recent surge of anti-racism advocacy continues to expand as we witness horrific events on the nightly news in a seemingly endless trail of heartbreak, rage, and tragedy.

How can we possibly respond? The biblical story of Esther tells of a time when events seemed out of control to Esther and her uncle, Mordecai. When evil was poised to triumph, God worked through their dark days.²

In a recent article Mary Pellegrino, CSJ, writes, “Like Esther the circumstances of our time challenge our own relative comfort, not so importantly as individuals, but especially as communities. What if we had a collective opportunity to move the arc of history toward greater justice, mercy and compassion in our day?”³

Among those who share in the spirit and spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the challenge “for such a time as this” is to let ourselves be given over to transformation in a manner consistent with our charism of unifying love. The pages that follow tell the story of our sisters, associates, agrégées, and partners in mission who, amid these challenging days, have found opportunities to listen to those on the margins and use their voice in the life-long, life-changing endeavor of healing the whole. May their witness inspire us to reflect on how we, too, have been a presence of unifying love in such a time as this. ☮

¹ See Book of Esther 4:14
³ Mary Pellegrino, CSJ, Esther’s Gamble, Reflections on Abundance, 2020
With Gratitude

Sister Cathy: During this season of Thanksgiving and Advent, I want our friends to know just how much we appreciate their support. Even in the midst of this pandemic they give us a reason to be thankful and I am gratified to realize that the spirit of selflessness and generosity is alive and well.

Carol: The donations and the kind letters we receive contribute to the spiritual as well as the physical well-being of our sisters as they continue to find creative ways to reach out to the “dear neighbor.” I join with you in offering a heartfelt “Thank you!” Friends, we don’t know what we would have done without you!

Sister Cathy: For me, the worst part of this pandemic has been the lack of personal connectedness, the inability to give a hug or a pat on the cheek, to visit with the grieved and/or to celebrate in person the joyful occasions of life.

Carol: I agree! As a grandparent I really miss those hugs. And I hope this will be the last Thanksgiving dinner we ever have to share with loved ones via Zoom! I know our friends have endured hardships of their own and we will continue to hold them in prayer.

I have a question for you - when it’s over, do you think we will be better people?

Sister Cathy: I sincerely hope so, but truthfully, I really don’t know. We tend to forget promises we make in times of hardship. I really hope that this time we can learn from our time away from others and our feelings about tough things that have happened. We have had the time to think, pray, reflect, wonder, to search for God and to ponder what God is asking of us or is revealing during such an unsettling time. I hope it has strengthened our faith and made us kinder and more loving people.

Carol: Me too! I want to invite our friends to keep in touch. See what the sisters are doing, ask for prayers, order cards and more on our website—csjboston.org. If you are online and you don’t already receive our monthly e-news with photos, stories about the sisters, events and more, contact Karen Yee, Editor, at karen.yee@csjboston.org

Sister Cathy: I have attached this Thanksgiving Grace. It was written by one of our sisters and I thought people might want to use it on Thanksgiving itself as they gather round the table to give thanks (either personally or virtually)!

A Thanksgiving Grace

Generous God
we give thanks today
in a very special way.

We thank you for this country
for our ancestors
and for the many men and women
who developed this land.

We thank you
for the blessings of the year
and for your presence with us.
Help us to be grateful
and generous.

We thank you for our families
those we gather with today,
those we love
and those we sadly miss,
especially N.....

We thank you for good friends
those who have supported
and sustained us
those we remember with fondness
those who need our prayers.

Help us to remember
those who lack food,
lack family and friends
and are so in need.

Help us to be people of gratitude
aware of the things that really matter
and thankful for gifts we recognize
and for the ways in which
You surprise us.

Amen

by Rosemary Mulvihill, CSJ

A very Happy Thanksgiving to all, from the Mission Advancement Team!
Amid the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice which have challenged us individually, as a nation, and as a global community these past months, the commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Women’s Suffrage was an uplifting experience for many. A frequently heard observation was “How come we never heard about this, or learned it in school?” Learning the facts of the long struggle, the names and exploits of the women who engaged in the process, the strong opposition they experienced from many quarters, and – above all – their ultimate triumph, perhaps instilled a sense of hope in these dark times. “For such a time as this…”

There were a number of available resources that told the story of the ratification of the 19th Amendment. We used the American Experience film, The Vote. In addition to “telling the story,” with amazing footage of the actual events, the film included discussion among several experts that provided further understanding of the story. Following the viewing of the film, I invited sisters, associates and agrégées to share their comments and reflections.

As you might expect, the respondents were intrigued by the women suffragists themselves: their courage, tenacity, endurance of suffering that included prison and force-feeding; their range of strategies to achieve their end: parades, rallies, speeches, collaborations, picketing, civil disobedience. A number of the respondents were surprised by the racism the Black suffragists experienced from the white suffragists, even as they were engaged as collaborators in the same struggle.

Some respondents noted the connection between the racism of the early 1900s and the systemic racial injustice exposed by the two pandemics today. Others connected the denial of the vote to women to the current increase in voter suppression, and the ongoing struggles of women for equal access to high level positions and to equal pay for equal work.

Our observance of the 100th Anniversary of Women’s Suffrage was intended to lead us directly into the election cycle this fall. As we brought to a close our sharing of the comments and reflections among ourselves and with our broader audience, we noted the stirring words of 20th century suffragist leader, Carrie Chapman Catt, taking it as a challenge for our immediate future:

“The vote is an emblem of your equality… the guarantee of your liberty… Understand what it means and what it can do for your country. Use it intelligently, conscientiously, prayerfully… Progress is calling you to make no pause. ACT.”
“QR” refers to “quick response” and gives easy access to more information about a topic. If you don’t have a QR code reader app on your phone, just point your phone’s camera at the QR code and it will prompt you to open the code in Safari browser. This will bring you directly to a webpage with more information. Using these QR codes is one way to explore… have fun…and be part of strengthening relationships for mission as our story unfolds!

“Six degrees of separation” is a common idea that suggests all of us are six or fewer connections away from each other. This adage came to life during our 2020 “pandemic summer” through connections that happened in the Holy Spirit Garden at our Motherhouse.

One lovely day, Cynthia Ellison, a resident of Allston/Brighton, stopped by for a moment of reflection and renewal of spirit as she was walking home from work. Soon after, Mary Milay, from Medfield, joined her. Mary and Cynthia were already friends through a local church called The Community of Love Fellowship near our Motherhouse but during summer 2020 our Holy Spirit Garden became one of the few places they could have a socially distanced get-together.

When Pat Andrews, CSJ, and Mary Rita Weschler, CSJA, noticed them in the garden, they reached out to say hello. As they talked, connections abounded. Pat had met Cynthia at a 2020 Census meeting in January. Mary is a sister to Margret Lynch, a former CSJ. Both expressed a desire to continue meeting and engage with our ministries in action for racial equity.

Given these connections, our cover demonstrates “relationship at the heart of mission.” Whether by design or happenstance, we are all connected, be it by six degrees of separation or our mission of unifying love. Cynthia and Mary’s coming together was made “for such a time as this.”
Heroes Work Here!

By Jacquelyn McCarthy, CSJ, RN, CEO and Anne Marie Willhite, MDiv, ThM, Mission Integration Facilitator

In the Face of COVID-19:
Love Unfolds in Ever-Widening Circles

It has been almost 30 years since Bethany Health Care Center began tending to the needs of the elderly and those too frail to care for themselves at home.

Many of the more than 60 nurses and certified nursing assistants (CNAs) who work here have been with us almost as long. As a Sponsored Ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston, we walk in the footsteps of the women who formed the “Congregation of the Great Love of God.” This is our heritage, this is our calling: to bring God’s presence of love into each and every situation – to participate in the healing ministry of Jesus. Love and care for the “dear neighbor” is at the heart of what we do.

With great sacrifice and devotion, our dedicated staff consistently delivered care with compassion and a passion for their mission, which is a profound dedication to the health, safety and well-being of our residents. As we fought to protect our residents from the COVID-19 virus, day after day, our nursing team came to work, even though they themselves were frightened; scared that they might bring the virus home to their families or even into the facility. So too, did our ancillary staff including housekeeping, dietary and kitchen staff.

In a sustained and arduous effort, we pursued every opportunity to support and keep our staff safe: by ensuring that adequate personal protection equipment was always available, constant cleaning and disinfecting all areas of the building, providing meals and on occasion hotel rooms, hazard pay and continued employment, as well as care, outreach and support to those staff members who became ill, some seriously. It was, and continues to be, a challenge. Our number one goal continues to be for our staff to know that their safety and that of our residents is our top priority.

“I am so grateful to all of you for the exceptional care you provide for our sisters and all the residents at Bethany. May God bless you and keep you safe!”

– Sr. Judy

“Thank you so much for the amazing work you’ve been doing during this incredibly challenging time. You are heroes and you are brave, and STRONG! Keep up the great work and stay safe!”

– Johanna
We have had to find creative ways to attend to the physical, spiritual, social and mental well-being of those in our care. We’ve had to adapt to constantly changing circumstances and regulations. Many have made personal sacrifices in order to ensure care was delivered, and the facility was kept clean and safe and demonstrated open hearts and generous, embracing love. Some performed heroic actions, others supported in smaller ways according to their gifts and abilities. In short, everyone showed up and contributed to the whole. Our residents were uplifted by the companionship and care provided by these wonderful frontline workers. The bonds at Bethany are as strong as steel. Our residents and our staff truly become family.

This pandemic challenges us all to consider what unity in the face of this virus means in actual, lived reality. It calls upon us to be selfless – to consider the needs of the larger community and act for the common good, especially for the most vulnerable among us.

Bethany Infirmary was built in 1961 and became a long-term care facility in 1991.
Reflections on Racism – Then and Now

By Kathleen Short, CSJ

Kathy Short, CSJ, shares this reflection written in 1978. As you read, you will realize that her words are as timely now as they were then.

Racism is a sin dividing the human family, blotting out the image of God and violating the true dignity of each human being, revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation. Racism mocks the words of Jesus: “Treat others the way you would have them treat you.” Mt. 7:12

Yes, laws have been changed, policies have been implemented. Only the ugly external features of racism have been eliminated, however, and then only in part. Covering over racism does not create fundamental change. We are called to “Repent and believe the good news.” Mk. 1:14

Our societal structures are subtly racist, geared for the success of the majority. This sin is social in nature, so each of us is responsible for it. All of us in some measure are accomplices. The absence of personal fault for evil does not absolve one of responsibility. We must resist and undo injustices we have not caused, lest we become bystanders who tacitly endorse evil.

We have preached the Gospel while ignoring the racism it condemns. Past mistakes must not hinder our response to the challenges of the present.

Let the Catholic Church proclaim that the sin of racism defies God and degrades the sacred dignity of humankind. Racism is a terrible sin that mocks the Cross and ridicules the Incarnation, denying the new creation of a redeemed world. To struggle against it demands radical transformation in ourselves and equally so in the structures of society. Conversion, a change of heart, is the task of each Christian. To eradicate racism continuing dialogue is necessary. Rejections of racial remarks, stereotypes, slurs, and jokes offer the opportunity to influence others. Becoming more sensitive ourselves, we hold the potential to encourage others to embrace and appreciate the authentic human values and cultural contributions of each racial group. We recognize how social structures inhibit the advancement of the marginalized. Making a personal commitment to join in political efforts will help bring justice to all.

We look to Christ. In Christ Jesus, “There is neither Jew or Greek, male or female, for all are one in Christ Jesus.” Ga. 3:28 In my life, multi-cultural experiences have changed and enriched me. May we make Jesus’ dream of the unity of humankind in all its diversity come true. Let us become ever more aware of the evil of racism and work toward the dream of peace, harmony and justice. In closing, I share a favorite poem by Langston Hughes in the sidebar.

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

– Langston Hughes

1 Dreams, Langston Hughes, 1902-1967
On March 7, 1965, the marchers from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, were attacked on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Later that month, on March 16, 1965, as a student at the University of St. Michael’s College in Toronto, I participated in a demonstration of religious women and men in solidarity with Martin Luther King, Jr.

Who would have expected that fifty-five years later, I would find myself at another prayer vigil shortly after the May 25, 2020 killing of George Floyd? This vigil, outside our Motherhouse on June 7, 2020, had been organized “to pray for unity and love for our dear neighbor without distinction.” Many participants created posters to give voice to our commitment to recognize and challenge oppressive structures and to stand in solidarity because Black lives matter.

Reflecting back to 1965 and thinking of the fifty-five years that have elapsed, I created the sign THE TIME IS NOW for the prayer vigil in June. The United States has laws on the books that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. These laws, however, have not eradicated racism from our attitudes or from structures in society, in religion, in politics. Similarly, in his book The Legacy of the Civil War, Robert Penn Warren suggests, “that the Civil War abolished slavery, even if it did little or nothing to abolish racism.”

I wonder why I thought that the Civil Rights Act would take care of change. It is clear today we need to acknowledge that we are the ones who need to change and effect the changes. For so long many of us have not noticed the reality of racism as it impacts the lives of our Black and Brown neighbors. Noticing is perhaps the first step to acknowledging that the law of love must be “written in our hearts,” not just in legislation.

We must not let any more time elapse. The TIME IS NOW for dignity, respect, rights for our neighbors. THE TIME IS NOW to notice the racism that is part of our society. THE TIME IS NOW to take positive steps that embody anti-racism in ourselves and in the structures that are such a part of our daily lives.

2 Jeremiah 31:33
A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood!

By Pat Andrews, CSJ, The Literacy Connection and Mary Rita Weschler, CSJA, The Women’s Table

These words of “Mister” Fred Rogers are from the long-running children’s TV show and were celebrated in the 2019 movie with the same name. This tune hummed through my head as I viewed pictures of our July 15, 2020 Allston-Brighton Neighborhood “Lean on Me” Vigil held on our Motherhouse grounds. Each week, 30-plus members of neighborhood businesses, elder housing, social service programs, neighborhood civic associations, health care facilities and civic leaders have been meeting to focus on food distribution, availability of healthcare, shortages of Personal Protective Equipment, and other needs of “frontline” workers. The idea of a neighborhood vigil began with “a seed of hope” at the close of one of these weekly Allston-Brighton COVID-19 Coalition virtual meetings.

Latisha Beebe, an Allston resident and Black mother of a high school freshman, initiated the idea to recognize the grief and loss from COVID-19 particularly felt by our Black and Brown neighbors. She collaborated with several community members from local non-profits to plan and implement the vigil.

More than 100 people from Allston-Brighton and beyond gathered at dusk to stand, reflect, listen quietly and sing in candlelight. “Lean on Me” was an apt description for this vigil as we stood in solidarity. That Wednesday evening, a unique gathering of neighbors – young and old, families, students, the CSJ family, and dear friends – stepped into “a future filled with hope” to work for racial justice in a neighborhood where “ALL may be ONE.” It was “a beautiful day in the neighborhood!”
When the Sisters of St. Joseph arrived in Boston in 1873, they rolled up their sleeves and went to work. They set up schools, offered vocational training for young women, staffed educational programs for deaf and aphasic children. When the need for higher education for women became apparent, the sisters were ready and made it happen.

Always attentive to changing needs of the Dear Neighbor, sisters, associates, agrégées, and partners in mission continue to actively engage with the community. Today they join peace vigils, host symposia and vigils against Human Trafficking, offer ESOL and Citizenship classes and much more.

Like our founding sisters, our present days are marked by paradox and tension...We are confronted with the horrible gaps between the rich and the poor, enslaved and the free, old and the young. Families and nations alike are estranged from one another...we feel anew the call of our charism, to be women of unity and reconciliation...The women who are our past have bequeathed to us a strong heritage: the courage to respond in the most difficult situations, the humility to let God be with people through us, the fidelity to God and to one another from which we derive our strength.¹

In the face of COVID-19 and Systemic Racism, sisters, associates, agrégées, and partners in mission continue to give dedicated service to a changing Church in a changing world. May we stand as one, linking arms with every neighbor without distinction, and promote ever-widening circles of love and compassion. May François Clemmons’ words, “I carried the hope inside of me that one day, the world would change” become a reality!*²

¹ Excerpts from the Constitution of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston, pg. 17

In the face of COVID-19 and Systemic Racism, sisters, associates, agrégées, and friends gathered at the CSJ Motherhouse and joined all who grieve and cry out against racism in all its forms.

On Sunday, June 7th, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston, associates, agrégées, and friends gathered at the CSJ Motherhouse and joined all who grieve and cry out against racism in all its forms.

Participants view the posters placed around the statue of St. Joseph at the conclusion of the vigil.
Our Partners in Mission Responses in Such a Time as This

Peace, Love & Solidarity Prayer Vigil at Fontbonne

By Maria Sarte ‘21, Sydney Lunnin ‘21, and Lisa Simmons, Director of Communications, Fontbonne

Fontbonne is committed to anti-racism and to playing an active role in changing the systems that are oppressive to our Black and Brown sisters and brothers. Our community held our first Peace, Love & Solidarity prayer vigil in honor of Black Lives Matter on June 18th. Since then, Fontbonne has held a vigil each month to stand in solidarity as we work and pray for justice. These inspiring events have been led by our students Sydney Lunnin ‘21 and Lindsay Rene ‘21.

Student leader Sydney Lunnin shares how this vigil series came about and why it will continue:

*The Fontbonne student body echoes the pain and frustration that people all over the world have expressed. As a community, we wanted to unite in solidarity to pay respect to the lives of those lost and express our outrage through prayer and reconciliation. We must look inward with hope, stay vigilant about holding people accountable for their biases, and educate ourselves on issues that are threatening our security. The time is now to unify as people and look inward to fight this country’s history of bigotry, hatred, and discrimination. This is why the Peace, Love, and Solidarity vigil was born.*

The vigils have been attended by students, Fontbonne’s Adult Learning Community, Sisters of St. Joseph, Fontbonne alumnae, along with countless friends and relatives of our community members. This outpouring of support has encouraged our young women to share their thoughts. Samantha Lucien ‘21 attested to the following:

*It is unfair that I have to worry when my father, brother, cousins, or male friends leave the house and I constantly have the fear of “What if an officer pulls them over and they do not make it home?” Please join us each month to pray and work for change. Let us stand united.*

Book Discussion of Racial Justice and the Catholic Church at St. Joseph Prep

By Lindsey Hughes, St. Joseph Prep

This summer, fifteen faculty and staff members at Saint Joseph Prep participated in a book club sponsored by the Roche Center for Catholic Education at Boston College. This book club was formed in response to the deaths of several unarmed black men and women this year and the subsequent desire of many to educate themselves on issues of racial equity, justice, and bias. Alongside other book club participants across the country, the small group from Saint Joseph Prep read *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* by Fr. Bryan Massingale. Massingale is a professor of theological and social ethics at Fordham University.
Addressing Systemic Racism at Regis College

by Audrey Grace – Associate Vice President for Inclusive Excellence, Regis College

The ongoing calls for racial justice across the world continue to be heard loud and clear at Regis College. Guided by the charism of our founders, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Boston, the Regis community understands that to truly love and serve the “dear neighbor without distinction,” we must first educate ourselves on privilege, systemic oppression, and the role we all play in upholding these systems.

This summer we held several dialogues on racism in our community and beyond. We heard from Black and Brown students, alums, faculty, and staff who shared the daily indignities they go through just to be themselves. But we did more than listen because our community needed more and demanded more. President Antoinette Hays issued a statement, “A Commitment to Do Better,” which laid out immediate action steps Regis would take moving forward. Her statement became a detailed plan of action to address systemic racism.

All senior leaders at Regis recently participated in an in-depth racial healing workshop and are now incorporating what they learned into all areas of Regis. Additional learning opportunities for all our community members are also being implemented. We have re-envisioned Founders’ Day, an annual tradition at Regis that honors the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston’s legacy of social action. Rather than reaching out to community agencies and non-profits to help serve their needs, we reached into our hearts and minds over the most important issue of our time – racism. And we launched a 30-day racial equity challenge to grow our individual understanding of race and racism, and move from talk to action.

This is just a start and there is so much more to come as we continue to honor our founders’ legacy by truly loving and serving our “dear neighbor without distinction.”

Racial Justice and the Catholic Church examines the history and presence of racism in the United States, the Church’s response – and, often, lack of response – in combating this social sin. Dr. Massingale also suggests that Catholic Social Teaching [CST] may offer hope and reconciliation to the crisis of racism in the United States.

Stemming from St. Joseph Prep’s prior relationship with the Roche Center, Melodie Wyttenbach, who serves as director of the Roche Center, asked if we would be interested in facilitating a group among our faculty members. The group decided to meet three of the five weeks of the book club and discuss the book in 1-2 chapter portions. Using the reflection guide provided by Boston College, group members discussed their thoughts on the text, how they have seen racism and its effects in their own lives, and how we might use this text to improve the experiences of students in the Saint Joseph Prep community. It was a beautiful experience to have these challenging conversations in the midst of such an open and accepting group of faculty and staff.

As the school year begins, we look forward to contemplating how the lessons of Massingale’s text may help us to create new initiatives to better serve our diverse student population. A PLC (professional learning community) has been formed to spearhead the development of these initiatives, facilitate discussion, and seek out guest speakers and workshops. As teachers began the school year, we also participated in a workshop by Jen Cort on diversity and inclusion. Finally, we are in the process of developing a student group centered around these same issues. Our faculty is excited to continue this conversation in the coming school year and beyond!
Standing in a Posture of Hope

In the midst of two pandemics, COVID-19 and racism, St. Joseph Spiritual Ministries has been looking to new ways to connect, create community and pray with our beloved SJSM friends. Looking toward a new future a wise friend, Carol Fitzsimmons, CSJ, and I were sharing what we were noticing about what God might be doing in the midst of this global experience to invite our own and the world’s transformation. She shared that she is looking “for a posture of hope.” That resonated with me as I began planning for prayer offerings via Zoom. While it saddens me that we cannot gather in person at this time I have hope for the ways in which we can be connected until we can safely gather together once again. What a return it will be!

Our plan for all our prayer gatherings this year is to look together at each pandemic in light of these questions: How do we pray/or how have we been praying in these challenging times? Has our prayer changed? Have we been able to pray? How has it raised our consciousness? Do we notice or have a glimpse of what God might be doing in our own lives and in the life of the world? In what ways do we still need to grow, change and take action? How do we stand in a “posture of hope”?

When all seems overwhelming, I have often returned to the lyrical refrain from Psalm 90, “In every age, O Lord, you have been our refuge. In every age, O Lord, you have been our hope.” I sing it over and over on long walks...
like a mantra, its truth is a balm, hopeful and calming in the midst of so much chaos and uncertainty. In this all-too-unprecedented age, God is with us, still our hope and our refuge in this new moment experienced the world over. I wonder what is coming, knowing there are no limitations to God’s mercy and care for each one of us.

Our spiritual directors have made the adjustments to meeting with their directees via Zoom, FaceTime and Skype. It has been a new learning experience and one that has met the challenge of these days. All are pleased to be able to continue to accompany those who seek a closer relationship with God. In October we offered our first directed retreat via Zoom which afforded participants the opportunity to make a retreat in the safety of their own homes.

We are also grateful for all who were able to join us on October 4th for our first Zoom Prayer gathering with Clare Walsh, MHSH, as we looked together at “The Blessing in the Shadow” of these times we are living. We hope you’ll join us for upcoming prayer gatherings. Two are listed here; others are available on our website at www.csjboston.org

Please be sure to register to: spiritual.ministries@csjboston.org so we can send you the Zoom link to join us for each prayer offering. Until then, I leave you with more sage advice from Dorothy Welch, CSJ who would often remind me that HOPE is always spelled in capital letters.

How do we stand in a “posture of hope”?

In what ways do we still need to grow, change and take action?

Upcoming Events

Set Upon the Pilgrimage

Tuesday, Nov. 17, 9:45 -12pm
With Kathryn O’Connell Cleary

“Our hearts are set upon the pilgrimage...” we pray in Psalm 84. During our morning of prayer, we will reflect upon the theme of pilgrimage, in light of this time in our world, across our country, and within the unique pilgrimage of each of our lives, trusting that we are companioned on the journey.

Advent: A Season of Rebellion?

Sunday, December 6, 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm
Carlotta Gilarde, CSJ

Advent does not pull us out of the world to wrap ourselves in the warmth of the season, but to put on Christ and his justice. Our so-called ordered lives need the disorder of Advent, filled with contradictions. Advent promises a change both for us and our world.

For more information visit the Events section of our website https://www.csjboston.org/news-events/event-dates/
“Perhaps this is the moment for which you have been created.”

— Esther 4:14

How will you respond to what God is inviting you to be and do?

What are our lives meant to be about in this time we have been given?
Reflection...

By Pat Boyle, CSJ

“Perhaps this is the moment for which you have been created.”

— Esther 4:14

Indeed, these words from the Book of Esther give us food for thought given all that has been happening in our world. Knowing that we have been created to live at this time, it becomes that much more important to rely on God for the graces we need to celebrate the good that we have been given as well as to face the challenges that surround us.

Over the last several months the challenges before us have been prompting us to search for answers/ways to respond to the uncertainty that has risen up all around us. How do we remain hopeful in the face of what some call a pandemic within a pandemic, COVID-19 and racism? The impact of these issues has touched every aspect of life. How will we steward our resources when so many face growing financial insecurity? Do we have the courage to venture forward into what feels like an uncertain future for religious communities, and for society? What is it that God is inviting us to be and to do?

As I have prayed and reflected on some of the challenges we face, the refrain of a hymn we often sing at Mass has repeatedly risen up within me:

“In every age, O God, you have been our refuge.
In every age, O God, you have been our hope.”

Psalm 90

This refrain reminds me over and over again that God’s faithfulness is not a thing of the past. Just as God invited our ancestors and our early sisters to be responsive to the graces for the moments in which they lived, so, too, now God gives us what we need to respond with humility and fidelity. We have been made for just such a time as this. What God is inviting us to be and do holds a sense of urgency to it. The opportunities that are before us, be they small or of great consequence, are where God intends us to be. . . where God intends us to act! Our charism of unity and reconciliation is needed now more than ever before. Remembering that God is our hope, how will we respond? We do know what God is asking of us—let us courageously seize the graces we are being given for such a time as this! 🕊
That could have been Greg, my son! This was the first feeling in my heart on May 25 when I heard of the brutal murder of George Floyd. I wept. While George Floyd’s death was a tipping point for our country and our world, additional acts of violence bombard our news media every day. When will it stop? How will it stop? In what way can I contribute to it stopping?

I grew up in a racially diverse neighborhood. We were all neighbors to each other. In high school I was the only Black girl in my class. For several years I was a member of a religious community and, as a novice, lived in a mostly Black neighborhood. The kids there had never seen a Black nun and were quite excited. I realized this was because they could see themselves in me. Later in life I learned that my paternal grandmother was a freed slave. She sacrificed for the life she passed on to our family. I’m her namesake and proud of that legacy.

As parents of a Black son and daughter, my husband and I had to teach our children about racism. We told them, “If you’re ever pulled over in a car, keep your hands on the wheel. Don’t move.” My daughter is now the only Black police officer on Nantucket. My son is a professional hockey player. My two-year-old grandson is growing up in a world where kids are learning to be more accepting and inclusive. There is hope!

Today, I look with a third eye and listen with a third ear. Wherever I am, I remain alert to my surroundings and sense cues. I live in a predominantly white area of Holliston and as George Floyd’s murder continued to touch the moral conscience of our nation, my neighbors asked if we could have a conversation. For a brief moment, I wondered, Why me? Then I realized how important conversations about racism are. We need these courageous conversations. As I prayed I thought, perhaps this is why God brought me into this world. Racism is out there. If you feel uncomfortable – good – we need to be uncomfortable. That’s how change begins.

Seeing Black Lives Matter lawn signs in suburban neighborhoods brings hope. Yes, all lives matter but we cannot say only that and stop there. Walk in my shoes, in my world, and you’ll know the difference.

As a Black mother, reflecting on the state of our country, my heart is filled with pain and brokenness. As I wept, and imagined George Floyd being my son, I needed to let go of my brokenness, and pray to God for healing.

I prayed, “God of great love and mercy, NOW is the time to put an end to racism. Help each one in our country to change our hearts, bringing forth love and respect for one another. Let this love be in our homes, work places, schools, communities and wherever we serve the dear neighbor.”

I was raised in a devout Catholic family in New York and attended an elementary school taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood. I was very active and involved with my parish. When I was 19, a long illness nearly ended my life. It was then that I lost my faith, and thirty years before I found it again.

After college, I headed to Boston for graduate school and met my future husband, an educator who awakened in me a love of teaching. We started a number of educational companies and brought science, technology, engineering and math to thousands of local children. We also launched Math Playground, an online space where children around the world learn math through interactive games.

I enjoyed my career and found great fulfillment in my work, but became increasingly aware of how far I had drifted from God. I longed for the relationship that had been such an important part of my youth, and prayed I would know God again. I prayed for forgiveness.

In an unexpected way, my prayers were answered on my 49th birthday. Alone in my house, a feeling of great joy came over me. For several minutes, I was filled with immense love. When it ended, I was left with a beautiful message of forgiveness. I was touched by the grace of God.

My life changed dramatically. I volunteered at St. Bridget’s Food Pantry and became more aware of the struggles of those around me. God seemed to orchestrate encounters with people in need. I helped everyone I could and looked for organizations doing good work. That’s when I discovered the CSJ ministries. I began spiritual direction and explored an Associate Relationship with the Sisters of St. Joseph. It was exactly what I had been looking for. I became a CSJ Associate in 2016. Since then, my life has been enriched by the sisters and associates I’ve come to know. I enjoy praying and worshipping in community and sharing our personal journeys. I hope to participate more fully as an associate in the years ahead.

Today I’m spending less time working and more time outdoors with my husband and our two golden retrievers. I’m looking forward to volunteering more. One of my passions is food security. I’ve developed relationships with a number of food pantries and work with them to provide fruit and vegetables. My dream is to launch community farms where everyone can get an abundance of healthy food. Too much food is thrown away. That’s a problem I’m eager to solve.

1 Hans Urs von Balthasar, Prayer, Ignatius Press, 1986
2 https://www.mathplayground.com/
3 https://www.csjboston.org/join-our-mission/become-an-associate/
Thank you…

Our gratitude for your generosity cannot be overstated. In this year of pandemic and unstable economy, I was truly worried that it would be impossible for us to raise the funds needed to support our sisters and their ministry. But...You came through! Your generosity and love enabled sisters to continue caring for the “dear neighbor” and supporting the retired members.

To those who donated to our appeals, supported us with sponsorships (even as our events were cancelled), donated using the envelopes in the MORE..., who remember us each month with recurring gifts, who use our cards to remember loved ones who have died as well as to celebrate and honor the living, who have designated gifts from your birthdays and anniversaries to us, who have donated stocks, and gifts from your donor-advised funds or foundations, on behalf of all our sisters I say THANK YOU!

I also want to thank those who contribute to the National and Diocesan collections for retired sisters.

General Operating—helps cover lights, heat, personnel, and supplies.

Special Appeals—these funds cover special projects like the renovation of St. Joseph Hall residence for older sisters and maintenance and repair of the garden. The needs change from year to year.

Congregational Ministries—these funds support the ongoing congregational ministries: The Literacy Connection, The Women’s Table, Casserly House and St. Joseph Spiritual Ministry.

As you can see, most of our gifts come from the individual gifts of our Donors and Benefactors. The category encompasses gifts received from our semiannual appeals, envelopes in the MORE..., card program donations, as well as the National and Diocesan Collections for retired sisters.

Bequests represents final gifts received from wills and other planned gifts. Events represent gifts received from our annual Living the Dream Dinner and A Place at the Women’s Table both from attendance and sponsorships. Grants represent gifts to specific Congregational Ministries for specific purposes.

Your Legacy, Your Plan, Your Gift to Tomorrow

Creating an Estate Plan can help you provide for your final expenses, and for your loved ones, and may also diminish estate taxes. It can also allow you to continue your support of The Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston and other causes that have been important to you during your lifetime. Your Legacy can make a difference in the lives of those you leave behind.

Our sisters have been blessed with estate gifts that have allowed us to continue with ministry and support sisters in need of care. To get started it is best to talk with a trusted lawyer or financial consultant. They can help you tailor a plan to distribute your assets the way you wish.
Many of our friends choose to celebrate the lives of loved ones with one of our tribute cards. Cards are available “In Memory of” to remember the deceased and for other occasions to honor the living. The Sisters of St. Joseph remember in their prayers both the recipient and the donor. All donations are acknowledged.

Displayed here is a selection of card designs available. A full list of cards is available on our website www.csjboston.org.

To order please indicate how many of each card you wish on the line by the card’s title:

1. Madonna and Child
2. Resurrection
3. Morning Rose
4. God
5. St. Joseph
6. Rose by the Ocean
7. Happy Birthday Cypress
8. Celebrate Life
9. Tulips
10. St. Joseph Cohasset
11. St. Joseph with Pansies
12. Carmel Lilies
13. Ships in the Harbor
14. Spring
15. Swan Boats
16. Get Well Iris
17. Get Well Wildflowers
18. Congratulations
19. Remembered in Prayer
20. Thank You

Cards may be ordered by visiting our website www.csjboston.org or by sending this form to:
Carol Mack
Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston
637 Cambridge St., Brighton, MA 02135
Or email her at:
carol.mack@csjboston.org

Name ___________________________
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City ____________________________
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Five ways your gift makes a difference for…

Our Retired Sisters
…enable retired sisters to keep serving as volunteers, help pay the cost of healthcare and help to maintain adequate and dignified housing.

The Women’s Table
…help to serve women from all walks of life by means of educational programs, social support, supportive circles, advocacy and outreach support.

The Literacy Connection
…make it possible to respond to adult immigrants and refugees seeking help with English language skills and citizenship preparation.

Casserly House
…support learning experiences and caring support services to the multicultural and underserved people of Roslindale.

St. Joseph Spiritual Ministries
…reach out to people of all faith traditions and cultures who seek a deeper relationship with God, sell and all creation through diverse spiritual opportunities.
If you do not wish to receive future mailings of the MORE..., please return your address label to us, and we will remove your name from all of our mailings.

Visit us online to follow the activities of our sisters, associates, agrégées, and partners in mission as we continue to stay connected with our dear neighbors during these days of social distancing.

www.csjboston.org