

# PRESENTATION DOORWAYS

*offering hospitality to the world*



# The COMMITTEE

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY by the  
Sisters of the Presentation  
2360 Carter Road  
Dubuque, Iowa 52001-2997 USA  
Phone: 563-588-2008 Fax: 563-588-4463  
Email: info@dbqpbvms.org  
Website: www.dbqpbvms.org

## DOORWAYS COMMITTEE

Jane Buse-Miller, director of communications;  
Associate Michelle Covey; Sister Carmen  
Hernandez; Sister Elena Hoye; Sister Joy  
Peterson; Cindy Pffner, associate co-director;  
Sister Francine Quillin; Marge Reidy; Karen  
Tuecke, partners in mission coordinator

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## The PURPOSE

The purpose of Presentation Doorways is to further the mission of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our associates by sharing the news and views of the congregation with our benefactors, families and friends. Through this publication, we hope to share the charism of our congregation and to invite others to become involved in our mission.

## Your THOUGHTS & COMMENTS

We want your input. Please send or email photos, stories and information about our sisters, associates, former members, family and friends, or any ideas which relate to the aim of this publication. Submit to:

Editor, Presentation Doorways  
2360 Carter Road  
Dubuque, Iowa 52001-2997  
info@dbqpbvms.org

## Cover PHOTOS

*The doorways represented on the cover are snapshots of significant doors in the Presentation history and present day ministries: (Left to right) Doorway of Hotel Hope, a nonprofit hotel for homeless women and children in New Orleans, Louisiana; Doorway of St. Vincent's Academy (now St. Columbkille) in Dubuque, Iowa, in 1879; Doorway of La Luz Hispana, a center where Hispanic people come together in Hampton, Iowa; Doorway of the Presentation Motherhouse at 2360 Carter Road in Dubuque, Iowa; Doorway of Casa Betania, home for retreats and a gathering space for students in Tarija, Bolivia.*

# PRESENTATION DOORWAYS

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On November 13, the Presentation Sisters celebrated Foundation Day and the 50th anniversary of their move from Mt. Loretta Avenue to Carter Road with a "Gratitude for our Mission Partners" event. Sisters Suzanne Gallagher (left) and Benjamin Duschner (right) enjoyed catching up with Joan and Virgil Blocker. Both sisters were on staff at Resurrection when Joan worked there.



# Openings A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

by JOY PETERSON, PBVM

**“We have a long, long way to go. So let us hasten along the road,  
the road of human tenderness and generosity.  
Groping, we may find one another’s hands in the dark.”**

*Emily Greene Balch – 1946 Nobel Peace Laureate*

I have carried a Christmas card with this message for over 30 years because the message continues to stir my heart.

Many of us probably think of Christmas holidays in terms of travel. Whether we are the ones on the road or we are the ones waiting for travelers, the season highlights the treasure most of us enjoy in having time with family.

The Scripture stories we tell at Christmas are also of travelers. Joseph and nine-month pregnant Mary make the arduous trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem with no hotel reservations. The trip might have easily taken a week or more, even on a donkey. Once Jesus was born, we learn that the shepherds traveled in haste to find this remarkable baby. Days later, the wise ones following a star found their way to the child. Finally, to escape the violence of a jealous ruler, the Holy Family fled into Egypt with their newborn son. If we sit for a moment with the feelings of these travelers, we might find everything from joyous discovery to terrifying distress. For each of these journeys, surely, there must have been a sense of having “a long, long way to go.”

In 2019, according to the United Nations, 70.8 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced from their homelands. Every day, 37,000 men, women and children flee their homes because of conflict or persecution. Imagine the stress of realizing that your home is no longer a place of safety or stability. Put yourself in the place of a parent hearing war come closer and recognizing that soon you will need to pack up and leave. No moving vans will be transporting your belongings. It will just be what you can carry or fit in your car if you are among the lucky who own one that still works.

Pope Francis frequently speaks with concern for those who have had to abandon their homelands. In preparation for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees in September, he described violent conflict as continuing “to tear humanity apart,” resulting in economic and social imbalances where the most impoverished pay the deepest price.

Those who have been displaced are often regarded with fear and disparagement as they seek resettlement. But Francis reminds us “we cannot be indifferent to the tragedy of old and new forms of poverty, to the bleak isolation, contempt and discrimination experienced by those who do not belong to ‘our group’” adding, “we cannot remain insensitive, our hearts deadened, before the misery of so many innocent people.”

Emily Greene Balch was writing in the shadow of two world wars which resulted in more refugees than had ever been seen. And yet, working together, nations were rebuilt, and families resettled around the world. Today, there are even more migrants and refugees than ever. “Holy Families” who have faced long and treacherous journeys seek the same hospitality Mary and Joseph needed. In solidarity with their journey so long ago and for the good of all creation, we join hands and “... hasten along the road, the road of human tenderness and generosity.”

*Sister Carmen Hernandez Sister Rita Menart Sister Joy Peterson Sister Marilyn Breen*

## Our MISSION

We, the Sisters of the Presentation, are Catholic women who dedicate our lives to God through evangelization, prayer, service and hospitality. Our way of life is based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We share in the vision of our foundress, Venerable Nano Nagle, who dared to dream of a better world for the poor, sick and uneducated of Ireland. We commit ourselves to the empowerment of women and children. We reverence and celebrate all creation as gift. We commit ourselves to confronting injustice and working for peace.

As we continue to keep Nano’s dream alive, we are pleased to share our vision with you.

## Our DIRECTION

Rooted in the Gospel, inspired by Nano Nagle and united to Presentation Sisters and associates around the world through the International Presentation Association, we, the Sisters of the Presentation of Dubuque, Iowa, are called to live our charism of radical hospitality in kinship with Earth and all people.

### Sisters of the Presentation LEADERSHIP TEAM

*Sister Carmen Hernandez*

*Sister Rita Menart*

*Sister Joy Peterson*

*Sister Marilyn Breen*





Sister Carla Popes' bubbly personality, infectious laugh and welcoming heart touches many lives as she assists families with various needs.

## SISTER CARLA POPES Welcoming and Loving

by MAURA MCCARTHY, PBVM

Sister Carla Popes from Nashua, Iowa, was remembered, even as a child, as the high-spirited and precociously social child of Carl and Laura (Merfeld) Popes and was considered a “spit fire” among her peers and neighbors. Carla was born in Greene, Iowa, one of six children, whose family moved to a farm in Nashua when she was seven. She attended a rural school near Nashua and went on to graduate from Nashua Public High School. Even though her mother prayed daily for vocations, hoping zealously that one of her six children would have a religious vocation, Carla pronounces it a “shock” to her family and friends that it was she who experienced the call to be a religious sister.

Carla learned about radical hospitality early because anyone who showed up at the Popes’ door was welcome and would be invited to share a meal. Carla’s mother was oft to say: “It is so good to have your feet under this table.” The Popes children learned to pray their morning and evening prayer at their mother’s knee. The entire family prayed the rosary at bedtime.

The Popes family worked hard together on their farm and each one knew that their part was important. In the springtime, the fields and gardens of the Popes family were carefully cultivated and planted. Then Sunday after Sunday the family checked the plants for new life. Carla remembers, “I can see the image of Dad getting down on one knee, gently digging around the seed to see if it was taking root. Without really knowing it, I witnessed faith in action as Dad prepared the fields, planted and harvested the yield. I even experienced picking corn by hand as a family. There seemed to be a sense of rhythm to life and both Mom and Dad were content with providing for the growing family.”

Carla adds, “I can still see how hard my mother worked canning delicious vegetables for winter use and teaching each of us how to hoe the family gardens.” This gardening and canning experience became second nature to Carla and her salsa is well-known and prized among her friends and community members.

Two weeks before entering the convent, Carla attended the circus at the county fair with her family and volunteered to come to the front of the grandstand so that an elephant could put its foot on her nose. Her shaken mother responded to the inquiring neighbors that she had no idea that Carla was going to do this. As Carla remembers this event from her adolescence, she reflects humorously that this youthful fire and adventure signaled her reaching out in hospitality and compassion that now characterizes her life.

Carla came to know the Sisters of the Presentation who travelled from Charles City to Nashua to teach religious education classes on Saturdays and for two weeks during the summer. Carla was invited to visit the sisters and later to assist them with the religion classes. She found “something about these women” that was attractive to her. She joined the Dubuque Presentation community in the fall of 1960.

When asked about her education and experience in ministry, Sister Carla readily explains, “I have been blessed abundantly over the years with awesome opportunities for both education and formation. I received a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Clarke College in Dubuque and later earned a master’s degree in theology from St. Mary University in Winona, Minnesota. I taught in several grade schools in Epworth, Monona and Algona, Iowa. Later, I served as a faith formation leader in Farley, Bankston, Charles City and Cedar Falls, all in Iowa. I was also an associate in the Office of Catechetical Services in the Archdiocese working with faith formation leaders and catechists as well as special services, later becoming the director of the lay formation program for the Dubuque Archdiocese for 18 years. For several years, I served as vocation director for the Presentation Sisters before returning to pastoral ministry in Strawberry Point.”

**I have come to know that  
compassion is where love  
meets suffering.**

*Sister Carla Popes*

Her passion for mission grew as a young teacher by working during the summers with the poor in Detroit and then Chicago. “Experiencing the poverty of the families tore my heart open,” expresses Sister Carla. “A number of years ago, a friend asked me if I could request a gift from God, what that gift would be? Without hesitation I said, ‘The gift of compassion.’ I have come to know that compassion is where love meets suffering.”

When selected by Archbishop Jerome Hanus, OSB, to receive the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Cross award for her service to the Church, the highest medal that can be awarded to lay persons by the papacy, Sister Carla responded, “I never thought that service in the name of Jesus needed to be given an award.”



Sister Carla Popes stands at the door of the Northeast Iowa Peace & Justice Center. The center offers hospitality for groups coming together to work for the common good.

Sister Carla speaks about her personal call to radical hospitality which were prompted by her own self-reaching question: “How will I know what it really is unless I choose to risk the unknown? I have asked God to know what I should be about in retirement, so I have prayed and prayed with our call to live radical hospitality. The Holy Spirit kept nudging me onward.”

After retreat time and reading the book, “The Presence that Disturbs” by Father Anthony Gittins, Sister Carla experienced the “disturbing presence” of the Spirit calling her further into the “winding lanes.”

Sister Carla’s discernment led her to a new mission in Decorah, Iowa, assisting immigrant families. Currently, she is accompanying a Guatemalan family, whose father of 24 years speaks English fluently because he was a student during the Postville raid of 2008. He returned to Guatemala for a time to marry his wife from Chimaltenango, Guatemala, who speaks only Spanish. Their three children are Johana, who is seven years old; Sadie who is five, and two-month old Elmer, who was given the middle name Noah because his father had to swim across the Rio Grande when he came to the U.S. Sister Carla is also aware of the growing needs of this young family, as they move from one apartment to another and need to prepare the children with winter clothing and blankets. She is always welcomed warmly into this home and can be seen holding the children with great affection as she exclaims, “I love them so much.” In Decorah, Iowa, Sister Carla has come to recognize Nano’s hospitality in “una nueva casa” (a new home).





Sisters and associates share their learnings and insights in their promise groups while discerning actions to carry out these promises.

# Engraving Our Promises on Our Hearts

by BETH KRESS, PBVM

Promises have been made throughout human history. Yahweh promised Abraham, “I will keep my solemn promise to you and give you more descendants than can be counted.”

Down the centuries – medieval vassals offered an oath of homage to their feudal lord; nations have made promises to other nations; governments have guaranteed protection and benefits to citizens; marriage partners have exchanged vows.

A simple 19th century song about making a promise encourages, “When ’ere you make a promise, consider well its importance and, when made, engrave it upon your heart.”

When making a promise a person commits to keeping that promise. A 16-year-old daughter declares to her parent, “I will be back with the car at 11:30 p.m., Dad, I promise.”

Before being deployed to Syria, a teary-eyed army nurse pledges to her three-year-old son, “Mommy will come home when she has helped the children and their mommies get better, I promise!”

The Dubuque Sisters of the Presentation renewed their resolve to live the Gospel in the spirit of Nano Nagle at their 2017-2018 Chapter, the elected assembly that reviews

**I came to realize through self-reflection and sharing and listening with our promise group that I have a choice to live a nonviolent life and to appreciate the gifts of peace and nonviolence.**

*Sister Michaeline Healy*

and gives focus for the future. From that directive flow four commitments or promises that express how radical hospitality is to guide Presentation life and mission through 2023.

During 2018 the newly-elected leadership team presented a vision for planning and structures to accomplish the community direction and promises. To share responsibility, leadership invited sisters and associates to form “promise groups” and a prayer support team or “wisdom group”. Thus, the direction and promises are the integral focus in congregational gatherings and corporate efforts.

**By October 2019 the groups named actions for the four promises:**

**We promise to live radical hospitality in all relationships, especially with people made poor.**

- We will educate ourselves and others to better understand our own racism;
- We will commit personally to learn about other racial and ethnic groups through personal relationships
- We will advocate for and support the reunification of unaccompanied minors and their mothers at the border.

**We promise to practice non-violence of mind and heart, speech and action as we address injustice directly and systemically.**

- We will educate and practice non-violence toward self, others and all creation through reading and study; hosting a violence-prevention training event.
- We will offer prayer experiences about non-violence toward self, others and all creation.
- We will practice active non-violence locally and engage with global grassroots movements of non-violence.

**We promise to form partnerships and utilize resources for the purpose of mission.**

- Within the context of mission sustainability, care of members and legacy, we will study, research, develop and initiate implementation of a phased plan for property and resources of Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque, Iowa.

**We promise to implement governance practices that foster dialogue and communication in decision-making.**

- We will create opportunities among Promise Groups and others to engage in communication about our shared future.
- We will research models of leadership and governance to identify and propose practices that promote dialogue and communication in decision-making.

Sisters and associates study, reflect and pray individually and together in their promise groups. They share their learnings and insights and discern actions to carry out these promises.

**How does the promise group experience affect the lives of the participants?**

“Our promise group soon came to realize that in order to practice ‘non-violence of mind, heart, speech and action’ each of us would need to take on the challenge journeying within ourselves,” reflects Sister Michaeline Healy. “I began with these personal questions: How do I feel about myself? How do I put myself down? How can I be more loving of myself? What are the ways I experience a gentle, loving, forgiving, peace-filled God?”

“I came to realize through self-reflection and sharing and listening with our promise group that I have a choice to live a non-violent life and to appreciate the gifts of peace and non-violence,” she continues. “I must choose my own peace and, in turn, share that peace with others. As the song says, ‘Let there be peace on Earth and let it begin with me.’ It is truly a joy to be a part of this promise group.”

Associate Cindy Pfiffner shares, “As a member of a group whose primary purpose is to find opportunities to engage in radical hospitality, I experience both blessing and challenge. It keeps me motivated and holds me accountable to step out and engage in ways that are not always comfortable.

“One of the main focuses of the group has been for members to educate themselves on the impact of racism in the world. I have become aware of how ‘white privilege’ is built into social systems and is typically not even recognized by white people. I find myself noticing how easily and how frequently I accept the advantages that my white skin affords me. The question becomes how will this new awareness make a difference?”

Making the promises and engraving radical hospitality on their hearts, sisters and associates are networked through the promise groups and connect with Presentation employees, partners and collaborators in the broader community. In a very sacred way, all are called to put faces on radical hospitality, non-violence, partnerships and resources for mission, and dialogue and communication in decision-making at all levels of life.

The initial gathering for this sacred process took place on December 8, 2018, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Singing the hymn “Mary, Woman of Promise,” all present celebrated the iconic role of the patroness of Presentation Sisters: “Mary woman of the Gospel, humble home for treasured seed, help us to be true disciples bearing fruit in word and deed.”



## Change in Mission

# The 1970s

by HERMANN PLATT, PBVM

The 1970s saw a significant change in the mission undertaken by the Dubuque Presentation Sisters. Where previous involvement in ministry had largely been in Catholic grade and high schools, the sisters followed Nano Nagle's lead in studying the needs of the time and striving to meet them. In 18th century Ireland, there were children who needed education to lift them from the depths of poverty, and elderly poor who needed someone to visit and care for their needs. Nano went out to all and did what she could to answer the call to discipleship.

Twentieth century Presentation Sisters looked to foreign missions and established missions in Bolivia and Guatemala where they established schools and dispensaries, and prepared catechists among the native populations. The Bolivian missionaries remain in active service in the O'Connor Province today.

As Catholic schools' populations declined, along with the number of sisters available to teach in them, religious education became more common, along with adult education and parish ministry. Schools of religion arose, such as St. John in New Hampton, Iowa, where three sisters served from 1970-1973 and St. Mark Parish in Iowa Falls where two sisters conducted the religious education program from 1969-1970.

Several parishes banded together to provide for the religious education needs of all in the area. Garnavillo, Elkader and Monona (G.E.M) operated a successful program under the direction of five Presentation Sisters from 1969-1975. This was the first of several such multi-parish endeavors.

At the diocesan level, Sister Eunice Kane coordinated and supervised the work of many parishes, employing adult education, teacher inservice, classroom materials and direct interaction with local parish workers. During the 1974-75 school year she was religious education coordinator for the Sterling, Illinois, diocese, spending much of her time on the road and working with teachers.

Ministering from 1973-1982, Sister Mary Ethel Paulus served in the Fargo, North Dakota, chancery office as archivist, historian and director of publications.

From 1968-1974 Sister Rosalie Whalen taught at the Mercy School of Nursing in Dubuque. When the program was discontinued there, she transferred to Peosta where she continued to teach at the Northeast Iowa Technical Institute.

"Mom was very religious. She and dad insisted that we say the family rosary and Angelus every day." Mass and all Catholic traditions were important, she adds.

With Mercy Sisters Georgeann and Andrew Ryan, her mother's sisters, Barbara considered attending Mount Mercy University (formerly Mount Mercy College) in Cedar Rapids. Instead she enrolled with her best friend at Clarke College in Dubuque. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in speech, drama and elementary education.

When she was a Clarke student Barb met Edward Lenz, a Loras College student. After graduation, Barb taught for four years at St. Anthony Grade School in Dubuque and was a substitute teacher in Dubuque Catholic and public schools for many years.

**It's not work; it's a gift,  
when you love what you do.**

*Barb Lenz*

"Since sixth grade I had a love for theater. I enjoyed teaching because I could put my speech and drama to good use working with kids who were so full of creativity," states Barb.

In her early youth, Barb loved singing in choir and skating – helping her to develop a flare for drama. Perhaps she also learned a few tips for stage from her Uncle Matt Ryan. "He was a character," declares Barb. "When playing Euchre with family, he would wink and declare, 'We ought to throw him/her to the wolves!'"

Barb and Ed married in 1970. They had three children: Laura is a teacher; Lisa is in business and Joseph is a dentist. Barb and Ed, who passed away in 2007, enjoyed recreation and fishing on the river and, of course, being with their three grandchildren.

"Being a wife, mom and grandmother gives me great joy and pride. My parents gave me good training for these roles," comments Barb.

In recent years, whether cooking, reading historical fiction and novels or travelling with her Clarke friends to places such as Italy, France, Mexico, and Caribbean islands, Barb keeps her flare for life and sense of humor.

A special trip she made to Ireland in May 1997 helped connect Barb and family to Aunt Theresa at her B&B in Dublin. With cousins she travelled by car to Galway, Killarney and the woodlands of magical fairytales near Sneem and the O'Connell restaurant in the ring of Kerry, Cork and Waterford.

Barbara O'Connell Lenz is a woman who connects easily with people. Daily she brings joy and good vittles to the Dubuque Presentation Sisters who enjoy her laughter and the twinkle in her eye.



*Lisa Behnke, director of food service, and Barb Lenz, cook, share a special bond having worked together for over 20 years in the Mount Loretto kitchen.*

## Longtime Employee, Barb Lenz

# Shares Presentation Heritage

by BETH KRESS, PBVM

Descended from a long line of O'Connell's from County Waterford in Southeast Ireland, Barbara Jane O'Connell Lenz has a magical heritage that connects her to the story of the Dubuque Sisters of the Presentation. Julieanne Scanlon O'Connell, Barb's paternal grandmother, was a pupil of the Presentation Sisters in Mooncoin, County Kilkenny, the convent in Ireland from which Mother Vincent Hennessy journeyed in 1874 to establish the Sisters of the Presentation in Dubuque, Iowa.

For over 20 years as a member of the Mount Loretto food service department, Barb has helped tend to the well-being of hundreds of Presentation Sisters and their guests. From hearty breakfasts to five-star lunches and dinners, Barb contributes her talents to the culinary creations of a great team.

"I have had the pleasure of working with Barb for 20 years in the dietary department," shares Lisa Behnke, director of food service. "We have shared so many memories, some really good times and some very hard times. Barb is very dedicated to the sisters and her job and her co-workers. Even in bad weather you can count on Barb being here."

Bringing good humor to her presence in Mount Loretto food service, Barb enjoys interacting with the sisters. She assures them that "it's not work; it's a gift, when you love what you do."

The O'Connell Restaurant, owned by a cousin in Sneem, Ireland, is an earmark of Barb's heritage. Food preparation was a skill she developed as the eldest daughter of Barbara Ryan and John O'Connell of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She and her sisters were a great help to their mother in a family of eight siblings.

Barb's mother grew up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. After meeting and marrying John Joseph O'Connell, a first-generation immigrant to the United States from Cork, Ireland, the young bride and her husband settled in Cedar Rapids.

"They raised us in the faith at Immaculate Conception Parish and gave us a Catholic education at St. Matthew Grade School and Regis High School," says Barb. Through family and faith, these sons and daughters of Irish Catholics – Barbara, Juliann, John, Maureen, William, Michael, Patrick and James – learned to work hard, pray fervently and play with great imagination.





Left to right: International Presentation Association leadership: Presentation Sisters Ann Marie Quinn, Dorothy Scesny, Mary Therese Krueger, Sister Sharon Fagan, Joy Peterson, Dr. Despoina Afroditi Milaki, and Gabrielle Morgan. Not pictured: Sister Maria Lazzaro and Terry Abraham.

# International Presentation Association Faces for Change

by ELENA HOYE, PBVM

Presentation people embody the compassion of Jesus and their foundress Nano Nagle. They practice non-violence of mind and heart as they listen to the chaos and feel the pain of our time. They believe that revitalizing their organization with new goals and new structures will launch their mission further into a future in order to help create a welcoming place for all life, a place of justice, non-violence and compassion.

The International Presentation Association (IPA) was formally launched in 1988 by Presentation Sisters to collaborate more fully on both a national and international level. On six continents, its members, comprised of sisters, associate and friends, are referred to as Presentation people. They work with each other and people of good will, to foster personal and systemic change for people and Earth.

As sharers of the charism of Nano Nagle, and guided by faith, they aspire to live Gospel hospitality, compassion and simplicity for all of creation. The cry of Earth and people made poor calls them to continue the mission of Jesus and help bring to birth a sustainable society founded on respect for Earth, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace. Informed by a contemplative stance, and

a spirit of oneness, they speak and act in partnership with others for global justice and the eradication of poverty.

A movement of God's Spirit is afoot in our time; a new consciousness is rising within the whole of the human community as well as the Presentation family. This worldview that Presentation people embrace is one that promises movement toward a global community, a community which provides a welcoming place for all children of the world, as well as a nurturing place for all plants and animals. Justice, non-violence and compassion are characteristics of such a world.

Where is IPA now? As this vision has deepened and developed, the IPA directors were commissioned to restructure the organization to better embrace this expanding vision. Presentation Sisters, Gabrielle Morgan from Australia, Joy Peterson from United States and Sharon Fagan from Ireland serve as IPA directors and strive to advance a more intentional association with new governing structures, practices and procedures. Embracing best practices, the restructuring includes a greater clarity of roles, terms of office, appointments and clearer avenues of accountability.



**The IPA mission is to speak and act in partnership with others for global justice from a contemplative stance in a spirit of oneness with the whole of creation.**

**We, Presentation People, embody the compassion of Jesus and Nano. We practice non-violence of mind and heart as we listen into the chaos and feel the pain of our time. We find strength in connectedness trusting that our feet know the way and our hearts carry the light.**

2017 IPA Assembly

The executive director is a new mission-driven position to help determine the most appropriate organizational structure for IPA to enhance and accomplish its mission. Sister Ann Marie Quinn, a member of the Presentation congregation of North East Province, Ireland, has been appointed to this position. She will lead a team which will develop processes to integrate and develop the mission of IPA. Together they will continue the work of Nano by addressing root causes of injustice and then systemically responding to global poverty and injustice.

Sister Ann Marie reflects, "It seems to me that the time is now for expanding the influence and reach of the IPA's mission, recognizing that people still suffer and cry out for justice. Nano, woman of vision and faith in God, gave us the passion and calls all of us to continue to respond and address the root causes of global poverty and injustice worldwide through our

presence in 24 countries and by working across cultures in an inclusive, diplomatic and effective manner. The challenge is too big to address it alone; we are called to network among ourselves and with others."

Dr. Despoina Afroditi Milaki recently assumed the position of IPA NGO (non-governmental organization) representative ensuring that the work of the IPA continues at the United Nations. Despoina, a native of Crete, Greece, is a U.S. permanent resident based in New York. She has substantive knowledge of the UN system, providing policy advice to senior government officials on the rights of women and children. Despoina has also gained experience working as an external consultant to a law firm in Uganda that provides advice on gender equality and human rights. She has experience developing training programs and workshops, supporting public awareness and civil society participation and engagement. Despoina stresses that, "You have to have the heart to do good. Being at the center of the international community is an important way to bring people together and promote collective action towards achieving a lasting impact on women and children's lives, in terms of global justice."

The IPA program action leader position is an innovative position within the new structure of the IPA. Sister Mary Therese Krueger, a Presentation Sister of Dubuque, Iowa, has been hired to this position. She states, "this new IPA position forms part of a two-way communication channel between the IPA communities from grassroots level (local) via the IPA justice contacts and the IPA NGO representative at the United Nations (global). I will facilitate advocacy on the issues and resolutions of the IPA foci of women and children; care of Earth; and indigenous peoples. These issues will guide the ongoing implementation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

A new spirituality and charism team has three co-leaders who are Presentation Sisters Dorothy Scesny from New Windsor, New York; Maria Lazzaro from Victoria, Australia; and Terry Abraham living in rural Zambia, Africa. The focus of work for this team links Presentation spirituality and the charism of Nano with the actions of IPA's members. This team will offer materials from a faith perspective to inspire energy and meaning for all Presentation people.

With an eye to the future, Presentation Sisters, associates and friends choose life, life for this beloved Earth, and for all of their sisters and brothers. The stakes are high; there is much to do. Through IPA, Presentation Sisters have firmly established their direction for this day and for days to come.

*Learn More about IPA*

[www.internationalpresentationassociation.org](http://www.internationalpresentationassociation.org)

[facebook.com/internationalpresentationassociation](https://facebook.com/internationalpresentationassociation)





Sister Hermann Platt, archivist for the Presentation community, enjoys the organization, research and discoveries that the job requires.

## SISTER HERMANN PLATT

# Keeping the Past Alive

by FRANCINE QUILLIN, PBVM

Josephine Platt was the youngest of the 10 children of Joseph and Elizabeth Platt of Algona, Iowa. One might quickly presume that she was spoiled by all the attention the youngest can receive. But that would be wrong. She is anything but that, as her life will illustrate.

Josephine was educated at St. Cecelia Academy Grade and High School in Algona. She relates that when she was a junior in high school, Sister Matthew Cunningham, her music teacher, asked her if she had ever thought of entering a religious community. "That got me thinking," comments Sister Hermann. Sister Matthew taught her piano and cello, and directed the orchestra and choral group, both of which Josephine was a member. So Sister Matthew was in a position to evaluate what a good candidate for religious life Josephine would be. Josephine also had the good experience of having great respect for her high school principal, Sister

Mary Aloysius Rush. Sister Hermann described her as "a good listener who was easy to relate to and didn't hold grudges. I respected her," states Sister Hermann, and undoubtedly that also influenced her decision about religious life.

In the fall of 1956, after high school graduation, Josephine entered the Sisters of the Presentation, and eventually chose the name Sister Mary Hermann. During her formation, she studied at Clarke College, and graduated in 1961 with an English major. She then began her teaching career in Iowa which was varied and called on her many skills. She taught seventh, then eighth grade in Osage where she resided for four years. She then moved to Storm Lake where she taught seventh and eighth grades for one year. Coming East, she taught in Ryan for one year until that school closed. Then she moved even farther East, teaching in Oak Lawn, Illinois, for four years. Her next four years were spent at St. Columbkille School in Dubuque, teaching in a departmental arrangement of sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

Then her life changed a bit. She went to Whittemore to be the principal and to teach seventh and eighth grades. With all of that experience, she then became the principal of a very large school – Resurrection in Dubuque. She remained there for four years, at which time she was asked to be a consultant for the schools in the Archdiocese of Dubuque. When that assignment was completed, she returned to her home ground and served as the principal and curriculum coordinator in Algona from 1984 to 2010.

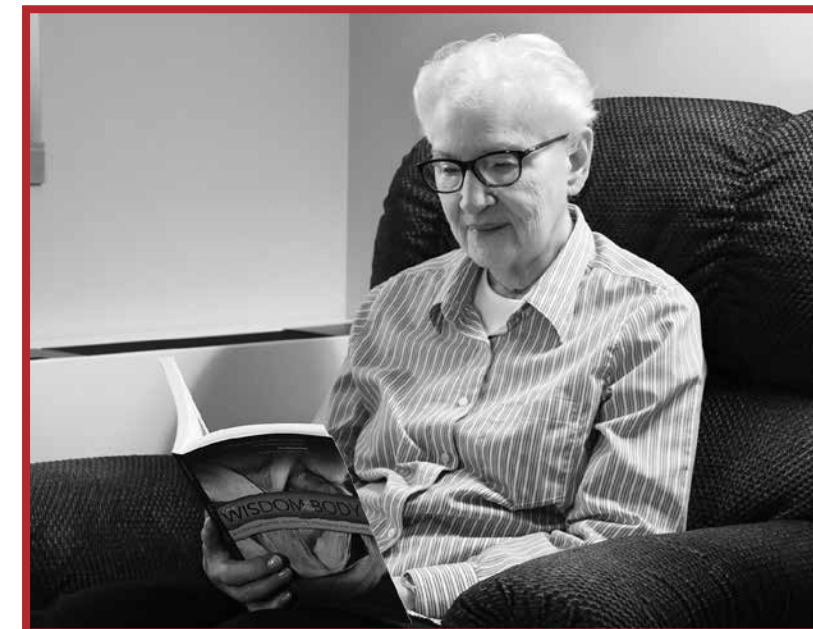
Sister Hermann spent five summers at Rosary College (now Dominican University) in River Forest, Illinois, earning at its end a master's degree in library science. She was eventually called to Mount Loretto to become the community archivist, a position she still holds. It is a ministry she really likes because it requires organization skills, which are inherent in Sister Hermann.

"I am frequently called upon by people who are looking for an earlier relative who entered the Presentation community. I enjoy helping people find information about their family history. Writing descriptions of sisters for relatives who inquire about them fulfills another passion of mine – writing. I frequently write articles for the community newsletter, *Presentation Doorways*, which is a big part of the ministry of archivist – keeping the past alive for all of us."

Sister Hermann has two very fond memories. Her father died when she was an infant, so she never knew him, but she remembers that when she was a small child, her mother used to hold her in the rocking chair and talk to her; and she can still hear the soothing sound of her mother's voice. Her other memory is of Sunday afternoons which her whole family would spend singing and playing instruments. Most of the family did not have music lessons; they played everything by ear, so their inherent talent is clearly visible. Sister Hermann and her sister Rose, however, did have lessons.

"I have never regretted my decision to become a sister. I love being involved with a community whose ministry is to serve people, and I appreciate the support which living in community offers."

And it would be most accurate to say that the Presentation community has never regretted her decision either. Sister Hermann is always pleasant, cheerful and very helpful to all. She respects other people and treats them accordingly. In addition to serving the people of God, she has blessed the Sisters of the Presentation by making that long-ago decision to join the community. Her prayerfulness, her presence and her desire to be helpful are all qualities from which everyone benefits. Thank you, Sister Hermann, for making that brave decision to separate from those wonderful Sunday afternoon family gatherings to become a Presentation Sister!



Having time to read is among Sister Hermann Platt's many blessings.

## New Appointment Pastoral Council

Sister Rita Cameron joins other representatives from parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Dubuque to serve a three year term on the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, an advisory body to the Archbishop.



Sister Rita states, "The council's responsibility is 'to investigate, under the authority of the Archbishop, all those things which pertain to pastoral works, to ponder them, and to propose practical conclusions about them.'"

The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council mission statement says: "The Pastoral Council of the Archdiocese of Dubuque is a leadership community composed of representatives of the people of God, who unite with the Archbishop to strengthen the Body of Christ by helping the archdiocese, part of the universal Church, meet the challenge of living out the mission of Jesus: celebrating the presence of God, proclaiming the Good News, building community, and serving the needs of others. This council is a primary consultative body and communications channel with the Archbishop."

The council has two regular meetings a year, but special meetings may be called by the council's president.





Left to right: Associate Bridget Lahart and Sister Lou Cota enjoy catching up with one another; Through prayer, radical hospitality is deepened; Sisters and associates engage in discussion.

## Sister and Associate Fall Gathering Living Radical Hospitality

by JOAN BRINCKS, PBVM, ASSOCIATE PARTNERSHIP CO-DIRECTOR

On September 28, Presentation Sisters and associates came together to share in the fall gathering “Living Radical Hospitality Daily” held at the Presentation motherhouse. Associate Dr. Janine Idziak and Sister Carla Popes were presenters. The day offered space to connect with one another and to be enriched and supported as together sisters and associates claim and live God’s dream of radical hospitality.

Dr. Janine presented an inspirational and challenging morning through the following sessions: hospitality as welcoming the stranger, biblical perspectives on hospitality and challenges in practicing hospitality. Those gathered learned about the Christian view of hospitality as welcoming the stranger and intentionally going out to others. Participants looked at challenges in practicing hospitality in a world of terrorism and fear and gained information about how to identify “heart triggers” that cause them to avoid or exclude people from their hospitality. The group was reminded that in Scripture hospitality is presented as a trait to be cultivated by “being with” another in giving one’s full attention as Mary did with Jesus in the story of Martha and Mary.

The afternoon was opened by Associate Barbara Ressler who introduced her book, *Becoming Light: A 21st Century Retelling of the Life of Nano Nagle in Prose and Poetry*. Using one of Barbara’s poems, *Lady of the Lantern in the Winding Lanes*, Sister Carla Popes followed by engaging the group through her presentation: *Walking the Path of Nano – Living the Life of Radical Hospitality*. She shared the personal story of

the impact of hospitality learned through her parents, of the heart imprint of being welcomed with joy by children living in poverty in San Juan, Mexico, and of her present Hispanic ministry in Decorah, Iowa. Sister Carla states, “The call to live radical hospitality will disturb us, stretch us and even challenge us to reach across differences.”

Through reflection questions, both Dr. Janine and Sister Carla invited the group to look within and go deeper. The following questions spoke strongly to Associate Rachel Evans, “Once I become aware of the needs and suffering of our brothers and sisters, what will be my next step that I can do NOW? How can I push through my personal biases and get out of my comfort zone to more fully live radical hospitality?”

Associate Maureen Utter states, “While I appreciated the topic ‘Living Radical Hospitality,’ I appreciate even more any opportunity to gather with sisters and other associates. It was such a blessing, and I always take something away from these encounters – hopefully helping me to be my better self, living radical hospitality.”

The day was concluded with a blessing of hearts, lips, eyes and hands as sisters and associates were sent forth to make a difference in the world. Summarizing her experience, Sister Sheila Ann Dougherty comments, “Good input from our speakers on the topic of radical hospitality interspersed with dialogue and sharing at tables brought a special unity among us. We were energized and look forward to future gatherings.”

## Dubuque Presentation Associate Scholarship

In the spirit of Presentation foundress, Nano Nagle, the Dubuque Presentation associates are offering a Dubuque Presentation Associate Scholarship to assist individuals to pursue their goals. In partnership with the Dubuque Sisters of the Presentation, associates strive to live out the congregation’s mission of offering radical hospitality in the world.

Presentation associates contributed to the scholarship fund and, in 2020, three \$800 Dubuque Presentation Associate Scholarships will be awarded to three individuals who have in the past or are currently receiving services from one of the following organizations: La Luz Hispana, Presentation Lantern Center, Hispanic Outreach Ministry of Evangelization (HOME) or Hotel Hope.

The Dubuque Presentation Associate Scholarship will be awarded to financially assist an individual to further his/her education, receive job training or to help with immigration/citizenship expenses. The scholarship award is intended for such expenses as tuition, books and supplies, tools or uniforms for work, transportation, legal and filing fees for immigration or citizenship or other needs associated with the above mentioned pursuits.

Applications are available on the Sisters of the Presentation website at [www.dbqpbvms.org](http://www.dbqpbvms.org) and from the above mentioned organizations. Applications are due April 1, 2020, to the Associate Partnership Office.

## How to Become a Presentation Associate

- Contact the co-director of the Presentation Associate Partnership, talk with a Presentation associate or sister, or visit the website.
- Complete an application for associate partnership.
- Participate in an orientation process (monthly for approximately six months) and a half-day retreat.
- Make a formal commitment stating a desire and willingness to live out the mission and charism of the Sisters of the Presentation.
- Participate in community gatherings, retreats, service opportunities and celebrations when possible.

## FAQs of Associate Partnership

### Who may become a Presentation associate?

Association is open to women and men who feel called to a deeper spiritual life and a desire to serve others. Living within their vocation and faith tradition, each person needs to be willing to share in the prayer and mission of the Sisters of the Presentation.

### Do Presentation associates live only where there are sisters and mainly in the Dubuque area?

While the majority of Presentation associates live in the surrounding Dubuque area, there are associates in other parts of Iowa and throughout the United States. Long distance relationships are nurtured through mail, email, social media, video conferencing and telephone. Because of our strong belief in the importance of community, we ask that associates network closely with sisters and other associates in order to offer each other support and prayer.

### Why is it called Associate Partnership?

Sisters and associates nurture and support one another spiritually and intellectually in order to better live the charism of radical hospitality in their own lives and ministries.

### Are associates unique to the Presentation Sisters?

No, the North American Conference of Associates and Religious reports that there are over 55,000 associates of religious congregations and orders in North America.

### For more information, please visit:

[WWW.DBQPBVMS.ORG](http://WWW.DBQPBVMS.ORG)  
Office of Associate Partnership  
563-588-2008  
[associates@dbqpbvms.org](mailto:associates@dbqpbvms.org)



## Mission Partner: Dr. Daniel Till

# Leaving a Legacy

by KAREN TUECKE, PARTNERS IN MISSION COORDINATOR

As the partners in mission coordinator, Karen Tuecke gets the pleasure of having conversations and learning more about the Sisters of the Presentation benefactors. It gives her great joy to hear the stories behind the gifts. A few years ago, she had the pleasure of talking to Dr. Daniel Till of Lincoln, Nebraska, formerly of rural Epworth, Iowa, and she shares a little bit about what she learned.

Dr. Till spoke kindly and fondly of the Presentation Sisters. "The longer I live, the more I appreciate what the sisters did for me. They were dedicated to education, loved to teach and I grew to love to learn."

He attended elementary school in Farley and graduated in 1956 from St. Joseph High School in Placid, both in Iowa, under the tutorage of many Presentation Sisters. Dr. Till then went on to graduate from Loras College in 1960 and from the University of Iowa College of Medicine in 1964. He completed his medical internship in Tacoma, Washington, and then continued his studies in pathology at the University of Iowa. Dr. Till also served as a physician in the Vietnam War in 1969 and 1970. The remainder of his life he spent working in pathology.

"I love the challenge of diagnosis and uncovering new learnings. It is important to keep updated and always ready to learn new things." Dr. Till served the Lincoln community as a pathologist and was chief of staff at Lincoln General Hospital.

Outside of work, Dr. Till was an avid duplicate bridge player who participated in the Lincoln duplicate bridge club and attained the distinguished level of Platinum Life Master. "Daniel is currently the only Nebraskan to hold the Emerald Life Masters rank. This is the second highest award in Nebraska's American Contract Bridge League. He travelled all over the United States to play bridge. It was a hobby of his and he truly enjoyed the challenge of the game." Dr. Till's brother, Dale Till of Dubuque, told us.

Dale elaborated, "Not only did Daniel travel to play bridge, but he travelled for the love of travelling." Dr. Till enjoyed getting into his car and driving across country. His favorite place to drive was to Alaska. "I think he must have driven there at least five times. Daniel even drove to Prudhoe Bay, Alaska. Do you know where that is? Prudhoe Bay is the farthest north you can go in Alaska, only 384 miles from the North Pole!"

The Sisters of the Presentation are so blessed to have kept in touch with Dr. Till for all these years. He cared deeply about his family, his work, his patients and his hobbies. Years ago, Dr. Till told Sister Elena Hoye, "One of my greatest blessings in life was my mother. She worked her whole life to support and encourage me. What a blessed gift she was in my life." Gratitude was another deep-seated value. "I believe that it is important to be grateful. I have supported the Sisters of the Presentation because I appreciate all they provided for me. It is one small way I can say thank you."

Sister Elena also wrote an article on Dr. Till. In that article she expressed, "The strength of a person is not found in their power or wealth, but the sum total of their education and character. Dr. Till's love for learning and his spirit of gratitude make him a strong person. The spirit of life-long learning and gratitude are the principles that are the firm foundation for his life of character and service."

His service and dedication to education found its way back to his roots. A few years ago, Dr. Till received the Seton Catholic School Distinguished Alumni Award. Dr. Till's brother, Don, accepted the award on his behalf. This award was well deserved, and emphasized his humble beginnings as a learner and philanthropist.

On November 1, 2017, at the age of 79, Dr. Till passed away. Even after his death, his legacy lives on. Today the sisters cannot thank Dr. Till for his generosity, but we would like to pay tribute to him. Dr. Till gave the Sisters of the Presentation generous gifts throughout his lifetime and after death. His legacy gift will be used to purchase new cutting edge technology which will benefit the sisters in many ways by improving communications amongst sisters, partners in mission, associates, employees and beyond the walls of Mount Loretto. It will also improve efficiencies, security measures and contribute to the sister's productivity in mission and ministry. Dr. Till would have wanted his contribution used toward something educational and, in this day of age, what is more educational than new technology. Thank you Dr. Daniel Till for giving a gift that will provide years of education!



Dr. Daniel Till

## Presentation Lantern Center

# 2019 Service Awards

by SARA MILLHOUSE, PRESENTATION LANTERN CENTER

This October, the Presentation Lantern Center honored four volunteers with an appreciation banquet held at the Presentation motherhouse. These volunteers have shown exceptional dedication to its mission of hospitality, advocacy and education for adult immigrants.

The Lantern Center honored **Sister Hermann Platt**, who has served as a board member and as secretary for the past nine years. She has served on the employment and executive committees providing support and feedback. She truly embodies the spirit of hospitality at the center.



**Dr. Julie Phillips** has introduced countless University of Wisconsin-Platteville (UWP) students, including Lantern Center education director, JoLynn Wall, to the Presentation Lantern Center. Julie read about the center when it first opened and has connected UWP's education students with learning opportunities at the center since spring of 2003.



Dr. Julie Phillips, left, with JoLynn Wall, Lantern Center education director and Julie's former student.

Julie, now at the University of Dubuque, collaborates again having her education students volunteer at the center. She is passionate about education and learning, as well as creating a world of acceptance and peace.

**Mary Toohey** has volunteered with the Lantern Center for nearly a decade. She has recruited other volunteers, including a family member who has also received an outstanding service award. She cares so much about the quality of the tutoring and instruction that she independently enrolled in and paid for formal training and certification as an instructor for English language learners.



Mary Toohey is surrounded by the love of her family and the family of an immigrant student she tutors.

Mary brings in fun, engaging teaching materials for everyone to use and share. She has touched many students' lives over the years, as their long-term tutor, as a substitute working on language skills and as a genuine friend.

**Sharon Speckhard** is on the center's education committee and has volunteered since 2016. She has years of experience working with English as a Second Language as the former director of the ESL program at Northeast Iowa Community College.



She loves learning and sharing knowledge with those around her, and her biology and science background is greatly appreciated by students pursuing higher education degrees. Sharon is faithful in her tutoring and offers two full days a week as needed. She also recruits her husband, David, as needed, with chemistry which is his passion. When she is not tutoring, she is singing in the Dubuque Choral, working in her garden or enjoying her children and grandchildren.

**Catherine Bastin** comes in for tutoring early, bringing thoughtful gifts such as a toy, a sippy cup or a treat. Other times, she brings new materials to share with her student because she wants every minute of the tutoring session to be meaningful and helpful.



She brings genius ideas for safety and health such as having allergen-friendly rubber gloves at the center, or bolting a toy shelf to the wall for safety from climbing kids. She also demonstrated her dedication at the Merry Millwork Market, when she and her husband wrapped gifts in pouring rain and windy, chilly weather!

These awards demonstrate the light these volunteers offer others through their hard work and presence and hospitality to immigrants, which is the core of the center's mission. Presentation Lantern tutors journey with their students and share with them life skills for a new culture. The Lantern Center is grateful to be blessed with an extraordinary team of volunteers.



# WOMAN OF CONTEMPLATIVE HEART

## Sister Stephen Eswine

*February 16, 1932 - October 10, 2019*

by JOAN LICKTEIG, PBVM

Sister Mary Stephen Eswine's life story stands out in our Presentation tapestry. While attending the public high school in Humboldt, Iowa, she became a convert to Catholicism in 1950, with the assistance of the parish priest and the sisters teaching at St. Mary School.

Upon graduation from high school, brimming with zeal and enthusiasm for her newly-embraced faith, Helen Hope, daughter of William and Frances (Zachman) Eswine, left her parents, two sisters, Bernadine and Joan, and two brothers, Charles and Robert, to enter the convent; Robert alone survives.

Hope entered the Dubuque community of Presentation Sisters in June 1950, three months earlier than her classmates. Pursuing the usual formation and education program of the day, she prepared to become a primary teacher, attending classes at Loras and Clarke Colleges in Dubuque and Briar Cliff College in Sioux City, Iowa. The teaching profession delighted many of her novitiate companions, but as time went on Sister Stephen felt called to a more contemplative lifestyle.

She spent many of her middle and later years, therefore, at the motherhouse in solitude and prayer. Additionally she served as receptionist at the front desk and as chapel sacristan. While waiting for visitors and phone calls she used her time to make rosaries, and over the years the orders kept coming in, at times making it difficult to keep up with them. Perhaps it was because at the same time requests to repair broken rosaries nearly matched the orders for new ones.

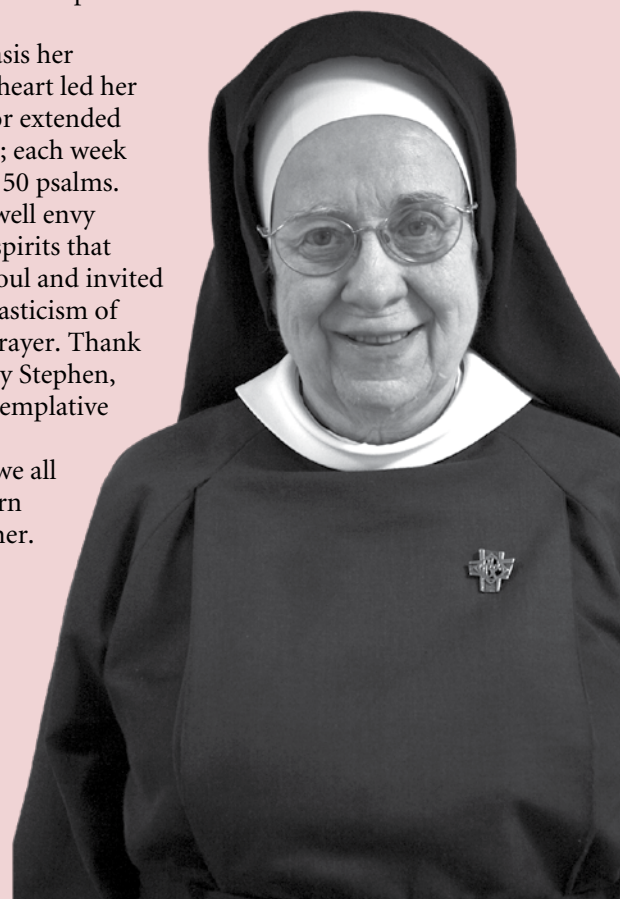
Father Doug Wathier, chaplain, recounted a "rosary occasion." A group of students under Father Doug's tutelage at Loras College were making plans for a small group retreat and chose praying the rosary together as one of the retreat activities. Hesitation came into their planning as they expressed concern that a number of students may not have rosaries. Suspecting that Sister Stephen would likely have an adequate stash in her possession, Father Doug volunteered to obtain sufficient rosaries. Sister Stephen was pleased with his request for a dozen rosaries and complied with many more than the number requested, giving the students a choice. As might be expected at the conclusion of the retreat she told them to keep the one they had chosen. Loras Homecoming Weekend, 2019, corresponded with Sister Stephen's death, and Father Doug had occasion to meet some of the students from the retreat.

He mentioned to them that Sister Stephen's funeral was upcoming, leading to a remembrance of the long-past retreat. To the amazement of the group, many still had the rosary which Sister Stephen had provided years previously.

As sacristan Sister Stephen made altar breads each week along with her other chapel duties. She delighted the congregation with the delicate floral bouquets she designed for the chapel from whatever she could find in the yard or clip from offerings of neighbors. Simplicity was the name of the game; the thought of buying flowers never entered her mind. That same simplicity completely permeated her lifestyle.

Spiritual writers sometimes proffer two major ways God speaks to God's people: through nature and through prayer. Sister Stephen delighted in both. When she wasn't busy with her household duties, she was either engaged in prayer or, like most gardeners, digging in the earth. She loved maintaining her flower gardens in the outdoor triangles and any additional patches she could claim in the yard. The cosmos called to her spirit.

On a regular basis her contemplative heart led her to the chapel for extended periods of time; each week she prayed all 150 psalms. One may very well envy the balance of spirits that animated her soul and invited her to the monasticism of Creation and prayer. Thank you, Sister Mary Stephen, woman of contemplative heart, for your example. May we all continue to learn from one another.





# Mount Loretto AND BEYOND

Featured below are special times in the lives of Dubuque Presentation Sisters and associates.



## Pampering for Presentation Day

Amber Vargas, healthcare employee, paints Sister Ellen Mary Garrett's fingernails during a special pampering event in preparation for Presentation Day. A social committee comprised of employees and sisters plan fun events throughout the year in an effort to foster relationships with one another and build morale within the motherhouse. Upcoming events for the rest of the year include a performance by the Renegade Cloggers, Christmas cookie tasting and exchange and ugly sweater day to name a few.

## PLEASE JOIN WITH US.

**December 25, 2019**  
Christmas Mass  
9:00 a.m.  
Sisters of the Presentation  
Sacred Heart Chapel  
Dubuque, Iowa

**January 11, 2020**  
Against Child Trafficking Film  
10 a.m. Film Showing  
Grand Opera House  
135 West 8th Street  
Dubuque, Iowa  
Free to the public.

**January 27, 2020**  
**February 24, 2020**  
Centering Prayer  
5:30 p.m. Evening Meal  
6:15-7:00 p.m. Prayer  
Sisters of the Presentation  
Sacred Heart Chapel  
Dubuque, Iowa

**March 14-20, 2020**  
Service & Discernment Opportunity  
New Orleans, Louisiana

**March 28, 2020**  
DAVA Women's Retreat  
Dubuque, Iowa

For updated information about the activities and events of the Sisters of the Presentation of Dubuque, please visit our website at [www.dbqpbvms.org](http://www.dbqpbvms.org) or call 563.588.2008.

## PLEASE PRAY WITH US.

**December 14, 2019**  
Christmas Dinner with guests from Dubuque Rescue Mission and Hope House  
Sisters of the Presentation  
Dubuque, Iowa

**March 8-13, 2020**  
Mount Loretto Retreat

**February 2, 2020**  
World Day for Consecrated Life

**March 8-14, 2020**  
National Catholic Sisters Week

**21st of each month**  
Pray for Vocations

**25th of each month**  
Mass for Benefactors

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*The gift of hope. The gift of peace. The gift of love.*

May all these be yours at Christmas  
and throughout the new year.

A Joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year!

SISTERS OF THE PRESENTATION  
DUBUQUE, IOWA