

A NEW VISION

Newsletter & Chronicle

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PROVINCE
November-December, 2021



THE FIRST ADVENT



As we come to the beginning of the Advent Season and to the close of the year dedicated to Saint Joseph, we cannot help but reflect on what that first Advent was like for Joseph and for Mary.

Christmas cards paint lovely pictures of that first Christmas but for Joseph, as well as for Mary, it was filled with whispering neighbors, with dangerous and rugged travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and with countless uncertainties.



We can only imagine how badly Joseph must have felt to not be able to provide a better place than a stable for the Son of God to be born in.

My favorite Christmas movie is *The Nativity Story*. In one of the scenes Joseph and Mary are resting on their journey to Bethlehem. Mary asks Joseph if he ever wonders “what will it be like to raise Jesus and when will they know how Jesus will redeem Israel?” Joseph responds to Mary that he wonders “what can I teach him?” This scene reminds us that God did not give Joseph and Mary a written plan. Like each of us, Mary and Joseph had to pray and pay attention to the presence of God in their daily life. They had to listen for His soft voice in their hearts. They had to ponder and turn over all these signs to understand God’s will and plan for them.

May Mary and Joseph teach us to wait with open hearts, listening ears and joyous expectation this Advent and always.

Sister Donna Marie, C.R.

First Weekend of a Three - Year Renewal Program

Due to limited meeting space at Ascension Resurrection Retirement Village a week-long renewal would be difficult to impossible to schedule and therefore the renewal is being divided into three, three-day weekends. The theme for the three-year Renewal (2021-2024) is “Put out into the deep...” (Luke 5:4). Year one is focused on prayer, year two on community life and year three on evangelization.

The first year weekend renewal was held on October 22, 23, and 24th. The focus was putting out or launching into the deep to meet Christ in prayer. This weekend gave us the opportunity to accept Jesus’ invitation to pay attention to the Spirit stirring in us a longing for something more in our relationship with God.



Friday afternoon, Father Paul Voisin, C.R., the Superior General of the Resurrectionist Fathers and Brothers, opened the weekend with his reflection on hope. Father Paul stated that: “As Resurrectionists, we are people of hope. This is in our blood, coming to us as an inheritance from our Founders, whose hope led them to overcome significant obstacles on the way to our foundation. Yet,

they had a vision and a purpose. They believed that they would make a difference in the Church and in the world, sharing a unique charism in our lives and ministries.”

Father went on to say that his “definition of hope is the belief and experience that God can do the improbable and the impossible, as He did when He raised Jesus from the dead.”

Father Paul ended his reflection by saying that; “As Resurrectionists we are called to provide this “greater hope” which is a gift from God, a truth to be embraced, and a love to be welcomed. Indeed, our world is in great need of hope.”

Father Paul challenged us to “*Put out into deeper water and lower your nets*”, trusting in our remembrance of the power and graciousness of God, that He is with us, and that His work is yet to be done. Our past experiences of the paschal mystery tell us that there will always be new life and resurrection if we are willing to ‘die’ to our own plans, and follow the instructions of the Lord.



Friday evening, John Shea, a theologian, writer, and storyteller shared his reflections on Mary and the depth of her prayer and love for God and for her Son. He shared several poems he wrote about Mary, her relationship with God and her desire to mother in each of us the same prayerful relationship with God.

Jack had us reflect and discuss our own Magnificat experiences of when we felt the power of God's love and grace working in us and through us. Our Magnificat experiences often come in moments of uncertainty when we can do nothing but put our trust in God. Then, when we experience the gracious gift of God's tender mercy, like Mary, we feel an overwhelming.

Jack emphasized that just as God entrusted Mary with the awesome responsibility of teaching His divine Son to pray, so God also entrusts Mary with the motherly responsibility to teach each of us how to pray and how to develop a deep friendship and relationship with God.

Saturday morning, Sister Donna Marie Wolowicki shared a reflection on the portrait Luke's gospel paints of Mary's prayer.

Mary had an awareness of God's presence in all of creation, in every moment of every day, in every experience and in every person. This awesome awareness of God's loving and all-embracing presence in her life, in the life of others and in all of creation caused Mary to ponder in her heart the greatness of God. How did Mary ponder? Filled with the Holy Spirit, Saint Luke tells us that Mary turned over in her heart, contemplated, and treasured every movement of God's presence in her life. Mary pondered at the birth of Jesus and the adoration of the shepherds, at the prophecy of Simeon, and finding of Jesus in the Temple.

This prayerful pondering focused on God's passionate love for His creatures, His attentiveness, His mercy, and His goodness. This pondering led Mary to praise God. This is exemplified in Mary's Magnificat. Mary magnifies God; that is, she gives Him an even higher place in her life. God is the center and treasure of her heart and so she lifts her heart in praise.

Each sister was given a small box to decorate and use for keeping track of events and experiences of God's presence and activity in their life, and then to ponder and treasure them.



Sunday afternoon Father Steve Bartzyszyn, C.R., Provincial Superior of the US Resurrectionists, shared his reflections on the *Power of Praying with Icons*.

Father explained that icons are instruments for the transmission of Christian faith, no less than the written word.

Through sacred imagery, the Holy Spirit speaks to us, revealing truths beyond the reach of words.

Father explained that what one sees in prayer before an icon is not an external representation of a historical person, but an interior presence in light, which is the glory of the transfigured Christ, the experience of which is transmitted in faith from generation to generation. The icon aims to transform the viewer.

An icon is silent. No mouths are open to imply sound. But an icon's silence is not empty. The stillness and silence are the silence of Mary's contemplative heart, the silence of the transfiguration, the silence of the resurrection, the silence of the Incarnate Word.

Through prayer we become more capable of seeing those whom we encounter in day-to-day life as living icons, even if the God-given image they bear has been damaged by the events of life. Father emphasized that prayer is never an escape from others, but rather equips us for greater intimacy, deeper caring, a growing capacity for self-giving love.



Father Steve brought some of his icons as examples and left a beautiful Resurrection Icon for the Province to share.

Time for communal **prayer as well as recreation** were part of Renewal. The days began with Common Morning Prayer and ended with Evening Prayer and on Sunday there was time carved out for table games and a delicious dinner.



Fr. Peter Semenenko, C.R. - November 18: Sr. Christine Maria Moskal, C.R.

Among the most prominent pivotal figures in C.R. history is Fr. Peter Semenenko whose death anniversary is commemorated on November 18. Fr. Semenenko's role in the history and spirituality of both the CR. Fathers and the C.R. Sisters as well as many other religious communities of the 19th Century in the Eastern European and Mediterranean faith communities of several liturgical rites is enormous. Semenenko arrived on the scene as a rebellious yet extremely talented figure who matured spiritually and culturally to be one of the leading authors, educators, speakers, and spiritual directors of his time. What we may not notice as we read his writings, is the personality and relationships that were also a part of his character and which contributed so greatly to his legacy.

Peter was a curious character as he studied religion on the doorstep of the local Church with a priestly mentor so as “not to be taught the Catholic Faith in school” as was the agreement between his Eastern Orthodox father and his maternal grandmother who practiced the Byzantine Rite. Peter was obedient, albeit circumventual in some ways. He made his First Holy Communion unknown to both his father and his grandmother for which he was punished and kept in fasting for several days before his father approved of his initiative and removed him from the care of his grandmother. His broad interests continued as he practiced clock working with a Mr. Schwartz during his teen years and later continued this avocation in Rome with a local clock smith who reciprocated his friendship by giving him a pocket watch etched with an image of the Risen Christ. This is preserved in the C.R. museum in Rome. He received from Blessed Celine a pool table with which to relax after

strenuous days of work for the Curia; he gave Blessed Celine a rocking chair. After his death, his brethren replied to Celine, “of course, take whatever you wish” in his memory. In the C.R. Sister’s museum are the remains of Fr. Peter’s apothecary equipment. His horn-rimmed spectacles are next to his slippers and small lock of hair, all of which Blessed Celine collected and kept, treasured as mementos, of her dear guide and friend.

Prior to becoming a spiritual director or novice director Peter had experience teaching young people. Peter and Fr. Jerome Kajsiewicz, C.R. started together as a live-in mentors and teachers of grammar school children. By day Peter taught and then, at the end of some very long days, he could be found tucking children into their beds in a residence that was very cramped, damp and dark.

At night Jerome and Peter studied together as they strained to complete their respective studies. Later, Peter oversaw the instruction of the grandchildren of Blessed Celine and even his own nephews and nieces for their First Confessions, First Holy Communions, and other advanced studies at the universities. He used five typewriters simultaneously, moving from table to table as thoughts came in quick succession in his amble mind.

Semenenko was an expert in many fields of knowledge including several classic and modern languages and the study of the newly emerging field of aeronautics. He exchanged correspondence with Jules Verne (Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea), and with royalty. His broad interests served as a bridge to engage others in conversation about philosophy, culture, or the spiritual life. One wonders what he might have said on long airplane flights. His gentle and engaging style ultimately led to very challenging conversations of interpersonal psychology and indepth spiritual direction. As one penitent described it, “once a person experienced the masterful hand of Semenenko in spiritual direction, he no longer desired any other to lead him”. Rather than regarding the scrutiny and challenges which Semenenko laid before them as rough hewn timbers bespeaking their own paths of crucifixion, his penitents soon treasured his astute albeit piercing observations, advice and invitations more than any earthly treasure. They recognized the skillful and generous shaping of their souls by a master director of the spiritual life. Cardinals, royalty, men of his own Congregation, numerous religious and hundreds of penitents praised and gave thanks for the spiritual gifts which God entrusted to him, for his multifaceted personality and ministry, for his multigenerational influence on the Congregation and the Church of Rome and for his loyal, prayerful intercession.

It is reported that while he was dying, two mystics in Rome saw the Blessed Mother and St. John at his bedside. He was known to be earnest and faithful in things both big and small, he never lost his ability to listen well, even to laugh and to learn more. He was unrelenting in sacrificing himself for others, yet demanding of them. He saw the beauty of God, and of the Immaculate Conception, and strove to make that glory apparent to others in words and deeds that would purify their spirits. He often preached a trilogy: of the Trinity, of human affliction (nothingness, misery, and corruption), and of fulfillment in dying to self so as to allow Christ to rise in each of us -- with Risen peace, hope and joy.



**Sister Carolyn Sniegowski, C.R.,
Vocation Directress**

During the month of November Sister Carolyn asked the local communities to reflect on and discuss what we can do to encourage young women to consider religious life as an option. Sister Carolyn gave out discussion questions and asked that individual sisters and local communities send their suggestions to her by the end of November.



Province and Local Communities Chronicle



September 22nd. Sister Mary Florence had a special Birthday this year! It was her 90th Birthday. The local community celebrated with dinner and recreation, Sister Florence received flowers, many cards from family and friends and was even able to go to her favorite store, the Dollar Store.

September 26th. CR Fathers and Brothers Fundraiser - Sisters Laura, Rosemary, Gloria, Virginia Ann and Donna Marie attended the Resurrection Fathers and Brothers Fundraiser at Café la Cave.

September 27th. Mother Hedwig's Death Anniversary - was celebrated in the Resurrection Local Community with prayer, recreation and pizza.

October 1st. Sisters Virginia Ann and Donna Marie participated in the virtual **Jammin' with Jen** fundraiser for the Jen School sponsored by Maryville. This school provides an academic and trades education for students who have behavioral challenges that make it difficult for them to succeed in a traditional school setting. Sister Donna is a member of the school's advisory board.

October 3rd. Emmaus celebrated the Birthdays and Feast Days of the Sisters who celebrate in October. The local community had dinner together in the community room followed by recreation.



October 10th. Sisters Virginia Ann, Maria Marta, Maria Goretti and Donna Marie went to the Botanic Gardens orchid show. The show featured the award winning orchids of local growers, both those who are professional and those who grow orchids as a hobby. There were many orchids of unusual size, appearance and colors!



October 16th. Kathleen Heneghan, an alumna from Resurrection College Prep High School spent the morning taking pictures of all the sisters doing different things such as talking with residents, praying, walking on the beautiful grounds and many other types. These pictures will be used on the Province website. Currently Sisters Donna Marie, Stephanie and Sina are working with Ava Marketing to create a new website.

October 16th. The Resurrection Local Community celebrated the October Feast Days and Birthdays with a dinner and recreation.

October 22, 23, and 24th : See article on first two pages for more details. What was very unique about this renewal was that every Sister in the Province had a role in setting up, or preparing prayers, ordering food, introducing speakers and many other tasks.

October 26th: In honor of Sister Laura's feast day, Sister Donna took the three **over 90** (years of age) out to breakfast at Cozy Corner and then to the Dollar Store it was a fun time and after all, being 90 or older should be fun.

November 1st: Sister Donna Marie had an **open meeting** with all the Sisters of the Province. The main topics covered were: the default by the buyers of the 5 acres of property the Sisters still own adjacent to the High School and Amazing Grace facility, and the decertification of the Provincial Home Chapel.

November 2nd: Sisters Virginia Ann and Donna Marie attended the All Souls Day Mass and Memorial Service at Resurrection College Prep High School. After Communion several people were asked to carry plaques up to the altar with the names of persons who have died. There were plaques for faculty, parents, spouses, students and for Resurrection Sisters who taught or worked at Resurrection.

In the afternoon Sisters Virginia Ann and Donna Marie visited the graves of our Sisters at Saint Adalbert Cemetery, prayed and placed a plant in front of the statue of the Risen Lord.

November 5th. Sister Donna Marie attended the 2021 Power of Nursing Leadership event as a guest of Lorna Finnegan, the Dean of the Loyola University Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing. The event was attended by over 300 Chicago area nursing leaders and educators. The key speakers shared some of the amazing stories of nurses and their self-sacrificing service and leadership during the pandemic.

November 5th. The book club, **Coffee, Tea and Saintly Women**, completed their first book, *"Women of Hope: Doctors of the Church,"* by Terry Polakovic. The book club will begin meeting again in January and Sisters Stephanie, Kathryn, Kathleen, Virginia Ann, and Donna Marie will be welcoming two new members Sisters Carolyn Marie and Maria Marta.

November 6th. The Resurrection Local Community celebrated the November Feast Days and Birthdays with dinner and recreation. The theme was Mexican and was delicious.

November 7th. The Emmaus Local Community celebrated the November Feast Days, Birthdays and Thanksgiving. Sister Gloria baked a delicious

Angel Food cake with strawberries and whip cream for the occasion. Sister Paulette made lovely Thanksgiving cards for each Sister with a gift.

November 12th. Sisters Hedwig, Maria Marta and Donna Marie visited the Chicago Botanic Gardens for the **Light Scape** Christmas and Winter program. This after dark walk on a reimagined trail, is 1.25 miles long. All along the way there are beautiful dazzling lights and music ranging from soft meditative to joyful Christmas Carols.





FEAST DAYS AND BIRTHDAYS

November

4th Sister Mary Patricia, Birthday

Sister Carolyn (Sniegowski) Feast Day

Sister Carolyn Marie, Feast Day

10th Sister Mary Leonette, Feast Day

21st Sister Carolyn Marie, Birthday

December

2nd Sister Christine Maria, Birthdsy

4th Sister Barbara, Feast Day

8th Province Feast – Immaculate Conception

8th Mother Dorota, Birthday

8th Sister Marilyn, Feast Day

25th The Nativity of Jesus Christ

25th Sister Gloria Marie, Feast Day

26th Sister Stephanie, Feast Day

