

# IN Formation- Vocation SCN

E-NEWSLETTER OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT ELIZABETH  
SPECIAL EDITION - FALL 2020



## THE CHARISM OF CHARITY IS ALIVE

*by JoLynn Krempecki, Seton Associate*

**"... the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."**

(John 1:5)

I don't know many who would disagree with the statement that 2020 has been a dark year – pandemic, political and racial divisions, protests and riots, fires and hurricanes. Dark. Yet, light shone into this darkness on September 12 when sixteen women and men, laity and clergy, young and "not so young" gathered in Holy Family Chapel. Surrounded by a small group of friends and family, they were there to promise to incarnate the Charism of Charity as Seton Associates, in union with the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth. This was light in the darkness. Six of these individuals made a lifetime commitment after having already been Seton Associates for two to ten years. This light stretched into the darkness of the foreseeable future.

What did that commitment mean to the six? And how did it come about? What about the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth compelled them to take a stand with them – a counter-cultural stand and a stand for life? I had the opportunity to ask them.

Most of them reported that they were formed by the Sisters of Charity from their early years – some in high school, some in college, one in the workplace. They named specific Sisters who impacted their lives in ways that were transformative – through singular acts of kindness and through entire lives dedicated to education, to the poor and to the marginalized, to service and to God.

**Jessica Velasques-Julca** of Newark said that the witness and lives of the Sisters of Charity she



*Jessica is happy to see her sponsor, Sister Maryanne Tracey, SC*



*Sister Maureen Shaughnessy, SC, General Superior, top row center and Rosemary Carroll, former Director of Seton Associates, center. With them are five of the six women who made a lifetime commitment with the Seton Associates of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth. Top row: Marie Noel and Maria Capozzoli. Front row: Olivia Burla Olson, Theresa Nolan and Linda Amitrano.*

met at Saint Vincent Academy and at St. Elizabeth University (formerly the College of St. Elizabeth) built upon the values her family instilled in her as a child and took those values to another level. She hopes that she will pass those values on to her young daughter by the power of her example and by her lifetime commitment as a Seton Associate.

In her professional life, **Linda Amitrano** of Cedar Knolls, met the larger Vincentian family (in the NY Sisters of Charity) when she worked at St. Vincent Hospital and Medical Center in New York City. She saw a "remarkable difference" between this institution and other medical facilities and was intrigued by the compassion and charity that animated everything at St. Vincent's. She later discovered that the same commitment to Love and compassionate care could be found throughout the Vincentian family including the Sisters of Charity in New Jersey.

For **Marie Noel** who now lives in Chatham, the introduction to the Sisters of Charity resulted from a serendipitous

encounter in which she was the recipient of ordinary kindnesses. Two Sisters – now nameless – encountered Marie as she visited Convent Station while exploring possible college choices. “They were so kind and loving... It was clear to me, I’ve found my home.”

In many diverse ways, God pointed these good women to experience the Charism of Charity lived by the Sisters based in Convent Station. That Charism drew them into relationship with the community and challenged them to find a way to live it in their own lives. Thirty years ago, the community established the Seton Associates – women and men who would commit to do just that.



*Theresa Nolan spends time with her sponsor, Sister Margaret Killough, SC, after the ceremony.*

**Theresa Nolan** of Bloomfield, who followed her mother into a career in education at St. Vincent Academy, was clear about what she wasn't called to do. “I did not want to become a Sister, as that was not my calling,” she said. “However, I felt that I could use my gifts to further the mission of the Sisters. I felt called to serve alongside them working hand and hand towards a better future – especially for those who are poor, immigrants and women.” Theresa, like the others interviewed, became a Seton Associate.

There are benefits derived from being a Seton Associate as well. **Olivia Burla Olson** of Red Bank said that the decision to become a Seton Associate in 2008 became a life-preserver during some difficult times. Throughout her husband’s long illness, the support of the Associates and the Community and the example of Mother Seton (who also struggled through her husband’s journey to his death) sustained her. Obviously, these individuals found the decision to become Seton Associates to be congruent with their lives, their values, and their personal mission. But what would impel someone to make a LIFETIME commitment?

Most said the decision flowed out of prayer and reflection and a desire to be with like-minded people. **Maria Capozzoli** of East Hanover was clear that it evolved as a natural next step. “I was living out the Charism (of Charity) well before I knew it,” she said. Olivia added, “As a Seton Associate, I am in the company of men and women who believe that having God in one’s life is the greatest gift one can give oneself.”

And, as Marie Noel commented, the commitment is reciprocal. She noted that the Sisters made a lifetime commitment not only to her, but to her entire country in the amazing work they are doing in Haiti. She feels she has become family to them, and they have become family to her. “Therefore, it is fitting that without any hesitation, I make a lifetime commitment to the Sisters and their mission of Caritas.”

That mission of Caritas – the Charism of Charity that sits at the heart of the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth – is not some abstract notion. Rather, it emerges from their mission – “The love of Christ impels [them].” (2 Cor. 5:14) The six who made a lifetime commitment to that Charism clarified what it means ... love, to serve others, to bring light into the world, to be Jesus to others, to do everything for God with love. They feel that they will keep their promise as a Seton Associate if people experience God’s love in each encounter with each of them.

**To anyone who might be discerning becoming a Seton Associate and to Associates who may be considering taking the next step – making a lifetime commitment – the new Lifetime members had the following advice...**

- **Those who are not yet Associates should consider joining. First you might want to come to a group meeting and/or to some Seton Associate events where you will have the opportunity to meet other Associates and get a better sense of what it’s all about.**
- **Being a Seton Associate is more than a commitment. It’s an opportunity to reflect on your life and the direction in which you want to live that life – either for a little while or forever.**
- **Reach out to Associates – or lifetime members. “We will welcome you with open arms!”**
- **Making a commitment results from a special calling, and one must be ready for it. Pray about it to ensure you’re being called.**
- **Listen to the whisper you’re hearing in your heart... trust it.**
- **Be the light of Jesus in the darkness – through the Charism of Charity.**



# *The Beauty of Religious Life*

by Sister Maryanne Tracey, SC



*Sister Carol Ann Lockwood, SC, is happy to share the article in *The Catholic Advocate* about Sister Frances Salemi with some of the young women.*

Sunday, October 10, 2020, was a dark and threatening day, but by no means did that have an effect on the spirit of the 13 young adult women who chose to spend their afternoon learning and experiencing the *Beauty of Religious Life*.

The setting was in the Motherhouse of the Vocationists Sisters and Priests in Florham Park, in an outside tent that followed the protocols of social distancing. Eight Congregations of Sisters were in attendance to share with these young women the joys and beauty of living the vowed life in community for the love of God and the service of others.

Presentations were given by each Congregation represented, as well as a Sharing Life in Community through a video and power point, followed by a Q & A. Adoration and Benediction, held outdoors, with time for personal prayer were an important part of the day.



*Sisters Maryanne Tracey, SC, and Carol Ann Lockwood, SC, proudly display the materials about the Sisters of Charity.*



*After a very fruitful and joy-filled day, the Sisters are happy to pose for a picture together.*

We knew the day was a success when some of the comments from the young women were: "I never realized all that the Sisters do for others"

"I am impressed at how happy you all are and how nicely you all get along and work together."

"I never knew that there were so many Congregations of Sisters in the world"

The day ended with Pizza and good conversation.

To learn more visit [www.SCNJ.org](http://www.SCNJ.org) \* [choosecharity@yahoo.com](mailto:choosecharity@yahoo.com)  
Facebook@ChooseCharityAlways \* [mtracey@scnj.org](mailto:mtracey@scnj.org)

# Vocation ministry collaboration during a crisis

By Sister Barbara O'Kane, M.P.F.

This year has been a year unlike any other. In an unprecedented time of uncertainty and concern, one thing remains certain: God is still present and calling people to be religious priests, sisters and brothers. Throughout the year, the vocation board for Religious Life for the Archdiocese of Newark promotes consecrated life in various ways and supports those considering it.

Earlier in the year, before the lockdown, several schools held vocation events in which members of the vocation board shared information about their own call, their religious communities and ministries, and answered students' questions. This helped provide those preparing to receive the sacrament of confirmation a better understanding of the religious vocation.

An annual gathering with seminarians took place at Immaculate Conception Seminary at Seton Hall University as an opportunity for those preparing for diocesan priesthood to learn more about consecrated life. The keynote speaker, Delegate for Religious Sister Patricia Wormann, O.P., presented the history of religious life. Small group discussions with religious followed. The more those called to ordained and consecrated life know and support one another, the better for the Church.

Seton Hall University also hosted the Archdiocese of Newark's annual Men's and Women's Conferences. Both of these events attracted hundreds of participants who come to be refreshed by worship, prayer and inspiring presenters. Members of the vocation board for Religious Life were exhibitors at each conference, meeting with attendees and providing information and materials about religious life. Brother Patrick Winbush, O.S.B., and Sister Annelyth Pandi, S.C.C., briefly addressed the attendees.

In another effort toward strengthening relationships with organizations serving in

the Church, the vocation board for Religious Life invited archdiocesan center employees to a luncheon at the chancery. In addition to sharing a meal together, this was a chance to share the commonalities and individual charisms of the numerous religious communities.

As the health crisis necessitated lockdowns and the lives and safety of all were impacted, religious responded with urgency and the power of prayer. The board's vocation directors joined weekly with those from other dioceses via Zoom. For several months, they offered prayers for those suffering from the coronavirus, for the medical caregivers and for an end to the pandemic.

Planning meetings to continue the work of vocation ministry in this new environment were conducted virtually. One discernment event via Zoom was a "Young Adult Cafe with Religious Sisters and Brothers" planned in collaboration with Marisally Santiago, the associate director for Hispanic Youth Ministry and Young Adult Outreach. Nearly 20 young adults joined with those in consecrated life to discuss points from Pope Francis' exhortation *Christus Vivit* about discovering one's life purpose and using one's God-given gifts in daily life. Based on the positive feedback, planning is underway for similar gatherings.

Collaborating with two young discerners to design an in-person experience, single women were recently invited to an event called "Come and See the Beauty of Religious Life" with sisters from eight religious communities.

Vocation ministers continue to find new ways to witness how fulfilling answering God's call can be.

If you feel the call to consecrated life, the vocation board for Religious Life is available to help you discern. For more information, call 973-497-4368 or email Sr. Patricia. WormannO.P@rcan.org.

Sister Barbara O'Kane, M.P.F., is the secretary of the vocation board for Religious Life.



Submitted photo