

*imagine*  
**ONE**

CONGREGATION OF THE  
SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH

FALL/WINTER 2019  
VOL. 11 | NO. 2



Seek  
**Meaning**  
TAKE  
**ACTION**

# imagine ONE

FALL/WINTER 2019  
VOL. 11 | NO. 2

*imagineONE* is published twice yearly, in Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter, by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

## **CENTRAL OFFICE**

3430 Rocky River Drive  
Cleveland, OH 44111-2997  
(216) 252-0440

## **WITH SIGNIFICANT PRESENCE IN**

Baton Rouge, LA  
Cincinnati, OH  
Cleveland, OH  
Crookston, MN  
Detroit, MI  
La Grange Park, IL  
Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN  
Nazareth, MI  
New Orleans, LA  
Tipton, IN  
Wheeling, WV  
Wichita, KS  
Kyoto, Japan

## **LEADERSHIP TEAM**

Sister Kathleen Brazda, CSJ  
Sister Jacqueline Goodin, CSJ  
Sister Marie Hogan, CSJ  
Sister Sallie Latkovich, CSJ  
Sister Pat Warbritton, CSJ

## **EDITORIAL AND DESIGN**

**Executive Editor**  
Pat Milenius

**Editor**  
Eileen Biehl

**Art Director**  
Gina Sullivan

**Contributing Editor**  
Elizabeth Powers

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

Please send address changes or any comments or questions you may have about the content of *imagineONE* to [communications@csjoseph.org](mailto:communications@csjoseph.org).



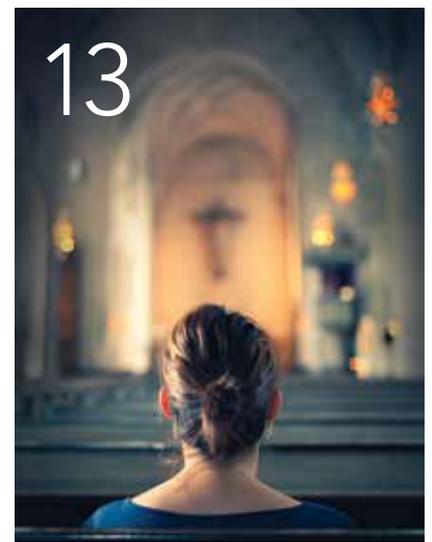
## Who We Are

**The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph** is a religious community of nearly 500 vowed Catholic women and over 500 lay associates who live and minister in the U.S. and around the world. We sponsor 25 ministries including three Catholic high schools; tutoring and literacy programs; spirituality centers; social service programs; spiritual direction; and pastoral assistance. We are also involved in and support numerous justice and peace initiatives including anti-racism efforts, the abolishment of the death penalty, fair and just immigration policies, non-violence especially in regards to gun violence, anti-human trafficking efforts, and care of the environment and Earth. Our mission is to bring all into unity with God, with one another, and with all creation. We do this through prayer, direct service and ministry, partnering with others to serve the *dear neighbor*, standing with and for the poor and vulnerable, and by advocating for systemic change.

## **WE CARE ABOUT ALL CREATION**

In awareness of our mission, the Congregation of St. Joseph is pleased to present this issue of *imagineONE* which has been produced in an environmentally sustainable way through the use of recycled paper manufactured by windpower and printed using soy- and vegetable-based inks.

If you would like to help reduce our number of printed copies by receiving future issues digitally by email, please contact us at [communications@csjoseph.org](mailto:communications@csjoseph.org). Let us know your name, address, and preferred email address. Please put "*imagineONE* by email" in the subject line.



# CONTENTS

## AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

- 6** Reflections from the Border
- 18** Moving Beyond Thoughts and Prayers

## WOMEN IN SPIRIT

- 10** Deep Waters: Living Celibacy and God's Mystery
- 13** Why I Stay

## MISSION FORWARD

- 16** Companions in Mission: Family of Joseph Continues to Grow
- 17** Volunteers Partner with Sisters and Ministries to Support Families

## CARE OF CREATION

- 20** Big or Small, We Are All Called to Sustainable Action

## LIVING LOVE

- 24** How Do We Find Truth?
- 25** What If?

## REFLECTION

- 27** Now Is The Time

## ON THE COVER

This issue of *imagineONE* invites readers to seek meaning and take action. The cover art, with hand covered in beautiful leaves, suggests the owner has sought meaning, perhaps through a growth experience such as prayer, reflection or education. The finger, which is poised to press a button, click a key, or maybe touch water and make a ripple, suggests action. However you choose to seek meaning or take action in your life, we join with you as contemplatives in action.

All issues of *imagineONE* are available for download at [www.csjoseph.org/publications](http://www.csjoseph.org/publications).

# Dear Neighbors,



▲ Sister Kathy Brazda, CSJ

---

Our hope and prayer for you and for our world is that we might all recognize that love is the best response to everything.

One of the biggest challenges of a magazine that comes out twice a year is the timeliness of our content. We want our message and content for you, our dear readers, to be both current and fresh as well as timeless. But recently, many issues that dominate the news remain unresolved, relevant and important, even as time moves on. With so many persistent challenges in the world today – including gun violence, immigration issues, environmental concerns, and the immediacy of news via the internet, we think that as part of the goal of *imagineONE*, we should also offer you food for thought and some ways of looking at things in a new way or through a different lens – hopefully encouraging ways of acting and loving others.

Our hope and prayer for you and for our world is that we might all recognize that love is the best response to everything. Once we realize the unifying power of love, we can take actions to make the world a reflection of what God calls us all to be.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sr. Kathy".

Sister Kathy Brazda, CSJ  
Congregational Leadership Team

► From left, Sarah Morgan from Grow Ohio Valley, Sister Leyla Cerda, student volunteer Mia Calderon, Sister Kathy Sherman, and student volunteer Madie Reidle work the fields at Farm 18, one of the community gardens of Grow Ohio Valley.



## Building COMMUNITY Building PEACE

This past June, students joined with sisters at our center in Wheeling, WV, to take part in our annual Community Builders for Peace program. Sponsored by the Congregation of St. Joseph, the program seeks to empower young people to actions that foster peace and justice through mentorship, dialog and service.

For five days, the students from Nazareth Academy in La Grange Park, IL, Maria Reina Academy in Puerto Rico and Wheeling Central Catholic High School in Wheeling, WV, were immersed in the mission and spirituality of the congregation, and also in service ministry. This included working the fields of Grow Ohio Valley; preparing a meal at

a local soup kitchen; learning about the dangers and toxic results of coal mining; and playing with children at the Fun Raiser Ministry Project.

At the end of the week, each school team created a justice project to take back to their respective schools to implement over the course of the next year and beyond. Each team has a young adult mentor to whom they will report back to on the progress and results of their projects.

We are so proud of these students who came together to learn leadership skills, reflect on our mission of unity, and complete much needed service at local organizations. ■

---

We are so proud of these students who came together to learn leadership skills, reflect on our mission of unity, and complete much needed service at local organizations.

# Reflections

## FROM THE BORDER

The Congregation of St. Joseph is dedicated to love of the *dear neighbor*, without distinction. We believe that we are all one people, and we work to bring all people together in love of God and one another. This work leads us to the belief that it is our responsibility to welcome those who seek a better life for themselves and their families regardless of culture, race or religion, and to provide safe asylum for those seeking refuge.

It is difficult to live in our world today without being aware of the humanitarian crisis happening on our southern border. The Congregation of St. Joseph, compelled by our love of all neighbors, felt the call to offer our support and service to those entering our country. This past spring, several groups of sisters and associates headed to Texas to spend two weeks volunteering with Annunciation House in El Paso, which serves the

poorest of the poor, including many of the most vulnerable people who come from south of the border. While there, our sisters and associates welcomed people who were granted legal entry pending asylum hearings.

Upon returning from the border, our sisters and associates were clearly changed. Here they share their experiences of heartbreak and hope.





▲ From left, Sisters Pat Bergen, Marlene Schemmel and Jackie Schmitz make sandwiches for incoming refugees.

### Sister Jacqueline Schmitz, CSJ

When the invitation to volunteer at the border came, I felt the tug to open my heart to compassion and generous love.

Receiving volumes of desperate people pouring into the shelter daily with the hope for a better life, holding the huge unknown of “what next” and staring into their sorrow-filled eyes was overwhelming and heartbreaking. I found my heart being tugged to minister to the children.

We provided puzzles, toys and coloring books for them to pass the never-ending hours of waiting. One child who sticks out in my memory was a little girl of about 2 or 3 years of age, who spotted me one day and smiled with a grin as wide as her face. She came running towards me, coloring book dragging on the floor behind her, grasping an orange crayon with her chubby, little fist. She planted herself right in front of me, swung her arm, coloring book in hand, and flipped it up into my lap. She grasped that orange crayon with all her might and scribbled away. She stopped, stepped back, clapped and laughed with glee at her masterpiece. And I melted. She ran off, coloring book flying in the breeze only to repeat the ritual over and over. In many ways, she saved me, with her reminder of childhood innocence.

I continue to see the fear and sorrow in the deep brown eyes of the hundreds of migrants making their way into an unknown future. And I keep pondering what the solution to this huge and horrific situation might be. There is so much more to do! How can we help?

### Sister Marlene Schemmel, CSJ

I had been hearing about and praying for refugees for months, so the call to serve was indeed an opportunity to enter more fully into the struggles that called migrants to leave their homelands and to experience their great hopes for asylum in the United States. What will always stay with me is the beautiful sight of seeing a father, released from detention after several weeks, running into the dining room and greeting his wife and children. His son and daughter hugged their dad for a very long time as the father’s tears ran down his cheeks. His wife covered her face with her hands as if a miracle had just happened...and indeed, it had! Since this experience, every time I make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, the same food we made for the refugees, I think of the 150 beautiful people we met every day and the small gift of nourishment we were able to provide. I will always remember offering garments to the men, women and children who needed fresh outfits after traveling for days and many miles with only the clothes on their backs. God bless them all!



▲ From left, Sister Margot Eder, Sister Marcella Clancy and Associate Jan Henderson.

### Sister Margot Eder, CSJ

A few years ago, one of our sisters went to the border for a few weeks. When she returned, I was touched by her stories and began to follow every news report about the refugees. This year, when the request for volunteers at the border came, I was ready. The warm response from our guests, and their gratitude, was what touched me the most. I don't know Spanish, but somehow we could engage together, despite the language barrier. The migrants were gentle, warm, generous people. Those of us volunteering could do so little for so short a time, but it clearly meant a lot to those who we were helping. I hope and pray that each immigrant we met reached their destination safely. While we didn't solve any of the big problems that led these wonderful people to flee their own homes, it clearly made a difference that we welcomed them.

### Sister Marcella Clancy, CSJ

One of the memories I will never forget was from the morning we were leaving El Paso. We were at the airport at 5:00 a.m. and a woman was ahead of us in line carrying a little girl. She had her immigration papers, a travel bag with sandwiches from Annunciation House, and a white kitchen garbage bag containing her few possessions. I knew immediately she was a refugee. I knew she had been at the airport all night because the first trip the buses from Annunciation House make to the airport is at 7:00 a.m. When we got through the TSA line, she was trying to figure out where to go next. I offered to help and took her to her gate. When my travel companions and I bought breakfast, I bought something hot for her and her daughter, along with bottles of juice. When I took it back to the mother, I wanted to cry. I had so much, they had so little. The words of St. Vincent de Paul rose in me, "May the poor forgive you for your gift of bread."

I am still reflecting on this experience and how I am being invited to change. I am so grateful for the blessing of this opportunity to experience Christ in the pained and sorrowful faces of the refugees.

---

### Jan Henderson, Associate

I had the privilege of serving at the El Paso border in March, with Sisters Margot Eder and Marcella Clancy. The three of us were assigned to work at the Pastoral Center of the Catholic Diocese of El Paso, where we daily served 90 to 140 families seeking asylum. I'm grateful I could play a small part in breaking down the barriers between "us" and "them." I wanted to experience the border first-hand, to better understand the situation amid the array of conflicting reports. I was most affected and humbled by the incredible number of local volunteers who donated clothing, prepared meals, and gave of their time and resources, without judgment, to assist their fellow human beings with great kindness and compassion.

# Sisters Witness For Refugees

## LIGHTS FOR LIBERTY EVENTS

This past July, sisters, associates, staff and friends from across our congregation took part in national Lights for Liberty events to witness and pray for fair and humane treatment of refugees and asylum seekers at our southern border. Attendees stood together in unity, prayed, and lit candles to symbolize bringing light to the darkness being endured by those detained.



▲ From left, Sisters Rosemary Balog, Rita Ann Teichman and Pam Owens.

### Sister Pam Owens, CSJ

A few decades ago I was a missionary in El Salvador. As with so many who ministered in Latin American countries, my soul was captured by the spirit of the Latino culture. When given the opportunity to go to the border and help our Latino sisters and brothers, I jumped at the chance. What hurt my heart the most, however, was the fear and desperation that were etched in the faces of those descending from the border patrol buses. As we greeted them with hugs, big smiles, and a hearty welcome, faces etched with desperation relaxed into relief and smiles. The stirrings of hope seemed to be reignited. For me, however, a deep sadness remains as I wonder how many of these brothers and sisters will be able to remain in this country and begin a new life, and how many will be returned to a life of fear and hopelessness. Together, we can make a difference, and so we continue to volunteer, pray, and trust in God's unifying love. ■



▲ Sisters Adalaide Williamson, Theresa Pitruzello and Joan Manuel at the Lights for Liberty event in Baton Rouge, La.



▲ Sisters, associates and staff at the Lights for Liberty event in Cleveland, Oh.

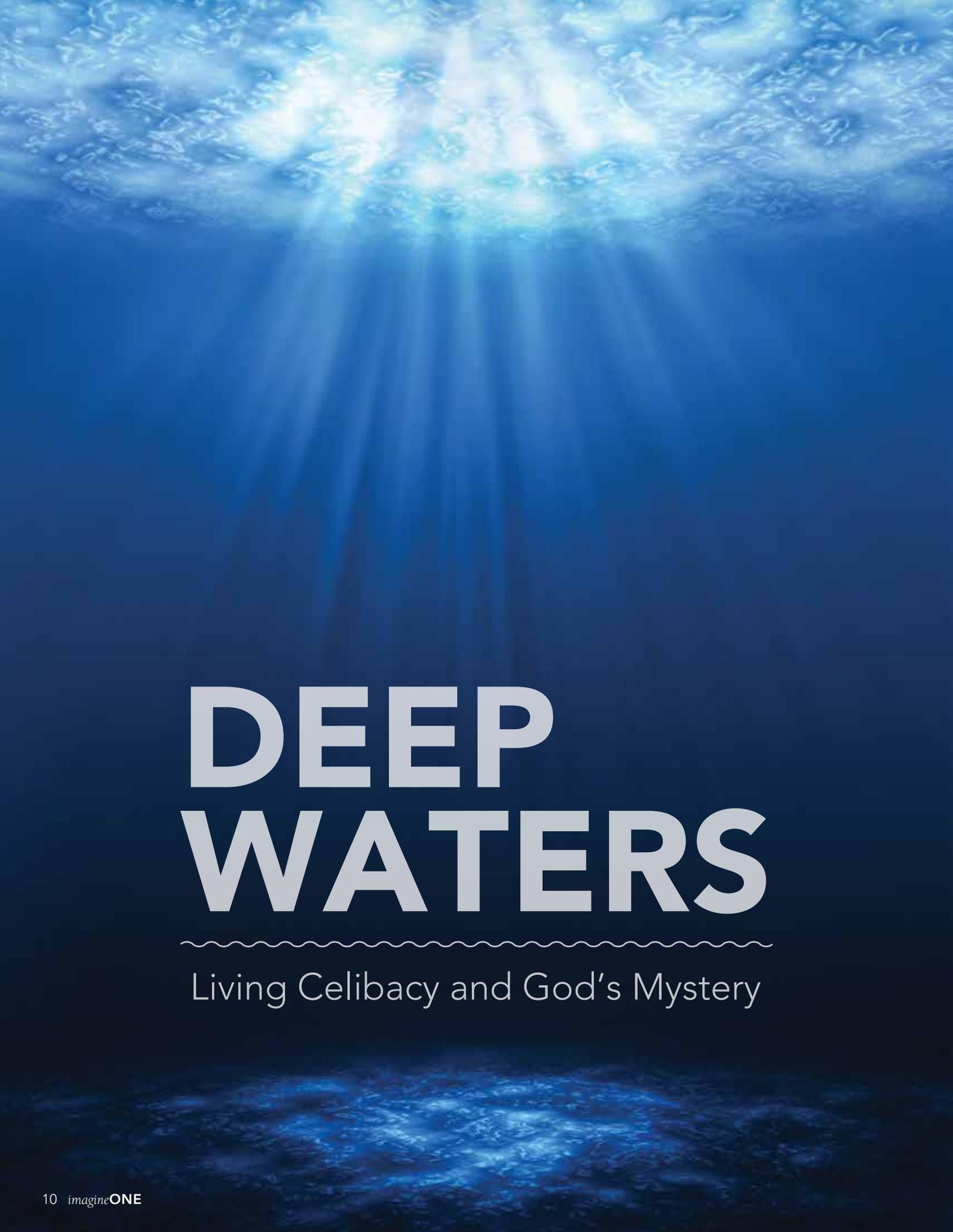
## CATHOLIC DAY OF ACTION FOR IMMIGRANT CHILDREN



▲ Sister Erin McDonald (far right), with other Sisters of St. Joseph witnessing for the refugee children who have lost their lives while in U.S. custody.

On September 4, Sisters Marcella Clancy, Rita Ann Teichman and Erin McDonald, who have all volunteered at the U.S./ Mexico border, took part in the Catholic Day of Action for Immigrant Children in Newark, New Jersey. They joined Cardinal Joseph Tobin and hundreds of people to witness, pray and march in support of refugee children, and to call on elected officials to enact just immigration laws.

We pray for a compassionate response to refugees at our border, especially children, and call on Congress to enact just and humane immigration laws. ■



# DEEP WATERS

---

Living Celibacy and God's Mystery

The following reflection was originally published as a post on our blog, "Beyond the Habit." In it, Sister Chris Schenk fearlessly deep dives into a subject not often talked about.

My mom had a very hard time accepting my desire to be a nun. We could not really talk about it. She had great dreams that I would have a nice career, marry a wealthy man (preferably a doctor or lawyer), settle down, have children, and live a happy life. In retrospect, I think I fell in love with God somewhere around the eighth grade, although I did not realize it until much later.

I have always loved things religious. Whether it was attending Mass, learning about the great philosophers, or reading the lives of the saints, God seemed the ultimate of "strange attractors," to use the language of today's science. I could not really explain my attraction to God, only that it was often more interesting to me than many other things in my life. I had boyfriends, of course, sometimes more than I wanted.

While I liked men a lot, I often liked them better as friends than as romantic partners. I fell in love a couple of times, but somehow the relationships never felt like quite

enough. Something inside me was not really thrilled with settling down with just one person. Something inside was searching for "something more," as I have now come to recognize.

God, on the other hand, was gradually becoming my most interesting and most long-lasting relationship. After a retreat in which I was blessed with a powerful experience of God's unique sense of humor, unconditional love, and profound acceptance of me in all my quiriness, I drove home filled with the knowledge that I would give my life over to this delightful mystery. But how? For me, it would have to be through Catholic 'nundom'.

While in one way it made no sense, in another way, it made the most sense of all. How better to express my longing to love God with my whole heart, soul, strength, and mind than through my most precious gift, my body?

For me, vowed celibacy is an embodied response to mystery. It springs from the profundity of a relationship, no less than the marriage commitment.

For me, vowed celibacy is an embodied response to mystery. It springs from the profundity of a relationship, no less than the marriage commitment.

Needless to say, my mother was not pleased. I have forgiven her though, because, why would she be pleased? Her deepest happiness had come from falling in love with my father. Their 60-year marriage was filled with ups and downs, but also much, much love. Why wouldn't she want this for her daughter?

I worked as a nurse midwife for nearly 20 years and know quite a bit about the awesome gift of our sexuality. I was afraid I must have some deep-seated psychological dysfunction that would make me want to choose celibacy as my desired mode of expressing love in our world. It seems pretty oxymoronic, after all. On the other hand, how could anything

Not that being a nun is always ecstatic! Any more than being in a married relationship is always ecstatic. My choice of religious celibacy, while not always easy, has been deeply fulfilling, healthy, and what brings me the deepest happiness.

adequately express love for God? I wonder if this is the best deep down philosophical and psychological explanation for the attraction to religious celibacy. When no amount of loving could ever be enough to express such a big love, a commitment to love beyond the physical may for some be the best response of all.

The celibate mode of loving is not about giving up, but about witnessing to a love that fulfills and completes as deeply as the most passionate of sexual expressions. One thing I know from my midwifery career is that a big part of the pleasure of sex is its ecstatic, almost mystical component.

Prayer can lead to a similar fulfillment. After all, doesn't it make sense that the God who created us for ecstasy would

also attract us in this most positive of human experiences?

Not that being a nun is always ecstatic! Any more than being in a married relationship is always ecstatic. My choice of religious celibacy, while not always easy, has been deeply fulfilling, healthy, and what brings me the deepest happiness.

Which is not to say that I don't need deep down soul friends and companions as much as the next person. These anchor me in the sure knowledge of being loved and valued. Some of my deepest down soul friends are married couples who have on occasion blessed me with some pretty profound conversations. They tell me their married intimacy both expresses and deepens their

relationship to God as well as to each other. Their spirituality, growth and capacity for intimacy are all part of their marriage commitment, expressed in, through and with our God of wondrous mystery.

Deep waters these, and very beautiful.

Another thing I love about the celibate way of loving is that it really does free me to take risks and be available to the needs of others. More so for me than if I had family obligations which must enter the decision-making equation. This is a good choice for my adventurous spirit.

When all is said and done, I guess my celibate commitment is the best response I can give to Mary of Magdala's plaintive refrain in *Jesus Christ Superstar*: "I Don't Know How to Love Him." I don't really know how to love the God of Love either, but this feels right, and it makes me happy.

Deep waters these, and very beautiful. ■

If you would like to subscribe to our blog, find us at [BeyondTheHabit.org](http://BeyondTheHabit.org)



Sister Chris Schenk, CSJ, has worked as a nurse midwife to low-income families, a community organizer, a writer, and the founding director of an international church reform organization, FutureChurch. Currently she writes an award-winning column, "Simply Spirit," for the National Catholic Reporter. Her book, *Crispina and Her Sisters: Women and Authority in Early Christianity*, details original research into iconic motifs of female authority found in early Christian art and archaeology. It was released in December 2017 by Fortress Press and is available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

# WHY I STAY

BY SISTER SALLIE LATKOVICH, CSJ

When I was teaching graduate students, class would often begin with a comment or question regarding “the church.” My first response was to ask: “What church?” Most often, the students would be speaking of the Catholic Church institution: its hierarchical structure and administration. Instead, I tried to encourage them to speak of the church in the way it was defined by the Second Vatican Council: as the people of God, the community of the baptized.



The Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (Light of the World), from the Second Vatican Council, defines the church as “a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (It is also interesting to note that the chapter on the people of God precedes the chapter on the hierarchical structure in that document.)

Just as the medical community researches and treats cancers that invade various body systems, it seems that the church has also faced a number of cancers in the recent years:



---

May we who are baptized into Christ take heart, reminding one another that he is still Jesus, still with us.

- Vatican II Revisionists, who deny the validity of the Second Vatican Council and its documents. Revisionists find new movement in the church challenging. They prefer and promote a pre-Vatican II understanding of the church and its mission. Their focus is on the primacy of the priesthood (rather than the primacy of baptism), and the power and authority of the hierarchy. Sister Sandra Schneiders, an Immaculate Heart of Mary sister and a noted theologian and scholar, believes that the revisionists' agenda is the biggest and most divisive problem facing the church.
- Clericalism. Another “cancer” in our church: where bishops are lords of the diocese, and priests are lords of the parish. Clericalists have the mistaken belief that the ordained *are* the church, and also that they are the main and most important participants. Parishioners and vowed religious men and women are simply distant observers, and even servants, of the ordained.
- The sexual abuse crisis, which may be the first “cancer” that one thinks of. The crisis of sexual abuse includes many things, including the practice of pedophilia and the protection of pedophiles. But it can also include the rejection of, and even condemnation of, LGBTQ people, as well as other forms of sexual harassment of all kinds.
- Bad theology is yet another “cancer” that is manifest in the church and evident in poor preaching. For example, some priests may preside at a funeral of someone who committed suicide and condemn the person to eternal punishment. Some priests counsel parents of LGBTQ children to disown them as sinners. Others maintain the Catholic Church as the only means to salvation.



May we hear God saying once again: "See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

ISAIAH 43: 19

In a book entitled *Blessed Are the Bored in Spirit*, author Mark Hart makes this commentary on his experience of Sunday Eucharist:

*"An organ blares. The faithful rise. Stragglers enter. Babies cry. Ushers point and cram. Singers miss the note. Children stare blankly at stained glass. Incense fills the air. The masses stand and kneel in unison like some form of Catholic aerobics. Fast forward twenty years and add cell phones ringing and you have yourself this Sunday's Mass... It was an expectation, not an invitation. It was an obligation, not an opportunity."*

Indeed, things can look very bleak for the faithful members of the Catholic Church. But let us not lose hope!

Let us remember that in the first creation account in Genesis, God created order out of chaos, and commented on each day: "It was good." God brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to the promised land. God freed them from exile in Babylon. Jesus is with us, and despite the darkness of the present moment in the church, there are lights that break through.

May we hear God saying once again: "See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43: 19)

What about the church remains good and birthing "something new"?

Wonderful, devoted, prayerful clergy who minister well to those in their care; religious and lay women and men who continue in ministries of education and healthcare; those people of God who reach out to the poor and marginalized in ways of direct service; those who seek systemic change of unjust systems. There are many who continue to take the Gospel as their primary source of conscience.

May we who are baptized into Christ take heart, reminding one another that he is still Jesus, still with us. The community of believers remains a place where God is found. And, may we remind one another that God is indeed doing something new. Just as in the creation account, God creates life out of seeming chaos. We can count on that! ■



Sister Sallie Latkovich, CSJ, is a member of the Congregation Leadership Team. Prior to being elected to leadership, she directed the Bible Study and Travel Program and the Summer Institute at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, where she also taught courses in Biblical Foundations of Spirituality. In 2019, she published her second book, "Worship and Church: An Ecclesial Liturgy." Sister Sallie continues to lead annual pilgrimages to the Holy Land where she serves as a guide and lecturer.

# Companions in Mission

## Family of Joseph Continues to Grow



▲ At a recent Giving Voice conference, Sisters of St. Joseph and novices gathered for prayer, sharing, and visioning. From left, Sally Koch, Paula Therese Pilon, Erin McDonald, Clare Bass, and Sarah Simmons.

### SISTERS – THE NEXT GENERATION

Every two years, sisters and novices of our St. Joseph communities have the opportunity to participate in a national gathering hosted by Giving Voice, a peer led organization that creates spaces for younger women religious to give voice to their hopes, dreams and challenges in religious life. This year, the conference theme was “Boldness and Beauty of Communion: Living Religious Life Now!” which provided space for our sisters to join with other Catholic sisters under age 50 to build bridges across communities. Sister Erin McDonald, CSJ, who participated in the conference, had this to share. “I’m so grateful for the opportunities I have to deepen my relationship with God and with other sisters, grow my leadership skills and help foster a vision for the future of religious life.” Sister Erin will profess final vows with the Congregation of St. Joseph on Saturday, October 5th. Please join us in praying for her, and all of our next generation sisters and novices.

### ASSOCIATES – JOIN THE MOVEMENT!

Have you ever felt an instant connection to something? Something that simply rang true for you the moment you heard or experienced it? This is the way some of our associates describe their connection to the mission, spirituality and community of St. Joseph – as a desire to embrace, live, support and move the mission of unity forward, and to make it visible through words and actions.

Associates are engaged at various levels in direct service with our ministries, as partners in prayer, and as volunteers at our centers and in the communities where they live.

Today, more than 500 women and men from all over the country are involved in our growing associate movement. We invite you to join us. Together, we can make a difference in our world as we live and work for love, unity, justice and peace for all!



▲ New associates after their commitment ceremony in Cleveland. Clockwise from left are Rita Minasola, Ed Zavoda, Donna Ernst, Carol Kolenda and Renee Brickman. They are just a few of many who joined us as associates this year from around the congregation.

If you are interested in learning more, visit us online at [csjoseph.org](http://csjoseph.org) and click on “How To Join Us.”

# Volunteers Partner with Sisters and Ministries to Support Families in Wichita

## DEAR NEIGHBOR MINISTRIES

Before graduating 8th grade at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School in Wichita, students complete what is known as a Culmination Project. Usually these projects consist of traditional research and writing on topics of social concern. Childhood poverty was the topic given to students Alex and Gabe, who chose to think outside the box by getting involved in the community.

Alex and Gabe met with Kit Lambertz, Executive Director of Dear Neighbor Ministries, to discuss how they could help support the children of Hilltop, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Wichita. It was decided that these two 8th grade students would raise funds to purchase shoes for children who live in Hilltop, and participate in the

children's programs offered by Dear Neighbor Ministries.

The boys learned a lot about childhood poverty through research, but they learned and benefitted far more from their experiences meeting and interacting with the youth of Hilltop and participating with them in the children's activities offered by Dear Neighbor Ministries.

Seeing first-hand the need in Hilltop inspired the boys to work very hard to raise money and make a difference in the lives of others. In three weeks, Alex and Gabe raised enough funds to purchase 30 pairs of children's shoes, with additional funds being given to Dear Neighbor Ministries to provide for future purchases of shoes as the need arises.



▲ Alex and Gabe delivered meals with Sister Ann Catherine Burger (and her well-known golf cart) to the home bound in the Hilltop neighborhood of Wichita.

Alex and Gabe are an inspiration and an example of our mission of unity at work, as they modeled love, compassion and hope for our neighbors in the Hilltop area of Wichita.

To learn more about Dear Neighbor Ministries, visit [dearneighbor.org](http://dearneighbor.org)

## STEPSTONE

This past June, sponsored ministry StepStone kicked off the summer with their annual fishing trip and picnic. StepStone helps women and children who have been victims of domestic violence find security, self-sufficiency and a life free of fear and abuse by providing safe, affordable housing, support services and advocacy.

StepStone staff, volunteers and officers from the Wichita Police Department gathered alongside survivors for a fun day of fishing, relaxation and food.

This event allows police officers to interact with survivors, especially

children, in a relaxed environment. The officers, volunteers, and sisters helped those who had never fished before bait hooks, cast lines and take fish off hooks for those lucky enough to have caught one. No one seemed to mind that each fish caught was thrown back into the pond.

Those who didn't want to fish could sit and relax near the pond, fly a kite, play catch, or simply climb the playground equipment. The relaxing day ended with lunch and promises to come back next year.



To learn more about StepStone, visit [stepstoneks.org](http://stepstoneks.org)

# Moving Beyond Thoughts and Prayers

The Congregation of St. Joseph is dedicated to protecting all life, from conception to natural death. We believe that all people have the right to life, and we work to preserve the dignity of all people. The following reflection was originally published as a post on our blog “Beyond the Habit.” Written by Sister Christine Parks, the message resonates now more than ever as gun violence continues to escalate and voices demanding common sense gun control grow louder.



This morning I had to toss out what I had begun writing — something “poetic” about September, the month when summer begins its slow stroll toward autumn and harvest time. After the news of more mass shootings recently, all of that poeticism felt more than a bit frivolous and disrespectful to those who were victims of the shootings, their families, and to the very serious state of our nation these days.

So having let go of my first draft, I’m left sitting here, heart bruised, mind reeling, fingers poised over the keyboard, wondering: what’s left to say? What’s left after all the news coverage and analysis; after all the words of experts and comments of survivors of prior violence; after all the tears of those who have lost loved ones to another inconceivable act of gun violence; after the trauma or numbness of seeing and hearing over and over the details of these horrendous acts.

One response could be to simply stop—stop listening to and watching the news, stop reading the reports whether in print or online, stop talking over coffee, lunch, the “watercooler” about another unthinkable event. How many unthinkable events are required before we begin to think this is our new normal? This option, however, doesn’t help, doesn’t ease the pain, doesn’t stop the hatred, doesn’t eliminate the fear that it can (and probably will) happen again, and again—and maybe next time in my city. Although, actually, it already has happened where I live.

Like many of you, I also bring this to prayer. Praying for those who lost their lives, the injured, families and friends, and even for the shooter—for the healing of all those whose anger, pain, suffering, and hatred bring them to this place of unholy violence. But even that doesn't feel like enough, not when I know what lurks in the depth of my own mind and heart sometimes. Perhaps any prayer for a change of heart must begin with my own.

As a community, sisters and associates, who believe wholeheartedly in the union of all creation in a loving compassionate God, we stand with all those striving to bring about an end to violence and hatred. We stand with all those who are willing to write, act, work—and yes—*pray* for a change of heart for our nation and world. Some days my personal contribution doesn't feel like that much, but when added to yours, and yours, and yours it increases exponentially, becoming part of the field of compassion that spreads out from every heart (yours and mine) and makes space for healing and love to grow. ■

If you would like to subscribe to our blog, find us at [BeyondTheHabit.org](https://www.beyondthehabit.org)



*Sister Christine Parks, CSJ, is a former member of the Congregation Leadership Team. Prior to that she served as Spiritual Director and Program Coordinator for Transformations Spirituality Center at our Nazareth Center in Kalamazoo,*

*Mich. She currently serves on our Sustainability Team with a special interest in clean water initiatives.*

The recent mass shootings in our country impel us to once again implore all citizens and elected leaders to end the rampant rage and division that have overpowered our nation and too often result in mass, indiscriminate violence. We are a nation that promises a life free from fear, and yet we seem unable to stop the epidemic of hate that has overwhelmed us. As we have been carrying in our own hearts the pain being endured by families who have lost loved ones and those wounded through gun violence, we bring in also those impacted by these latest attacks.

We implore all legislative bodies to pass legislation that effectively prevents gun violence. We call for the passage of laws that ban assault weapons, require universal background checks for all gun sales, provide funding for gun violence prevention research, and make the trafficking in weapons a federal crime.

The deeper causes of violence must be addressed by us as a nation, and we must put our resources there immediately. Only by focusing on the multi-layered foundations of violence will we succeed in making our nation a safer and less fearful place for all.

*– From the Congregation of St. Joseph Position Statement on Gun Violence*

## ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE:

- 🕒 **Call** your senators and ask them to pass common sense gun laws.
- 🕒 **Join** a local organization in your area that is advocating against gun violence or supporting victims of gun violence. Everytown for Gun Safety and Moms Demand Action are a good place to start.
- 🕒 **Educate** yourself on the roles systemic racism and white supremacy ideology play in contemporary justice issues.
- 🕒 **Examine** yourself and your relationships for implicit bias to better understand the roots of prejudice in our society.
- 🕒 **Pray** for all those affected by the tragedy of gun violence.

Big or Small,  
We Are All Called to  
***SUSTAINABLE  
ACTION***

BY SISTER CHRISTINE PARKS, CSJ



In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis reminds us that the story of creation teaches us: "...human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor, and with the earth itself."

If your house is like mine, you probably recycle everything you can; hopefully compost your kitchen waste; are trying to decrease your use of "throw-away" paper and plastics. Every day I, and the sisters I live with, sort our trash between what's recyclable and what will end up in a landfill. We put our kitchen waste into a compost bucket to make organic fertilizer for the garden. We use cloth bags for groceries, have silicon covers for left-overs, don't use straws—and we've been doing all of that pretty faithfully for over 10 years. But, while all these efforts and behaviors are laudable and essential for sustainable living, they're not enough.



On their own, none of our individual efforts are enough to make change on the level necessary to slow down the current pace of climate change, which is leading us to a global climate crisis. This crisis isn't just about the environment. It's related to a whole range of other changes and challenges that are creating both humanitarian and ecological crises around the world—including:

- population shifts as people search for land that they can earn a living from
- loss of viable habitat for many species
- changing weather patterns causing increasingly severe weather events
- rising sea levels leading to erosion and rising ocean temperatures leading to the melting of glaciers, the decrease of polar ice caps, seasonal sea-ice, and the death of vast reefs vital to a healthy marine environment
- floating mats of plastic that threaten increasing numbers of ocean dwellers.

At the same time, the reality of climate crisis, and the impact of human activity on its acceleration, continues to be a topic that is not universally recognized in our country. But in terms of climate concerns and issues, >

*... perhaps what's important is to change our hearts;  
to find common ground in terms of our desire to  
create and leave a better future for our children...*

perhaps what's important is to change our hearts; to find common ground in terms of our desire to create and leave a better future for our children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, and for the many creatures with which we share this lovely planet.

In 2007, the Congregation of St. Joseph made a promise...*to recognize the reality that Earth is dying, to claim our oneness with Earth and to take steps now to strengthen, heal and renew the face of Earth.* In the years since making this promise we have worked to educate ourselves and increase our awareness of climate change and how our own carbon footprint contributes to it. In addition we have made substantial commitments to “put our money where our mouth is” in terms of the sustainable building of our new centers. It is not just semantics, we are *deconstructing* some of our old buildings rather than demolishing them, and ensuring that over 90% of materials are reused, recycled, or repurposed—rather than ending up in a landfill. In three of our locations



▲ One of the solar installations which helps power our center in LaGrange Park, Il. It also serves as a carport.

we have installed solar panels to reduce our reliance on carbon-based fuels; we have installed water-saving fixtures in all centers; we are working to decrease the use of paper and plastic products. Beyond that, we have also encouraged the adoption of a variety of similar practices and changes in lifestyle with all sisters and associates, to protect and heal Earth—this precious home we share with all creation.

Building on the work we've done to keep our promise to Earth, last year we made a further commitment to *recognize that the crises of humanity and the crises of Earth are intertwined.* This emerging worldview of integral ecology impels us toward an intentional and fuller way of living out our promise to renew the Earth. It is heartening to know that Pope Francis—through his *Laudato Si* encyclical, is a companion on this journey with us. In *Laudato Si*,



*We are committed to looking for those with whom we can collaborate and partner in doing our part, using our energy and our resources to help address climate crisis.*

Pope Francis addresses the concept of integral ecology as a new model for justice; an ecology “which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings.” We are committed to looking for those with whom we can collaborate and partner in doing our part, using our energy and our resources to help address climate crisis.

Individual efforts to change our lifestyles and behaviors are not enough, but they cannot be abandoned. They are signs of our personal and corporate commitment. However it will take the sustained efforts of government agencies, political will, the combined efforts of business and industry, along with all of our individual actions

(including advocacy through letter writing, emails, and phone calls) to create change on the level required to slow the inexorable march toward disastrous climate change and massive species extinction.

We’re in this for the long haul—how about you? ■

## The Plight of the Monarch

### Congregation works to save crucial pollinators

Did you know that one out of every three bites of food you eat exists because of pollinators like the monarch butterfly? Did you also know that every fall, the monarch’s migrate 2,500 miles south to Mexico and pass over many of our communities? These creatures are as necessary to the food chain as they are beautiful, but sadly they are in trouble. The monarch population is down 90% of what it was in 1992, and the milkweed plant population, which is indispensable to the monarch, is also down 90%. Milkweed is the only source of food for the monarch caterpillar, but these plants are rapidly disappearing due to land development and the widespread spraying of weed killer.

After learning of their plight, sisters, associates and staff of the Congregation of St. Joseph decided to make efforts to promote the recovery of the monarch population. So far, a plot of land at our center in Wheeling has been planted with milkweed and other pollinator attractors, such as wildflowers, in order to provide the necessary food for these important creatures. We hope to expand this effort and have provided the seeds and planting instructions to others. ■

If you would like to learn more about the monarchs and what you can do to help, visit [www.saveourmonarchs.org](http://www.saveourmonarchs.org)





# How Do We Find Truth?

In an increasingly complex mix of information, found in media reports and social media postings, it seems to be getting harder and harder to sort out and discern the truth. Yet knowing the truth seems more important now than ever since we base so many of our actions on what we believe to be true. In looking at this issue of truth we decided to talk with Dr. Michael Lynch, a professor of philosophy at the University of Connecticut. He recently received attention for his TED Talk titled “How to See Past Your Own Perspective and Find Truth.” We find that his insights offer us respite and a reset of how to reclaim truth and balance. We hope they might do the same for you.

Dr. Lynch supports a mode of questioning our own ideas that allows for intellectual humility. That is, he encourages us all to recognize that we don’t know it all, and we need to be humble enough to remain open to the thoughts of others. This approach allows a dialogue to occur with those around us, a conversation that opens up a way for sharing thoughts, ideas, and information. Based on ancient philosophical approaches, it allows us the freedom to change our minds based upon our interactions with other people.

He urges us to support efforts and work that are reflective and thoughtful. Instead of settling for getting our news via sensationalized headlines on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms, he supports getting our news from serious journalists who work for credible sources. He challenges us to be trained in recognizing implicit bias, so that we may identify and explore our own biases and learn to recognize when there are issues that we may be blind to. Most of all, he calls us to the urgent importance of dialogue. “It is so important for us to want to talk to other people,” he says. He speaks with passion about the danger of insisting that what we know is the full and final answer rather than just the beginning of learning or simply one’s own particular and limited experience. We need to reclaim the language of truth and humility as an answer to the arrogance and divisiveness of the world. Perhaps the most striking aspect of what Dr. Lynch proposes is the simplicity of it all. “I think of humility as a contrast to arrogance. Humility for me is openness to a worldview that can only be improved by an experience of being with other people.”

What if we each became humble in this way? What relationship and possibilities could unfold? What love could be generated? ■

I think of humility as a contrast to arrogance. Humility for me is openness to a worldview that can only be improved by an experience of being with other people.

**MICHAEL P. LYNCH**

---

*Michael P. Lynch is the director of the Humanities Institute and a professor of philosophy at the University of Connecticut. His book “Know It All Society” was recently published by WW Norton. His previous books include “The Internet of Us” and “True to Life,” an Editor’s Choice by the New York Times Book Review. Lynch has held grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and is a frequent contributor to the New York Times.*



# WHAT IF?

BY SISTER PAT KOZAK, CSJ

What is true? What should we believe? Perhaps we are asking the wrong questions. Perhaps our search for a single, once and for all “right answer” actually prevents us from seeing the larger truth of our world.

In terms of faith, we hold many large, even inexplicable truths already. We say that Jesus came that we might have life and freedom—and yet he seems powerless to prevent suffering in our world. We believe that God is all-powerful and all-knowing—and yet we are unable to explain why human free will is able to thwart God’s desire for peace among all God’s family. We profess that God is everywhere and ever present—and yet so much of our world is caught in the tragedy and evil of poverty, racism, and cruel oppressions. Every one of us can add to the list of “That is true, and yet . . .” In the face of this reality, how do we identify, much less explain, truth?

Several years ago, I heard a talk by Parker Palmer, the world-renowned writer, speaker and activist. In reflecting on the difference between facts and truth he began by saying what seemed obvious: if one claims that 2+2 equals anything but four, they would be lying. Declaring the Earth is flat and that you will fall off if you go too far is another lie. The opposite of a fact, Palmer explained, is a lie. A fact is true; a lie is false.

He then suggested that a very different dynamic exists in the arena of truth. Truth doesn’t have the simple dualism of fact and lie. Something else is present, something deeper and more difficult to accept and reflect on. Palmer posed

that the opposite of one great truth is not a lie but rather another great truth. For example, we know that everyone will die someday. And that is true. The opposite, however, is another truth that we believe as Catholics. That is, everyone will have eternal life. The opposite of a great truth is another great truth.

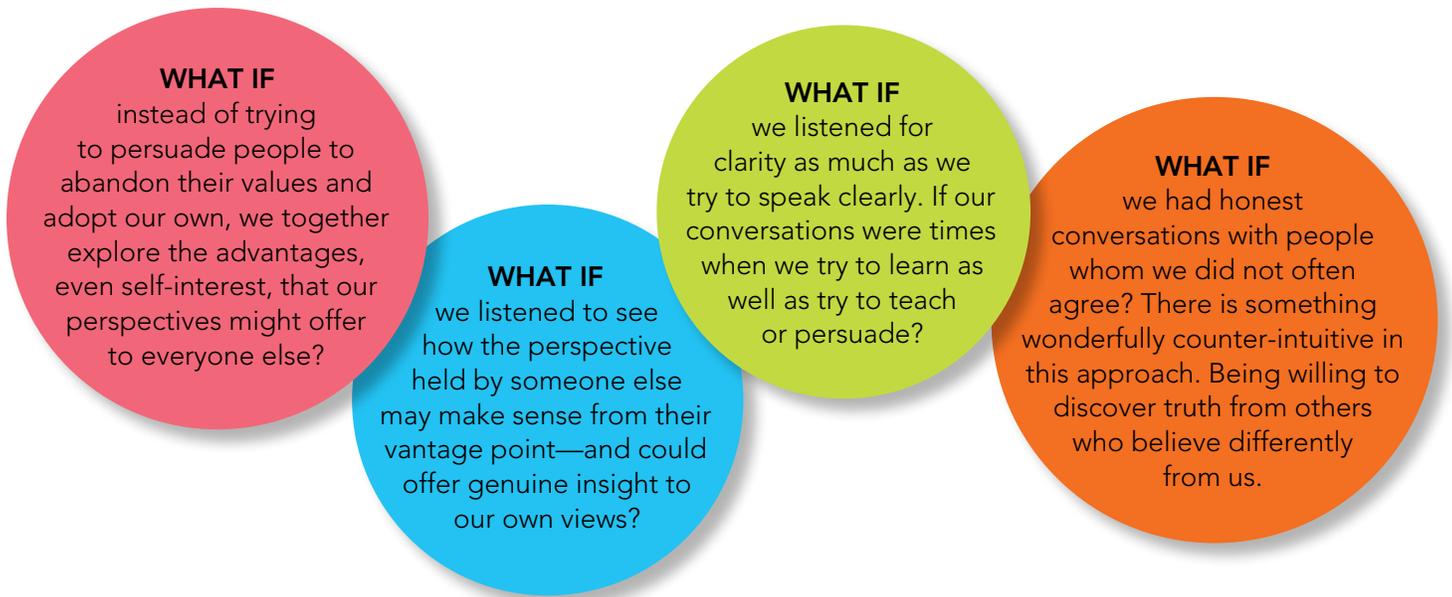
In some of our thornier conversations as Catholics, we rely on the truth that all people are loved by God; all people are in some way, brothers and sisters of one another. Climate change, health care, jobs, religious freedom, even war and peace – when considering all these issues we know that our responses can meaningfully flow from the truth of love.

It’s all about perspective, the particular and sometimes peculiar vantage point from which we see and experience life. Acknowledging our own perspective requires us to be aware of the experiences and values that shape our lives and predispose us to see things and experience situations in certain ways.

Maybe we could discover a wise and courageous response to the gospel if we talked more, with a willingness to be open and honest, even vulnerable, with one another. Maybe we ourselves could find greater truth if we more carefully considered the perspectives of others.



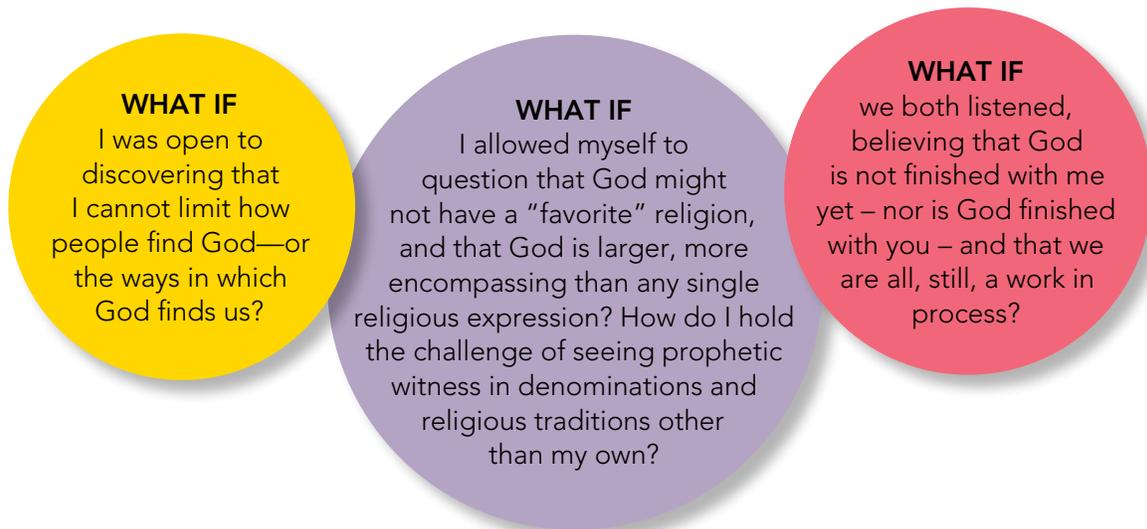
## CONSIDER CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THINGS THAT MATTER



---

## CONSIDER FAITH, HUMILITY AND OUR NOTION OF GOD

Some might worry that being too open to hearing the perspectives of others leads to a relativism, an “anything goes” kind of faith. I think it is far more likely to lead to a long-overdue humility. Rooting our faith in doctrinal formulations rather than in God’s love and forgiveness is just too small. God is bigger than any doctrine. Way bigger.



What if I took the risk of having the conversations that matter? What if I were to say “I have much to learn on this. I might not see this clearly and I might just be wrong.” And while saying this, I enter the conversation also believing that I have something to offer to the other in service of a search for truth fuller than my own.

What if truth is as large, mysterious, encompassing and inclusive as God? ■

# NOW IS THE TIME

*From the song "This is the America I Believe In,"  
by Sister Kathy Sherman, CSJ*

Now is the time for all to be fed.  
Now is the time that all had a bed to rest from the  
cold on a long winters night.  
This is the America that I love. This is the America  
I believe in, how about you?

Now is the time for violence to end.  
Now is the time for us to befriend those who have  
fallen on times that are hard.  
This is the America that I love. This is the America  
I believe in, how about you?

Now is the time to heal what is broken.  
Now is the time to hear what is spoken, the  
longing for work, for food and home.  
This is the America that I love. This is the America  
I believe in, how about you?

Now is the time to set our sight  
On the dream once again how all have the right to  
life, liberty, pursuit of happiness.  
This is the America that I love. This is the America  
I believe in, how about you?

Now is the time to protect all creation.  
Now is the time for equal education for children  
who one day will lead us in peace.  
This is the America that I love. This is the America  
I believe in, how about you?

Now is the time to reach out our hand.  
Now is the time to join with all lands in building a  
world where all can be one.  
This is the America that I love. This is the America  
I believe in, how about you?





3430 Rocky River Drive • Cleveland, OH 44111

If you would prefer to receive a digital copy of this magazine or be removed from the *imagineONE* mailing list, please email [communications@csjoseph.org](mailto:communications@csjoseph.org).

There are places away from the ordinary, where there is time and space to find meaning and deepen your relationship with God, Earth, self and one another.

The Congregation of St. Joseph sponsors places for retreat and spiritual nourishment around the country, including:

**Christ in the Wilderness**

Stockton, Illinois

**River's Edge**

Cleveland, Ohio

**St. Joseph Center**

Wheeling, West Virginia

**The Well**

LaGrange Park, Illinois

**Transformations**

Kalamazoo, Michigan

For more information, visit us online at [csjoseph.org](http://csjoseph.org) and click on "Our Spirituality."

