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CORNER

Religious congregations connect, collaborate, celebrate!

The year 2015 brought together many converging opportunities for the Ursulines of Brown County to recognize the ways we have built relationships with other religious communities over our 170 year history. Pope Francis' call for a year of Celebration of Consecrated Life in the Church was an invitation, in the spirit of joy, to give thanks for the rich history of every religious community, to celebrate the present with passion, and to embrace the future with hope. In this issue we begin a two-part look at the other communities with whom we have shared ministries and our way of life. We begin with our present connections and collaborations. The next issue of Cornerstone will highlight those relationships we enjoyed in the past.

In the Cincinnati Archdiocese, as the Year of Consecrated Life was coming to an end, two Franciscan Friars conceived and implemented the idea of a concert to be performed by members of all the religious communities in the Archdiocese. Seventeen religious communities of women and men came together for four rehearsals and presented *Wake the World with Joy* at St. Peter in Chains Cathedral on January 17, 2016. Over 120 singers and musicians performed before a full church. Included in the chorus were Cincinnati Ursulines Srs. Margie Efke and Eileen Connelly, OSU, Brown County Ursuline Sr. Christine Pratt and Mary Cabrini Durkin of the Company of St. Ursula. Fr. Dan Anderson, OFM shared a beautiful narrative which united the music and the theme of the year together. It was said that through this experience a community of communities was formed.

Fr. Dan's words embraced the spirit of the Year of Consecrated Life and our interconnectedness: "Every form of religious life has been born of the Spirit's call to follow Jesus. The initial expressions and experiences of our communities



Photo courtesy of the Catholic Telegraph Register

developed and evolved throughout our histories, engaging new members in new geographic and cultural contexts, and giving rise to new ways of exercising our charism, new initiatives and expressions of Gospel charity... We commit ourselves to hearing and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We recommit our lives to lifting up the Gospel today and everyday so that we and all who hear it may come to what Pope Francis called *Evangelii Gaudium*-**The Joy of the Gospel**... It is this spirit who leads us out of ourselves into one family, the beloved children of one God."

Sr. Phyllis Reflects On Her Experience

As religious congregations face aging of members and diminishment in size, opportunities for collaboration among the congregations increase. The Ursulines of Brown County have been blessed abundantly by being able to partner with other communities in a variety of ways.

One of the most significant opportunities for collaboration occurred when Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Cincinnati invited our sisters who needed nursing care to receive it at their new health center. In 2003, Sr. Mary Carmen Johnson was the first of a long line of Ursulines of Brown County to make her home at the health center. We are so grateful to the sisters and the staff for making our sisters part of their family, celebrating birthdays, the feast of St. Angela, and other “family” type events. They join us in keeping vigil when one of the Ursulines is preparing to go to the Lord. Sisters who require short-term rehab after a hospitalization/surgery have also been cared for at Mt. Notre Dame.

This past summer when there was “no room at the inn” at Mt. Notre Dame Health Center, the Sisters of Mercy at McAuley Convent welcomed Sr. Anne Maureen Maher into their community in their skilled nursing unit. They, too, made Anne part of their family, enjoying her ever-present smile and Irish humor. They mourned with us at her passing. To these sisters and staff, we are also very grateful.

When I was on retreat this past November, I prayed about my weekly schedule. With email, the Internet and phone, I realized I could do

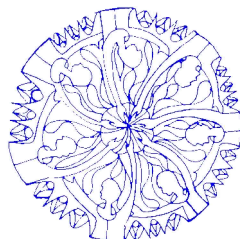
more work in Cincinnati rather than driving to my office in Brown County 3-4 times a week. Because I wanted to make a separation between work and home, I decided to find a location in Cincinnati to have some office space. When I approached Sr. Margie Efke, OSU, General Minister of the Ursulines of Cincinnati, about the possibility of having space in their congregational offices, I received a resounding, “Yes.” Because Margie and I are both the only elected leaders in our congregations, this arrangement has been especially helpful as we have a greater opportunity to be a support to each other. Working at BC two days a week, in Cincinnati two days, and at Chatfield College as a student advisor one day has provided more balance to my life.

One of the monthly meetings I try never to miss is the support group for congregational leadership in the Cincinnati area. We are able to share concerns in a confidential setting and help each other work out possible solutions to issues. The opportunity to discuss the situations we all face increases our ability to collaborate in our lives as religious women.



Sister Margie Efke, Ursulines of Cincinnati and Sister Phyllis Kemper, Ursulines of Brown County

Be bound to one another by each other, helping each other



the bond of charity, esteeming bearing with each other.

St. Angela Merici



Sister Anne Maureen Maher will be remembered for her smile

Sister Anne Maureen Maher, OSU died on December 22, 2015 after a long illness. Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at Ursuline Academy, Cincinnati on December 28, 2015 with burial in the Ursulines of Brown County cemetery in St. Martin, Ohio the following day. Anne was born on April 23, 1942. She made her final profession as an Ursuline on August 9, 1966. Anne spent several years teaching in elementary and high school before becoming a guidance counselor for high school and college students. She was director of the Wellness Center at the then College of Mt. St. Joseph where she supervised the diverse professional staff. She served as formation director and Congregational Minister within the community. Other positions she has held include director of Spiritual Life Services at Mother Margaret Hall for the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. Anne leaves many cousins and enduring friends who remember her for her ever present warm and welcoming smile. Anne is dearly missed.

Connections continue

Over the last several years our community leaders have found involvement in regional and national gatherings to be a source of energy, support and assistance as religious congregations face ever new challenges. The regional and national gatherings of Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the North American Ursuline Leadership Conference particularly bring together in a prayerful environment the gifts and experiences of various congregations who together seek to continue the mission of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that of their individual foundresses.

Sister Ellen Doyle continues to share her talents with various communities who seek her facilitation skills as they prepare for their futures. She most recently has served the priests and brothers of the Society of the Divine Savior (the Salvatorians) in Spain and Portugal, and Ursulines of Chatham, ON, Canada, Tildonk in India, Belgium and Italy and the Ursulines of the Irish Union.

Other Sisters serve on committees and in ministries that include sisters from other communities. Sr. Christine Pratt works with representatives from communities throughout Cincinnati and

Ohio in addressing issues supporting Catholic teaching on Immigration, Racism, Poverty and the Environment, to name a few. Sr. Joan Roach also works on Human Trafficking with other religious communities. Sr. Nancy Vollman serves as spiritual director to several sisters of other communities, and several of our sisters have other religious as spiritual directors.

Mary-Cabrini Durkin Reflects on The Company of St. Ursula

“The Company of St. Ursula, the original form of Ursuline life (1535), is now described as a secular institute. Ursulines of Brown County were among the first to encourage me in launching the Company in the USA (2000). In the 1990s Srs. Agatha Fitzgerald, Pat Brockman, and Anne Maureen Maher, along with Ursulines of other communities, prompted me to study the Rule composed by St. Angela for the Company and shared their own insights. The Brown County community has invited me to exchange thoughts and reflections in several settings over the years, with the added benefit of making the Company better known in southwest Ohio.”

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Ursulines of Brown County

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Save the date

Saturday, July 30, 2016-Ursuline Camp Reunion at Brown County

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Ursulines of Brown County Finance Administrator Supports Other Communities

Ms. Norma Green, Financial Administrator for the Ursulines of Brown County has taken her knowledge and skill to participate in regional and national organizations related to finances within religious communities. Norma serves on the Board of Directors for the Resource Center for Religious Institutes and has been a member of their Finance and Investment Committee for 8 years. She is a consultant for other congregations using software specifically designed for religious communities to track their finances and demographics (TRENDS). She also serves on the Executive Committee of Religious Treasurers for the Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee region. All communities involved benefit from the knowledge and resources available through these collaborative efforts.

This summary of the many relationships formed and connections that continue tells only part of the story. It has been our experience from the foundation of the Ursulines by St. Angela Merici in Brescia, Italy in 1545 until the present day that women and men religious have benefited from close collaborations as we serve the people of God. We continue to rely on each other to bring the Gospel alive in our day no matter who we are, where we live and how we serve. Our next issue of Cornerstone will highlight the rich history that we have had with other religious congregations of men and women.