



# Rejoice!

Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Newsletter

Spring 2025

## *Dear Family and Friends: "Have you ever thought about ..."*

This time of year is filled with many requests for the Sisters to come and speak about religious life to groups of students from kindergarten through college, help with retreats, sit on vocation panels, and to speak and/or simply be present at conferences, parish groups, and retreats. There is a great need for religious women today. We feel it constantly. The Lord continues to call young women to be His Bride, to be totally His, to love Him with an undivided heart, and then to share His love to others. Why aren't there more Sisters?

There are many reasons why those souls whom the Lord is calling to be a Bride of Christ do not respond. It can be hard for a young woman to discern if she has a religious vocation. She may be afraid to express her thoughts, not knowing how family or friends will react. Others may feel a desire, but, if no one encourages them, the desire fades away. I often pray, not only that the Lord may call many strong, dedicated and persevering women to our Community, but also for someone in their life to encourage them to respond to this call. That may be you!

I asked the Sisters to briefly describe three or four people in their life who encouraged them to respond to a religious vocation. The Sisters listed encounters with the Sisters of our Community, as well as religious women from other Communities. Parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts – those family members who witnessed to their own personal relationship with God, gave her the support to discern a religious vocation. Brothers and sisters made the list – being closer in age and in a unique relationship with their sister, they were able to encourage her to follow her vocation as they discerned their own vocation. I found it touching that many of the Sisters' siblings were true voices of support during their discernment time.

It was not surprising that the Sisters listed the support of friends – friends from high school, college, and Catholic campus centers. It was these friends who walked with the young woman, who went with her on visits, who listened to her, encourage her, and even discerned with her. Some Sisters said they had a group of friends who made "discernment a norm", so she was comfortable sharing her journey with them. It was no longer something that she had to "sneak around" and figure out with no one else knowing. It is not surprising that, in helping a friend discern a call to religious life, he/she may also discern

their own vocational call. There is a special joy when one of your friends also joins a religious community or enters the seminary.

Priests – parish priests and college chaplains, were high on the Sisters' lists. It is to this "spiritual father" that she turned when the possibility of the Lord calling her to religious life came to the forefront. It is to him that she looked for help to know how to discern, who she should talk to, how to deepen her prayer life, and ultimately to understand God's call. This priest becomes a trusted guide as she journeys down a similar path – a path that may be unknown to family and friends.

Finally, there were stories of other encouraging encounters: members of the parish prayer group; the witness of parishioners who adored Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament; the person on the street who told her she'd make a good Sister; parishioners who noticed she was at Mass/Adoration and asked if she ever thought about being a Sister; the mother of friend who showed joy in the midst of much suffering; high school and college teachers..... and the list goes on.

If you love religious life and desire to see more faithful, prayerful and joyful young women answering Our Lord's invitation, I would like to encourage you to become a part of the solution, to become a source of encouragement for a young woman you know whom the Lord may be calling. You could simply say, "I think you have (I see in you) qualities that would indicate you might be a wonderful Sister. Have you ever thought about it?" What a simple yet positive way to introduce the idea or encourage someone may have already perceived this loving invitation in her soul. Suggest that they visit our website – not only can they learn about our Community, but it also has resources to help young women learn about religious life and on how to begin discernment. If she is your friend, offer to go with her to talk to Sisters or to visit a convent. Help her move from "thinking about it" to actually doing something about it. What a beautiful opportunity – to help someone hear and respond to a loving call from the Lord to belong totally to Him.

In Mary's Heart,

*Mother Cecilia Marie, IHM*

Mother Cecilia Marie Hammersley, IHM



## *Prayer for Vocations*

*O Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, You have promised to answer the prayers of those who ask with faith and perseverance and so we continue to beg You for strong, dedicated and persevering young women for the IHM community.*

# *The Beauty of Religious Life*

## GOD'S BEAUTIFUL CONSTELLATION

God's plan for every person is no secret; every single person that God has created and will ever create, from the time of Adam and Eve until the last day, is intended to spend eternity with Him in heaven. God creates because He loves and His love is undying, lasting into eternity, for every single soul.

With that in mind, every single person shares one common purpose of existence: to get to heaven and there be in communion with the Triune God and with the whole communion of saints.

God wants everyone in heaven with Himself. The one who loves wants to be with the beloved. God is love and we are His beloved!

Not only does God want this, He has provided us the means and the help we need to realize the purpose of our existence. To spend all eternity in loving communion with God and all the saints in heaven, we have to do the same during our earthly life: love God and love each other. Living the two greatest commandments is not only the way we are to live our life, it is the way to heaven where it will be brought to perfection. How one lives their call to love is through their God-given vocation.

At our baptism, God gave each of us our place in the Mystical Body, that is, our vocation. Living that vocation is how God wants us to love Him and our fellow brothers and sisters. Our vocation is our path of love and holiness. All of the vocations together make a beautiful constellation, complementing each other, with each of them contributing to the mission of the Church in a way that is proper to itself, complementing what the other vocations offer that is proper to theirs.

We can say that the vocation containing all vocations is the call to love and the very essence of love is self-gift. All persons are called to give of themselves; it is sin and its residual effects in our souls that makes us selfish.

Pope Saint John Paul II taught that the beautiful constellation of vocations which equip us in living the universal vocation of union with God and our fellow men are the lay life, consisting primarily of the married state; the ordained ministry, which consists primarily of the priesthood; and consecrated life, consisting primarily of religious life.

Each of these – the lay life, the ordained ministry and the consecrated life – highlight a particular part of Jesus' life and have a specific character, a specific purpose, a specific task, and each is given specific preparation by the Church enabling those in that vocation to fulfill their task and purpose.



# The Beauty of Religious Life

The nature of the lay vocation is secular; the laity live and fulfill their vocation in the world. They, most perfectly, reflect the years of Jesus' hidden life: the domestic church, family life, daily life, working for a living, relaxation, holy leisure. They are the leaven of the Kingdom of God and the specific task of the laity is to seek that Kingdom by engaging in their daily affairs and striving to fulfill their duties according to the plan of God. Pope John Paul adds that it is through the witness of their lives that the Gospel is proclaimed even in the ordinary affairs of daily life. It is through the graces of Baptism and Confirmation that the laity is prepared and sustained for their mission.

Turning now to the priestly vocation, Pope John Paul says that it is the role of the priest to be living images of Christ, guiding the faithful through this pilgrimage to eternal life. It is apparent that the priesthood is a continuation of Jesus' public life as He taught, fed, forgave, healed, and expelled the demons. The task of the priest is ministry, that is teaching, sanctifying, guiding, proclaiming the Word of God, administering the sacraments, leading us on the journey. The priest is enabled to act in the person of Christ through the permanent mark made on his soul at ordination.

Completing the constellation, it is the character of the religious to conform their whole being to Christ in an all-encompassing commitment. With that as the characteristic mark of religious life, the purpose of the religious vocation is not about doing, but about being, being all His ... that is, to be completely and exclusively the Lord's and in and through that total gift of self as His bride, to witness to the spousal relationship between God and His people.

The laity find their primary role of imitation of Christ in the example He gives in His hidden life; the priest finds his in the public life of Jesus, and the Church teaches that as the religious lives her self-gift, belonging only to Him, they have begun here on earth the life of heaven, Jesus' glorified life, where everyone will be all His and partake in the eternal wedding banquet.

What does it mean that the religious belongs exclusively to Jesus? It means that Jesus is her spouse; the religious has been chosen by Him out of His goodness, not because of anything she did or is; by accepting His invitation she becomes exclusively, voluntarily, joyfully and gratefully, His. The religious will have no family of her own, only Him and His family. She will have no possessions, only Him and He is her treasure. She has no desires, no ambitions other than to be more pleasing to Him as His bride and to do His will in all things, at all times and in every way.

So, the specific task of religious is conformity to Christ, to be one with Him; not just to love Him above all else and to serve Him, for everyone is called to do that, but to renounce the goods of this life to begin the life of heaven. The religious gives up voluntarily at profession what all are forced to give up at death. Pope John Paul said that Jesus asks all Christians to "make the following of Himself the whole purpose of their lives," that is, every aspect of life for all of the baptized must be formed by and reflect the fact that they are Christians; then John Paul continues, "But of



some, [that is,] those called to the consecrated life, He asks a total commitment, one which involves leaving everything behind in order to live at His side and to follow Him wherever He goes."

As the laity are prepared and enabled to live their vocation through the graces of Baptism and Confirmation and the priest through his ordination, the religious, at her perpetual profession, is set apart by the Lord to be all His as He bestows upon her, through the Bishop, a unique and special consecration. Pope John Paul explains,

*"Everyone in the Church is consecrated in Baptism and Confirmation, but the ordained ministry and the consecrated life each presuppose a distinct vocation and a specific form of consecration, with a view to a particular mission.*

*For the mission of the lay faithful, whose proper task is to "seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God", the consecration of Baptism and Confirmation common to all members of the People of God is a sufficient foundation.*

*In addition to this basic consecration, ordained ministers receive the consecration of ordination in order to carry on the apostolic ministry in time.*

*Consecrated persons, who embrace the evangelical counsels, receive a new and special consecration which, without being sacramental, commits them to making their own — in chastity, poverty and obedience — the way of life practiced personally by Jesus and proposed by him."*

The work of conforming oneself to Christ and to living the life Jesus chose for Himself and His mother, is no small task, even with the aid of His grace. The beautiful reality is, if the religious lets Him, He will transform her just as He transformed the water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana.

# The Beauty of Religious Life



# *The Beauty of Religious Life*

## **THE CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS SHARE A COMMON VOCATION**

To be who and what she was founded by Jesus Christ to be, the Church needs all the vocations. If each is not fostered and if they are not lived according to God's plan, then the Church is weakened and her holiness suffers. Being true for all the vocations, this must also be true regarding religious life. If religious life suffers, the Church suffers and part of her mission is thwarted. Religious life will never be archaic or obsolete.

The Church's teaching on this is unambiguous; religious life undeniably belongs to the life and holiness of the Church.

Thus, even though religious life is not part of the Church's hierarchy or magisterium, it is a necessary element of the Church which cannot be laid aside. The Church needs the unique role, specific task, and contribution of religious to fulfill her mission. Nobody else can do what religious do because nobody else is what religious are.

Each vocation established by Jesus Christ to be part of His Church is essential to that Church. Without any one of them it would not be the same Church. It is the particular task of religious to show the Church who she is, as existing only for God Himself. The religious shows every baptized Christian and the whole Church what it means to be His bride.

The Church teaches that through living the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience religious life "indisputably belongs to the life and holiness of the Church ... [and thus] can never fail to be one of her essential and characteristic elements" for it reveals to the Church her very identity. Without religious life, the Church would not be the Church Jesus intended it to be.

There is a need for healthy, holy religious life in the Church. As there is a need for the priests to show forth the fatherly face of God, the Church also needs, through those who share her vocation as Virgin, Bride and Mother, to present to the world Her motherly face.

Giving love a face is giving the Church a loving face. The Church needs religious life because religious reveal to her, her own identity and because religious bring the Church to every person they encounter. That is a huge statement, but it is true because religious life is at the very heart, that is, at the very essence of the Church.

Pope Saint John Paul was not the first to make this observation. Pope Saint Paul VI – during the heat of the battle in the 70's – said, "Without this concrete sign there would be a danger that the charity which animates the entire Church would grow cold, that the salvific paradox of the Gospel would be blunted, and that the 'salt' of faith would lose its savor in a world undergoing secularization".



# *The Beauty of Religious Life*



Religious are now, here on earth, what all will be in heaven. Religious who take their lives and their vocation seriously are to lead all to heaven, not just point them in the right direction as a sign. Religious, chaste, poor and obedient, begin the life of heaven on earth.

Thus, the specific task of religious, through embracing their call to belong solely to Jesus Christ and through the witness of their lives, is to reveal to the Church her own identity as bride of Christ, as existing solely for Him. Religious are thus to remind the faithful that this life is not the end, but a preparation for the real reason for which we were created: to be with the Triune God in heaven for all eternity.

The importance and necessity of religious life is beyond any task the religious takes on; the Church needs religious who, even before committing themselves to any particular service for the Church, allow themselves to be transformed by God's grace and conform themselves fully to the Gospel. The first duty of religious is to devote themselves totally to God and to others for the love of God, regardless of whether or not what they do is deemed useful in the eyes of the world.

If somehow religious life were to disappear, the Church would suffer greatly; truly, she would not be the Church intended by Jesus Christ Himself: a Church consisting of the lay faithful, ordained ministers, and consecrated persons. Only with all three can the Church most fruitfully fulfill her purpose and the mission of salvation for all peoples.

Please encourage young women to ask the Lord how He wants to be loved by them! Perhaps those with whom you speak are being called to religious life!



# The Beauty of Religious Life



# Three IHM Sisters make their First Profession of Vows

by Sr. Cora Marie Goenner, IHM

There is a saying that happiness comes in threes. There was a triple cause for rejoicing for the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary as three Sisters—Sr. Mary Gemma Hund, Sr. Edith Marie Lamborn, and Sr. Emilia Marie Sponsel—each made their first profession of vows on Saturday, June 29, 2024. The three vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience are known as a “triple expression of a single ‘yes.’” By professing these vows, a Sister becomes a bride of Christ.

The first profession took place at St. Francis of Assisi parish during a Mass celebrated by Fr. John Hay, the chaplain of the IHM Sisters. Fr. Hay’s homily highlighted the role of happiness in religious life, the happiness that comes from following God. The joy in the Sisters’ voices and the radiant smiles on their faces made this happiness apparent to all.

“Professing first vows filled me with joy and fulfilled a desire I have had for a long time,” Sr. Mary Gemma said. “I am filled with gratitude that Jesus called me and for all the ways He has worked in my life to make this moment possible.”

Professing one’s vows involves not only an internal change, but an external one as well. The evening before their profession, the three Sisters received the blue dress of the habit, along with a cincture, a crucifix, and the rosary of the Seven Sorrows of Mary. During Mass, after professing their vows, the Sisters received the scapular and the badge of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and their white veils were exchanged for black veils, symbolizing their consecration.

Sr. Edith Marie recalled a moment before Mass began when, “...our wedding day became real, and everything that led up to it—sorrows and joys alike—was so unbelievably and indescribably worth it. I cannot wait to share the joy of Christ with everyone I meet.”

Sr. Mary Gemma, the daughter of George and Marcia Hund, is originally from Paxico, Kansas, and attended Sacred Heart parish in Newbury. Sr. Edith Marie, the daughter of Brett and Jennifer Lamborn, lived in Wichita during her high school years after growing up in various places around the country. Sr. Emilia Marie, the daughter of Theodore and Susan Sponsel, grew up in the Wichita area and attended St. Peter the Apostle parish.

When reflecting on the day, Sr. Emilia Marie said, “The moment my name was called for the summons, it was as if God was calling me again to be His as He had done when I first realized I was called to be His alone.”

The newly professed Sisters are continuing their spiritual and apostolic formation at the convent, as well as taking college courses to prepare for the active apostolate of education.



# Perpetual Profession

## FOREVER A BRIDE OF CHRIST

by Sister Cora Marie Goenner, IHM

On Saturday, July 27, during the Mass for Religious Profession celebrated by Bishop Carl Kemme at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church in Schulte, Sr. Julian Marie Swantek, IHM and Sr. Maria Cabrini Sponsel, IHM professed perpetual vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience and were solemnly consecrated to God, becoming brides of Christ forever.

During the Rite of Perpetual Profession which occurred during the Mass, all in attendance prayed the Litany of the Saints for Sr. Julian Marie and Sr. Maria Cabrini, who then professed their vows in the hands of Mother Cecilia Marie, IHM. After the Sisters signed the documents of their profession on the altar of sacrifice, Bishop Kemme prayed the prayer of solemn consecration over the Sisters. The Sisters then each received a ring, which is a sign of their espousal to Christ the Bridegroom.

“The whole Mass was beautifully majestic, truly a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy that we will join in for all eternity,” Sr. Julian Marie said.

After the celebration of the Mass, many relatives and friends of the Sisters were able to join in the festivities.

“I am still in awe, and I will forever be pondering the graces received on that day and the days following. To be His bride forever—totally His—I cannot express my deep joy,” Sr. Maria Cabrini said. “The Mass was so beautiful, and we were surrounded by our community, bishops, priests, family, and friends.”

Sr. Julian Marie, the daughter of Marc and Annette Swantek, grew up as a parishioner of St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Genoa, Nebraska and attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for three years before entering the convent.

Sr. Maria Cabrini, the daughter of Theodore and Susan Sponsel, grew up as a parishioner at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church, in Schulte, Kansas. After graduating from Bishop Carroll Catholic High School she attended Newman University for two years before entering the convent.

Many significant events in their religious lives have been shared by the two Sisters: both entered the convent in August 2018, were received as novices on February 11, 2019, and made their first profession of vows on March 13, 2021.

Both Sisters have entered the active apostolate of teaching. Required for two years to teach in the area of her Kansas State teaching license, Sr. Julian Marie has been teaching in the science department at Bishop Carroll in Wichita, and Sr. Maria Cabrini has been doing her student teaching in elementary schools in the Wichita area.



*TOP: Sister Julian Marie professes her perpetual vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience in the hands of Mother Cecilia Marie.*

*ABOVE: Sister Maria Cabrini signs her perpetual vows on the altar uniting her sacrifice with the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.*

# *Perpetual Profession*

*“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.  
May it be done to me according to your word.”*

**MOST REVEREND CARL A. KEMME, BISHOP OF WICHITA, HOMILY**

Today, the Catholic Diocese of Wichita and the religious congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters of Wichita rejoice greatly in the gift of the perpetual profession of Sr. Jullian Marie Swantek and Sr. Maria Cabrini Sponsel, two gifted and enthusiastic young women who have heard the call of the Lord to come to him and to unite themselves to him as his beloved spouses. What a joy and honor it is for us to be here for this most solemn and wonderful liturgy. It is a special honor for me to serve as the presiding bishop. I knew Sr. Maria Cabrini well before she entered the convent; over the past ten years since my own arrival here her family has invited me often for a meal and a meal with the Sponsels .

is a memorable event. The joy Sr. Maria Cabrini brings, in fact some might call spunk she gets naturally and I am delighted to see that she has lost none of it. I have come to know you, Sr. Jullian Marie since your entrance and I have very much enjoyed your recent letter and notes to me sharing your spiritual journey to this moment. Thank you for your trust and confidence in me as your bishop and spiritual father. Because of this, I feel, taking nothing away from their own fathers and if you would forgive me for saying it, like the proud father, albeit a spiritual one, who presents his daughters on the day of their wedding. Dear sisters, it is my joy to offer you to Christ who from this day onward will be your eternal spouse and you his eternal bride.

In being together I cannot also help but recall the days just last week when I was blessed to be at the 10th National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis. There with more than 50,000 people from all over the country, we prayed, offered the Mass, adored the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, heard inspiring talks, and felt encouraged by the dynamism of everyone's Eucharistic faith. It was an experience I will remember for quite some time.

Among the many wonderful things I will recall of our days together was the presence of so many bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians and especially women religious. Everywhere, you would see many young women in full habit with broad smiles and exuberant spirits, just like the sisters here today, our dear IHM sisters. So many of them would stop me and just tell me how much they were praying for me and my brother bishops, and our priests and how much they were grateful for what we do in the Church. I couldn't help but be in admiration of them and to thank them for their uncommonly bold and authentic witness as authentic women serving the Church.

This experience repeated often during the Congress gave me the no uncertain conviction that religious life is alive and well in many parts of our country, knowing that young women with joy and enthusiasm are embracing a life of consecration, a way to live and to serve that not all that long ago was deemed by far too many as old fashioned, unnecessary in today's modern world, out of touch with modernity and a thing largely of the past. How untrue that all is and we have only to look upon these two women here today, Sr. Jullian Marie and Sr. Maria Cabrini to give witness to this movement in our Church. They could have done almost anything with their lives, but rather they have chosen to follow the Lord's call, to attach themselves to one of these growing and remarkable religious communities and there to receive the holy habit and to profess, at first temporarily but now perpetually the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience as a sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Wichita.

I for one take great comfort and consolation knowing that these two women join a growing group of young women who have the boldness and courage to reclaim religious life as the Church intends, to live in a dedicated community of prayer, sacrifice, discipline and mission, to wear without hesitation the wedding garment of their habit, to give themselves over in humble submission to the will of their superiors and to do all of this as Mary did in today's familiar Gospel without fear and withholding nothing, for the salvation of their souls, for the good of the people they will encounter in their ministries, for the sanctification of priests and, I hope, bishops -- dear sisters don't forget to pray for me -- and for the glory of Almighty God.

# Perpetual Profession

Witnessing this today before our very eyes should fill us all with profound gratitude for we are seeing something deeply profound and life changing.

Thank you, Sisters, for your yes and for joining what by all accounts is a growing number like you who will revitalize the Church by living a fully consecrated life as brides of Christ, to whom you are giving your life, not just for today or for a while, but for all eternity.

Your special and particular patrons must surely be smiling upon you from heaven, St. Peter Jullian Eymard and St. Frances Xavier Cabrini. Both were powerhouses of apostolic courage and witness in their times. St. Peter Jullian is called the Apostle of the Eucharist who in the early years of the 19th century preached of the many graces that come to us by the Holy Eucharist. He combined a deep love for Mary and for the Eucharist in his ministry. He once said, “Virgin Immaculate, perfect lover of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, we ask you to obtain for us the graces we need to become true adorers of our Eucharistic God. Grant us, we beg of you, to know him better, to love him more, and to center our lives around the Eucharist, that is, to make our whole life a constant prayer of adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and petition to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.”

Mother Cabrini, a fearless missionary to the United States to serve the immigrant people, founded schools, hospitals, orphanages and other ministries to care for those who were most in need. She was a bright light of hope and consolation in a dark and ominous time for Catholics. She once said, “I will go anywhere and do anything in order to communicate the love of Jesus to those who do not know him or have forgotten him.”

Dear Sisters, may I urge you to go often to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament as these holy saints did. There you will encounter Him as your first love. Draw near to him in quiet prayer and adoration and deepen your passion and intense love for him and the mission he has entrusted to you. Be his faithful, joyful and beloved brides; be his saints among us. And may God who has begun this good, good work in you bring it to fulfillment in the day of Christ Jesus. Amen.



*Sister Julian Marie receives her wedding ring from Bishop Carl Kemme.*



*Mother Cecilia Marie places Sister Maria Cabrini's wedding ring on her finger, signifying her perpetual betrothal to Jesus Christ.*

# Sister Sisters

By Sister Maria Cabrini Sponsel, IHM and Sister Emilia Marie Sponsel, IHM

“What is it like to be sister Sisters?” is the most commonly asked question we receive others realize that we are siblings; it may be a surprise that this is a difficult question to answer. Growing up in a family of eleven, with 7 girls and 4 boys, our dad would tell us that he wasn’t going to have any grandchildren because (he hoped) we were all going to be Sisters and priests. We are 4 ½ years apart with Sr. Maria Cabrini being the older sibling and Sr. Emilia Marie being the younger. For Sr. Maria Cabrini: “The idea of religious life and the support from my parents to be open to this vocation was present



*Sister Emilia Marie (left) poses with her newly perpetually professed sister, Sister Maria Cabrini*

from a young age. I started praying to know my vocation in second grade, with the help of an IHM, and my desire to be a Sister increased, but... it was a battle between being called and trying to please everyone. Eventually, after continual prayer I entered in the Fall of 2018, leaving my loving family to embrace my religious family. Little did I know, Jesus would give it back to me in an unexpected way.”

Just like Sr. Maria Cabrini, I knew that I would have my parents’ support; unlike her, I didn’t think I would ever be a Sister. I actively started discerning my freshman year of high school. Little did I know, that my sister was also discerning at the same time! When she entered, I felt this great jealousy in seeing her so happy and at peace; that was what I wanted. Every time we would have our family visiting at the convent, I noticed that a change had been effected in her; she was no longer just my big sister, she was conforming herself to Christ and this displayed itself in her genuine joy. But what drew me to the IHMs was the conviction that this was where Jesus was calling me, and my sister just happened to be called here too. Her witness helped me to discern my religious vocation and I entered the convent in January of 2021.”

We asked our parents, Theodore and Susan Sponsel, what it was like for them when we entered the convent, “As a parent, it is such a humbling thing to think that God would call you both and that you would answer his call... we couldn’t be any happier for you both. With Sister Maria Cabrini, we knew who the IHM’s were, we understood the vocation but not completely. When Sister Emilia Marie entered, that was easier, we knew what to expect.” Just like our parents, we didn’t know what it would be like when we entered. Because of our age difference, we weren’t very close and didn’t share similar interests. Even our perspective of shared family memories was different. It wasn’t until we were in the convent that we started to get to know each other as adults; no longer was Sr. Emilia Marie just the little sister under her big sister’s protection and Sr. Maria Cabrini wasn’t just the bossy, but loving, big sister. The closer we grow to God, the more our relationship matures from natural familial bonds into supernatural ties of Religious Life. Closeness to God redefined and purified what it means to be siblings in religious life. When we look at each other we don’t see a sibling, we see a Sister. Our dad commented, “Everything you both do is pointed toward one thing: What does God want me to do with my life? The love that you have for each other and the love you have especially for Our Lady has, and will continue to help you discern this.” We both came from the same biological hearts and now we are drawn to the Immaculate Heart.

# Sister Sisters

Yes, we have a special bond as siblings, but this bond doesn't negatively affect our relationships with our Religious Sisters; there are no exclusive relationships in the convent. Because we are in the same community, we share the same charism that animates our life, our prayer, and our work. Through this unity of purpose and God-given mission, we are constantly striving with our community to be one in heart and mind which is more than just agreeing on the superficial level, it is seeing things with the eyes of Christ through the lens of our shared charism. We are one big family. Our dad commented on this reality from a parent's perspective, "In religious life, your family is now the IHM's; we are still your family, and that will never be taken away, but your responsibilities now are not to our family but to the IHM family."

This summer, we both professed vows – Sister Maria Cabrini professed her perpetual vows and Sister Emilia Marie her first vows – and due to the supernatural reality of being brides of Christ, our bond has grown stronger. It is a great blessing to have a sister Sister. We share the same vocation with all its joys and sorrows. Everybody wants to share what they love most with those they love; this is something we get to share. But our vocation is not just for us. When we asked our parents what it is like to have two daughters in the convent they replied, "What a gift it is to us, what a gift to our family, what a gift to our parish, and what a gift to our diocese." Those who leave everything to follow Christ, are promised a hundred-fold in this life and in the life to come. Little did we know that part of our hundred-fold would be each other. What we have come to realize is that having a sister Sister is a mystery and an immense gift. We will continue to grow in our understanding of and appreciation for this unique added dimension to our relationship. Already the mystery has deepened as we share now on earth what all will share in eternity: participation in the eternal wedding banquet of heaven.



*TOP: Never a dull moment!*

*MIDDLE: Ping pong: a family favorite!*

*BOTTOM: Dishes ... some things never change.*

# Remember the Sisters

## ON THE HORIZON

BY MRS. BRONWEN LEWIS

*We know more about times long past than the times we live in – our time is too complicated.*

There is one aspect of this world that is not complicated and that is trusting in God. In the 175-year history and charism of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, it is as plain as day, God has had a hand in everything.

Since the Sisters moved to their current property, the continued steady growth of vocations has brought the construction of a Motherhouse to the horizon.

We invite you to come see firsthand how your support of the Sisters is working in the heart of Kansas. We host five annual events at the future site of our Motherhouse—including a Novena, Processions to Commemorate Our Lady of Fatima, Days of Reflection in Lent and Advent, and Holy Saturday Vigil. The Sisters also host monthly First Saturday devotions. Engaging with the Sisters in prayer and fellowship will be a welcoming and nourishing experience.

The legacy of your giving to the Sisters will have an impact for generations to come. It all begins with inspiration of your heart: God has designs on many hearts to help with this undertaking. He has a plan for you—for each of us—for His Church and for the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Wichita.

I invite you to make a plan to give to the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Wichita. Planning involves strategic thinking: is it better for me to give weekly, monthly, or annually? Through my Will or Trust? How? What? When?

Your engagement with the Sisters, your bold giving as a Catholic to the Sisters, will have a direct impact for them and for your heart...it will do a world of good. Trust in God and entrust everything to Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I would like to finish my article this month with a brief overview of how the Sisters fund what they do ... and what they do that requires funding.

The Sisters receive no government funding—period. You might ask, “aren’t there other organizations the Sisters can count on to help them with their financial needs?”—the answer may surprise you, it is “no”. There are only a handful of Catholic Grant Makers and Foundations who support organizations like the Sisters, and they are “few and far between” ... furthermore, they are typically very narrowly focused on the founding purpose(s) of their foundation which, frankly, does not generally include gifts to religious sisters like the IHM’s. While this is a general statement, it is true that

few of them give either to religious life, or for construction of facilities for religious sisters.

The Sisters primary source of revenue is their teaching stipends which are paid from the schools where they teach. Because the Sisters are so frugal, and are such excellent stewards of all that is given to them, they are able to “stretch” the revenue from one teaching stipend into support for the living expenses of two Sisters overall ... and because of the number of Sisters teaching and receiving a teaching stipend, literally 100% of the living expenses of the Sisters are covered in this way.

There are, however, other expenses and almost exclusively, their outside financial support comes through gifts from Catholics like you and me ... we are the main benefactors to the Sisters. The two most costly expenses in addition to living expenses – where our gifts come into play are educational expenses and health insurance.

Educationally, each teaching Sister must obtain a teaching license from the State of Kansas, along with a four-year degree in a secular subject. On top of these two educational requirements, each Sister is needs a thorough knowledge of the of Catholic Theology (similar to the formation of diocesan priests).

The other major expense for the Sisters, health insurance, is for 36 (and growing) Sisters. The Sisters pay for 100% of these health insurance premiums, as well as 100% of all medical treatment and prescription expenses not covered by the insurance.

If we want a Catholic culture and authentic Catholic teaching ... if we want more vocations to the priesthood and religious life ... if we want more devout young families in our parishes ... then our Catholic culture needs the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Wichita, and the Sisters need our support to strengthen this effort and help it to grow.

We spend a lifetime preparing for the most important moment ... the passage from this life to another for the encounter with God. What could be more rewarding in this life, and beyond, than planning during our lifetime for family and friends ... friends such as the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Wichita.

I invite you to jump in solidly, with both feet firmly planted, to help the Sisters in this most important mission of theirs – passing on the beauty and truth of the Catholicism to our youth and those following in our footsteps.

# Remember the Sisters



With your prayers and support, the Sisters' presence in the classroom and beyond continues to inspire and transform lives.



**Direct your Donor Advised Fund for the benefit of the Sisters**

**Direct your IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) to the Sisters. If you are over age 70 ½ contact your IRA administrator on making a direct transfer (QCD) that will be free of federal income tax**

**Gifts of long-term appreciated stock/securities (owned for one year or longer) or mutual funds offer a quick, easy and tax efficient way to give**

**Set-up an EFT/ACH – a recurring monthly or quarterly gift**

**Consider using estate planning concepts for giving to the Sisters**

The *Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Wichita* extend deep gratitude to those who have gifted, or are planning to gift, annual or estate planned gifts. All gifts play a vital role as we position for the building and completion of the Motherhouse building.

Please contact the *Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Wichita* if you have any questions at (316) 722-9316.

A bequest is a gift from your estate...a transfer of cash, stock/securities, or other property...made through your estate plans. A bequest costs you nothing now and enables you to contribute to the Sisters' excellence far into the future.

- By making a Bequest, you retain control of and use of your assets during your lifetime
- You may modify your bequest if your circumstances change
- Gifts to the Sisters from your estate are exempt from federal estate taxes
- By letting the Sisters know of your plans, you can enjoy interacting with them as they put your great gift to great use
- A bequest can be made for a specific amount, for a percentage of your estate, or for all or portion of what is left after you have made bequests to your family

*Thank you for all the prayers!  
Keep reciting those Memorares!*

6,381,547

*Memorares  
for Our Lady  
to Date*

SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY OF WICHITA

**3550 N 167TH STREET W  
COLWICH, KS 67030**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Please contact us with your  
address changes: (316) 722-9316 or  
rejoice@sistersihmofwichita.org

See our website:  
www.sistersihmofwichita.org

NONPROFIT  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 544  
WICHITA, KS

*May the angels lead them into paradise.*



*Memorials established for:*

<i>Jerome and Betty Mae Axman</i>	<i>David Giltrich Robert Gordon</i>	<i>RJ Peck Sam Peck</i>
<i>Charles and Ruth Anne Baker</i>	<i>Dianne Haas Robert James Higgins</i>	<i>Rev. H. Michael Peltzer Heidi Peltzer</i>
<i>James Boede Betty Bowman</i>	<i>James Hofer Denise Marie Dusek Karst</i>	<i>Aileen and Pat Potter Albertine Rajewski</i>
<i>Catherine Petersen Brady Mary Zwenger Burton</i>	<i>Ray J. Langlois Leo and Pat Borg</i>	<i>Patricia A. Ridder Louise Shinogle</i>
<i>Marian D. Fine Kim Friess</i>	<i>Adrian and Kay Martin Anna Mae Metz</i>	<i>Sandra J. Swantek Stephen Tkach</i>
<i>Mike Gann Arlene Girrens</i>	<i>Irene Metzinger Ann Patton</i>	<i>Richard Tucker Patricia A. Zrubek</i>

*Gifts given in memory of:*

<i>Roger Davis Kathy Falzone (friend 2024 RCJA) Darlene Hageman</i>	<i>Frank and Helen Lester Robert and Carole Moritz Joseph and Amy Nicosia Mark Peltzer Robert Porod</i>	<i>Arnold Reichuber, Jr. Rev. Monsignor William H. Schwartz William Thomas</i>
---	---	--