



CONNECTIONS

Newsletter



July 2025

**“EVERYTHING IN OUR
INSTITUTIONS MUST HAVE
AS ITS END, GOD AND THE
GOOD OF OUR STUDENTS.”**

—THE SISTERS OF ST. MARY OF NAMUR

With the fervent desire to “do a little good” for those in need of assistance in a new land, the Sisters of St. Mary arrived in Waco, Texas in 1873. They were responding to a request to establish schools on this unknown Texas frontier. Though greeted with the harshest of conditions, they never gave up on responding to the mission they had been given!

Only a week after arriving in Waco, the Sisters opened Sacred Heart, followed by the Academy of Our Lady of Sacred Heart the following year in Corsicana. Following the paths laid by the railroads, they established St. Ignatius Academy, the forerunner to Fort Worth’s OLV, in 1886. The Sisters went on to establish academies in Ennis, Denison, Sherman, Dallas, Arlington, Dickinson, Beaumont, Houston, Wichita Falls and the University of Dallas in Irving.

We proudly offer this newsletter in honor of the Sisters of St. Mary educators who have given so much of themselves in responding to the mission first begun in those first days in Waco.



THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO THE SISTERS’ INFLUENCE AS TEACHERS.

ACCOMPANIMENT: A LIFETIME WITH THE SISTERS OF ST. MARY OF NAMUR

By Dan Luby

I was an infant when my family moved to Dallas in 1948 and my four sisters enrolled at St. James grade school in our new South Oak Cliff neighborhood. I have been steeping in the graceful and inspiring influence of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur ever since.

I calculate that they have been my teachers and mentors, my companions and collaborators, my and my family's dear friends for about 75 years. Remembering that long record of blessing has brought to mind the many places I have shared with them.

Some are still active sites of learning and worship and mission. Bishop Dunne Catholic School in Dallas, where the Sisters were among the original administration and faculty, continues to thrive. The University of Dallas, founded by the Sisters in 1955, remains a source of ministerial formation for the local church. The parishes of St. John the Apostle and St. Philip and OLQP and others, the Catholic Center in Fort Worth — all these physical places where I worked with the Sisters in ministries of teaching and formation and pastoral care, continue to further that work and enhance the ongoing commitment to “do a little good” here in our patch of the Kingdom.

Perhaps because I am old, I have also remembered places where I enjoyed the companionship of this community of women, but which no longer stand.

I am remembering the once-grand



Our Lady of Good Counsel, 1942

mansion in Oak Cliff with the weird fake brick siding and the rickety-looking fire escapes that became Our Lady of Good Counsel Academy, where I attended first grade. I am remembering the boxy House of Studies for student Sisters on the UD campus, where I made the Happening Retreat and experienced a radical spiritual conversion that changed the course of my life, professionally and

“What strikes me in looking back on these places where I interacted with the Sisters is that their charisms continue to bless, their learning enlightens, their challenges ring...”

personally. I am remembering, with sadness and gratitude, the recently demolished convent at Nolan Catholic High School which housed the late, lamented Catholic Renewal Center for 40 years. Multiple SSMN Sisters served there for decades, offering spiritual insight and loving hospitality. They welcomed the stranger, spoke out for justice in the Church and in the world, and shone the light of the gospel in fresh ways. I bought books there, co- led retreats, offered classes, shared meals, worshipped and grieved and laughed and had my eyes and heart opened there in the company of the amazing women of this community.

What strikes me in looking back on these places where I interacted with the Sisters is that their charisms continue to bless, their learning enlightens, their challenges ring, even after direct involvement at those locales has ceased.

That says a lot about how the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur continue to live their collective vocation as justice for the poor and light for the world. Their Spirit-filled presence remains in the hearts and minds and actions of our local church. Like the Sisters, their gifts endure and increase. I could not be more grateful to be a fellow traveler on the path of following Jesus, loving the world into beauty and truth, kindness and reconciliation. I thank them and I thank God for the gift they continue to be.

To everything there is a season. Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time.

Ecclesiastes 3:1a, 11a



REFLECTIONS FROM ALUMNA

Sue Haggerty Borders, Our Lady of Good Counsel Class of 1960:

"The two things I remember most vividly are Sister St. John's English class: "You LIE down, but you LAY the book on the table." And Sister Raphael's and Sister Justin's math solution order: PEMDAS, that's for Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally, which tells us in a problem you should do parentheses, exponents, multiply, divide, add and finally subtract ... in that order!"

"They raised us kids! Sister Ginny, Sister Patricia Ste. Marie, Sister Mary Jean, Sister Anselma, Sister Miriam, Sister St. John, Sister Mary Elizabeth, Sister Cathy — every one of them one was so kind and loving!

They were wonderful examples of how to live a good, Catholic Christian life. I could always talk with them and never felt judged — only accepted and loved. They were always so inclusive — they treated you like family. The Sisters helped me in so many ways: Sister Patricia would ask me to help weed the garden — and of course we would spend the time talking about Scripture!"

**- Katharina Schlosser,
Alumna of Wichita Falls
Queen of Peace**

Elizabeth Gutierrez:

"The four years at Our Lady of Good Counsel were some of the best of my life. I carry with me the most memorable lessons. I remember a teacher saying, 'We can't teach you everything because time is changing so fast, but we can teach you how to learn as you go through those changing times.' They gave us the tools to learn. The Sisters and lay teachers provided an environment for me, as a minority, to never feel like I was any less than those around me. Because of those four years, I have never sought out another Church other than the Catholic religion."

Linda Kuntz: Currently Assistant Principal, St. Joseph Catholic School; Formerly Principal at OLV

"Working with the Sisters of Saint Mary of Namur has had a profound and lasting impact on my life — both personally and professionally. Their example of love, faith and dedication to Christ's Gospel mission inspired me to live those same values and become a witness of faith to my family and students.

The Sisters fostered an environment rooted in service, community and strong moral values. This allowed me to teach and live my faith openly, just as they did. Over the years, they strengthened my Catholic faith, inspired a lifelong commitment to service and guided my decision to dedicate my career to Catholic education. They encouraged me to share the Gospel with others, reinforced the importance of integrating faith into my professional life and motivated me to support their mission in meaningful ways.

As my roles and responsibilities have evolved, partnering with the Sisters to advance their mission and vision has been deeply fulfilling. Their continued presence in my life remains a powerful source of inspiration and purpose."



Lizzie Grubbs, Bishop Dunne Class of 1968:

"My twin sister and I started at Bishop Dunne High School at a serious and turbulent time (1964-1968). We were fortunate enough to have as teachers and role models mostly young women/nuns/teachers who, during this time of youthful transformation, seemed to be joyful in their jobs and lives! These women were caring, supportive, humorous, witty and smart! They brought warmth and light, humor, meaning, guidance, questioning and growth into my life. You could see and feel that they too were also students — and seekers of contemplation, meditation, nature, science, being, purpose — albeit within an explicit hierarchical structure."

CORSICANA SISTERS REMEMBERED

We remember our first Sisters to arrive in Corsicana with gratitude and deep respect. **Sister Stephanie Hoolie** departed Lockport, New York on August 25, 1874 and arrived in Corsicana on August 29. They were blessed to find a small, clean and furnished house in which to live. She and two Sisters who traveled with her excitedly welcomed their first high school students, five girls and six boys, on September 7, 1874. This was the second school to be established in Texas. Sister Stephanie entered the novitiate in June 1872 and celebrated her 21st birthday in Corsicana. Sadly, Sister Stephanie succumbed to typhus just three months after arriving in Corsicana; she was one of the first Sisters to arrive in Corsicana and the first Sister to die and be buried in Texas soil.



Sister Margaret is another Sister who served the Corsicana community at the Academy of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. These are women who bravely traveled to new places and touched students with the special charisms of the Sisters of St. Mary.



Vicki Washington, Bishop Dunne Class of 1971:

"I came to Bishop Dunne as a sophomore and had a glorious three years at 3900 Rugged Drive! I arrived in the final year of single-gender classrooms, and interestingly, I don't remember noticing much difference when we moved to co-ed. My strongest memories of the Sisters are of **Sister Joseph** (now **Patricia**), **Sister Maria** (the art teacher), **Sister Ruth Marie**, **Sister Mary Bosco**, and **Sister Mary Catherine**.

I studied French all three years with Sister Mary Catherine. Though she had a strong Texas accent, she sparked my lifelong love of French culture. I still sing *Entre Le Boeuf* at Christmas! I remember our French Club singing carols in the neighborhood and our annual trips to competitions in San Antonio — possibly at Our Lady of the Lake.

Sister Ruth Marie taught geometry, and even though math wasn't my favorite, her teaching helped me truly understand it. Sister Mary Bosco, also a math teacher, was no-nonsense. I'm pretty sure she was the one who repeatedly made me unroll my skirt waistband to meet dress code. Remember, this was the late '60s and we all wanted miniskirts!

Sister Maria seemed to float down the halls with a sweet presence. I only spoke to her a few times, but I remember her asking if my earrings were Hattie Carnegie. As a 10th or 11th grader at the time, I had no idea who or what that was!

Sister Joseph, now Patricia, was my religion teacher — so full of life, with a smile that lit up every room. She nurtured the seeds of social justice my mother had planted in me. I often think of her and how she lived out the daily practice of justice. I later realized she was quite young when she taught us — maybe that explains the energy!

Collectively, the Sisters embodied care, compassion and high expectations. They wore habits, but they were never stern or dull. They made learning fun and meaningful. As a retired teacher, I'm grateful for how deeply my Dunne experience shaped my own approach to teaching.

Years later, the Sisters still supported me. Nearly a decade after graduation, they came to see me in a play at Theater Three, and more recently, Sister Patricia came to a production I directed in Fort Worth. That kind of continued encouragement means so much.

And finally, while I was at Dunne, my mother had us active in the Dallas SCLC Civil Rights movement. And guess who else was there? The Sisters."



THE MULTI-GENERATIONAL IMPACT OF THE SISTERS

The blessing of having the Sisters influence three generations of one family is incalculable, as the Taylor family can testify. This story all began with Martha Taylor — and there was never a question in her mind about where her daughters would attend school: OLV Academy.

Martha had three daughters: Mary, who graduated as valedictorian in 1919; Catherine, who graduated as salutatorian in 1921; and Josephine, the adventurous child of the three, who graduated in 1928.

Josephine, like her mother, also had three daughters: Yvonne, Sammie and Helen. She, too, was intent on her daughters attending OLV

Academy. Helen remembers that, beyond the stellar academic education offered, there were many other wonderful activities for the students, including horseback riding. Her favorite teacher was **Sister Mary Bridget**, who was principal when she was in



Terri Jones and Fleet Rhine

first grade. “Sister Mary Bridget was caring and compassionate, and made every student feel special. She did not tolerate discrimination of any kind.”

Helen went on to share: “The most profound influence of the Sisters was the feeling of belonging you felt the moment you walked through those beautiful doors of the Academy. Each child was made to feel special, to know deep inside that they counted for something and could accomplish anything. The Sisters just quietly went about shaping lives and touching hearts, ‘doing a little good’ in the only way they know how to — humbly and with deep compassion.”

Helen’s sister, Josephine, also had two daughters, Terri and Mary. Terri, touched by stories and the history of the

Academy shared by her grandmother, mother and aunts, now volunteers at the Convent with Fleet Rhine, another dear friend of the Sisters.

To get to know Helen and Terri, it is poignantly clear that the values Helen speaks of having recognized in Sister Mary Bridget and the other Sisters of St. Mary of Namur have taken root in them as well. To see the strength and commitment to compassion lived out by this multi-generational family of women shaped by the Sisters of St. Mary speaks to the legacy they continue to have long after their formal education is over.



Taylor Family Graduation Dates

Mary Taylor, 1919
Katherine Taylor, 1921
Josephine Taylor, 1928
Yvonne James, 1948
Sammie James, 1953
Helen James, 1962
Michael Clubb, Nolan 1985
Cary Machala, Nolan 2000

Lisa Losoya, Former Staff Member at OLV Elementary School:

“Six years ago, I was diagnosed with Stage 3 ovarian cancer. I was scared and overwhelmed, especially thinking about my son. He had already lost his father to liver cancer 10 years earlier, and I didn’t know what would happen to him. During my pre-op at the hospital, I began to pray and asked God to see me through. I put all my trust in Him.

Looking back, I’m incredibly grateful for the influence, wisdom and strength I received from the Sisters of Saint Mary of Namur. When my husband passed in 2008, I brought my son back to school a week after classes started. The principal, Mrs. Miller, asked about my plans and offered me a job as a kindergarten teacher’s aide. I accepted.

That first year, I learned so much from the Sisters and staff — especially how to teach religion across grade levels. Their presence on campus was powerful. They engaged students thoughtfully, encouraged questions and helped them understand faith on a deeper level. The Sisters remain a meaningful part of my life today.”

LIFELONG LEARNING

For a teacher, there is perhaps no greater testament to the relationships formed with students than to be invited to reunion gatherings decades after graduation. This was true for **Sister Jane Conway** and **Sister Joan Markey** over the past couple of months.

Sister Jane attended the reunion for the Nolan Catholic High School Class of 1965, at the invitation of Laura Cocharo Bachman. The class of 1965 was the first to graduate from Nolan after attending all four years at the school. A classmate of Laura's, Phyllis Farrell Norman, hosted an annual luncheon celebrating the Class of 1965 for many years following their graduation. It was at this gathering that Phyllis, Laura and 35 of their classmates shared memories with Sister Jane, including the fact that they first met when Laura was 13 years old and Sister Jane was 23!

Sister Jane taught music to the class of 1965 for all four years of high school. Laura shared, "under Sister Jane's tutelage, my love of music grew — so much so that as an adult, I began attending the Fort Worth Symphony and Fort Worth Opera with Sister Jane!" Memories of the years shared more than 65 years ago and the wonderful experiences of



Sister Jane and Laura Bachman

enjoying the beauty of music over the years since have helped them remain special friends to this day. In a spirit of gratitude for Sister Jane's influence on her, Laura and her husband, William, who recently passed, have been monthly donors to the Sisters for many years.

There is such joy in hearing Sister Joan Markey share her experiences with the students she taught at Nolan Catholic High School. To hear her creative ways of fostering a love for literature, and most notably, Jane Austen, with the students in her classes, you find yourself imagining the laughter and sharing that had to be a natural part of Sister Joan's classroom. And so, it was no surprise that she was specially

invited to attend the reunion for the Nolan Class of 1960.

Sister Joan attended the reunion with Dr. John Franko and his wife, Cathy. Talking with her about the reunion, she noted that she taught the same group of young men through grade school at St. Mary the Assumption Catholic School and then reunited with them again during high school at Nolan Catholic. To anyone who knows her, it is no surprise that Sister Joan and these young men have remained friends throughout

the years since high school. With a glint in her eye and a smile on her face, Sister Joan described these young men as being

as full of mischief as adults today as they were when she shared learning with them so many years ago! What a blessing to know a teacher who loved teaching and laughing with her students — and who continues to do so 65 years later.



Sister Joan

JUBILEE CELEBRATION

This year, we joyfully celebrate the 65th Jubilee of three Sisters of St. Mary of Namur: **Sister Miriam NeSmith**, **Sister Patricia Ridgley** and **Sister Patricia Ste. Marie**. Together, they have devoted 195 years to educating youth and serving those in need in Dallas, Fort Worth and Wichita Falls.

Their faith and commitment continue to inspire. As shared throughout this newsletter and by those whose lives they've touched, their impact endures.

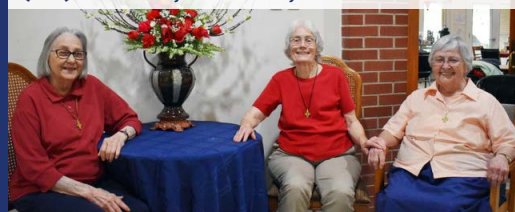
Sister Patricia Ste. Marie, known

for her joyful spirit, says she is "wonderfully grateful" to be healthy and alive to mark this Jubilee. Though she's guided many through teaching and spiritual direction, she insists, "It is I who have been touched by the people I've encountered. We just love one another."

Sister Miriam expresses "a deep sense of gratitude to God for allowing me to serve Him and His people for all these 65 years."

Sr. Patricia remembers vividly that 8th day of September 1960, when 10

(L-R) Sr. Miriam, Sr. Patricia, Sr. Patricia Ste. Marie



young women — most of them just having turned 18 — set out on a life journey. They surely had no idea where the next 65 years would take them, what assignments would be received, what joys and sorrows would be theirs, as they stumbled through their years, ever seeking the Face of God.

Farewell

TO A DEAR FRIEND

Dr. Toni Craven, the I. Wylie and Elizabeth M. Briscoe Chair at Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, and our dear friend, passed away on June 5, 2025.

Toni was an internationally recognized Scripture scholar, sharing her expertise with religious and laypersons throughout the world, with special emphasis on women in Scripture, the book of Judith, commentaries on the prophet Ezekiel and the Book of Psalms. Students, including our Sisters, described Toni as a lively and engaging professor of Hebrew Bible, who joyously shared her knowledge. Her many honors included

serving as a Professor of Hebrew Bible at Brite Divinity School at TCU, and receiving both the Faculty Achievement Award and the Chancellor's Award for Distinguished Teaching. The Society of Biblical Literature and the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession awarded her their Outstanding Service in Mentoring Award in 2005.

In retirement, Toni enjoyed working with several doctoral students at Brite Divinity School, gardening, playing the piano, teaching Biblical Hebrew, reading with children at the Como Community Center, traveling and spending cherished time with her daughter,



Kathryn, and their Maltese dogs. We will deeply miss her, as will the many students she touched throughout her 40 years as an educator.

THE MISSION CONTINUES ...

It has been suggested that **Sister Rita Claire** could very well be the face of the mission of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur. Her life's work as a teacher, mentor and friend to countless numbers of people with whom she lovingly stays in touch — as evidenced by her cell phone “list of contacts” — is a testament to the commitment to serve she made to the Lord many years ago.

Just one example of the work she does as part of her commitment to serve is her wholehearted dedication to providing ESL study opportunities. Sister Rita Claire has been teaching ESL classes and overseeing ESL programs since 1986, beginning in West Texas. It was there that she helped migrant oil field workers complete immigration applications. Since that time, she has never stopped.



The ESL classes she currently oversees at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church are celebrated by the students who return year after year to study with Sister Rita Claire!

Left: Sr. Rita Claire and Tony Blanco, ESL teacher, Graduation 2025; Below: ESL Graduation, May 2025



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS



Sister Rosemary



Sister Mary Jean



Sister Jane



Sister Anselma



Sister Ginny



Sister Clara



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BIRTHDAYS TO REMEMBER

August 23 - Sister Joan Markey

August 31 - Sister Patricia Ridgley

September 5 - Sister Patricia Ste. Marie

September 6 - Sister Gabriela Martinez

October 4 - Sister Charles Marie Serafino

Many thanks
TO THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS:

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THE SISTERS OF SAINT MARY OF NAMUR
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