

NEWSLETTER OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY MISSIONARY SISTERS

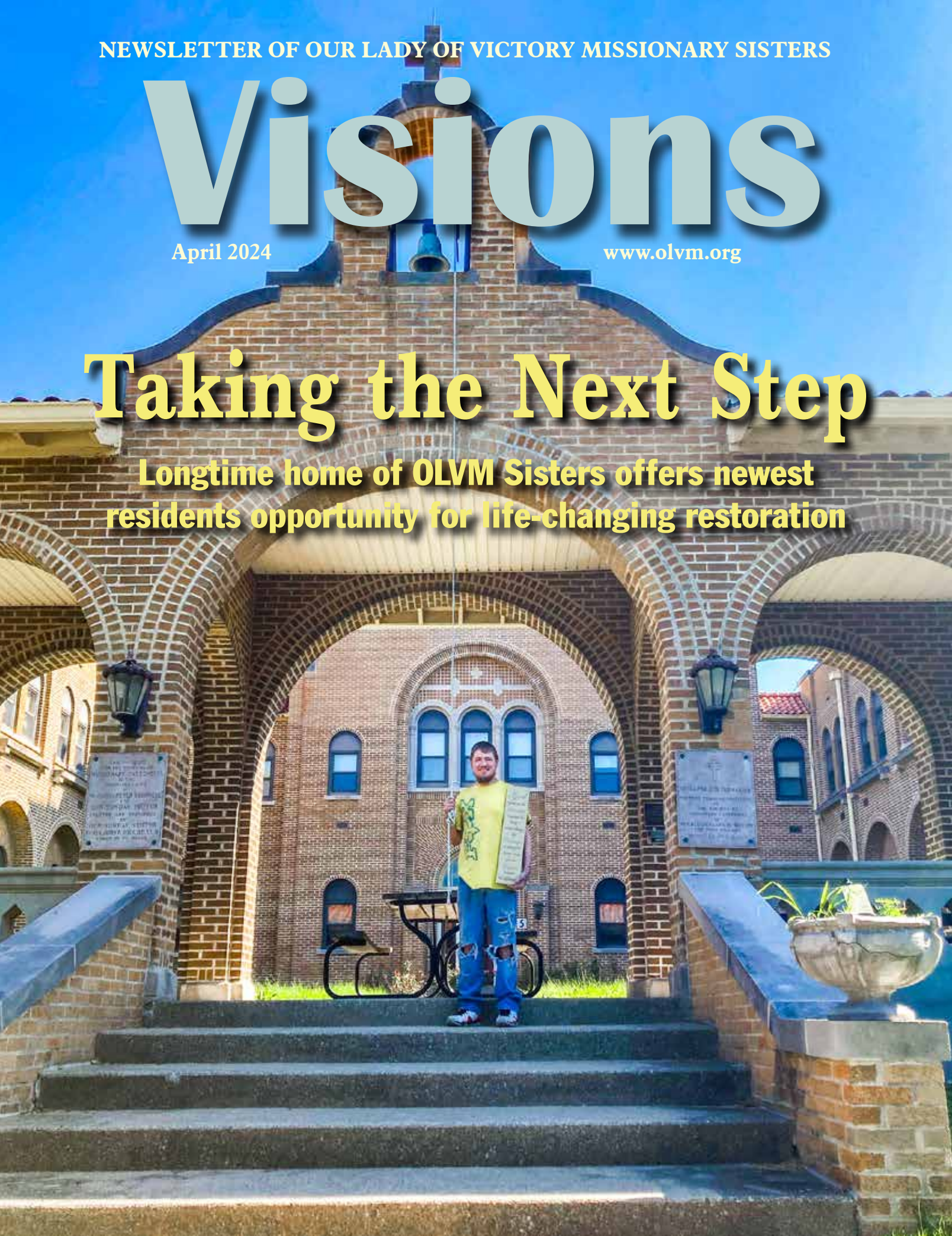
# Visions

April 2024

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

## Taking the Next Step

Longtime home of OLVM Sisters offers newest residents opportunity for life-changing restoration





Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters is a community of women religious founded in 1922 by Father John Joseph Sigstein. The Victory Noll Motherhouse is located in Huntington, Indiana.

Victory Noll Sisters:

- Proclaim the Word of God
- Stand in solidarity with those living in poverty and oppression
- Foster justice
- Promote the development of leaders

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## ON THE COVER

Celebrating completion of a restorative process of Huntington County Community Corrections, a program participant rings the mission bell at Victory Noll.

Huntington County Community Corrections photo

**E**ach of us is on a journey. We steer our way through each day, week, year and beyond. Along the way, our journey's path has hurdles to clear, detours to navigate. Sometimes the way is blocked completely. Like a GPS, we recalculate a new route, or even sometimes have to divert to a different destination.

## PERSPECTIVES ALONG THE JOURNEY

The word "journey" has been important in the history of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters.

Their journey of the Sisters has been to be present with people in need, people who are struggling with their own personal journeys, perhaps having been marginalized by society or by other roadblocks placed in their way. The Sisters have walked alongside these people, helping them to have a voice and opportunities to set their own course. All they ask is that the way to the ultimate destination be fair and just.

There are many such journeys that we all deal with. In addition to our personal journey, we follow paths with our families, our friends. We are on a journey in our society, our country, and as a world. The more people on the same path, the more difficult the journey can be. These large journeys often stop completely when divisions keep people from walking together toward a common objective. The group begins to wander without purpose and progress comes to a halt.

To restart this collective journey, we add the word "transformation." Making this a "transformative journey" means to look inward, to challenge ourselves to contemplate how we engage others, to learn new skills and practices that contribute to decision-making and action which leads to being in the right relationship with Earth and all people.

This issue of Visions highlights the work being done by many to facilitate these transformative journeys and put everyone on a better path, a journey all of us can walk together. ❖

— Paul Siegfried

## CONGREGATION LEADER

Sr. Jenny Howard, SP

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# A Both/And Experience

**O**n February 1, Saint Anne Communities at Victory Noll announced it would have to close by March 31. The Sisters had hoped when this healthcare facility opened seven years ago it would meet the needs of the laity in the Huntington area as well as those of our own Victory Noll Sisters. From the beginning, however, the rooms were never filled to capacity. This, along with the negative effect COVID had on attracting new residents, made it financially unsustainable.

This announcement (See story, Page 13) came as quite a shock to the Sisters as well as to friends and neighbors. It was especially difficult, of course, for the 12 Sisters, 14 residents of Saint Anne's, and the staff. The sense of loss and grief became an overwhelming part of our Lenten Journey,



**Sr. Jenny Howard, SP**  
Congregation Leader

You probably will not be surprised, however, that soon after the announcement many of the Sisters began packing and preparing for the move. For many of the Sisters, even in their own sadness and grieving, their primary concern focused on the other residents as well.

In God's Providence we were able to locate a facility about 15 miles from Victory Noll that could welcome all 12 Sisters, at Heritage Point of Warren, which meant the Sisters could remain together. In addition to the 12 residential rooms, Heritage Pointe also provided space for a prayer room and an office for our Victory Noll Pastoral Care person. Truly, everyone at Heritage Pointe has been very accommodating and welcoming during this difficult transition. Several OLVN Sisters, as well many others closely connected to the Sisters, have also offered much support during this challenging time.

A week or so prior to our move, we received this beautiful prayer from Pastor Ginny Soultz, one of the chaplains at Heritage Pointe: "I just want to remind all the Sisters who will be moving soon that you all are in my prayers continuously as you are making this difficult transition. I am asking the Lord for three specific things on your behalf: Transcendent courage, Unexplainable peace, and Unexpected Joy. May God Bless you all!"

I titled this reflection "A Both/And Experience" reflective of the Paschal Mystery of Death/Resurrection. We trust in God's loving presence with us, as we have experienced it in the long journey as a OLVN Congregation, often bringing new life and possibilities out of painful, difficult situations. As I write this we continue to engage in this transition. May we also continue to pray for the grace to respond to God's call to enter fully into the Mystery of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection to New Life.



## CROSSING OVER

By Joyce Rupp

Crossing over in to the unknown,  
 Crossing over from a secure land  
 To one whose roads I have never walked.  
 Companion and Guide, you are my transition coach.  
 You say to me: "Cross over the bridge.  
 Go ahead, come on over. It's sturdy enough.  
 Don't look down, though, or you might get terrified  
 And never walk across.  
 Don't look back too long or you will lose courage  
 And want to stay right where you are.  
 Hang on. Keep going. That's what bridges are for,  
 To get you to the other side. Trust me to protect you."  
 For all of us in transition who have bridges to cross,  
 Bless us, God of the journey, gift us with the desire to go ahead.  
 Help us to trust that the bridge will be strong  
 And the risk will be worth it. ❖



Photo by Paul Siegfried

**Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters chat with one of the participants in the Huntington County Community Corrections program at Victory Noll. Program participants reside in the same building where Sisters once resided. Huntington County acquired the building in 2021.**

## **Presence of Sisters carries on Former OLVM residence utilized as restorative space**

**W**hen Father John Joseph Sigstein was imagining his dream of what would become Our Lady of Victory Sisters, his focus was creating a community to reach out and empower groups of marginalized people, to lift them out of their situations and into a new life.

In 2021, Huntington County Community Corrections acquired the buildings Fr. Sigstein had used to make his dream become reality. Following in the footsteps of Fr. Sigstein and the OLVM Sisters, Huntington County Community Corrections has its own dream of creating a system that addresses changing the lives of another marginalized population.

In this case, the goal is to implement unique alternatives to incarceration for certain offenders, hoping to break a cycle that sees them in and out of the justice system.

With a deep understanding of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, Community Corrections was eager to integrate the legacy of the Sisters into their venture. Participants in the program are told the history and mission of OLVM, and how it mirrors the goals of the corrections efforts.

Among the history told is the story of Fr. Sigstein, who in his early years as a priest in Chicago, would reach out to immigrant men who had been arrested

and implement his own particular brand of rehabilitation and restoration in an effort to change their lives.

The work of Huntington County Community Corrections mirrors the aims of what Fr. Sigstein strived for a century ago — creating a new life journey for people who are struggling.

Other ties to OLVM were included in facility transformation.

The former OLV Building was renamed The O'Donnell Center, recognizing Peter and Julia O'Donnell, early benefactors of Fr. Sigstein who provided initial financial resources for the building of the Victory Noll Motherhouse in Huntington in 1924.

Residents in the Community Corrections program stay in the same rooms where the Sisters once lived. They spend time on the grounds and in the OLV Chapel. It is all part of the restorative, person-centered process.

A mural recently installed in the building depicts the journey of the Sisters and the transition to Community Corrections. When Victory Noll Sisters were invited to view the mural, they met with some of the current participants living in the building.

Established in 2012, Huntington County Community Corrections is a community-based program that looks to provide preventive services, services to offenders, services to persons charged with a crime or an act of delinquency, services to persons diverted from the criminal or delinquency process, services to persons sentenced to imprisonment, or services to victims of crime or delinquency.

Vision and mission statements were created to detail the direction of the ground-breaking program.

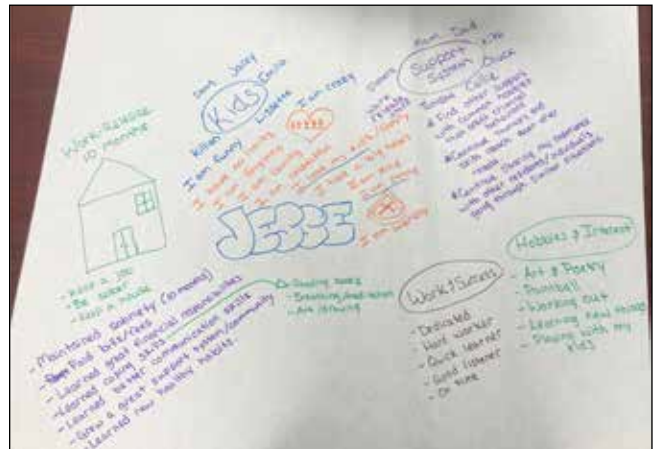
“The vision of Huntington County Community Corrections is to provide meaningful, affordable, cost effective alternatives to the offender population that instills individual accountability while redirecting behaviors using evidence-based practices to provide for successful re-integration into society.”

“The mission of Huntington County Community Corrections is to provide the local court system with alternative sentencing and to make the community a safer place through a balanced system of evidence-based practices and services to the offenders. Hunting-



Huntington County Community Corrections photos

**Purdue Extension Educator Caroline Everidge (left) and Community Corrections residents show off their re-potted plants, a skills-building exercise that is part of the restorative process. Below, one of the residents lists goals and gratitudes to reinforce positive affirmations.**



ton County Community Corrections strives to provide a safe environment, effective management of offenders, and worthwhile programs for offenders that will assist them in life while providing them with an opportunity to maintain their family structure.”

To illicit change in the offender population an understanding of the unique challenges facing their success whether it be in the realm of mental health, poverty, drug addiction, lack of education, disability, trauma, or homelessness has to be considered in the planning, development, and implementation of services. A person-centered planning approach is taken to assess risk and needs, determine intrinsic motivation, target interventions, skill train, increase positive reinforcement, create support in community

for post release, measuring data for effectiveness and providing measurement feedback. These principles of effective intervention create the foundation to support the mission of Community Corrections. The vision for programming includes Pretrial Services, Day Reporting, Electronic Home Detention, Alcohol Detection programming, Community Service, Restorative Residential Work Release and Transitional Housing.

In July 2021 Community Corrections collaborated with the Victory Noll Sisters to acquire their training campus to implement the residential component of the vision. This opportunity provided a space for the unique model of supervision with services for the residents to attend treatment with Parkview/Park Center on one campus. This “warm handoff” approach greatly diminishes the time from the offense to treatment addressing co-occurring disorders of the offender population under supervision. In July of 2022 Huntington County’s receipt of the Community Catalyst Grant inserted a foundational piece to launching programming that provides the avenue for offenders whose behaviors need to be redirected in a way that encourage personal growth, turning vision into action to make a profound impact on Huntington County.

In December of 2022, the first residents were taken on-site and in 2023 the first 64 individuals were screened for the residential program, with 30 being accepted. Currently, there are 11 men in residence.

The program is a work in progress and is still taking baby steps. With its new approach to Community Corrections, there is no playbook for methods and procedures. Each person has an individual program based on needs and skills.

Keeping the history and mission of the Sisters is also part of the program development, which includes utilization of the physical space.

The mission bell at Victory Noll was once used as a clarion sign of major events happening on campus. Today, Community Corrections continues to use the bell to celebrate a life-changing moment.

Those in intense outpatient therapy for drug or substance addiction ring the bell following completion of their treatment. Men completing the residential program come with their families to ring the bell to herald the next step in their journeys to recovery and rehabilitation.

It is a time to close one part of their lives and enter



Photo by Paul Siegfried

**Director of Huntington County Community Corrections Leslie Rentschler (right) embraces OLVM Sister Jeanette Halbach. Rentschler’s office was once occupied by Sr. Jeanette when she was OLVM President.**

into a new way of living, and a tribute to the Sisters’ training that took place there.

There are other ways Community Corrections keeps the connection with the Sisters.

Historical photos remain on the walls, reminding both program participants and staff of the history of Victory Noll that Fr. Sigstein built his dream from scratch, just as Community Corrections is building their program from the ground up.

The OLV Chapel is used for staff and board meetings, for training programs, and for times of quiet reflection. With its stained glass and history as a sacred space, there is a calming presence. It is part of the healing and restorative journey that assists both participants in the program as well as a respite for corrections employees.

For 100 years, Victory Noll was the center of the mission and ministry for Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters. Now, Huntington County Community Corrections begins their own journey and mission, drawing on the legacy the Sisters have created. ❖

*Leslie Rentschler, Director of Huntington County Community Corrections, and Paul Siegfried, OLVM Communications Coordinator, contributed to this story.*



# Mural tells the journey of transition

## Huntington County pays tribute to OLVN Sisters and ongoing mission

**H**untington County Community Corrections acquired buildings on the Victory Noll campus in 2022 as a home for its programs to provide alternatives to incarceration and offer care and assistance for those with mental or substance illness and the opportunity to maintain family structures and to reintegrate into society.

It was important to county officials that the story and mission of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters be integrated into the restorative programming. The former OLV Building was renamed The O'Donnell Center, reflective of Peter and Julia O'Donnell, who were early benefactors of the Sisters and who provided initial funding for the building's construction.

Some of individuals in the Community Corrections programs reside in the building for a time, living in the same rooms that once also housed the Victory Noll Sisters.

In 2023, a mural was commissioned to illustrate the Journey of Transformation, depicting the history of

the Sisters through to the present day and the county's renewed use of the facility as a place of recovery and restoration.

The Mural Committee included: OLVN Sisters Mary Jo Nelson, Lucille Martinez, Rose Zita Rosonke, Rita Musante, Clarita Trujillo, Mary Louise Rowney and Director of Huntington County Community Corrections Leslie Rentschler.

Local Huntington artist Jason O'Connell produced a five-panel mural illustrating different eras of the journey, from Father Joseph Sigstein's initial efforts in Chicago, through his founding of the community in 1922, the growth and ministries over the years. The final panel depicts Huntington County Community Corrections and the ongoing story of presence and service among those marginalized by society.

The mural was install in December 2023, and Sisters had the opportunity to visit and view the artwork, and also had a chance to meet several residents who are taking part in the current programming. ❖



**Left, mural artist Jason O'Connell is shown with OLVN Sister Lucille Martinez (center) and Leslie Rentschler, director of Huntington County Community Corrections. Right, Victory Noll Sisters made a visit to view the mural.**





“... it is we human beings above all who need to change.”  
— Pope Francis

# Transformation begins in the heart

## Efforts address task of bridging divisions in Church and Society

By Sr. Beaty Haines  
OLVM Social Justice Coordinator

**W**omen Religious in the United States are embarking on a new initiative focused on “Transformative Justice” in response to the question, “What is ours to do in this time?”

### The Work of Transformative Justice

In November Victory Noll Sisters joined the initiative of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) for the coming year: “Transforming Grace: the Work of Transformative Justice.”

*The work of transformative justice is grounded in contemplation and is an engagement in learning skills and practices that will lead to decision-making and action that leads to being in right relationship with Earth and all human persons.*

— LCWR website



We are invited to take responsibility for the personal and collective responses we can make in the challenges we will encounter especially during the national election period.

On the personal level I might ask: does my thinking and behavior in situations of conflict or disagreement foster further harm or healing? How can I reach across the divides in our Church and Society? Pope Francis is calling each of us to learn to listen respectfully to each other with the goal to understand better what God is speaking to all of us. This respectful listening is a process or approach we can also utilize beyond the Church, even when it comes to politics. Easy? No, but it is action most likely to bring about positive change. Change and transformation is possible, and it begins in the hearts of each one of us.



**Part of the Synod of Synodality in October, 2023 included table discussion among delegates with a focus on respectful listening and a free expression of ideas.**



The following words of Pope Francis encourage us to always root our efforts toward transformation in faith:

*“I cannot fail...to remind the Catholic faithful of the motivations born of their faith. ... since we know that authentic faith not only gives strength to the human heart but also transforms life, transfigures our goals and sheds light on our relationship to others and with creation as a whole.”*

Laudate Deum, #61

For us Christians, transformative justice is rooted in our faith that God is a God of Life and a God of Hope, a God that works through human beings.

I recently read an article by Fr. Dan Horan that included the following description of the deeper meaning of Easter. “What we celebrate at Easter is the full affirmation of the presence of the divine in the world and the hope we have of new life to come.” Yes, we hope for the coming of new life experienced through greater justice and a healing of the harm done by injustice. Happy Easter! ❖



Leadership for the Monocacy Farm Project includes (from left) Anton Shannon, assistant project manager and farmer; Eli Stogstill, project manager and lead farmer; Sister Bonnie Kleinschuster, director; and Amy Baringer, marketing and fundraising coordinator.

Photo provided



## Sharing Nature's bounty

### Project mission addresses poverty, care for the Earth

The Monocacy Farm Project began as a “simple project,” initiated in 2013 by the School Sisters of St. Francis, US Province in response to a General Chapter Mandate. Drawing on their Franciscan roots, the sisters embraced the congregational challenge to “commit to a concrete response to alleviate poverty and care for our sister, Mother Earth,” and dedicated 10 acres of land to *Feeding the Hungry, Caring for the Earth, and Growing Healthy Community*. Most encouraging was that this mission was later affirmed by the challenges of Pope Francis in his encyclicals *Laudato Si’* and *Fratelli Tutti*. Now, having grown

*“We are in relationship with all of creation. We are called to stewardship.”*

Sister Bonnie Kleinschuster, OSF,  
MFP Director

from conceptual seed to a thriving ministry which continued to blossom and grow through its 10th Anniversary Growing season, MFP looks forward to its next decade of service.

#### Cultivating Tangible Results for the Community...

MFP grows healthy community through mutual care for the land along the Monocacy Creek in Bethlehem, PA. The work of the sisters enables

Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters created Victory Noll Empowerment Grants as a way to utilize resources as they continue addressing the needs of those who live in poverty and marginalized by society. Each issue of Visions features the work of a current grant recipient.



The Monocacy Farm Project seeks to use land and resources at Monocacy Manor, in the Franciscan Tradition, to model stewardship and care of the Earth, foster community involvement, provide educational opportunities, and serve the needs of the poor.

MFP to: share the land through community gardens, grow food for distribution to the emergency food system, make seasonal produce available to visitors, and explore the ecosystems of the farmscape with learners of all ages and abilities.

*“Collectively we are all facing serious ecological crises which are deeply interrelated to social and economic injustices. Our work is a small contribution to growing healthy communities from the ground up.”*

Eli Stogsdill,  
MFP Co-Manager

Each growing season, MFP welcomes individuals and families to visit the farm and pick their own produce regardless of ability to pay. Throughout the season, members learn from our farm staff about the produce we grow, how to properly harvest, and to prepare healthy meals. In 2023, affordable, fresh produce made it to more tables than ever before as Pick-Your-Own membership grew from just a handful in 2019 to nearly 170. We look forward to growing this accessible way for families to build gardening skills and experience the agroecological production process of fruits and vegetables.

Our Community Garden Program makes plots available to growers who might not otherwise have land access, enabling them to provide culturally and nutritionally important food for their families and communities where they live. The plots provide a rich site for families and individuals



Photos provided

**Above, MFP Director Sr. Bonnie Kleinschuster (center) helps with the weekly distribution for the Community Feeding and Meals Ministry for a local church. Below, volunteers learn skills during the annual Intern Impact Day at Monocacy Farms.**



to experiment, learn, and “grow community” around healthy eating and outdoor physical activity.

In partnership with ecological restoration projects through the Watershed Coalition of the Lehigh Valley, MFP helps to steward our local ecosystems. Newly planted trees and shrubs growing in and around our farm fields also testify to concern for future generations. A young

windbreak planting with persimmons and hazelnuts west of our fields will reduce wind stress and moisture-loss, protecting produce grown for distribution through the emergency food system. Our agroforestry demonstration puddle garden incorporates high-quality fruit and nut tree varieties to a low-lying area of the farm. Inspired by Jared Rosenbaum’s children’s book *The Puddle Gar-*

den, we have planted half an acre with pecan, hickory, hazel, pawpaw, persimmon, plum, native grasses and flowering plants.

MFP educational programs provide instruction and hands-on experiences which cultivate our relationship with all creation. Through interactive programs, groups and individuals of all ages and abilities can explore agroecology, creation care from a spiritual perspective, health, nutrition, and more.

### Looking Ahead...

The work of MFP is conducted in collaboration with many partners at every step of the seasonal rhythms. Seeding in the greenhouse for our earliest spring plantings is currently under way alongside community volunteers from university and middle schools. The tractor work of field preparation will follow as weather and soil conditions allow. Greenhouse tables will soon be filled with trays of vibrant seedlings for our annual plant sale alongside those planned for our fields. Our community gardeners will commence their relationship with the plots they will tend this season as our farmers sow spring cover crops to support regeneration of the soil ecosystem, an important part of the seasonal rotation for sustainable harvests.

Spring days lengthening towards summer will bring the return of regular harvests and produce distributions through our many partners in the emergency food system. Daily pick-ups by volunteers throughout the season ensure our fresh, nutritious pro-



Photos provided

**Above, students from St. John Chrysostom School in Bethlehem, PA enjoy weekly farm visits as part of their Nature Study Class. Monocacy Farm Project engages and grows with gardeners of all ages. Left, a “future intern” helps with harvesting carrots.**

duce getting to those who need it the most throughout our community. By early June, MFP staff, volunteers, and the School Sisters of St. Francis will welcome visitors to share in the harvest and in the responsibility to care for this place, and each other, together.

Notably, the Monocacy Farm Project team has grown into a broad community. Local faith communities, representing Christian, Jewish, and Muslim congregations have become mission partners, providing volunteers

and financial support. Their support, along with that of local businesses, foundations, organizations, individuals, and religious congregations like Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, who share our values and generously empower our ministry, is vital to our mission. We are blessed. We are grateful. There is much more to be done. ❖

Monocacy Farm Project  
website:  
[www.monocacyfarmproject.org](http://www.monocacyfarmproject.org)

# Sisters “crossing another bridge”

## Closing of Saint Anne facility prompts move away from Victory Noll

By Sr. Lucille Martinez, OLVM  
and Sr. Mary Louise Rowney, OLVM

Over the last eight years the Victory Noll Sisters have been involved in creating for themselves a sacred journey of Transformation. This has involved much communal prayer and participating in small groups and assemblies several times during the year. This collaborative process enabled us as a community to arrive at major decisions impacting the future of our mission as a Congregation. As our President, Sister Mary Jo Nelson reminded us at our last Chapter on October 22, 2021, the decisions we made in the previous years might appear as an indication of the end of our Congregation, but in reality, she said, “it is rather, a re-commitment to live into the next phase of our life as Victory Noll Sisters.”

One of the significant decisions that we made was to transfer our health care facility and services to Saint Anne Communities in Fort Wayne. Our discernment led us to face and accept our reality. We were smaller in number, had a higher median age, and no new members. With this acceptance, we decided to partner more intentionally with others. We partnered with Saint Anne Communities, with a new facility at Victory Noll, with the hope the new partnership would enable all our Sisters to age in what has been a familiar place, a place we have called “home” for more than 100 years.

Since the opening of Saint Anne Communities at Victory Noll in 2017, healthcare has become increasingly complex and difficult, impacted by the aftermath of the global pandemic and ongoing financial challenges. Faced with these ongoing challenges, Saint Anne Communities in Fort Wayne made the decision to close the Victory Noll facility. The announcement was made on February 1, 2024. At the time of the announcement, Saint Anne Communities at Victory Noll location housed 12 OLVM Sisters and

14 lay residents and had 48 employees.

After the announcement, Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters immediately began searching for alternative living options to ensure the 12 Sisters at Victory Noll would be able to live together at another health care facility. Saint Anne Communities in Fort Wayne said they would assist the lay residents to find new living options and they would assist employees with job transitions.

Because the Sisters living at Saint Anne had expressed their desire to stay together as a group, the location chosen with enough accommodations for all 12 Sisters was Heritage Pointe in Warren, Indiana. The OLVM Sisters moved to their new living location on March 19, 2024. This facility is about 20 minutes from Huntington. Sister Jenny Howard, SP, our Congregation Leader, informed the Sisters that the staff at Heritage Pointe has been most accommodating and welcoming

throughout the process.

The Sisters are especially grateful for Bishop Kevin Rhoades’ approval to have the Blessed Sacrament in a prayer room prepared especially for this purpose. The Bishop has also assured the Sisters that the Eucharistic liturgy will be celebrated several times each week.

As we “cross another bridge,” we recognize and acknowledge the courage and resiliency of our Sisters to move from the known to the unknown, with heavy hearts and sadness. Together we will continue as pilgrims on the journey and help each other walk the mile and bear the load.

*For all of us in transition who have  
bridges to cross,  
Bless us, God of the journey, gift us  
with the desire to go ahead.  
Help us to trust that the bridge will  
be strong and the risk will be worth it.*

— Taken from “Crossing Over”  
by Joyce Rupp ❖





OLVM Archives

**OLVM Sister Carolyn Lopez (left) signs with students at the Utah School for the Deaf and the Blind in the 1970s. Victory Noll Sisters began their ministry at the school in 1947.**

## Finding ways to meet special needs

By Jeff Hoffman  
OLVM Archivist

**O**ur Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters have encountered many challenges through the years in teaching catechism. They took on those situations and found ways to overcome any difficulties.

Because of their successes, the Sisters were sought out by dioceses for assistance in teaching challenges, especially for groups that were often marginalized. One of those special-needs groups were students with various levels of hearing impairment. Once again, the Sisters developed inventive methods for making

sure every child received religious education.

With her students relying on their sight alone, Sr. Susanna Michels, OLVM, used arm, hand and body gestures, pantomime, crayons, pencils, paints, the written word, sign language and anything else that she could create to communicate with hearing-impaired students as she prepared them for their First Holy Communion. She repeated the ideas in as many ways as possible. In teaching a class for these students, Sr. Susanna described it feeling like she had “been put through a sieve at the end of the hour.” She saw that oral and manual methods of teaching



OLVM Archives

**OLVM Sister Susanna Michels signs with a deaf student while she was missioned as a catechist in New Mexico.**

***EDITOR'S NOTE:** Following the completion of OLVM's year-long Centennial Celebration in 2022, Victory Noll Archivist Jeff Hoffman continues his historical look at significant events and individuals from the congregation's first 100 years.*

# OLVM HISTORY

were necessary to give the students a true understanding of their faith and help them become better members of God's family.

Here's an example that was used to impart one of Christ's messages to the children:

- Sister falls to the floor in mock pain and calls for help. One child runs to her aid. Sister tells them that Jesus says to help.
- Sister cries and another student comes to pat her on her shoulder in comfort. Sister tells them that Jesus says to be kind.
- One child finds a box of gumdrops that Sister has hidden in the room. The child offers to share them with the rest of the class. Sister tells them that Jesus said to share.

By telling the story in this way, those with hearing loss were able to make full use of their eyes for learning to compensate for their lack of hearing. Pictures were utilized to convey the message the Catechetical teacher was trying to present.

Sr. Susanna described the teacher as needing to have great patience, but also to be firm. The teacher of the hearing-impaired student must remember to think as the student would think, and ask themselves question, "How might the deaf student express this idea?"

While in Utah, a group for the hearing impaired was organized and met monthly for a signed mass, lunch and meeting. They chose Our Lady of Victory as their patroness to honor the Victory Noll Sisters for their help getting the group started. In New Mexico they worked with the New Mexico School for the Deaf and had a staff of two sisters and six lay teachers with seven seminarians and four lay people assisting in the classrooms. A weekly signed Sunday mass was held at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary in Santa Fe, and the children would also have the opportunity for confession. ❖



OLVM Archives

**OLVM Sister Anna Hitzler (above) was recognized for 50 years working with the hearing-impaired in the Catholic community.**

**Below, the newsletter of the Diocese of Salt Lake City highlighted the work of the Sisters with special-needs students. Bottom left, Sr. Mary Edna Butler stands with hearing-impaired students following First Communion in Santa Fe, New Mexico.**





OUR LADY OF VICTORY  
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# Visions FROM THE VICTORY NOLL ARCHIVES



**F**ather John Joseph Sigstein founded what would become Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters in 1922, and retired police officer Peter O'Donnell provided needed funds to building the community's motherhouse at Victory Noll in Huntington, Indiana. Some years later, Fr. Sigstein (right) and O'Donnell met again in Long Beach, Calif. The buildings at Victory Noll were acquired by Huntington County in 2021 to house its ground-breaking Community Corrections program, and to recognize the contribution of O'Donnell and the history of Sigstein and the Victory Noll Sisters, Huntington County renamed the original building The O'Donnell Center. ❖