

NEWSLETTER OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY MISSIONARY SISTERS

# Visions

January 2022

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

Lighting  
the way  
ahead

**VICTORY NOLL SISTERS  
HOLD FINAL CHAPTER**





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

Sister Clarita Trujillo lights a candle after walking across a symbolic bridge to open the final Chapter of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters in October.

Photo by Paul Siegfried

Like fenceposts along a winding country road, Chapter proceedings have marked the journey of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, with each one a distinctive moment in the timeline of the Congregation. Held like clockwork every four years, Chapters have been a time to gather and reconnect,

## PERSPECTIVES ALONG THE JOURNEY

a time to reminisce, but mostly a time to look ahead, to chart the course into the future. It has been well-documented that OLVM has been facing many major decisions recently. The aging Community has been planning for its fulfillment — a time when they will not have the capability or the members to have an active role in their mission. At the 21st General Chapter in March 2020, the Sisters laid the groundwork to change the way they are governed and who will oversee everything from basic care and needs of the Sisters to how their resources will be shared. Since that time, events have accelerated with the sale of the remaining campus buildings and seeking approval from Rome that will allow someone from outside the Community — a commissary — to step into the OLVM leadership role. The quickening timeline called for one final Chapter, just 19 months after the previous one. These October proceedings, not numbered, but aptly titled the “Extra-ordinary” Chapter, gave final approval to the major decisions determining the shape and fashion the OLVM mission will take, and securing that it will continue well into the future. But just as importantly, this Chapter allowed the Sisters to “Cross to New Life” and embrace the next phase of their journey, secure in the knowledge their charism will go on even as their physical presence fades from view. In that way, this Chapter truly was extraordinary. ❖

### OLVM LEADERSHIP TEAM

*Sister Mary Jo Nelson*  
*Sister Lucille Martiny*      *Sister Ginger Downey*

**Visions** is published three times a year by Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters.

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*As Chapter began, there were several major decisions to be made regarding the future of OLVN, including governance, resource sharing and community direction.*



**Chapter events included time for prayer, reflection and discernment to help facilitate the decisions made for the future of the community.**

## Setting the course as a community

**By Sister Beatrice Haines**

**W**hat we experienced in the Twentieth General Chapter 2016 was God's call to continue the sacred journey of Transformation accompanied by the Spirit. For me, this call was the "guiding star" of our journey this past 5 1/2 years.



Sr. Beatrice Haines

We have learned that change is an external reality, while transformation is internal. We could say it is the process of growth, of becoming more of what God is calling us/me to be.

An important aspect of inner growth as a Com-

munity is how we make decisions. We have come to realize gradually since Vatican II that each member, by her vow of obedience, shares responsibility for the life and mission of the congregation, not just the leaders.

In the past 5 1/2 years, through prayer and participation in small groups and assemblies, we have together discerned God's will for us at a very critical time for our future. We have pondered information that the Leadership Team has shared with us, prayed over it, discussed it and arrived at major decisions that impact the future of our mission as a Congregation.

This is a great source of peace and joy for me. ❖



**Sr. Adela Amoroso-Medrano (above) and Srs. Lupita Aguilar-Huanca, Lupe Flores-Ocaña and Mary Lou Rowney (right) discuss topics during Chapter proceedings.**



*Midway through the Chapter proceedings, the Victory Noll Sisters paused for a special Mass to remember Sisters who had died in the 19 months since the previous Chapter.*

# Honoring those who have gone before us

By Sister Rita Musante

The Evening of Remembrance was a welcomed and much-needed time for reflection and prayer around the lives of our 11 Sisters who had died since our last Chapter in March 2020. This Chapter coincided with the arrival of the COVID-19 virus in our country. Like everyone else in the early days of the pandemic, we were denied the comforting and healing rituals of grieving because of that virus.

We had much to grieve. In the past several years, we have sold all but two acres of our land and all of our buildings. We were working toward the end of our current manner of governance and the beginning of a great deal of newness in that area.

The Evening of Remembrance was rich in ambience, prayer and song. On entering the chapel we were met by photos of the 11 Sisters who had died, artistically arranged on a long narrow table in the center of the worship space.

The Eucharistic celebration that began the evening provided an abundance of rich Biblical and poetic/musical images for our grieving hearts. Those images included:

*“Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.”*

*“The love that dreamed and formed you still surrounds you here today ... the light that shines to guide you home to the loving hand of God.”*

*“They shall shine, and shall dart about as sparks through stubble”*

The Service of Remembrance following the Mass was an audio-visual collage recalling the person and life of each of the 11 Sisters. These pictures were projected on the front wall of the chapel accompanied by beautiful music.

The theme of our final Chapter, in which we were immersed that week, aptly and powerfully summed up the evening of remembrance: Crossing to New Life. ❖



**The Evening of Remembrance traced the path the community has traveled recently with music and reflection, including a tribute to the Sisters who have died since March 2020.**



Sr. Rita Musante

*The final Chapter of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters came to a close on October 22, 2021, with a final Mass that included each of the Sisters crossing a symbolic bridge.*

## The Journey continues with new commitment

By Sister Judy Turnock

**A**s Mass drew to a close, Sister Mary Jo invited all of the Sisters to cross over the bridge once more, signifying each one's commitment of accepting the decisions of the Chapter and of the future of our life. These days of our Extra-Ordinary Chapter have been a blessing of hope and courage for our community and for the Church. We re-committed ourselves to live into the next phase of our life as Victory Noll Sisters. With joy, awe and some hesitancy, I willingly lit my candle and walked across the bridge to new life.



Sr. Judy Turnock

The "bridge" was "constructed" in front of the altar, with a brown cloth representing the dirt path, handrails to help us, and tall grasses by the sides from our grounds. Sisters who needed to use their cane, walker or rollator also crossed the bridge. Sr. Mary Jo called us each by name at the opening and closing rituals. For part of this sacred moment we sang: *"We are pilgrims on the journey ... We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load."* ❖



**Sisters lit a candle and crossed a symbolic bridge to signify their renewed commitment to the next part of their journey as a community. During the procession, Sisters sang "All That We Have."**

**The closing ritual of Chapter included words, music and acts of renewal as Sisters embraced their future and also each other.**



*To end the closing ritual of the final Chapter of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on October 22, 2021, OLVN President Mary Jo Nelson offered this homily.*

# Not an ending, but a chance to embrace the new

**T**his afternoon marks a significant ending and new beginning for us as a Congregation. We have concluded our final Chapter. However, it is not an end – it is not a completion or the fulfillment of our congregation. It is rather, a re-commitment to live into the next phase of our life as Victory Noll Sisters.

Over the last several years there have been changes that might feel like endings and new beginnings or maybe both:

- The death of many Sisters who have been our friends and companions
- The changing energy and health of many Sisters
- The selling and repurposing of our Victory Noll home for restorative services to people struggling with addiction
- Letting go of treasured ministries, influence and visibility we experienced for so many years



- Experiencing the evolution of religious life in our midst, where one story, one way of religious life is ending and another is emerging
- Transferring our health care facility and services to Saint Anne's Community
- Selling most of our land to ACRES Land Trust
- The change in our governance structure, by requesting a commissary
- Creating a Direction Statement to guide our life together
- Developing a legacy plan to share our abundance in a way that carries our charism, mission, and values into the future
- Becoming part of the Heritage and Archive Research Center at St. Mary's, Notre Dame
- Tending the heart of our lives to deepen our search for God as lived in community, the vowed life, and the Victory Noll mission
- Sharing our journey of transition and transformation with many other congregations

At this time in our life we are called to re-commit ourselves to the mission of the consecrated life – we are called to explore the depths of the vowed life,



open ourselves to a new experience of community life, and continue our search for God and the questions of God, and to share who we are with others.

Our two scripture texts for this liturgy speak profoundly of this new call ... To live in the Resurrection!

From Corinthians we hear these words: “Do you not know that a little yeast makes the whole mass of dough rise? Throw out, then the old yeast and be a new dough.” These two short sentences call us to give up the old yeast, let go of what is no longer working because there is something new in our future!

From the John’s story of Mary Magdalene at the tomb we hear ...

Mary stood outside the tomb crying ... Jesus asked her, “why are you crying? Who are you looking for” then he calls her by name ... Mary! And Mary Magdalene desperately cries out to her “Master.” Yet Jesus quickly tells her to not hold on to him

and then sends her to the brothers – she runs to tell them “I have seen the Lord.”

We feel the grief of Mary Magdalene and her call to proclaim new life “to the brothers!” She is a bundle of both grief and the excitement of something new with her God that is on the horizon. Are we not like Mary Magdalene? Like her we are called to a new and deeper relationship with our God and called to meet God in our grief, our loss, and in all that is beginning. There is grief and there is newness and they both live in us.

Living religious life is living in the life of the resurrection of Jesus. It means that the life-passion, death and resurrection of Jesus has claimed our hearts. It is the pattern of our life. It is where the risen Jesus calls us by name, meets us where we are – whatever is real for us – because it is the only place of transformation. But there is more – we are also sent to live and share resurrection life with others!

As we end our chapter I pray this blessing for each of us:

## The Magdalene’s Blessing

by Jan Richardson

You hardly imagined standing here,  
Everything you ever loved suddenly returned to you,  
Looking you in the eye and calling your name.

And now you do not know how to abide this hole in the center of your chest,  
Where a door slams shut and swings open at the same time,  
Turning on the hinge of your aching and hopeful heart.

I tell you, this is not banishment from the garden.  
This is an invitation a choice, a threshold, a gate.  
This is your life calling to you from a place you could never have dreamed,  
But now that you glimpsed its edge, you cannot imagine choosing any other way.

So let the tears come as anointing, as consecration, and let them go.  
Let this blessing gather itself around you.  
Let it give you what you will need for this journey.

# Seeking stability

## Programs lift people from homelessness to new life paths



Casa Esperanza came into being in 1994, when Sister Jean Kielty of the Society of Helpers realized that women and children in Chicago needed more time to find stability after experiencing homelessness.

At the time, people were given only 120 days to reside in city shelters. Sr. Jean was running shelters for Catholic Charities, and through her experiences wanted to find a new way to help this underserved community. She realized that the Society of Helpers had a building that became vacant recently. The Society was able to use it to open an extended transitional housing program for women and children. Thus, Casa Esperanza was born!

Casa Esperanza provides its residents with sorely

needed stability at some of the most difficult times in their lives.

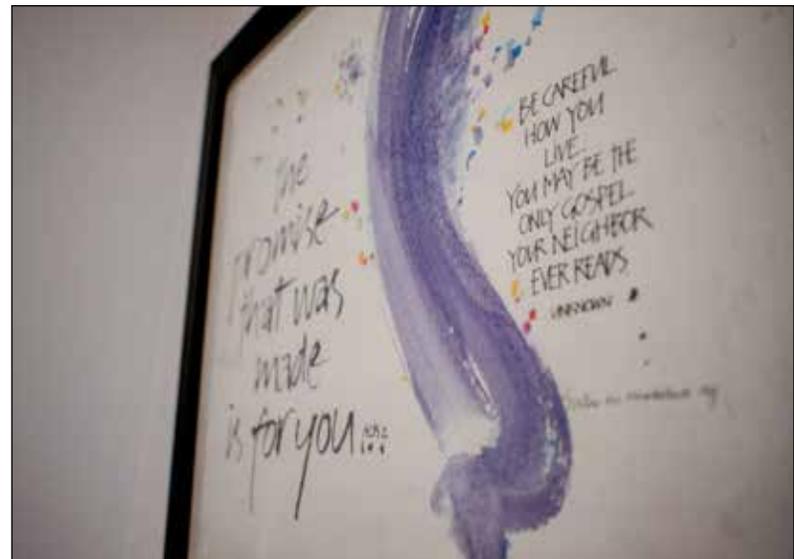
We provide the time and educational programs they require to move towards self-sufficiency. Many programs and classes are offered on a variety of subjects such as home maintenance, job search strategies, resumé building, childcare, etc.

We also partner with local institutions – for example, through the University of Illinois Extension we offer a monthly program educating participants about healthy lifestyle choices. This includes cooking tips, exercise, and priorities that they need to set to stay healthy and clean.

We also work with US Bank to offer a financial literacy program. It focuses on the basics of open-



Casa Esperanza is a transitional housing program serving the women and children of the Chicagoland area, with a mission to help residents overcome the cycle of poverty and homelessness by providing a safe, stable home and a caring community. Programming offers opportunity for personal, social and professional development, and fosters independence, helping women achieve self-sufficiency through counseling, holistic workshops and skills-based training.





ing a checking or savings account, information about renting, mortgages, and managing credit.

These interactive sessions give participants opportunities to manage their finances and identify the various ways they can prepare themselves to experience an independent lifestyle.

Over the years, we have helped over 120 residents transition out of the shelter system into stable housing and new careers. We are also starting an alumni group to continue helping former residents as they navigate life.

One alumna has her own advice for those interested in Casa: “I encourage anyone who is going through a tough time to look for refuge through Casa, stay engaged and take advantage of the assistance that is offered.”

This alumna was with Casa Esperanza in the late 1990s/early 2000s. After her time at Casa Esperanza Project, she went on to receive her Associates degree in Business Administration from Robert Morris University and a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Chicago State University.

After her academic accomplishments, she started her family and had a beautiful daughter. In 2010, she started her own business but then chose to go back to school once again.

Our alumna attended Illinois Media School and received certification in Broadcasting. She has had much success since leaving Casa Esperanza and is a fantastic example of how important stability is to creating a new life!

With Covid-19, many of our in-person programs had to be put on hold, so we took this time to re-focus our efforts on the digital front.

In recent months, Casa Esperanza has brought a communication team on board to focus on updating our website and increasing outreach in the digital world. We now offer lists of resources for those living on the south side of Chicago and we are reaching out to make those resources available to a wider audience.

Casa Esperanza is in the process of becoming a community resource beyond the programs offered to our residents.

In addition, we are upgrading our outdoor space to provide a safe place for mothers to engage with their children. We plan to tear down the current run-down garage and build a small playground. This will be a perfect place for the children to play, learn, and grow which is not available in the immediate neighborhood.

In the Spring of 2021, Casa Esperanza hosted our first-ever virtual fundraiser called, “Swing into Summer for the Kids at Casa.”

Once the fundraiser finished, we were able to dive into this project and hope for it to be finished by the Spring of 2022.

As we enter the new year, we are very pleased to say that we have been able to welcome a couple of new families to our home. ❖

Casa Esperanza website:  
[casaesperanzachicago.org](http://casaesperanzachicago.org)  
 On Facebook:  
 @casaesperanzachicago

**NOTE:** *Casa Esperanza is one of the agencies receiving an OLVM Empowerment Grant.*



# Taking to the airwaves

## Using the new medium of television, Victory Noll Sisters reached the masses

By Jeff Hoffman  
OLVM Archivist

**W**ith the baby boom that occurred in the years following World War II, there was a need for more catechism teachers. Requests for the services of Victory Noll Sisters were multiplying, and some bishops realized men and women religious would not able

to do it by themselves and needed to request help from the laity.

The Victory Noll Sisters helped to meet the challenge. In dioceses where they had a presence, the Sisters assisted in training the laity to take over teaching of catechism and preparing the students for First Communion and Confirmation. These teacher-training classes were held at the

parish level, or sometimes offered at the diocesan level. During this transition from Sister-led to laity-led classes, it was not uncommon for a Victory Noll Sister to remain in contact with parishes to offer guidance and to answer questions from the lay teachers.

The use of lay teachers was not the only method used to reach the growing number of public school

***EDITOR'S NOTE:** As Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters celebrate their 100th anniversary, we are taking a look back at the history of the community in a series of articles, researched and written by OLVM archivist Jeff Hoffman. In this article he writes about how Victory Noll Sisters used new methods and modern means to bring religious education to students in the 1960s.*

**In the photo above, Sr. Mary Alice Murphy teaches the televised class "TV Religion School," which was broadcast in Midland, Tex., in 1963.**



At right, Sr. Rose Ann Kaiser gets instructions on how to run a camera at the television station WTEV in New Bedford, Mass., in the 1960s. Above, the program “TV Religion School” was broadcast in Midland, Tex.

students in CCD classes.

In the 1920s, OLVN Founder Father John Joseph Sigstein urged his new community to “meet modern needs with modern means.” With that edict in mind, Victory Noll Sisters embraced the growing medium of television, and on Easter Sunday morning of 1963, Sr. Mary Alice Murphy presented a half-hour program entitled the “Symbolism of Easter” on KOSA (Channel 7) in Odessa, Texas.

With Bishop Thomas Drury’s blessing, the program “TV Religion School” went on the air during the summer of 1963 on KMID (Channel 2) in Midland, Texas. The program was sponsored by the Knights of Columbus from the cities of Midland, Odessa, and Big Spring. The first two weeks were led by Sr. Jerome Manternach, who taught smaller children by tracing the history of salvation to the public life of Jesus. The last two weeks featured a program by Sr. Mary Alice titled “Christ Our Leader, His Virtues” for high school students.

An estimated 8,000 to 10,000 viewers in west Texas tuned into the program each afternoon it was broadcast, even though it competed for teen viewing against the likes of “American Bandstand.” The station received more than 750 letters from viewers, which was a high number, according to the station.

Not all viewers were Catholic. One Baptist parent went as far as to thank the station for providing a religious program geared toward children that contained a basic Christian message.

While KMID ran the show in the weekday

afternoon time slot during the month of June in Texas, the Victory Noll Sisters were presenting a televised religion class in New Bedford, Massachusetts. The program titled “The Little Flock” ran on Saturday mornings during the school year on the local ABC affiliate WTEV.

“The Little Flock” was geared to primary school students. It started in the fall of 1963, but had some scheduling difficulties. After two successful years, ABC wanted the time slot for its own programming, but WTEV wished to keep “The Little Flock” on the air. WTEV offered the Sisters a Sunday morning time slot. At 9:30 a.m. on Saturday mornings they had averaged 10,400 viewers while competing with popular cartoon programs “Underdog” and “Atom Ant.” At 7:30 a.m. on Sundays, with no other competing children’s programs, the audience was more than 20,000. With that data in hand, WTEV continued to broadcast “The Little Flock” in the Sunday time slot.

At that same time, more Victory Noll Sisters were entering higher education, pursuing bachelor’s and master’s degrees. There was also an increased call for Sisters in other ministries. With fewer Sisters available, the decision was made to end Victory Noll’s involvement in the televised religious broadcasting.

Although the TV programs only lasted a few years, the Sisters had been able to reach a greater audience that would not have been possible without the generous cooperation of outside contributors, including the television stations. ❖



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# Visions FROM THE VICTORY NOLL ARCHIVES



**O**ur Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters was at its height in terms of membership in 1971, and at Community gatherings like the one pictured, the Victory Noll Sisters filled the cavernous Archbishop Noll Memorial Chapel for services. Today, the numbers may have diminished and the services become more intimate, but events are nonetheless just as meaningful and important to the Community. ❖