On August 10, 2013, the Motherhouse chapel was filled with the sounds of jubilation, praise, and thanksgiving as our Sister Jubilarians, celebrating 75, 60, 50, and 25 years of religious profession, walked down the center aisle with the sounds of “Come, Thou Chosen” filling the chapel. Sister Nancy Streitmatter celebrated her Silver Jubilee; Sister Theresa Dabulis celebrated her Golden Jubilee; Sister M. Lawrence Puishys, Sister Lorraine Therese Siminas, Sister Mary de Sales Sokol, and Sister Agnese Chapkauskas celebrated their 60 year Diamond Jubilee; and Sister Reginald Tamulevich celebrated her 75 year Diamond Jubilee.

The chapel was filled with family and friends and Sisters of St. Casimir — all who have been part of the Jubilarians’ lives, who have loved and supported them in their vocation, and those whom they have come to know and treasure during their years of service. A number of priest friends of the community and of the Jubilarians concelebrated the Jubilee Mass. Music throughout the Mass was provided by the beautiful voices of the Women of the William Ferris Chorale, directed by Paul French and accompanied by Paul French, organ, Anna Belle O’Shea, flute, and Bruce Daugherty, trumpet. Brittany Fouskas, granddaughter of Golden Jubilarian Sister Theresa Dabulis, sang Schubert’s “Ave Maria” as the communion meditation.

In the homily, Father Mike spoke personally to and about each Sister Jubilarian, highlighting her ministry

("Jubilee" continued on page 7)
Dear Friends,

Every five years we, the Sisters of St. Casimir, hold a General Chapter during which we meet to study and evaluate the present situation of our religious community, to deliberate on matters related to our life and growth, and to elect new leadership, always seeking to be faithful to the charism and mission of our community. During the 2013 General Chapter (April 2 until April 7, 2013), we made a very significant decision with regard to our Motherhouse property and housing for our Sisters. This has been a very long journey for us. We have been in prayerful discernment about this for more than ten years. Our numbers continue to decrease. Today, we have 69 Sisters. Our median age is 81 and only 6 sisters are younger than 70. We know that we cannot continue as we are.

Because of your relationship with our congregation over many years, we would like to share with you how we are moving forward on the recommendations of our General Chapter.

We have engaged Mercy Housing to assist us in exploring options for the use of our Motherhouse in a way that continues our mission and legacy. Representatives from Mercy Housing have been meeting with us and with key stakeholders in the community to consider the best re-purposing of our Motherhouse. We have been at this site on Marquette Road since 1911. It is the sacred place where Venerable Mother Maria Kaupas, our foundress, spent most of the years of her religious life and the place where all of us received our formation. It is our home, and the surrounding community is very dear to our hearts. At the same time we realize that the Motherhouse with only half occupancy is far too big for us and that we do not have the Sisters to continue to manage this beautiful property and facility. Good stewardship of God’s many blessings to us calls us to make some difficult decisions.

At the same time, we have been looking at options for housing for our Sisters. We have visited many places and spoken with a number of religious communities who have already lived through this experience. The Franciscan Sisters of Chicago in Lemont, IL have offered to share their infirmary in Our Lady of Victory convent with our Sisters who need skilled care. At their General Chapter in June 2013 the Franciscan Sisters transferred the first floor of their convent to Franciscan Village for licensed assisted living. They have offered us 15 rooms on that floor. We are in the process of acquainting our Sisters with this possibility that would be available for us some time in the new year. We are also looking at other possibilities for assisted and independent living.

In the coming months we will work with Mercy Housing Lakefront and various entities in the community, including the Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP), Sinai Health System, Catalyst Maria, the Greater Southwest Development Corporation, and others, to gather the wisdom of the wider community on their thoughts for the future of our campus and the re-purposing of our Motherhouse. Our goal is to preserve our legacy while continuing to serve the people of this community. We have begun this process by ensuring the future of Maria High School through Catalyst Maria K-12 Charter School, the continued operations of Holy Cross Hospital through Sinai Health System, and the Maria Kaupas Center, a Catholic community center which provides after school opportunities for the high school students of Catalyst Maria and hosts other events for various groups. You have read about these in past issues of Journeys. As you can see, many new things have happened that continue to meet the needs of our surrounding community.

What remains for us to do is one of the most difficult decisions that we will ever need to make for our life: the future use of our Motherhouse and where we may continue our life as a religious congregation. We pray that we may carry this out in a spirit of great faith and trust in God. We continually remind ourselves of Mother Maria’s words, “Fortified with a good intention, wherever you are and whatever you do, always keep it in mind, ‘God is here’,” and the realization in a new way that religious life is not a building but a commitment to a way of life. We, the Sisters of St. Casimir, are being called to a deeper faith and trust in God and a deeper living of the vows we promised to keep all the days of our lives.

Please remember us in your prayers. We trust that we can count on your support as we move forward.

May God bless you.

Sister Regina Dubickas, SSC
General Superior
Sisters of St. Casimir
The call to give and bring life to others comes in different forms, requests, surprises, and demands, but the responsibility to respond with love is always there.

Jubilarian Reflections

Sister Theresa Dabulis
Golden Jubilee

Upon my Golden Jubilee celebration my heart is filled with joy and all I can say is THANK YOU, GOD for your faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Thank you for my family, especially my parents, my vocation, the Sisters of St. Casimir, and all those sisters, spiritual companions, and friends who have strengthened and nourished me along the way of my vocation.

I am grateful for the opportunities that crossed my path, people who enriched my life, experiences and challenges that stretched me to see with new eyes, the eyes of faith, the eyes of the heart.

My blessings have been many these past 50 years. It was in 1962 that Pope John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council into session. And what a blessing it was for the church, the world, the laity, women, and religious throughout the world. Personally, I remember our novice directress coming home from a theology course and introducing us to Teilhard de Chardin and scripture. This sparked my interest to pursue studies in religious education. I was inspired by the explanation of the Eucharist as the paschal mystery, Christ, life, death, and resurrection, as the core of our faith, and that our lives were all intertwined with the Paschal Mystery. It was a revelation to me and it helped me to view life with its joys and sorrows through the lens of the Eucharist. It’s at the table of the Eucharist that we are nourished with the Bread of Life and are sent forth to continue the mission of Christ, and it is at the table of life that we are called to give of ourselves to others.

The call to give and bring life to others comes in different forms, requests, surprises, and demands, but the responsibility to respond with love is always there. Through my prayer, reflection, and contemplation, I became more aware of God’s presence, and goodness in everyone and everything around me. As a sister in community, a teacher, a Director of Religious Education, a social worker, a congregational leadership team member, a friend, and advocate for the poor, I try to respond with a compassionate, understanding heart while keeping in mind my own humanness and shortcomings; thus, a need for forgiveness and Eucharist.

In God’s providence, I was led to a particular community, the Sisters of St. Casimir, whose Foundress, Venerable Mother Maria Kaupas, was imbued with the Eucharistic presence and encouraged her sisters to stay close to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. It is here that the mystery of God’s Divine Plan has become a reality, living in community with others whose focus was on the mission of Jesus — a mission of love, compassion, and service to others.

The quote from Mt 26:26 has always been meaningful to me because it speaks of what we are called to in everyday life, to be “Bread,…blessed,…broken…and shared.”

Mother Maria’s vision of preserving the faith, educating, reaching out to others in need, and going beyond the walls of the convent and motherhouse into the neighborhood, parishes, missions in the United States, Lithuania, and Argentina, continues to the present. We, vowed religious, associates, and dedicated laity, need to continue and carry on her vision.

If a woman were inquiring about becoming a vowed religious I would tell her to be open to the possibility and consider the following:

• Pray, talk it over with someone whose advice you value

• Listen, because the Spirit does speak out of the clear blue through a passing thought as I wonder if God is calling

• Take seriously when someone asks you, “Did you ever think about being a Sister?”

• Ponder a word from scripture that speaks to your heart

Each day, each moment, God calls and nourishes us through His Word, sacrament, people, events, and circumstances and asks us: “to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8). It is in this spirit that I look forward to continuing my life journey with faith, and hope, and love, and joy, and dance.
Jubilarian Reflections

Sister Nancy Streitmatter
Silver Jubilee

As my 25th year of religious life is upon me, I mostly feel surprised. When did this happen? Was it that long ago I entered? I have great appreciation for those who have been here so much longer. Also, I know that I stretched spiritually and emotionally to come to community, but I also am cognizant of and appreciative of the way the community has made space for me and accepted the challenge that someone who enters at a later age and a different work brings. I am very grateful to this community.

I know this is where I belong. First of all, it is so good to live with people who have the same love for God and keep me rooted when the cares of work or other issues get in the way. Secondly, I am so often aware of what Mother Maria said when she referred to the good that one person in love with God can do, but just think what an army of women with the same belief and united in that work can do. And third: we came together without choosing each other, yet we help not only others outside the community, but are so given to be there for those in community. This is such a blessing and really shows "how those Christians love one another."

I feel blessed in so many ways. It is wonderful to know the love of God and to adore and worship that God. One of the ways I try to keep this in mind is by a nightly practice of remembering at least three ways in which God touched my life during the day. This is usually something that really touched me like God brushing me by with a reminder of love. Sometimes it is a challenge that reminds me of the need for God.

I am very proud of our community. We have done so many good works in teaching and healing that the results are probably uncountable. Also, and so important, is our commitment and continued work for peace and justice. We are a small community, but we have really made an impact in so many ways. Age and limited numbers have not stopped us. We continue to learn and be effective in ways, both individually and communally.

I have many favorite biblical quotes, but the one which has really been a force in my life is "all things work for good for those who love God" from Romans, 8. There have been significant challenges for me as for everyone. I can truly look back over my life and see all as blessing, as God walking with me in life and the hand of God at work. In current situations, as in the past, I have trust that it is God who directs and all will be well.

To someone considering religious life, I would say that if you really feel called, trust in God and surrender. As I was told, "God cannot be outdone in generosity."

Sister M. Lawrence Puishys
Diamond Jubilee – 60 Years

I have been blessed from the day I was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, into a loving family. My parents were the best! They taught us seven children to respect each other and everyone else.

That was reinforced by the Sisters of St. Casimir, who were our teachers. To this day I try to live what I learned. The Sisters were my inspiration to join them. I am grateful to them for helping me achieve my desire to serve God with them.

As I reflect on my 60 years as a professed Sister of St. Casimir, I am grateful to God for helping me to enjoy being a teacher as well as an administrator, not only in educating children, but also in caring for the elderly.

One of my special blessings is being with my sister, Sister June, and our Sisters of St. Casimir at our Motherhouse.

I’ve learned that God’s will is what counts, not mine! God knows what is best for me and for all of us!
Having met this special milestone in my life as a Sister of St. Casimir – 60 years of profession – I am thankful for God’s blessings for helping me to maintain good health to reach this point.

Some special moments stand out for me: I especially liked teaching first and second grade in St. John’s school and St. Peter’s school in New Mexico. I also taught religious education to children in the local parishes there. This was my first experience teaching students with a Mexican heritage, and I enjoyed my years in New Mexico.

I also enjoyed working with the young women at Maria High School as I ministered in the main office. My last assignment before coming to the Motherhouse was at Holy Cross Hospital. There I was a spiritual care visitor, ministering to people during very critical times of their lives.

None of these opportunities would have been possible without the support and guidance of the Sisters of St. Casimir. Wherever the Sisters of St. Casimir were needed, that’s where they went. In fact, Mother Maria responded to the call to send “home missionaries” to various parts of the United States, including New Mexico. Had she not made that response, my ministry in New Mexico would not have taken place. Had I not received the education I needed to teach young children, I would not have been able to teach young children in our schools.

God not only has directed me in my life, but our Congregation as well.

In the early years of my life, it was my mother and father who introduced me to God for the first time. Besides explaining the pictures and statues to me in our church, my mother would take me there when she attended devotions in our church, and sometimes she took me to the Sorrowful Mother Basilica. When my mother prayed the rosary novena, she would have me in front of her in the pew so that I could see the pictures as she turned the pages. My father, too, took me to church when we’d have a procession of the Blessed Sacrament. He would bend down and whisper in my ear in Lithuanian as he pointed to the Host – “There is God.” My eyes would follow as far as I could to see the Host. (We owned a candy store, so sometimes my parents had to take turns going to different devotions.)

Later, our priests sometimes asked us what we planned to be when we grew up. They suggested we pray. For those who were very young, the priest suggested we say three Hail Marys each day for that intention. Eventually I, too, wanted to become a Sister and enter the convent and bring God to others.

"I try to still bring God to others, as well as meeting God in others . . ."

I am most grateful now for my spiritual development and the education I received as a Sister. As I found God in my family, I have also found God in the schools where I was missioned as teacher and principal. Most of all, I delighted in finding God in the children I taught. Many children passed through my hands during my years as teacher. I think of them often and pray for them.

Now that I have retired, I try to still bring God to others, as well as meeting God in others, as I go about my daily tasks. This gives me great joy because God has been good and generous to me. Holy is His name.
Jubilarian Reflections

Sister Mary de Sales Sokol
Diamond Jubilee – 60 Years

At this time in my life, having celebrated 60 years as a Sister of St. Casimir, I must say that I have been blessed: I am blessed now in my life in the infirmary; I was blessed in all my years of ministry – as teacher, as principal, as Council member, as Motherhouse superior. I did things I never would have dreamed of doing. Somehow, with God’s help, I was able to do them.

I grew up in a good home with good parents. I felt I had a vocation to religious life, but my father would not let me enter the convent. I helped take care of my father before he died. My mother eventually allowed me to come to the convent. I was surprised to be given the name “Sister Mary de Sales” – it was not a usual name to be given. I had not asked for it. But this, too, was a blessing. Throughout the years I have been inspired by my patron saint, St. Francis de Sales. One of his sayings comes to my mind now: “Have patience with all things but chiefly have patience with yourself.” I strive to live those words.

“I did things I never would have dreamed of doing.”

Sister Reginald Tamulevich
Diamond Jubilee – 75 Years

Having recently celebrated my Diamond Jubilee – 75 years as a Sister of St. Casimir – I cannot help but thank God for everything. When I think about these past 75 years, a number of things stand out for me – one being that I actually knew Mother Maria and she knew me. When I entered the convent, I tended to run everywhere. Of course, when I approached Mother Maria’s room, I would slow down and walk, but after I passed her room, there I was, running again.

One time Mother Maria actually caught me running up a flight of stairs. Next time, I tried another staircase, but Mother Maria was standing at the top. I was actually caught running quite often, but Mother Maria would only sigh and say, “Oh, Sister” in Lithuanian, and I would drop to the floor on my knees, all apologies. I could tell that Mother Maria had a kind heart.

Mother Maria never seemed to get angry or upset. She was always cool, calm, and level-headed. She also never let on that she was in pain.

Playing the violin was a gift from God. My older brother played the violin, and that made me want to play it. I was in the 3rd grade when I was able to use his violin. Eventually he gave it to me.

My mother was a very religious woman and had a great influence in my life. She had a beautiful singing voice and loved to sing, especially in church.

I hung around with a crowd of kids at home and had a wonderful childhood playing in an area they called the swamp. It was at the base of a huge hill, so in the winter it was a natural place to go sledding. The wettest part would freeze, so we could all ice skate. During the warm months we caught turtles and frogs and spent all of the summer days there.

Sister Margaret Mary and Sister Clement were neighbors, so we all grew up together. Sister Margaret Mary was the youngest and couldn’t always keep up with the bigger kids, so I would carry her on my shoulders so that we could be with the rest of the kids.

I went to a public elementary school. The ladies in the parish, St. Rocco’s, prepared the children for the sacraments. I saw an ad in the church bulletin about a boarding high school in Newtown, PA, and wanted to go. My mother was supportive, but my dad was not. My older brother drove my mother and me to Pennsylvania so I could attend Villa Joseph Marie High School.

My vocation is truly a gift from God. I am most grateful for having known Mother Maria, the ability to play the violin, the opportunity to teach and to help my students appreciate and love music. I enjoyed playing in many orchestras.

The gift that the Sisters of St. Casimir gave to the Church and to the world was Mother Maria. She is truly a saint.

I’ve lived 75 years as a Sister of St. Casimir, I played the violin, I taught, I enjoyed life. I cannot thank God enough. As the saying goes, “Practice makes perfect.” I’m still practicing.

“Practice makes perfect”
Postulant Maria Sandoval became Sister Maria when she was received into the novitiate of the Sisters of St. Casimir in a private, simple, and moving ceremony on September 8, 2013. Maria asked to be received into the novitiate of the Sisters of St. Casimir, to which the Sisters responded with their promise to walk with her on this sacred journey. Symbolic of this stage of religious life, Sister Maria was presented with a copy of the SSC Constitutions and a crucifix. As the hymn “On this Day, O Beautiful Mother” was sung, Sister Maria placed a rose on Mary’s altar and all present asked for Mary’s care and protection. A blessing from all present concluded the ritual, and everyone joyfully left the chapel to greet and congratulate the new novice with hugs and some with tears of joy.

As a novice, Sister Maria’s first year is devoted to deepening her prayer life and studying the religious life and the vows. She lives at the Motherhouse in one wing with several Sisters, but participates with all the sisters in prayer, meals, and other activities. Tuesdays, she meets with other novices from various countries for common classes. One day a week she will volunteer for service in varied ministries. In the second year of novitiate, the curriculum will expand with the possibility of other studies or immersion into ministry activities.

Nazareth is the name Sister Maria has given to this time in her life – a quiet time of growing in grace and wisdom as did Jesus in preparation for his public life. The license plate on her car reads: SSC B1. At the end of the novitiate journey, when life in Nazareth changes to life in mission, we pray that God’s grace and call will make her license plate to read: SSC M1.

Jubilee (continued from page 1)

and the special gifts she continues to bring to those who are part of her life and her community. Integrating the message of the day’s Gospel on the vine and the branches, Father Mike shared a reflection about each Sister Jubilarian, beginning with Sister Reginald. As Father Mike ended this first reflection with the words: “Your life has borne great fruit,” Sister Reginald responded enthusiastically with words each sister mentioned later would echo in her own heart: “Thank you, Father.”

The celebration continued during the luncheon that followed as Jubilarians were surrounded by their families and friends. After memories were shared and the meal enjoyed, the Marimba Band from Holy Cross/Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish provided “dance music” that had guests young and old joining together in dance throughout the auditorium.

On August 15th, the Sisters of St. Casimir celebrated with the Jubilarians in a special morning liturgy commemorating Mary’s assumption into heaven, and Vespers that evening were followed by a wonderful banquet. During the program, Sister Regina Marie Dubickas expanded on the stories told by Father Mike during the Jubilee Liturgy on August 10th, highlighting the unique presence and contribution of each Jubilarian and expressing the appreciation of the community for each Sister’s life. Sisters from each Jubilee year then shared their reflections on this Jubilee milestone; Sister Reginald jokingly noted that she was speechless but still expressed her gratitude for all that was part of the celebration. Sister Lawrence, Sister Theresa, and Sister Nancy shared personal reflections and words of gratitude to God, the community, family, and individual sisters who had been part of their vocation journey.
Gift to Lithuania by Sister Margaret Petcavage, SSC

In 1911, Mother Maria and her first Sisters settled into the newly built Motherhouse in Chicago. Soon Mother opened a school with a library for boys and girls. Over the past 102 years the Lithuanian library grew to hold a treasure of books dating back to the 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as books published more recently, both in Lithuania and the U.S. Books from the library of the Sisters' spiritual director, Rev. Anthony Staniukynas (d.1917), along with more recent contributions from the libraries of two Pennsylvania priests, Fathers J. Bagdonas and J. Karalius, enlarged the collection. This library was greatly valued by Lithuanian writers and researchers who visited. From 1863 until the early 1900's, Lithuania was forbidden to print books because of a ban imposed by governing Czarist Russia. Many Lithuanian men risked their lives to bring Lithuanian manuscripts into Germany to be printed. Several of those forbidden books were included in our library.

Within the last decade, for various reasons, the library had not been used. It was decided to donate the books to the “Vytautas the Great University” in Kaunas, Lithuania.

Under the direction of Sisters Margaret Petcavage and Theresa Papis, together with volunteers, Sister Deborah Romanuski, Loretta Ezerski, Karen Strabel, Terry Yates, and Father Chris Steinle, OSA, as well as Ed Hoak from the Motherhouse Maintenance Department, 282 boxes of books were packed and shipped to Lithuania.

Shortly after the shipment's arrival, the University sent a beautifully crafted formal “Thank You” acknowledging this exceptional gift that will now be available for its students, professors, and researchers. This outstanding collection is a marvelous tribute to the Sisters of St. Casimir who value Lithuanian literature and culture and have preserved them for future generations. Little did they realize that it would be the people of Lithuania, who in the end, would benefit from this treasure.

United States SSC Associates

"Jesus loves us with an infinite love; Then let us love Him with our whole heart.” – Ven. Maria Kaupas

These words of Venerable Maria Kaupas were the theme of the Associates’ annual commitment which took place on Sunday, September 22, 2013. It truly was a day filled with God’s grace and blessings as three Associate Candidates – Toni Courson, Linda Penkas, and Nancy Sans – made their initial commitment with the Sisters of St. Casimir and Eileen Shirt renewed hers.

The commitment took place within the Eucharistic Liturgy with Father Tony Pizzo, OSA, presiding. In her reflection, Sister Regina Dubickas, General Superior, pondered with these women and men on what drew them to become Associates with the Sisters of St. Casimir. She said: “In some mysterious way, you saw this as an opportunity to deepen your faith by sharing in the life and mission of our community. And we Sisters felt a call to widen the circle, to share the richness of our spirituality and Mother Maria’s spirit and vision so that it may inspire you to make a difference in our world.”
Transfer Ritual at Holy Cross Hospital

On July 29, 2013, the Sisters of St. Casimir and Holy Cross Hospital ritualized the transfer of Holy Cross Hospital to Sinai Health System during a beautiful prayer service in Holy Cross Hospital’s chapel. Sister Regina Marie Dubickas welcomed all those assembled – including Sisters, hospital employees and physicians, representatives from Sinai Health System, community members, religious leaders, and political leaders – to this sacred and historical event. Father William Grogan, Vicar of Health Care for the Archdiocese of Chicago, set the tone for this special time of prayer together. Readings and responses from current and past Holy Cross Hospital leaders (Kathy Loeb, vice president of patient care services at HCH, Wayne Lerner, former CEO, and Diane Howard, former HCH Board chair, Lori Pacura, senior vice president for Holy Cross Hospital) followed.

Insightful reflections from Sister Immacula Wendt (why we are here), Alan Channing (where we will go), Imelda Salazar (why mission makes a difference), and US Senator Richard Durbin (together building a stronger community) were a key part of the service.

In a candle lighting ritual, Sister Regina Marie and Gary Niederpruem, Sinai Health System Board Chair, took their lit candles to representatives from the community – Sisters Margaret Zalot and Theresa Dabulis, Elba Aranda-Suh and Rafi Peterson – who lit the candles of all the congregation while Andy Tecson (saxophone) and Bobby Schiff (keyboard) played a jazz rendition of “This Little Light of Mine.”

All present participated in responding to a shared co-missioning statement and accepting a special blessing from the representatives from religious institutions and various community organizations, using the words of Mother Maria Kaupas. The service ended with “Let There Be Peace on Earth.”

Posters depicting the history of the Sisters of St. Casimir and the SSC Mission at Holy Cross Hospital as well as the Sinai Health System mission were displayed outside the chapel.
Year of Faith Celebrated by Associates in Avellaneda, Argentina

by Sister Joyce Ann Dopkin, SSC, Director of Associates, Argentina

On Saturday, August 31, 2013, the date closest to the birthday of the SSC Congregation, I gathered the associates to close the Year of Faith with a time of prayer and reflection, and to celebrate the birthday of the congregation and that of each associate. The Girl Scouts offered to help us in the preparation of the event and in serving the tables during the meal. Inspired by the remembrance of the yearly birthday party of the St. Casimir’s Auxiliary in my home town (Shenandoah, PA), we decided to set up four tables representing the seasons of the year, and seat the associates according to their birthdays. This would provide an opportunity to come to know other associates with whom perhaps they have little contact.

The encounter began in chapel with an explanation of why we use two different Creeds in the church today. It was stressed that Faith has to do more with how we respond to God rather than what we believe. A guided meditation followed. We examined our response to the love of the triune God, our response to Jesus’ desire to become incarnate in us, so that we make his love present in the world about us.

We spoke of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus and our response of gratitude and desire to make his work of salvation known to others. Then we took our chairs and went out into the garden where the Girl Scouts had the tables set and decorated according to the four seasons of the year. A candle likewise decorated and bearing the name and birthday of each associate was on the table. Each associate presented themselves and shared a faith experience with the others at the table. Then they shared the sweets some of the associates had brought until finally four small cakes made by the sisters were brought out and we celebrated our birthdays with song.

Closing the encounter, we passed out seed paper which we will plant and water in the hope that something will grow for the coming spring which begins here on September 21st.

Ed. note: Sister Joyce Ann ministers in Avellaneda (near Buenos Aires), Argentina with Sisters Nilda Varanauskas and Asuncion Costantini, who were also involved in this Year of Faith celebration.

Cordoba Women's Ministry

Sister Jeanne Moceyunas ministers in various ways to the people of Cordoba, Argentina. One of her ministeries is “Intercambio Cultural,” a women’s group that meets monthly with psychologist, Silvia Spaccesi. Recently they participated in a workshop to improve relationships in their families. (Ed. note: Sisters Elenisa Buzas and Estela Risso also live and minister in Cordoba.)
Sister Estela Risso with Christina, school psychologist at Our Lady of the Valley School, were honored to attend the Beatification Ceremony for Blessed Jose Gabriel Brochero.

Beatification of Cura Brochero in Cordoba, Argentina

by Sister Estela Risso, SSC

September 14, 2013, was a special date for the Argentines and especially for the people living in the province of Cordoba. Thousands gathered in a small town in the mountains to celebrate the beatification of a simple diocesan priest, José Gabriel Brochero. Sister Estela Risso was among those present.

Cura Brochero was born in the northern part of the province of Cordoba, March 16, 1840, in a very humble family, the fourth of 10 children. He entered the seminary (1856) in the city of Cordoba. As a young priest, he helped very many people during the cholera plague that spread across the city. In 1869 he was sent to an area on the other side of the Sierras Mountains. The SSC Sisters in Argentina visited this town on a number of occasions as did some of their visitors from the United States, including Sisters Regina Marie Dubickas, Marilyn Kuzmickus, Immacula Wendt, and Margaret Zalot. This town is beyond the “Sierras Grandes.”

Today that locality is called CURA BROCHERO. Cura Brochero, as he was known, worked wholeheartedly to bring the message of Jesus to the people living in the mountains, far from the large urban centers. He accompanied men and women to the city to participate in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. The journey, made on mules and horses, took at least three days to reach Cordoba. He eventually constructed a Retreat House with the help of the local people, and continued to personally look for retreatants from far and wide among the mountains.

Cura Brochero did more than look after the spiritual life of his people. From his University days he had friends that were in political offices as Governors – and even the President. He used these contacts to ask for financial support to build schools for girls, more than 200 kilometers of roads, and various churches. He petitioned the authorities and obtained postal and telegraphic services. He presented a plan to install a railway connection, but, sad to say, was unrealized. At all times in his visits to the country folk he would say, “Here I am to bring you music,” and with joy he announced the Gospel message.

Due to his visits with a leper and sharing the mate drink with him, he also became ill with leprosy. He died as a leper and blind on January 26, 1914. After his death, the people prayed and asked for graces and favors in his name. In 1964 Cura Brochero was named Servant of God and in 2004, Venerable. The cure of an 11-month-old baby with severe brain damage due to an accident was recognized as a miracle. The boy, now 13 years old, was present for the Beatification on September 14th.

As a 4th grade teacher, Sister Estela taught all about Cordoba to her students. In 2010 she and the other 4th grade teacher received permission to travel to the town of Cura Brochero with their students, praying that all would model their lives after this holy man by being missionaries wherever they were.

Sister Estela was able to participate in the great gathering for the Beatification with the psychologist from the parish school, Our Lady of the Valley. She could not help but call to mind our own Mother Maria. This memory touched Sister Estela’s heart and her deep desire that Mother Maria be beatified some day.

Ed. note:

Pope Francis sent a letter to Archbishop José Maria Arancedo of Santa Fe, Argentina, the President of the Argentinian Bishops’ Conference, on the occasion of the Beatification of “Cura Brochero” (José Gabriel Brochero), which took place in Cordoba. In his letter, the Holy Father praised “this pastor with ‘the odour of the sheep,’ who made himself a poor man among the poor, who always struggled to be very close to God and to the people, who did and continues to do such great good, like the caress of God for our people who suffer.”

Pope Francis said that in a beatification, “pastoral realities” are important. Cura Brochero, he said, did not remain in the parish office, but went out on a mule, seeking the people like a priest on the street of the faith. This, the Pope said, “is what Jesus wants today: missionary disciples!”

Today, the Pope concluded, “let us allow Cura Brochero to enter, mule and all, into the house of our hearts, and to invite us to prayer, to the encounter with Jesus, who frees us from bondage to go out into the streets to seek our brother, to touch the flesh of Christ in those who suffer and who need the love of God. This is the only way we will taste the joy Cura Brochero experienced, the foretaste of the happiness he now enjoys as a Blessed in heaven.”
Along the Way

Founders' Day Celebration

Sister Clement Mazgelis (left) greets Mary Burns while selling crafts and Lithuanian ornaments on Founders’ Day.

On August 24, 2013, sisters, families, and friends gathered in commemoration of the 106th anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of St. Casimir. Bishop Alberto Rojas was the celebrant for the Mass. He was assisted by Deacon Joe Panek. A celebration was held in the auditorium immediately following the liturgy. Refreshments and raffles, interesting items for sale, and visiting/conversation combined for the fun-filled afternoon.

Grand raffle winners this year were: Bob Toborowsky, Shenandoah Heights, PA, $1,000; Sister M. Joanella, SSC (posthumously), $500; Judy Johnson, Willowbrook, IL, $500; Beth Yerkes, Palos Park, IL, $250; Vanessa Carraway, Burbank, IL, $250; Teresa Hilton, Hickory Hills, IL, $250; and Deacon Frank Bina, Darien, IL, $250.

Providence of God Reunion

Sister Andreata Naudziunas was among the many sisters who met and mingled with former students at the Providence of God All-School reunion.

Sisters of St. Casimir Regina Marie Dubickas, Margaret Zalot, and Theresa Dabulis were welcomed as “special guests from Chicago” and participated in the formal missioning of the faculty and staff. All were challenged by Sister Regina Marie to live the mission of Villa Joseph Marie, to live the words of Mother Maria: “Always more, always better, always with love” by giving examples of how each of these phrases have been lived. At the end of the Mass all sang “Walk With Us” and the school song, and each student was given a card as reminder of the day and asked to write on it how she would live the words of Mother Maria — “Always more, always better, always with love” — during the coming year.

VJM Opening Liturgy and Missioning

Although students at Villa Joseph Marie had been in full session since September 2, faculty, staff, and students, gathered together in the auditorium for the opening school liturgy on September 13, 2013. By that time, students had an idea of “who was who,” including newly appointed Director of Curriculum of Instruction Lauren Carr and newly hired Campus Minister Theresa Plummer. Students were also well prepared to lead the singing, participate in the processions, and lector during the liturgy. Father Loomis, newly ordained priest and assistant at St. Bede’s Parish, was the celebrant.

Providence of God’s All-School Reunion was held on August 23, 2013. The school, located in Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood, was staffed by the Sisters of St. Casimir for many years, a number of whom attended this event. Fond memories were shared and acquaintances renewed with former students.
Along the Way

SSC Auxiliary Banquet

Sisters of St. Casimir Auxiliary president, Eleanor Ebert (right), presented Sister Regina Dubickas, SSC General Superior, with a check for $25,000 at the annual Auxiliary Banquet, which was held on October 6, 2013. Throughout the year, members of the Auxiliary sponsored a Bingo Games Party, launched a successful Annual Banquet, sold various raffle tickets, had a Christmas sale, participated in garage sales, and promoted Perpetual Memberships as an effort to assist the Sisters in their various ministries and to help care for the ill and infirm Sisters. The Sisters are very grateful for the Auxiliary’s support. For more information on becoming an Auxiliary member, call (773) 776-1324, ext. 210 or contact Susan Binkis at sbinkis@ssc2601.com.

Knights of Lithuania Celebrate 100th Anniversary

Sisters Theresa Papis and Margaret Petcavage, both Knights of Lithuania members, were participants in the K of L 100th anniversary convention in Quincy, MA from July 24 - 28, 2013. Sr. Margaret greeted the Convention on behalf of the SSC’s and mentioned how noteworthy it is to our Congregation that the name “Knights of Lithuania” was suggested by Fr. Anthony Kaupas, Mother Maria’s brother.

Daily Mass opened the convention proceedings. Committee and council meetings, plenary sessions, and activities for the Junior Members were held each day, with various social events filling the evenings. Ruta Lee, the Lithuanian movie star, and her husband, Web Lowe, were present throughout the days. Sister Andreata Naudziunas’ delightful sister, Alice (95 years old), was thrilled for the opportunity to take a picture with Ruta Lee!

The culmination of the Convention was the 100th Anniversary Convention banquet, which was “black tie optional.” All were exquisitely dressed including Ruta Lee, who served as the Mistress of Ceremonies. Archbishop Gintaras Grusas, the newly appointed Archbishop of Vilnius, flew in for the occasion and greeted the assembly.

Kudos to the K of L Committee who prepared the event and coordinated transportation between various Lithuanian sites. Much was commemorated and much was accomplished. It was a heartwarming experience to see how so many people try to maintain their Lithuanian heritage.

Sisters Theresa Papis (left) and Margaret Petcavage enjoy a Lithuanian dinner sponsored by the Knights of Lithuania at the Lithuanian Club in Brockton, MA.

SSC Employee Picnic

The annual SSC employee picnic was, once again, a great success. The picnic committee, comprised of representatives from the various employee departments, arranged a table laden with pot-luck offerings, door prizes, children’s games and face painting, hayrides around the Motherhouse grounds, and a visit from Chicago’s mounted police. In between these activities, the day was filled with visiting and meeting each other’s families.

Sisters of St. Casimir "Journeys" — Fall 2013
Sister Joanella, nee Leona Mary Fayert, was born the youngest of six children, to Mary and George Fayert in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania. Her parents were married in Lithuania and emigrated to the United States in the early 1900s. Apart from eighth grade in a Catholic school, Leona received her elementary education in a public school. The deep roots of her faith came from Leona’s mother who taught her prayers and took her to devotions. Her interest in music began at the age of 10. Music turned out to be one of the gifts of her life.

Leona continued her education at Villa Joseph Marie, and she felt that her vocation to religious life began to take root during these years. A very poignant memory for her centers on Mother Maria Kaupas. At the Villa, on April 17, 1940, as the girls were celebrating Leona’s 15th birthday, news arrived that Mother Maria had died. On graduation day Leona made the announcement that she would like to enter the Sisters of St. Casimir. After some heart-to-heart talks with her parents, she was accepted as a postulant on August 15, 1942 and said that from the moment she came through the doors, she felt completely at home. On August 15, 1945 Sister Joanella made first vows, and on August 15, 1950, she made her perpetual vows.

She earned a BS in Education in 1957 from Marywood College in Scranton, PA, and in 1969, an MS in Education from Marywood. The first 25 years of her ministry were spent teaching elementary grades. For 15 years, she did this, and the ten years after, she served as principal of the school where she also taught.

The next 18 years of Sr. Joanella’s life were dedicated to serving in the administration of the Sisters of St. Casimir. From 1970–1978, she served on the General Council, initially as councilor and then as assistant to the General Superior, and from 1978–1988, she served as General Superior.

Throughout this time, her opportunities to travel to Argentina, Lithuania, Rome, Switzerland, Canada, and many places in the U.S. deepened her appreciation and understanding of various cultures. In all her dealings with others, Sr. Joanella was known for her kindness and her openness and broad understanding of issues within the Church and the world.

One of Sr. Joanella’s most memorable accomplishments was that of assisting in the research of Mother Maria’s life as she initiated the process for Mother Maria’s beatification. On the occasion of the congregation’s 75th anniversary, Sr. Joanella had the privilege of going to Rome and in an audience with Pope John Paul II, asking him for blessings on the Sisters of St. Casimir. Sr. Joanella was also the first General Superior to travel to Lithuania while it was still under Soviet rule to reestablish the relationship with the Lithuanian Sisters of St. Casimir.

When Sr. Joanella left the position of leadership after 18 years, she expressed what it had meant to her: “I look upon those times with loving gratitude to my God who gifted me with the necessary graces to lead the congregation.”

After completing a sabbatical year at St. Louis University, Sr. Joanella returned to Chicago to work at Holy Cross Hospital for five years, where she inaugurated a mission effectiveness department and served as its director. Sr. Joanella continued in this same ministry at St. Joseph Home in Holland, PA, from 1994-2003.

When God asked Sr. Joanella to share the cross of suffering and to submit more fully to the care of others, the love and support of family, her caregivers in the infirmary, and her Sisters in community, especially the love and devotion shown to her by Sr. Lawrence, helped sustain her. We thank God for the life that Sr. Joanella shared with all of us and the gift that she was to our community and to so many others.

Sister Joanella, nee Leona Mary Fayert, SSC
April 17, 1925 — July 22, 2013

Sister M. Maura Werbicki, SSC
February 2, 1921 — August 27, 2013

Sister Maura, nee Mary Werbicki, was born in Providence, Rhode Island, to Adam and Mary Werbicki as the youngest of six children. When Mary was 11, her mother died, and her older siblings helped their father in meeting the family’s needs. After completing the 10th grade at Central High School, she worked to earn money before entering the convent.

Mary met the Sisters of St. Casimir when they came to teach religion at her parish. She was attracted to their good example and dedication to their work. At the age of 17 she entered the community in 1938, and on August 15, 1939, she entered the novitiate, receiving the name Sister Maura. Two years later she made her first vows.
One of Sister Maura’s most cherished memories was to know Mother Maria Kaupas, foundress of the SSCs, during her early years of religious formation.

Sister Maura’s ministry was in the Food Services department in Sisters of St. Casimir institutions: Holy Cross Hospital, Loretto Hospital, Maria High School, and the Motherhouse, all in Chicago. She served for 23 years at Maria High School as cafeteria supervisor. For 18 years she served in the Maria convent, initially as the main cook and supervisor, and later as instructor to the lay women who came to work in the kitchen, teaching them her recipes and skills.

Sister Maura was known for the wonderful meals she prepared for the Sisters, students, and staff of Maria, as well as the great meals that she prepared for the monthly Fathers’ Club meetings. Sister Maura is fondly remembered for the many times she baked homemade bread and made caramel apples for various events, but she is most remembered for her special “kugelis.”

Sister Maura also served at St. Joseph Hospital in Osmond, NE, and Antelope Memorial Hospital in Neligh, NE; Sacred Heart convent in Clovis, NM; and Immaculate Conception convent in Chicago. In 2007, as her health began to fail, she came to the Motherhouse.

On the occasion of her Golden Jubilee, Sister Maura wrote, “As I look back on my life, all becomes clear that God’s gift to me of loving work and prayer were his ways of preparing me for a religious response. Very unexpectedly it happened that the Sisters of St. Casimir from Worcester, MA, had begun weekly catechetical work in my home parish of St. Casimir in Providence. In 1938 a parish school was founded. I frequently assisted with parish projects and activities. Sister Nataline would casually pose a question about serving the Lord. I pondered and prayed and finally inquired, and thus Mary Werbicki became Sister Maura, a Sister of St. Casimir.”

Sister Maura was grateful for all the blessings of her 72 years in religious life and for all that the community had done for her. Throughout her last weeks, she expressed that she was praying for the community and that she was grateful for the prayers the Sisters were saying for her.

As she wrote her reflection at her Diamond Jubilee, Sister Maura ended with a prayer, “Guide me, dear Lord, I ask, in coming years, and keep me strong to follow you until I hear your call.” Indeed, Sister Maura went peacefully to meet the God when she heard that call.

Mother Maria had an innate sense for being a great historian and was greatly aware of life and its happenings. The virtue of gratitude was always a part of her life. We see this in an excerpt from her letter of August 6, 1912, in Chicago, to her dear mentor and friend, Mother M. Cyril, IHM, in Scranton, PA. Mother Maria had not yet made her final vows and thus was not the General Superior for she was too young in religious life. Mother M. Gabriel, IHM, was living at the Motherhouse and was responsible for the young St. Casimir Community.

“Mother M. Gabriel told me that she would like me to tell you about some things which she did not tell you yet and here they are: Last week a mail box was erected at the corner of 67th and Rockwell Streets for our use, it is emptied twice a day. Very soon there will be light posts erected on 67th Street and especially in the front of our Convent. Lately we got a notice that by the first of September the city will put in a sewer for us, so you see how good God is to us. We humbly beg you to thank Him with us for all the favors we have received from Him; we are afraid that we are not grateful enough for all He has done for us.”
Saturday, November 2, 2013
All Souls’ Memorial Liturgy and
Monthly Mass for the Beatification of Venerable Maria Kaupas
9:00 AM  Reading of Names
9:30 AM  Liturgy
For further information, contact:
Paula Schultz  (773-776-1324, ext. 221)
pschultz@ssc2601.com

Saturday, December 7, 2013
Monthly Mass for the Beatification of Venerable Maria Kaupas and
Advent Day of Reflection
9:30 AM  Liturgy begins the Day of Reflection
Rev. Tom Santa, CSSR
For further information, contact:
Sister Theresa Dabulis  (773-776-1324, ext. 226)
tdabulis@ssc2601.com

Saturday, January 4, 2014
Monthly Mass for the Beatification of Venerable Maria Kaupas
9:30 AM  Liturgy
(134th Birthday Commemoration)

Saturday, May 3, 2014
St. Casimir Academy/Maria High School
All-School Reunion
Plans are being made. Make your voice heard!
For further information, contact:
Sister Elizabeth Ann Yocius, SSC ’71
seayocius@ameritech.net