Sisters of Notre Dame of the United States

SND USA

SPRING 2026

Young Adults United in Faith & Energy



ALSO INSIDE:

A Young Adult's Conversations with God

The Call to Religious Life

Lasting Tributes

And More ...

Sisters of Notre Dame of the United States

SND USA

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New Student Liaisons at John Carroll University, University Heights, OH, kick off their training to lead peers and serve as a vital link between the University and community partners.

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SND USA Magazine



I-r: Sister Regina Fisher, Toledo, OH; Sister Leanne Hubbard, Thousand Oaks, CA; Sister Margaret Gorman, Chardon, OH; Sister Shauna Bankemper, Covington, KY; Sister Patricia Garrahan, Chardon, OH

LETTER FROM **SND USA PROVINCIAL TEAM**

Dear Friends,

Once again spring has “put a spirit of youth in everything!” As William Shakespeare observed centuries ago, spring’s renewal of the earth inspires rejuvenation of our spirits. However spring manifests in your backyard, we hope the new season also brings you new energy and joy.

The spirit of youth enlivens our focus on young adult ministry and this issue of *SND USA* magazine. We are excited to introduce you to some of the wonderful young people who inspire us. You will read about young adults who are bringing life and energy into the Catholic Church; young adults who are diving into questions about faith, evangelization, callings and prayer; and the many ways SNDs walk with young adults as they strive for deeper understanding and expression of their spirituality.

Whether through one-on-one conversations, group retreats, service or collaboration with other organizations, the Sisters of Notre Dame are responding to the deep desires of young adults to learn more and engage with their faith, live the Eucharist through service and develop a stronger sense of community in these challenging times.

Thank you for your continued interest in our mission and ministries, your generous financial support, and your prayers. We hope that meeting these vibrant and committed young adults encourages your own faith and hope for the future!

With gratitude,

The SND USA Provincial Team

Building Relationships with Young Adults



"It is a privilege to assist young adults to grow in their relationship with God."

- Sister Val Roxburgh

Sister Val Roxburgh, who serves as SND USA Vocation and Young Adult Ministry Director, entered the SND congregation in 2003 and professed her perpetual vows in 2012. “I was drawn to the Sisters of Notre Dame because of the congregation’s charism, and their areas of ministry resonated with me,” she recalls. Today, she considers her ministry with young adults a perfect fit.

“I fell away from the Church as a young adult. I lost my faith compass. In today’s world, the 20s and 30s are a challenging time. Constant distractions contribute to individuals’ anxiety, so it is easy to lose one’s anchor in God. Due to my own experiences, I feel drawn to this age demographic.”

“People make important life decisions during these years regarding career paths, choosing to marry or remain single, pursuing a call to religious life or priesthood, etc. It is a privilege to assist young adults to grow in their relationship with God and introduce them to Ignatian spirituality and its discernment tools for making Christ-centered decisions for their lives,” Sister Val states.

“Young adults are searching, looking for a connection with God or the spiritual or a community. They care about what is happening in the world. While my generation was driven to succeed, today’s young adults have compassion for humanity,” Sister Val says. “They are seeking hope. And those raised without religion can find the journey even more confusing. We want to reach both Catholic young adults and those without religion, offering them the love and acceptance of Christ.”



Sister Val Roxburgh with young adults at a Catholic Scouting Retreat

CONNECTING WITH YOUNG ADULTS

With other sisters who serve in young adult outreach, Sister Val connects with young adults in a variety of ways. One approach is through Christus Ministries, a collaboration with the Jesuits West which works with parishes and universities to encourage young people to hear God’s call in their individual lives and stir in them a sense of discipleship. As part of faith development in the tradition of St. Ignatius Loyola’s Spiritual Exercises, young people are invited to develop a prayer life, a sense of discernment, a link to parish life and a commitment to service.

Similarly, SND USA Young Adult Ministry connects with young adults through faith-sharing groups, local and online book discussions, a variety of retreats, presentations to young adult groups and Scriptural prayer, especially with the Sunday Gospel readings.

In describing her one-on-one encounters with young adults, Sister Val uses the term “accompaniment,” a process of “being-with” rather than “talking at.” Sister Val’s goal is to meet young adults “where they are in their stage of life, without judgment or an agenda. Our goal is to provide an authentic listening presence and support.”

She continues, “Relationship building is a huge part of this ministry. We are with them on this journey. We see God’s transforming grace all the time as God manifests himself in various ways. These are ‘God moments’ which are beyond us.”

Sister Val and her team have witnessed an increased hunger and desire for God and faith among young adults. Citing data from The Barna Group, a Christian research organization that tracks trends affecting faith, culture and ministry, Sister Val

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> *"I saw firsthand a passionate community of believers who genuinely want to serve God and others."*
>
> *- Arvin Dicioco, 32*

Arvin Dicioco

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notes that young adults — Gen Z (ages 13 to 28) and Millennials (ages 29 to 43) — are now the most regular churchgoers, outpacing older generations. As a participant in a faith-sharing group at a Catholic parish in LA, Sister Val is pleased to see 40 to 50 young adults in attendance every week. "As I've learned, and other young adults are coming to realize through this Young Adult Ministry," Sister Val says, "we're all God's children on a journey. And God is always with us, welcoming us with open arms."

"I have always felt it important that the Catholic Church become more active in young adult outreach," adds Sister Val. "The Church needs young adults' thoughts, creativity, energy and involvement, personally as well as financially, to continue evolving and responding to the needs of the times."

YOUNG ADULTS RESPOND

Arvin Dicioco, 32, and his wife Larissa Purnell, 31, who attend St. Paul the Apostle in Chino Hills, CA, have become dear friends of Sister Val. Arvin recalls, "I've had several dinners with Sister Val and the sisters in Thousand Oaks, gatherings that completely changed my perception of nuns — from distant and formal figures to warm, welcoming, and deeply human. Meeting Sister Val and other SNDs was like receiving a warm hug physically from God. Their devotion to bringing people closer to Jesus is so profound, but they also share in the same joys and sorrows of everyday life."

Larissa explains, "I grew up a cradle Catholic with strong influence from my mom and grandmother. In the last 10 years, starting in college, my eyes have truly opened to the gift of the faith instilled in me at such a young age. Navigating young adult life without parental guidance allowed me to recognize that my faith is my North Star, shaping how I prioritize things, what I value, how I spend my time, and the people I choose to surround myself with, who can impact me in growing into a life aligned to Christ. I began building a personal relationship with Jesus during my Confirmation retreat, a relationship that continues to blossom as I've learned the practice of discernment and how Jesus journeys with me. In a society that places so much value on superficial elements, it's

only through Jesus, our relationship with Him and understanding our inherent worth, that we can truly grasp the gift we are to the world, to God, and to others. That's what drives this friendship with Jesus: getting to know Him, knowing that He has always desired to know me."

"Sister Val, my spiritual director, inspired and encouraged me to go on a Caritas retreat with my husband in January 2025. We were deeply moved by how Christus Ministries creates an intentional community like no other that receives people as they are and helps them understand their worth and value, unconditionally loved by Jesus," Larissa states.



Patrick Lehe (third from front sitting on bench) and friends

Caritas retreats have deeply impacted her husband as well. Arvin recalled attending Caritas 70 and co-facilitating with Sister Val and Larissa at Caritas 71, each retreat having about 50 participants and another 50 volunteer facilitators. "Despite what people say about young adults leaving the Church, I saw firsthand a passionate community of believers who genuinely want to serve God and others. Christus Ministries creates a space where people feel safe, seen and heard — where real transformation happens. Even a year later, I still see the graces unfolding in my life and continue to grow my Catholic community through Christus," says Arvin.

Larissa has also participated in several SND USA weekend retreats in Thousand Oaks, both silent and in community, where she has made life-long friendships. "In addition to in-person retreats, I've joined monthly virtual faith-sharing sessions with Sister Val, Sister Ruth Lubbers, and other young adults across the U.S. which have been wonderful for preparing my heart for the upcoming Sunday Gospel readings. It's been fun to participate in some of the fellowship opportunities at Thousand Oaks, too."

Patrick Lehe, 36, also attends St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church in West Los Angeles, CA. "My faith and relationship with Christ are the foundation of everything for me," he says. "I have worked hard to understand our faith, and to understand why I believe what I believe. Even when faith is hard, there's a peace in knowing that God never stops loving us. Everything changed for me when I started to have complete trust that God knows my truest desires better than I do."

Jennifer Bonilla-Cartagena, 29, with a degree from UCLA in international development and global health, is a member of St. Raphael Parish in South Central Los Angeles. "As a cradle Catholic, faith has always been a part of my life, though it was more like a tradition and a piece of my culture until I met a FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) missionary who helped me understand what a personal relationship with Jesus Christ meant. Since college, I value having Jesus at the center of my life by making the effort to spend time with God in all the busyness. Through prayer and faith in my everyday life, I feel peace knowing I will always be loved.

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I try my best to keep a healthy spiritual life by seeking the sacraments, growing virtuously, attending retreats, reading spiritual books and volunteering. My faith has helped me seek my career in health care." Jennifer also volunteered in Paraguay with a Peace Corps health team.

During her first SND USA silent retreat in 2023, Jennifer met "authentic Catholic gals that I thankfully can now call my close friends," she recalls. "Through SND USA, I learned to love the silence and find how important it is to just BE. The silent retreat prepared me for my Camino de Santiago pilgrimage last year, an experience that changed my life. I am forever grateful for the guidance and space the Sisters of Notre Dame have provided for young adults—to be safe while having a chance to grow in faith in a community of love. Sister Val helped me find a Catholic like-minded community." Jennifer has invited some of her friends to participate in SND retreats as well.

BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN YOUR FAITH

Young adults interested in getting more involved in their faith can explore events offered through their local Catholic diocese or archdiocese, and through Christus Ministries and their retreats, events and service projects for young adults. Many Catholic young adult groups promote their events on social media. Sister Val also urges young adults to volunteer in their parish as lectors and Eucharistic Ministers, to assist with religious education, youth ministry or OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults), and to connect with other nonprofit organizations such as Catholic Charities and Catholic Volunteer Network.

Arvin encourages other young adults on their faith journey: "Faith journeys have seasons — times of fire and times of dryness. It's easier to believe when you're surrounded by people who share your values. Surround yourself with people who challenge you to keep growing spiritually."

Sister Val Roxburgh, center



"We want to reach both young adult Catholics as well as those without religion, offering them the love and acceptance of Christ."

- Sister Val Roxburgh



Patrick agrees, "Do the hard work and be open to change. I compare my faith journey to going to the gym, but for the soul. There are days when you just want to stay home and do your own thing out of laziness or exhaustion or whatever, but the more you show up, the more you start to feel God's presence in your life in very real ways."

A Young Adult's Conversations With God



Faith is very important to Monica Luong. While raised Catholic, the 24-year-old admits she did not develop a personal relationship with God until middle school, inspired by a Dynamic Catholic Institute video she watched in class. The video, Prayer Process, describes step-by-step how to talk to God.

Monica recalls, "After watching the video, I got in the car after class, turned to my mom and said, 'Mom, my life has changed forever.' That moment was the beginning of a deep, complex and beautiful relationship with God."

Monica says that, despite remaining a faithful Catholic, her relationship with God has been one of the hardest to maintain, but it has weathered many storms. "A few years ago, my family almost lost my mom. She was on life support. My only solace was my faith. Miraculously, after a great act of divine mercy, she recovered and is nearly 100 percent healed today. This experience strengthened my faith immensely."

"The past couple of years have been far from rainbows and unicorns despite experiencing this miracle from God," she describes. "His plan has been challenging and confusing in many ways, but my faith remains strong."

Sister Val Roxburgh connected Monica with Sisters Ruth Lubbers and Elaine Winter, who offered her overnight hospitality in the Covington, KY convent when she arrived for a summer internship with Dynamic Catholic. While there, Monica attended an SND USA Vocation and Young Adult Ministry pilgrimage that also impacted her faith journey.

"The other young adults attending the pilgrimage were so comfortable to be around because of their friendliness and inclusiveness," Monica recalls. "The pilgrimage to the Abbey of Gethsemani with 11 other young adults was wonderful. I received a sense of that 'wonder' of life. This was written in the Abbey's

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Gethsemani group with Brother Luke



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> "When you pray, God listens,
> When you listen, God talks,
> When you believe, God works."

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Welcome Center gallery, and it essentially means taking nothing for granted, both big and small. According to an excerpt hanging on the gallery wall, it is the first step towards awareness of the divine. It was a rare day when I truly felt awe and wonder about the things of life back then. This experience blessed me with a more gracious heart, a mindful, appreciative mindset, and ultimately a closer awareness of the divine in my life."

"Traveling, praying and sharing silence with other young adults created community," she adds. "Being united by our journey together was a beautiful reminder that the Church is one, holy, Catholic and apostolic."

Monica has received spiritual direction from the Sisters of Notre Dame for the past two years. "I have met so many Sisters of Notre Dame, from California to Kentucky, and I learned about their many ministries. My most recent visit was to Thousand Oaks, CA, where I attended a silent retreat. Even though it was a silent retreat, the sisters couldn't help but chat in the hallways and at meals, a reflection of their warm and welcoming community. They made sure to make me feel welcome in their home."

Monica says the Women's Silent Retreat "was full of fruit that continues to unfold months later. Sisters Val, Regina (Robbins) and Lisa (Megaffin) led the retreat. The theme, 'The Gift of Choice Rooted in God,' resonated so deeply with many retreatants, including me. By the end of the weekend, I realized how God had been preparing me for the retreat and the calling He had in store for me. I came away with a deeper awareness of the goodness of God and the abundance of His graces. And the sisters were true instruments of God's love in all of it."

Monica believes there is a surge of young adults turning to faith in search of answers in today's complex, unpredictable world. "For young adults, the world raises many questions about life, meaning, existence, safety and connections," she describes. "As humans, we often cling to worldly things for security, but those things are ever-changing. God, however, is constant. He is unchanging. Psalm 43:5 reminds us: 'Do not despair nor be disturbed. My hope is in the eternal, unchanging God. I will live a life of praise and

Monica Luong at Gethsemani



thanksgiving because my God always comes to my rescue.' As many young adults search for answers and security, their search may bring them to answers concerning faith. What some young adults may find, and what I have certainly found, is that true security comes from clinging to God."

"Learning to pray was the kickstart to a deep and intimate relationship with God, like the first kindling of a fire," Monica says. "If you want a fire to continue burning, you must tend to it. And the more time and effort that goes into nurturing it, the stronger the fire."

For young adults who may have drifted from their faith and wish to rekindle their relationship with God, Monica offers this advice: "First, pray every day. I suggest starting with 10 minutes of prayer each day. It might sound difficult to start this daily prayer habit, but I read the other day from Matthew Kelly (author, speaker and founder of Dynamic Catholic Institute) that 'God is never more than one choice away.' Sitting down and praying for 10 minutes is never more than one choice away."

"Second, ask God to increase your faith and reignite the fire in your heart for Him. With a prayer request like that, God is sure to answer!" Monica exclaims with a broad smile.

The compelling young adult also recommends spending time with a faith-based young adult group. "The SNDs are awesome. Their SND USA Vocation and Young Adult Ministry activities are definitely worth trying out, even if it's just to hang out with the sisters. Spending time with the Sisters of Notre Dame will reveal God's love in ways you may not have experienced before. You'll witness their deep devotion to Him and see His love shining through their lives," she insists.

"What some young adults may find, and what I have certainly found, is that true security comes from clinging to God."

- Monica Luong

Do you feel called to a religious vocation?

Are you or someone you know looking for help with discerning direction in life?



The Sisters of Notre Dame Vocation and Young Adult Ministry is versed in discernment and would be happy to assist you with your journey.

If you want to be added to a list of faith sharing, retreats and other opportunities for discerners or would like someone to reach out to you to assist you, contact us at vocations@sndusa.org.

Sister Katherine Feely Cherishes Her Role with Young Adults



JDOS (Jesuit Day of Service) Team, John Carroll University, University Heights, OH. (Front row, center: Sister Katherine Feely)

"Young adults are an incredible group to work with. They're learning about the world, discovering their passions, exploring career paths, and discerning what truly matters to them. They are generous with their time and talent, idealistic and open to new ideas and experiences. Accompanying students during this formative time is both sacred and energizing. In the Jesuit tradition, accompanying students as they grow, question and find their purpose is a beautiful responsibility, and one I deeply cherish," states Sister Mary Katherine Feely, director of the Center for Service-Learning and Social Action (CSSA) at John Carroll University (JCU) in University Heights, OH.

Sister Katherine serves as a vital bridge between the University's academic mission and the needs and strengths of the Greater Cleveland Community.

“Each year I collaborate with more than 90 community partners and more than 1,000 students to connect coursework with meaningful experiential learning that deepens understanding, sharpens skills and fosters civic engagement,” Sister Katherine says matter-of-factly. She has served in this position since August 2014.

“The mission of the Center – an academic department – is grounded in equity and justice. The CSSA facilitates community-engaged, experiential learning through sustained partnerships to strengthen academic outcomes, develop ethical leaders, and foster lifelong civic engagement,” Sister Katherine says.

In her role, she also oversees the Center’s budget and operations, strategic planning, and cross-campus collaborations, ensuring its programs are sustainable and responsive to emerging community needs.

“At its heart, my job is about making learning come alive,” she states emphatically. “By connecting the curriculum to real-world challenges and opportunities, I champion experiential education that enhances student success, strengthens community capacity and cultivates graduates who are ready to lead with purpose.”



Kylie Gillespie, second from right

“By connecting the curriculum to real-world challenges and opportunities, I champion experiential education that enhances student success, strengthens community capacity, and cultivates graduates who are ready to lead with purpose.”

- Sister Mary Katherine Feely

“This work is student-centered and designed to help students engage deeply with the community in ways that enrich their coursework, expand their perspectives and bring their learning to life,” Sister Katherine states.

Cultivating relationships with organizations that are addressing today’s most urgent needs is key to her role. “These organizations include youth development programs and schools, food security initiatives, health and social service agencies, environmental organizations, and justice-focused nonprofits,” she says. “These partnerships make it possible for students to engage meaningfully in the community while gaining real-world experience aligned with their academic studies.”

“In 2018 I launched JCU in the City, an initiative that immerses students in Cleveland’s neighborhoods, history and civic landscape through community-engaged coursework and programming. I also established the Summer in the City Internship Program, which places students in full-time, community-based internships that blend professional skill-building with social responsibility,” Sister Katherine says.

Sister Katherine also expanded and formalized JCU’s Student Leadership Program, providing training, mentorship and development opportunities to help students serve as ambassadors of service-learning. To further weave community engagement into the academic fabric of the University, Sister Katherine created the Community-Engaged Faculty Fellow Program and spearheaded Faculty Learning Communities focused on high-impact practices. These initiatives support faculty in course innovation and the integration of community partnerships to deepen student learning.

“In these polarizing times, we are seeing students more intentionally seeking meaning and purpose, and for some, that journey includes exploring faith and spirituality,” describes Sister Katherine. “Many

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students connect their deepest values to community service, finding in service a tangible way to live out what they believe. Students are hungry for spaces of reflection, connection and grounding."

Kylie Gillespie met Sister Katherine Feely during her junior year at John Carroll when she became involved with the University's Center for Service-Learning and Social Action and their Summer in the City Cleveland internship program. "Sister K (as many JCU students fondly call her) was always a beam of Jesus' light on John Carroll's campus — smiling, encouraging and sharing wisdom with everyone in her path," Kylie describes. "I worked most closely with Sister K as she mentored me through my career discernment process during my senior year at John Carroll. Sister K met with me weekly to review my strengths assessment records, talk with me about what I am most passionate about, and connect me with a wide web of resources."

She continues, "Sister K was diligent, intentional and compassionate as she assisted me in navigating a time of discernment that many soon-to-be grads find daunting."

Kylie also participated in CSSA's Summer in the City Internship Program in the summer of 2023. Today, the young adult is working with Church of the Gesu in University Heights, OH. "My work with CSSA allowed me to realize I love working with children and teens, especially in a learning environment. Being involved with John Carroll Campus Ministry and growing in my own faith outside of the college campus really fueled my relationship with God and my desire to help others form their own personal relationship with Jesus," Kylie says.

Kylie offers this advice to young adults who feel disconnected from their faith: "You are not alone. I deeply understand how it feels to be disconnected from God and discouraged in pursuit of faith. Persevere in prayer, open your eyes and heart to the good around you, and remember, faith is a gift. It's OK to ask God to strengthen your faith! He asks for us to seek Him, to love Him, and most importantly to let Him love us."

Practical tips Kylie suggests:

- Find a parish and get involved.
- Participate in the sacraments.
- Persevere in prayer.

Madelyn Laird graduated from JCU in May 2024 and is currently in her last year of graduate school at JCU. She is also a youth minister to both high school and middle school students at St. Dominic Church in Shaker Heights, OH.

"I first met Sister K when a group of JCU students and two chaperones were preparing to walk 120 km of the Camino Ignacio across Northern Spain. The moment I knew she would be a friend and mentor for life was one day walking on the Camino with her. As we chatted, I learned we share the same life goal: to find the



Kylie Gillespie (front row, third from left) and Madelyn Laird (front row, fourth from left) lead a JCU Manresa Retreat.

best chocolate chip cookie in the world," laughs Madelyn. "To this day, we exchange life updates on our fellow pilgrims and offer encouragement for the good work ahead of each of us. In her busy schedule, she makes time to see me. It means the world."

Madelyn adds, "Sister K leads a life of example, inviting everyone she embraces to share in the journey closer to Christ. She balances the joy and light-heartedness of Christ so beautifully with a fierceness and grit, ready to serve and promote justice in all her work. Sister K saves you a seat at the table. I am just humbled by her example. If a fraction of my heart resembles hers, that's all I can ever ask for."

Like Kylie, Madelyn encourages other young adults to lean into Christ. "Do not underestimate the power of community. As beloved sons and daughters of a loving Father, we are made for community. A grace to one is a grace to all when it is shared, so SHARE! Show up! Listen well! Love loudly! Doing so will attract like-minded, like-hearted people who will become your community and lead you closer to Christ through friendship. I would also take a page from Sister K's book and say service never fails to ground the soul. Get out into your local community and serve neighbors. It will ground you in humility and instill a spirit of generosity, selflessness and radical compassion."

"Persevere in prayer, open your eyes and heart to the good around you, and remember, faith is a gift."

- Kylie Gillespie

Sister Katherine also encourages young adults searching for purpose, direction or a deeper sense of meaning, to begin simply by paying attention to what stirs their curiosity and lights them up. "Start with questions that won't go away. Seek out experiences that help you reflect, connect and stretch: a retreat, a service immersion, a conversation with a mentor or a class that challenges your assumptions," she suggests.

"Young adults are absolutely vital to the future of the faith," Sister Katherine insists. "They bring fresh questions, honest critique, bold hope and a generosity of spirit that continually renew and reimagine what faith can look like in the world. Their desire for authenticity, justice, belonging and meaningful action challenges faith communities to grow and to live their values more fully."

Young Adults Seek To Live Faith Authentically



Rosie Chinea Shawver

Rosie Chinea Shawver is excited and optimistic about the increase in religious interest among students on college campuses. The former director of campus ministry at University of Southern California (USC) who now serves as executive director of the CCMA (Catholic Campus Ministry Association) says, "I believe young adults are seeking real friendship and honest growth; a credible path of discipleship; intellectual seriousness – how faith meets culture, science and justice; prayer that is teachable and repeatable; peer and adult mentors who model an integrated Catholic life; and a way to serve that links with the Eucharist," Rosie lists with a broad smile.

"Today's young adults are longing for belonging and accountability," she continues. "They desire prayer that's grounded in Scripture, adoration and the Liturgy, and look for mentors who model what it means to live faith authentically in the modern world. And finally, today's college students desire a way to serve that connects the Eucharist to mission and back again, allowing worship to flow naturally into action."

"Dear young people, Jesus is our hope ... Aspire to great things, to holiness, wherever you are. Do not settle for less. You will then see the light of the Gospel growing every day, in you and around you."

- Pope Leo XIV





Young adults gather at USC Caruso Catholic Center in California.

At USC Caruso Catholic Center, Rosie's campus minister role blended pastoral care, leadership and organizational building. "I oversaw student formation – small-group discipleship, retreats, OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults), service and justice initiatives – preached and taught, mentored student leaders, coordinated with missionaries and chaplaincy, and partnered with university offices," she details.

During her tenure as a campus minister, Rosie observed hundreds of students attending Mass on a typical Sunday, with hundreds more involved in weekly small groups, OCIA, service and leadership. "Well over 1,500 students were engaged with us across a full year through liturgies, programs and events," she states.

"The USC Caruso Catholic Center exists to help students encounter Jesus Christ, grow as mature disciples and become leaders for the Church and the world," Rosie says. "Practically, that means vibrant sacramental life, small-group discipleship, service and justice opportunities, intellectual formation, and a welcoming community for seekers and committed Catholics alike."

"The USC Caruso Catholic Center exists to help students encounter Jesus Christ, grow as mature disciples, and become leaders for the Church and the world."

- Rosie Chinea Shawver

Rosie says it was a gift to work alongside Sisters Jennifer Zimmerman, Dean Pfahler and Val Roxburgh on the USC campus. "They brought a charism of joyful presence, deep prayer and practical wisdom. Concretely, they offered excellent accompaniment of students, retreats that integrated prayer with discernment, consistent availability for spiritual conversation, and a steady, hospitable spirit that helped our community feel like home."

Rosie says there is joy and excitement as she continues to work with young adults. "Students carry real burdens – mental health, polarization, family stress, finances – but they're also idealistic, generous and hungry for meaning. That combination makes ministry both demanding and deeply hopeful. Among campus ministers nationwide, I see renewed collaboration,

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Young adults gather at USC Caruso Catholic Center in California.



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more professional training and creativity around evangelization, belonging, and justice — all reasons for joy," Rosie states.

Rosie is also observing sustained interest in Scripture, small groups, Eucharistic adoration and service tied to Catholic Social Teaching among young adults. "I believe it is due to converging factors: post-pandemic, purpose-seeking, loneliness and mental-health pressures; desire for real community; dissatisfaction with shallow online discourse; and a longing to integrate intellect, ethics and spirituality," Rosie suggests.

> *"The biggest driver of student involvement tends to be personal invitation plus a clear discipleship path. When these two elements are present, engagement rises."*
>
> *- Rosie Chinea Shawver*

To address these needs, Catholic Campus Ministry Association is doing the following:

- equipping ministers with formation (e.g. cohorts, office hours, resource packs) and mental-health-awareness pastoral practices
- building the Service & Justice Innovation Hub to help campuses integrate worship, formation and action
- advancing missionary integration with shared vision, clear roles and healthy team culture
- curating ready-to-use tools (downloads, templates, small-group guides, retreat frameworks) so ministers can implement quickly

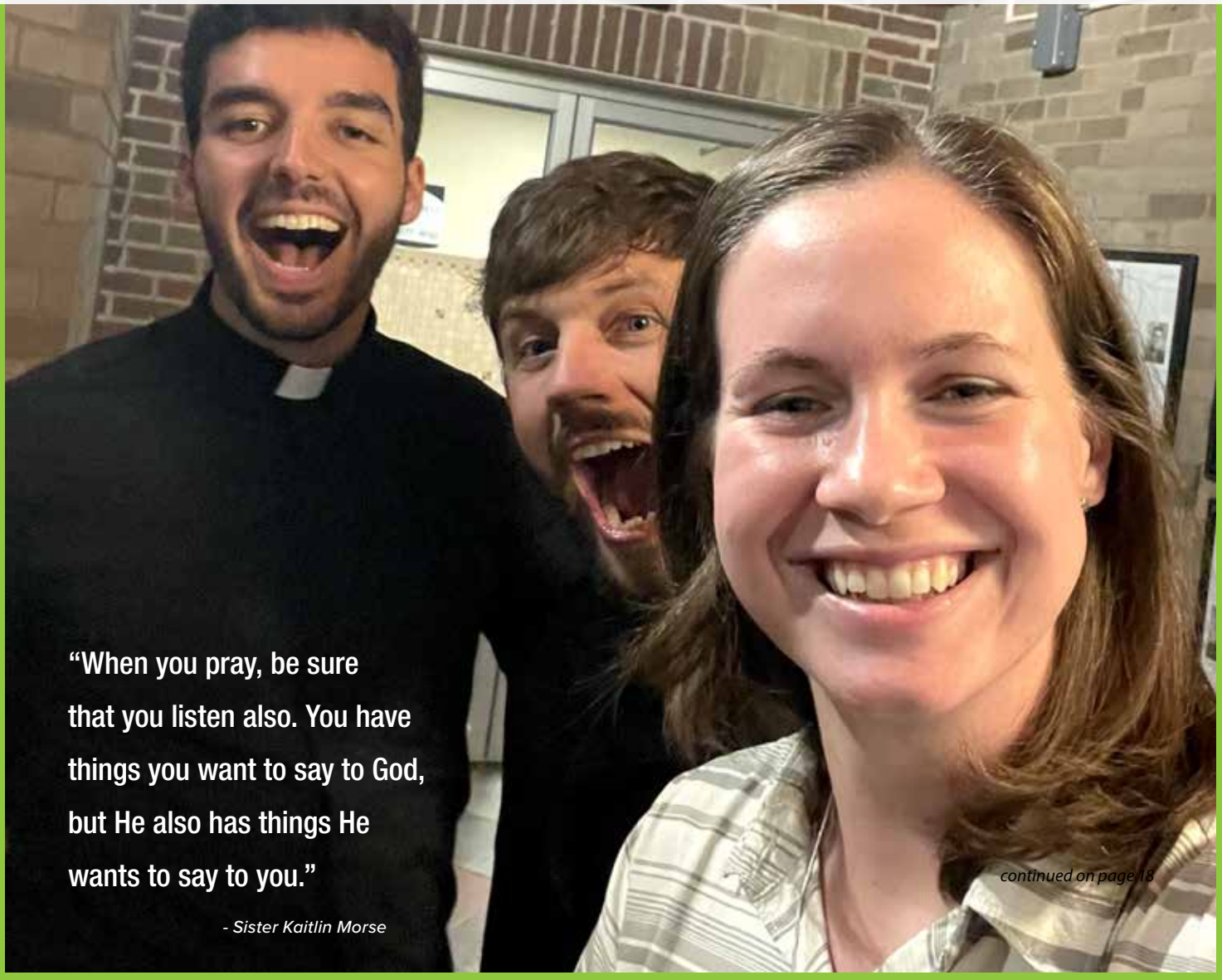
"The biggest driver of student involvement tends to be personal invitation plus a clear discipleship path. When these two elements are present, engagement rises," explains Rosie.

She encourages young adults who want to get involved in faith-based initiatives to start at the Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center on their campus or with their university Catholic Chaplaincy. CCMA will also help connect students locally at ccmanetwork.org.

The *Call* To Religious Life

Hearing a "call" to religious life is often subtle and personal. Some indicators that may suggest one is called to religious life include a strong desire to know and understand God; a preference for deep friendships with God and others who share a similar spiritual interest; a desire to grow in faith and spiritual maturity by seeking out opportunities for spiritual development and community; a willingness to serve others and contribute to the community — and finding joy in helping those in need; and a desire for guidance and direction on one's spiritual journey.

Sister Kaitlin Morse first discerned a personal calling to religious life with the support of a spiritual director and her family. "My parents were instrumental in the way they shared their own personal observations with me about how I was positively changing as I grew in prayer and took discernment of religious life more seriously," the 31-year-old reflects. "They were encouraging and supportive before I even told them I was considering religious life."



"When you pray, be sure that you listen also. You have things you want to say to God, but He also has things He wants to say to you."

- Sister Kaitlin Morse

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Sister Kaitlin Morse

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Sister Kaitlin earned a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership from Gonzaga University and a Master of Science in Nursing from Kent State University.

"Because I am still in formation, I am still discerning my personal call to religious life. In addition to support from my spiritual director and family, I now have support from some close friends and other sisters who know me well," says Sister Kaitlin. "Discerning a call to religious life (or really, any way of life) is done best with the support of others in community."

Today, Sister Kaitlin feels drawn to serve in the Sisters of Notre Dame's Vocation and Young Adult Ministry.

"I believe more young people are reaching out today to talk about their faith and God. There is something positive happening in the Diocese of Cleveland, especially," Sister Kaitlin says. "I think the pains and sorrows that fill our world are forcing young people to look for more meaning and purpose in life. They are looking for solid foundations to support the temporary nature of things in our world. God is present today and eternally. Young people are recognizing that and are trying to deepen their faith life because of that."

Sister Kaitlin believes it is vital for young adults to become active in their church communities.

"We must learn how our churches function so we can continue to help them function and grow in the future," she states. "We also can make an impact in the unique way we share Christ with others. We are all called to share the Good News with others. We shouldn't wait until we are older or wiser or ready. Now is the time to get involved and serve. It could be something related to Mass or taking care of others in service work. Parishes have a multitude of ways to get involved. And if they don't have what you are looking to do, tell someone and help start that specific program and get others involved."

Sister Kaitlin was recently involved in the Young Adult Ministry at the University of Michigan. "I had the chance to experience the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius with the Jesuit novices from the Midwest and East Provinces in 2022. Since then, I have had strong connections with those Jesuits and others they have put me in contact with. The Jesuits run the Catholic parish at the University of Michigan," says Sister Kaitlin.

"I feel drawn to serve in Young Adult Ministry because I know what it's like to be a young adult searching for meaning and purpose," admits Sister Kaitlin. "When I was younger, there weren't many groups for young adults in the Church. After aging out of high school programs, there wasn't really anything to keep young people engaged or supported. I want to do all I can to support young people so they feel and know they have a place in our Church and can continue to grow in their relationship with God.

"God has absolutely changed my life and the way I see the world as a young person in the vowed religious life. I have gotten to see and do things I never would have as a laywoman. I've worked in ministries I never dreamed of. Those experiences changed the way I know and experience God. I see God active in the world. Because of my experiences, I can better share God with others."



Sister Kaitlin Morse (right) and friend

"I would encourage any young adult considering religious life to be bold in taking the next step," Sister Kaitlin advises. "Discernment and religious formation are all about small steps that eventually add up to the total gift of self we make when we profess vows. I would encourage discerners to reach out to religious to have a conversation, especially young religious. We are approachable and love to talk about religious life and our own vocation journeys. A lot of what holds us back from taking steps is fear, but when we see real people living out the vocation, our fears disappear."

"As Christians, we can't base our decisions off what is popular, trending or even progressive. Our decisions must be rooted in the authority of something higher. And that authority is only found in God's Word."

- Sister Kaitlin Morse

If you are interested in learning more about religious vocation or how to get involved in young adult ministries, please contact Sister Val Roxburgh at vroxburgh@sndusa.org or call 805.452.9699.

Campus Minister Encouraged by Students on Campus

According to Ursuline College Campus Minister Sister Nicole Varnerin, SND, "Young adults are thirsting for peace, for something that will quell their anxiety inside. Some young adults are finding that peace in our chapel and our Bible studies; others in the relationships they build, while others are finding that peace in the service we do as a group."

Sister Nicole is responsible for ensuring that the mission, spirit, heritage, justice and compassion of the Ursuline sisters are present in daily life on campus. Her goal is to facilitate each student having an experience of God and a sense of purpose as they begin to make bigger life decisions.

"My main goal for the ministry is to cultivate a student-led, spiritual community that creates a culture of belonging and deep conversations on campus. The number of student leaders and meaningful small groups has multiplied over the past year. We are attempting to meet the needs of students who are seeking deeper meaning," Sister Nicole affirms.

One Ursuline College student, Isabel Martinez, says, "Sometimes, I feel intimidated trying to build my faith, but God has gifted me with so much support and love. I couldn't be more grateful for what God has done and continues to do in my life. Sister Nicole's involvement in the ministry here at Ursuline College has been so impactful."



Sister Nicole with guests at an Ursuline College worship night.

She continues, "I believe my generation of young adults is more interested in growing their faith because they are trying to find their purpose in life and build community."

To young adults on campus who feel disconnected from Catholicism, Sister Nicole reminds them, "Know that you still have a connection to God, no matter your connection with the Catholic Church. God loves you in ways no one can understand. Listen to the depths within, to your deepest desires, and you will find God."



Sister Nicole is encouraged as she spends time with the young adults on campus. "From my perspective, young adults are taking an active role in their faith life. They are curious, seeking and have a deep desire for God. They are ready to lead, to learn and to live out their faith in the community. We just need to be willing to let go and give them the opportunity to shine!"



"If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world ablaze!"

- *St. Catherine of Siena*



Cultural Exposure Widens Understanding of Indian Sister

Sister Archana Joseph left her home in Patna, India, to begin graduate studies in the United States in August, 2024. While pursuing a Master of Science in College Student Personnel Counseling at California Lutheran University, her interactions with SND USA sisters and young adults in America have enriched her journey and widened her cultural understanding.

"I didn't plan on studying in the U.S., but the SND province administration in Patna discerned the need for a sister to study counseling, and the lot fell to me," she recalls. "I received this call with openness and trust, knowing it was not just about earning a degree but embracing a broader mission."

"Studying in the U.S. allows me to experience our charism in a different cultural context, to witness how our mission as Sisters of Notre Dame unfolds across cultural and country borders, and to grow in understanding of the global Church. This journey is helping me see with wider eyes and serve with a deeper heart," the 34-year-old SND states.

Her decision to attend California Lutheran University allowed her to live in community with sisters in Thousand Oaks, CA, a short distance from campus. "What truly drew me in was the Education Department's vision statement: 'Guided by social justice and advocacy, we will reimagine education to disrupt inequities and to meet the future needs of students and communities.' That resonates deeply with me," she says. "It reflects the very heart of our ministries in India, where we strive to empower the marginalized, promote equity and build communities rooted in compassion and justice. I felt a strong alignment between their mission and ours. It gave me peace and clarity in choosing this path."

"The Notre Dame Center in Thousand Oaks is my home now. It fills my heart with gratitude and wonder that simply being part of this beautiful congregation has made me international. Our shared formation and mission as Sisters of Notre Dame unite us, no matter how different our cultures may be. The sisters here welcomed me with open hearts. They inspire me with their joyful witness. I feel truly blessed to have more sisters in my life, and each one is a reflection of God's love and the global family we belong to," she says.



Honoring the spirit of youth during Children's Day Celebrations at Notre Dame Academy, Jamalpur, Bihar.



Own the gifts God has given you.

- Sister Archana Joseph

Sister Archana adds that the openness of young adults, with whom she interacts on campus, is a further blessing.

"In counseling sessions, students express feeling safe and comfortable sharing their faith stories with me, which I hold with reverence. I sense many students are quietly navigating spiritual questions beneath the surface," Sister Archana describes.

"I've met young people who believe in a higher power, though not always with a specific name or tradition," she continues. "Some come from devout Christian or Catholic families and feel obligated to attend services, even if they're still discerning their personal connection to God. Others are actively exploring what faith means to them. What gives me hope is their openness. I believe that when someone is open, even in uncertainty, there's always the possibility of a deeper relationship with God."



Sister Archana continues, "I believe the culture of a place deeply shapes how we think, relate and respond to life's situations. In India, where community is central, decisions are often made with others in mind: family, neighbors, society. There's a strong sense of collective responsibility and shared identity. In contrast, here in the U.S., individual differences are celebrated. People are encouraged to make choices for themselves and take ownership of their own paths."

She believes both approaches have their strengths and limitations. "I don't think it's fair to compare them directly. Each culture carries its own wisdom, shaped by history, values and lived experience. What I find beautiful is how this exposure has widened my understanding. I'm learning to see things from multiple perspectives, to hold space for both communal and individual ways of being. It's been a humbling and enriching journey that invites me to grow in empathy, discernment and grace."

"I encourage young adults in the U.S. and everywhere to be open," Sister Archana concludes. "More than learning about God, it's about experiencing God. In the goodness present within each person and in the beauty of the world, we encounter the unseen power of God. From my own journey, I've come to know that God often calls us when we least expect it. So, take nothing for granted. Cultivate gratitude. Own the gifts God has given you – they are the first steps in witnessing to God's love. We don't have to be perfect … Let us be aware of God's grace that surrounds us always. Let us seek wisdom, and faith can be shared anywhere, and in any moment. It speaks loudest through our actions. Let our lives become radiant testimonies of the love of our Abba."



FEED THE SOIL, FEED THE SOUL



Guests visit with workers at ALMA Backyard Farm in Los Angeles, CA.

Sister Erin Nagy recently experienced the meaning of "feed the soil, feed the soul." This epiphany occurred while she was volunteering at ALMA Backyard Farms, a grassroots organization in the Los Angeles, CA area that works to "reclaim the lives of those formerly incarcerated, repurpose land into productive urban farms and reimagine community as a place for people and plants to thrive."

"I found ALMA Backyard Farms through an assignment in my Care for Our Common Home course at Loyola Marymount University (LMU)," Sister Erin says. She is a graduate student in theology there.

Sister Erin Nagy



"We were asked to work alongside a grassroots environmental organization to better understand what it takes to work in the ecological field. I was able to attend an event put on by the staff of ALMA for the Catholic community in the area, in celebration of the 10-year anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical '*Laudato Si.*'"

"The co-founders, Richard Garcia and Erika Cuellar, who are Loyola Marymount University alumni, began the event by speaking about how the farm is the place where the 'Gospel meets the street.' Their vision for ALMA is to be a place for the community to grow and flourish, a place for stories to be shared. ALMA, in Spanish, means soul and that is exactly what Richard and Erika hope to give space to develop," says Sister Erin.

The organization serves formerly incarcerated individuals, youth from neighboring Catholic schools and communities surrounding their two farms in San Pedro and Compton.

Sister Erin describes encountering several men working at the farm who were formerly incarcerated. "They shared their stories of being in prison for more than 20 years and how they once used their hands for destruction but now use their hands for creating. They also shared how they were used to taking, but now they are learning how to give. These men had only been working on the farm for two months and already their lives were being changed through their experience at ALMA."

"My experience with ALMA was profound," Sister Erin states. "I could see very quickly how Richard and Erika create an environment where the dignity of each person is uplifted through the love and care of God, even if they don't mention that directly. Richard spoke to volunteers the first day about welcoming those coming to the farm. He said to welcome them like the father of the prodigal son, as if you have been waiting for them to come home. This was a powerful image for me of welcoming a stranger and creating a community that allows people to flourish."

"I COULD SEE VERY QUICKLY HOW RICHARD AND ERIKA CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE THE DIGNITY OF EACH PERSON IS UPLIFTED THROUGH THE LOVE AND CARE OF GOD, EVEN IF THEY DON'T MENTION THAT DIRECTLY."

-Sister Erin Nagy

Many young adults volunteer and work for ALMA, Sister Erin says, "They all talk about how they first encountered the farm and were enticed by the beauty of the community and the mission, so they kept coming back. I am grateful for the opportunity to meet each of them and find a place where the goodness and providence of God is expressed so powerfully!"

SNDs Collaborate with Jesuits at University of Michigan



Sisters Kaitlin Morse (left) and Kelley Rush

To celebrate National Vocation Awareness Week this past fall, Sisters Kaitlin Morse and Kelley Rush traveled to the University of Michigan for the second year in a row to participate in vocation outreach with the Jesuits.

St. Mary Student Parish in Ann Arbor, MI, which is staffed by the Jesuits, hosted seven weekend Masses for hundreds of students and instituted the formation of discernment groups every Friday this school year.

The two Sisters of Notre Dame joined men and women religious from 13 different communities for a vocation fair. "At the first evening Mass, we were privileged to witness 42 new OCIA members being welcomed into the church, many of whom were young adults!" says Sister Kelley.

According to Sister Kelley, "Following the first evening Mass, the vocation fair resulted in many engaging conversations with some amazing young women. We met some of the eight women who are currently living in an intentional discernment community and who are open to considering religious life. It was a great opportunity for us to share the charism and history of the Sisters of Notre Dame with them and to learn more about them, as well."

In addition, Sisters Kaitlin and Kelley were able to network with members of other communities, priests and the campus minister. "We even had the joy of meeting Sister Shawn Marie Doyle's niece who happens to be at the University of Michigan! What a small world!" adds Sister Kaitlin.

The sisters also sat down with one of the Midwest Jesuits for a sharing and brainstorming session. "It was a blessed conversation that allowed for deeper connection and a multitude of opportunities going forward," says Sister Kelley. "We are hoping to return to the University of Michigan in the spring to facilitate some discernment opportunities for the women's discernment community on campus and to speak to those members of the Friday discernment groups at the parish. The University of Michigan campus ministry program is truly creating a culture of vocation on campus! Sister Kaitlin and I left this experience very hopeful about the movement forward and the opportunities that await us! God is truly working in the hearts of many young people, and we are privileged to be a part of their journey."

"It was a blessed conversation that allowed for deeper connection and a multitude of opportunities going forward."

- Sister Kelley Rush



The Gift of Silent Retreats

by Sister Val Roxburgh



In our noisy, busy world, a silent retreat lets us press pause to hear God's voice. SND USA's Vocation and Young Adult Team has been offering weekend silent retreats for young adults since 2018 at SND retreat centers in Chardon and Toledo, OH as well as in Covington, KY and Thousand Oaks, CA.

The idea of a silent retreat can be intimidating for people who think they could never spend a weekend in silence or without their cell phone. But taking the risk of silence, carving out time with God alone, can have astonishing benefits.

During a silent weekend retreat at Notre Dame Center in Thousand Oaks, participants arrive by 5 p.m. on Friday, settle in their room, and meet for dinner at 6 p.m. An orientation meeting sets the theme of the retreat with a brief reflection. Participants meet their spiritual directors to set up a time and place for meeting on Saturday and then close with a prayer in chapel. Then the silence begins.

Retreatants have a packet of prayer materials, including scripture passages, reflective articles and a description of spiritual direction. On Saturday, everyone is free to pray quietly in chapel, walk in the neighborhood, sit on a bench outdoors or simply rest in their rooms. Each retreatant meets with a director to share ideas and questions. Meals are taken in silence, but some participants choose to eat and converse with the sisters. Mass is available for the retreatants on Saturday and Sunday at the Catholic Church down the street. The retreat concludes at 2 p.m. after a time of sharing on the graces of the retreat.

Many U.S. retreat centers, including Jesuit facilities, offer silent retreats lasting a day, a weekend or a week. Those who experience the peace of silence with God know the value of a silent retreat. As an off-the-chart extrovert, I want you to know it is possible to be in silence and enjoy it!

A LASTING TRIBUTE



Sister Dorthea Marie Arndt
February 4, 1944 – February 25, 2026
Toledo, OH



Sister Mary Deborah Carlin
(Mary Margaret Carlin)
May 9, 1935 – February 6, 2026
Chardon, OH



Sister Mary Claire Engbersen
October 7, 1936 – November 13, 2025
Covington, KY



Sister Mary Sharron Goller
February 23, 1939 – January 30, 2026
Covington, KY



Sister Mary Rose Bernard Groth
March 8, 1931 – November 13, 2025
Toledo, OH



Sister Mary Paul Ann Hanneken
January 15, 1932 – September 3, 2025
Covington, KY



Sister Mary Therese Hennessey
Formerly Sister Mary Francis Therese
May 4, 1930 – November 12, 2025
Chardon, OH



Sister Mary Jeanne Moenk
Formerly Sister Mary Bede
March 31, 1946 – December 30, 2025
Chardon, OH



Sister Mary Barbara Morscher
Formerly Sister Mary Dennine
December 11, 1942 – February 7, 2026
Chardon, OH

May our deceased sisters rejoice in God's everlasting love.

Please visit sndusa.org/tributes for their complete obituaries.



Sister Mary Gertrude Ann Mueller
November 10, 1937 – October 30, 2025
Toledo, OH



Sister Mary Joan Terese Niklas
January 2, 1937 – December 16, 2025
Covington, KY



Sister Mary Stefana Osredkar
December 16, 1944 – December 7, 2025
Chardon, OH



Sister Mary Popoczy
Formerly Sister Mary Paul Rene
July 29, 1938 – October 5, 2025
Chardon, OH



Sister Marilyn Sabatino
Formerly Sister Mary Phillip
November 20, 1943 – October 17, 2025
Chardon, OH



Sister Elizabeth Marie Scanlon
Formerly Sister Thomas Marie
April 2, 1936 – July 14, 2025
Chardon, OH



Sister Mary Lucy Suter
August 15, 1940 – December 21, 2025
Toledo, OH

Lord, grant eternal peace to these Sisters of Notre Dame who served you with faith and joy. May their loved ones be comforted by our prayerful remembrance.

To read more about these sisters, please visit sndusa.org.

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Save the Dates

September 27, 2026
SND BBQ Event
Chardon, OH

November 1, 2026
Memorial Mass
Covington, KY

November 7, 2026
Memorial Mass
Thousand Oaks, CA

November 12, 2026
SHINE
Toledo, OH



