

# From the Foot of the Cross



The Passionist Nuns of Saint Joseph Monastery in the Diocese of Owensboro KY      Thanksgiving 2016

## *A Lifetime Seeking the Face of God*

*Meet our Sr. Mary Magdalen  
of the Good Shepherd*

Grateful for 50 Years  
of Passionist Fidelity

*1966 - August 13 - 2016*

Recently our Jubilarian graciously shared her vocation journey and God's drawing her to himself in Passionist cloistered life.

**Was there a particular person or event that inspired you to want to be a religious sister? Did you always think of being a cloistered nun? Or an active sister?**

As far back as I can remember thinking about my future, I thought I would be a religious Sister. I don't know how it started. At that time, there was a full staff of religious Sisters – Ursulines from Mount Joseph - in the grade school of my parish, St. Thomas More – 9 Sisters, 1 for each grade and a music teacher. And there were Sisters of Charity of Nazareth in St. Mary's Academy in the neighboring parish of St. Francis de Sales where I went to high school. Also Sisters of Mercy in the school at St. John's parish in the county, whom we saw on some occasions when we went to Mass there. And of course, they were in full habit in those days. I always thought about being a foreign missionary Sister. My aunt, who made annual retreats at our monastery on Benita Avenue in Owensboro, brought me with her on two retreats when I was about 13 and 14 years old. That was my first experience of cloistered life. I was attracted to it, but of course was too young then to think about entering any time soon, and I didn't think about it anymore.

**Did you ever think about entering a different religious community?** As I was growing up, I wrote for information to a



Photo Courtesy Fr. Josh McCarty - Lolek Productions

*"I made a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the college chapel. It was then that I experienced Our Lord's call from the tabernacle."*

couple of missionary communities, but I was still years away from being old enough to enter, so I never got to the point of seriously thinking about entering any of them.

**You went to college for a year. What motivated you to do this? Did you have a certain career in mind? Why didn't you finish?** During high school I got interested in being a medical doctor. I went to a Catholic college, Catherine Spalding College (now Spalding University) in Louisville. During a retreat for the students that was held during the semester break in January, I was reminded of the retreats I made with my aunt at



**Nancy** (right) on the day of her First Holy Communion in May of 1952.  
Her sister **Patsy** is at left.

our monastery in Owensboro. Those memories were in my mind when I made a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the college chapel. It was then that I experienced Our Lord's call from the tabernacle. It was quiet, nothing dramatic, but I knew then that this was my vocation, and I've never had any doubts about it.

**Did you ever want to get married?** I never had any strong desire for marriage. I guess the religious call was always latent, although I put it on the back burner during high school.

**What was your family's reaction?** I was dreading telling them, because I



*The Wurth family sometime after Sr. Mary Magdalen entered the monastery.  
Left to right: James "Daddy", Olean "Momma", Patsy, Mike and Susie*

knew the emotional pain it would cause them, since the cloister was so strict in those days. The nuns could never go home for anything, not even deaths in the family. But I knew that they would not oppose my decision. My parents made it clear to us when we were growing up that they would never interfere in our vocational decisions, and they didn't.

**How did their support over the years grow?** Once they got to know the community, and got over the initial pain of me leaving, they were happy about my vocation. My mother even told me that she wouldn't want me anywhere else, not even in any other religious community, and my father once told me that he wished he could bring everybody to the monastery and show everybody how happy we were. I think that was sparked by someone saying something to him to the effect that it must be hard for him that I was in the monastery.

**What are some memorable experiences of monastic life?** I've always been very grateful that I had the privilege of knowing and living with our five foundresses and Sister Mary, who entered as a postulant in Scranton. She was in her forties and probably would not have been accepted if they hadn't been planning the new foundation in October 1946. They accepted her for the new foundation, and she came about a week after the foundresses ar-



*Sister has had the privilege over the years of working closely with our infirm and elderly sisters.*

*Here she is seen with Sr. Mary Cecilia Taylor, C.P., one of our five foundresses who came from the Passionist Monastery of Scranton, PA to bring Passionist life to Owensboro, KY in 1946.*



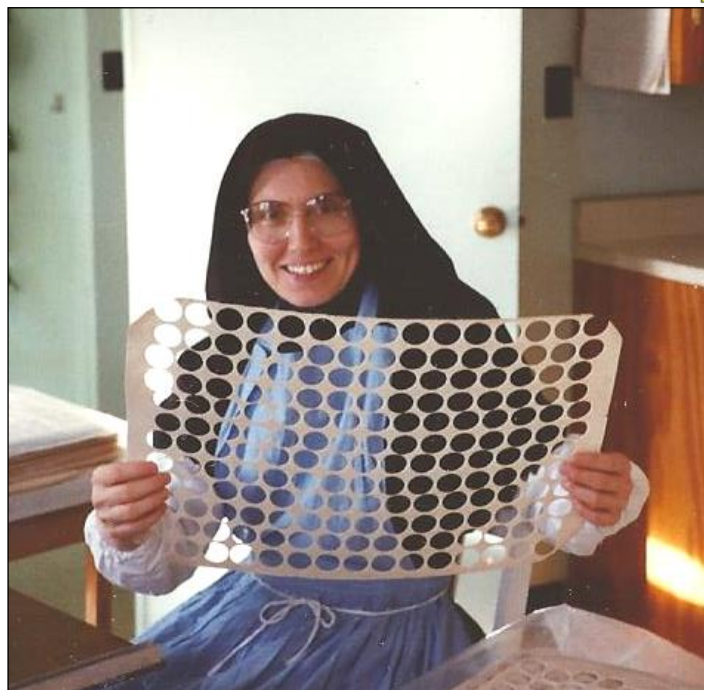


rived. She died about a month before my first profession, so I lived with her for almost two years, and I lived with the other foundresses for many more years.

Also, I'm grateful for the classes we had on Scripture, Passionist spirituality and history, etc. from various priests through the years, and the retreat Sundays with Msgr. Powers during the Jubilee years of 1974 and 1975. And now I'm very happy and excited about the work the Holy See is doing to revitalize women's contemplative life and all that's involved in that, and I'm looking forward to Mother Fernanda's visit to our community in November. (Sister is referring to a formal Visitation of the Holy See to all our monasteries throughout the world. Mother Fernanda, delegate of the Holy See, will be visiting the U.S. monasteries in the month of November.)

**What are some jobs you have had in the monastery?** I've worked in the kitchen, made altar breads, done liturgy planning, helped to care for our elderly and sick Sisters, cleaning, archivist, secretary Council Member.

**Do you have a Word of Wisdom for our readers?** I urge everyone in these critical times for our nation and the world to study in depth, as much as possible, the teachings of the Church on the life issues, abortion, euthanasia, and on the nature of the human person, sexuality, marriage, etc. Learn not only what the Church teaches, but also the reasons for her teachings. These teachings are so often rejected because so often people do not understand the reasons for the teachings, which correspond to the deepest longings of the human heart. By our Baptism and Confirmation we have an obligation to live the Gospel and by our witness, to help bring about the victory of the Culture of Life over the culture of death.



*Sister holds up the altar bread sheet after the hosts were cut. When we relocated to Whitesville, KY we gave our altar bread making machinery to our Nuns in the Philippines hoping to earn our living through the ministry of offering a place of solitude for retreatants.*

### **From Pope Francis' recent Apostolic Constitution for Contemplative Nuns Seeking the Face of God**

"Dear Contemplative sisters, without you what would the Church be like, or those living on the fringes of humanity and ministering in the outposts of evangelization? The Church greatly esteems your life of complete self-giving. The Church counts on your prayers and on your self-sacrifice to bring today's men and women to the good news of the Gospel.

"The Church needs you! It is not easy for the world, or at least that large part of it dominated by the mindset of power, wealth and consumerism, to understand your particular vocation and your hidden mission; and yet it needs them immensely. The world needs you every bit as much as a sailor on the high seas needs a beacon to guide him to a safe haven. Be beacons to those near to you and, above all, to those far away. Be torches to guide men and women along their journey through the dark night of time. Be sentinels of the morning, heralding the dawn."



*Sister visiting with her family on the day of her Jubilee celebration.  
Left to right: brother Mike, niece Tracy, sister Patsy, sister Susie,  
great-niece Bailey, brother-in-law Bill, nephew Jonathan  
Front: sister-in-law Susan, great-niece Regan*

# Offering God thanks for His 50 Years of Fidelity

Saturday, August 13, Bishop Medley together with several priests, as well as a small group of family and friends of Sr. Mary Magdalen joined us for the Golden Jubilee Mass of Thanksgiving.



Left to right: Fr. Joe Mills, Fr. John Vaughan, Bishop William Medley, Fr. Ray Clark, Msgr. Powers and server Ian Barnstead shortly before the Mass of Thanksgiving.

## FROM FR. JOHN VAUGHAN'S EXCELLENT HOMILY FOR THE GOLDEN JUBILEE MASS:

It was on July 22, 2016, (Feast of St. Mary Magdalen) that Pope Francis "made public an Apostolic Constitution on Women's Contemplative Life entitled "Seeking the Face of God." (Vultum Dei Quaerere). In this document the Holy Father highlighted the foundational values of contemplative life, characterized by Silence, Listening, and Stability.

"These values are so contrary to our contemporary world. In our world of political campaigns, sound bites, TV's in multiple locations throughout a home, ear-buds and I-phones etc., where do we find the silence? Who takes time to listen? On some Sunday's I take an extended time of quiet after Holy Communion thinking to myself that this may be the last moment of silence many in the congregation will have all day. Your contemplative silence is a witness, a gift and an important reminder to all of us that it is in the silence that we will hear God speak. In a rapidly changing and hectic world, a world of great mobility and temporary jobs and commitments, your witness of stability and permanence is also a welcomed gift.

"Pope Francis quotes St. Augustine, 'You have made us for yourself O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.' Whether known or realized, all the longings, the hungers, thirsts and desires that drive our lives and motivate our decisions are essentially a search for God. Contemplative Life is a Prophetic life standing as a sign of that which is truly important, the 'one thing necessary.' True happiness is our relationship with Jesus Christ, our way, truth and life. Your witness is a profound gift to the Church and to the world.

"Sr. Mary Magdalen, as we celebrate your five decades of faithful witness, we first of all celebrate God's

faithful love for you and all of us. You are the first to acknowledge that it is only by God's grace that you are here and have accomplished anything, mindful of St. Paul's words to us today, that "whoever boasts, boasts in the Lord." Read the entire text: [www.passionistnunsblog.com](http://www.passionistnunsblog.com)

## Mother Fernanda's Visitation of our Five U.S. Monasteries

As we write this newsletter we are joyfully anticipating the visit of the General Delegate of the Holy See who has been assigned to assist the monasteries of Passionist Nuns throughout the world for the revitalization of our Passionist charism and the strengthening of our sisterly communion and sharing.

Our friend Passionist Fr. Joe Barbieri will be assisting Mother during her month in the U.S. Our Visitation will take place November 21- 23 and Mother will remain with us through Thanksgiving weekend. We ask you, our dear family and friends, to keep this holy endeavor in your prayers. We will include an update in our next newsletter!



**Mother Fernanda Barbiero, SMSD** at left, during a conference presented by Fr. Sebastiano Paciolla, O. Cist. to the Passionist Nuns during the international meeting of 2015.



# From Small Beginnings 70 Years Ago...



On October 8, 2016 we commemorated the **70th anniversary of our community's founding in the Diocese of Owensboro, KY.** Knowing the countless sacrifices our five foundresses made to "plant" our Passionist cloistered way of life here in the "soil" of Owensboro, our hearts are overflowing with gratitude for the way God has enabled our community to grow. As each generation of Nuns carry on our consecration to Christ and Him Crucified, we pray that we may be blessed with many healthy and wholesome vocations—loving hearts who will take deep root in our Passionist soil, and bring forth a rich harvest for the glory of the Crucified and the good of the Church.



Our Five foundresses that came to the diocese of Owensboro, KY in 1947 **Sr. Francis Marie, Sr. Mary Bernadette, Foundress Mother Mary Agnes, Sr. Jeanne Marie and Sr. Mary Cecilia**

Seen here is the cake lovingly prepared by Sr. Cecilia Maria and her assistants. The small hearts representing the Our Father beads had the initials of each foundress. Quite creative and delicious!

We also took a walk down memory lane recalling funny memories from those early years during an afternoon game.



Praying for all the deceased members of our community, especially remembering our five foundresses whose grave markers are seen here





Oh joy! Two aspirants! **Mother John Mary** welcomed **Ruth** and **Olivia** into the aspirancy program August 28. The happy novice directress, **Sr. Mary Veronica** stands at right. Please offer a prayer for them as they discern Passionist life which, God-willing, will lead to officially entering the monastery on December 8, 2016.



Recently, we purchased a promotional banner (at right) to set by our vocation literature at youth gatherings. Since ours is a hidden life many young women don't know we exist and are a viable life vocation. Thanks for your donations that made this purchase possible! And special thanks to **Fr. Josh McCarty** (above) and **Larena Lawson** of **Lolek Productions** for generously giving their afternoon to take photos for vocation publications. With another of the photos taken that day we have printed a new vocation poster that you might see in a parish, school or Newman Center near you.



Our friend **Theresa** keeps coming back to visit the monastery... hmmm... I wonder when she will enter the monastery... Pray for her and all the women who can't shake the thought of being a Passionist!

May the Passion of Christ  
be ever in our Hearts  
[passionistnunsblog.com](http://passionistnunsblog.com)



Let's go for a hike! These words initiated a afternoon spent climbing around on Angel. Do you like our hiking apparel? A few of the including the photographer, got the worst b ever! Bug spray will be used next time.



Check out our website [passionistnuns.org](http://passionistnuns.org)



# Our Passionist Community



Does the nun above seem happy? It is right and just that she would be. She was just accepted by the Chapter Members to make her First Profession of Vows January 5. Blessed be God! Be on the watch for our first 2017 newsletter with a photo story from the glorious day.

Novitiate baking days...bringing in a little extra money to clothe and feed our growing membership!



a Sunday  
l's Peak.  
e sisters,  
ug bites



*H*oly Friendship is a blessed thing. Fr. Austin Litke and Mother Mary Clare and the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus blessed us with wonderful visits this Fall.



& while you are there click on the BLOG





## (Update on St. Joseph Guest House...

Since our last newsletter was published and thanks to our benefactors, we have some new additions in the Guest House.

- Beautiful religious art in chapel
- Outdoor tables for eating or a shady place for prayer and reading
- Bathroom shelves
- Comfy chairs
- A hammock

### Make a retreat!

For Further Information  
Contact Christie at  
(270) 302-8023

Email [retreats@passionistnuns.org](mailto:retreats@passionistnuns.org)  
Website [www.passionistnuns.org](http://www.passionistnuns.org)

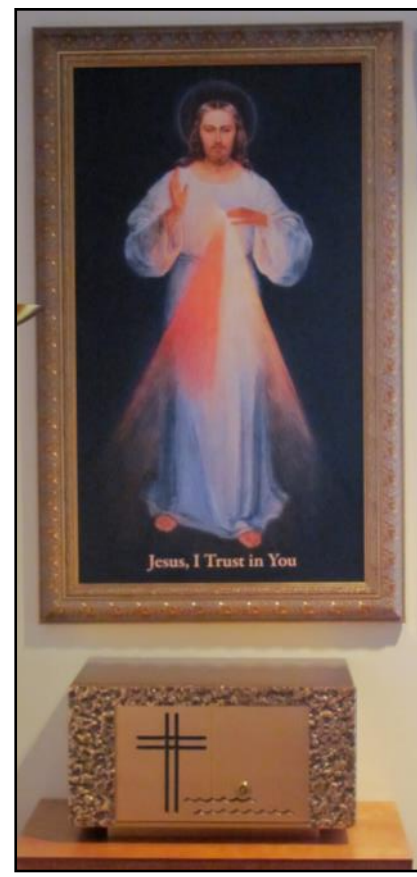


#### FROM A RETREATANT:

*I want to say again what a continued blessing it is to have such a beautiful peace-filled place for our retreats. And how wonderful to have the additions that we so enjoyed this time! It was such a delight to have our meals outside in the garden area...the tables give it that extra special touch.*

*The bathroom shelves provide storage for our toiletries, etc. We really appreciate that convenience! The wing back chair is a nice addition as well.*

*We really enjoyed the food...it was so good. Healthy too, which I so appreciate. Thank you again for everything!*





# **Welcome** **Monastery Visitors**

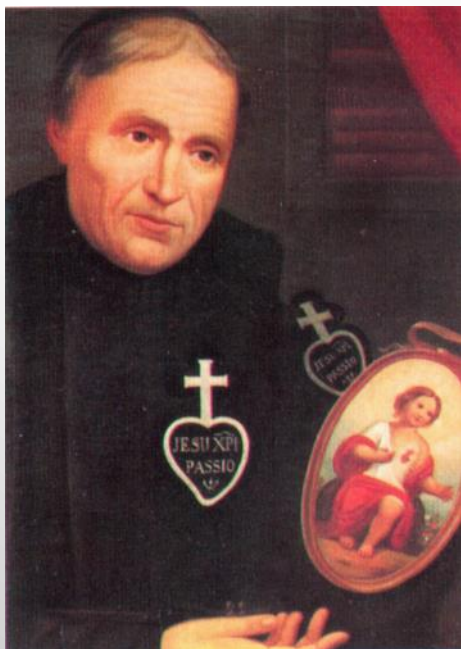
We are long-time members of the Institute on Religious Life (IRL) which promotes and supports the growth, development, and renewal of the consecrated life—particularly vowed religious life—as a gift to the Church and an evangelical witness to the world.

This summer we had the joy of meeting **Anne Tschanz**, staff member for IRL, and her husband **Tom** and we were reminded of the many times we were visited in the past by Fr. John Hardon, S.J. and Mr. William Fairman. The IRL is seeking to be of greater service to assist their cloistered affiliate member communities.



*Visit them at [religiouslife.com](http://religiouslife.com) to find out how you can be a part of their mission*

## **A SAINT OF THE PASSIONIST COMMUNITY**



**B**lessed Lorenzo Maria of Saint Francis Xavier, (also known as Lorenzo Salvi), was born October 30, 1782 in Rome, Italy. He studied for the priesthood at the Jesuit-run Collegio Romano in Rome; his classmates included the future Pope Gregory XVI.

Lorenzo was greatly impressed by the preaching and zeal of Saint Vincent Strambi and soon followed him into the Passionist Congregation. He became a novice at Monte Argentario in 1801, the first monastery of the Passionists. He received the religious name Lorenzo Maria of Saint Francis Xavier and professed his vows on November 20, 1802, and was ordained a priest on December 29, 1805. He followed closely in the footsteps of the founder of the Passionists, St. Paul of the Cross.

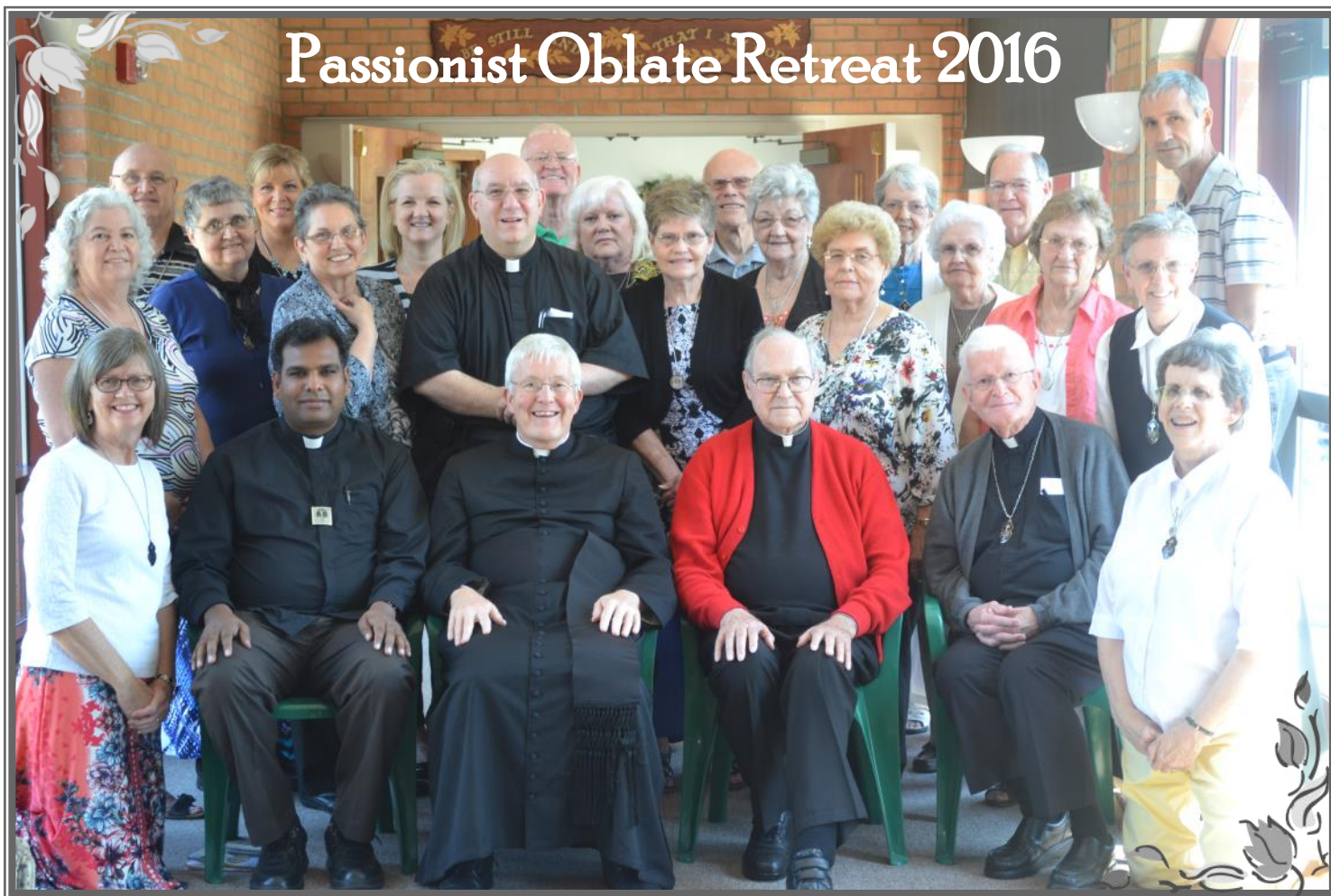
The anti-clerical laws of Napoleon saw the Passionist house suppressed and its members dispersed. When at last Lorenzo was able to return to Passionist life he preached missions and encouraged devotion to the Passion of Christ, these two things are the hallmarks of the Passionist life. But he also gained the reputation of a most wise and admired superior for his ability to ably lead communities.

He had great devotion to the Infant Jesus and was steadfast in promoting, in every circumstance, prayerful devotion to the holy childhood of Jesus, not only through his untiring work, but also through his constant example and his proliferation of writings. He often wrote about and preached on the wonders of the Incarnation. Because of this great devotion he is usually depicted in religious art with a picture of the Child Jesus.

Lorenzo was made Rector of the Passionist generalate in Rome, SS John and Paul, but spent much of his time preaching missions. His Vice-Rector was Blessed Dominic Barberi, the great Passionist saint who labored in England.

Blessed Lorenzo died June 12, 1856 at Capranica, Viterbo, Italy of natural causes. He is buried in the Passionist church of St. Angelo, Vetralla (Viterbo). October 1, 1989 Lorenzo Maria of St. Francis Xavier was beatified by Pope Saint John Paul II. His Feastday is June 12. Blessed Lorenzo, ora pro nobis!

# Passionist Oblate Retreat 2016



**Oblates who attended the retreat:** Standing l-r: Nadine Trogden, Kerry Ledington, Dottie Edge, Janie Gayhart, Mary Lou Payne, Susan Stallings, Passionist Nuns chaplain Fr. Lou Caporiccio, Gary Trogden, June Hayden, Barbara Hodskins, Dcn. Bill Bach, Mildred Harrington, Martha Kauffeld, Joy Bach, Sue Howard, Dan Howard, Wilma Baird, Christie Swanson, Lou Mattingly. Front l-r: Veda Mattingly, Fr. Patras Samuel—a dear priest friend from Pakistan, Fr. Charles Connor, Msgr. Bernard Powers, Fr. Joe Mills, Sue O'Bryan.

Our community and our Passionist Oblates were so blessed in early August to welcome **Fr. Charles P. Connor, Ph.D.**, to our monastery. Many of you may recognize Father from his frequent appearances on the Eternal Word Television Network over many years. During his time with us, Father gave four private conferences to our community, and then preached the annual Oblate retreat, August 5-7. He powerfully opened up to us the depth of the spiritual legacy of Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, whose teachings are very prophetic in the light of current national and world events. The Oblates were so graced by their retreat that they invited Father back next year.

Fr. Connor's love for and association with the Passionists goes back many decades as he grew up in the Scranton PA diocese. His father's brother, Fr. Julian Connor, C.P., was a well-known preacher of missions and retreats, as well as a chaplain and confessor to the Passionist Nuns first in Scranton and then in Clarks Summit PA.

Currently, Fr. Connor teaches at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland. He is author of many books and DVD courses and has recently published **The Spiritual Legacy of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen**, available from St. Paul's Alba House Publishers. His many historical DVD's can be obtained from the EWTN Religious Catalog.

Special thanks to all who have fed hungry Nuns throughout this year...from fresh eggs and beef, fruits and veggies, to delicious and healthy Great Harvest Breads. Mother John Mary and all the Nuns say

**“ May  
God  
reward  
YOU! ”**







Due thanks to **Patrick Mills** (left), son of our maintenance man, **Steve Mills**. Patrick cleared our hiking trails in the cloistered part of the woods. Here he is seen with friend **Jason Ralph**, who helped him clear a couple trees that had fallen across a trail. The younger sisters are most grateful we can now hike back there again without being covered with itchy bug bites!



Some months back **Pat Burch** was asking the Lord where she could best serve him as a volunteer. Shortly after that she heard about our request for volunteers to work in the retreat house. She felt this was her calling and has volunteered many hours cleaning up after meals for our retreatants. We are most grateful for her assistance. God bless and reward you Pat!



We also thank the members of our Passionist Oblate family who are able to donate their time cooking and cleaning in the retreat house. We also are grateful for meals lovingly prepared for the nuns, taking guests to and from the airport and errands done in Louisville for us. These generous deeds make it easier for us to do what we do best - PRAY!

The **staff of Trinity High**, our local Catholic high school, generously gave of their time and talents to improve the looks of our monastery grounds and helped out with prepping our last newsletter for mailing. May the Lord reward you!



# FROM THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

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Dear Family and Friends,

*"Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His mercy endures forever!"*

So sang the psalmist and so we sing as we end the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. As Passionists we keep a GRATEFUL remembrance of His mercy which flows from the Paschal Mystery - the death and resurrection of Jesus. Let's make time daily to contemplate this Crucified One. Let us be immersed in the ocean of God's infinite love. How generous must be our return of love for Love. Let's love Him and let us thank Him by keeping a loving memory and a grateful heart.

The providence of God has brought us through 70 years of keeping a grateful remembrance of the Paschal Mystery here in the Owensboro diocese. We humbly thank you for your financial help and personal service that has brought us to this point. Without your help we would not exist! And we hope that you will walk with us for the next 70 years of our future in this diocese.

This is our last newsletter before Christmas. As we draw near to that Holy Season let's make this Advent the best yet with thoughts, words and deeds of gratitude, then when Christmas comes we will be ready to welcome the Incarnate God into our hearts and homes.

To all of you, our spiritual family, I and all the Nuns wish you a joyful Thanksgiving, a blessed Christmas and a holy 2017.

With grateful hearts,  
Mother John Mary and all the Nuns

