



News



Spring 2026

URSULINE SISTERS OF CLEVELAND



Transforming lives through contemplation, justice and compassion



URSULINE SISTERS OF CLEVELAND

SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

The *Ursuline Sisters News* is published three times a year for friends and supporters of the Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland.

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Ursuline *Birthday Extravaganza* 175th Celebration

A Benefit to Support the Ursuline Sisters



Thank You for Supporting the Birthday Extravaganza!

Message from Leadership

Dear Friends,

After the experience of another Cleveland winter, we are anxious and eager for Spring more than ever. Looking around, new life is emerging in the abundance of fresh green grass, flowers and blossoming trees outside our doors.

While we find ourselves nearing the end of our 175th Anniversary Year, we rejoice in continued new life!

This year we celebrate a Jubilee Liturgy with eighteen of our sisters marking anniversaries of 50, 60, 70 and 75 years of Ursuline life and commitment. These sisters will be featured in the next Newsletter.

In this issue, we share with you some signs of that abundant new life within and around us!

Read about

- Re-Member Day when former Ursulines joined us for an afternoon of prayer, storytelling, tours and celebrating the deep bonds we share, still carrying the echoes of the spirit of Ursuline and Angela.
- The evolution of the Ursuline Sisters 4th vow.
- And we are never too old to celebrate a birthday! The Birthday Extravaganza was a joyous and fun-filled event.

Look for a special feature "Ask A Sister!" in this issue.

It may be the wrap-up of our 175th celebrations, but we certainly are not slowing down!

All are invited to join us at 2:00pm on Sunday, June 28 at a special liturgy at Church of the Gesu in University Heights as we bring this anniversary year to a close.

Most importantly and more than ever, we maintain our commitment to one another by taking wise and prudent steps to care for our sisters now and in the years to come. We are renewing our commitment to justice and peace, and care for our common home. And we continue planning for what lies ahead. The future before us is uncertain, filled with opportunities and challenges to meet the needs of all of God's people.

We have been honored and humbled throughout this year as you recalled and shared how the Ursulines have touched and influenced your lives. We have been blessed by your faithful support and presence. Please know of our deep gratitude.

You are imprinted on our hearts.

Sister Kathleen Flannery



Sister Kathleen Flannery

PLEASE HELP US keep our records current with your new or changed email address.

Call Mary Moran at (440) 229-5607 or email her at mmoran@ursulinesisters.org.



Re-Member Day

By Sister Susan Mary Rathbun

On Saturday, April 18th, more than forty former Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland, some from as far away as Texas, Florida and Michigan joined with Sisters from Merici Crossings and Light of Hearts to share memories, pray and learn about each other.



The gathering began at 2:00 PM followed by a half hour prayer service during which a two minute presentation was given on some of our present ministries. Sister Laura Bregar, our President, welcomed everyone followed by a reflection on St. Angela's writings written by Sister Anna Margaret Gilbride (James Francis) read by Luci Pietrzyk. Then Sister Nancy Beckenhauer introduced intentions and sharing of memories of our Ursuline Sisters. Pope Leo's prayer from his installation was read for the closing by Sister Susan Mary Rathbun and then all joined in singing "Veni Angela" accompanied by Regina Shelly Waterhouse.

Sister Ritamary Welsh then introduced Sisters who spoke briefly about the present ministries in which they are involved. Sister Mary Kay Conkey told the history of House of Champions up to the present day. Joanne Buckman reviewed Mission and Heritage today, begun 25 years ago

by Sister Joan Petersen. A request for support of the repeal of the death penalty in Ohio was given by Sister Diane Pinchot. An overview of the Women Religious Archives Collaborative (WRAC) was presented by Sister Susan Durkin. Sister Susan Bremer spoke about our 91st Day efforts for the immigrants in the Cleveland area followed by Sister Noel Marra's explanation of the St. Philomena Project/Bishop Pilla Center for East Cleveland. Refreshments were provided after the prayer service.

Throughout the afternoon, pictures of Sisters past and present were shown on television screens throughout Merici Crossings. Sister Adelaide Landoll and Noreen Hastings used photos given by the Sisters and committee members to share with everyone. Tours of suites were given by the Sisters who live there. Valet parking was available for all who enjoyed sharing with each other until 5:30 PM.

Continued >

Ready,
Set,
Smile!

Ursuline Sister Re-Member Day Set Photos





A VOW TRANSFORMED:

How Ursuline Education Evolved Through Service and Spirit

By *Sister Elaine Berkopec*

When the Ursuline Sisters set foot on the shores of Lake Erie in 1850, they were already known as a teaching community who took a fourth vow for education along with the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Over the decades, as educational trends and needs changed, so did the Ursuline understanding of the meaning of that fourth vow, reflected in the changed wording of the vows themselves.

At first, the Ursulines were exclusively dedicated to teaching girls. Nearly 100 years later, in 1949, the mission of education expanded to coeducational classes, and the vow also was adapted to reflect that mission “to instruct youth.” Again, in the 1960s, as the need became broader, so did the wording, and this broadened ministry is reflected in the current vow “to serve the Church through Christian education.”

Just as the Ursuline community, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, over the decades has read the signs of the times and the call to address the changing needs and expanded understanding of education, so have individual sisters experienced this growth in their personal understanding and living out of this fourth vow. A good example of this experience can be found in Sister Lisa Marie Belz, who moved from high school Spanish teacher to missionary to Scripture scholar and retreat leader.

Sister Lisa Marie first met Ursuline Sisters Eileen Mary Collins and Ellen Themes when she studied at Kent State University in 1979 and 1980. Sister Ellen invited her to attend Sister Dorothy Kazel’s funeral, an experience that had a serious impact on Lisa Marie and inspired her to seek a career



Sister Lisa Marie on a pastoral visit with a dear parishioner, María Tránsito, Chirilagua, El Salvador

as a pastoral minister to the Cleveland Latino community as an Ursuline Sister. A few years after becoming an Ursuline, she was assigned to teach Spanish first at Beaumont School and then Villa Angela Academy. There she came into her own, loving her students, teaching them a “love for this language and a love for the people who speak it.”

By the time she went on to further her education, the concept of the Ursuline fourth vow of education had broadened to include pastoral ministry. Sister prepared for serving Latinos by studying at Boston College and at the

Mexican American Cultural Center in San Antonio Texas. When she was asked by Ursuline leadership to serve as a missionary in El Salvador in 1995, her desire to minister to Latinos and be a missionary was realized. Her work in El Salvador included instructing catechists and creating a seriously needed catechetical manual for those who worked in the countryside.

For Sister Lisa Marie, living her fourth vow of education became more than just imparting knowledge. A good example of that is her encounter with a man in El Salvador who had just been told by the doctor that his blindness could not be cured. Sister relates the story in these words:



Sister Lisa Marie with Teresian Sisters in Bogotá, Colombia, after giving them a retreat

The ophthalmologist said to me, "I can't bear to tell him that I can't do anything for him. You have to tell him."

I had no idea what to say to him. But what I did know was Salvadorans would interpret anything like that as a punishment from God, and because of my very good Boston College education and theological and pastoral formation, I knew that I had to help them understand that this wasn't a punishment from God. I prayed that the Holy Spirit would just help me figure out what to say to him, and what came out of my mouth surprised me. I heard myself say to him, "Now this isn't a punishment from God that the doctors can't do anything for you, but instead it's God's inviting you to be like the beloved disciple who stood at the foot of the cross, and God inviting you to turn your blindness into a prayer for those who are spiritually blind, and in God's love that will make your blindness the most powerful prayer and most effective prayer of your life, that God will use that blindness in a way to transform the lives of those who are spiritually blind."

The grace given to that man was beautiful. His response in Spanish words still ring in my ears. "Benito, si, Dios mi padre, Blessed be God my Father. If this is what God my Father calls of me at this time in my life, then with all my love, I offer to him my blindness, for those who are spiritually blind, that they might come to see Christ." I thought, so this is a way we're serving Christian education for the church. You could see how practical it is in helping people accept what they can't change, and to see it and to receive it in a way that can be used as a grace for them; you come to see yourself as being used by God in ways that you never anticipated, in ways that are complete surprise to you.

For the Ursuline Sisters, the vow of Service in Christian Education for the Church has been reshaped by the Spirit over the years and envelops all the ways they can teach: by word, by writing, by example, by leadership.



Sister Lisa Marie with members of the youth group from the town of San Pedro in Chirilagua parish

When Sister Lisa Marie returned to Cleveland in 2001, her ministry expanded into a PhD in Scripture Studies, which has led to published scholarly texts, professorships at Ursuline College, St. Mary Seminary, and John Carroll University. But her work is not limited to the classroom. Sister conducts retreats using her learning and experiences to enrich the spiritual lives of others, from Ohio to Latin America. The Spanish she studied enabled her to teach high school, serve in El Salvador, work in ministry to Latinos, and conduct retreats in Spanish as well as English.

For the Ursuline Sisters, the vow of Service in Christian Education for the Church has been reshaped by the Spirit over the years and envelops all the ways they can teach: by word, by writing, by example, by leadership. What Sister Lisa Marie said about her experience is true for each Ursuline: "You come to see yourself as being used by God in ways that you never anticipated, in ways that are complete surprise to you."

Welcome to Our New Feature – **Ask a Sister**

Question:
What led you to make the decision to enter the convent?



I was one of those who had planned since the sixth grade to become a nun. I helped out in school, in the sacristy and in the convent when I was asked to. My grade school Ursuline teachers and certainly several in high school encouraged this desire. And here I am, sixty years later!

– **Sr. Donna Mikula**

I admired my Ursuline Sister teachers. They were good teachers, but they were also kind and took a personal interest in their students. Also, most of them seemed to live happy, fulfilling lives. The sisters modeled for me what I believe St. Angela was striving for: faith-filled women who are keenly aware of how to live the Gospel in an imperfect world.

– **Sr. Beverly Anne LoGrasso**



A vocation to religious life, for me, is a personal call from God – one that gently stirs my heart and invites me to serve both God and God’s people with love and purpose. This call did not come all at once, but grew steadily within me, beginning in my family where faith was a central and guiding part of everyday life. I was drawn not only to what they (Ursuline Sisters) did, but to who they were – their joy, their deep sense of community, and the way they lived their faith so authentically.

– **Sr. Diana Stano**



By the time I actually considered entering religious life I was 34 years old. I had graduated from college, served in the Peace Corps in Brazil and worked for the federal government. I had an idea about what I wanted my ideal life to be. But as I achieved my goals, I discovered that they were not what I really wanted or what God wanted for me. Religious life made me feel at home, in the right place, challenged and fulfilled.

– **Sr. Cheryl Mentkowski**

Is there a question you have always wanted to ask a Sister?

About her life? About her commitment? About how religious life has changed since Vatican II? About . . . ?

If so, please send your question to Mary Moran at mmoran@ursulinesisters.org and we will do our best to answer it in an upcoming issue. **We welcome your participation!**

Ursuline Sisters Celebrate 175 Years of Joyful Service with **Record-Breaking Birthday Extravaganza**

By Mary Moran

The Ursuline Sisters' 175th Anniversary Birthday Extravaganza, held on Friday, May 8, was a joyful evening celebrating 175 years of faithful service to the Cleveland community. The Banquet Center at St. Noel was filled with family, friends, supporters, and benefactors who gathered to honor the Sisters and their lasting impact through education, ministry, outreach, and compassionate care.



Guests enjoyed an exciting evening featuring a large basket raffle, 50/50 raffle, Costa Rica vacation raffle, wine pull, and live auction. The enthusiasm and generosity of attendees created an unforgettable atmosphere of celebration and community spirit.

This year marked the first Ursuline Sisters Benefit held at the Banquet Center at St. Noel, whose welcoming atmosphere and outstanding staff helped make the event a tremendous success.



Thanks to the incredible generosity of sponsors, volunteers, donors, attendees, and supporters, the Extravaganza raised nearly \$200,000 — making it the most successful fundraiser in the event's history. Funds raised will directly support the care of the Ursuline Sisters and sustain their ministries for years to come.

Continued >



We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who helped make this milestone celebration so meaningful. Your support ensures the Ursuline Sisters can continue their mission of joyful service for future generations.





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to our sponsors!

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Extravaganza

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We Remember with Prayers and Love

Remembering
Sister Kathleen Ogrin



The life of Sister Kathleen Ogrin included service to countless individuals as she served as a teacher, principal, and childcare specialist.

Kathleen was born to Rudolph and Mary Ogrin on September 30, 1943. Her older brothers were James and Kenneth. She attended St. Paul's School in Euclid and Villa Angela Academy in Cleveland.

After entering the Ursuline Congregation in 1961, Kathleen studied at St. John College and Kent State University, earning Bachelor's and Master's degrees in education. She then began a long teaching career at St. Francis de Sales, St. William, St. Mary (Mentor), and Urban Community Schools. Kathleen proceeded to serve as principal of St. Mary Magdalene and St. Mary (Mentor) Schools.

In 1990 Kathleen assumed directorship of Holy Family Learning Center in Lakewood, now known as Lakewood Catholic Academy. For 27 years she led teachers in serving childcare needs of hundreds of children aged six weeks to five years of age. Kathleen assisted Holy Family in creating a homelike atmosphere for the children in its care.

Kathleen retired to the Ursuline Motherhouse in Pepper Pike in 2019 and then in 2024 to Light of Hearts Villa in Bedford. Within both communities she was known for her deep spirituality, love of her sisters, and her sense of humor.

Kathleen died April 19, 2026. She is survived by her Ursuline Sisters; sisters-in-law, Kathy and Marlena; and nieces and nephews.

Memorial donations may be made to the
Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland at
www.ursulinesisters.org.



DEVELOPMENT OFFICE
URSULINE ACADEMY OF CLEVELAND
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URSULINE SISTERS 175th ANNIVERSARY

Closing Liturgy

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Please join us!
Sunday June 28, 2026 at 2:00pm

CHURCH OF THE GESU
2470 Miramar Blvd
University Heights, OH 44118

Bishop Michael Woost Presiding

Light refreshments following the Liturgy

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Please RSVP
Phone: (440) 229-5635
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