



# Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, USA Province

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A PUBLICATION OF THE USA HANDMAID PROVINCE DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

## LETTER FROM THE PROVINCIAL

Dear Friends,

On behalf of all the Handmaids in the US Province, I would like to extend our wishes for a **Blessed and Happy New Year!**

As we open our arms to 2021, I invite each of you to do so with faith and hope, knowing that with God, all things are possible.

The following prayer was recently shared during a daily Adoration in Haverford.

When warfare and violence threaten, may your peace shine among us and your love set us free.

For deliverance from the pandemic – for civic solidarity and an equitable sharing of the vaccines.

That this year may see victories for justice -- may there be new songs in the mouths of the oppressed.

For the innocence of our hearts -- that we may be preserved from cynicism, corruption, and despair.

For those beginning new relationships -- that they may rejoice in the tenderness of their hopes.

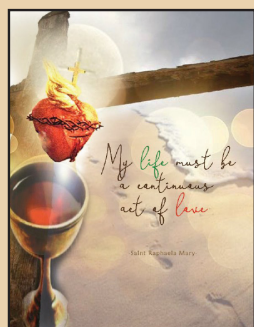
For those who are yearning to heal, may they find in you the balm of compassion.

I ask that you place your trust in God and ask for his mercy and kindness in praying with us.

With hope and gratitude,

*Belén Escauriaza*

Belén Escauriaza, acj



## Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus US Province Engage in the Public Square

by Sr. Sagrario Nunez

Some 10 years ago the sisters of the US province became aware of UNANIMA International a non-governmental organization, (NGO) advocating for those on the fringes of society. UNANIMA's work takes place primarily at the United Nations headquarters in New York. There, many religious communities and other members of civil society aim to educate and influence policy makers at the global level.

It was mainly through the work of UNANIMA that many of us Handmaids grasped in a new way the urgency of engaging in Advocacy. We saw Advocacy as an active and effective tool to be used for reparation - registering our public support for policies that work for systemic change for shaping a more just and equitable world.



Photo courtesy of UNANIMA

In 2012, the General Congregation, an assembly of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus from across the globe gathered in Rome. The goal of that meeting, as of all such meetings, is always to wrestle with a couple of relentless and interconnected questions:

**AS A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY HOW CAN WE CONTINUE TO  
DEEPEN INWARD AND EXPAND OUTWARD?**

**And**

**HOW CAN WE BEST ENGAGE WHAT LIFE IS ASKING OF US  
NOW?**

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Six weeks later the outcome of our deliberations was an overwhelming gratitude. Gratitude for the desire to serve and give back, especially to those in greatest need. GC XIX, as we call those periodic assemblies every five years, made the following recommendation to our Superior General.

That she initiate the process of incorporation of the Institute into the inter-congregational NGO UNANIMA International, which works in the United Nations “in support of women and children, (particularly those who live in poverty), migrants and refugees, the homeless, the displaced, and the environment.”

And so for the last eight years we have redoubled our efforts to make our voices heard in the public square. A sample of what has occupied us lately:

#### June 20, 2020 World Refugees Day

We celebrated Every Action Counts in the effort to create a more just, inclusive, and equal world.

#### August 18, 2020

We informed ourselves of some of the latest measures taken by President Trump regarding immigration. All countries have imposed travel restrictions in response to the pandemic. At the end of April, 2020, the US became the first, and so far, the only country to explicitly justify mobility limitations, not on grounds of health risk, but to protect the jobs and the economic well-being of US workers.

#### August 21, 2020

We joined more than 170 of the nation’s leading organizations, among them LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious), in releasing the 2021 Immigration Action Plan, a broad-based advocacy effort to treat migrants and refugees with justice and humanity. Trump’s divisive anti-black and racist rhetoric against immigrants has resulted in greater xenophobia, further corroding a system that has been broken for decades.

The 2021 Immigration Action Plan proposes ten actions which will both reverse the racism and damage of the Trump years and reshape long-standing deportation policies that have defined many past administrations:

1. *Prioritize equity and harm reduction in the immigration system*
2. *End the anti-black and discriminatory targeting of certain US citizens and immigrants*
3. *Rebuild the US economy*
4. *Reenvision leadership in the next administration*
5. *Decriminalize immigration*
6. *Protect immigrant children, families and their communities*
7. *Phase out immigration jails and find community-based case management programs*
8. *Establish thriving, right respecting borders*
9. *Reimagine the role of the immigrant courts*
10. *Restore the right to seek and receive protection from persecution, torture, and other serious human rights violations*

#### September 8, 2020

We contacted the members of Congress to restore The Refugee Program, which under the present administration has been reduced to a minimum.

Since 1980 the US has aimed to resettle an average of 95,000 refugees per year – the most of any country in the world. However, the Trump administration’s goal for fiscal 2020 was to admit a maximum of just 18,000 refugees.

#### September 27, 2020

Celebration of the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees

We read the message of Pope Francis for this day and we informed our representatives of our position regarding two important pieces of legislation:

- Welcoming refugees in US policy
- Justice for immigrants in US policy

As we continue to have our voices heard in the public square, we are strengthened in the conviction that the struggle is our humble but most important contribution to shape our world as God desires it.

## HANDMAID NEWS

**Sister Carmen Cabrejos** has joined the Handmaid community in Athens, GA.

**Sister Betty Ann McDonald** has joined the Handmaid community in Wyncote, PA.

**Sister Oanh Vo** is living with the Handmaid community in Cadiz, Spain.

### Please help us to update our records

In an effort to communicate more effectively with our friends, we are asking that you help us by sending your email address and cell phone number to the Handmaid Development Office.

Please email: [handmaidsoftheusa@gmail.com](mailto:handmaidsoftheusa@gmail.com)

OR

send your information to:

Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

c/o Maureen Howe

616 Coopertown Rd. Haverford, PA 19041

OR

phone: 610-642-5715 ext.15

Several commemoratives remain available for the **Last Supper Sculpture Garden and Walking Path**. If you are interested in securing a commemorative honoring or memorializing a loved one, please contact the Province Development Office at 610-642-5715 ext. 15.



Walking Path (4 remain)

@\$15,000

Apostles’ Stools (6 remain)

@\$3,000

Garden Benches (2 remain)

@\$1,000



## Handmaids Welcome New Postulant



The Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus recently welcomed 22-year-old Lauren Serfas into the community at Haverford. The newest postulant, Lauren is a midwesterner, who was raised by her parents along with two older brothers in Edwardsville, Illinois. Heavily influenced and inspired by Jesuit teaching (her brothers attended the Jesuit-run Marquette University), Lauren headed west to California, where she received an undergraduate degree in bioengineering from Santa Clara University, (another Jesuit-sponsored school), with an emphasis in social entrepreneurship.

During college, Lauren was selected as a Global Social Benefit Fellow, and was sent by Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship to spend eight weeks in Kenya, living with the congregation, Assumption Sisters of Eldoret. During her time there, she conducted action research with Eggpreneur, a social enterprise that seeks to increase household income, economically empower women, and decrease childhood malnutrition by teaching women to be poultry farmers.

In Africa, she found herself spending more time praying in the Sisters' chapel, gazing upon the face of Jesus that was conveniently placed over the tabernacle. It was there that Lauren felt that *"God was desiring for me to enter into religious life, and it wasn't only my desire."*

Ever since high school, Lauren reports that she had secretly been imagining her life as a Catholic Sister, constantly researching religious congregations behind the closed doors of her room. When she was introduced to social entrepreneurship, however, she fell in love with the incredible impact this alternative charity model had on communities. Therefore, she felt she had to say "no" to her own desire to enter into religious life so she could say "yes" to the opportunity to embrace what was offered through the fellowship. It was only through conversation with the director, a Franciscan brother, that Lauren realized that there was a possibility to engage both of these passions.

A bright, energetic, warm, and introspective young woman, Lauren describes her "way" to the Handmaids was encouraged by a friend who knows the sisters, and suggested she visit them while discerning her future. In the days she spent with the Handmaids, she found them to be joyful and authentic, the type of people who shared her passion for prayer, and far from the stereotypical image of nuns that has been perceived in the media.



Lauren (standing, top left) is pictured with the sisters in the Haverford community.

According to Lauren, *"Nearly every thought, decision, and action I take is rooted in my desire to grow in relationship with God and live into the life He is inviting me to participate in. Time in daily prayer, reflection, and silence is critical in helping me determine my purpose in life and where God is continuing to call me each and every day."*



## Remembering Sister Cecilia Tong

Sister Cecilia Tong, a member of the Handmaid community for more than fifty years, passed away on January 21, 2021 at Saint Joseph's Manor in Huntingdon Valley, PA. Born in Vietnam, Sister Cecilia's journey to becoming a Handmaid was based on great faith, and as she once described, "miraculous".

That miracle came in 1954, at a time when there were many bombings from the far north of Vietnam to her family's village. Almost every night, carrying mats, blankets, and food, Sr. Cecilia's family sought to escape the terror of the bombings and traveled through the dark to stay at the home of a friend who lived two hours away. A safer place, they took shelter there for many months. One evening, Sr. Cecilia and her family remained at home, intending to attend Mass and make Adoration and Reparation to the Blessed Sacrament the next day. Soon after, they learned that the friend's house had been bombed the night before, and that there were no survivors. Her father described their protection as a miracle. As she recalled the experience she revealed, *"I am certain today that my love for the Reparation and Adoration of Jesus began at that time."*

Years later, on her first trip sailing to the US, Sr. Cecilia met a group of young women dressed in black habits, each with a golden heart hanging from her neck. Curiosity forced her to ask them about their Congregation, their spirituality, their apostolate - anything she could think of. They informed her that they were members of the community of Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that their charism was reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and that they were dedicated to daily Adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist and education at all levels. Instantly, though unable to explain it, she felt a connection.

At the height of the Vietnamese influx to the US, Sr. Cecilia was the only Vietnamese religious in the Philadelphia archdiocese, and worked almost 24/7 with the refugees from her country. Described as a "dynamo" and multi-lingual (she spoke seven languages) she later taught in the East Asia Pastoral Institute, worked in formation training with Handmaid postulants, and was a contributor to Radio Veritas in the Philippines. In recent years, she returned to the US and lived and worked at Saint Raphaela Center with the Haverford community before moving to the Wyncote community, and finally, the Manor. Following her funeral mass, Sr. Cecilia was laid to rest at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Cheltenham.



# Journey of Hope Stories that Inspire

Wednesday, April 28 at 7:00 pm

You are invited to join us as we host our first ever **virtual** Journey of Hope. All are welcome to attend this **free** event.

If you are someone who supports:

- Experiences that bring you closer to God
- Assisting those who face economic and social injustice
- Education in service of the Gospel     This event is for **you!**

During this pandemic, when so many are struggling physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, take time to be **inspired** to hope.

Email us at [handmaidsoftheusa@gmail.com](mailto:handmaidsoftheusa@gmail.com) or visit our website for more information at <https://www.acjusa.org/journey-of-hope/>

Follow us on:



Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus



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## IN THE HANDMAIDS' PRAYERS

*Please pray for the souls of our dearly departed:*

Anne Barilotti, Millie Berry, H. Brien Boston, Jane Bozzi, Emily Bradigan, Ruth Brown, Richard Byrne, Ellen Byrnes, Dottie Cassidy, Hermenegilio Castro, Leonard and Vera Colangelo, Jean Cook, Jim Coyle, Eileen Crafts, Angel Dalmau, Emidio DeCesare, Alice Demko, Thomas Dennis, Pat Devine, Huynh Ngoc Diep, Steve Dietrich, Robert Doerr, Michael Driscoll, Chuck Dunn, Helene Fetridge, Anita Fitzgerald, Brendan Fitzpatrick, Joseph Flood, Eugene Fontana, Jean Foster, William Gallagher, Bert Garbut, Anita Gianvittorio, Carol Heininger, Martha Bich Ha Tran Hoang, Logan and Austin Jackson, Edna Keough, Margaret Killiam, Peggie Killian, Betty Kincade, John Koerwer, Dolores Krol, Robert Lechner, Peter Lentini, Janice Linfoot, Jean Lombardi, Robert Lonegran, Ken Losch, Patricia Lynch, Tom Lynch, Donald Mahan, Michael Martinelli, Carol Matula, Robert McCullough, Jeane McGinn, Molly McIntosh, Mary Jo McNamara, Louise Melanoski, William Mesmer, Colleen Moon, Suzanne Nagel, Bredgel Nassib, George O'Brien, Ann Marie O'Donnell, Mary Orlando, Rev. Anthony Orth, Sr., Nancy Osborne, Susan Peracchia, Angelica Perez, Al Phelan, Dave Phillips, Jack Poole, Rosemary Riemer, Sally Rittenhouse, Robert Ritterbeck, Loretta Robertoy, John Robinson, Agnes Romano, Miguel Rosado, Alan Roslen, Gus Saccomanno, Charles Samtmann, Paul Scanlan, Dr. Richard Simmers, Marie Salvucci-Smith, Dr. Martin St. John Sutton, Helen Tobin, Sister Cecilia Tong, acj, Louis Troilo, Robert Trout, Isaiah Turner, Walter Waeltz, Vanessa Walsh, Mark Waltz, Susan Westerman, James Whitt, and for all the Handmaids who have gone before us.

*Please pray for the requests offered on behalf of:*

David Anderson, MD, David Barrett, Bishop Herbert Bevard, Christopher Bottone, Pat Byrne, Megan Connolly, Michael Cortale, Nora Dougherty, Isabelle Duca, Becky Duffy, Joan Ealey, Betty Flynn, Charlotte Gannon, Martie Gillin, Jeanne Goodwin, Mary Kate Harkins, Edward Hoban, Edward Klings, The Kusek Family, Joe Liborati, Arlene Lyons, Judith McGrane, Michael Murnane, Rosemary Patrick, Andrea Remolde, Palma Ricci, Rose Ann Scanlon, Lorraine Schlett, Grayson Voytek, John Ward, for people who have no one to pray for them, for peace in the world, and for an end to violence.