



# 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,

Happy Spring - a time of newness and rebirth; a time when longer days give way to an awakening of all that grows and blooms and is alive; a time to welcome changes and embrace imagined and unimaginable possibilities.

It is with this sentiment that I am excited to share some exciting news with you, our loyal friends and supporters. As you will see in this newsletter, our recently held *Journey of Hope* was by all standards a wonderful success! I am deeply grateful to those whose efforts were so very well intentioned and productive. A special and well deserved thanks is due to our Advisory Board and committee members whose planning and organizing created a memorable evening for all!

Another very exciting piece of news is that the Handmaids are expanding westward and are establishing a new community in St. Louis, Missouri. We are still in the process of making final arrangements, but beginning in the fall, we will be opening a juniorate house of studies for young women. One of the first there will be Sr. Nhàn Nguyen, who recently returned from Cochabamba, Bolivia. We anticipate that Sr. Nhan will be joined by several other juniors in the near future.

A final piece of news is accompanied with a bit of sadness as we are closing the doors on our community in Philadelphia. It was not an easy decision to make, but with trust in God, we will move forward.

I ask that you please keep the Handmaids in your prayers as we respond to the new directions that have been set before us. And please know that we will keep you and those you love in our most heartfelt prayers.

With gratitude and love,

Belén Escauriaza, acj  
Provincial Superior



### Handmaids to Leave Philadelphia

After a ninety-five year presence in the city of brotherly love, the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus will be closing the community that has spanned from West Philadelphia to Germantown to Kensington and finally to South Broad Street in South Philadelphia. The announcement was made by Sister Belén Escauriaza, and as might be expected, was greeted with a degree of sadness and disappointment. For many in the Handmaid community today, as well as many deceased sisters, Philadelphia represents the place they became aware of the Handmaid congregation which ultimately led to their call to religious life.

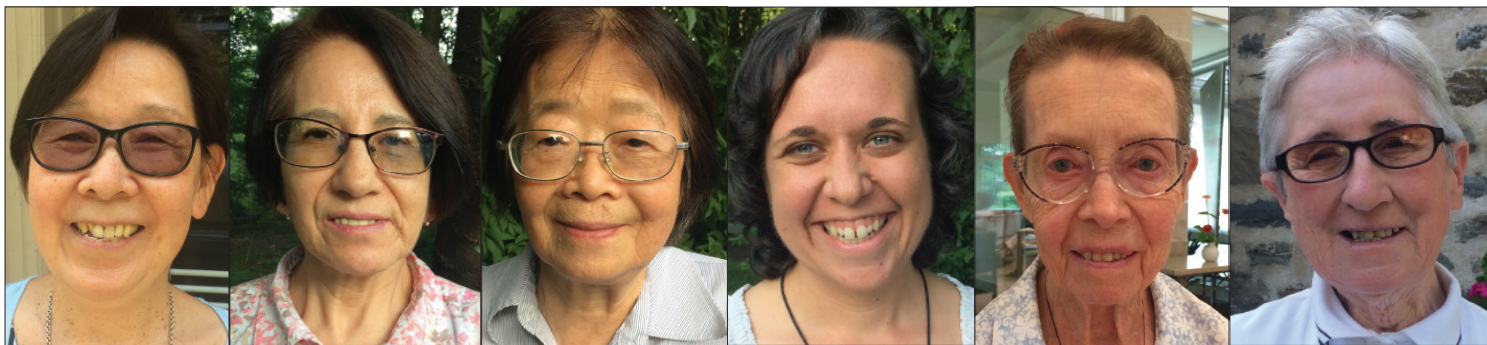
Arriving from Spain in April, 1926, the first Handmaids established a small chapel and began teaching classes in fine arts, sewing, and languages to young women and children on 34th Street. Their commitment to education prompted the beginning of Ancilla Domini Academy (ADA), an elementary school in Germantown. The school expanded to offer classes for girls in grades 9 through 12, and remained operational until its closing in 1976. Several of the present-day sisters including Kayjoy Cooper, Kathleen Helbig, Gloria Petrone, and Julia Walsh became acquainted with the Handmaids during their high school years at ADA, as did the late Sr. Elizabeth McCoy.

After the close of ADA, and always seeking ways to service the ever growing influx of immigrants, the sisters began outreaching and evangelizing to those in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. They moved to a location on 2nd Street and in cooperation with several of the local parishes including St. Michael's, St. Peter the Apostle, and St. Veronica's, offered assistance to the poor and disenfranchised. Two new locations followed; the first on North 17th Street and finally the location on South Broad Street in South Philadelphia, where they ministered to the parishioners at St. Thomas Aquinas, Annunciation, Our Lady of Hope, Visitation, Holy Redeemer, and Old St. Joseph Church.

The diversity of the sisters in nationality and experiences provided a unique opportunity for them to serve the English, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Spanish populations of inner-city Philadelphia. Additionally, throughout the years several of the sisters worked for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's Catholic Social Services in a number of capacities that directly assisted the immigrant population.

While in Philadelphia, the sisters also established a Mission Center, which eventually saw to the creation of Project Fiat in El Salvador, a project that remains active today.

Although the physical presence of the Handmaids will no longer be a part of Philadelphia, their impact will long be felt by those whose lives they touched and those on whose journey they were a companion, mentor, and friend.



Sr. Cam Banh

Sr. Carmen Cabrejos

Sr. Cecilia Chen

Sr. Michelle Cimaroli

Sr. Kayjoy Cooper

Sr. Angela Cordero



Sr. Kathleen Helbig



Sr. Marietta Jansen



Sr. Catherine Kirwan-Avila

# *The Journey of Hope*

These are the faces of the thirty Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who make up the USA Province today. Their smiles radiate with joy, hospitality, compassion, humility, and simplicity - reflections of the core values that represent their congregation. The sisters' ages span seven decades - from twenty-three to ninety-three and hail from countries across the globe, including Spain, Vietnam, Perú, Cuba, Columbia, Taiwan, and the United States. Half of them have been fully professed women religious for at least fifty years and when asked will tell you that they never looked back. Their dedication and commitment underscore the ways in which they serve, and remain open to the challenges of today's world. While their US Province is relatively small in size by most standards, the Handmaids maintain a presence in twenty-four countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

A multi-cultural representation of their commitment to the mission and ministry of their foundress, the sisters celebrated the 2021 *Journey of Hope*, a virtual event, held on April 28th. The theme of this year's program focused on *Stories that Inspire* and featured personal reflections from the sisters, volunteers, friends, and those served by the Handmaids through several of their ministries including Oasis Catolico, the Saint Raphaela Center, and Project Fiat in El Salvador. The event also offered a segment highlighting one of the two nonagenarians, Sr. María Jesús Sagasetta, and the newest postulant, Lauren Serfas, as they provided a glimpse of some of the contrasts and similarities of religious life through the years. The evening's special guests included Philadelphia's Archbishop Nelson Perez, who offered a greeting and Reverend James Martin, SJ, whose description and discussion about prayer was insightful and inspiring, with many revelations and practical advice from his newest publication, *Learning to Pray: A Guide for Everyone*.



Sr. Betty McDonald

Sr. Nhàn Nguyen

Sr. Mary Theresa Nguyen

Sr. Sagrario Núñez

Sr. Gloria Petrone

Sr. Alice Rodriguez





Sr. Pilar Dalmeau

Sr. Uyen-Cji Dang

Sr. Dona DeMarco

Sr. Belen Escauruaza

Sr. Kathy Gazie

Sr. Maureen Gillespie

# *Takes Another Step*

Attendees to this first-time virtual event hailed from across the United States, as well as Europe and Canada. The *Journey of Hope*, which is promoted as an annual Handmaid friend raiser and fund raiser, had over two thousand (2,081) visitors to its event page and five hundred and forty who could be counted among those who viewed the event. The number is most likely higher as many of the viewers were part of a “watch party” or gathered with family members to take part. The data also shows that the Advertisement and Program book, featured at the end of the event and also with a separate link, resulted in 1,200 views. A video of the event will remain available following the April 28th presentation.

As a primary fund raiser of the Handmaid Province, the *Journey of Hope* nearly reached its \$100,000 goal, with 185 contributors donating a total of \$97,250.00.

While the statistics and numbers are important, more compelling are the comments of those who are usually unable to attend the in-person gatherings held since 2010. One viewer commented, “I was overjoyed to be able to see the sisters and learn how they are still impacting the lives of so many.” Another remarked, “Last night was wonderful from beginning to end. Congratulations.” And yet another simply stated, “God bless the sisters and all their works!”

It is the last comment that sums up the ever-present belief and hope that keeps the sisters driven to fulfill their mission. Indeed God has blessed them with a determination that keeps them going tirelessly, despite any obstacle or impediment. Their work today reflects the ability to embrace the changes and directions in which they are being led, as they continue to be the beacons of hope in an evolving world.

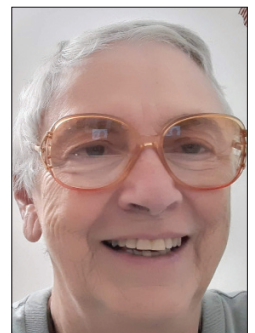
(To view the *Journey of Hope* video, please go to <https://app.mobilecause.com/e/zQxaow?vid=gyvh6>; to contribute to the Handmaid event, please visit <https://app.mobilecause.com/form/hhaASw?vid=gyvvc> or the Handmaid website @ [www.acjusa.org](http://www.acjusa.org)).



Sr. Florentina Iruretagoyena



Sr. Jessica Kerber



Sr. Margarita Martin



Sr. María Jesús Sagaseta

Postulant Lauren Serfas

Sr. Asunta Than

Sr. Lyan Tri

Sr. Oamh Vo

Sr. Julia Walsh

## Handmaid News

Sisters Oanh Vo and Michelle Cimaroli (pictured at right with the incorrupt body of St. Raphaela Mary) are in Rome where they are taking part in the third probation. This is a period of time when sisters from around the world who are preparing for final vows come together for a time of spiritual reflection, education, and cultural orientation. Final profession for the sisters will take place when they return to the US.



Three Handmaid communities have seen changes in their leadership structure beginning in August with newly appointed community superiors. In Miami, Sr. Margarita Martin will assume the new position, with Sr. Sagrario Núñez in Wyncote, and Sr. Lyan Tri in Haverford taking on the new role.

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.

The Handmaids USA province will convene in July and August for their Provincial Congregation. This meeting is comprised of the provincial superior, consultants, community superiors and additional sisters elected by the province. They will be reflecting on the topic sent by the General leadership: *"Contemplating His heart leads us to look upon the world with active hope."*

This meeting will be held in preparation for the General Congregation which will be held in February, 2022, when leaders from each province will collectively gather to review the ideas and suggestions for moving forward.

## IN THE HANDMAIDS' PRAYERS

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

Dorothea Aci, Dorothy "Jean" Adams, Phyllis Ameliu, Fran Auch, Jay Barone, Jane T. Bozzi, Peter Bryan, Ellen M. Byrnes, Ronald Calvy, Jr., Richard Carns, Regina Carroll, Edward Casey, John D. Cipollone, Sr., Gloria Collins, Frank Collucci, Jr., John E. Connelly, Shane Connolly, Ann Corbett, Mary Corbett, David Cullen, Susan Pasker Davies, Lucia DeMarco, Pat Devine, Anne Dougherty Devlin, Charles Donahue, George J. Downs, Joseph Dunlop, John Elliott, Morton French, Frank Gallagher, Frances Gauntlett, Patricia Gavaghan, Frank Giovinazzo, Paul Gorka, Byrd Gwynn, Marilyn Hagan, James Hennelly, Anne T. Hennessy, Phanxico Tong Dui Hien, Peter Hlywiak, Ed Hoban, Mr. Keyser, Margaret Killian, Archibald "Art" King, George Kirsch, Jr., Peter Kroeger, Nancy Lavin, Robert Lechner, Daniel Leddy, Kathryn Llewellyn, Vincent P. Lombardi, Donald Mahon, Carolyn Molshan Malanis, William Mann, Bryan Marchesani, Jeanne McGowan, Keith Melinson, John J. Michalski, Daniel Milione, Jr., Mary Orlundo, Joseph N. Panicelli, Frances "Jane" Paul, Jack Poole, Shirley Price, Alfonso Raimondo, June Ross, William "Danny" Remar, Helene Rizzo, John Robinson, Lorenzo Saria, Frederich Schachinzer, Beverly Schatzman, Daria Schuster, Bart Sereni, Sally Serventick, Denise Shaw, F. Robert "Bob" Shaw, Gus Sigismondi, Betsy Sladish, Constance Smith, John R. Spencer, Sr. Cecilia Tong, acj, Walter Waeltz, Arthur J. Wasch, Sr., Susan Klunder Westerman, Doug Winter, and Millie Zambrano.

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

David Greg Anderson, M.D., Frank J. Baldino, Lewin, Barringer, Rick Bayster, Robert Benson, Letty Boelte, Ronald Bramham, Eileen Carr and Family, Cuddy Family, Elizabeth DeNatale, Thomas Descano, Abha Dewon, Allen Dyson, Rakesh Galati and India, Susan Gallagher, Maria Louisa Gaston, Michael Gokie, Joanne Gribbin, Frank Kelly, Edward Klinges, Delores Mason, Sr. Kate McCaffrey, SJ, Michael McGann, Anne McGee, Clare Moran, SSJ, John Mulhern, Rev. John J. Nordeman, Bridget Nossib, Rosemary Patrick, Gail Pitt, Jana Rose and children, Michael D. Russo, Lorraine Schlett, John Suplee, Joann Sommers, Pat and Michael Taraborelli, Patrick Travers, Ugo Umile and Family, George Weber, and Kathleen F. Wilson.

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