

MAY 2026



SSpS MISSION

Called by the Spirit · Embracing the World

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters | USA & Caribbean



PARACLETE PROVINCE USA & CARIBBEAN

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT OUR FOUNDING GENERATION: SSpS SISTERS FOURERIA VAN ACKEN, MARTINA MULLER, M. LEONARDA LENTRUP, ALEXIA GERLOADS, & KLARA BAUNGARTNER.

CONTENTS

- 02** Sr. Ann Ita Walsh, SSpS
Focus on Mission
- 03** Sr. Ann Ita Walsh, SSpS
SSpS: Celebrating 125 Years
- 06** Sr. Mary Laureen Lahnan, SSpS
Sr. Elizabeth Bigga, SSpS
**25 Years: A School for
the Ghanaian Girls**
- 07** Patricia Broderick, HSMA
**A Treasure: The Quarter
Hour Prayer**
- 08** Sr. Rose Therese Nolta, SSpS
Why Can't We All Get Along?
- 09** Mary Ellen Rivero, HSMA
**The History of The Holy Spirit
Missionary Association**
- 11** Sr. Evelyn Lobo, SSpS
Morning of Prayer

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Sisters at the convent in Shermerville, 1901.

Dear Partners in Mission,

As this Easter Season draws to a close and the great feast of Pentecost will soon be upon us, I greet you in the joy of the Risen Lord and in anticipation of the joy of the Holy Spirit. These two great feasts of our Church and their liturgical celebrations give us much to be hopeful for. Through our celebration of the Paschal Mystery, we have moved from death to life, and with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, when Christ breathes out His Spirit of peace upon the Church, we move from fear to hope.

This year, on May 11th, we celebrate the 125th Jubilee of our Paraclete Province. The opening article of this issue, which is based on the book "This Fire Ever Burning" by Ann Gier, outlines some key events that marked the foundation of the Province.

Our Sisters in Ghana, West Africa, are also celebrating a jubilee: 25 years of St. Mary's Technical Vocational Institute, which provides educational and vocational training for young women. Sr. Mary Laureen Lahnan SSpS, a former Ghanaian missionary, and Sr. Elizabeth Biga, SSpS, from Ghana, share about the institution's history and progress, as well as its role in the education and empowerment of young women in West Africa.

Patricia 'Pat' Broderick and Mary Ellen Rivero, both members of the HSMA (Holy Spirit Missionary Association), have contributed articles to this issue. Pat begins her first in a series of reflections called 'Treasures' based on the prayers and spirituality of St. Arnold Janssen, and Mary Ellen provides us with a brief history of the Holy Spirit Missionary Association.

In their article on peace, Sr. Rose Therese and her team explore the core issue by posing the question, "Why can't we all get along?" and offering us some practical ways to be people of peace.

Pope Leo, in his Easter message, tells us, **"The peace that Jesus gives us is not merely the silence of weapons, but the peace that touches and transforms the heart of each one of us! Let us allow ourselves to be transformed by the peace of Christ! Let us make heard the cry for peace that springs from our hearts!"** (Pope Leo XIV, Easter Message, 2026).

Dear Partners in Mission, let us prepare ourselves for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. May the peace that Jesus gives fill our hearts, our homes, our country, and our world.

Sr. Ann Ita Walsh, SSpS

CELEBRATING



125 Years

Sr. Ann Ita Walsh, SSpS
US Province Mission Secretary
Source: "This Fire Ever Burning"
By: Ann Gier

THE EARLY YEARS

The Congregation of the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit was founded in Steyl, Netherlands, on December 8, 1889, by Fr. Arnold Janssen (Founder of the Society of the Divine Word) and our two co-foundresses, Mother Maria Helena Stollenwerk and Mother Josepha Hendrina Stenmans. On May 8, 1901, Sr. Leonarda and her four companions, Sr. Foureia, Sr. Martina, Sr. Alexia, and Sr. Clara, arrived in the United States to begin the fourth overseas mission of the Congregation. They came to Shermerville (today's Northbrook), ten miles north of Chicago, where the Divine Words Missionaries had established their mission in 1895. The next day they began their missionary work in the form of domestic service for the S.V.D.s, a service that would continue until the 1970s.

During the summer of that same year, the Sisters were approached by an elderly lady from the area, Mrs. Janssen, who insisted that she wanted to move in with them. Unable to deter her, the Sisters allowed her to come and stay with them. Sometime later, two more elderly ladies from the area also requested to stay with the Sisters. Accepting these three ladies laid the foundation of

a ministry of care for the elderly that would continue for the next 97 years through our ministry at St. Ann's Home for the Elderly in Techny, Illinois (1903-1981), the Sacred Heart Home for the Elderly in Hyattsville, Maryland (1926-1988), and the Little Flower Retreat Center in St. Louis (1928-1953). In 1998 our Sisters transferred ownership of the Sacred Heart Home in Hyattsville to the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate, who continue, one hundred and eight years later, to provide care for the elderly.

EDUCATION MINISTRY & FIRST MISSIONS IN THE SOUTH

The arrival of four more Sisters from Steyl in August 1901 allowed the community to take charge of a small school at the S.V.D. mission in Shermerville. This mission and school would later develop into St. Norbert Parish and School in Northbrook, Illinois, where our Sisters continued to teach until 1960.

In the summer of 1906, Fr. Heick, S.V.D., pastor of a small African American community in Vicksburg, Mississippi, visited Sr. Leonarda and petitioned her for



Sisters at the convent in Shermerville enjoying the fresh air as they complete their tasks.

Sisters to staff a new school he intended to open there. Four Sisters, Sr. Bertranda (superior), Sr. Maria, Sr. Sebastiana, and Sr. Alexia, went to open the Congregation's first school for African Americans. This ministry of educating African American children in the South grew when, in 1909, the S.V.D. opened a mission in Jackson, Mississippi, and Mother Leonarda followed by opening a school. The following year, the S.V.D. opened two new southern missions: Meridian, Mississippi, and Little Rock, Arkansas. Three Sisters who went to Meridian found a beautiful new building with a chapel, school, and residence awaiting them. The Sisters, who went to Little Rock, had a different experience, as it was marked by deep poverty, and the attitude of the locals towards the Sisters was quite hostile. This made their mission to provide education to African American children significantly more challenging. However, the Sisters persevered despite their frustration and discouragement. In June the following year, Mother Leonarda, aware of the situation in Little Rock, asked the Sisters to take over a new school in Harrington Addition, the city's African American neighborhood. Although initially met with suspicion, the Sisters gradually gained the community's trust. **By 1912, there were ten Catholic schools for African Americans in the State of Mississippi, nine of which—three in Vicksburg, Jackson, and Meridian—were run by the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters.** This ministry continued to grow when, in the fall of 1924, our Sisters opened a new school for African American children in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

The Holy Ghost Academy for Girls, located about a mile from St. Ann's residence, opened in September 1911 and offered domestic science and academic courses. While its initial enrollment was just seven girls, over time this school evolved into a high school and candidature for girls, which operated right up until the 1960s. Several graduates eventually joined the Holy Spirit Sisters.

EXPANSION OF OUR MISSIONARY WORK IN THE USA

From the beginning, Fr. Arnold encouraged the S.V.D. and S.Sp.S. to welcome lay retreatants. Our Sisters in the U.S.A. hosted their first lay retreat from July 29 to August 1, 1909, with fifty participants. This ministry continued at the Convent of the Holy Spirit Sisters until 1995 and at Little Flower Retreat Center, St. Louis, from 1928 until 1953.

In August 1912, Sr. Mathia, upon completion of art training, received a studio at St. Ann's to serve the developing church vestment and embroidery department. This department's high-quality work was in great demand.

MOTHER LOENARDA CONTINUED TO RESPOND TO REQUESTS FOR SISTERS FOR VARIOUS MINISTRIES.

Mother Leonarda assigned Sisters to two new missions: Girard, Pennsylvania, on September 4, 1913, to handle domestic tasks for the S.V.D.; and Granite City, Illinois, on December 16, to administer St. Elizabeth's Hospital. Due to several challenges, she was forced to withdraw the Sisters from the hospital. However, a new request came from Watertown, Wisconsin, where the Sisters successfully took charge of the hospital, serving there for more than forty years.

In 1913, two Sisters were dispatched to Kickapoo, Illinois, on the pastor's invitation. Shortly after the Sisters came, the pastor was assigned to another parish. Despite the setback, the Sisters remained active in the parish, serving as teachers, pastors, and counselors.



SsPs Srs. Bartholomea and Romana with boarders and orphans in Meridian, Mississippi 1913.



SSpS Sisters Fundraising for St. Anne's Home 1963

In December 1914, Mother Leonarda received a letter from a Franciscan Sister, Sr. Mary Antonea, of Dubuque, Iowa, relaying a request from a Dr. Schilling, for Sisters to build a hospital in New Hampton. Although it seemed risky, Mother Leonarda trusted in the Holy Spirit and moved forward with the project. St. Joseph's Hospital was opened on February 6, 1917. This was the hospital Mother Leonarda later asked to return to when she sensed her life was nearing its end.

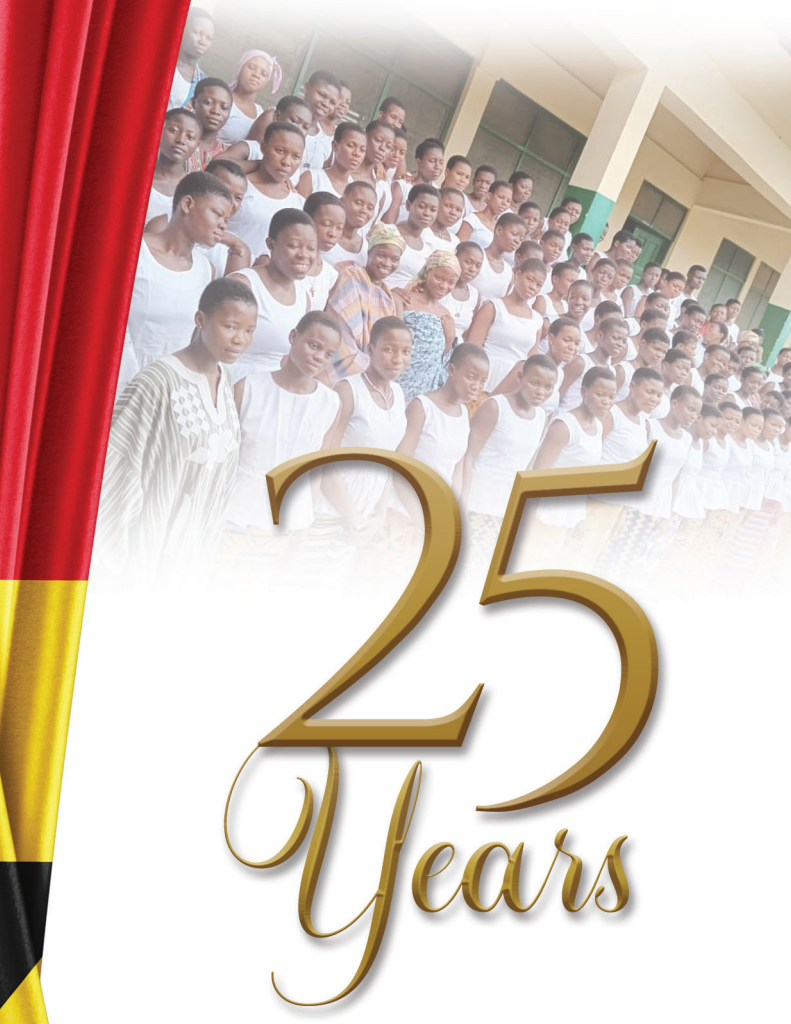
In October of 1927, Mother Leonarda, at the request of Bishop Hoban and Cardinal Mundelein, began the construction of St. Therese Hospital in Waukegan. This hospital provided healing for innumerable people,

particularly those of low means, by offering affordable medical services and community health programs. It also served as a medical teaching and training center for numerous healthcare professionals. In 1988, the Congregation turned the hospital over to Franciscan Sisters.

On April 7, 1937, Mother Leonarda, upon feeling ill, asked to go to St. Joseph's Hospital in New Hampton for a checkup. Believing she needed rest, she entered the hospital but, on May 9, suffered a severe heart attack and was anointed. Though she seemed to improve, her strength continued to decline. On June 26, Mother Leonarda peacefully passed into eternity.



Images of St. Therese Hospital, (Waukegan, Illinois) & St. Joseph's Hospital, (New Hampton, Iowa).



The Afram Plains in Ghana, West Africa is surrounded by the Volta Lake. It was once a land rich in cocoa farms, but the drought and fires in the early 1980s destroyed that rich crop. It was also called the “food basket” of the country, but the crops are now reduced to yams, with fishing being profitable. The main “crop” that is now produced is charcoal. The trees are cut down, charcoal is made, and sent to the big cities of Ghana. Heavily loaded trucks travel throughout the villages, ruining the roads with their bags made from jute, piled high on each truck. Will there be any trees left? Are they replanting? This is a task for the SVD & SSps as they try to instruct the people on JPIC issues for the area: “Replant – save our trees – save the environment.”

This is the geographical area where “St. Mary’s Technical Vocational Institute” began. On March 1st, 1999, with 15 students, a school was started. It was under the inspiration of a missionary from Indonesia, Father Paul Pio, SVD. He began with 15 students and three lay teachers. The following year he handed over the administration to Sr. Angelina Gerharz, SSps, from Germany.

Little by little it grew. In 2010 the school, under the administration of Sr. Mary Lamisi Adolmoga, SSps (from Ghana), was absorbed into the Ghana Education Service as a Technical Vocational Institute, with a student population of forty-five and a staff strength of thirteen, both teaching and non-teaching.

In 2013, the institute had the opportunity to benefit from the School Selection and Placement System, and this caused the enrollment to increase to a total of 395 students. No longer is it a place where only the village people could send their girls, but it is now nationally known for its excellence in fashion design, Kente Weaving, and the Culinary Arts Program. These, along with the core subjects of English Language, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and ICT, are examinable before graduation. These programs saw their development under the administration of Sr. Elizabeth Biga, SSps (from Ghana), the current Headmistress.

On November 21, 2025, the St. Mary’s Technical Vocational Institute proudly celebrated its Silver Jubilee. The motto of the school is “Head, Hand, and Heart in all that we do.” Educating the Ghana Girl for entrepreneurial skills for future economic emancipation: enabling them to selflessly and skillfully fit into society and lead a productive lifestyle, wherever God’s providence may place them. These are the goals which the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters are offering the students today.

A SCHOOL FOR THE GHANAIAAN GIRLS

Sr. Mary Lauren Lahnman, SSps
Sr. Elizabeth Bigga, SSps (Co-Author)



Treasure

The Quarter Hour Prayer

Patricia Broderick, HSMA



Do you want to discover a treasure? What comes to mind when you think of the treasures in your life? Family, friends, your job, education, events, a pet... The Gospel of St. Matthew (6:21) tells us: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” We are encouraged to discover our treasures as we grow as missionary disciples.

Our great joy is to share one of the treasures St. Arnold Janssen gave to the missionary congregations (Society of the Divine Word, Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit and Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters) he founded. We want to transmit this treasure to you, dear readers.

St. Arnold encouraged the members of his congregations to constantly deepen their awareness of the Triune God’s faithful accompaniment in their missionary lives and service. St. Arnold believed that frequent reminders helped the missionaries stay rooted and focused on the source of their lives and purpose of their missionary service.

He formulated the Quarter Hour Prayer, a treasure that the three Congregations have carried forward for more than a century and half. Originally the prayer was proclaimed (in community or individually) every 15 minutes. We want to share this treasure with you, remembering the Gospel verse: “Give as gift what you have received as gift.” (Mt 10:8) In other issues we will unpack the depth and meaning of each invocation of the Quarter Hour Prayer.

The invocations are directed to the Blessed Trinity, Father Son and Holy Spirit. It is an intentional practice that is a way of being mindful of God’s desire to be active in the daily life of a missionary disciple. We invite you to pray this prayer every day. Memorize one of the phrases. Repeat it during the day. You will find your treasure!

God Eternal Truth, We believe in You!

God our strength and our salvation, We hope in You!

God Infinite Goodness, We love You with our whole heart.

You have sent the Word as Savior of the World,

Let us all be one in Him.

Send us the Spirit of your Son,

That we may glorify your name. Amen!



Why Can't We All Get Along?

Sr. Rose Therese Nolta, SSpS, Sr. Liz Valdez, SSpS and Lori Brayer
Justice, Peace, & Integrity of Creation

It is a question children ask on playgrounds. It is a question whispered by people watching the evening news. It is a question that rises in the heart of anyone who longs for peace. Why can't we all get along? The Gospel suggests that the answer is not primarily political, it is human. Often, we do not "get along" because we are afraid. Fear of losing control. Fear of losing identity. Fear of losing land, power, security, history, or dignity. Fear that there is not enough. We sometime feel there is not enough safety, not enough resources, not enough belonging.

Fear, when left unexamined, becomes suspicion. Suspicion becomes resentment. Resentment can lead us to treat others as objects rather than persons, and once human dignity is forgotten, violence becomes possible. We as a JPIC team work for peace and justice with a prophetic voice. It is now that we speak and act for peace. We listen to the Word of God and respond to what is happening by living out our faith and living out the Catholic Social Teaching. We translate this into our lives and this is where **Catholic Social Teaching offers important guidance.** Our faith reminds us how we are called to live together as one human family.

The Dignity of the Human Person

At the heart of our faith is the belief that every person is created in the image and likeness of God. War becomes possible when dignity becomes conditional. Peace becomes possible when dignity is recognized as universal. We may not agree on everything, but we must always recognize the humanity of others.

Solidarity

Solidarity is more than compassion; it is the conviction that we are responsible for one another. When bombs fall in Gaza, when families flee Ukraine, or when violence erupts anywhere in the world, their suffering is not distant from us. Solidarity reminds us that we cannot separate our peace from the pain of others.

The Common Good

Conflict often grows when groups pursue only their own security or advantage. The common good asks what conditions allow all people to flourish. True peace requires justice and care for the whole human community.

What Can We Do? Pray for peace. Speak with compassion and refuse language that diminishes the dignity of others. Stay informed and advocate for diplomatic solutions and humanitarian aid. Practice peace in our own communities through listening, patience, and reconciliation.

Prayer for Peace: God of peace, You created every person in Your image and called us to live as one human family. Where there is violence, bring healing. Where there is hatred, plant compassion. Guide leaders toward wisdom and justice and make us instruments of Your peace. Amen.



The History of *The Holy Spirit Missionary Association*

Mary Ellen Rivero, HSMA

What is the Holy Spirit Missionary Association? To answer that question, we explored the SSpsS archives at the Convent of the Holy Spirit, Church documents, and the lived experience of Associates.

Founding

The Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpsS) first established the Hilfswerk vom Heiligen Giest (Holy Spirit Aid Agency) in 1921 in Steyl, Netherlands, inviting lay people to support their missionary work. Decades later, a group of lay faithful approached the Sisters, seeking to learn how to pray in the spirit and tradition of the SSpsS. Their request launched the Holy Spirit Association during Pentecost week of 1957.



Mother House (Steyl, Netherlands).

Expansion in the US Province

A vibrant lay group known as the Holy Spirit Auxiliary had already taken root wherever the SSpsS served. Building on this early enthusiasm, the Holy Spirit Association was officially sanctioned by the Chicago Archdiocese in 1961, marking the beginning of a more organized lay partnership with the Sisters.

Much of the Association’s early growth can be traced

to Sr. Othmara Becker, SSpsS, who served as both retreat coordinator and first directress in the US. Retreatants from the Chicago area and beyond were introduced to the Association and joined in remarkable numbers. Membership soon spread across the country—from the Midwest to Hawaii—and even into Canada. At its height, the Association counted 2,300 members—including the Sisters’ relatives, friends, coworkers, and former students.

Communication and connection between SSpsS and HSMA has taken various forms over the years. Recognizing the vast geography of the United States, the Association began training local leaders in 1969 to strengthen regional groups and ensure that members could gather, pray, and serve closer to home. Written communication included “The Leaven”, quarterly letters, and the current “SSpsS Mission Magazine”. Technology such as e-mail, YouTube, and Zoom are being embraced to minimize the geographic barriers.

The Effect of Vatican Council II

Vatican II transformed the Church by restoring baptism as the foundation of Christian identity and mission, making all the faithful co responsible participants in the Church’s life, worship, and evangelizing work.

In 1979, to reflect the shift from “helper” to “partner,” the SSpsS united the Hilfswerk vom Heiligen Giest (founded for financial support) and the Holy Spirit Association (founded for prayer and spirituality) to form the Holy Spirit Missionary Association, adding “witness” and “service” to its identity. These changes were clear under SSpsS Sr. Anita Marie Gutierrez's leadership during her term as directress of the HSMA (1997 - 2006).



Sr. Patricia "Pat" Snider, SSps passes on the mantle to Sr. Evelyn Lobo, SSps (Pentecost 2025).

The HSMA Today

More recently, Pope Francis defines “walking together with distinct but complementary vocations” as “synodality”.

The Global Sister’s report describes how religious congregations and their lay associates are adopting more synodal ways of relating—shared leadership, mutual listening, and co-responsibility.

The SSps Generalate is urging the HSMA worldwide to adopt these principles. To this end, it is one of the directions of the 15th General Chapter (2022) and the 2nd International Assembly for the Laity is planned for 2027.

Under the guidance of Sr. Patricia Snider, SSps, the structure of the HSMA began to implement the synodal

shift while retaining the original identity of the HSMA: In-person meetings included sharing of how members live out their mission. Using their unique gifts, members took a more active role in developing and presenting the semi-annual Days of Prayer, training of new groups, and were invited to contribute to the Mission Magazine.

Currently, under the guidance of Sr. Evelyn Lobo, SSps, HSMA is reaching out to neighboring parishes through Come and See events and Day of Reflection . Members are engaged in strategic planning and connecting with the SSps at events and in shared service projects.

The history of HSMA reflects a steady, Spirit led movement: baptized lay persons embracing the SSps spirituality and charism, and living the “Good News” in their sphere of the world.

For more information about the HSMA: Sr. Evelyn Lobo, SSps hsma.usa@ssps-us.org

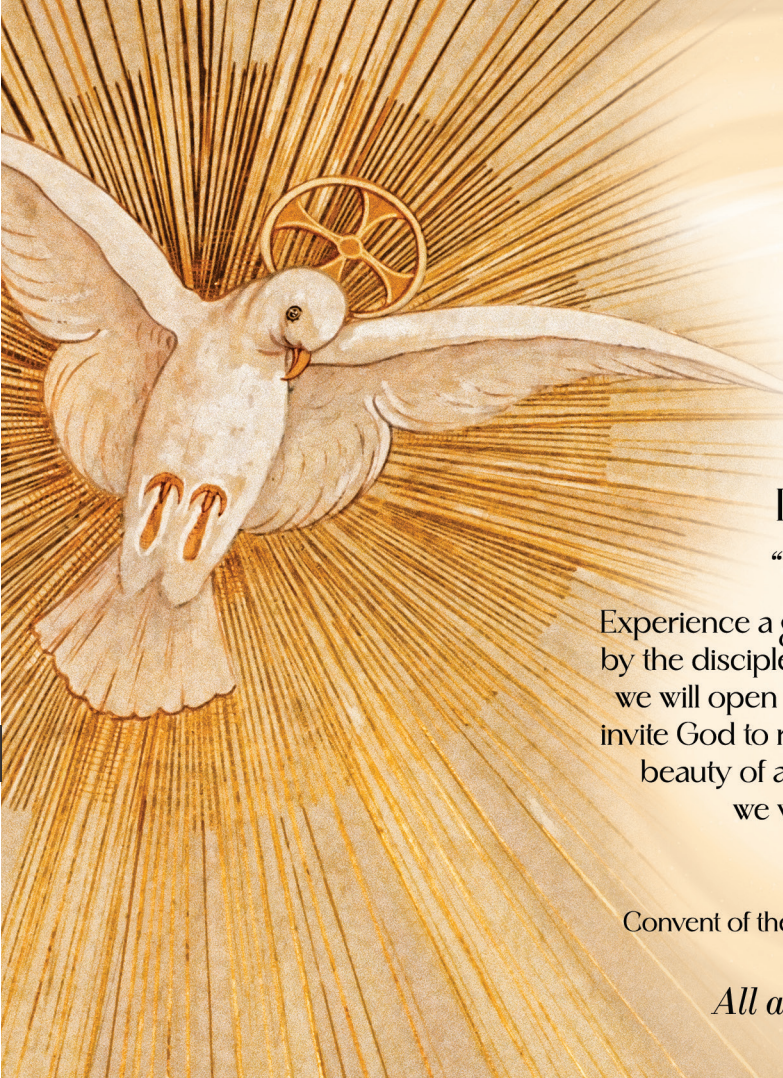
To comment on this article: Mary Ellen Rivero, HSMA maryellen.rivero@gmail.com



(Left) Sr. Pat & Sr. Evelyn.

(Right) HSMA retreat at the Convent of the Holy Spirit.





Morning of Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit: Rekindling the Flame of Pentecost

“They were all together in one place.” — Acts 2:1

Experience a grace-filled morning of prayer, reflection and sharing, inspired by the disciples gathered in the Upper Room. As a community of believers, we will open our minds and hearts to the presence of the Holy Spirit and invite God to rekindle the flame of His love within us. Through talks, sharing, beauty of art, uplifting music, guided reflection, and peaceful stillness, we welcome God, Holy Spirit to awaken the gifts within.



Date May 16, 2026, 8:30 AM - 12 PM

Convent of the Holy Spirit, 319 Waukegan Rd, Northfield, IL 600093 or by Zoom.

Tammy Ames & Sr. Evelyn Lobo, SSps

All are welcome - come and be renewed in the Spirit!



Join Us in Mission

Meet some of our Sisters and learn about our mission service with “Christ Over Coffee” Through your prayers and generous support, YOU are in mission with us!



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