Weavings
Women making a difference
WINTER 2021

DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SPARKILL

Holy Rosary School's
120th Anniversary
Dear Friends,

I’m sure that you would agree that the past months have been unprecedented in our time and very difficult. The pandemic is still raging among us even as we are hopeful for the vaccine distribution to go as smoothly and quickly as possible, especially for the those most vulnerable who have the greatest need for the protection this vaccine offers.

Political unrest and economic uncertainty for so many people have also been very present during these months. Yet, through it all, we remain hopeful and hope-filled that the year 2021 will be better for us.

We want you to know that your support has meant a great deal to us and sustains us in hope. Your contributions and prayers have benefitted our missions in Pakistan where children receive education and support to assist them in achieving their educational goals. Your support for an interfaith program called Days for Girls helps young women and girls by providing special hygiene kits that allow them to stay in school as they pursue educational dreams as well.

In addition to these and other projects, your generosity has enabled us to provide for the needs of our frailer senior Sisters as they live their faith-filled witness in their life and ministry of prayer.

We ask for your continued support and prayers as we remain faithful in hope, faithful in love, and faithful to our mission to be a peaceful presence in our world.

Thank you for helping us to care for the needs of the most vulnerable among us while we proclaim the reign of God through a ministry for justice and reverence for all creation.

God bless you always!

From the president ...
THREADS OF WISDOM AND GRACE ...

“Will you let me be your servant?”

Every once in a while, I am stopped short in the face of unanticipated beauty—a sign that God’s love is all around us.

This happened in November while I watched my niece’s wedding via livestream. Because of the pandemic, this was a wedding unlike any past family wedding: the liturgy was livestreamed because of the restriction on the number of people who could be in attendance in her parish church; the usual hugs and kisses of greeting between family members were nowhere to be found; the reception is planned to take place on their first anniversary; the list goes on.

I fully expected to be inspired by Carly and Sam’s words of commitment, the joy on their faces, and the pastor’s homily. But something happened that bowled me over. Following their vows, Carly took a seat in front of the altar and her new husband brought over a basin and pitcher. Sam began to wash Carly’s feet while the cantor sang the hymn “Will You Let Me Be Your Servant?” When he finished, my niece then got down on the floor and washed her husband’s feet. It was the most powerful symbol of married love I have ever witnessed at a wedding. Their eagerness and willingness to serve each other was palpable.

I know that my willingness to serve others is probably the best measure of my relationship with God. Lent is a wonderful opportunity to examine that commitment.

SISTER MARGARET PALLISER, OP
Sister Margaret has a doctorate in sacred theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and is a member of the leadership team at Sparkill.

EDUCATION MINISTRY HIGHLIGHT
As part of “Celebrate Catholic Schools Week,” ALBERTUS MAGNUS HIGH SCHOOL announced on February 1, 2021 the establishment of the Sister Miriam Joseph Scholarship Fund that will provide financial assistance to current Albertus Magnus students who experience unexpected hardship. This initiative gives Albertus Magnus the ability to provide scholarship assistance to a family who is experiencing unexpected financial hardship, allowing a student to continue their Catholic education.

SISTER MIRIAM JOSEPH SCHAUB has exemplified the highest standards of Catholic education, compassion, and dedication throughout her career. During the celebration of her 100th birthday on November 24, 2020 she was surprised by a “giant card” signed by Albertus Magnus High School’s leadership, staff, alumni, and students. The Sister Miriam Joseph Scholarship is a testament to her distinguished service at the High School from 1970 to 1995. Congratulations!
First grade students practice with Sister Sue to lead the singing at the Eucharistic celebration.
The year was 1901 and the month was April. Father Dan Sullivan, pastor of Holy Rosary Parish in the small rural town of Monroe City, Missouri, wanted to establish a Catholic school for the children of his parish. He had a friend who knew Mother Thomas Gargan, the Mother Superior of the Sparkill Dominican Sisters in New York, so Father Sullivan wrote to Mother Thomas and requested Sisters to come to teach the children. In his letter he noted, “The people want a Catholic school at any sacrifice.” Mother Thomas and her Council agreed to send four sisters, and Holy Rosary School was established in September 1901. With ninety-one students enrolled that first year, classes began in a two-story, four-room former public school building.

I have often wondered how those four Sisters felt as they traveled by train across the country from New York to this very small rural town. I imagine that it would have been a long and difficult journey. I also think that the culture shock upon arriving from New York at their new country home would have been somewhat overwhelming.

The earliest program organized for the School included an elementary and high school curriculum. One room on the second floor of the old building was proudly styled “The High School.” All the subjects of the high school were taught by one Sister. Many of the students came from great distances, for Holy Rosary was the only Catholic high school within a radius of 25 miles.

Twenty years after its founding, Holy Rosary School had prospered far beyond parish expectations. The enrollment had grown to more than 150 students. To meet the needs of the families in the parish, the construction of a new school was begun in 1920 and completed the following year. The dedication of Holy Rosary’s new elementary and four-year high school in 1921 was a momentous day for the parish. This beautiful facility served the Holy Rosary community for 96 years until the new Holy Rosary School was dedicated in 2016.

In 1966, when it was no longer possible to continue staffing Holy Rosary High School, it became necessary for the students of high school age to attend the
local public high school. While it was a sad time for all involved, Holy Rosary was then able to focus even more sharply on providing a solid Catholic education for students in grades one through eight. Classes for kindergarten students were added in 1995, and classes for three- and four-year-old students were added in 2009.

Today, the School has a steady enrollment of 175 students from pre-school through the eighth grade with one class for each grade. The full academic program is taught with a strong emphasis on daily religious instruction. Many activities for enhanced learning are also provided, including a yearly presentation of a fifth and sixth grade musical, an annual eighth grade Christmas play, special Christmas and Easter choirs, an annual talent show, and participation in the Bellarmine Speech League, the diocesan art competition, Missouri district music festivals, as well as many community service projects. Students also participate in athletics, including softball, football, basketball, and track, competing with local public school teams.

The parishioners and parents have a long and strong tradition of supporting Catholic education. This is especially evident in the fact that the alumni, parents, families, and local community members raised the money to build a new facility in 2016—the wonderful space and

Continued on page 8
It is fondly called The Miracle on Locust Street.

Since its beginning in 1901, the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill have been present at Holy Rosary School and the leading force in providing a solid Catholic education to the young students of the area. This parish school has been served continuously by the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill longer than any other mission of the Congregation. It is truly remarkable that, during the entire 120 years of the school’s service to the families in Monroe City, a Sparkill Dominican Sister has served as the principal of Holy Rosary School.

The presence of the Sparkill Dominicans has had a tremendous influence on the people of the community and the development of their faith. To this day, young couples return to Monroe City, because they want their children to have an opportunity to grow in their Catholic faith and to receive a solid Catholic education. Holy Rosary’s alumni carry their appreciation of the Sparkill Dominicans with them into all parts of the United States and the world. The “miracle” of Holy Rosary School travels well beyond the beloved building on Locust Street!
It has been my honor and privilege to serve the people of the Holy Rosary School and Parish community for the past forty-six years. But my heart and soul have been here even longer. Monroe City is my hometown, and I attended Holy Rosary School from the first grade through high school graduation. The Dominican Sisters whom I had for teachers helped me to grow in my relationship with Jesus Christ, and I entered the Sparkill novitiate in 1964. I taught at St. Anthony’s in the Bronx, New York, for three years and then at St. Thomas More in St. Louis, Missouri, for five years. In 1975, the Holy Spirit led me to return to Monroe City as a teacher in Holy Rosary School. Years later, I accepted the role of principal and have been blessed to be in this position for the past thirty-six years.

— Sister Sue
In September 2020, we held a new and different golf tournament: a “hybrid” golf tournament. Over a period of ten days, golfers and sponsors gathered to play a round of golf on a day of their choice. Breathtaking views of New York City caused golfers to pause and appreciate the beauty of New York Country Club in New Hempstead. Golfers wore masks and practiced social distancing as they played the challenging 18-hole course. They shared lunch as they came off the course; in an abundance of caution, there was no celebratory dinner. The prize baskets were visible on our new golf website, and the 50/50 raffle winners were selected by our Sisters in the dining room of the Motherhouse. Individual winners received the news of their good fortune through phone calls. We congratulate all the winners and extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who helped to make this outing such a magnificent success, especially in light of the challenges that COVID-19 presented.
EVENT CHAIR: Ed Morrissey

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Our 2020 Golf Committee for your time and efforts
The Dominican Sisters of Sparkill for your prayers and support
Dr. Art Kelleher took a chance when he unknowingly bought the winning raffle ticket in Sparkill’s annual golf tournament raffle. He took a chance that would help a congregation of Sisters that had once helped him. But the story does not end with the awarding of the first prize, which he generously gifted back to the Sisters. Sister Helen Robert Boyd recognized the name “Dr. Arthur Kelleher of San Diego” when reviewing the list of winners. The memory of a tall boy with a shock of red hair who loved science and joined the Navy came to mind. Never to be daunted by the unknown, Sister Helen surprised Dr. Kelleher with a call and then happily reconnected him with the teacher who had inspired him to pursue a career in medicine, Sister Rose Pfannebacker.

Dr. Art Kelleher was taught by the Sparkill Dominicans at St. Catherine of Siena School in Binghamton, New York. He remembers the names of all the Sisters who taught him there and appreciates and admires them for their dedication and sacrifice in order to provide the excellent education he received. Sister Rose was one of them and to this day, looking back, Dr. Kelleher considers her to be one of the most outstanding teachers and mentors he has encountered during his long academic career including college, medical school, and residency training. At the time, Sister Rose was a young Sister on her very first teaching assignment, and (perhaps because of that!) she was not quite ready to entirely give up some of the joys of youth. There was a hill directly behind the church that was ideal for sleighs and toboggans. Dr. Kelleher distinctly remembers Sister Rose fearlessly flying on a toboggan down a particularly steep hill while the wind whipped her habit about her. The toboggan tipped over toward the bottom of the hill, causing all the riders, including Sister Rose, to continue the journey to the bottom of the hill without the aid of the toboggan. “We laughed about it and began calling her the flying nun.”

Sister Rose, too, has fond memories of the young “doctor-to-be.” She recalls how beautifully he played the piano for all the Sisters, how his penmanship was perfect, and how excited he was to show off his “new” teeth to her after his braces were removed.

Dr. Kelleher’s mother was a nurse and
Dr. Art Kelleher

... it was his classes in science, particularly in biology, throughout his Catholic education that “cemented the deal” for him. His Dominican education shaped his life.
St. Mary Magdalen School opened in 1923 in Brentwood, Missouri through the efforts of three Sparkill Dominicans. Over the past 98 years, the School has earned a highly respected place in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. The commitment of the pastors, parishioners, and teachers to provide its students with an excellent Catholic education continues to this day, as do the enduring friendships that were initially nurtured by the Sisters. Early in 2020, the parish council decided to replace the Convent, which was no longer in use, with a park and children's play space dedicated to the Dominican Sisters.

Expressions of gratitude from former students....

I spent my formative years at St. Mary Magdalen Elementary School in Brentwood. Like most people, I didn't realize how fortunate I was to have had that experience until many years later. Not only did they educate us in the basic subjects all children must learn, they also left us with the social skills, moral values, and ethics to make a positive difference in our community. The Sisters set high standards for us to achieve more. Thank you for making me the best I can be.
– Leo Bernard Meyer

Back when I was just a kid, I was quite introverted. The Sisters took the time to welcome me and make sure that I adjusted to a Catholic school. They helped me through some tough times, and they were very sweet to me. Now it is my turn to give back to them to say just how wonderful they were to me in making me the man that I am today.
– John Rossini
Sister Ellen Marie explained to me my responsibilities as the oldest of three. I never forgot the words she said.

– Bob Frossard

I am nearing 70 years young and have lived in the St. Mary Magdalen Parish boundaries my entire life. I am lucky and grateful for the things I was taught, in and out of the books, by these wonderful women. I want to thank all of them for the part they played in my life.

– Tom Deimeke

When I think back on my grade school years at St. Mary Magdalen, it always starts with the Dominican Sisters. They had time to answer my questions and to take care of any problems I may have been going through. The love that they had for all of us and the Catholic faith have remained with me. I know in my heart that the Dominican Sisters, especially Sister Catherine Patricia, are the reason I became a firefighter. She told me later that her dad was a fireman and that when the Sisters would hear or see a fire truck go by, they would quietly say a prayer to protect them and keep them safe. I also know in my heart that whenever I was in any danger at a fire the Dominicans Sisters were still saying prayers to keep me safe so I could go home to my family.

– Bob Kurtz, Retired Assistant Fire Chief, Brentwood Fire Department

The Sisters were located around the St. Louis Archdiocese at numerous schools. Some of the schools were St. James the Greater, Little Flower, Epiphany of Our Lord, St. Kevin, St. Mary Magdalen in Brentwood, St. Elizabeth, St. Simon, Holy Redeemer, and numerous schools in the rural areas. I attended St. Mary Magdalen School and many of my lifelong friendships were formed at that school. Now I am on a committee to help raise funds for the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill.

– Bob Laughlin

I grew up on Magdalen Avenue and was blessed to have had the Dominican Sisters as neighbors. They were thoughtful, kind, and devoted ladies. Their amazing faith was an inspiration to many of us.

– Patty Grutsch Benner

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– Bob Kurtz, Retired Assistant Fire Chief, Brentwood Fire Department
Through many trials and challenges the congregation grew in number to meet the needs of the times. The seeds of the Congregation’s ministry in education took root at St. Joseph Mission Church in Manhattan. That early ministry to destitute orphaned children continued at Holy Rosary Convent on East 63rd Street in Manhattan, St. Agnes Home and School at Sparkill, and St. Benedict Home in Rye for the desolate Black children of New York. The mission of Catholic education expanded to Rockland County at St. John School, Piermont in 1890 and St. Ann School, Nyack in 1897.

As the congregation grew, the Sparkill Dominican Sisters started their first mission in Missouri in 1900 to teach in St. Patrick School in Jonesburg. Many other schools would be opened in Missouri. In 1906, we accepted the administration of St. Catherine of Siena School in Manhattan. Additional missions were opened in the Archdiocese of New York and in the Dioceses of Albany, Brooklyn/Queens, Rockville Center, and Syracuse. In 1958, our congregation responded to an appeal from the Dominican Fathers to serve in Pakistan where the commitment to education continues. Further expansion of our educational ministry occurred in Montana.

Commitment to the ministry of education has not always been easy. The Sisters often lived with privation and sacrifice. Conditions were not always favorable and required the Sisters’ strong reliance on the grace...
I marveled at the beautiful, well-equipped building in which the students were continuing to receive a quality Catholic education, and I said a prayer to thank the Sisters who laid this solid foundation for Catholic education.

Of Almighty God. At times, the Sisters endured cramped quarters with few furnishings, insufficient heat, and meager food supplies. Oftentimes travel was required each day since the living arrangements for the Sisters were not in close proximity to the school. In the early days, this meant a horse and wagon trip each day, regardless of the weather, despite rainfall, snow, and ice. In addition, the physical conditions under which the school functioned were often primitive. In the early days there was no water in the building (outhouses), heat was provided by potbellied stoves, and the Sisters were paid no stipend during the vacation months.

Continued on page 18
The Sisters who ministered in St. Rita School on Staten Island in 1922 had to teach all the elementary grades simultaneously in an open space in the church basement with no partitions to provide privacy or quiet. Because there were no textbooks or equipment, materials discarded by other schools were secured for the students to use. This practice continued for a decade. As I visited St. Rita School in 2019, I marveled at the beautiful, well-equipped building in which the students were continuing to receive a quality Catholic education, and I said a prayer to thank the Sisters who laid this solid foundation for Catholic education.

As time went on, so did the challenges our Sisters confronted as they continued to teach in our Catholic elementary schools: The Great Depression, a 20th century of wars, and demographic changes in neighborhoods resulting in decreased registrations, financial difficulties, closed schools, and now the pandemic. Yet, through all these challenges, our Sisters continued to teach so that our students would have a solid grounding in our faith and a clear understanding of what it means to be a child of God.
The last words that Jesus spoke to us in the Gospel of St. Matthew are a command, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations. Teach them to carry out everything that I have commanded you.” As our Sparkill Community has responded to that command in the past, how do we respond to that command today?

In actuality, we are in new mission territory. The world around us suffers from the unraveling of marriage and the family, drugs, violence, injustice, racism, and poverty. Like John the Baptist, we may be that voice in this modern wilderness that prepares the way for the Lord because the goal of Catholic education has been and is to teach a Person, Jesus Christ. Sometimes that is quite unexpected.

The goal in our Catholic elementary schools must be to form the whole person in Jesus Christ so that each of our students will come to know Jesus Christ personally. Energized by fidelity to Christ, His Church, and one another, then through this witness each student will help to form society at large. Our students will change the world for good by what we teach them.

Continued on page 20
In 2015, the visit of Pope Francis to New York showed us on all major networks during “prime time” how people are longing to bring God back into their lives. People today are starving and thirsting for the Good News of Christ. Jesus called His apostles to go out and teach that Good News. Jesus calls us and gives us that same command. If we continue to make Him the heart of our schools and teach our children to learn Jesus by heart, we will plant seeds that may lead to a tremendous harvest.

As members of the Dominican Family, the particular mission we receive as Sparkill Dominicans is the proclamation of the Word of God. Our apostolic spirituality requires us to live the spirit of the Gospel while our distinct experience as Dominican women challenges us to preach the truth of the Gospel in our world today.

The inspiration of our early Sisters are the shoulders upon whom we stand today and continues to impel us to face forward with hope in our ministry of Catholic education to elementary school students. We trust our Sparkill Sisters can make a difference because we dedicate this ministry to the honor of Almighty God under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

When I served as the principal of St. Brendan School in the Bronx, one of the parents met with me because she was very upset. It seemed that her son Neil, a first grader, was convinced that God’s name was Harold. Despite the efforts of his parents to change his mind, Neil was positive that God’s name was Harold. I sent for Neil, and when I asked him why he thought God’s name was Harold, Neil responded that I had told him this. When I asked Neil when I told him that God’s name was Harold, he said, “Every day, you say Our Father who art in heaven, Harold be thy name.” Well, I tried to convince Neil that “hallowed” and “Harold” were two different words with two different meanings, but he remained unconvinced. I sent him back to class and assured his mother that he was a smart boy and would come to understand that God’s name was not Harold. That summer their family moved to New Jersey and the following February, Neil’s mother contacted me. Neil was dying of cancer in Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. She asked me to visit Neil, and I did. I remember that he looked so small in the bed, and I asked him how he felt. He said that although they gave him medicine, it still hurt. However, he said he talked to Harold every day and that made him feel better. He also asked Harold to take care of his Mommy and Daddy because they were so sad. The Holy Spirit was certainly busy there. Neil went home to Harold several days later.

– Sister June Clare Tracy, OP
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The gift of God is eternal life

We remember our Dominican Sisters who entered eternal life during 2020.

Sister Katherine Bernard Gaffney, OP
January 1

Sister Carolyn Bell, OP
February 8

Sister Marie Jean Dempsey, OP
March 6

Sister Winifred Marie O’Halloran, OP
March 16

Sister Ann Louise DeGennaro, OP
March 31

Sister Rose Marie Duchesne, OP
April 3

Sister Marianne Morelli, OP
April 9

Sister Cecilia Ann Flynn, OP
April 16

Sister Theresa Angelo Girolamo, OP
June 27

Sister Eileen Clifford, OP
August 27

Sister Mary Burke, OP
November 23

Sister Marianne Travers, OP
November 24

Sister Catherine William Moran, OP
December 1

Sister Jeanne Burns, OP
December 1

Sister Christine Corey, OP
December 29

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Financial donations given to the Dominican Convent of Our Lady of the Rosary may be directed for use to any of four areas: Sisters' Ministries, Pakistan, Retirement, or the General Fund (which will be used as needed.) We are grateful for all contributions. Your gifts enable us to continue to address the needs of those who suffer and to bring hope to our world. Dominican Convent of Our Lady of the Rosary is a nonprofit, charitable, faith-based organization that is exempt from federal and state taxes under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Revenue Code/EIN. (IRS Tax ID# 13401033)

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- Estates/Bequests: 50%
- Foundations: 2%
- Friends & Family: 27%
- Special Events: 21%
- Total: 100%

**Income**
- Sisters Compensation: 48%
- Property Income: 2%
- Gift Income: 19%
- Investment Income: 26%
- Other-nonrecurring: 1%
- Retirement Reserves: 4%
- Total: 100%

**Expenses**
- Administration: 17%
- Heath & Wellness/Skilled Care: 21%
- Sisters Living Expenses: 38%
- Congregational Properties: 17%
- Ministry Grants/Contribution: 2%
- Fundraising: 5%
- Total: 100%

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The Dominican Sisters of Sparkill are audited by the firm of Grassi & Co. Audited financials are on file in the Advancement Office, 175 Route 340, Sparkill, NY 10976. Contact Karen Ellis at 845-359-4173.