



The Widows' Mite

Widows of Prayer

Issue No. 34

Spring/Summer 2023

Spiritual Insights

Mary Reardon, our foundress, wrote these insights for the Widows of Prayer many years ago:

I have made notes of the talks given by the Spiritual Directors of the Widows of Prayer the last few years. In going back over these notes, I found some thoughts I'd like to share with you, given by Fr. John Guimond, O.F.M. Cap.



This particular day he spoke to us of our journey. All of us sometimes can have a sense that we're not getting anywhere. Life can be tedious, boring, and frustrating. I thought, "Yes, I know. I've been there."

But if we keep trying, we ARE going to get somewhere. We all need a sign of God's grace in our lives like:

- The Cross** – a sign we are precious to God
- Eucharist** – A divine food to see us through human reality
- Rosary** – A connection with the Holy Mother, a reminder of her tender love
- Personal Shrines** – reminders to us of where we have been especially touched by God

The symbols of hope are there for us. We have to make use of them. They are the visible signs of our invisible Presence watching over our journey. It may be a very long journey, but there IS a Promised Land somewhere ahead of us. If we stop believing that, we can become cynical and hopeless "Like a dry weary land without water."

Our water is the hope that keeps renewing us day by day. To follow the Lord, we have to believe in Who the Lord is – we have to center our attention on Jesus. The journey is taken a mile at a time – otherwise it can become overwhelming.

Our gaze must be fixed not on where we are going but on who we are going with. If we enjoy the company, we will enjoy the journey. What makes life beautiful is the one we are following – not the scenery we encounter on the way.

Like Mary who followed Joseph, trusting in his wisdom and good sense and simply enjoying the long journey wherever it led.

Not knowing can become part of the excitement when we trust completely in the one who is leading us. When we lose our trust – as the Israelites with Moses – we become negative and complaining. Then we miss out on the beauty.

We are on a journey, and sometimes it seems long, and problems are countless. If we concentrate on that, we lose courage. Our vision must be on the leader of the journey.

When we feel discouraged, we need to refresh ourselves in the Presence of Jesus. He is the remedy for the journey.

Ultimately, we are not just trying to build something beautiful, but we are following something wonderful, and whatever we build, we build because we love that someone.

Then we will be less concerned with results and far more willing to let things develop as they will. As long as we trust the leader, the way will be wonderful. When we think we have to do the leading ourselves, we will get "worn out by the journey."

As Widows of Prayer, you are called to be "His delight day by day." Then, indeed, you will be "craftsmen" building something beautiful for love of Him.

A simple thought: If the Lord speaks to us a special invitation, can we ignore it without frustrating our own life? His way may not be easy, but it IS the only way that brings happiness to anyone.

As I go over the notes of the teachings given the Widows of Prayer by our Spiritual Directors, I thank God for them and their great wisdom in instructing us along our journey.

JMJ Mary Reardon, WP



Our Mission:

To serve Christ through His Church by praying for priests and others in Church leadership, to be devoted to the Blessed Sacrament and to promote Adoration of Christ in the Eucharist.

Community News

Appleton: Kathy Feistel, Servant Leader

Our Appleton Community continues to meet for Adoration and Mass on Thursday afternoons. Adoration begins at 4:00, closing with Evening Prayer and Benediction. Mass follows at 5:30 and is open to the public. We sponsor a Mass for Vocations on the 3rd Thursdays of the month. We continue to invite new widows to a quarterly breakfast to share our common experience of loss and hope.

Winter was difficult this year as many of us were out of sorts because of seasonal illness. Several joined Alice for a Christmas Celebration. Our Lola moved to assisted living after celebrating her 97th birthday. She is still getting out to some of our activities as the weather allows. She displays a wonderful spirit and we have so much to learn from her.

Our plans for a Second Wednesday of the Month morning gathering for social and spiritual formation have begun.

We have scheduled a day at Our Lady of Good Help on Monday, May 22nd. Father Tom Farrell will be our celebrant at Mass and speaker at our gathering. Father Tom is the National Spiritual Director for the Widows of Prayer. He will talk on St. Joseph. We will have ladies from other parts of the country coming in to make their promises. We are excited to see the growth and meet others who share our commitment to Our Lord and His Church.

We are becoming tech savvy and use Zoom and group calls to keep all in contact as travel is sometimes difficult. I think Mother Angelica would be proud of our use of technology in our attempt to share our mission.

On March 16th Mary Rose Verdegan (Appleton remote) made her 2nd Promise at St. Joseph's Church in Sturgeon Bay. Pictured with Mary Rose on the Left, are Rev. Bob Stegmann and Alice Peeters, General Servant Leader.



Prayer for Priests

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the gift of our priests. Through them, we experience your presence in the sacraments. Help our priests to be strong in their vocation. Set their souls on fire with love for your people. Grant them the wisdom, understanding, and strength they need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom. Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel. Allow them to experience joy in their ministry. Help them to become instruments of your divine grace. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns as our Eternal Priest. Amen.

From USCCB

Community News

Franklin/Milwaukee: Teresa Erdelt, Servant Leader

We are excited that we are now able to meet weekly at Sacred Heart Monastery Lake Apartments in Franklin. Both Jan and Rose Marie live there and obtained permission for us to use their chapel every Wednesday. It is great to be able to meet on a regular basis again. As an added bonus, we still have Mass once a month at St. Alphonsus Church in Greendale with Fr. Patrick Magnor.

We are also excited that we have a new candidate, Margaret Rewolinski.

Our deepest sympathy to Jan Gilberto, whose daughter, Maureen, died on Palm Sunday.

At our last Chapter meeting on October 19th, Josephine Janezic made her first promise at Sacred Heart Monastery Chapel (photo on left with Teri Erdelt). In the



group picture taken the same day are: L to R Back row, Joyce

Eesley, Rose Marie Peyovich, Alice Peeters, Carlotta Stricker, Teri Erdelt & Jeanette Gilberto, Front row, Josephine Janezic, Paola Alioto, & Bernadine Ziemba.



Ft. Wayne, Indiana: Mary Lou Sohn, Servant Leader

The Fort Wayne widows, along with the Huntington widows, had our regular Christmas bingo in November. We had the largest attendance since we started! We still have Mass together on the first Wednesday of each month.

Father Wimal had the traditional Seder meal which is a meal served in Jewish homes to begin Passover. We include this meal during Holy Week to recall the custom Jesus and His disciples followed in the days leading to the crucifixion.

Hibbing, MN: Mary Wanhala, Servant Leader

We are all facing challenges in our lives but prayer is carrying us through. Jeanne's son died recently; Fio, in fragile health is still living at home with her son but is hoping to make it to her birthday in June when she will be 100 years old! Louise has cognitive limitations; and Bev has not been feeling the best off and on during the winter. Carole, a possible new candidate, joins us whenever she can. I have been extremely busy with multiple things going on with my brothers. Our Lenten retreat didn't take place — another snowstorm occurred and Joyce had covid. Our Easter tea didn't happen either but we are hoping our summer tea will still be possible.

Community News

Huntington, IN: Catherine Fitzgerald, Servant Leader



Mary Therese Turner made her First Promise on November 3rd at St. Peter & Paul Parish in Huntington IN. Pictured left to right are Catherine Fitzgerald, Father Anthony Steinacker, Mary Therese Turner.

I have been meeting weekly with our two new Candidates: Ann Koch and Esther Dyer as we go through our Formation Binder and studying Fr. John Hardon's document *The History of Eucharistic Adoration*. Fr. John Doerfler (now Bishop) gave this document to us Widows of Prayer in 2009. It was his recommendation that since we had Eucharistic devotion as part of our apostolate, we should have a good understanding of the development of this doctrine and its importance in our religious life.

On January 14th, four of us attended Bishop Rhoades' Eucharistic Conference. Bishop even took a few moments to greet us personally as Widows of Prayer and thanked us for our ministry. When that same Conference was given in February in the South Bend section of our diocese, three more of us attended, with seven Widows of Prayer from the Fort Wayne Community. On June 25-27, SS Peter and Paul Parish in Huntington will be the eighth parish to hold the Services. Our Diocese is at the center of the ongoing Eucharistic Revival in the United States and we local Widows are eager to do what we can to be prayerful support for this endeavor.

Spotlight on Widow of Prayer

The Widows of Prayer are scattered throughout our country, and beyond! In an attempt for us to know each other better, we try to highlight 1 or 2 members in each newsletter.

Mary Wanhala – Hibbing, Minnesota

Mary joined the Widows of Prayer about eight years ago. She found out about the Widows of Prayer in doing research on the internet. This ministry appealed to Mary as



she saw it as offering up the suffering of widowhood to draw down graces on the church!

Mary and her husband were both 46 years old when he died suddenly. Their three children were transitioning out of the house and Mary found herself restless with time on her hands. She started spending more time in church. Eventually she began cleaning the holy water fonts and then more odd jobs around the church. As she was now going to daily Mass, the pastor gave her a key to the church. She could now find peace in the middle of the night by visiting and praying in the church.

Eventually the current pastor asked Mary to organize a class. Then an employee suggested she get a Masters in Theology. So now Mary, with a full time job, a child with health problems, was also attending classes. After she got her degree, Mary worked at an Indian Mission for one year. Then she was offered a job doing outreach at her home parish. With no specific job description, Mary's creative juices came up with amazing ideas and she spent 18 years as Director of Outreach Ministries.

When Mary wanted to do something special for widows at Christmas time, her now famous "teas" were born. She holds a tea three times a year. Though all women are welcome, recently widowed women are specifically invited as well as the parish Priests.

Mary is the Servant Leader for the Hibbing Minnesota community. Her newest idea is to connect with widows of Deacons and collaborate with them.

Mary's family includes three grandchildren and one great grandchild. She is the youngest sibling of five brothers and also spends a lot of time and effort ministering to them. In addition to continuing volunteering for church events, she also loves to do research on the church and the direction it is heading.

Molalla, OR: Suzanne McKenzie, Servant Leader in Formation

As of August 2022 the Oregon Widows of Prayer became an official Chapter with the addition of Joyce Wells of Portland making her First Promises.

Our community had a one day retreat on November 8th at the Mt. Angel Abbey (Benedictine) Guest House. Fr. Paul Thomas, OSB, said Mass for us and then gave us a conference on prayer in the morning. We brought our own lunches and so enjoyed each others company during the meal. The afternoon conference, also on prayer, was given by Fr. Martin Grassel, OSB. We had a little time for silent prayer and reflection.

We continue to meet on the second and fourth Tuesdays. We join the monks for mass with the Abbey Community. We then move to the guest house where we pray the Rosary and say some formal prayers for priests and seminarians. There are up to six widows who join us for mass and prayers. The local parish in Mt. Angel town and the parish in the neighboring town of Silverton are beginning to put our notices in the church bulletins.

It is with deepest sympathy that we say goodbye to our sister who has moved on to her final resting place with God. May she rest in peace.

**Denise J. Brennan, 3/9/23 – Bensalem, PA
(Appleton Remote)**

Spotlight on Widow of Prayer

Nancy Mary Siebers — Appleton, WI, Remote
Nancy Mary's husband and Mary Reardon's husband were friends and the couples met regularly for dining out. So Nancy knew about the Widows of Prayer. When her



husband was in Hospice, he asked her if she would be joining Mary's group. Nancy responded that she didn't know and left it at that. She traveled for the next three years, but one day while cleaning at home, the thought came to her; "I have to join Mary's group". But she could not remember the name or find a phone

number. She told God that if you really want me to join this group, you're going to have to give me more information. The next morning, she knew right away it was the Widows of Prayer. When she met Carlotta and Kathy, it just seemed like a good fit. She joined the Widows of Prayer about five years ago. Nancy Mary likes the camaraderie and the fact they all have something in common and walked in the same shoes.

Nancy Mary has six children, and 2 granddaughters, plus 2 great granddaughters. She loves to play cards and is in two different card groups. She also volunteers, bringing Communion regularly to a home-bound individual, leads a grief share group, volunteers at a pregnancy crises center, member of Seven Sisters, and makes a weekly Holy Hour at Relevant Radio Adoration Chapel. But what we especially appreciate her for, is that she is the person who sends us our birthday cards. She finds the cards, addresses them and mails them out in a timely manner. She even puts the mailing date in pencil in the space where the postage stamp goes. Nancy Mary volunteered to take over this task when our then General Servant Leader was feeling overwhelmed. We all love receiving these birthday greetings.

Widows of Prayer Retreat

September 12, 13 and 14, 2023

International Shoenstatt Center

W284 N698 Cherry Ln., Waukesha, WI 53188

Arrival: 4:00 pm on Tuesday, September 12, and depart after the noon lunch on September 14.

Cost: \$182 which includes 2 nights lodging including meals. (Cost is subject to change as we get closer to September.)

Your deposit of \$50 to secure your room will be due at a later date, and at that time if you have any special dietary needs, please indicate them. The balance of the room/board rate will be due upon arrival at the Schoenstatt Retreat Center.

For questions, contact Alice Peeters, General Servant Leader at 920-725-7768.

For more information about the *Widows of Prayer*:

website: www.widowsofprayer.org

facebook.com/WOP092994

or e-mail: widowsofprayer@gmail.com

Appleton, WI area — 920-284-9476

Franklin/Milwaukee WI area — 414-427-0020

Huntington, IN area — 260-356-8021

Fort Wayne, IN area — 260-484-6300

Hibbing, MN area — 218-966-9074

Molalla/Portland, OR area — 503-949-3142

Will You Help the Widows of Prayer?

The Widows of Prayer are growing in number with satellite communities in neighboring states and dioceses. Our financial needs are growing as well.

Are you willing to support a new movement in the Church with your financial help?

The Widows of Prayer is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Tax Deductible Charity.

Cut off the bottom of this sheet, fill out and send along with your check to:

Widows of Prayer, Inc. 414 Frances Way, Menasha WI 54952-1350

WIDOWS OF PRAYER DONATION-----

Name _____

Address _____

I am willing to give: \$100 - \$75 - \$50 - \$25 - \$20 - \$10 - Other \$ _____

Any amount given will be greatly appreciated. Remember the Widows of Prayer in your will.

www.widowsofprayer.org