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CORNER



Sr. Phyllis gives Sr. Patricia a blessing of gratitude in the Notre Dame Care Center Chapel

Ursuline leadership transition . . .

The Ursulines of Brown County celebrated Pentecost with the installation of Sr. Patricia Homan as Congregational Minister for the next four years. She follows Sr. Phyllis Kemper who just completed four years in leadership. The liturgy was held at the Mt. Notre Dame Center and included all 20 members of the community, Companions, friends and family members. Before the final blessing, Srs. Phyllis and Patricia were called before the community for a blessing, given by Sr. Agatha Fitzgerald, as the member who has the longest history as an Ursuline. Phyllis then blessed Patricia with a blessing in the name of the community, using water from the River Jordan, Lake Garda in Italy and Solomon's Run on the Brown County property. Sister Phyllis received a blessing of gratitude for her faithful service. The celebration was followed by dinner.

Both Phyllis and Patricia have held leadership positions in many ministries over their years in Community. Following is just a glimpse of how they have shared their gifts with many.

Sister Patricia Homan

The Ursulines of Brown County were important figures in my life from the beginning of my formal education. Various Ursuline Sisters would travel from St. Martin to Owensville on Saturday mornings to teach Religion classes in the old public school building. I have vivid memories of Sister Regina Winters parading the second grade from the public school to St. Louis Church to practice for First Communion. St. Louis School was built and opened as I entered the fourth grade where Sr. Martha Fealy was the first Principal and also the third and fourth grade teacher. By the time I reached the upper grades, Sister Aloysius McCarthy had taken over as Principal and Math teacher for the seventh and eighth graders. Sister Regina Winters was teaching the first and second grades but spent time after school as the Art Club moderator, teaching art techniques through projects, including a mosaic of St. Louis that still graces the main hall of the school. Being one of nine children, the Ursulines were part of our family conversations, cherished memories and certainly enlivened the religious foundation established by my parents.



So it really wasn't a big surprise when the idea of becoming an Ursuline resonated in my heart and spirit during my years at McNicholas High School. In September of 1966 the Ursulines accepted me as a Postulant. Although the transition from living with my parents and eight siblings was challenging, it was a calling that shaped and enriched my life in unimaginable ways and provided opportunities for which I am deeply grateful.

Following the years of formation and college education, three years at what is now Chatfield College and two years at Ursuline College in Cleveland, my first assignment was as at Brown County. Teaching Home Economics for the High School and serving as residence moderator for the various groups of boarding students kept me busy. For six years assisting in the daily lives and challenges of the students taught me to respect each young woman as an individual with gifts and talents and how to help them navigate their lives in a productive manner.

After the intensity of teaching and living with students, the move to Dayton and my experience teaching Home Economics and serving as Assistant Principal at Springfield Catholic Central High School was a totally new adventure. Catholic Central is a co-educational school and provided my only experience of teaching young men. Friday nights were spent at Football and Basketball games and cheer leading skills were quickly learned. Having male students in cooking, sewing and child care classes was a pleasure and taught me that compassion is God's gift to each of us.

In 1980 the Home Economics position opened at Ursuline Academy and my belief in and support of education for women blossomed. The academic expectations, open environment and modular schedule instilled responsibility and self confidence in students inviting me to be a better teacher and role model. At the same time Ursuline Congregations became more involved in researching St. Angela Merici and the foundation of her Company and making connections with Ursuline Schools around the country. Not only were we educating young women, we were instilling in them the Ursuline charism of leadership, service and spirituality. These connections were foundational in the years that followed.

Being intrigued with the Ursuline charism initiated my taking the opportunity to be a part of an Ursuline school in Cleveland after ten years at UA. For four years Beaumont School in Cleveland Heights became my home away from home. The Beaumont students were more ethnically and economically diverse but the Ursuline heart was strong and healthy. The Cleveland Ursulines took me in as one of their own and the years spent ministering with them was a rich blessing for me personally and spiritually.

Returning to Ursuline Academy in 1994 in an administrative capacity continued to nurture my Ursuline heart and soul. While supporting UA as a host school for students from an Ursuline school in Japan to preparing seniors for the traditional graduation ceremony, thirteen years passed quickly. These years were filled with young women who established their values, learned to use their voice and lives to follow the vision of St. Angela and to emulate the courage of Julia Chatfield.

The election process for the Community in 2003 and again in 2007 called me as Congregational Minister for the Ursulines of Brown County for eight years. Less involved in the day to day workings at UA, I continued to assist as time and circumstances allowed during the first four years. In 2007 I was privileged to serve as the Co-Director of the Ursuline

Education Network, assisting Ursuline schools around the country through the coordination of programs and opportunities for interconnectedness and sharing the depth of St. Angela's wisdom and vision.

For the past eight years Chatfield College has been the focus of my ministry. Serving as Site Director and Associate Dean at both campuses along with sharing the Ursuline mission and identity with faculty, staff, students and board members has been challenging and invigorating. The student population is distinctly different from past educational experiences but demonstrated a faith in God's presence that invited me to stretch my understandings and beliefs in the education of the whole person.

God's generous blessings and gifts have been abundant during my 53 years with the Ursulines of Brown County. Having the opportunity to again serve the Community as Congregational Minister is a privilege. Undoubtedly, one that will hold continued surprises and grace, support and encouragement, disappointment and challenges. Unwavering is my appreciation for all who have touched my life – from my Ursuline Sisters to students and co-workers, family, friends and colleagues and yes, to those with differing views and beliefs. Each person has enriched and strengthened my joy, my faith in God's love and life within all of us. It is with deep gratitude that I continue to be sustained by St. Angela's words: "Have hope and firm faith in God, who will help you in everything."

Sister Phyllis Kemper

I have been blessed to be part of a very close and loving family with nine siblings. Early on I learned what it was like to "live in community". The Ursulines of Brown County were my teachers in grade and high school so when I heard God's call to religious life, it just seemed natural to join the women I knew and loved. That was over 50 years ago when I was too young to realize how many surprises God would have in store for me. Each ministry has been a preparation for the next, starting with teaching home ec. at Ursuline Academy in Cincinnati. After 6 years at UA I moved to Brown County where my role as head of housekeeping had several evolutions. When the community decided to raze the motherhouse building, I assumed the role of liquidator, all the while being a nursing assistant to Sr. Raphael Grueter, caring for our elderly sisters.

When the liquidation was completed, I was able to follow my dream of becoming a nurse. My goal was to work in community health. At the time, hospital experience was a prerequisite, so I worked as a medical-surgical nurse at Mercy Hospital Clermont before transferring to Mercy Home Care. It was during that ministry that I became acutely aware of the folks who were falling between the cracks – they no longer met Medicare criteria for home care but they needed help managing their health care, no matter how well the nurses tried to teach them to be independent. I was introduced to a model of parish nursing at TriHealth in which the nurses worked out of inner-city parishes but served the entire neighborhood; my neighborhoods were Over-the-Rhine and North Fairmount. Our clients were among the underserved people who were falling between the cracks of our health care system. I had the opportunity to teach individuals and groups about managing their health care as well as mentor student nurses during their community health practicum. However, the most rewarding part of this parish nurse ministry was being part of the health care journey of people not wealthy materially but ever so gifted in wisdom and spirituality. What I learned from my clients far outweighed the care I gave them.



Fifty years ago, I never thought I would be in leadership in the community, much less negotiating the sale of our property at Brown County and closing our home there after 173 years. More importantly, when I entered, I had no idea that I would be accompanying seven sisters as they prepared to meet our loving God. What a privilege that was!

Another gift of leadership was working with sisters in other congregations who shared the same ministry, whether they were part of the North American Ursuline Leadership Conference, archdiocesan committees, or the regional and national groups in the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. There was a strong bond that developed because we all faced similar challenges. We supported each other as each of us experienced various degrees of diminishment of our congregations.

Now as I complete my term in congregational leadership, God has surprised me again in the opportunity to be a co-moderator at Mt. Notre Dame Health Center. The moderators' role is to foster community life for the sisters, who include not only the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, but the Ursulines of Brown County and a Poor Clare sister who are also residents. I am honored to be the first non-SNDdeN in this position and very happy to be part of the health center community.

URSULINES OF BROWN COUNTY
20860 STATE ROUTE 251
ST. MARTIN OH 45118-9507

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Sr. Raphael Grueter

Sr. Raphael (Rosemary) Grueter died peacefully at Mt. Notre Dame Health Center on April 12, 2019, at the age of 92. Beloved member of the Ursulines of Brown County for 75 years. Sr. Raphael is the dear sister of Gerald Grueter (the late Sue) of Birmingham, MI, and special aunt to three generations of nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents Henry and Rosemary Grueter and her brothers Edward (Mary) and Thomas (the late Dorothy) Grueter. Sr. Raphael's primary ministry was serving as the nurse for the Ursuline community as well as the students at the School of the Brown County Ursulines, where she also taught biology. She was in congregational leadership and was maintenance director of Ursuline Center for many years. Sr. Raphael donated her body to science through the University of Cincinnati School of Medicine. A Memorial Mass was celebrated at the Sacred Heart Chapel, 20918 S.R. 251 St. Martin, Ohio 45118 on Saturday, April 27, 2019. A second Memorial Mass will be celebrated at Mt. Notre Dame Health Center on July 23rd, where she had lived for the past seven years.

