



# STONE

A publication of the Ursulines of Brown County  
St. Martin, OH 45118-9507  
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## CORNER

Over the past two years we have shared many of the changes that have affected our lives as Ursulines of Brown County. In June 2017 after a unanimous vote by the Sisters, we deeded all the buildings and non-farm land to Chatfield College, our sponsored Associates Degree College. With this agreement, the Sisters maintained the Brescia residence, along with the use of Springer House as our Administrative Building for as long as the community needed to occupy them. In addition, we may continue the use of the Chapel, Mongan and Welcome Center Buildings when needed for various community events.

### FROM BRESCIA RESIDENCE



### TO MT. NOTRE DAME HEALTH CARE CENTER

In October 2017 the farmland, which is held in a conservation easement, was auctioned to a local farmer with Ursuline connections, and a beautiful soybean crop was produced for the 2018 harvest. In both cases we have felt blessed by all who helped make it possible that our legacy may continue when we no longer are present on the grounds first inhabited by our foundress Julia Chatfield and her ten companion-sisters 173 years ago.

October 2018 brought perhaps the most difficult change during this whole process. Since 1985 Brescia has been our physical motherhouse residence and community gathering space after the former motherhouse was demolished. By June 2018 only two sisters resided at Brescia. For many reasons it was decided that the time had come to vacate Brescia and move the sisters to assisted living at Mount Notre Dame Health Care Center.

We gladly accepted the invitation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur to be permanent or temporary residents at their health center as the need arose. From 2003 to 2017 ten additional sisters were cared for on the health care unit. Some sisters received rehabilitation care after surgeries, and for the past few years we have been able to take advantage of assisted living. It has become a gathering space for our community prayer days, meetings, birthday and Christmas celebrations that now may be attended by all the sisters

Prior to the move, we held a special prayer service of remembrance and a meal. On October 17th, Sisters Agatha Fitzgerald and Ruth Podesta joined Sisters Pat Brockman, Clare Ragazzo and Joan Roach on the assisted living floor and Sr. Raphael (Rosemary) Grueter and Mary Docker, who reside on the health care floor. The final act of closing the building as our residence and community space came when the Blessed Sacrament was removed from the chapel and

Sr. Phyllis Kemper, Congregational Minister extinguished the sanctuary lamp leaving the tabernacle door open. She says of this very difficult and meaningful act:

*"In October 2018 the Ursulines of Brown County moved from the property that had been home to generations of sisters. Safety concerns indicated it was time for the last two of our sisters to move to assisted living at Mt. Notre Dame Health Center. The decision, of course, impacted these two sisters most directly, but at our final prayer and dinner, a few days before their move, we learned how deeply the move affected the other sisters, too. For those of us under 78, this building was "home" longer than our beloved original motherhouse buildings that were razed in 1985. It was consoling to me when one sister reflected that we will always be present here, because our cemetery remains on this holy ground.*

*The reality of the move hit me when Fr. Tom Bolte left open the doors of the tabernacle and I extinguished the sanctuary candle. Just as we were present on this property for 173 years, so was the Eucharist. It was a sign that each person who walks this holy ground must be the presence of Christ to one another.*

*We are blessed that Chatfield College, one of our sponsored ministries, is the owner of our former motherhouse property. There are many possibilities for how they will use the building vacated. We are grateful we can continue to house our archives and heritage room in the lower level of that building and that our administrative offices can remain in a small cottage on the property."*

All of this has been made possible through your prayers and generosity shared with us on this journey. In so many ways we have come to a deeper understanding of Julia Chatfield's words: "We are led by an unseen hand we can only adore in silence.

One-third of the Ursulines of Brown County now reside at the Mount Notre Dame Health Care Center. These seven extraordinary women together have given 400 years of service to thousands of people in a variety of local, national and international ministries. We are happy to share their stories of the people, places and ministries to which each one felt called over the past 72 years.

## Ursuline Sisters in Assisted Living at Mount Notre Dame



**Sister Pat Brockman** in July 2016 was the first of the Ursulines to become a resident of assisted living. She arrived after 65 plus years of active ministry that took her from teaching at Ursuline Academy to today's work of helping to chronicle the life of the New Jerusalem Community. Pat began her Ursuline connection at the age of 5 when she went to the boarding school in Brown County and continued her later education at Ursuline Academy. She entered the community in 1946. She taught both elementary and high school at Ursuline Academy culminating her ministry at UA as principal by taking on the daunting task of moving the school from Oak Street near downtown Cincinnati to suburban Blue Ash in 1971.

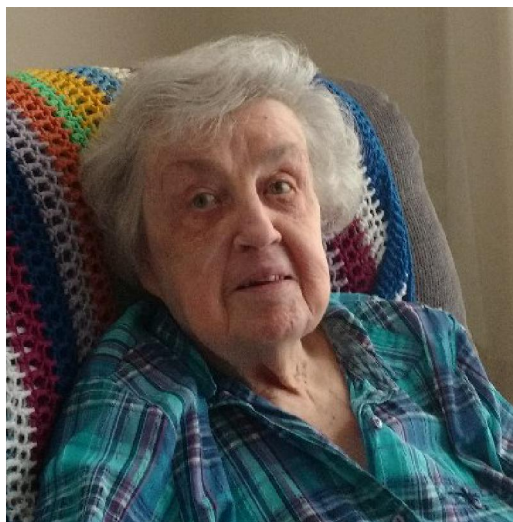
From here she began her long relationship within the New Jerusalem Community. Her leadership there morphed into prayer ministry that led to her work with people on the meaning of their dreams. She received her PhD from the Union Institute and University. Her experiences led her to provide spiritual renewal opportunities through retreats and using retreatants' own dreams for prayer in discernment. Her book **The Community Dream: Awakening Tribal Consciousness** was a result of her work with spirituality and prayer work with many religious communities as part of their own discernment processes. At the invitation of Fr. John Quigley, OFM, Pat also spent a year in Geneva overseeing and guiding young adult interns in the Franciscan office of social justice. Over all these years Pat was committed to her local parish and the New Jerusalem Community.

Pat says of her life at Mt. Notre Dame: "The sisters here are gracious and welcoming. The time for prayer and daily Mass is wonderful. One sister particularly shares my love of poetry with me. I have a beautiful room and I am able to partake in activities, particularly yoga and a book club with sisters, priests and lay persons. I am also close to family here." In her first year at Mt. Notre Dame Pat published a sold-out book of poetry about St. Angela called **Angela's Promise**.

year before being named directress of the Novitiate where she remained for six years, providing initial formation to the young women who entered the Ursuline Community, meanwhile teaching and counselling in the boarding school. She was appointed Principal of the boarding school for five years and then joined the staff at Chatfield College for the next thirty years, teaching psychology, providing counseling, and eventually becoming Dean. As her work included Public Relations, Agatha became involved in civic and local community activities. The last two decades of her active ministry were spent in development and communications for the Ursuline community. She continues to share her artistic talent with anyone who requests it, including the layout of this newsletter.

Agatha moved to Mount Notre Dame in October 2018. "We have been warmly welcomed at Mount Notre Dame and made to feel a part of the community. As we share in their joys and sorrows, this experience expands my understanding of community," Agatha says. "I lived my vocation and ministry primarily at Brown County and I am very grateful for my seventy years as an Ursuline. Now I have another opportunity: I am here at Mt. Notre Dame to listen and to be present to others in my expanded community."

## Ursuline Sisters at Mount Notre Dame



**Sr. Mary Doeker** spent twelve years at Ursuline Academy before entering the Ursuline community in 1946. She loved her time at Ursuline so much that her aunt predicted that she would enter the community. She attended the Athenaeum Teachers College and completed her bachelor's degree in education at the former Edgecliff College. She received her master's in education and theology from Xavier University.

Mary's professional experience included teaching at our boarding school and Ursuline Academy for high school but also at the elementary level at St Louis, Owensville, St. Vivian, Cincinnati and St. Joseph in Springfield, Ohio. She also served as Director of Religious Education at both St Vivian and St Joseph Parishes. Mary felt blessed to be able to participate in the Ursuline Tertianship Program in Rome in 1974-75. The last years of Mary's active ministry involved pastoral services for seniors at Mapleknoll Village in Cincinnati and as Pastoral

Associate at St. Gabriel Parish in Glendale, Ohio. She particularly cherishes her work with the pastor at St Gabriel, Fr. David Fay, a long-time friend of the Ursulines.

Mary has been residing at Mt. Notre Dame since August 2012. "This is a wonderful place," Mary says. "I am happy to be here, and they are so good to us."

**Sr. Raphael (Rosemary) Grueter** came to Mt Notre Dame in April 2012 after many years of nursing for hundreds of students and Sisters at the boarding school and Motherhouse in St. Martin, Ohio. Following her graduation from the boarding school in 1944, she entered the community. In 1952 she completed her nursing at Good Samaritan Hospital in Cincinnati. She later received her BS in Science from Mt. St. Joseph College. Except for one year at Ursuline Academy Raphael provided care and service in many areas at the Motherhouse. Besides her nursing care, she taught biology, junior high science and religion in the school. Raphael served as assistant to the superior and on the Community Leadership Council. Raphael also had unique knowledge of the buildings and grounds after years of supervising the maintenance staff. Her life-long commitment to the health and well being of all who resided at the Motherhouse campus was gift and blessing for more than half a century.

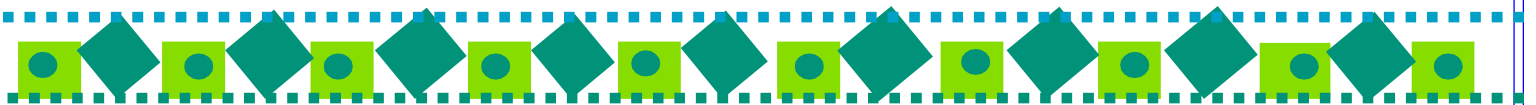
Raphael has always been a warm and welcoming to everyone she meets. Those qualities, as well as her delightful sense of humor, have made her a beloved resident to the Sisters and staff at Mt. Notre Dame.





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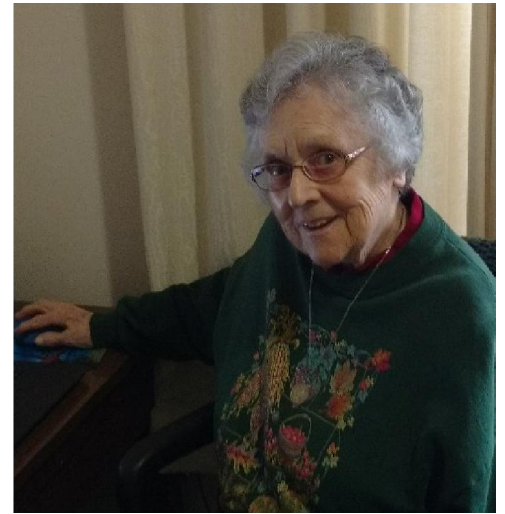
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Let them have  
Jesus Christ  
for their only  
treasure

St. Angela Merici

**Sister Ruth Podesta** arrived at Ursuline Academy as a first grader. Twelve years later she entered the Community in 1950. She spent 30 years teaching in elementary and high school at both UA and our boarding school. Her students best remember her as their French teacher. She would later work at Chatfield College as registrar and in financial aid. After a sabbatical year in the program for women religious, Active Spirituality in the Global Community, she had an opportunity to work in Communications at the International Union of Superiors General in Rome, Italy. The UISG is a source of information for active women's religious congregations all over the world. This international experience led her to answer the call to Washington to work at the Center of Applied Research for the Apostolate (CARA) where she edited research papers. From there she went to the National Jesuit Social Action Office. Two evenings a week Ruth taught in an English Language Program for foreign-language speaking adults. It was there she met Haitians who invited her to join them in their new community and parish church. This relationship led to many years of ministry among Haitian refugees at the Pierre Toussaint Haitian Catholic Center in Miami, Florida Miami and the Haitian Center in St Francis Parish, Trenton, New Jersey.



Following that ministry, she returned to Cincinnati where she became secretary to the Chancellor for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati for eight years. After retiring from that position, she became very active in her parish serving in food assistance as part of the local outreach program. Ruth also volunteered at Hope Lodge, the former Ursuline Academy that became American Cancer Society's temporary residence for cancer patients and their companions from out of town. Many Ursuline Academy alumna from Oak Street have enjoyed tours of Hope Lodge and were delighted that the new building maintained so much of the original school's aesthetics.

In 2012 Ruth returned to Brown County where she resided at Brescia. She volunteered at Hope Emergency Program (begun and continued under Ursuline direction) and taught religious education in the local parish. She also taught French and Latin at Chatfield College. One of Ruth's happiest experiences in Brown County was living on Hamer Road in Sardinia, getting to know the families, teaching the children and helping in parishes in Mt. Orab, Sardinia, Arnheim and Fayetteville. She began living at Mt. Notre Dame in October 2018.

Reflection on Ruth's past relationships and many ministries alone certainly show how many people and geographic areas have been touched by the presence of Ursulines. She says of her new life, "I keep busy typing original stories handwritten by a friend for her family and grandchildren. I appreciate the spiritual and intellectual opportunities and just plain fun in beautiful surroundings with a tree-beauty campus, but most especially with many new friends."



**Sr. Clare Ragazzo** became the second Ursuline resident on the assisted living floor in October 2016. Clare's journey to the Ursulines was one of faith that led her at the age of 30 from the coal mining community of Aflex, Kentucky to St. Martin, Ohio. Her love of education was evident throughout her high school and local commercial college days. After graduating she worked at the company store across from her home. Clare pursued her business education at Gregg College in Chicago while living with relatives. She returned home and worked for the Draft Board and later as bank teller and bookkeeper in a nearby town. Her desire to pursue other experiences and further education led her to peruse the Cincinnati Enquirer for job openings. She applied and was hired as one in a pool of secretaries at Procter and Gamble. Clare lived at the Fontbonne, a residence for single Catholic women in Cincinnati. While there she re-visited her earlier desire to enter a religious community. She met with several local congregations but found them too large. A priest recommended that she visit the Ursulines at Ursuline Academy at Oak Street. Her first visit led to her entrance into the Ursulines in 1952.

Clare developed the business department at our boarding school. With the program flourishing, she was able to return to school and graduated from Mt. St. Joseph College (now University) with a degree in history. Following her graduation, she taught business classes and elementary school at Ursuline Academy. She loved teaching history; students particularly loved the subject because of her.

At the age of 70 Clare turned to another talent that filled her days for more than two decades. She turned her love of growing flowers and artistic flair into an entrepreneurial project. She took her flowers, dried and pressed them and made them into a variety of notecards. Clare sold her cards at church festivals as well as among the sisters. Today her cards are still a popular selling item at Inner Visions, a Catholic Religious Goods Store in Cincinnati.

Clare is now 96. She was the first of our community to reach the age of 95. Clare says of her life at Mt. Notre Dame, "It is a warm, welcoming, friendly atmosphere. The meals are delicious and nutritious. My room has everything I need, and our own private bathrooms are wonderful. The sisters and the staff are so kind and gracious."



**Sister Joan Roach** joined Srs. Pat and Clare on the Assisted Living floor in July 2018. She also brought with her a past of many ministries and persons served. Joan came to Ursuline Academy as a freshman and continued her life with the Ursulines after graduation. She began her formal ministry as an educator, teaching elementary school at Owensville, Ohio, then English and religion at Ursuline Academy followed by teaching a time at St. Pius X High School in Atlanta, Georgia. She eventually went to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where she was contracted with the Department of Aging of Allegheny County to design and implement adult guardianship programs both public and private through the Ursuline Center there. Later while in Pittsburgh she was trained and hired as a chaplain for Allegheny General Hospital. There she became certified to provide pastoral service, spiritual assistance and ethics in hospital decision making. Joan also served at St. Joseph Hospital in Atlanta. Both hospitals are research hospitals. Upon her return to Cincinnati Joan worked in parish ministry before immersing

herself as ombudsman for Pro-Seniors to assure no violations were occurring in 252 nursing homes in their areas. She also worked on the issue of Human Trafficking in policy development with the FBI and other committee members. She gave presentations, participated in political advocacy and intervention to address this issue. Joan muses how her active ministry as a young sister began with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and ended working against human trafficking with "elder wisdom"

Joan sees her residence at Mount Notre Dame as the latest chapter of life. "I currently live in a neighborhood surrounded by family and the 'munchkins' [great-nieces and -nephews]. They visit often, do art work for my walls and they love the 24-hour soft serve ice cream machine. I live with the illusion that they love to visit with me!!"

**Sister Agatha Fitzgerald** didn't know when she joined her friend Alice Focke in their freshman year at our Brown County boarding school that Brown County would continue to be her home for most of her life. In 1946, after high school, she entered the Ursuline Community and while in the novitiate she taught English on an elementary level and Physical Education in the High School. After their first profession of vows, she, Sisters Pat Brockman and Mary Doeker were given the unprecedented opportunity to attend college full time. Shortly into that year Agatha was called to replace the third- grade teacher who was confined to bed due to illness. Her first assignment after a semester at college was to work full time with the younger girls in the boarding school. The experience of those years was foundational to all her ministry in the years that followed.

She spent a year teaching eighth grade at Ursuline Academy before attending Catholic University full time for a Master of Arts degree that prepared her to be a school counselor and to teach Psychology at Chatfield College. Agatha returned to Ursuline Academy as a counselor and teacher of English and Religion for a

