

## RSHM - Eastern American Area Welcomes New Leadership Team

The Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary – Eastern American Area selected a new area leader and councilors effective August 1, 2024.

Sister Maria Timoney, RSHM, was inducted as the new leader at the close of the area's three-day gathering in July. Sister Maria trained as a teacher and worked at St. Bridget's School in Virginia followed by several years in the Marymount College Admissions Office in Tarrytown, New York. She was then missioned to the Appalachian region of Virginia in 1979. She was involved with community development, community organizing and advocacy, and served as a legal intern with Legal Services of Southwest Virginia. She returned to New York in 1988 to attend CUNY Law School, Queens College. Upon completing her law degree, she returned to Wytheville, Virginia and worked as an attorney for the Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society. In 2019 she returned to New York when she was asked to join the Eastern American Area's leadership team as a councilor. She served in this role until a new council was elected in 2021. She continued to do legal work for the Eastern American Area and its ministries until her recent appointment as Area Leader.

Also inducted were two area councilors, Sister Catherine Vincie, RSHM, and Sister Margaret Hoyne, RSHM. Sister Catherine served as a councilor for the past nine years and played a central role in the renovation of the Butler Memorial Chapel in Marymount Convent. She received a PhD in Liturgical Theology from the Catholic University of America and taught liturgical theology in several graduate schools. From 1995 to 2015 she served as a Professor of Liturgical and Sacramental Theology at the Aquinas Institute of Theology and Ministry in St. Louis. A frequent lecturer, she has written several books, articles, and book chapters about Christian initiation, Eucharist, and liturgy and justice.



*L to R: Srs. Maria Timoney, Catherine Vincie and Margaret Hoyne*



With an MS degree in Education from St. John's University, Sister Margaret served as both teacher and administrator at several schools over 36 years, including St. Pius X in Rosedale, NY, St. Andrew's in Sag Harbor, NY, St. Catharine of Alexandria in Brooklyn, NY, Good Shepherd in St. Louis, MO, and Marymount International School in Paris, France. In 2005 she joined the staff of the RSHM LIFE Center in Sleepy Hollow, NY, and became Convent Coordinator in 2015. In 2023 she began a new ministry at Cormaria Retreat Center in Sag Harbor until asked to join the new Eastern American Area leadership team.

We are grateful to the previous council, Sister Rosamond Blanchet, Area Leader, and Councilors Sisters Susan Gardella and Catherine Vincie for their leadership and service. Sister Rosamond will be moving to Cormaria Retreat Center and Sister Susan is returning to her position as Director of the RSHM LIFE Center in Sleepy Hollow.

# Signs of the Times

## Reflections on Ministering in Lampedusa

By the time you receive this issue of *Highlights*, Lampedusa, Italy, will have, for the 11<sup>th</sup> year, commemorated the tragic loss of lives a few hours after midnight on October 3, 2013, when an overcrowded fishing boat capsized only half a mile off the coast of Lampedusa. It had taken these refugees approximately 36 hours to arrive from Libya. According to a survivor, when they saw land; there was immediate excitement on the top deck which was heard by those below deck who had been suffering debilitating seasickness. They turned off the engine and to get the attention of the Coast Guard or anyone around them, the “captain” lit a fire that soon got out of control. Of about 523 asylum seekers aboard who had come from Eritrea, Somalia and Ghana after crossing the Sahara, 368 drowned and only 155 survived. They had each paid smugglers \$1,600 for the crossing.

Every year since then, with planned memorial events, it has become necessary to remember so many more victims. Well over 30,000 men, women and children from the Middle East and Africa have since died crossing this route to Italy from Algeria, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. It is considered the deadliest migration route in the world. According to the U.N., more than 280 children alone have died trying to cross the Mediterranean in 2023. These numbers don't include the many more who are missing.



*The Mediterranean Crucifix - Milagro, by Kcho, “presents Jesus crucified on wooden oars bound up by rope to symbolize the harsh reality of migrants who have crossed or failed to cross” the Mediterranean “aboard unseaworthy vessels.” It hangs in San Gerlando Church.*

*“You say grace before meals. All right. But I say grace before the concert and the opera ... and grace before I open a book, and grace before sketching, painting, singing, ... walking, playing, dancing and grace before I dip the pen in the ink.”*

*-G.K. Chesterton*

6,500 inhabitants in Lampedusa and in a matter of weeks we were dealing with over 7,000 to 10,000 of our brother and sister refugees! Where to accommodate and how to

feed them? An extraordinary amount of generosity came from families and restaurants to make it possible for San Gerlando and our many volunteers to feed them! It was amazing and a very moving experience of solidarity I will never forget!

Practically every day, regardless of the weather and the time, we religious sisters from different congregations would receive the message on WhatsApp of a

pending arrival of refugees at the pier. We would respond immediately joining with those from Mediterranean Hope (a project of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy), Save the Children, European Union Agency for Asylum, Fontex, and the Italian Red Cross, as well as the police and the Italian Carabinieri to greet the refugees rescued and brought in by the Italian Coast Guard.

There were often tragedies in Lampedusa, and we needed to be ready to do all we could to make each woman, man, and child feel as welcomed as we possibly could. Sometimes, there was just time enough before they boarded the bus that took them to the Welcoming Center, a holding center where migrants can rest and be fed. Sometimes we found ourselves needing to sit next to and comfort a mother who had seen her child drown. So many lost!

Like the story of this teenager from Eritrea. I noticed her one afternoon when I entered the emergency room of the only clinic in Lampedusa. She was alone and sobbing. Fortunately, she spoke a little English, so I sat down with her. She told me two of her brothers had drowned when the boat capsized. She and two of her other brothers were saved but they were separated from her. She had no way to contact them because her cellphone had fallen into the water as she tried to get aboard the Coast Guard vessel. She was so distraught that the nurses were afraid she would take her own life. I stayed with her while waiting for the Salesian Sister with me, Sister Ausilia, to appear. I shared the teenager's story with her and she devised a plan. Sister Ausilia knew the driver of the emergency vehicle that would take the teenager back to the Welcoming Center. She asked him if it would be possible to take her to our home for an



# Happenings Around the Eastern American Area

## Missioning Day

Each year in September, the sisters of the Eastern American Area gather for Missioning Day, a time to recommit as disciples of Jesus Christ and as RSHM. During Mass, the Area Council anointed each of the sisters with the words: "Be the voice of God to a world in need."

## Cormaria Celebrates *Night in Venice* at Garden Party

The more than 60 guests at Cormaria Retreat Center's annual Garden Party were treated to a *Night in Venice* with tastings prepared by renowned Chef George Hirsch. The small plates included Venetian duck ragu with four cheese pasta; shrimp prosciutto and crisp squid; stuffed artichoke hearts; and fig and fontina. To cap the evening, pastry with chocolate hazelnut cream was served for dessert. Funds raised support the retreat center.

## Marymount Alumnae Day of Service

Twenty alumnae, their families and friends joined us on September 14 for a day of service at Marymount Convent. Following Mass and lunch, our volunteers participated in one of three activities: planting in the Native Garden, polishing statues throughout the grounds, or painting/art projects with the sisters. The day concluded with ice cream, music, and games.

## LifeWay Network Afternoon Tea

As part of the global movement against human trafficking, LifeWay Network provides safe housing for women who have been trafficked and offers education about trafficking to the public. Recently, LifeWay hosted an Afternoon Tea honoring and celebrating its Corporation Members, including the RSHM. Honorees included Sisters Kathleen Kull, SC, and Maureen McGowan, RGS. They also welcomed Sisters Tesa Fitzgerald, CSJ, and Peggy McVetty, OP, to the corporate board. The RSHM are proud to be a Corporation Member, represented by RSHM Sisters Rosamond Blanchet and Betty Kolb, who serves as Secretary of the Board.

## Weaving Center Holiday Fair

Save the date for the Weaving Center's annual Holiday Fair, December 7 – 8, from 12 pm to 5 pm each day. It's a great way to start your holiday shopping.



L to R: Sr. Ausilia, young girl, Sr. Paola and Sr. Ines.

hour because of the condition she was in. Though it was highly unusual, we managed to take her home for a shower, gave her a change of clothes and food, and took her to a store to get her another cellphone. Sister Ausilia knew the owner of the store and immediately this young woman was set up. We had just enough time to return her to the driver waiting to take her back to the Welcoming Center. Her state of mind and demeanor had improved significantly. By the time we left her, she was smiling ... with hope.

Lampedusa was a gift to me. It was an answer to prayer; and my "yes" to going there came from my heart. So, I knew it was from God and what God wanted. My two years there left me with many memories and reasons to give thanks, in spite of the challenges that came with it. **I said "grace" many times. And I hope I gave more than I received.**

*Ines Gizzarelli, RSHM*



Sr. Ines at memorial to those who lost their lives crossing the Mediterranean on October 13, 2013.



# Connecting for Service in the Global Network of RSHM Schools

Students from Marymount School of New York and Marymount Los Angeles had an incredible experience when they were invited to participate in the Global Network of RSHM Schools' first Social Service Week hosted by Marymount Cuernavaca. Students and chaperones were met at the airport in Mexico City by wonderful representatives from Marymount Cuernavaca who planned an amazing week.

In Cuernavaca, the students from Marymount New York and Marymount LA stayed with generous host families and were paired with "student siblings" who acted as their guides for the week. Students would arrive at the Cuernavaca school with their siblings for days filled with important presentations and activities. Following the school day, they had the opportunity to engage in community service projects with organizations that have partnered with Marymount Cuernavaca in the past. Students spent an evening supporting other teens at a local Nuestro Pequeños Hermanos children's home (which led to dancing in the rain), baking banana bread and then praying with retired nuns at an elder home, and playing games with younger children from Ministerios de Amor, an orphanage in Cuernavaca. On Saturday morning, the students served breakfast at a local St. Vincent de Paul Center and learned about authentic inclusion when they met with children who have various abilities and needs.

Saturday afternoon, the entire group traveled to a Benedictine Monastery in Cuernavaca for a brief spiritual retreat to help us reflect and think about opening ourselves up to the needs of others. We considered the importance of community service in our lives and how we can continue to live out the mission of the RSHM sisters in diverse ways. We prayed with the monks on Sunday morning when they chanted their morning prayer in their beautiful church.

This was the first time that three Marymount Schools engaged in service projects together and articulated our shared connection to the RSHM charism and the wider message, "that all may have life and have it to the full." It was a beautiful demonstration of how Marymount schools share so much in terms of their history and their Catholic mission and identity, but also how we can all continue to learn from one another in important ways. While each of the three schools has different policies and practices related to community service hours and how we teach social justice classes, all three schools gave a presentation illustrating how students are involved in service activities both within and beyond the walls of their schools.



The hospitality and generosity of everyone in Cuernavaca helped make this well-planned experience truly remarkable. Students' hearts and minds were impacted as they developed new friendships and engaged in new experiences. They were able to live several of the pillars of Catholic Social Teaching including honoring the life and dignity of the human person, participating in family and community, and gaining a greater understanding of what it means to stand in solidarity with those on the margins. The week ended with a trip to a beautiful natural park in the Mexican state of Morelos where students were able to reflect on their responsibility to care for creation.

The Global Network of RSHM Schools has allowed us to be connected for impactful moments like these, and we are all grateful to be part of the larger RSHM community.

*Dr. Marianne FitzGerald  
Marymount School of New York*



# Report from the Global Network of RSHM Schools General Conference

Participants from 19 schools representing 6 countries and 3 representatives of the RSHM Institute answered the invitation to the Global Network of RSHM Schools meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil at the end of June. Whether we arrived from near or far, we were warmly welcomed by Sister Maria Helena Morra, the RSHM Area Leader, and all the members of the conference planning team with open arms, just like Christ the Redeemer who watches over this dynamic and culturally diverse city.

We received a special video message from Sister Margaret Fielding, the RSHM Institute Leader, who reminded us of three important signs inviting each member of the RSHM family to a deeper reflection of who we are and what we're called to do: 1) the new RSHM logo that conveys love, care, openness, and connection to our contemporary world, 2) the 2025 RSHM General Chapter theme, inviting us to examine how we as educators, people of faith and hope, strive to form young people who will make a positive difference, and 3) the image of Christ the Redeemer standing above Rio with arms outstretched, calling each of us to embrace and care for others, especially those on the margins of society, and the whole of creation, our common home.

The conference theme, *“Advance into deeper waters, educate with hope, acting prophetically in favor of humanity and creation,”* was organized in such a way that each day's sessions highlighted a different part of the theme. And what inspiring and thought-provoking sessions they were! Francisco Orofino compared spirituality to fishing in his interpretation of Christ's call to the Apostles to become “fishers of men,” and Sister Maria Helena explained the historical understanding of “shepherd,” Gailhac's experience of the Good Shepherd, and the significance for us today of Christ's model of commitment, trust, tenderness, and care. We witnessed authentic examples of those who are creating hope through education for refugees in Rio and Malawi, indigenous children in the Amazon region, and the “invisibles” who collect everything that society discards in Belo Horizonte, and the prophetic and changing education of students who participate in mission formation programs in our schools in Brazil and Portugal.

This visit to Rio de Janeiro wouldn't have been complete without some memorable spiritual, cultural, and artistic experiences. One unexpected event that we'll all remember took place during the welcome dinner when Sister Maria Helena joined the colorful, rhythmic, Samba dancers and expertly demonstrated her Carioca heritage. At Mass on Sunday, the Global Network of RSHM Schools received a special message and blessing from Rio de Janeiro's Cardinal Orani João Tempesta. After prayer in the Chapel one morning, the Commissioning Ceremony took place to thank the departing members of the Coordinating Committee



2024 Coordinating Committee (L-R) Sue Kumnick - Coordinator, Susana Sousa - Portugal Area, Ir. Cristina Caetano - RSHM Representative, Catalina Guzman - Mexico+Colombia Area, Sarah Thomas - EAA Europe Area, Jacqui Landry - USA Area.



and welcome three new members. Other experiences that complemented our Conference theme included time with students from the host school who took us on tours of the campus and offered artistic presentations, as well as our visits to the Museum of Tomorrow, Sugarloaf Mountain, and the Christ the Redeemer monument.

Thank you, Brazil, for giving the modern-day shepherds of our Global Network schools so much to think about, pray for, and take back to our school communities!

Susan M. Kumnick  
Global Network of RSHM Schools Coordinator



# A Century of Blessings: Sr. Fernanda's Inspiring Life

ON AUGUST 4, 2024, the Eastern American Area celebrated Sister Fernanda Moreira's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, the actual anniversary of her birth. Eucharist was followed by festivities and tributes to this incredible centenarian.

Fernanda is from Vila Cova in the district of Braga, Portugal, where she attended school and served as a "church girl" whose role was to say the responses during daily Mass. It was during this time that the parish women sponsored her to attend a retreat in Fatima where she met other young women, some of whom would be entering the RSHM. These connections, as well as meeting the RSHM superior there, led her to enter the community in 1943, making her first profession in Guimares, Portugal, in 1945.

From this point on, Fernanda lived the internationality that is so central to RSHM identity and mission. Although she once said that it was a challenge to learn the language of the country where she was missioned, "I found myself able to speak not only Portuguese, but also English, Spanish and Italian." How gifted she is!

As a young sister in Portugal, Fernanda expected to be sent to the Mother House, but was asked instead to go to Rome. She had no idea of all the places she would eventually live — Rome, Kingston, Barcelona, Umtali, and Tarrytown. In Barcelona, she cooked for the students and community, and in Umtali she assisted the school nurse.

It was in Rome however that Fernanda spent the most time, from 1950 to 1962 and from 1983 to 1995. She made her final profession there in 1950. As the communities formed and reformed to accommodate the growing needs of the schools and their boarders, Fernanda lived at both Istituto Marymount and Marymount International School. She loved being a "house mother" for the younger students and enjoyed chaperoning school trips.

Fernanda is an accomplished cook. According to one sister, her chicken and rice dish is incredible. She has also been known to come into the kitchen and rescue dinner for their small community when the sister preparing it was too far behind schedule! To this day, she often prepares soup for her supper at Marymount Convent.

Fernanda loves to sing and was often heard singing "Amazing Grace" and the chorus "I will raise him up" from "I Am the Bread of Life" while she worked. She also states that she especially loves "Abba Father" which has special meaning for her because of a retreat experience that she associates with this hymn.

When Fernanda returned to Tarrytown in 1995, she did not slow down. In 1999, she read the Prayer of the Faithful in Portuguese at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City at the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the founding of the RSHM. She did the same at St. Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre on an anniversary of the RSHM arrival in the U.S. in 1877. And, at the age of 90, she was still volunteering as a Eucharistic Minister at Phelps Memorial Hospital. In her leisure time, Fernanda now enjoys shopping, music, and walking in nature.

When Fernanda was asked to reflect on her years as an RSHM, she stated: "I have been blessed in my years of ministry, enthusiastic about the gifts I have been able to share, helping people when I can, saying words of encouragement, offering a smile and being grateful for their gifts. I thank God for being able to respond to the various calls received." And we, too, thank God for Fernanda's response, for her generosity, wisdom, and joy.

*Joanne Safian, RSHM*

100  
Years





# Preparing for Our 2025 Chapter

From the 23rd to the 25th of July 2024, the RSHM Eastern American Area met for reflection and sharing, the first phase of preparation for the 2025 General Chapter. The theme for the Chapter is “Women of Prophetic Hope, walking together, risking the new, that ALL may have LIFE.”

Following are some of the inspiring reflections on this theme presented by Mary Maher, SSND:

*Now is a critical time for our Church and our world. Climate change, violence, poverty, displacement of people ... all pose serious threats to humanity. How do we hold on to enthusiasm in the face of such risks? It is imperative to experience the Holy Spirit here in our commonality.*

*The Chapter theme calls us to “walk together” as explorers on a journey ... we are inspired by the words of Elizabeth Seton to her sisters: “Go and meet your grace.” What will it be like on this journey? What do I know is true?*

*First: GOD AND I ARE OLD FRIENDS. I have a story of my relationship with God, the love of my life. Our relationship is different today from when I was younger. Familiarity with God in prayer has grown over the years.*

*Second: TO HAVE MY LIFE I MUST GIVE IT AWAY. Love is the lifeblood of being. That includes love of our enemies. The way to peace is to forgive others and receive forgiveness. It is a liberating process. It is not about me but for the common good. To be prophetic we need to “do Jesus” in the world on social and economic levels, transforming our reality.*

At the conclusion of these days together the depth of the challenge and heartfelt confidence in God’s presence gave momentum to the General Chapter 2025 Prayer in our hearts:

Bea McMahon, RSHM



God of eternal newness,  
you are present  
in our hopes and dreams  
and in the unfolding  
of the universe.  
Teach us to walk with you  
humbly, acting justly  
and loving tenderly. (Mic 6:8)  
Open our eyes to see  
the future that you see, so that,  
like Mary, we may be  
women of prophetic hope.  
Guide our feet  
So that we may walk together  
In the spirit of faith and zeal  
that gave light to our founders.  
Embolden our hearts so that  
we may risk what is new,  
sure that you await us there.  
We ask this in communion  
with all your people  
In the deep and effective hope  
THAT ALL MAY HAVE LIFE.  
Amen

# HIGHLIGHTS PUZZLE: Marian Shrines

The themed clues in this puzzle refer to Marian shrines. Answers are posted at:

[www.rshm-east.org/category/newsletter](http://www.rshm-east.org/category/newsletter)

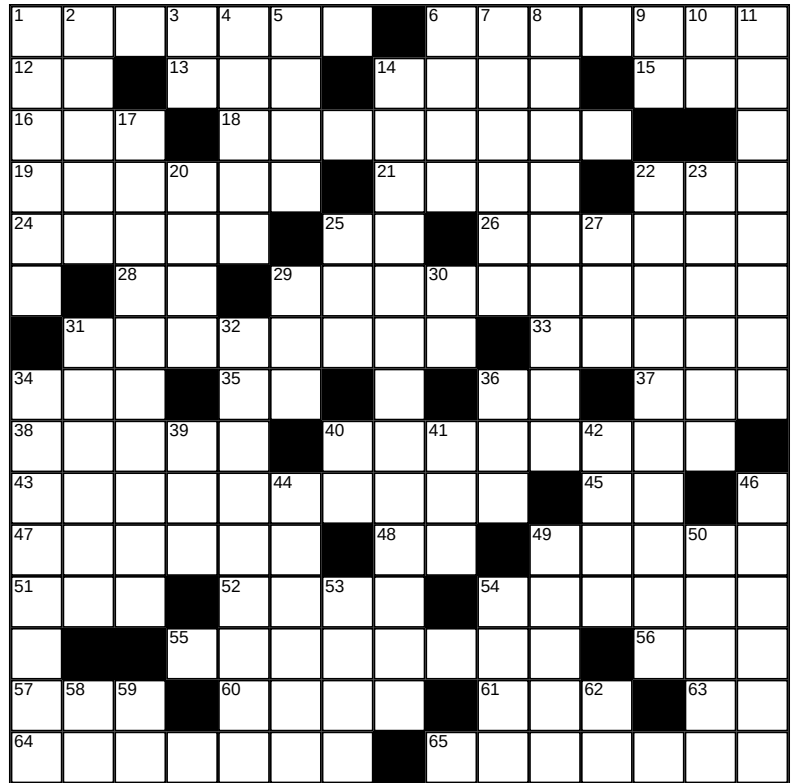
## Across

1. \*Our lady appeared here to Bernadette
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Lansbury and Davis
12. Pair before C
13. Set free from
14. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_, former Giants outfielder, youngest of famed MLB trio of brothers
15. Tiny \_\_\_\_\_ who tiptoed through the tulips
16. \_\_\_\_\_-o'-shanter
18. Couch at the edge
19. Come forth
21. Action
22. Grand Sierra Resort, abbr.
24. Hawkins dance
25. Concerning
26. Arrest Santa's helper
28. Little Woman who sold her beautiful hair
29. Hails to Pop
31. Eliminating my voice
33. Not merited
34. Droop
35. North America, abbr.
36. Advanced Placement, abbr.
37. Baseball's Mel \_\_\_\_\_
38. \*Our Lady is addressed here as Golden Rose, Queen of Ireland
40. Brief answer to the question, "What's the TV-&-room situation?"
43. How family members are connected
45. Georgia, abbr.
47. Come together again
48. Printer's measure
49. Puccini opera set in Rome under threat from Napoleon's army
51. Thermodynamic Engineering, abbr.

52. Newport News, Virginia, abbr.
54. Not finish
55. Pains of aging
56. Tai \_\_\_\_\_, capitol of Taiwan
57. Non-Governmental Org.
60. My mistake!
61. Crazy
63. PM opposite
64. Tallest living animal
65. Certificate of completion of a course of study

## Down

1. Most up-to-date
2. President before Biden
3. Railroad, abbr.
4. Funeral song
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Falco, Soprano actress
6. It's not true
7. Nine days of prayer
8. \*Our Lady's sign here was a cape full of roses
9. Sgt.'s boss
10. Artificial intelligence, abbr.
11. Game with a group of tiny blue humanoids
14. Increased the number of air conditioners in theaters, briefly
17. \*Thousands come in pilgrimage each year to this shrine in Bosnia-Herzegovina
20. Violent disturbance by a crowd
22. Send for the doctor at once, briefly
23. Detective
25. Slang for a sleazy newspaper
27. Small, round cake or roll
29. Double helix carrying genetic info.



30. Southeast, abbr.
31. Occupied, often militarily
32. Slightest suggestion of
34. Going around
36. \_\_\_\_\_ Arbor, Michigan
39. Chief Exec. Officer, abbr.
40. Tarrytown, abbr.
41. Charged particle
42. A Grand Old Party, briefly
44. (2 wds.) Green Gables

46. \*Our Lady appeared here to three Portuguese shepherd children
49. To deplete
50. \_\_\_\_\_ of the crop
53. Use a device to inhale a vapor
54. Half
58. US soldier, briefly
59. Operating room, abbr.
62. Disabled list, abbr.

*Bea McMahon, RSHM*

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