

# Ursulines of Cincinnati Visions

Christ-Centered Women in a Changing World



Spring/Summer 2016

## ST. URSULA ACADEMY PARLORS TO UNDERGO RENOVATIONS First Major Work in Almost 30 Years

If you are an alumna of St. Ursula Academy, how would you answer this survey question: "Name two areas/spaces on the St. Ursula campus that make St. Ursula unique and elicit fond memories?" The majority of a very small random sample said it would be the chapel and the parlors.

Recently our faithful volunteer archivists — Nancy Strottmann Broermann '68, Kit Rettig Overbeck '61, Elaine Besterman Semancik '54, Janet Buchert Hirst '67, and Anne Kennealy Gutzwiller '61 — were hav-

ing lunch with several of the sisters, and mentioned that the parlors were in dire need of a "touch up." The archivists frequently host tours of the parlors and archives for docents from

the Cincinnati Historical Society, the Taft Museum, the Cincinnati Art Museum, and the Museum Center, among other groups.

In addition, the parlors are still used for important activities for our students and alumnae — the annual Alumnae Christmas Tea, Homecoming, the induction ceremony for the National Honor Society and the French Honor Society, the Parents' Club Welcome Coffee, and hosting guest speakers. Many of our graduates celebrate their

weddings in the chapel and take pictures in the parlors to remember their special day.

The sisters agreed to do some refurbishing. Other than cleaning, there has not been any major work done to the parlors in almost 30 years. This is an important part of our heritage, and we want to pass it on to future generations of St. Ursula Academy women. We received two very generous, unsolicited gifts to help make the ren-

ovations of the parlors possible. The first gift came from our own Elaine Besterman Semancik, and the second gift was from the Homan Foundation

in honor of Matilda Kokenge Homan '15. Matilda was one of the very first girls to enroll in St. Ursula Academy when it opened in 1910. She attended Mass in the first chapel located in what is now known as the piano parlor.

Matilda's 1915 diploma was donated by her granddaughter, Diane Homan Werner '67, and will be displayed in the parlors.

The parlors are located in the Worcester House, built in 1877 and purchased by the sisters in 1910 as our very first piece of property on McMillan Street. It is the oldest part of what is today St. Ursula Academy.



*Volunteer archivists (L-R) Janet Buchert Hirst '67, Nancy Strottmann Broermann '68 (on chair) Kit Rettig Overbeck '61, and Elaine Besterman Semancik '54 (not pictured: Anne Kennealy Gutzwiller '61) have cleaned every item in the many cabinets in the parlors getting ready for the renovation.*



*The Homan family with the diploma of Matilda Kokenge Homan '15. Seated: Mattie (Matilda) Ziegler, SUA Class of 2016; second row (L-R): Debby Homan Bradley, Myse Homan Heinichen '86, and Ivy Stocks; back row (L-R): Chip Homan, Christine Homan Ziegler, Diane Homan Werner '67, and Libby Homan Stocks '93.*

(continued on page 3)



Dear Friends,

Could anyone unfamiliar with Jorge Bergoglio prior to his 2013 election as pope and Bishop of Rome have imagined the energy he would bring to the Catholic Church — and the world community — as Pope Francis? I find it impossible to keep up!

It seems the whole of North America was electrified by Pope Francis's visits to Cuba and the United States last September. His words challenged us; his actions spoke volumes. Sr. Eileen gives us an account of her experience of the Papal Mass in Philadelphia to close the World Meeting of Families.

Through the just-ended Year of Consecrated Life, Pope Francis called women and men religious to "live passionately in the present, bearing witness to the charism of the Founders" and to "embrace the future with hope." Ursuline Sisters are responding to this call in various ways. In the past year, the leaders of North American Ursuline congregations began a contemplative process engaging the question, "What is the legacy — the spiritual heritage — the Spirit is calling us as Ursulines to offer to the People of God?"

At their fall Cluster Gathering, members, friends and co-workers of the Ursulines of Brown County, Cincinnati, Louisville and Toledo heard from their respective Ursuline schools how St. Angela's charism is being instilled in their students and staff. SUA staff member Mary Ragland represented the sisters on the planning team. The experience motivated religion teacher and participant Jenifer Mertens, a regular contributor to *National Catholic Reporter's* "Young Voices" column, to write an article about her own experience of efforts at St. Ursula to "offer the [Ursuline] charism to future generations." See her article at <http://ncronline.org/blogs/young-voices/women-religious-offer-their-charism-future-generations>. Recognizing the importance of the Coordinator of Ursuline Initiatives at the Academy, the sisters are supporting a new, comparable position at St. Ursula Villa. Both schools are vital transmitters of Angela's charism.

Pope Francis, from his deep well of concern for all God's creatures, has already given The church new themes to pursue. In response to the release of his encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home: Laudato Si*, the sisters have entered a contemplative study of creation spirituality. We hope to stand open to the Spirit's guidance to practices that will bring healing to our hurting planet and hope to the disenfranchised of the world. We undertake these efforts in the light of this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. As we move through this presidential election year, may we all do so with an eye to the well-being of all of God's people and all of creation!

Sister Margie Efkeman  
General Minister

## Our Mission Statement

We, the Ursulines of Cincinnati, are a community of Christ-centered women transforming lives with compassion and creativity. We pledge to respond to the needs of our times through our diverse ministries and in collaboration with the laity. We will respect the dignity of each individual, nurture their unique gifts, and be present to them as we all seek a deeper and more personal relationship with God.

## Ursulines of Cincinnati

Sr. Margie Efkeman, OSU,  
General Minister

### Editor

Sr. Eileen Connelly, OSU

Special Acknowledgment to  
Stephanie Lang Beckmeyer (SUA '89)  
for design



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Welcome

Please feel free to write letters to our editor on anything you might like to say about articles that appeared in *Visions* or anything else that is of interest to you.

We welcome your opinion.

Please address letters to:

Eileen Connelly, OSU  
Ursulines of Cincinnati  
1339 East McMillan Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45206

## St. Ursula Academy Parlors to Undergo Renovations

(continued from page 1)



The home was purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Worcester for \$36,000 and has served us well for 106 years. The representative from the flooring company that will help preserve the floors told us that the wood is from old growth forests that

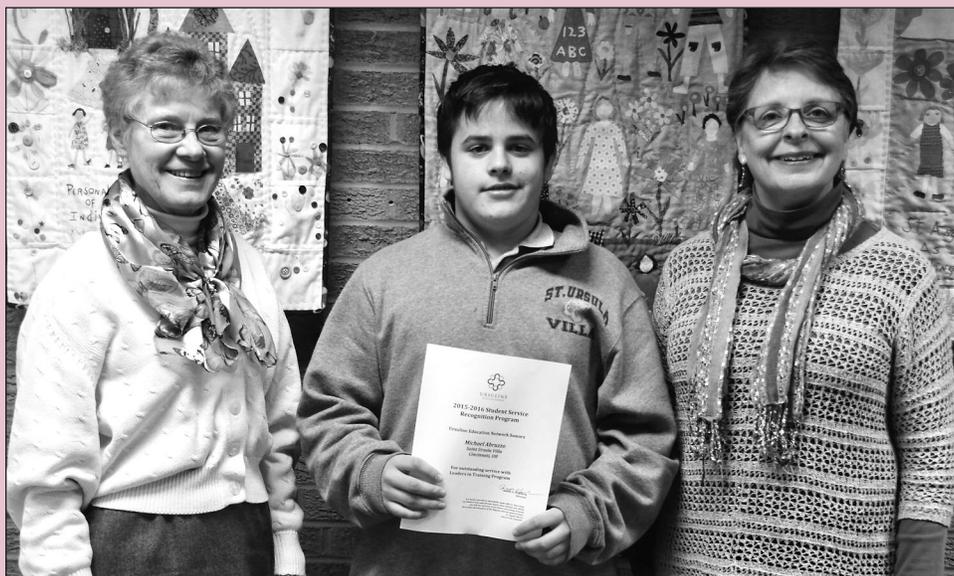
were already 600 years old when the boards were cut and installed in the house in 1877. He told us the tree species represented include oak, cherry, mahogany, and walnut.

Diane Homan Werner of Homan Interiors will direct the project. Carol Mal-

oney Donohue '67 is consulting. These two women are examples of the talented alums who do not hesitate to say "yes" when asked to serve!

—Sr. Mary Jerome Buchert

## Coordinator of Ursuline Identity



The Ursulines are supporting a new position, Coordinator of Ursuline Identity, at St. Ursula Villa. Laura Riehle, the Coordinator, is pictured here (far right) with Ursuline Education Network Service award recipient Michael Abruzzo (center) and Sr. Margie Efke.

## FALL CLUSTER GATHERING

### Highlighting Charism of Ursuline Schools

Mary Ragland, Coordinator of Ursuline Spirit Assistant at St. Ursula Academy, had never attended the annual Fall Cluster gathering before last year, but is now grateful she had the opportunity. Along with Theresa Butler, Director of Associates for the Louisville Ursulines, she planned the event, held Oct. 3 at General Butler State Park. Judy Wimborg, Director of the Ursuline Education Network, also assisted.

Titled "Contemplation in Action," the gathering centered on the relevance of St. Angela Merici's charism today and how it is being currently being carried out at Ursuline schools. The

day was patterned after a prayer service conducted several years ago at SUA. Representatives from four schools — SUA, Ursuline Academy in Blue Ash, Sacred Heart Academy in Louisville, and St. Ursula Academy in Toledo — were present. Liz Curran, '96, Coordinator of Ursuline Spirit Initiatives, spoke on behalf of the academy. After lunch, Jennie Mertens, '05, a religion teacher at SUA, shared a presentation on how students can be women of faith today.

The gathering came to close with a bread service, also patterned after one held at the academy, a litany and the "Hymm of St. Angela, composed

by Kathy Backherms '73.

"It was a nice, reflective day," Mary said. "It's always good to meet new people and see what they're doing. Being around others who share our love for the Ursuline charism is wonderful, and there is always more to learn about St. Angela."

"She was such a revolutionary in her time — to start a company of women, and to do it later in her life," Mary continued. "When we think we're winding down, maybe that's not the case. There might be more God wants us to do. That was definitely the case with St. Angela!"

# CONCERT CELEBRATES YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

## Featuring Singers and Musicians from 17 Religious Orders

A full house at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains Jan. 17 enjoyed a concert performance by more than 120 singers and musicians from 17 religious orders, including Srs. Eileen Connelly and Margie Efke representing the Ursulines of Cincinnati. The concert celebrated the closing the Year of Consecrated Life declared by Pope Francis at the end of 2014.

Fr. Fred Link, OFM, organized the hour-long event along with a planning committee that included Sr. Eileen. More than a dozen inspirational selections, including several soloists, were featured in the program, narrated by Fr. Dan Anderson, OFM. Fr. Link conducted the choir, which was accompanied by

religious performing on piano, organ, cello, guitar, flute, trumpet and percussion instruments.

Life concert,” she said. “Preparing for this event has brought joy to both the singers and musicians. We share with you this afternoon, in reflection and song, the joy we experience in our vocation to the Consecrated Life. St. Augustine said ‘Singing is praying twice.’ It is our prayer that all of us present today will be renewed in our God given vocation.”

A reception followed the event in the cathedral undercroft, along with the opportunity for guests to peruse displays by the participating religious communities.

“In emotional and spiritual impact for me, it is rivaled only by our 100th anniversary Mass in 2010,” Sr. Margie said of the concert.



*Members of 17 religious communities, including the Ursulines of Cincinnati, participated in “Wake up the World: A Concert Celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life.”*

Sr. Marilyn Kerber, SNDdeN, director of the archdiocesan Office of Religious, greeted the audience and introduced the choir.

“Welcome to this sacred space and welcome to this Year of Consecrated



*Sr. Eileen Connelly chatted with guests after the event.*



*Sr. Margie Efke played percussion during the concert.*

## Celebrating the Legacy of Ursuline Foundress St. Angela Merici



Sisters, Companions, Associates and friends celebrated the legacy of the Ursuline foundress, St. Angela Merici, with Mass and dinner on Jan. 23, posing for a group photo after the liturgy.

## THE ASSIGNMENT OF A LIFETIME

### Sr. Eileen Attends Papal Mass in Philadelphia



As the sun rose on Philadelphia Sept. 27, dozens of pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati arrived on several buses that departed from the Pilarczyk Center in Dayton the night before on a faith-filled journey — to catch a glimpse of Pope Francis and take part in the Papal Mass that brought the 2015 World Meeting of Families to close. Their trip was sponsored by the archdiocesan Family and Respect Life Office. The buses traveled through the night to “the city of brotherly love,” leaving the pilgrims exhausted, but excited about the day’s events.

Among the travelers was Sr. Eileen Connelly, who was covering the trip for *The Catholic Telegraph*, where she serves as news editor. “An assignment like that is a blessing,” said Sr. Eileen, “and the experience of a lifetime.”

Joining throngs of other pilgrims, Sr. Eileen’s group made their way through the crowded streets of

Philadelphia and security checkpoints before securing vantage points along Ben Franklin Parkway where they eagerly awaited the Holy Father’s arrival. While they waited, the pilgrims prayed, laughed, chatted and shopped for souvenirs, including rosaries and other commemorative items. Jumbotrons throughout the city enabled them to keep track of the pope’s every move. When Pope Francis appeared in the “Popemobile,” he was greeted with cheers and shouts of excitement as he smiled and waved to the faithful crowd.

The atmosphere became one of prayer and reverence as the 4 p.m. Mass began. The diverse crowd of pilgrims, representing various nationalities and age groups, joined together in worship, led by their beloved pontiff, who spoke of the importance of family and treating one another with kindness during his homily. At Communion, they sang together the familiar words of “You Satisfy a Hungry Heart” and “Taste and See.”

“I was moved by the pope’s message of hope and the joyfulness of those gathered,” said Sr. Eileen. “It was a truly Spirit-filled experience to be in the holy, yet humble, presence of Pope Francis and share such an incredible sense of faith and community with more than a million other people.”



*Sr. Eileen was able to capture this photo of Pope Francis as he passed by.*

## Sister Mary Germaine: Outstanding Volunteer Caregiver



*Sr. Mary Germaine with Sally Koester, Mercy West Park chaplain, who nominated her as Caregiver of the Year, 2015.*



*Pictured here (L-R) are Kris Morehart and Sally Koester, both West Park staff members, Sr. Mary Germaine, and Donna Corcoran, RN, staff member honoree for 2015.*

Sr. Mary Germaine Thorburn was honored as Outstanding Volunteer Caregiver for Mercy West Park, where she resides, at Catholic Charities annual Caregiver Recognition Mass on Nov. 8.

### North American Ursuline Convocation 2016 A Radical Response in the Evolving World: Re-Imagining Angela's Charism

Following Angela Merici's admonition to "come together from time to time," Ursuline sisters, associates, co-ministers, and graduates of Ursuline schools will come together in Louisville, Kentucky, July 7-10, 2016, to "re-imagine Angela's charism" for our evolving world.

Internationally-acclaimed speakers, Sr. Sandra Schneiders, IHM, and Fr. Michael Crosby, OFM Cap, will offer keynote talks. Prayer, breakout sessions, small group sharing, and socializing will round out the days.

Join — or continue — the conversation about carrying Angela's vision into the future. Registration opens in early March. Visit <http://northamericanursulineconvocation.weebly.com/> for details.



## We Have A New Website!

The Ursulines of Cincinnati are excited to announce the launch of our new website: <http://cincinnatiursuline.org>. It's been several years in the making and, we hope, worth the wait! Three Cogs handled the web design for us, and David Abad, friend of the community, will be serving as our web master. The site will feature information about St. Angela, our history, spirituality, membership, events, and news on our sisters and their ministries. This is a wonderful opportunity to expand our social media presence and reach a new audience, while staying in touch with our benefactors, alums and friends. Please stay in touch and visit often for updates.

# PASSING ALONG THE URSULINE HERITAGE

## The Archives of the Ursuline Sisters Is Alive With Activity

The Archives of the Ursuline Sisters of Cincinnati is alive with activity. A bright and beautiful space, it beckons students and faculty, alums, community organizations and the general public to experience an introduction to the Ursuline charism and history. This is accomplished through special events onsite, group and individual tours, and off-site presentations. In-depth research of the sisters' past and present mission can be undertaken through document search and interviews arranged through archivists.

Every Thursday throughout the year, five volunteer archivists — Nancy Strottman Broermann '68,

Kit Rettig Overbeck '61, Elaine Besterman Semancik '54, Janet Buchert Hirst '67, and Anne Kennealy Gutzwiller '61 — join together in doing

whatever needs to be done to assure the Archives remains a dynamic environment for learning and enrichment. In partnership with the sisters, St.

Ursula Academy and St. Ursula Villa, the Archives plays a significant role in continuing the Ursuline tradition of excellence in education in light of the gospel message.

Those who have been enriched by the Ursuline family want to play a part in passing along that heritage to current and future generations. That's the primary reason the archivists meet every week.



*A senior religion class discussed – and experienced – the habits worn by women religious during a visit to the Archives.*



*Interest in the Ursuline Sisters' connection with Cincinnati patron of musical arts Maria Longworth Storer prompted the docents of Cincinnati's historic Music Hall to visit the Ursuline Archives in September.*



*Nancy Strottman Broermann '68, lead archivist, gave a presentation to the Wyoming Woman's Club as part of their 100th anniversary celebration. Her topic: "Maria Longworth Storer, Beyond Rookwood Pottery."*

### Go Green with Our Publications!

The Ursulines of Cincinnati would like to "go green" by delivering some of our publications to you electronically. We encourage you to share your email address with us, or to update it if it has changed. Please send an email to Allison McGraw at [AMcGraw@ursulinesofcincinnati.org](mailto:AMcGraw@ursulinesofcincinnati.org), including your name and your preferred email address. This will help us keep you up to date on the Ursuline Sisters. Many thanks!

Your support of the Ursulines is deeply appreciated. Financial contributions may be made by check payable to Ursulines of Cincinnati and mailed to

The Ursuline Sisters of Cincinnati

1339 East McMillan Street

Cincinnati, Ohio 45206-2180

Attn: Convent Development Department

[or you may use the enclosed envelope.]

Credit card contributions may be made by calling Allison McGraw at

513-961-3410, ext. 146.

THANK YOU!

The Ursulines  
of Cincinnati



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