

Ursulines of Cincinnati Visions

Christ-Centered Women in a Changing World



Winter/Spring 2024

URSULINE COMPANIONS SPONSOR PRAYER SERVICE FOR THE CARE OF CREATION

The Ursuline Companions, a group of lay women engaged in prayer, mutual support and diverse ministries, sponsored a prayer vigil on October 25, 2023 in the St. Ursula Academy Chapel. The service was modeled on Taizé, a style of Christian worship practiced by the ecumenical Taizé community in France. Characteristic of a Taizé service, the vigil included the

alum and retired SUA music director), violinist, Sarah Geraghty (SUA alum), and Kathann Koehler (SUA mom) on hand bells, welcomed guests and set the stage for a calming, peaceful atmosphere. Accompanied by the musicians, talented vocalists Katherine Jennings, Mary Ragland, Eileen Connelly and Peggy McCormick-Platz, led the

thirty-nine participants in repetitive, meditative song. Periods of silence encouraged a serene and prayerful resting in God's presence.

Light refreshments and fellowship followed where individuals expressed appreciation for the evening's program and for the opportunity to take time from busy schedules and become still and quiet in the presence of God.



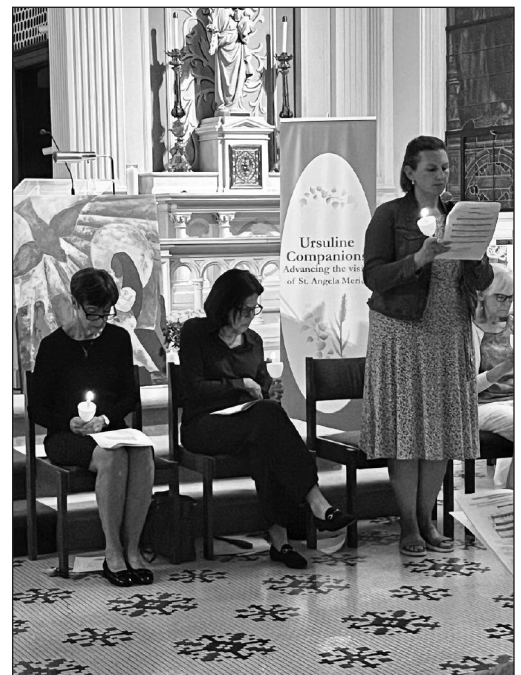
Participants placed lit candles in bowls representing their silent prayer intentions during the Taizé prayer vigil.

singing of simple harmonized tunes, interspersed with readings, prayer, and periods of silence. Intercessory prayers and readings reflected the evening's theme for the Care of Creation. Banners and paintings highlighting St. Angela Merici's life were displayed around the altar and served as additional sources of prayerful mediation.

Beautiful music, provided by pianist, Kathy Backherms (SUA

WHAT IS TAIZÉ PRAYER?

In the south of Burgundy, France, lies a small village called Taizé. Over seventy years ago it became the home to a group of religious brothers from all continents and major denominations, devoted to prayer and reconciliation. Today many people, especially youth, make pilgrimages to Taizé to experience the prayer and community life.



Tori Vogelgesang led intercessory prayers in gratitude for all of God's creation, for all victims of natural disasters, and for peace in war-torn countries.

Taizé prayer is a simple, meditative form of prayer. It is characterized by simple, repetitive songs that create a mantra into which one can easily enter, prayerful silence and short scripture readings. The generous use of silence is an important dimension.

"It is a time to rest in God, to let the words, listened to and sung penetrate one's being."

—Brother John of Taizé



Dear Friends,

We write this letter, having recently celebrated the Christmas season and the end of 2023, now in the early days of 2024. The Scriptures and songs of the season just past remind us that God-



become-human in Jesus came to bring peace on earth and among all people. We've been reminded to not be afraid. Sometimes it's hard to hold onto hope when we look at the reality of our world today. When we truly enter into the Scriptures, we realize that the world into which Jesus was born was as chaotic and dangerous as our world is now. Daily we are overwhelmed by news of violence against humankind and violence against the earth. Still, there is reason for hope.

The stories in this edition of *Visions* are expressions of reasons for hope. Tori Vogelgesang and her sister Cathleen were among the throngs of young adults who gathered in Rome this past fall to pray for the Spirit's guidance during the session of the Synod on Synodality. Locally, our Companions provided an evening of quiet prayer for the advancement of our collective care for Earth, our common home.

The church, in its liturgical seasons, the Scriptures, and the daily news remind us of our personal responsibility to be sources of peace within our relationships and in our awareness of the needs of others, especially the most vulnerable among us. We are called to respond to God's grace and take action individually and to advocate for solutions that support the common good. As we move through the days of 2024, we might set for ourselves a daily practice of praying, "God, please order my day that I may know what you want me to do, and help me to do it!" (St. Thomas Aquinas)

May peace reign in your hearts!

Sr. Sandy Sherman and Sr. Margie Efke

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.

Sr. Margie Efke, OSU
Local Congregational Representative

Sr. Sandy Sherman, OSU
Pontifical Commissary

Editor

Sr. Margie Efke, OSU

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



RESPONSE TO THE CONTENT Invited

Please feel free to share anything you might like to say about articles that have appeared in *Visions* or anything else that is of interest to you.

We welcome your response.

Please address letters to:

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TOGETHER 2023—GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD, ROME, ITALY; SEPTEMBER 30, 2023



Pope Francis once said, “The path to Christian unity and the path of synodal conversion of the Church are linked.” To officially open the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, an ecumenical prayer vigil was held in Rome, Italy at St. Peter’s Square on September

With all that being said, my sister Tori, who is an Ursuline Companion, and I were honored to be invited by the Ursuline Sisters and Ursuline Companions of Cincinnati to attend “Together”. While we were asked to represent young, Catholic adults as alumnae of Saint Ursula Academy, we brought along our dad for this once in a lifetime experience.

When the three of us decided to travel to Rome, we were set up with our host parish, the Emmanuel Community at Trinità dei Monti. We arrived Thursday and were met with a warm welcome, a small language barrier and some much needed caffè. We toured the grounds which included a convent, a small school, the church and a terrace with an absolutely breathtaking view of the city. The parish sits atop the Spanish Steps and overlooks the Piazza di Spagna. The location of our host parish could not have been better. The day continued with visiting our first of the four major basilicas in the world, St. Mary Maggiore, the largest church dedicated to Mary in Rome, followed by

Tori and I attended the workshop “Different perspectives on the proclamation of the Good News”. The three panelists were leaders of different Christian organizations and shared their stories of how Christ entered their lives, how they continue to live Christ-like and how we too, can continue to live out our faith all while helping others find theirs. After the workshop, the three of us journeyed to our second major basilica, Saint John Lateran, the oldest basilica in the Western world.



Cathleen and Tori Vogelgesang pose with their father as they set out for the walk to St. Peter’s Square.

30, 2023. With Christians traveling from all over the world, in the presence of Pope Francis and representatives of different churches, “Together - Gathering of the People of God” commenced. Organized by the Taizé community, this weekend-long event was a time for listening, fraternity, unity and peace.

The vigil brought travelers of all ages, but young adults aged 18-35 were hosted by local Parishes and communities throughout Rome. Together ‘23 included workshops, meet and greets, prayer services, a pilgrimage to St. Peter’s Square and more.

Trevi Fountain, the Pantheon and Piazza Navona. All the while enjoying the culinary scene with pizza, gelato and more caffè between touring.

The next day was another busy day of exploring as “Together” didn’t officially begin until Friday evening. We began with a guided tour of the Vatican Museums and wandered through the art galleries and archaeological collections from popes over the centuries. The tour concluded at Michaelangelo’s miraculous Sistine Chapel. Later we ventured to the Colosseum, the world’s largest amphitheater, to learn more about the Roman Emperors and gladia-



The throng of pilgrims gathers in St. John Lateran before setting out for St. Peter’s Square

On Saturday, Tori and I attended the workshop “Different perspectives on the proclamation of the Good News”. The three panelists were leaders of different Christian organizations and shared their stories of how Christ entered their lives, how they continue to live Christ-like and how we too, can continue to live out our faith all while helping others find theirs. After the workshop, the three of us journeyed to our second major basilica, Saint John Lateran, the oldest basilica in the Western world.

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Together 2023

(continued from page 3)

Here is where the three mile pilgrimage to St. Peter's Square would begin. 2,000 people walked the streets of Rome toward St. Peter's Square as a symbol of our commitment to being on this Christian path together.

The main event of our trip was about to begin, the ecumenical vigil of prayer "Together - Gathering of the People of God". The atmosphere was overwhelming. 10,000 Christians from all walks of life, from all around the world gathered at the foot of St. Peter's Basilica for one purpose - to pray for unity in our world. Testimonies, songs, scripture,

meditation, everything about the vigil was moving; from a children's choir singing "Hallelujah" to praying the Via Creationis, a prayer that commemorates the mystery of Creation and is prayed in seven stations. Pope Francis concluded the vigil with a prayer to open the first session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

Sunday was our final day in Rome. After the unforgettable evening the night before, it was only fitting to celebrate Sunday Mass at St. Peter's Basilica, our third major basilica and the largest church in the world. Following Mass, we had

one more stop to make, the fourth major papal basilica. Founded on the burial ground of St. Paul, St. Paul Outside the Walls displays portraits of each of the popes, while the portrait of Pope Francis is illuminated.

It was so special to be able to share this experience with two of the most faithful people I know and to grow in my own faith! We shared countless laughs, ate more pastries and pasta than I care to admit, participated in the most beautiful, faith-filled ceremony and made memories that will last a lifetime.

Credit card contributions may be made by using the enclosed envelope or by calling Allison McGraw at 513-961-3410 ext. 146

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