

Our Mission:

The Carmelite System fosters the healing ministry of Christ in Catholic health care by proclaiming the value and dignity of the aged and infirm and providing collaborative ways to meet the needs of today's elderly. A commitment to compassionate, loving care of the highest standards with wise stewardship of resources is the hallmark of programs and services rendered.



Dignity



Collegiality



Excellence



Collaboration



Service



A LETTER FROM MOTHER MARK

Even in times of extreme crisis, there are moments of grace.

An activity aide holding an I-pad in front of a resident's bed to assure that a treasured family connection was made, a family having takeout delivered to support the staff caring for their

mother and grandmother, a nurse pausing on her rounds to sit in prayer with a resident nearing the end of life.

Though these are simple moments, they are also profoundly impactful. I wanted to take a moment and reflect on our experience to date and how we might move forward.

Mid-March seems like a century ago. We had just completed the Leadership for Mission program at Avila and met to plan our response to what was fast approaching.

Then everything changed. Our homes went into lockdown. Families were not able to visit. We had to take staff temperatures and ask them health-related questions on the way into work. We scrambled to pull together enough PPE to last through the siege. Infection control preventionists prepared us for battle with an enemy which could not be seen but which could wreak havoc. We were about to face the test of a lifetime.

Despite all the precautions, the "enemy" gained entrance to some homes, especially in locations where there was a high concentration of the disease. Our staff braved through their fears and heroically came in each day to provide care. I cannot say enough for their commitment, despite the risk to their own health and that of their families. One of our Core Values of

Mission is Shared Commitment, and our staff lived that value out 110%, caring for the residents, preparing and serving their meals and keeping the facility clean and well maintained to minimize the spread of infection.

Our families have also endured a terrible cross over the last few months. The inability to see their loved ones face-to-face has to be agonizing. Our teams have put in extra effort to make digital connections, but we can all agree: it is no substitute for a gentle touch or the sight of a grandchild's smile. Our families are true partners in our residents' care, and we look forward to the day when they can again visit. Our hearts ache at the losses this pandemic has spurred: lost moments of connection, lost milestones, and most importantly, loss of life. We share in the grief of families who have lost a loved one due to COVID-19.

In looking ahead, though there is cause for optimism in the focus of the medical community on both therapies and a vaccine, we must rely on our abilities to control the spread and management of this virus until mitigating solutions are available.

I end, therefore, where I began: in thinking about grace. We will forge ahead with as much grace (and a healthy dose of grit) as we can bring to bear. Our residents deserve nothing less. We only hope and pray they can return to some semblance of normalcy when the situation resolves adequately and will be able to enjoy the remaining years God gives to them.

Sincerely,

Mother M. Mark Louis O.Carm.



Becoming the Change: Reflections on Ageism and Racism.

One of the Core Values of the Carmelite Sisters is Sanctity of Life. Our statement on this value states in part: *We hold in reverential esteem the sanctity of life, believing that God has touched humankind in a personal and lasting manner by the gift of life.*

Ageism

As we have lived through the pandemic these last three months, another part of the statement has proven problematic to society. *Sanctity of life does not depend upon the quality of life. Although mental and/or physical limitations may exist, the life of every human being is considered sacred.*

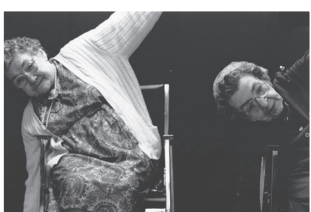
It would seem that when needed healthcare resources are scarce, the elderly are at the end of the line to receive them. This was never more evident than during the search for personal protective equipment for our staff and our lack of access for testing both residents and staff. We live in an ageist society that does not honor the contributions made by our elders, nor the wisdom they have to impart. And if one is both elderly and a person of color, the situation is worse. Recent statistics support that fact.

Racism

And just as things finally began to improve in the battle with Covid-19, the country experienced yet another blow to the sanctity of life – the senseless killing of George Floyd. We all watched the video of one human being calmly snuffing out the life of another in broad daylight with multiple witnesses.

How can this arrogant disregard for the life of another human being be tolerated by us in a supposed civilized society? Why can't we see past the color of a person's skin, and why do we stereotype our fellow human beings? What is the excuse for our continued racism, more polite or blatant?

Each one of us has the moral duty to look into our own hearts. The problems of ageism and racism will be solved one person at a time and through a unified voice for systemic change. Let us remember the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr on this subject: "Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability but comes through continuous struggle." Let us become that change.



A lighter example of this innovative spirit can be seen back in the 1960s, when St. Patrick's Residence in Naperville, IL was one of the first to promote the health benefits of chair yoga, which has since grown to be a widespread exercise in communities across the country.

Sr. Joseph Awarded the Benemerenti Medal.



We are happy to share that Sr. Joseph Catherine Raymond has been chosen to receive the Benemerenti Medal from our Holy Father Pope Francis. Bishop DiMarzio of Brooklyn submitted Sr. Joseph's name to Rome for consideration, and she was selected to receive these Papal Honors due to her "long time service to the People of God of the Diocese of Brooklyn." The medal is a great honor awarded by the Pope for service to the Catholic Church. Our Foundress Mother Angeline received the honor during her life time as well, so Sr. Joseph is in great company.

Sister Joseph joined the Carmelite Sisters at the age of 17 and has served in communities in Michigan, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and New York. Along with graduating from nursing school, Sister Joseph earned a B.A. in Psychology and Social Sciences and a Masters in Gerontological Counseling. In 1986 she was appointed the administrator of Ozanam Hall, where she is presently the CEO. In 1991 she was elected to the Carmelite Sisters' General Council and later to the position of Vicar General. In 1999 at the request of Mother Mary Suzanne, Sister Joseph undertook the challenge of starting the Carmelite System for the Aged and Infirm. Through the foundation she set, our system has grown to be what it is today!

Sister Joseph shared that she feels very humbled by this honor and blessed to have been called to follow the Lord. She is grateful if her dedication and work brings the residents' closer to God and is happy to serve in whatever way the community can use her talents and gifts.