

February 2017

## Upcoming Events

Please join us for these celebrations and special events at St. Joseph Center, 1501 S. Layton Blvd., Milwaukee

**Jazz Concert:**  
**Chris Hanson Swing Band**  
Saturday, Feb. 11  
7:00 p.m.  
St. Joseph Hall  
\$20. Tickets: 414-385-5272

**Come and See Afternoon of Reflection**  
Saturday, Feb. 18  
1:00-4:00 p.m.  
St. Joseph Center

**Immigration Presentation**  
Saturday, Feb. 25  
10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.  
St. Joseph Center  
Details: 414-385-5261

**Beatitudes Prayer and Concert**  
Wednesday, March 1  
6:00-7:45 p.m.  
St. Joseph Chapel

**National Catholic Sisters Week  
Free Ice Cream Social**  
Wednesday, March 8  
12:30-1:30 p.m.  
St. Joseph Center

Visit [www.sssf.org](http://www.sssf.org) for more upcoming events

## Who Was St. Valentine?

When the month of January comes to an end (finally) and we turn the calendar page to February, our attention might quickly be drawn to a special date that appears in the exact middle of this short month: February 14, Valentine's Day! It's a day celebrated in many countries, either as a feast day or as a simple holiday. But who was St. Valentine? Did he actually exist, and is he still considered a saint?

After doing a bit of research on what became a surprisingly intriguing topic, I found a few interesting details about Valentine. One biography identified him as a "beloved Christian priest" martyred in the latter part of the third century (269 A.D.) and buried on the outskirts of Rome. Another account stated that he was originally imprisoned for performing weddings for soldiers (who were forbidden to marry at the time), and then later imprisoned for ministering to Christians who were also being persecuted by Emperor Claudius III.

An especially interesting anecdote pertaining to St. Valentine—one that was destined to have unforeseen and far-reaching effects—involved the healing of his jailer's daughter, who was blind. The jailer told Valentine that he would become a Christian if he could heal his daughter. In the words of this account, "Placing his hands onto her eyes, Valentine restored the child's vision." Not only was the jailer and his family baptized, but the other Christian inmates were also freed!

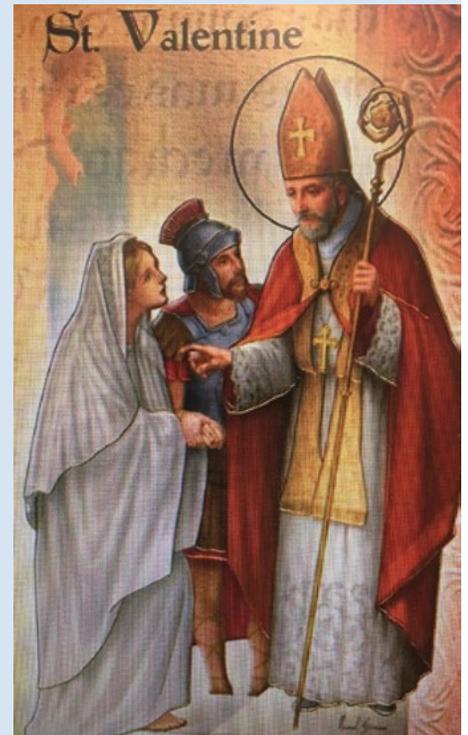
The "far-reaching effect" I previously mentioned? Legend has it that on the day before Valentine's eventual execution, he wrote a note to Julia (the girl he cured of blindness) and signed it, "Your Valentine"!

However, associating St. Valentine's Day with love and romance didn't occur until the eighteenth century, when people began expressing their love for others by giving them flowers, candy, and cards that came to be known as "valentines." (One could even say that St. Valentine wrote the first valentine card himself!)

We know that archaeologists have discovered both a catacomb and an ancient church in Rome dedicated to a "St. Valentine." So although we have few details about his life, we know he did exist and his "legacy" lives on into the present day.

Have a Happy Valentine's Day!

Sister Beth Ann Baricevich, OSF  
Vocation Minister



*Valentine secretly performed wedding ceremonies for soldiers and their brides.*

# Vocation Story: Sister Mary Ellen McRaith

By Sister Ruth Hoerig

Mary Ellen McRaith's vocation was nurtured in a strong, faith-filled Catholic family of six children. She recalls attending First Friday Mass with her family and participating in Saturday Perpetual Help devotions. She went to public grade school, but remembers "one of the Rochester Franciscan sisters was having a lot of fun teaching catechism class."

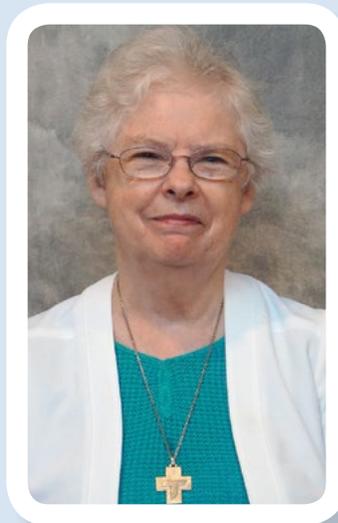
In 1952, her family moved to Winsted, Minnesota, so the children could attend Holy Trinity Catholic School, where she met the School Sisters of St. Francis. When she graduated from high school, she entered the postulancy.

Sister Mary Ellen took courses in home economics at Alverno College while working in the Motherhouse kitchen. Her first ministry assignment was at St. Rose of Lima Parish in Crofton, Nebraska, where she served as a homemaker for six sisters. "I wanted to make a difference in the lives of the sisters, just like Sister Bavo did at Holy Trinity," she said. "Sister got deep satisfaction at seeing how much her tasty meals delighted the sisters."

After 10 years as a homemaker, Sister Mary Ellen began studies as a nursing aid and later became a Licensed Practical Nurse while working at Omaha's Bishop Clarkson Memorial Hospital. As her own parents began to age, Mary Ellen served as a home health care nurse.

"I served in therapeutic recreation and pastoral care," she said. "I had the opportunity to pray with the patients. One day, one of the patients became so excited at seeing Catholics and Protestants praying together, he wanted to call the local media to take a picture for the newspaper!"

Since 2010 Sister Mary Ellen has volunteered with retired sisters at Our Lady of the Angels Convent and Sacred Heart in Milwaukee. "I have found that healing the body and nurturing the mind and heart of others on the journey to God is a wonderful way to grow closer to God, and to the people I serve."



## Mark Your Calendar!

Where is God calling you? Pray, discuss, and imagine with us at one or more of our "Come and See" afternoons of reflection.

These are great opportunities for women interested in exploring the meaning of vowed life to spend an afternoon in prayerful reflection and discussion, concluding with a tour of our beautiful, historic St. Joseph Chapel.

- » Saturday, February 18th
- » Saturday, April 15th

For more information, please contact Sister Beth Ann, 414-550-0321.



*Women of Hope is the monthly electronic newsletter from the Membership and Relationship Team of the School Sisters of St. Francis for single Catholic women interested in exploring God's call in their lives.*

*If you are interested in learning more about life with the School Sisters of St. Francis, contact Sister Beth Ann Baricevich by email at [babaricevich@ssf.org](mailto:babaricevich@ssf.org) or call her at 414-550-0321.*



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