

Women religious: Living one mission

By **SISTER SHARON IACOBUCCI**

Congregations of women religious are making a difference every day in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Permit me to offer a snapshot view as to why we celebrate them during this National Catholic Sisters' Week.

More than 700 religious women in the diocese are praying, sacrificing, reaching out and touching lives as they respond to their vocational call from God, our creator, redeemer and life-giving Spirit. Catholic sisters are making an impact in the church, in society and in the world through their ministries involving leadership, parishes, education on all levels, retreat and faith formation, outreach centers, board memberships, pastoral care, soup kitchens, administration, advocacy, day cares, and the list goes on.

With a diversity of charisms and a specific congregational mission to offer the church and the world, women religious undoubtedly are living one mission: to give vibrant witness to Gospel living as they faithfully live the consecrated, vowed life.

As religious life undergoes many changes and is in transition, there have been difficult decisions to make as each congregation faces limitations and challenges. Yet undeterred, religious women move forward dedicated and passionate in their pastoral response to the cries of the poor, the bereaved, victims of social injustice and those with spiritual hunger. These women remain open to God's providence with love, mercy, compassion and courage.

Today women religious collaborate and network with each other more than ever in living the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, often in innovative



Divine Providence Sister Margaret Mertens with a friend.

ways modeled by their pioneer founders who took the necessary risks to bring about the reign of God. Side-by-side with

lay partners, clergy, associates, volunteers, neighbors and each other, communities of women religious move ahead in trust to

an unknown future full of hope and promise. As each congregation lives the paschal mystery, a transformation is occurring in their ongoing efforts to address the signs of the times. It is truly a time of great grace.

As the delegate for religious, I am happy to collaborate with sisters in the diocese, to advocate, support, companion and address issues that affect all of us. It is with a heart full of gratitude that we journey together in our commitment to bring healing, peace and reconciliation to a broken world.

As you read the articles on Pages 1 and 8, be assured of the prayers of the religious women in our diocese. During National Catholic Sisters Week, March 8-14, let us pray for each other as we bring awareness of the presence of women religious who make a difference each day.

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