RELIGIOUS OF THE SACRED HEART OF MARY

UT VITAM HABEANT

Highlights

Eastern American Area

Fall 2025

Thirty Years of Service, and a *LEGACY OF LOVE*

Thirty years is a remarkable milestone in the life of an organization - one worthy of gratitude, celebration, and reflection. For the RSHM LIFE Center, this 30th anniversary is more deeply meaningful as we remember with love and thanksgiving our founding Executive Director, Sister Susan Gardella, RSHM.

The RSHM LIFE Center began with RSHM Sisters Susan's and Betty Kolb's vision of a place where all would be welcome, where neighbors could gather, learn, grow and support one another. With their characteristic faith and determination, they planted the seed that would grow into the vibrant community that we know today. Sisters Susan and Betty gave the Center its start, but it has never been theirs alone. From its earliest days, the LIFE Center has been built by the hands and hearts of many – staff, volunteers, families, board members and supporters who have carried the mission forward.

Over the past three decades, the LIFE Center has become more than a building, it has become a home. Children have taken their first steps into learning here, parents have found resources and encouragement, teens have discovered their leadership skills and neighbors have become friends. Generations of families have walked through our doors, each leaving a mark on the story of the LIFE Center.

The journey has not been without its challenges. As we were planning for our 25th anniversary in June 2020, COVID hit in March. Instead of planning for reunions and parties, we had to navigate lockdowns and determine how we could best continue to serve the Tarrytown-Sleepy Hollow community. While that 25th year ended without fanfare, we were deeply grateful for what we had achieved together. In the years since, the LIFE Center has restored beloved

Andrea Carson, RSHM LIFE Center Executive Director

programs - After School, Parents & Tots, Adult English Classes, Friday Night Fever Teen Club, Smarty Saturday and Summer Fun - while continuing to adapt to new challenges.

Now, as we celebrate this milestone anniversary, we do so with full hearts. We remember not only the thousands of families whose lives have been touched by this community, but also the extraordinary leadership of our beloved Sister Susan. Her vision, compassion, and tireless dedication shaped the LIFE

(Continued on page 7)

Signs of the Times: Walking Together, Risking the

2025 General Chapter Delegates

During the 2025 General Chapter of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, held in Brazil from July 9 to 31, the delegates spent days in prayer, listening, and discernment, united as *Women of Prophetic Hope, Walking Together, Risking the New, That All May Have Life.* "The Chapter was a very joyful experience of our shared communion in mission, and of our unity in diversity. As Pope Francis said of the Synod, the Holy Spirit was the protagonist of our Chapter, inspiring and guiding us towards harmony. So, we come to this moment with a deep sense of gratitude for the wisdom, discernment, and deep listening that shaped our reflections and discernment." *Sister Margaret Fielding, Institute Leader at the Closing Ritual.*

This Chapter was marked by remarkable shifts in several areas. While RSHM communities in the Northern Hemisphere are aging and diminishing in number, communities in the Southern Hemisphere are much younger. Because of a decision of the present Institute Leadership Council (ILC), a significant number of sisters from Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Brazil were present both as formal delegates and as support staff for the Chapter. This enabled all of us to experience in a more fulsome way the international character of our Institute and the shift from older to younger members of the Institute. The vitality, competence and maturity of the younger members was striking and enriching for all of us. Throughout the Chapter special efforts were made to pair sisters from various areas to get to know one another better through two-by-two "walks," meetings in same or mixed language groups, table groups and working with one another preparing eucharistic and non-eucharistic liturgies.

An important part of the Chapter is the election of new Institute Leadership and the ritualizing of this transfer of leadership. Sisters Margaret Fielding, Paré Moreira, Ana Luísa Pinto, Sipiwe Phiri and Monica Walsh, members of the outgoing ILC, lit the candles of the new ILC: Sisters Coltrida Mooya and her Council - Sipiwe Phiri, Madalena Manhica and Maria Teresa Nogueira. In moments, the entire assembly was illuminated. "By lighting the candles of the new Council, and illuminating all the others, we proclaim our unity, and with the light, we testify that we want to walk together. To be a living presence, women of prophetic hope, willing to risk the new, so that in us and through us ALL MAY HAVE LIFE. May the bridge be faith. May the crossing be trust. And may the light burning in us never go out," stated Sister Margaret Fielding.

Another part of the agenda of this Chapter was the approval of the revised Constitutions, our rule of life, which, following a period of experimentation since the last Chapter in 2019, put in definitive form our move to one unit of governance. Because of changing

New, That All May Have Life

Sister Coltrida Mooya (3rd from left) and her Council - Sisters Sipiwe Phiri, Madalena Manhica and Maria Teresa Nogueira.

demographics, we no longer had the canonical requirements for different areas to be considered provinces. Instead, we moved to one unit of governance at the international level and areas on the local level. This change will involve us in further efforts to be united in all aspects of our lives, while at the same time allowing local levels of governance to maintain their responsibilities of mission and ministry. For the Eastern American Area, we are continuing with an Area Leader and two Councilors for the time being. This arrangement allows us to continue the various ministries that are still under our leadership and responsibility. This includes ministries such as the RSHM LIFE Center, Centro Corazón de María, Cormaria Retreat Center and our four European schools.

A review of the Chapter would be lacking if we did not recount the deep listening and discernment processes that marked our time together. Following a Synodal method of small group sharing, deep listening and then being attentive to the Holy Spirit speaking through individuals and the group, we moved toward consensus on the various issues that needed to be addressed. When we met as a full body (39 delegates), we repeatedly followed a pattern of personal reflection, small group sharing, and then sharing in a large group. Our two facilitators, Sister Brid Long, SSL, and Sister Kelly Connors, PM, expertly guided us through our discernment of issues and elections. The Chapter was a profound experience of the Spirit alive in our Institute, calling us to be prophetic women of hope as we encounter a world in deep distress on so many levels.

Catherine Vincie, RSHM

DEDICATED

She's dedicated her life to mission and ministry

You can be Dedicated too!

When you enroll in the RSHM's **Dedicated Donors** monthly giving program, you enjoy these benefits:

CONVENIENCE AND SIMPLICITY
Set up recurring donations, eliminating the need to remember to donate each month

BUDGET-FRIENDLY
Smaller, consistent monthly gifts can be easier to fit into a budget than larger, one-time donations

INCREASED IMPACT
Over time, the cumulative effect of monthly contributions is significant, leading to a greater overall impact on the sisters

FLEXIBILITY
You can adjust your monthly contribution amount as circumstances change

FEELING GOOD
Making a difference is good for the sisters...and you

Become a Dedicated Donor today!

To enroll, visit **rshm-east.org/donate** or call the Advancement Office at **914.631.4407**.

A Look Back at the 2025 Global Network of RSHM Schools Heads' Encounter

We "Pilgrims of Hope" traveled to Marymount London, carrying in our hearts the flame of continuing the RSHM educational vision in our schools. We welcomed the heads of 17 of our 21 member schools plus RSHM Sisters from New York, Belo Horizonte, and, on the last day, Upminster.

This year's meeting from June 27 - July 3, 2025, was a combination of regional group work to conclude the year-long Global Network strategic plan process and many inspiring presentations and experiences to nourish and challenge the spiritual-professional leadership of our lay Heads of School. This was a joyful reunion of heads who, through the years, have become close friends, as well as a warm introduction to four of the seven new Network Heads of School and Sister Maria Timoney, RSHM Eastern American Area Leader. There's nothing like being together in person!

This year's Encounter established a clear vision for the Global Network's future. Two days were dedicated to work on the strategic plan, masterfully led by Sarah Gallagher, Head of Marymount Rome. Sarah was aided throughout the year by the Coordinating Committee who, in dialogue with their area heads, shared valuable stakeholder feedback. The Network's mission statement was reviewed and minor changes were added and approved. The first vision statement for the Global Network was created and approved, which states: *Rooted in the Charism and Mission of the RSHM, we envision schools that form globally competent, spiritually grounded leaders dedicated to building a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world.*

As we move forward with the Network's Mission and Vision Statements in our schools, we'll be guided by the following new goals:

- Strengthening Catholic identity and mission continuity,
- Collaborating on academic innovation and holistic development,
- Developing systems for financial sustainability and resource optimization,
- Embracing technological advancement and digital equity.

Our spiritual-professional experiences during this Encounter included moments of personal and group prayer as well as motivational reflections on leadership lessons from the Good Shepherd, on contemplating our pilgrim journey and vocation as a "ministry of encouragement" in our schools, and on living the sacrament of the present moment while navigating the daily challenges of a "Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous (VUCA)" world. As a highlight, we "Pilgrims of Hope" spent a whole day at Aylesford Priory, a sacred Carmelite site in Kent that has welcomed pilgrims for centuries. After Mass, we visited the relic of St. Simon Stock, contemplated the sacred art created by Adam Kossowski, walked the pastoral grounds, and offered a closing prayer of thanksgiving at the High Altar of Our Lady.

Our pilgrimage to Aylesford Priory

Strategic Plan Process with Sarah Gallagher

After a walking morning prayer, the last day was busy, beginning with a summary of Network goals and performance indicators for each, followed by confirmation that next year's General Conference will take place in Portugal. It was then discussed and agreed that, after Portugal, the Heads' Encounter in 2027 will be hosted by New York, and the General Conference in 2028 will be hosted by Barranquilla. Our mentor Jacqui Landry and the new heads shared personal reflections on their year's experiences. Our commissioning ceremony that afternoon thanked Jacqui Landry for her extended service on the Coordinating Committee and welcomed Eric Crespo, Head of Cantwell-Sacred Heart High School in Montebello, CA, as the new USA representative. We also thanked Concepcion Alvar, retiring Head of Marymount NY and a founding member of the Global Network. Heartfelt thanks were given to Margaret Giblin and her team for hosting the "Pilgrims of Hope" Heads' Encounter and to our two translators from Portugal. We closed with a delicious dinner, followed by warm hugs, good wishes and happy farewells.

Susan Kumnick, Coordinator, Global Network of RSHM Schools

Decent Work & Economic Empowerment

In preparation for the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha, Qatar this fall, the NGO Committee for Social Development convened a High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) side event that focused on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 – decent work and economic growth, *Grassroots Perspectives on Barriers and Opportunities in Achieving Productive Livelihood and Socioeconomic Wellbeing.*

People from India, Pakistan, Mauritania, Ghana and Indonesia shared the barriers they face, including lack of access to education and training, violence, harassment and discrimination, in trying to find productive work and socioeconomic wellbeing.

Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, Director of the International Labor Organization (ILO), noted that the few prosper at the expense of the many. Advancing social development through decent work and social justice is morally compelling and both fiscally and institutionally relevant. Economic empowerment must be rooted in structural solutions, eliminating barriers, bold investment and social protections. An economy centered on human dignity supports the growth of social enterprises that address social and environmental challenges, invests in public service and provides economic support to locally created programs.

Timor-Leste exemplifies what progress looks like. This small island nation, a post-conflict democracy anchored in peace and human dignity, is significantly impacted by climate change. Over the past 20 years, they have made significant progress in health and education. However, they are still trying to address barriers to decent work. They are investing in education and employment opportunities for young people and women. They want a future of dignity, not dependency on foreign aid. They know that their agriculture must be climate smart and evidence-based to increase yields. They recognize they must create economic opportunities that simultaneously address environmental issues, such as employing young people in mangrove restoration.

Cathy Wilkins, Director, Communications & Advancement

H.E. Dionisio da Costa Babo Soares, Permanent Representative of TImor-Leste to the UN and Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, Director, ILO

Coastal mangroves covered in plastic waste pollution from the ocean, Timor-Leste/Adam Costanza-Lic. Adobe Stock

UPCOMING *Events*

November 9 – Gailhac Legacy Society and Sacred Heart of Mary Extended Family Mass and Luncheon, Tarrytown

December 6 – Area Celebration of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Tarrytown

December 6-7 – Weaving Center Holiday Fair, 12 pm – 5 pm each day, Tarrytown

December 10 – Lessons & Carols, Butler Memorial Chapel, Marymount Convent, Tarrytown

December 21 – Holly & Ivy Breakfast to Benefit Cormaria Retreat Center, Sag Harbor

THE REAL COST OF CLEAN ENERGY

Cobalt mining under militia control in North Kivu region of the DNC /Erberto Zani - Lic. Adobe Stock

Transitioning to clean energy is one way to address global climate change and also embrace the spirit of caring for our common home. However, increased demand for clean energy leads to an increase in mining for critical minerals - including lithium, cobalt, nickel and copper. Often these materials are located on or near Indigenous lands. A recent study found that of 5,097 mining projects involving these critical minerals, approximately 54% are located on or near Indigenous peoples' lands. While these minerals are intended for clean energy, the extraction methods are far from "clean."

In most instances, when transnational companies set up mining operations to extract these minerals from the earth, they displace Indigenous peoples, threaten their way of life, destroy the landscape, pollute the soil and water, and destroy natural habitats. These actions are in violation of the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) as recognized in Article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' (UNDRIP) right to determine how and when minerals are extracted from their lands.

At the United Nations' 44th Semi-Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues held in April, the RSHM co-sponsored an NGO Mining Working Group panel, *Extractives, Critical Minerals, Land Grabbing and Just Transitions from the Lens of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Good Practices and Challenges.* Representatives from Argentina, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Flores Islands and Papua shared the negative impact these mining operations have had on the peoples and their land.

The Lithium Triangle, also known as the Triple Frontier, covers part of Chile, Bolivia and Argentina. This area is home to 6% of the region's lakes. Known as the Salt Flats, a fragile hydrological ecosystem above sea level, it is home to a variety of fish and birds. Water is needed to sustain not only the environment, but also the Indigenous peoples that live there. Industry extraction of lithium destroys both the area's natural beauty and fragile ecosystem. The lithium extraction process entails perforating the rock in which lithium is embedded, then placing the rock in an extremely large amount of water. The water separates the chemical compounds as it evaporates, leaving the lithium behind. Indigenous peoples in the Argentinian part of the Triangle are no longer able to fish in these waters as a result of these practices. Despite the damage they have caused, transnational companies from the US, Canada and China continue to expand their extraction efforts to meet demand.

Similarly, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has a wealth of coveted natural resources. The demand for cobalt, needed for EV batteries and cell phones, has tripled in the past years. The world's largest cobalt deposits, 80% of the world's supply of coltan (a key component in many electronic devices), and the world's 7th largest copper deposits are found in the DRC. Four million metric tons have been removed so far with an estimated 7.6 million metric tons in reserves. The untapped value of mineral deposits in DRC is valued at $24 trillion.

Lithium brine evaporation ponds in the altiplano in JuJuy Province, Argentina/Katherine - Lic. Adobe Stock

While multinational companies and governments including the US, Canada and China continue to secure mineral rights and mining operations in the DRC, the Rwandan army, seeing an opportunity for themselves, has taken over the DRC's mineral rich eastern region bordering Rwanda, displacing Congolese through violence and destroying entire communities.

In Indonesia, the government works hand-in-hand with the mining companies, disregarding Indigenous peoples' rights in both the Flores Islands and Papua. While Indonesia is considered a democratic republic, its current leader has expanded the role of the military in government.

In the Flores Islands, water used to irrigate rice fields is diverted for mining projects, thereby degrading water quality resulting in diminished agricultural yields. Yet, companies continue to expand their mining sites.

In Papua (the western half of Papua New Guinea), the Indonesian government allowed mining companies to commence operations, despite having negotiated a separation agreement with Papua in 1999. Eventually, Papua became a province of Indonesia. Government "investment zones" created near military bases resulted in conflict and the displacement of Indigenous populations. Native Papuans that don't move face racial discrimination and intimidation. As the "outsider" population grows in Papua, the more than 250 Indigenous communities continue to decline as their very existence as distinct cultural and ethnic groups are threatened.

To truly care for our common home, structural, economic, cultural, sustainable and political change is needed. "A true 'ecological debt' exists, particularly between the global north and south, connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment, and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time *(Laudato Si'* 51)." Working together we can find equitable solutions to our quest for sustainable energy while addressing climate change and caring for the earth.

Cathy Wilkins. Director, Communications & Advancement

(Continued from page 1)

Center into what it is today. Sister Susan's dream lives on in each program, in each act of kindness, in each life touched by the Center.

This anniversary is both a celebration of the LIFE Center's enduring mission and a tribute to Sister Susan's legacy of love and service - a legacy we are committed to carrying forward for the next 30 years and beyond. Sister Susan closed her reflection on the 25th anniversary with the words of Dag Hammarskjold, former UN Secretary-General, and I think it still holds true: "For all that has been, THANKS... for all that will be, YES!"

Andrea Carson, Executive Director, RSHM LIFE Center

HIGHLIGHTS PUZZLE: Oh, Pairs!

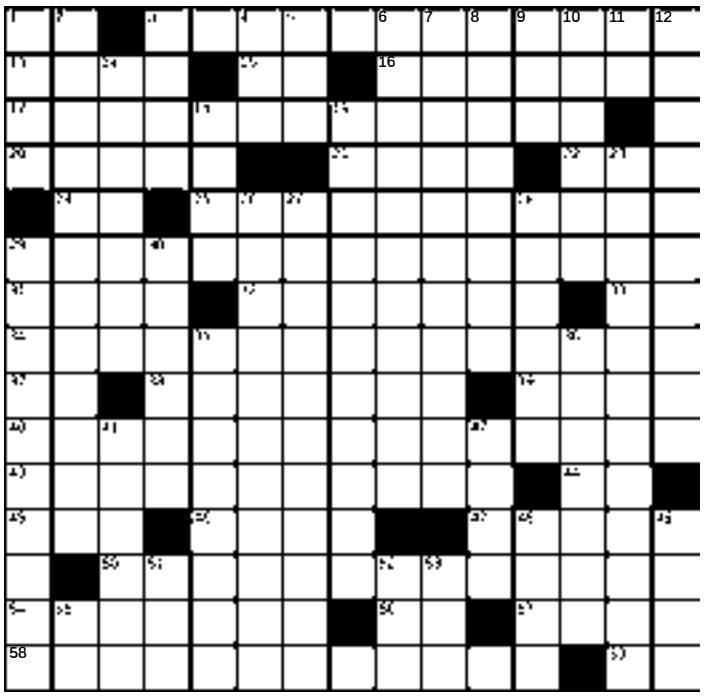
The themed clues in this puzzle are for sets of two.
Answers are posted at:
www.rshm-east.org/category/newsletter

Across

1 East Africa, abbr.
3 Those who consent
13 A gun is useless without it
15 Artificial intelligence, abbr.
16 Not inside
17 Rooney has 500 sheets of paper
20 Like a bubble bath
21 End of a cigarette
22 Mon. of St. Pat
24 Resident Asst.
25 Environmental Protection Agency Alert closers, briefly
29 *North and South
31 In Los Angeles, briefly
32 A day for average grades
33 _____ what?
34 Refusal of sons' oath
37 Old Testament, abbr.
38 Henry the Fourth in Paris
39 What comes between gmail and com
40 To nephews in Fordham's color
43 Norma's New York pattern of speech
44 Advanced Placement, abbr.
45 Oncology, abbr.
46 Nat. Soc. Sec. Act
47 Little Rose
50 One who redoes event with unexpected outcome
54 Sale of fish eggs
56 Railroad, abbr.
57 And-so-forths, briefly
58 *Heads and tails
59 East Yemen, abbr.

Down

1 *The better to hear you with
2 Love on a French cartoon
3 Counterparts of pros
4 New Amsterdam Yankee, abbr.
5 Salem Institute of Health, abbr.
6 No brilliance like that
7 *Gift closest to the partridge in a pear tree
8 Route to East African fauna, briefly
9 This room _____ mess!
10 Bring to a boil and _____
11 Touchdown, abbr.
12 Those who entertain fortune teller
14 In modal form
18 *The better to see you with
19 Lessen wee arctic revolution, briefly
23 "Arts Now" exhibit
26 Lone performance in the Poconos
27 Listening to oneself
28 Obeying the dentist, one opens and _____
29 Certain reds
30 Break the "no pork" rule
35 Over certain South American mountains
36 Aid for composing poems of praise, briefly
41 Title for believable guy?
42 Lima's country
48 Not closed
49 Shopping site
51 East Southeast, abbr.
52 Tolkien humanoid monster
53 To's partner
55 Osteogenesis imperfecta, abbr.



Bea McMahon, RSHM

RSHM Highlights is a production of the Communications and Advancement Office of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Eastern America.
Editors: Maureen Egan, Bea McMahon, RSHM, Catherine Vincie, RSHM, Cathy Wilkins, and Clevie Youngblood, RSHM | Design: Barbara DeAngelo

Address Service Requested

Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary
50 Wilson Park Drive
Tarrytown, NY 10591

RELIGIOUS OF THE SACRED HEART OF MARY
UT VITAM HABEANT