

Sisters of Charity
H A L I F A X

Joyful Witness to Love

We See. We Listen. We Must Act.

Dear Friends,

I write to you with great gratitude, joy and inspiration. My first year as Congregational Leader has been very busy; made more intense by the continued struggles of the pandemic, and the increasing needs of the world around us. Yet I am constantly inspired and energized by the Joyful Witness displayed by our Sisters. I am also humbled by the warmth and support we continue to receive from you, our donors and friends.

Below you will find two examples of the type of ministries you help fund through your gifts. While these are both stories of Sisters working with immigrants, they are but two of countless stories of our Sisters meeting the needs of those around them. I hope you are as moved by the charism of charity in these stories as I am.

Several years ago, Sisters Kay Conroy and Katherine McGrath were called to serve those seeking safe refuge in the United States. After years of serving in Peru, many people would have considered retirement, but not Sisters Kay and Katherine. They share an excerpt from Matthew 25:35 that inspires them, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me...”



Sisters Kay and Katherine (back row), with two Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, in the clothing room at Annunciation House.

In 2018, 2019 and again recently in 2021, they served at Annunciation House at the Texas and Mexico border. They welcomed asylum-seeking brothers and sisters from many countries including El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, and even two families from Turkey. Fleeing civil unrest, war and other dangers, these guests are in need of shelter, food, clothing and HOPE. The monies needed to provide ongoing transportation is the responsibility of their families/friends. The shelters provide much assistance in connecting with families and also translation services to understand immigration documents.

Sisters Kay and Katherine, along with other volunteers, are often the first safe, welcoming presence these immigrants encounter in the United States. They have heard many stories of the harrowing journeys: crossing rapid rivers, walking shoeless for 14 hours through the desert, families risking crowded, filthy, disease-invested passages. All knowing that where they were going was safer than staying where there were.

Sister Kay stays inspired by a Spanish phrase: “conciencia en aumento”, which roughly translates into “consciousness rising”. She explains that when we welcome the stranger, we welcome Christ and must have a compassionate consciousness in our heart to help others. Sister Katherine draws on a call-to-action phrase that challenges her: “Now you know...let compassion be your response. You have the response-ability.”

Sister Yvonne Pothier has spent many years serving the needs of immigrants arriving in Nova Scotia. She held several positions, all connected to working with parishes and communities providing support to refugees, including during the crisis in Syria. Once the families arrived, she continued to work to ease the transition for these new Canadians.

Sister Yvonne has been officially retired for some time now, yet the evidence suggests otherwise. Every time a Sister has furniture they no longer need, Sister Yvonne has been a remarkable resource in furnishing new homes for immigrant families. When a large local convent closed, she was able to supply several families with furniture, kitchenware and linens for their apartments. When friends have something to donate, she gets a call. Nothing usable goes wasted once Sister Yvonne is involved. In her mind, it is simple: “Whatever usable items we have that we don’t need belong to the poor.”



New Canadians sitting at the table they received for their apartment through Sister Yvonne's work.

The sponsors and newly arrived families she advocates for are most grateful and recently shared this message to Sister Yvonne: “We couldn’t sponsor as many families without your help. The in-kind donations you provide us have benefitted more than 100 newcomers to Halifax in recent years. Moving forward, we continue to rely on your support for furniture and other donations as the arrival of refugee families has now resumed. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all you do for newcomers.”

The Joyful Witness to Love that Sisters Kay, Katherine and Yvonne hold in their hearts and put into action in their own lives is inspiring. These are only two stories of the Sisters of Charity – Halifax responding to those in need. We hope our stories will move you to support the ministries of our Sisters this season.

Merry Christmas,

Margaret Mary Fitzgibbon, SC

You can read more about the work of Sisters Kay, Katherine and Yvonne on our website: schalifax.ca/donate.