



# The Eagle

Summer 2025

Dear Associates, Oblates and Friends of SSJD,



Sr. Elizabeth Ann

“When will the Guest House be open?” was the most frequently asked question we heard from people attending the 44<sup>th</sup> General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada held this year in London, Ontario. People are eager to visit our Guest

House – often referred to as a *Home for the Heart*, for spiritual renewal, rest and refreshment. Earlier this year we heard the sad news that by the end of the year, the retreat portion of Loyola House in Guelph, ON, run by the Jesuits, will end while they pursue other avenues of ministry. This makes the reopening of our guest house critical. We are one of the few remaining retreat houses in Canada with a residential monastic community. Our life of prayer and service with its



SSJD at General Synod – Sr. Elizabeth Ann, Gabriella (Trinity College staff), Ruth Corston, Associate; Sr. Wendy Grace

regular rhythm of daily prayer provides a spiritual context for the Guest House and its associated retreat ministry.

We deliberately chose Saturday October 11, 2025 as the date for the grand opening of the Guest House during the Canadian Thanksgiving long weekend. We wanted to connect the celebration of Thanksgiving with

the gratitude we have for our donors who, through their generosity, have helped us bring the dream of a renewed guest house to life. The grand opening will include a blessing of the renewed Guest House followed by afternoon tea and donor recognition. There have been delays inevitable in any renovation project, especially one of this scope. Some delays were due to the perimeter heating system. We continue to work with the builders and the architect to manage the delays to bring this project to completion. We are almost over the finish line! See the back page of this *Eagle* for the invitation to our reopening.

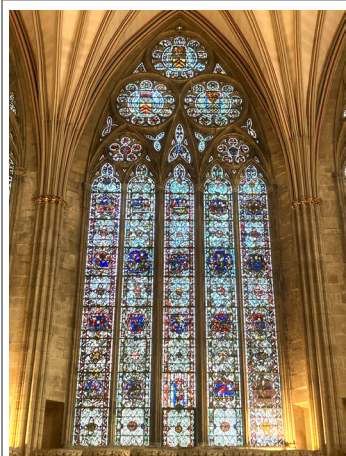
I had a short time of sabbatical prior to my installation on May 6<sup>th</sup> as the new Reverend Mother. I was in



Stained glass windows at OHP, Whitby

England and stayed with the Order of the Holy Paraclete in Whitby, North Yorkshire for about 6 weeks, including being with them through Holy Week and Easter. I was even invited to be part of the Sisters' choir for the filming of the **Thy Kingdom Come 2025** opening service for Ascension Day 2025. It was wonderful connecting with the Sisters whom we've come to know over the years of our exchange visits. I really appreciated being part of their daily life of prayer while having time for reading, reflection and walks by the sea. I also spent a couple of days in York, one of my favourite cities because of York Minster. I attended services there and had a great tour of the cathedral and

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Stained glass of York Minster

afterwards walked through the famous Shambles and old city of York. I also spent several days in Surrey with a friend, just enjoying daily life with her without any extra tourist activities.

Sr. Elizabeth began her sabbatical time with a trip to Vernon, BC. Unfortunately, she had a nasty fall down some stairs which resulted in a neck injury and a premature halt to her sabbatical plans!

She is healing by walking, gardening, and continuing her on-line spiritual direction course, and being her usual cheerful self around the convent. Sr. Elizabeth will head to South Korea this fall for two weeks to represent SSJD at the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Society of the Holy Cross (SHC) in Seoul, Korea. Several years ago, Sr. Prisca Park, SHC, spent two years with SSJD.

One of the changes the Sisterhood has made recently is the addition of two external members on our seven-person Board of Directors. Along with other charities and not-for-profit organizations, we updated our By-Laws in accordance with the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act. It is a new step for the Sisterhood, and we are already delighted by the contributions the new members have made.

Our annual General Chapter will be held in August. During Chapter the sisters make decisions about our life and how we are being called to live. We begin Chapter with a time of silent prayer in the chapel, invoking the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to guide us in all our deliberations. No doubt there will be changes to report following Chapter. We ask your prayers for our Sisterhood as we meet and deliberate August 19 – August 28.

This year Bishop Helen Kennedy from the Diocese of Qu'Appelle will lead the Sisters' annual Long Retreat. We've had a long association with the diocese through our involvement with the Qu'Appelle Diocesan Girls' School and we still have contact with some of the "old girls."

This summer we've had a bountiful crop of cherries from our cherry trees on the property. We've enjoyed many of them and have been happy to see the birds enjoying them as well. We've also been able to harvest

serviceberries and mulberries which resulted in some delicious pies!



Oblates and Associates at BBQ

We held our Annual GTA Associates, Oblates and Friends BBQ and Book Sale at the convent in July and appreciated the time of fellowship and fun. The weather was perfect and many enjoyed dining outdoors in our guest courtyard.

Sisters Brenda and Wendy Grace, with the help of a few others, hosted a two-week program for two aspirants this summer, with teachings on prayer, community life and monastic values. The re-opened Guest House will allow us to offer the Women at a Crossroads program next summer so we can provide this type of experience to a larger group of women.

Sr. Anne completed her term as a member of the Board at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in June; Sr. Connie will take her place in September. Currently we have two sisters working on an "on-call" basis in spiritual care at SJR and several others continuing to lead regular chapel services, with the assistance of associates and oblates.

The Rev. Canon Joanne Davies retired as Chaplain at SJR at the end of April. Her contribution to the spiritual wellbeing of patients, staff and visitors was tremendous. Joanne was able to collaborate with Wycliffe College to offer a hands-on chaplaincy training to students at SJR. We will see how this ministry unfolds in the coming years, as we know how vital it is for patients to have holistic care which includes their spiritual wellbeing as well as their physical and mental health.

Pray for our world which needs so much healing. Pray for peace in the world God created in love, for love. Pray for each other. Be assured of our prayers for you.

With all good wishes as summer continues.

**Elizabeth Ann Eckert, SSJD**  
**Reverend Mother**



## Home for the Heart



Friends,

**W**ork on the renewed Guest House is well underway, and thanks to the incredible generosity of people like you, we more than surpassed our initial goals to fund it. But you know how renovations go in your own home with the surprises uncovered when the walls come off!

So our Campaign Committee has continued the work we had thought done! I personally have a deep commitment to the ministry of the Sisters, and I think a letter I wrote sums up why. I have used it to speak or write to potential donors, and with those who have already given, to consider prayerfully whether they could give again or for a longer period. Please read the letter. You are most welcome to share it with others, either as is or adapted as you see fit.

*“Dear ..., May I be bold enough to make a pitch to you on behalf of the Sisters of St. John the Divine?”*

*“As you know, one of the significant ministries in the life of our Church since 1884 has been the Sisterhood. From their foundation as the first Canadian Anglican religious order, they have been a beacon of faithful prayer and active service in the life of the Anglican Church in Canada. They served as nursing sisters in the Northwest Rebellion in the 1880s, and then established Toronto’s first hospital that performed surgery for women. Their original convent in downtown Toronto is now the Kensington Hospice. They founded and ran until fairly recently St. John’s Rehabilitation Hospital, now part of the Sunnybrook Hospital network – one of the first, and still one of the finest, hospitals dedicated to physical rehabilitation. They continue their involvement there, but their primary focus has been the provision of spiritual care, retreats and hospitality, and teaching of prayer. They have served on the faculty of Wycliffe and Trinity Colleges teaching courses in prayer and spirituality to those preparing for ministry. They assist at the lunch programme to feed the homeless through St. James Cathedral. They have been an integral part of the reestablishment of Healing Ministries in the church. It’s only a fraction of what they do!*

*“The Sisters provide the only Anglican retreat centre in Canada, and one of the very few such places anywhere, at a time when others are shuttering their doors. Before COVID, they welcomed over 2700 guests a year from all denominations and none, seeking a quiet place for spiritual renewal and discernment – an oasis in the midst of the unquiet, chaotic lives so many of us lead. It is a place of welcome, prayer, teaching, and hospitality, hence the name of their campaign to renew their guest wing, Home for the Heart. They provide space for individual retreat and spiritual direction, parish conferences, and for many private groups. The twice yearly ACPO discernment weekends assessing candidates for ordination in the province are held here, as is the interviewing process for ordinands in the Diocese of Toronto.*

*“I am writing to ask whether you would consider making a gift to the Sisters’ renovation campaign, Home for the Heart, to renew their guest wing. When the new convent was built, now 20 years ago on their property beside St. John’s Rehab Hospital, the old nurses residence became their guest wing with cosmetic updates, but it is in the need of a significant renovation. Roof, windows, flooring, accessibility, toilets and washrooms, and HVAC systems need replacement in the wing that was built in the late 40s-early 50s.*

*“The campaign has been very successful – about \$6.6 million was raised including a \$2 million contribution from the Sisters’ Founder’s Fund. Most came from very small gifts, although there have been a number of larger contributions of several hundred thousand dollars – all have been generous and gratefully received. Corporations and foundations today rarely contribute to religious organizations, so we depend on individual donors.*

*“As renovations progressed it became evident that the heating pipes that were going to be reused were discovered to be unusable, asbestos mitigation was required and the costs increased by over \$800,000. We need to do additional fundraising. I hope you might be moved to contribute.*

*“Ellen and I made a major contribution to the campaign, in addition to our annual donation to their general fund, because we know how deeply valuable this ministry is and have benefited from it ourselves. A one-time gift or a gift over a period of time are possible. I would be happy to speak to you more about this if you wish at [abp.colin.johnson@gmail.com](mailto:abp.colin.johnson@gmail.com).*

*“The Sisters make a huge contribution to the witness of Jesus Christ in faith and practice and to the life of the Church today as they have throughout their 140 years of service. I am pleased to be able to support their mission. I hope you will join me,*

*“Thanks for considering this request prayerfully.*

*“Yours in faith,  
+Colin R. Johnson”*

## Ahoy and Thank You to Nova Scotia and PEI

On a trip to SSJD last fall, the Rev. Frances Drolet-Smith, Oblate, broached the idea of a team from SSJD visiting the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to talk about Associates, Oblates and Companions as well as the Sisterhood. I ran with the idea. I also volunteered Shannon Epp, the Communications and Companions Coordinator, to accompany me. (Three of the current 2024-2025 Companions live in Nova Scotia.) And thus began months of planning with a special committee from Nova Scotia.



All Saints' Cathedral, Halifax

We began our two-week visit during Lent by arriving in Halifax in mid-March. We were met at the airport by Bishop Sandra Fyfe. Our first event was an afternoon and evening gathering at All Saints' Cathedral in Halifax where we, as well as various other monastic communities, shared about our life and ministries. We were warmly received. The following day (Tuesday) we travelled to Berwick, NS, to host an afternoon of prayer and a panel discussion involving the Companions and Oblates.



Sr. Dorothy; Elizabeth Walker, Companion; Magdalena Jennings, Companion; Judith Milne, Companion; the Rev. Frances Drolet-Smith, Oblate; Shannon Epp, Companions Coordinator

On Wednesday, we introduced the Anglican students at the Atlantic School of Theology (AST) to the importance of keeping a Rule of Life and they began to craft their own! We gathered at noon the following day for AST's ecumenical worship service where Sr. Dorothy preached followed by another delicious luncheon.

We had the honour to be asked by Bishop Sandra to lead this year's Clergy Retreat. On Thursday evening,



From left, Associates and Oblates Heather McCance, Sr. Dorothy, Marilyn Newport, Frances Drolet-Smith, Shannon Epp, Mary Leigh, Helen Ryding, Taunya Dawson and Michelle Bull.

we began the retreat with a Taizé service to help the clergy enter into a time of quiet, reflection, presence and preparation for the retreat the following day. The morning of the clergy retreat (Friday), Bishop Sandra gifted all those present with a holding cross made of olive wood from Jerusalem. The retreat was held at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Beavertown, NS, which was perfect as one of the topics we covered was the labyrinth, and this church has two labyrinths built into the floor! Topics included praying the labyrinth,



Participants at Clergy Retreat

making and praying with prayer beads (rosaries) and holding crosses as well as other forms of prayer. The clergy seemed moved by the retreat and thanked us for "a time away for silence and prayer before the busyness of Holy Week."



Holding crosses

On the final day of the retreat, the Clergy renewed their ordination vows in a moving Eucharistic service. It was fitting that it took place with the clergy standing within the labyrinth.



The following day (Saturday) Sr. Dorothy gathered with Associates and Friends for a lunch in Tangier, hosted by Rosemary Boutilier. It is with sadness that we learned that Rosemary died within a few days of our returning to Toronto. It was wonderful to be able to spend some time with her.

While Sr. Dorothy was in Tangier, Shannon was back in Berwick visiting some of the Companions for the weekend. She and the Companions participated in the



*Sr. Dorothy, Rosemary Boutilier, LauraLee Kennedy, Bp. Ron Cutler, Judith Beaver and Eleanor Keeping*

Companions' Saturday classes via Zoom. Shannon also met with area Companions individually. She stayed at the home of one of the Companions that weekend and all three Companions and Shannon attended Sunday worship at St. Mary's Church, Aylesford, followed by lunch at another of the Companions' home in Annapolis Royal. In the city, on Sunday, Sr. Dorothy and Frances Drolet-Smith enjoyed attending the 9:30 service at the Cathedral in Halifax via ferry!

Our second week began with Sr. Dorothy and Shannon leading an Associates retreat at All Saints Church in Bedford, Halifax, on Monday and Tuesday. It was a time of fellowship and prayer and Sr. Dorothy had the pleasure and joy of receiving the Rev Taunya Dawson as an Associate. The next day (Wednesday) saw us driving through Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, traveling across the Confederation Bridge, and into Prince Edward Island – three provinces in one day! St. Mary's,



*Sr. Dorothy admits the Rev. Taunya Dawson as an Associate*

Summerside, PEI, welcomed us for tea and home-baked goodies as they listened and learned about SSJD and our various ministries. Shannon and I were warmly welcomed by the Catholic Sisters at Marguerite Bourgeys Centre where we stayed the night. It was also the venue for the following day's events. The

retreatants began arriving at the Marguerite Bourgeys Centre early Thursday morning. This truly was an ecumenical gathering and a day of rich learning on the topic of Tools for Prayer.

We said goodbye to beautiful PEI on Friday morning and arrived in Halifax that evening. On Friday, we visited



*Tools for prayer*

Christ Church, Dartmouth, and learned about the vibrant outreach ministries that parish offers the community. Deacons from the diocese also attended and we all had lunch together as spokespeople for the various ministries

presented on how they reached out to others. It was a rich and full day of learning!

Following the lunch, the Rev. Frances Drolet-Smith toured us around Dartmouth, including Cow Bay where we experienced first-hand the fog and how quickly it can clear, as well as "meeting" the famous Cow Bay Moose!



*Sr. Dorothy and Shannon Epp meet the "Moose"*

We closed our two-week visit in Nova Scotia with a delicious meal at The Wooden Monkey with Frances Drolet-Smith and Michelle Bull. A warm thank you for the hospitality of Frances Drolet-Smith and Paul Smith, and Michelle and Charles Bull who graciously welcomed us into their homes during our stay. Thank you to

Elizabeth W and Judith M for their driving skills; thank you also to all the Nova Scotia and PEI Planning committee members who spent months planning this successful trip: Rev. Heather McCance, Rev. Michelle Bull, Bishop Sandra Fyfe, Rev. Frances Drolet-Smith, Rev. Laurie Omstead, Elizabeth Walker and Rev. Elizabeth Nelson. We reconnected with about 80% of the Associates in Nova Scotia and PEI.

In gratitude,

**Sr. Dorothy, Oblate Director  
Shannon Epp, Companions Coordinator**

## Book Room Corridor



Book Room Corridor

**T**he book room – aka temptation alley – is a **MUST** for any visitor to the convent.

Relevant and timely books are specifically ordered for each liturgical season, for example - Advent & Christmas, Lent and Easter. We also order books for retreats.

Since Covid and the closure of the guest wing, sales have suffered. However, there are still visitors to the Convent and meetings happening. Novalis\* supplies most of our books and we strive to have recently published editions and feature a variety of theological positions. Authors vary from modern theologians like Richard Rohr and Ilia Delio to Teresa d'Avila and the Rule of St Benedict.

There are multiple shelves with books on the following topics: Devotions, Spirituality, Ecology, Women's perspectives, Multiculturalism, Theology for Today, and Relationships. The shelves are refreshed regularly. Payment can be by cash in the envelopes provided or by credit card with Jeanette, the Guest House administrator.

In addition to new titles, we have been selling good quality second-hand books for \$5 each. These are books that have been enjoyed and donated by associates and visitors; the funds go towards the guest wing renovations. These reduced books are very popular, and we are always happy to have donations. Donated books need to be similar to the books we have in the book room, unmarked and in good condition. No novels or academic books, please.

So if your bookshelves at home are overflowing, consider donating some to the Convent on your next visit. Children's books are welcome too.

Sister Doreen has also added some of her reflections (see below) to the shelves and we have notebooks with the Convent logo for sale.

Along the corridor there is another table with cards and bags which are being sold for guest wing fund raising.

Another temptation at the end of the corridor is the collection of "Bears and Bunnies". These are knitted by Sisters and Associates, all 100% washable, in varied colours and very lovable. All are the same price, \$10, and those funds go to Amnesty International.

Another shelf contains some of the Sisters' crafts: prayer shawls, finger labyrinths, knitted dish cloths, etc.

The book room does earn the Sisters some money; it is also, to my mind, very much a ministry. Although religious books abound, it is not always easy to find sound theology. The Rev. Pauline Head continues to order the books for us. I display them and let Pauline know which categories need refreshing.

### Jane Winstanley and The Rev. Pauline Head

\* Novalis.ca is Canada's leading religious publisher. Founded in Ottawa in 1936 by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Novalis publishes mainly religious and spiritual periodicals and books, in both English and French. Since October 1, 2008, Novalis has been a brand of Bayard Canada, owned by the Augustins de l'Assomption.



We are excited to announce that we have received a donation of \$15,000 from the Anglican Foundation of Canada. This is the second donation that the Anglican Foundation of Canada has gifted us with in relation to our Guest House renovation. We are grateful for their generosity and support!

## Remember!

This year during the festal celebration in our chapel of the Pentecost Eucharist I found myself overwhelmed by the word 'remember' ... it was as if God were saying to me, and to us, as the bread and wine were held up, 'remember me!' It immediately also took me to the crucifixion and the words of the penitent thief to Jesus ... 'remember me.'



Pentecost this year for me became a day in which I found myself pondering that promise: God calling out 'remember me' and the longing deep in one's heart that also calls out 'remember me'. And in response that promise ... Today you will be with me, a promise that is for today, and all the days before today and all the days after today – today forever! May the long Pentecost season this year be one that is full of pondering this intimate exchange of 'remember me.'

Throughout the day it became like an intimate dance between me and God, exchanging our longing for that intimacy that we both desired. It was as if what Jesus promises the thief... 'today you will be with me' was an exchange between God and myself that stirred my imagination, deepened my faith and restored my hope.

In this exchange, 'remember me' throughout the day, I believe that affirmation, that promise, was also a gift that was exchanged: God being assured that I was remembering and I being assured that God was remembering! 'Remember' ushered in a day of gift giving! We all need affirmation of truths that we believe and know!

Remember is such an important word. The Greek philosopher Epicurus said "Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not; remember that what you now have was once among the things you only hoped for."

For all of us, taking the time to remember is so important, both the happy experiences that we have had and the difficult experiences that we have had; our spring times and our dark, snow times.

Looking back on each experience brings us the gift of assurance that we can go on, that we can overcome,

that all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well; because we have had these experiences, we have learned, and we have grown, and we have come through them.

One of our greatest freedoms is how we respond to things, and remembering is that gift that can add confidence to our going forward in life. In Charlie Mackesy's book "The Boy, the Mole, the Fox, and the Horse" there is a conversation that is so affirming in our journey through life, and our quest for a deeper spiritual life. "We have such a long way to go," sighed the boy. "Yes, but look how far we've come," said the horse.

There is another conversation between these friends in Mackesy's book: "What do we do when our hearts hurt?" asked the boy. "We wrap them in friendship, shared tears and time, till they wake hopeful and happy again."

This is part of the mystery and beauty of remembering, of pondering the dance of remember between us and God, others and the whole of creation.

A quote by Megan McKenna, from "The New Stations of the Cross":

"The world and time and all created by God are east-ering and rising up to life again. The universe and all of us are the result of unbearable tenderness, and we are laced and threaded with everlasting life that cannot and will not ever be undone. Hope surrounds and delight stalks our every step, because Love still reigns and seeks us out no matter where we hide or live."

Remember me! Remember me!

**Sr. Doreen, SSJD**

### Food for the Soul

Nov. 7 – 9, 2025	Zentangle workshop with Nancy Houghton
Nov. 29, 2025	Advent Quiet day with Sr. Doreen
Dec. 23 – 26, 2025	Christmas Retreat with Sr. Constance Joanna
Dec. 31 – Jan. 1, 2026	New Year's Retreat with Sr. Elizabeth

For more information, check our website at [www.ssjd.ca](http://www.ssjd.ca) or contact the Guest House at [guesthouse@ssjd.ca](mailto:guesthouse@ssjd.ca)



# Guest House Reopening Celebration

October 11, 2025, at 2 pm

Celebrate the reopening of the Guest House with us! We are delighted to celebrate this project completion with a Blessing of the Guest House and Donor Recognition with Afternoon Tea.

Afternoon Tea will be in the guest courtyard, weather permitting.

**Fee:**

Free, but registration is required.

**Registration Deadline:**

October 4, 2025



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