



# A Year in Quarantine

By Maria Cunningham

On March 13, 2020, shortly after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, St. Anne's Home went into lockdown for what was expected to be two weeks. Just as Residents had begun to comment on the relief of knowing there was only one week left in the mandated lockdown, it was extended to an additional three weeks. No one imagined then that living in quarantine would become a way of life at St. Anne's for the next 365 days.

The quarantine quickly went beyond merely not allowing visitors into the Home. Distancing, masking, handwashing, and increased sanitation efforts all became part of the armament with which to battle the invisible enemy. Widespread vigilance and diligence for the protection of our most vulnerable went into overdrive. Community meals and social activities, along with Resident admissions, were all halted. Necessary adjustments were made to help negate the adverse effects of the obligatory restrictions. Virtual alternatives were introduced wherever possible, and a new normal resulted.

As weeks turned into months, new standards to further control infection included the cycle of anxiously waiting for test results that would determine the dreaded news of possible illness requiring further isolation or good news granting more relaxed interaction. It was, without a doubt, a grueling roller coaster journey for all.

Information from news sources flooded the senses on a regular basis and traversing through the unknown territory of the novel virus often brought with it winds of fear and anxiety. When the infection crossed the threshold of the Home, it brought great heartache to Little Sisters, families, staff, and friends alike. The mission of the Little Sisters — caring for the life that

prepares you for your journey to heaven — was uncharacteristically defined by PPE's and isolation.

However, through the ups and downs of 2020, the bonds of family at St. Anne's strengthened. The courage of the Little Sisters and staff and the patience and acceptance of the Residents remained constant and remarkable. Many moments of meaning were shared, holidays and milestones were still observed, the joys of daily life were celebrated, and special acts of kindness brightened the days in unexpected ways.



Like in most times of hardship, the resiliency of the human spirit did not cease to inspire. The kindness and generosity of heart exhibited by people in the community helped to give balance to the ordeals and to help keep hope alive. The most basic of human qualities: caring for those in need, took



center stage and that is how the St. Anne's family got to today.

One year later, the Little Sisters, Residents and staff have been fully vaccinated, and everyone has learned different things about themselves and each other in the past year, but the words of Sr. Constance, the Little Sisters Communications Director, sum it up appropriately from the perspective of a Little Sister who was on the front lines at the Home in Delaware which was particularly hard hit by the pandemic.

*"The needs of the elderly in our society are sometimes put on the back-burner or overlooked, yet this pandemic has hit the elderly the hardest. It really has affirmed me in my vocation, the value of the work that we do and the mission that the Church has given us, to accompany the elderly and to try to protect their dignity, to look out for them, and to provide them with all the care and love that we can."*



# A Chapel Renewed

*By Maria Cunningham*

The endeavor to revitalize St. Anne's chapel began approximately eight years ago when it was recognized that in its current state it was not meeting the needs of the Home's aged community. With changes in societal aging, Residents come to St. Anne's Home much later in life. There is less mobility in the Resident community and certain comforts that at one time might have been considered luxuries are now considered necessities.

The contemplative space that filled the spiritual needs of so many for over three decades needed renewal to adequately accommodate wheelchairs, provide safe access to seating for those with walkers, and to allow elderly priests with level access to the sanctuary; but that was just the beginning, and the all-important issue of how to fund this project remained. After over 30 years since the construction of its current building, St. Anne's faced many other important maintenance demands. The stove, the dishwasher, the washing machines, the

emergency generator and the lighting and security systems were all nearing the end of their serviceable life and needed refurbishment or replacement. Over the eight-year period, the Little Sisters' faithful dependence on Divine Providence prevailed once again. Most of the urgent needs were addressed through the kindness and generosity of the community. In the meantime, the Little Sisters continued to do what they needed to do to ensure the safety and comfort of Residents in the chapel. Pillows in the pews were commonplace and, of course, more assistance was dedicated to helping Residents navigate their chapel visits.

The need for an ADA compliant chapel was an undertaking that was well understood by those who considered it their space of worship and by those who witnessed the needs during each visit. The chapel was a special place for Yvonne and Angelo Sangiacomo, who frequently joined the Little Sisters for worship. During one of the standing-room only services, the Sangiacomo's took

particular notice of the challenges — the lack of ease for Residents in pews, in wheelchairs, and with walkers, the unmerciful kneelers and the broken pews. Through their love for the Holy Trinity, they felt compelled to help, and they came to the rescue.

The path to completion of this project was not without obstacles, but it happened according to God's plan. Hurdles were both large and small and included everything from delayed permitting to contractor changes that affected timelines and budgeting, and finally a pandemic lockdown. Despite the hindrances, and with deepest gratitude to the Sangiacomo Family Foundation, in December 2020, the work to make the St. Anne's chapel fully ADA compliant was completed.

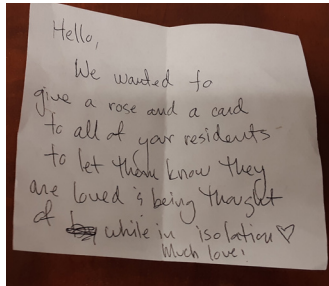
Thankful for the journey of faith represented by the completion of this project, the Little Sisters gratefully look forward to when the doors of the chapel that represents the heart of the Home can open to welcome all to safely pray, worship, and celebrate together.



## Rays of Light

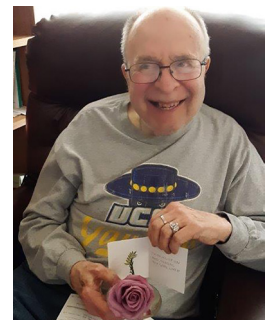
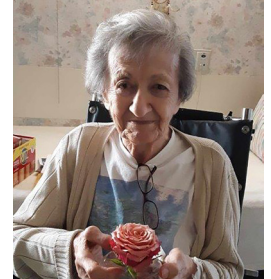
Throughout this past year we have been blessed with rays of light that have brightened many days for our Residents. The “day brighteners,” as we like to call them, have included gifts of fresh produce, special notes and cards, Christmas wreaths, and a variety of other treats. Most recently, we had three kind students from San Francisco State University drop off beautiful glass vases with a rose and card for each Resident. The gifts were accompanied by a simple handwritten note that read, “We wanted to give a rose and a card to all of your residents to let them know they are loved and being thought of while in isolation. Much love!” This lovely, unexpected gesture certainly accomplished its goal and was a source of much joy for our Residents.

The three graduate art students came together admitting, “It’s been so tough for our older loved ones, and it’s hard to know how to help.” But they found a way. One of the students is also a florist,



who throughout the pandemic has been delivering flowers to individuals nominated by the community as in need of uplifting. One of the other students shared that she had been thinking a lot about her grandmother during the pandemic and she remembered a story about a dream that her grandmother told her a few months before she passed away. “She told me that we were hanging out in my backyard with a giraffe. That was my inspiration for the giraffe cards I made for the Residents and a personally meaningful way to honor my grandmother.”

It is acts of kindness like this from which we all draw strength, and which remind us of the beauty that lies in the hearts of kind people all around us. Thank you, Natasha, Nicole, and Haley for being rays of light in the lives of our Residents.



## In Memoriam

In 2016, the Little Sisters of the Poor at St. Anne’s Home bestowed their highest honor, the St. Jeanne Jugan Award, on Yvonne Sangiacomo. The award recognizes an individual who values the solidarity of the human family, the wisdom of age, and with kindness of heart embraces the importance of care for the elderly. These attributes were unmistakably personified by this special woman, but it took several years for the Sisters to convince her to accept this award. Yvonne was not interested in having any attention focused on her. She eventually accepted only because it would help the Sisters and their work.

For close to four decades Yvonne consistently worked alongside the Little Sisters to help keep alive their legacy of hospitality and care. She understood that the Little Sisters’ work was founded with full faith in community and that community support



gave it breadth. She appreciated the purpose and zealously took on the role of ambassador to their mission. In the 1980’s, she was instrumental in starting the St. Anne’s Home Auxiliary. As a charter member of the group, she served as founder, volunteer, and benefactor of the highly acclaimed Red Tie Gala – her signature event for the Little Sisters. Her heart was always with the Little Sisters, but her desire to help those in need did not have boundaries. Yvonne’s generous heart was far reaching. If there was a need and she could fill it, she did. Her heart told her that was how life was meant to be.

A few days prior to the St. Jeanne Jugan Award Dinner, Yvonne fell ill and had to spend a few days in the hospital. It was not clear if she would be able to attend the sold-out dinner in her honor, but she did. She came straight from the hospital because she couldn’t keep 600 guests waiting, and she could not let the Little Sisters down. As impressive a feat as that was, it was the impassioned words that she delivered to the audience at the end of the evening that defined her: “Think of your blessings, of what you have been given, pass it on as best you can — help your neighbor, the person next to you or the person in front of you. Don’t give up on people who need your help. It will make you feel like a million bucks!”

Yvonne will be greatly missed, but forever remembered for the life that she so vibrantly embraced, for the generous heart that inspired, and for the unleashed kindness that she shared.

***Forever in our Hearts***

## MOTHER'S MESSAGE



Dear Friends,

As we journey into a New Year hopeful for the promise of less challenging times, we also look back on the feats of the past year, despite its trials. We look back on the blessings, which were many, and we are grateful. We are thankful for all of you who have continued to stand beside us and have helped us through a long and difficult year. We are thankful for the blessings of health and stamina of our Little Sisters, Residents, and staff because it is together that we have been able to maintain the required level of safety in our Home and keep the infection controlled. We are thankful to have received our vaccines to add the highest level of safety possible at this time and are hopeful that our quarantine can soon be at least partially lifted.

The words of Pope Francis seem particularly significant as we travel on the path to toward Easter, "In these times of trouble when everything seems fragile and uncertain, it may appear challenging to speak of hope. Yet Lent is precisely the season of hope, when we turn back to God who patiently continues to care for his creation which we have often mistreated. In order to give hope to others, it is sometimes enough simply to be kind . . . to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference." We thank you for your prayers, for the kindness that you have shared with us for the benefit of our Residents, and for your part in helping to create radiance in their smiles.

May you have blessed Lenten and Easter Season,  
*Mother Theresa*

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