

# Lurana's Star

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF THE ATONEMENT  
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2016

SUMMER

No. 3

*Jubilee 2016*

*Lord, you called me by name.*

*Isaiah 43: 1*

*Sister Esther Garcia*

*Celebrated her*

*Golden Jubilee*

*At Graymoor on*

*Saturday, May 21st*



Esther replied: “ *This is my petition and request: if I have found favor with the king and if it pleases your majesty to grant my petition and honor my request, come with Haman tomorrow to a banquet which I shall prepare for you; and then I will do as you ask.*”

Book of Esther 5:7-8

Franciscans...  
Missionaries...  
Lovers of Creation...  
Lovers of the Lord!



Sister Eilish Sweeney

Dear Friend,

Greetings and best wishes to you, your family and loved ones. Can you believe it, we have gone beyond mid-way 2016? As the old saying goes, "Where does time go?" May God

bless each moment of our lives.

You may have noticed in our previous Lurana's Star that Sister Kristine Koba has replaced Betsaida Cohen as part of our Development Staff. I am grateful to Betsaida for all she did for us and I welcome Sister Kristine to her new ministry.

On Sunday, April 3, 2016 - Mercy Sunday - another one of our Sisters was called home to her Eternal Reward. Sister Mary Theresa O'Neill from Co. Tyrone, Ireland was a member of our congregation for sixty-nine years. May she Rest in Peace.

One month later on Sunday, May 1, 2016, Sister Bridget McGovern died peacefully surrounded by several of our Sisters. Sister Bridget, a Franciscan Sister of the Atonement for seventy-seven years, came from Co. Fermanagh, Ireland. May she now be enjoying her Eternal Reward.

In this edition of our Lurana Star it gives me great pleasure to re-introduce - see edition

#3, Fall 2013 - an old friend who shared in ministry with me many years ago in the Roxbury/South End area of Boston. And now, almost twenty years later we came together again with fond memories as Sister Esther Garcia celebrated her Golden Jubilee here at Graymoor.

This year's celebration of Jubilee was very unique for us, the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement, as Sister Esther was the *only* Sister of the Atonement who celebrated Jubilee on Saturday, May 21, 2016.

Although it is unusual for congregations like ourselves to have only one Sister celebrating her Jubilee during the summer months, it turned out to be a glorious day indeed for Sister Esther, her family who traveled from California, her good friends and for all of us, the members of her congregation.

Another big event in the life of our congregation took place in Washington, D.C. from June 5th to June 18th: our twentieth General Chapter. Sincere gratitude was expressed to the former members of our Leadership Team: Sisters Nancy Conboy, Mary Patricia Galvin, Paul Marie Gouthro, Denise Robillard and Mary Kelly who have served our congregation during the past five years.

Sincere gratitude to all our good friends and benefactors who supported the Phil Coulter/Andy Cooney Concert. See page 7 for more details. It truly was a very enjoyable evening. Thank you.

Wishing you and your family a safe and happy summer season. Know you are in our thoughts and prayers. God bless you.

Gratefully,

*Sister M. Eilish Sweeney*

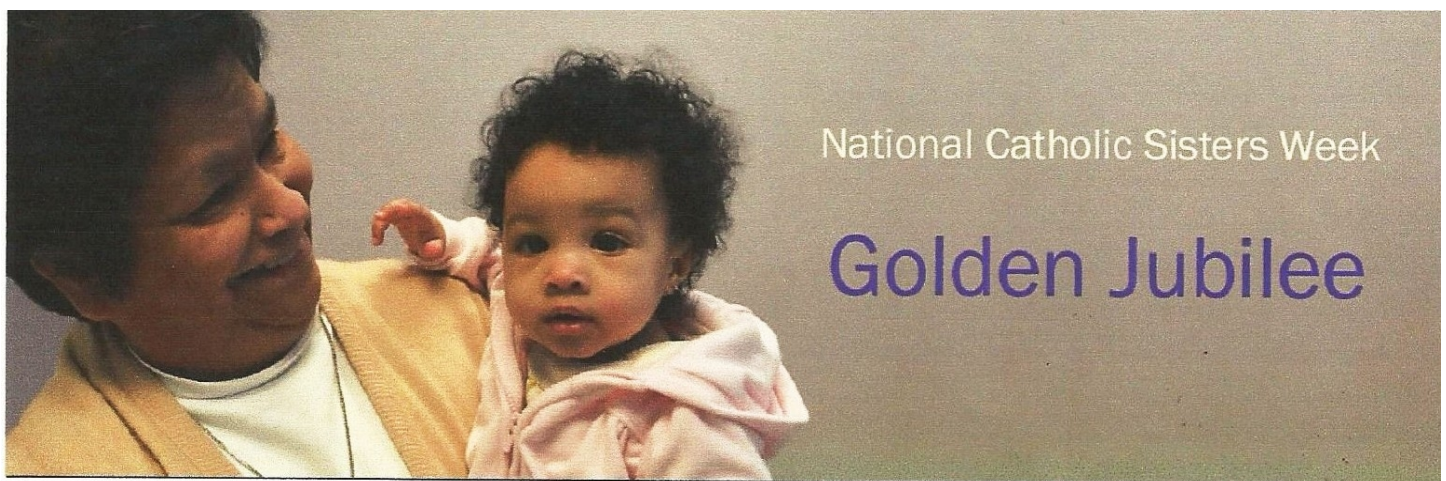
# Golden Jubilee 2016

Sister Esther Garcia was born in one of the warmest cities of the United States of America: Bakersfield, California. I should know because like so many of our Sisters, I, too, spent several good years among the families of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Bakersfield and in the surrounding area Parishes.

Sister Esther, a member of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, entered our congregation back in 1966. Except for a few years in our postulate, novitiate and her early educational training days, Sister Esther has given thirty-seven years of her Religious Life to the children and families of the Archdiocese of Boston.

Recently Sister Esther was treated like a celebrity. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese did several interesting profiles of Women Religious during National Catholic Sisters Week. The following has been shared throughout the Archdiocese and far beyond beginning with Sister Esther's story.

"National Catholic Sisters Week (NCSW) is an annual celebration taking place from March 8 - March 14, 2016 to honor women religious and to raise awareness of women vocations as an option for young women today. In that spirit, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Boston is proud to celebrate and introduce the women religious who work with us to help realize our mission of providing a path to self-sufficiency for the poor and working poor of Eastern Massachusetts. The first sister we wish to honor is one many generations of Catholic Charities' families from lower Roxbury, the South End and Dorchester know well, Sr. Esther Garcia.



Sr. Esther Garcia is of the **Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement**. With simplicity and joy, her religious community serves the poor and strives to empower those who are neglected or oppressed. In May 2016, Sr. Esther celebrates a major milestone in her life, her Golden Jubilee or 50 year anniversary as a sister. On behalf of everyone at Catholic Charities and the people we serve, we say thank you for your service, your love and your care.

Sr. Esther's career in childcare with Catholic Charities began in 1979 at Emmanuel House, serving lower Roxbury and the South End of Boston. She continued her service when we

# Golden Jubilee 2016

moved our childcare center to its current location in 2006, the Yawkey Center, Haitian Multi-Service Center on Columbia Road in Dorchester. Today, Sr. Esther's job title is Program Director of Childcare, but to the parents and children she sees every day, she is much more.



During her years at Emmanuel House, Sister Esther prepared hundreds of young children for their “*big day*”, their Kindergarten Graduation.

In the back row, left to right are the dedicated members of the Emmanuel House staff of years gone by: Sisters Esther and Laurie, Miss Minnie, Miss Bobbie and Miss Mary.

Sister Esther works hard to make sure the children in her care know each day that they are loved and accepted for who they are, regardless of their culture, color or religion. Sr. Esther stated, “Children are the core of our future. The amazement and wonder on their faces when they discover something new—that’s what’s important to me.”

Creating a safe, structured and consistent environment, regardless of what’s happening outside of Yawkey Center’s doors, also shapes the children’s success. Sr. Esther often tells her children “No matter what happens out there, we will protect you in here.” Despite her petite stature of less than five feet, the children in Sr. Esther’s care believe that she is nothing short of amazing. Her reward is in the smiles of the children Sr. Esther says, not to mention the tremendous individual growth and learning of her students.

Growing up in a close-knit family, Sr. Esther had a very special and close relationship with her grandmother; they spent much time together and often accompanied each other to church.

# Golden Jubilee 2016

Sr. Esther remembers her grandmother saying that she thought someone in the family would choose the religious life, but no one thought it would be Esther, especially Esther! That is, until her parish priest suggested she explore the possibility. She hesitated for a long time and prayed for a long time before even considering it, and then one day, she decided to investigate. Shortly thereafter, she discovered the community of the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement--the community that fit her best.

During the early years of her sisterhood, her father asked if she ever regretted not having a family of her own. She responded by sending him pictures of her students telling him, “these are my children; these are your grandchildren.” Sr. Esther and her family have never looked back and for this, our Catholic Charities family is grateful.”

In closing, Sr. Esther shared with us some wisdom her grandmother shared that she lives by daily, “don’t live for tomorrow, live for today.” Here’s to today Sr. Esther! ”

As I began to write for this edition of Lurana’s Star and before Sister Esther had become *famous* throughout the Archdiocese of Boston, I had written to her asking that she write her story for me. Here are her own words:

“Where does one begin to tell their story, their life as a Franciscan Sister of the Atonement? Many have asked when did you get the call or did you know that you wanted to enter religious life. I cannot really say when it all began or when God put the seed inside me, but when I did begin to tell my family, my mother would tell her friends, ‘Oh my daughter is going to enter the convent’, the response would be ‘Oh Mary will be a beautiful Sister.’ Mom would say, ‘Not Mary but Esther’. What would be the reply? Not many people thought I would last more than two weeks to a month. I would always see our Sisters in church. I never knew that they were Franciscan, I just knew that they taught religion and did home visits. When I did receive the letter that I had been accepted into the community, I thought I would be living on Bernard Street. To my surprise I was told by our parish priest that I was not going to stay in Bakersfield but that I had to go New York, New York. My life as a Franciscan Sister of the Atonement began September 8, 1966.

I saw Graymoor for the first time. My three years as a postulant and novice were very enriching and rewarding as I began to learn about the life of a Franciscan Sister and our Founders. We were blessed to have teachers who enriched us. I have been blessed to have worked with children from New York to Philadelphia, Edmonton, Vancouver and my present assignment in Boston working with many diverse families

## *Golden Jubilee 2016*

Every day is a new and rewarding experience. Children can lift up your spirits. Our childcare is now located in Dorchester. The one thing I do miss is living right in the neighborhood like we did at Emmanuel House in Roxbury. We were a big family and when we stepped out the families knew that we were “The Emmanuel House Sisters.” I thank God every day for the life that he has given me to be so blessed and to be among the young children who through their eyes you see the beauty and the innocence of every thing. Being in childcare there is never a dull moment. Oh yes, it does have its moments!



*Sister Esther and “Mr. Tipp” enjoying a moment of recognition at Emmanuel House.*

I want to end this by saying, I thank God for my family but most especially my Grandmother that she said, ‘God has called you and He will let you know that if it is not the life for you He will let you know. Do not be afraid, God is walking with you.’ And yes, He does walk with me every day. God is Good all the time and all the time God is Good. Amen”



*Our Jubilarian, Sister Esther Garcia, with her sisters, Mary and Janet, her brother, Frank, her sister-in law Celia and her brother-in-law, Jimmy, all of whom traveled from Bakersfield, California for her special day.*

May God continue to bless Sister Esther, her family and all the families whose lives were touched by her love and dedication shown towards them during the past fifty years.



*A special thank you to all our good friends and benefactors who attended/supported the Celtic Crossings - Phil Coulter/Andy Cooney Concert with special guest, Geraldine Branagan on Wednesday, March 16, 2016 at the Paramount, Peekskill, New York.*

*On behalf of all of our Sisters, we express sincere gratitude to Andy Cooney for his generous gift to us, the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement.*



*After a wonderful evening of great music, Sister Eilish Sweeney is pictured left to right with Phil Coulter, Jonathan Close, General Manager of the Paramount, and Andy Cooney.*

# In Memoriam



**Sister Mary Theresa O'Neill, S.A.**  
**October 10, 1919 - April 3, 2016**

*“Let nothing disturb thee: Let nothing dismay thee; All things pass; God never changes. Patience attains all that it strives for; He who has God, finds he lacks nothing: God alone suffices.”*

St. Teresa of Avila



**Sister Bridget McGovern, S.A.**  
**January 31, 1922 - May 1, 2016**

*“We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have received the Atonement.”*

Community Text: Romans 5:11

## Sisters' Gift Shop Graymoor

Shop 5 days a week 9am-4pm  
(closed on Monday & Tuesday)  
Call 845-424-3809  
[giftshop@graymoor.org](mailto:giftshop@graymoor.org)



## Mass Schedule

*You have an open invitation to join us in prayer*



*M-F 11:15  
Sat. 4:30  
Sun. 9:00*

Welcome to  
the Sisters' Chapel  
St. Francis Convent,  
Graymoor