

Sodality Unit Summaries

Christ Child Unit

The Christ Child Unit is one of the original units of the St. Jane Frances de Chantal Sodality, dating back more than 50 years. Many members have passed away in recent years and some are now homebound, but the group continues to welcome new members. The Christ Child ladies participate in and volunteer their services for many Sodality events. The unit meets about three times annually at a member's home or at the Seton Center, and they keep in touch with their homebound members. For many years the unit hosted the annual General Sodality Christmas meeting by providing decorations, refreshments, and drinks for this joyous holiday occasion. The unit now supports the St. Jane Frances de Chantal community with its prayers. At each meeting, members pray for the persons on the parish prayer list and all those who need their spiritual support. They continue to pray for these intentions during their private prayer as well. For more than half a century, the ladies of the Christ Child Unit have been a mainstay of the Sodality.

John Neumann Unit

The John Neumann Unit currently consists of 17 active members who regularly support the General Sodality's missions of faith and charity and also meet as a group approximately four times during the Sodality year. During unit meetings the members share communal prayer and undertake their own charitable projects that serve a wide variety of community needs. Over the years, John Neumann members have chaired a number of the Sodality's major events, such as the Anniversary Brunch and the Plant Sale, and have served in leadership positions in the General Sodality. Currently, two unit members serve as officers on the Sodality Executive Board. The unit's past charitable projects have assisted a wide range of programs. Recently, John Neumann members have donated funds or needed supplies to assist the following charitable missions: Birthright of Montgomery County; the Fisher House Complex serving the families of wounded service members at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center; de Chantal's own St. Martin's Cloak Guild; the Misericordia Heart of Mercy program for persons with developmental disabilities in Chicago, Illinois; and the Gabriel Project of Montgomery County. The women of the John Neumann Unit treasure the close relationship they share and are thankful to be able to assist these very worthwhile programs.

Regina Coeli Unit

The members of the Regina Coeli and Margaret Mary Units reunited in 2011 and kept the name of the original unit, Regina Coeli. Comprised primarily of women who have served in various leadership positions within the parish over the past 15-20 years, the unit meets three to four times per year as a group, and its service includes chairing and supporting various fundraising and outreach efforts such as the parish Giving Tree. The unit's newest initiative is a monthly evening recitation of the Rosary in the church to which all Sodalists are invited. For the last several years the unit has held a Christmas tea at Maplewood Park Place to honor founding members of the unit as well as other parish ladies who reside there. In the spring, the unit will also host the Sodality's Anniversary Brunch for couples in the parish who are celebrating milestone anniversaries. In addition, the group supports the residents of ManorCare Health Services – Bethesda, and collects food donations and delivers them every weekend to de Chantal's sister parish, the Shrine of the Sacred Heart in Washington, D.C., to assist the Shrine's community. Regina Coeli members have often provided a meal for students after an evening Mass at the John Neumann Center of the University of Maryland. The unit has been serving these dinners for more than a dozen years and on average feeds approximately 160 students in an evening. Since focusing on its members' spiritual needs and prayer life is central to its mission, the unit also has held a home Mass followed by a potluck dinner for a number of years. Attending the monthly Sodality Mass and praying the Rosary are other important ways the unit fosters the spiritual growth of its members.

St. Monica Unit

The St. Monica Unit assists St. Jane Frances de Chantal Church and the surrounding community in many ways. In keeping with their goal of supporting underprivileged mothers and their children, the women of St. Monica have started donating their time and treasure to the DC Diaper Bank (DCDB). At their spring meeting and home Mass last May, unit members collected diapers and formula to donate to the DCDB for families in the area who would otherwise go without these basic supplies. In November the unit gathered at a DCDB warehouse and wrapped almost 8,000 diapers to be distributed to families in need. They will visit the warehouse again this April 15th. The members also served dinner at the Catholic Student Center at the University of Maryland on February 26th. The St. Monica Unit is equally involved in the activities of the General Sodality. For the past few years, its members have provided the refreshments for the Christmas Craft and General Sodality meeting in December. In addition, they will again coordinate and run the parish Red Cross Blood Drive on April 5th. A home Mass as well as a brunch following the monthly Sodality Mass are in the works for the unit this spring. The busy ladies of the St. Monica Unit enjoy working together to help the community and support a life of charity and spirituality.

St. Gianna Unit

The St. Gianna Unit is an active unit comprised primarily of mothers with school-aged children. One key mission of the St. Gianna Unit is to help address the many needs of pregnant women, young mothers, children, and families in our community. The members of the St. Gianna Unit meet monthly to pray, to share their challenges and triumphs, and to organize their charitable projects. Activities planned for members this year include a visit to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and a craft project to learn to make rosaries. Further, members of the St. Gianna Unit are active in Sodality leadership and fully support the spiritual, charitable, and fundraising activities of the Sodality. The unit recognizes that the spiritual and material needs of mothers and young families are profound, and its members strive through their charitable efforts and through prayer to address these needs with the guidance and blessings of St. Gianna and the Virgin Mary.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Unit

The St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Unit aims to bring female professionals - single and married - together for faith, fellowship, and fun, and for deepening devotion to the Blessed Mother. The unit takes its name from the Seton Center, where its first meetings were held. Soon after, the members made a spiritual retreat to Emmitsburg, Maryland, home of the National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, who was the first native-born citizen of the United States to be canonized as a saint. Over the last several years, the unit has engaged in multiple service projects within the parish and archdiocese, including the annual drive for religious education supplies for needy parishes in the District of Columbia. With its membership base growing, the unit is looking to elevate its members' faith through prayer, its service projects, and faith-filled fellowship. To strengthen the spiritual growth of its members, the unit also incorporates into its activities an annual book club selection (recent choices have included *Rediscovering Catholicism* and *Breaking Through: Catholic Women Speak for Themselves*) to encourage contemplation and to explore and understand different aspects of our faith. The unit membership also enjoys and engages in the events of the General Sodality.

Sodality Associates

The Associates Unit consists of 68 prayerful and generous Sodalists who support the projects of the General Sodality and donate an annual gift to the parish. Associate members can always be found at the Fashion Show, General Sodality meetings, and other social Sodality events supporting the parish. This year, the Associates contributed generously toward the cost of the planned renovation of Caulfield Hall, which Sodality uses frequently during the year. Last year, they paid for the purchase of new red vestments for our parish deacons. In the recent past, the

Associates made a substantial contribution toward the purchase of the *Madonna della Strada* statue that now stands in the Mary Garden and helped to defray the cost of a second electronic announcement board for the right side of the church gathering space. Over the years, the generosity of the Associates has paid for the regilding of the tabernacle and provided financial assistance toward the purchases of new hymnals for the church, the security system for the school, and the church's magnificent pipe organ. In addition, donations by the Associates have contributed to the sign for the driveway entrance to the church and the improved church audio system. The group's largesse also made possible the outdoor statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, stage curtains for Caulfield Hall, a beautifully woven banner of St. Jane de Chantal, flower stands for the altar, new vestments, and new altar linens. The lifetime of service the Associates have provided to the parish and the community stands as a model for all Sodalists to emulate.

Junior Sodality

The Junior Sodality is an enthusiastic group of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade girls of St. Jane de Chantal School who seek to emulate the Blessed Mother and, in doing so, reach out to others through prayer and deeds. At their first meeting in October, they learned what Junior Sodality is all about and discussed ways they could contribute during this school year. They vied for bragging rights by playing "Catholic Trivia," testing their knowledge of the lives of the saints and other facts. In celebration of Veterans' Day in November, they collected Halloween candy and wrote to active duty service members for Operation Gratitude, an organization that makes care packages for our armed forces. The girls listened intently as Father Giese described his deployment to the Middle East and gained a new respect for those who serve our country. In December they sang Christmas carols and visited with the residents at Maplewood Park Place, who in turn surprised the girls with Christmas cookies and punch. In February, the Junior Sodalists crafted Valentines for infants in the NICU and made sandwiches for Bethesda Cares. They have many more plans to serve the community this school year and also will help to tend the parish Mary Garden this spring. The eighth graders have earned the privileges to assist at the Fashion Show, participate in the annual Junior Sodality essay contest for a scholarship toward tuition at a local Catholic high school, and lead the annual May Crowning ceremony to honor the Blessed Mother. The Junior Sodalists are building a spiritual foundation that will help them become Catholic women who are strong in their faith.