



Beautiful Belonging



Anna Quast | 2022-2023 Volunteer | A graduate of the University of Notre Dame

As I sat on our comfy couch in the BSVM community house, covered in a blanket and sipping some warm tea, Emily (from BSVM staff) pulled out a big sticky-note-like paper, stuck it on the wall, and wrote the word “Justice” on top. She then gave us the task of coming up with short phrases or words to describe justice to a six-year-old.

I sat there for some time, wracking my brain as to how to seemingly simplify the topic of justice. After some time, our house came up with some key words and phrases, including fairness, respect, the Golden Rule, loving others, etc. Seeing justice described in such ways led to reflection on a common thread—relationship.

On Thursday mornings, our community comes together for a weekly morning reflection with BSVM staff—a space for collective prayer, reflection, and sharing. In the winter and spring, many of our Thursday reflection spaces focused on the BSVM pillar of practicing God’s justice. The morning we were asked to describe justice to a child, we went back to Genesis to build a foundational understanding of God’s justice. We discussed injustice as the breakdown of connection between God, self, others, and creation, thus learning that justice involves the repairing and strengthening of those connections into “right relationship.”

In learning how practicing God’s justice involves an understanding of right relationships among God, self, others and creation, our community discussed the importance in recognizing our interdependence on God,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Editor's Perch



By Emily Thrush | B SVM Site Manager

For 25 years, B SVM has accompanied young adults in their personal and communal journeys towards transformation through service with others. At the heart of each of the program pillars is an invitation into relationship: deepening and repairing our relationship with God, with our community members, with ourselves, with our neighbors, with our colleagues, with strangers, and with our faith communities. This issue of *The Companion* highlights some of those relationships that are fostered in a year of intentionality and growth.

Anna Quast (B SVM 2022-2023) reflects on her experience in the gospel choir at Holy Rosary Catholic Church, which gave her another community of belonging and love, and framed her entire B SVM experience with elders who demonstrated their faithfulness, hospitality, and grace. Caroline Kirk (B SVM 2021-2022) reflects on solidarity and the relationships that have grown from her listening presence at Cristo Rey Richmond High School, where she served as a Ministry Volunteer and now where she's been teaching for the last two years. Caroline's Site Supervisor and Cristo Rey Principal, Dr. Lynn Waidelich, reflects on her experience of observing Ministry Volunteers over the years, and shares her hopes for anyone considering the commitment to a year of something different: there is power in taking an intentional pause after college, building spiritual habits that help ground one's work in practices that help them endure, and doing that important work *together* in community.

"God of Solidarity, Thank you for being a God who enters the suffering of the world—who doesn't run from those in pain but rushes to the site of blood and tears. [...] Show us when the voices of the vulnerable are being drowned out by the cacophony of the privileged. Make our presence and dignity known in a world that perpetually eclipses the voices of the marginalized. Guide us into a solidarity that demands something of us. Let us learn to risk ourselves on behalf of the vulnerable, believing that when one of us is harmed, we all are. And God, keep us from those who will demonize the fight in us, who would prefer us complacent and far from one another. Secure in us the courage to resist, knowing that together we will restore what the world has tried to suffocate in us. Amen."

Cole Arthur Riley
(Black Liturgies: Prayers, Poems, and Meditations for Staying Human, 142)

Lynn bears witness to seeing Ministry Volunteers live into the charism of the Sisters of Bon Secours in tangible ways, which was the original hope when the Sisters set out to sponsor a Volunteer Ministry more than 25 years ago. Sr. Nancy Glynn, Sr. Elaine Davia, and Director Shannon Curran share reflections on the ministry and how they see it connected to the sisters' mission. We continue our anniversary celebration by sharing pictures from different communities over the years, and we highlight the pillars of our mission that support the growth of volunteers with excerpts from alumni reflections. When volunteers commit to a year with B SVM, the ministry of presence they cultivate throughout the year is built from proximity, intentionality, compassion, and persistence. For all of us, may we commit ourselves—like the prayer from Cole Arthur Riley affirms—to "solidarity that demands something of us," built on relationships centered in love, interdependence, and beautiful belonging.



A mini reunion: most of B SVM 2021-2022 community shares a meal with B SVM 2022-2023

Celebrating our 25th Anniversary Year

Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry is proud to celebrate our 25th year of ministry! Since our beginning in 1999, we have accompanied 111 young adults as they immerse themselves in the charism of Bon Secours and open themselves to be transformed through service with others. Throughout the issues of *The Companion* this year, we take time to reflect and honor this ministry through the years.



As a ministry of community, BSVM would not be where we are without the support and guidance of many. From the Sisters who sponsor the ministry, to our volunteers who commit to this year of transformation, to our alumni who continue to grow in the mission of BSVM and support the ministry long after their ministry year ends, to our staff who provide the leadership, infrastructure, and formation, and to the numerous friends and family we've met along the journey who support us in countless ways through prayer, financial donations, and much more – we say thank you! We appreciate your support and take this moment to celebrate our past, our present, and our future.



Our Mission

Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry, sponsored by the Sisters of Bon Secours, provides the opportunity for women and men to participate in the Sisters' commitment to justice in radical solidarity with the poor, the suffering, and those most in need. By sharing the Bon Secours charism of compassion, healing, and liberation, the ministry nurtures and sustains individuals in their personal and communal journeys towards transformation through service with others.

To nurture this transformative journey, Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry supports individuals through a year of spiritual formation. The ministry is structured with five pillars that support this growth. Volunteers commit to: grow spiritually, develop an intentional community, live simply, practice God's justice, and learn through service with others. Throughout this year, volunteers discover that by sharing the charism of compassion, healing, and liberation with others they, in turn, receive the charism from those they serve.

Celebrating our 25th Anniversary Year

Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry PROGRAM PILLARS

By Shannon Curran | Director, Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry

Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry celebrates our 25th year of nurturing a transformative journey of spiritual formation for young adults. The ministry is structured with five pillars that support this growth. Volunteers commit to grow spiritually, develop an intentional community, live simply, practice God's justice, and learn through

service with others. Along this journey, ministry volunteers discover that engaging with each pillar opens them to both receive and share the charism of Bon Secours: compassion, healing, and liberation.

We honor these 25 years of transformative work by sharing reflections on each pillar:

1

GROW SPIRITUALLY

"When I was saying my final goodbye to a patient this past week, she told me she loved me, and I told her I loved her, and then I cried. I cried because it was true. I thought about all the life she gave me, and I prayed to God that I gave life to her. I feel confident I did, because they were not the kind of tears that left trails clouded by question marks; they were clear and pure like the love that sent them.

This patient can't stop eating Baked Cheetos although I told her not to and she promised me she would stop. She responds with 'no' when I call her out on it. This doesn't change a thing. I love her, and she loves me. It is a love so true that I can't possibly be capable of it. Only God can, and I thank Him for it."

-Matthew Parra, BSVM 2013-2014



2

LEARN THROUGH SERVICE WITH OTHERS



"Her mom asks: 'What do you do to these kids, Ms. Julie? Lee sometimes yells "Juju" at home.' All I can tell her is that I am just there. I am there for story time, block building, and for dancing. Lee sits next to me for snack time and nap time, she tells me about her food and rubs her face on my shoulder when she is tired. Lee does not know or understand now, but she is a living definition of a word whose meaning I continue to grapple with: 'presence.'

...During my time in service, I begin to meet people, who not only articulate this lesson, but live it. In each person's willingness to engage in conversation, to look me in the eyes and see a person eager to listen and learn, to share their own tales of the path that led them to this

place and this time, they put words to a lesson that the kids can only teach through action. Their eyes invite me to know the realness of who they are as they gently peer into the realness that is me."

-Julianne Cozzetto, BSVM 2013-2014

Celebrating our 25th Anniversary Year

3

PRACTICE GOD'S JUSTICE



"And on a particularly busy day, when there were no open rooms for him to sleep in, the charge nurse gave him a bed in the hallway. That day, his assigned nurse's name was written on the board as: 'Everybody, he's family.' I couldn't stop smiling when I saw it because that name is justice. ...Everyone has his or her own stories and struggles, and no one is more deserving of our kindness than another. This is the justice we're called to live out, and it starts with seeing everybody as part of our family."

-Katie McDonald, BSVM 2011-2012

4

DEVELOP COMMUNITY

"As I finished scrapbooking our year as Bon Secours Ministry Volunteers in photos and words, I was amazed at how close we grew together. We entered the year as five very different individuals with a common passion for service, and we left as a family with many shared memories. [...] Of course, it wasn't all fun and games. We had our ups and our downs with living in community, but learning from our mistakes was the best way to understand each other better. ...I discovered that what I learned in community living was not separate from what I learned in my service work."

Crystal Truong, BSVM 2008-2009



5

LIVE SIMPLY



"Living simply in community has taught me that simplicity doesn't mean the things that I'm missing out on, but rather the things that I've gained: deeper relationships, a ministry of presence, a supportive community, and the opportunity to have time to process and talk through my experiences. ...My year living in simplicity does not mean that I will completely understand the plight of many in my neighborhood, but it has allowed me to release a lot of what was keeping me from deeper relationships and a deeper understanding of the world around me."

Jocelyn O'Kane, BSVM 2018-2019

Photos:

1. Sr. Rose Marie blesses BSVM 2015-2016 at the Closing Liturgy
2. Paula Hastings (BSVM 2018-2019) at her ministry site in Baltimore
3. Claire Kimilu (BSVM 2017-2018) at her ministry site in Baltimore
4. BSVM 2014-2015 Ministry Volunteers in Baltimore
5. Liv Nguyen and Mark Conforti (both BSVM 2019-2020) in Richmond Community Hospital

Sisters' Corner: Legacy of Milestones: 200 Years and 25 Years

Reflections from Sr. Elaine Davia, Sr. Nancy Glynn, and Shannon Curran

Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry (BSVM) celebrates its 25th anniversary this year as the Congregation of Bon Secours celebrates its 200th anniversary. Director Shannon Curran describes the connection: "The mission and charism of Bon Secours involves 'bringing people to wholeness and helping them know that there is a God who loves them' while 'defending and caring for all of creation.' BSVM is one of many ways that the Congregation fulfills this mission."

Sr. Nancy Glynn remembers bringing the idea of a Volunteer Ministry to the Congregation over 25 years ago: "Since 1992 we have had a small community of sisters living on Fulton Avenue in West Baltimore adjacent to St. Martin's church. A group of Capuchin volunteers lived next door to us in St. Martin's Rectory. We often had them over for dinner and admired their spirit and generosity in ministry. We began to say to one another, 'Why not have Bon Secours Volunteers?' We brought a proposal to the Provincial Chapter Meeting, and it was enthusiastically approved. Following the implementation of this new ministry, our community here on Fulton Avenue has been enriched as the Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry served in life and ministry to our neighbors. Today, our volunteers embody the charism of the Sisters of Bon Secours, sharing hope and healing within community. They are the hands and feet of our mission, working tirelessly to improve the lives of those they serve."

Sr. Elaine Davia, USA Area Leader for the Congregation, said, "From our earliest history the first sisters generously shared our charism with others, even with those whose intention was not to join the community of Bon Secours as a vowed religious. This sharing helped to spread our charism of healing and compassion far beyond the reach of the sisters. For 25 years our Bon Secours Ministry Volunteers have been spreading our charism throughout the USA. After spending a year living in an intentional community and focused on learning about God's justice through service to those most in need, they also are spreading this healing and compassion far beyond what we, the sisters can do. The sisters are so grateful to the staff who are dedicated to teaching and accompanying them through this year and to each of the volunteers who continue to live our mission long after they complete the program."



*Sisters gather with the 2010-2011
Bon Secours Ministry Volunteers*

The BSVM year gives volunteers the opportunity to share and receive the charism of the sisters of Bon Secours. BSVM Director Shannon Curran said about the anniversary: "Throughout their time of sharing the charism of compassion, healing, and liberation, Ministry Volunteers find themselves receiving that same charism from these new relationships with neighbors and co-workers. It is through building these relationships based in mutuality that Ministry Volunteers often receive healing and wholeness and come to know themselves as loved by God."

At the invitation of the sisters and the health system, over many years, Shannon worked with different partners in mission to expand BSVM to Richmond while running the full ministry in Baltimore. In 2018, the Baltimore-based ministry opened its second house in Richmond, VA to have one BSVM community in two cities – both cities steeped in the history and tradition of the Sisters of Bon Secours sharing their mission and charism of being "good help to those in need."

"Looking forward," said Sr. Elaine, "we are committed to nurturing and growing this ministry, expanding our reach, and continuing to serve as a beacon of hope for the marginalized. The next 25 years will be a journey of growth, innovation, and deepened commitment."

Alumni Reflection: Responding to the Signs of the Times

By [Caroline Kirk](#) | B SVM 2021-2022 | A graduate of the University of Virginia



Caroline Kirk with two Cristo Rey Richmond High School students

Black Liturgies Guides me in Responding to the Signs of the Times

I've followed Cole Arthur Riley, creator of the "Black Liturgies" account on Instagram since the summer of 2020. The Covid summer. The George Floyd summer. The summer I was beginning to discern a year with B SVM.

So when she finally released, *Black Liturgies: Prayers, Poems, and Meditations for Staying Human*, just a few months ago, I jumped to buy the book. Arriving at my classroom at Cristo Rey Richmond High School just in time for Black History Month, these prayers, poems, and liturgies have been a solace for my predominately Black students and our month of celebrations.

In her introduction, Riley speaks about solidarity as a liberatory practice. This is the same concept that has continued to feel so real to me in my life striving toward service. When we stand in solidarity with those who are different from us, we get to be a part of the process of liberating and being liberated at the same time. What or who we thought was so different from ourselves may not be very different at all. Our humanity becomes central. Our beautiful commonality amidst difference matters most.

Speaking to the non-Black reader of her book (like me), Riley writes, "All of a sudden you may come across a phrase or an emotion that doesn't immediately resonate with you. It may not be *for you*. But what does it mean to commit yourself to staying in the room—remaining in the words even if they don't immediately speak to you? Are you capable of decentering yourself long enough to hear the voice of another? Will you take up the words alongside them, never overpowering them but following in solidarity?" (xvii)

While I have experienced this while praying and meditating on Riley's prayers, these same questions can apply to the way I teach Black tenth grade students or work alongside a Student Government Association team of leaders, where I am more often than not the only white person in the room. By centering my students' voices in prayer and academic dialogue, everyone is positioned as the expert of their own experience, with valuable and beautiful information to share. The learning environment grows much closer to the Beloved community, where peace and harmony among all races, classes, and creeds can become a reality.

This month in class, we have been reading *March: Book One*, the graphic novel of John Lewis' young life as a student growing up in rural Alabama, a hopeful preacher, and an organizer with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. While we have analyzed and discovered more about Lewis' life, he has ultimately shined light on the lives of each of my students—with their



The 2021-2022 Ministry Volunteers; L-R: Patrick Kollman, Mario Sultan, Caroline Kirk, and Ally Staresinic

Friend of BSVM: Dr. Lynn Waidelich



Dr. Lynn Waidelich served as Site Supervisor to Caroline Kirk during her BSVM year (2021-2022)

Conversation with Dr. Lynn Waidelich

Principal and Chief Academic Officer | Cristo Rey Richmond High School

Lynn Waidelich has shown hospitality and leadership to Ministry Volunteers placed at Cristo Rey Richmond High School since 2020. She has served as a Site Supervisor and hired three BSVM alumni as teachers after their commitment ended with BSVM, which she reflects on in this conversation as well.

How were you first introduced to BSVM? I had been in conversations with Cristo Rey leadership about this Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry we were connecting with, but I didn't know any of the faces involved in the program. It was the late summer in 2020 at the start of our second year as a school and we were hosting a virtual family town hall. We were looking for parents to log on and we had this eager anticipation of who would arrive, counting how many people came on the Zoom because at that point, what we had lost was connection, and we wanted to stay connected to as many parents as possible.

We were eager to see our families and regain a little of our connection to what we had very tentatively had before the lock-down. At this Back to School town hall, there were three people that were online, their cameras were on, and I remember thinking – wow – look at this family that's so committed to the Cristo Rey mission! And then I found out that it was the Bon Secours Ministry Volunteers – I just didn't know you yet! That was one of my earliest memories, seeing the Volunteers and their enthusiasm for the school in a way that many of our parents were not quite as enthusiastic about.

What gifts have you/your staff observed from the Ministry Volunteers over the years? I think about the three volunteers who are still very much part of our work and our mission. To me, there are so many gifts that Ministry Volunteers bring: of enthusiasm and joy, of competency and the ability to problem-solve. They're each really good in the classroom in their different disciplines and subjects, so they bring so many things.

I was thinking about the through-line between these three young people. To me, it's the gift of the Holy Spirit. Lots of people join our work and they come in with high hopes, big dreams, and huge aspirations, and then the work is hard and the kids are hard and the year is long, and the reality of the work sets in. There is something different about Caroline, Mario, and Mikayla – that they are as committed now as maybe they ever have been. Through the thick and thin and the good and the bad and the easy and the hard. And I don't know any other way to say it– that has to be the Divine. It's not human strength because we all run out of that commitment at some point. With the three of them, they have retained a joy and a belief and hope when most of their peer-group and their colleagues at some point run out. So besides all of the smarts and all of the competencies and all of the preparation and planning – they have all of those things – they also have something inside of them that remains loyal and faithful, sometimes beyond reason.

Left to our own devices, we all have a finite amount of gifts to give or commitment to give. But each of them has an ability to go back to the well in a way that very few of their contemporaries do to fill themselves back up - with God, with purpose, with meaning – it's probably both the work of the Holy Spirit and the skills and the strategies that they've developed in going back to the Holy Spirit to be re-filled with that.

How has Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry helped to expand your mission at Cristo Rey Richmond? We're sponsored by the Sisters of Bon Secours, so we're also working towards the charism of the sisters. But compassion, healing, and liberation are pretty huge and high level – liberation is a really hard thing to feel like you accomplish on any day or lifetime or millennia. So, I think in some ways, the volunteers have been very physical representations of the work of the Sisters of Bon Secours and what our bigger work is. It can be easy to get lost in compassion and liberation – you can show it in some moments, but each of the volunteers have been able to physically represent the charism and perhaps what the sisters did in their time. As the sisters were healing and as they were working with people, you watch the volunteers do that same sort of work - on the ground, in the field, mundane actual work – and how that, along with a whole lot of other people's work combined, hopefully works towards these huge lofty

ideals of the charism. I think the volunteers are tangible examples of what the sisters have been, and they help us see what that looks like in our classrooms, and our hallways, and Black History Month, and all of the unique things that each of them take on.

Now that these alumni have been with us for three years, it's not even what they have been able to do in one year, but now we're talking about year upon year. From an academic point of view, there is a ton of research that says: you don't need an excellent teacher for one year, you have to have it for at least two to see any sort of significant change for a kid. We can see the benefit of these alumni year to year in what they have been able to do.

Yesterday, because of Caroline's hard work with the SGA [Student Government Association], and her commitment to Black History Month, and because Caroline and Mario are part of Holy Rosary Catholic Church*, we took the whole school to Holy Rosary for our Black History Mass. Students felt connected to that worship experience in a way that many of them have not ever felt in all of the masses that they've gone to. Yesterday in that church, kids felt connected to Saint Josephine, they felt connected to that parish, and that's a tangible example of the mission. A student walked away and said to Caroline and Mario, 'thank you so much for hosting us at your church.' While lots of people planned it, the students saw Caroline and Mario as hosts because it was their home parish, and that felt like they were welcoming them to a space that the students felt invited into. And what a gift that is for kiddos.

*[*Holy Rosary Catholic Church is the oldest active African American Catholic Church in Richmond and is the local parish for BSVM volunteers. In the work of expanding to Richmond, BSVM staff intentionally chose to locate the volunteer house in this parish and to structure invitations to participate in the life of Holy Rosary into our formation. We are grateful for this faith community and for the hospitality and love shared with ministry volunteers.]*

What is your hope for young adults who are considering a year with BSVM? I think I have a few levels of hope. The first is, now that I've been a professional for multiple decades, there is such a blessing of taking a breath or taking a pause between things. Between college and career. In deciding what you want, where your next steps are, that pause is so powerful. My first hope for the young person is to build a little bit of space between things and enjoy having just a little bit of space between. It feels like such a remarkable gift to be able to pause post-college before what comes next.

The second part of that is about building the habits of faith. To be able to – in community – transition between being 'a college kid' and 'an adult' and to be able to practice and play with how to do things that help us be good people over a long period of time, not just an in and out way, but how do we do this over a lifetime? I think BSVM helps young people think about not just how to be men and women of faith today but also helps frame how someone builds something that's going to help them be a person of faith in a decade or two decades or three decades.

The third layer: there is such desire for meaning in our world. I think BSVM allows a young person to find meaning for themselves – in healthcare or education or whatever the actual working environment is – which means they're able to find their own meaning separate from the meaning of their families or the meaning that other people have given them; they get to build how they can contribute and how they can find meaning for themselves.

There is significance to 'in community'. I think one of the things that has impressed me the most about this type of year is to be able to transition alongside other people. I think there is such a deep loneliness when you leave college and you go into the workforce, and many people feel very isolated. A person may be working and going to the grocery store and doing all these new, strange adult things – but doing it in a city that they may not know people or in a context that they don't have familiarity with. One of the greatest gifts I think of BSVM is that it is built in community, and you're doing all that with other people. When I think about where Caroline, Mario, and Mikayla are currently living, there is nothing that brings me more comfort than the fact that they are still in community together. That is such joy to me, and I have watched how much that is a protective factor for young people, to have those that care about them and about God all around them, and what a unique gift that is of the program.

Last words: I was the college kid who was the do-gooder and wanted to go save the world. I was the person that would have signed up for Bon Secours. It blows my mind that it's a thing - that you can do that in a way that is supported. I just jumped off a cliff and I taught in south Atlanta, and I got an apartment by myself, and I did some of the same things, but in a way that was such a shock to my system because I was alone. To do that with people and a leader who can guide you – that's just the greatest gift ever, particularly for those who are inclined to go into the world and to give back.

others, and creation. After a collective reading of Dr. King’s sermon, “Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution” one day, I was intrigued by and highlighted the following phrase in our community reflection: “for some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.” I sat reflecting about this “interrelated structure of reality,” as Dr. King phrased it, and I was struck with the beauty in the reality of our interdependence. Belonging to each other, with creation, and with God is foundational in our understanding of God’s justice, and how beautiful is this belonging!

In my time with BSVM, there were many communities in which I felt this beautiful belonging. One powerful example was the Holy Rosary Choir, which was one community outside of my house and service site in which I felt connection and belonging in such a way as God designed. In all honesty, I was a bit nervous to join the choir. I had never really sung in a choir, let alone a gospel choir. I would be one of the youngest and newest members in the group, whereas most of my fellow members had been a part of the choir, congregation, and surrounding East End community for years and even decades. We were still relatively new to the congregation, and, while everyone had been very welcoming already, I still was not entirely sure if I would fit in.

Despite my anxieties, God was reaching out to me, drawing me to find communion beyond the pews and in the choir. God was calling out to me in the moving music and in the joyful souls singing at the front of the sanctuary. I remember the Sunday I worked up the courage to approach the choir director about joining. The meditation song, a song we often sang after communion, was called “Excellent.” I just remember my eyes being glued on the faces of the choir members, seeing the passion in their facial expressions. I remember the sound of the harmonies striking my ears and getting goosebumps. I remember thinking, “I want to be a part of that.” Upon reflection, I know God was not just calling me to the music ministry, but God was also drawing me to connect with this community. God was proclaiming to me that this would be a community in which I would experience beautiful belonging.

Understanding what “I ought to be” –in right relationship with God, creation, and others–came in moments of beautiful belonging with the Holy Rosary Choir. Moments where I reveled in hearing all singing parts –soprano, alto, tenor, and bass–come together in a powerful hymn and understanding how each part relied on the others. Moments of warm conversation with a fellow alto who kindly offered me rides home after rehearsal. Moments of healing hugs and smiles with fellow choir members at the sign of peace. Beautiful belonging, to me, has also shown itself in this choir community that cheered me on as I



Photos from top to bottom:

- * Anna Quast with Dr. Joseph Robinson, Music Director at Holy Rosary
- * Anna singing with the Holy Rosary Choir during Black History Month
- * Anna playing flute at Holy Rosary Church during Black History Month
- * Anna served with Bon Secours Hospice

timidly played “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” on the flute in front of the whole congregation, this community that—after being tipped off by my scheming housemates—sang “Happy Birthday” to me, again, in front of the whole congregation, and this community that ensured I had and felt welcome to share in wearing a Kente cloth for a special mass during Black History Month.

I remember one night after a rehearsal when one of my fellow altos insisted, once again, that she would drive me home. Even though I only lived three minutes from the church, it always warmed my heart that I would be given a lift home. I was still relatively new to the choir, but she—and everyone—made me feel as though I had been a part of their family for a long time. My fellow alto, in the three minutes it took to drive me home, chatted with me about her life, her own worries, and even about losses she has endured. The trust she showed in sharing even slivers of her life with me solidified my understanding of what ‘right relationship’ looked like in community with the Holy Rosary choir. God’s love shines through the strength and support the choir members give to one another, and I was blessed to be welcomed into that beautiful belonging.

The moments in which I felt a belonging with the Holy Rosary Choir may seem small, but they were anything but to me. Each smile, song, and gesture strengthened my relationships with my fellow choir members, and the sense of beautiful belonging that resulted brought me to an understanding of God’s abundant love. Thus, my time with the Holy Rosary choir left me with an important lesson from the Spirit—I am called to support my communities in “seemingly” small ways. Those “small” ways actually hold immense power when it comes to building connections and fostering a belonging that embodies “right relationship,” which is “justice” lived out.

What “I ought to be” and what “you ought to be” is bound together. That belonging to and with one another, all creation, and God is the foundation of God’s love and God’s justice. How beautiful!

unique desires to organize, advocate, and make continued change toward the Civil Rights’ struggles of our modern day.

Riley’s words and prayers from *Black Liturgies* ground me in this work. Not just this month, but the last two and a half years I’ve spent at Cristo Rey Richmond. “As we make sense of our callings, may we do so with an unflinching awareness of the exterior world—the weeping of our neighbor, the groans of creation—so we would understand our vocation to those around us and their needs.” (53) The needs, weeping, and groans of creation, of my students, of the city of Richmond will continue to evolve, but as long as we intentionally remain aware of what and how things change, we have the capacity to respond in solidarity with justice and humility.



Congratulations to Mario and Caroline on their recent engagement

As a BSVM alum, I am grateful for a year that was dedicated to growing this awareness and intention. Today and every day I hope to choose solidarity over ease and—through slow, yet gorgeous work—become liberated.



Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry

Sisters of Bon Secours, USA

1525 Marriottsville Road,
Marriottsville, MD 21104

Cover Photo

BSVM 22-23 group shot outside Richmond Community Hospital. Photo taken by Doug Buerlein Photography.

BSVM Staff

SHANNON CURRAN, Director
shannon.curran@bonsecoursusa.org

EMILY THRUSH, Site Manager
emily.thrush@bonsecoursusa.org

ANN SCHWARTZ, Recruitment Leader
ann.schwartz@bonsecoursusa.org

LIESEL RUPPRECHT, Program Coordinator
liesel.rupprecht@bonsecoursusa.org

OFFICE EMAIL
volunteer@bonsecoursusa.org

COMING SOON

Later this year, BSVM will switch from mailing *The Companion* to delivering it electronically.



To ensure that you continue to receive our newsletter, please scan the QR code and provide us with your preferred email address.

Thank you for staying connected with us!



Support BSVM

Share your time and enthusiasm. Your personal presence is one of the best ways to support the program. Send a letter of support, or schedule a time to visit our community outside or over Zoom. Contact BSVMoffice@bonsecoursusa.org.

Support the program financially. It costs about \$16,000 to support one volunteer for the year, including rent, health insurance, stipend and funds for community support. Monetary donations or gently used furnishings for the volunteer houses are greatly appreciated.

Donations are tax-deductible

BY MAIL Make checks payable to **Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry** & mail to:

*Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry
1525 Marriottsville Road
Marriottsville, MD 21104*

BY VENMO @bonsecoursvolunteer

BY CREDIT CARD Visit our website:
bonsecours.us/volunteers/donate/