



The View From The BLUFF May 2020

SISTERS OF CHARITY OF OUR LADY OF MERCY

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA



Sister Mary
Alexius McCreen

Member
Spotlight



Sister M. Alexius, formerly Bridget McCreen, was born in Richmond, Virginia, to Mr. and Mrs. Patrick McCreen who had emigrated from Ireland some years earlier. According to Sr. Alexius' grand niece, Sr. Mary Concepta Knightly, Sr. Alexius was the twin sister of her father's mother, Mary Catherine McCreen Knightly. Unfortunately, our records do not contain information about her education or family life prior to her entrance into the OLM Community on September 25, 1882 at age 22. She was received on July 2, 1883, and, professed on March 25, 1885. The records are silent as to her ministries or activities during the next fifteen years. However, from the beginning of the 20th century until her death in 1930 Sister M. Alexius held many responsible positions in the Community. She served as General Secretary and Treasurer from 1903 to 1906 and again from 1911 to 1913. She was the Mother Assistant from 1906 to 1908 or 1909 and again from 1914 to 1917. While serving in these positions Sr. Alexius also taught in the OLM Academies and parochial schools as follows: St. Patrick's, Charleston, 1903-04, St. Joseph's Academy, Sumter, 1908-1911, St. Joseph's Parochial School, Charleston, 1911-1913, St. Patrick's Parochial School, Charleston, 1915, OLM Academy, Charleston, 1916, The Chapel School (America Street), Charleston, 1924, and, St. William's, Ward, SC, 1926.

However, Sister M. Alexius is probably best remembered in the OLM Community for her service as Novice Mistress from 1918 to 1922. The attached accounts not only provide insight into her personality, but also the respect and affection which she attained as Novice Mistress. Sister Mary Alexius died on May 24, 1930 at St. Francis Xavier Hospital, Charleston. She is buried in Saint Lawrence Cemetery.

Sister Alexius was my novice mistress. She was elderly, deeply religious, and had a genuine love and dedication to our Community.

Before I entered the Convent I remember my mother telling me about her. She had known Sister as a young girl at the Convent. Her anxiety about me expressed itself in her oft' repeated remark, "If you persevere two weeks with Sister Alexius I won't worry about you anymore." Knowing me so well my Mother realized the job a woman of Sr. Alexis' character would have on her hands to control me for I was anything but inclined to a quiet contemplative life at that time. My Mother's warning proved very helpful to me in helping me realize my need of discipline in religious observance.

Sister Alexius proved herself to be a very holy woman whom I learned soon to admire and deeply respect. She was a true witness of a good religious—taught me valued ideals and planted these ideals in the soil of my heart.

She exemplified poverty of spirit not only in deprivation of material comfort but in her emptying of self. She never thought of herself. A faithful observer of rule—particularly the rule of silence and customs of the early community. I recall Sister Rita who substituted on summer for Sr. Alexius when she was sent to Sumter for a few months telling us about Sr. Alexius when Sr. Rita was a girl living at St. Catherine's (oops! St. Joseph's) boarding school in Sumter where Sr. Alexius was stationed. I never forgot Sr. Rita's remark about Sr. Alexius—"She was a pack-horse—meaning the constant duty, carrying firewood up several flights of stairs for the various stoves in the dormitories and all kinds of household tasks." Sister Alexius would often tell us novices we must always keep our eyes on the keyhole of the tabernacle where Jesus dwelt whenever we were in Chapel. I was amused one day when, as we were saying the Stations of the Cross, Sr. Alexius, who was with us, as she finished her journey she went up to St. Joseph's side altar and examined a patch on the altar cloth there. We teased her for a long time about the "keyhole". I was privileged to be kneeling at her bedside when she was dying at St. Francis Hospital. She quietly stopping breathing. Written by Sr. Genevieve Cross

To know Sister Alexius was to love her. She was such a holy spirit, full of the love and God and neighbor. Everything about her life was beautiful.

On many occasions her novices would find her in the Chapel pointing her finger at the Tabernacle.

In 1918, six postulants (Bishop William T. Russell called us his six crosses) entered. We received the names Sisters Perpetua, Felicitas, Laurentia, Raphael, Genevieve, and Ignatia. Sister Alexius became a true Mother and inspiring to us all.

As a girl she rode 12 miles on mule-back to daily Mass. As a religious she seemed selfless. Her person was as clean as wax with few tunics and habits. Her spirit would match Mother Theresa of Calcutta in holiness and Community service. Three of "The Crosses" are alive to testify to the life of our religious Mother.

Written by Sisters Genevieve, Laurentia, Ignatia

Sister M. Alexius McCreen, a member of the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy (1882-1930), was the twin sister of my paternal grandmother, Mary Catherine McCreen Knightly.

My association with her was, unfortunately, very short for she died 16 months after I became a member of the Community to which she had dedicated her life. During this time she became ill, and I was very fortunate to be able to minister to her. I was permitted to serve her trays and give any assistance necessary. At other times I spent some time in reading "The Watches of the Passion," which she dearly loved, but, because I was a novice, she would dismiss me with the admonition, "Novices should not be conversing with Professed Sisters." She was once a very strict Novice Mistress. This and many other little admonitions endeared me to her, and I wanted to be like her.

Sister Alexius used to come to the kitchen after breakfast to help dry the dishes, especially the silverware. She confided to me that she didn't get any merit for it because Mother didn't send her there. She was teaching me the value of Obedience to authority.

On one occasion, while about these kitchen chores, I was engaged in an amusing conversation and enjoying it. Sister Alexius waited for me outside the kitchen and shook her finger at me saying, with a twinkle in her eye, "You talk too much."

Most of my knowledge of her years in religion and her devotion to duty has been told to me through the years by some of her novices. She was prayerful, deeply religious, with a strong sense of justice, dedicated totally to God and the Community. Written by Sr. M. Concepta Knightly



Sisters Alexius McCreen, Baptist Eccleston, Augustine McInerney, Genevieve Cross, DeLourdes Boyle attending summer school for Sisters at Catholic University. OLMs were one of the first religious congregations to attend Sisters' College started in 1912. This photo is circa mid 1920s.



The six crosses of Bishop Russell....his description! Sr. Alexius was Novice Director.

Sitting:

Sr. Genevieve Cross,
Sr. Raphael Cummins

Standing:

Sr. Perpetua Riley
Sr. Laurentia Bennett
Sr. Alexius McCreen
Sr. Ignatia Gavaghan
Sr. Felicitas Dolan



1916
Academy of
Our Lady of
Mercy. Sister
Alexius sitting
left side.



Mine Creek
Sister Martina Fowler
Sr. Alexius McGreen
Sr. deLourdes Boyd
Fr. Dietz

Saint Joseph
School, Charleston



About Laudato Si'

[Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home](#), is Pope Francis' encyclical on climate change and ecology. It was signed in 2015 on 24 May, the Solemnity of Pentecost. Its title means "Praised Be" in the Umbrian dialect spoken by St. Francis.

The encyclical is a reflection on how to practice the essential Catholic principle of valuing life in the midst of the unimaginable devastation of our planet. Laudato Si' responds to a world that is daily growing hotter, more polluted, and more devoid of life. It frames the urgent need to solve these challenges within the long history of Catholic teaching about ecology, and draws from statements made by St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and bishops and scholars from around the world.

Building on these foundations, Laudato Si' asks us to consider the deep connections between how we treat God, each other, and all creation. The encyclical proposes a lens of "integral ecology," through which we see that the environmental catastrophe—in all its dimensions—is one symptom of a greater social catastrophe. (137)

As Laudato Si' says, we don't face "two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental." (139) In the economy, policy, and technology, in biodiversity, resource management, and global warming, and even in our theology, we see that broken relationships have dire consequences for our world. Hope is possible. We are called to sincerely assess our mode of living and to

renew the bonds that tie us to each other and our Creator. As Laudato Si' says, "If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships." (119)

Laudato Si' is a rich and moving document that offers new perspectives and opens new areas of inquiry in the body of Catholic teaching. It has been embraced by Catholic communities around the world. Bishops' conferences, dioceses, parishes, religious communities, and Catholic schools and universities.

Around the world, communities taken up its clear and coherent guidance on the roots of and solutions to a planet in crisis.

How does protecting creation express Catholic values?

Protecting creation expresses essential Catholic values: honoring our Creator and loving each other.

As Catholics and as Christians, we believe that all life is the gift of a loving God, and that the Earth was given us to keep and to till. We have certainly tilled the Earth, but we haven't kept it very well. We haven't protected creation as a gift; we have not stewarded it for the good of all. Righting this wrong honors our Creator.

Caring for creation is also a way to care for our brothers and sisters. A changing climate means unpredictable rain, stronger storms, and spreading mosquitoes. This in

turn means more hunger, more sickness, more migration, and more conflict. The end result is needless suffering. Climate change affects everyone, but the poor have fewer resources to avoid and recover from its devastating consequences. Addressing the crisis of climate change is a fundamental way to care for all people, and especially for “the least of these.”

What is Laudato Si' Week?

Laudato Si' Week commemorates the fifth anniversary of Laudato Si', a milestone teaching in the history of the Church.

In the five years since *Laudato Si'* was published, greenhouse gas emissions have continued to rise, species have continued to disappear at an astonishing pace, and our brothers and sisters around the world have continued to suffer the effects of a planet in crisis. At the same time, Catholic communities everywhere have taken concrete steps to reduce their environmental impact, connect to the Creator in prayer, and encourage the development of moral environmental policies.

During Laudato Si' Week, we look back to celebrate the incredible actions Catholic communities have taken to date, and we look ahead with a commitment to accelerate action to protect our common home. [Source: cafod](#)



Prayer for

Laudato Si Week May 16-24

Creator, Redeemer, Holy Spirit,
thank you for the gift of Laudato Si', which
teaches us
that "The Creator does not abandon us;
he never forsakes his loving plan
or repents of having created us.
Humanity still has the ability to work
together
in building our common home."
Creator, you give us life.
Help us to honor you
as we care for your precious creation.
Redeemer, you give us hope.
Help us see new ways of living
as we turn from the path of destruction.
Holy Spirit, you give us unity.
Help us find strength in the love between
us as we seek healing for the Earth.
Amen.

Source: Catholic Climate Covenant



May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.

– Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 244

Meditation on Creation

Find a comfortable position/place for this meditation.

Breath: Take three deep breaths, filling your lungs thoroughly, holding your breath momentarily and exhaling through your mouth.

Heart: Quiet your inner self – embracing the gift of life with each breath and heartbeat. Let yourself reflect on these words of St. Hildegard of Bingen: “Human beings are the thinking heart, called to be co-creators with God in shaping the world.”

Express your gratitude for the wonders of creation’s rhythm of interconnection.

Reflect: How do you feel that this most beautiful place, Earth, is threatened by destruction due to our own actions and neglect?

Ponder the call to be co-creators and not dominators and oppressors of this web of life for now and future generations.

Resolution: Come in touch with the passion/energy you feel to protect this most beautiful place, Earth. In what way(s) might you help sustain Earth’s life?

(Adapted and used with permission by the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Written by Sister Barbara Sheehan and Providence Associate Gene Majewski.)

Pray

God of all creation, your goodness and glory shine forth through everything you have made. Through the light of faith, help us to see this world, our common home, not as a resource to dominate and exploit, but as a gift to be cherished by all generations. Prompted by your Spirit, we ask this in the name of Jesus, through whom all creation was made. Amen.

(Prayer from Catholic Charities)

Note: There are numerous websites where you can read *Laudato Si'* online. Just “google it”!