

# THE 2018 WANSBORO AWARD RECIPIENT



*Bridget Bearss, RSCJ*

“If I had my life to live over again, I would live in complete openness to the Holy Spirit.” - Madeleine Sophie Barat

On this Feast of Pentecost, we celebrate Religious of the Sacred Heart with a passion for the Spirit - women with hearts on fire with God’s love who spend their lives radiating the love of the heart of God through their service. Living the legacy of Madeleine Sophie Barat, Katherine Wansboro wanted to expand the doors of mission and make Sacred Heart education accessible to students from Wayne County, Oakland County, Macomb County and beyond. With courage and confidence, she and her firebrand companions paved the way from Lawrence Avenue to Kensington Road and began a legacy championed by our Wansboro award recipient.

Bridget Bearss, RSCJ is a native of Omaha, Nebraska, whose heritage is steeped in Sacred Heart legacy. The family story includes the stop her parents made with their fifth child at Duchesne Academy, where her two RSCJ aunts received special permission to ring the chapel bells and venture out the portry door to meet the newest Bearss. With a fierce commitment to education nourished by a family of homesteaders and educators, Bridget was inspired to dedicate her life to the work of education in this first vocation discovered as a student at Maryville University.

After completing her graduate work in educational administration at Washington University and her first years as an educator in the St. Louis archdiocese, Sr. Bearss kept following dreams and headed to Houston, Texas as a faculty member at Duchesne Academy. There, a new call was ignited in the experience of working closely with Religious of the Sacred Heart and recognizing the desire to join with women of the heart to make a difference through the work of education.

This year our Wansboro recipient celebrates 60 years of life, 30 years since her first vows as a Religious of the Sacred Heart, and is called from this House Built on Confidence to a new ministry at the Stuart Center in Washington, D.C. In her 26 years at Bloomfield Hills, Sr. Bearss has been a member of the faculty on every floor of the school, as well as Dean of Students, Head of the Upper School, and then Head of School for 18 years.

While we might laud the opening of the Middle School for Boys, the merger with Kensington Academy, the building of the Field House, the navigation through the Great Recession or the opening of the Early Childhood Program as her accomplishments, these are not what she celebrates these days. For Sr. Bearss, what really matters are the people of the Heart -- of the Academy of the Sacred Heart. It is the relationships made, the teams built, the dreams shared, the births and deaths and life-in-between, and the moments of knowing the open heart-to-heart that she celebrates. It is the House Built on Confidence and the people of compassion, courage and character that fill her heart with joy and our hearts with gratitude.

As she wrote in “Seeking the One Whom We Love:” Here in Detroit, where we have watched worlds tumble down and where there is no going back to what was, I have learned the story of the phoenix that rises and the real meaning of resurrection. I have learned to live my life of trust in God’s grace that shows up at exactly the moment that I need it, not ten seconds before. It is here, in this House Built on Confidence, that I have learned to breathe the lessons of contemplation and action. It is here that I have learned what it means to be a Religious of the Sacred Heart.