

# The Whitehall FRANCISCAN

Vol. 33, No. 2  
Fall 2024

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God



# Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, commit ourselves to the evangelical life of continuous conversion in the tradition of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis according to the example of our founding Sisters.

Called together by a good and provident God, we cultivate an intimacy with God that is nourished by Sacred Scripture, by the Eucharist, by our gift of self to others and in reverence for all creation.

Faithful to our Charism, we go to those to whom Providence sends us and conscious of our mission in the Church, we assume the commitment of evangelization and liberation, especially with the poor and oppressed. We witness to God's overflowing love by our lives and service, promoting justice, peace and reconciliation among all.

In simplicity and joy, we are signs of hope, for we believe that Jesus Christ is with us in the power of His Resurrection.

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Images of St. Francis on Cover, page 2 and page 5 are AI-generated via Shutterstock.com

The Whitehall Franciscan is a quarterly publication of the

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# Preparing for the Future as Sowers of Peace and Hope



Preparations have begun for our 24th General Chapter in 2025 - a significant milestone for our congregation held every four years where Sisters gather to discern how we will continue to live our Franciscan mission, respond to the needs of the world, and care for each other, as well as elect a new leadership team to serve our Community for a term of four years. At their first meeting in February, our General Chapter Planning Committee chose "Sowers of Peace and Hope" as the 2025 General Chapter theme. This reflects our Franciscan charism, as well as the theme of the 2025 Jubilee Year proclaimed by Pope Francis:

Pilgrims of Hope. As a reminder of the confidence we must have in God's providential guidance, the Committee also chose the following inspirational scripture for our 24th Chapter: "I, the Lord, know well the designs I have for you, designs for peace to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29: 11)

Our planning committee will continue to meet monthly in preparation for our 2025 General Chapter in São Paulo. Please keep our Sisters in prayer as we faithfully evaluate where we are today and plan to go forward as sowers of peace and hope.



Comprised of Sisters from the US and Brazil, the General Chapter Planning Committee includes Sisters Adriana Aparecida Duarte, Antônia Maria A. Silva, Neide Teixeira, Maria José de Conceição, Rute Guimarães, Selma Maria dos Santos, Joance Conceição dos Santos, Joanne Brazinski and Janet Gardner.

## A Season to Hope and Act with Creation



This September 1 – October 4, the Season of Creation encourages more than 2 billion Christians around the world to come together to renew our relationship with God and commit ourselves to go forward in hope and action to care for our common home. The 2024 theme "Hope and Act with Creation" invites us to further engage in contemplative prayer and reflection, as well as cultivate hope and meaningful action.

Pope Francis made the Roman Catholic Church's observation of the Season of Creation official in 2015, the same year *Laudato Si'* was published. The Catholic Church encourages the following:

- **Reaffirm our personal vocation to be stewards of creation.** Reflect on our daily habits, learn more about environmental concerns and injustices, and discern actions we can take.
- **Thank God for all Creation** - the beauty, wonder and life that surround us.
- **Ask God for forgiveness, guidance, and help** to repair and care for creation.

As we go forward into this Franciscan-inspired season, you are invited to join our Sisters and Associates as we prayerfully contemplate how to cultivate hope and act with creation. A special issue of our e-mail newsletter will be published each Wednesday during the Season of Creation sharing reflections and resources. To sign up for our e-newsletter, please contact us at [info@osfprov.org](mailto:info@osfprov.org). For more information on the Season of Creation, please visit: [seasonofcreation.org](http://seasonofcreation.org). (Additional Sources: "United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2017)

# Celebrating and Growing Together

“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18:20)

This summer, our Sisters in the United States and Brazil gathered in Pittsburgh and São Paulo for our annual Assemblies of Corporate Reflection to prayerfully come together and embrace our Franciscan mission and religious life in Community.

Sisters in the United States met in Pittsburgh from June 12-14, 2024 beginning with a day of reflection that included contemplating the gift of aging and opportunities to embrace our Franciscan spirituality and mission in each season of our lives. After the Assembly concluded, our Sisters in the United States celebrated Sister Janice Campbell’s 50th Jubilee, which included a heartfelt liturgy by Rev. Howard Campbell, Sister’s younger brother.

As an added blessing, our Sisters in the US were joined for Assembly and Jubilee by our General Minister, Sister Rute Guimarães and Sisters Maria Lucia do Nascimento and Vendete Barbosa de Oliveira from Brazil. Aided by Google Translate, they visited our Sisters in Pittsburgh and took a day trip to see the natural wonder of God’s creation at Niagara Falls.

Our Assembly was held in Brazil from July 1-5, 2024 and had a special focus on formation and vocations outreach. Our USA-based General Councilor Sister Janet Gardner traveled from Pittsburgh to be with our Sisters during this faithful gathering. On July 6, after the Assembly concluded, our Sisters recognized Jubilarians: Sister Elenice Maciel da Costa celebrates 65 years and Sister Adriana Duarte celebrates 25 years as Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God.



Sister Janice’s 50th Jubilee celebration at St. Ursula Church (Allison Park, PA) included (front row, l to r) Sisters Hilária de Oliveria, Theresa Codispoti, Maria Lucia Nascimento, Vendete Barbosa de Oliveira, Janice Campbell, Ann Marie Lostoski, and Peg Markey; (back row, l to r) Sisters Joanne Brazinski, Althea Anne Spencer, Eliana da Silva, Rute Guimarães, Janet Gardner, and Mary Ann Lostoski.

(Editor note: Sister Theresa Codispoti chose to celebrate her 65th Jubilee on August 12, the Feast Day of St. Clare of Assisi, after this issue went to press.)



# Kindred Franciscan Hearts

Blessed by Providence, our Congregation has endured economic ebbs and flows for over a century. Knowing our Sisters do not earn much income from our work, inquisitive minds sometimes ask how we've been able to fund our ministries and needs. Like the Beatles song, we "get by with a little help from our friends." More accurately, a lot of help from our friends sent to us by our loving Provident God.

Since our founding, most of our support has come from individuals who generously give their time, services, and gifts, both monetary and in-kind (food, clothing, etc.) Providence has also blessed us with several auxiliary groups of faithful friends, family, and benefactors who encourage such generosity. The most enduring has been our Pittsburgh Auxiliary.

Originating in the 1930s, the Pittsburgh Auxiliary was dormant for several years then re-established in 1985 with eight members, most of whom were St. Francis Academy Alumnae. Founding member Nancy Lippert collaborated with then General Minister Sister Marian Blodis to restructure an Auxiliary that built upon the efforts of previous groups and emphasized the relationship with the Sisters, which included hosting regular gatherings.

Today, the Auxiliary continues with a little over 200 members. The affordable yearly dues of \$10 help support their fundraising efforts spearheaded by a tenaciously dedicated Board that includes Moderator Sister Mary Ann Lostoski, President Annette Yousko, Kathy Antoniazzi, Shelley Carter, Rosalind Gorman and Joyce Wilhelm.

Prior to joining the board 24 years ago, current President Annette Yousko's only connection to our Sisters was former President Addie Kearney, who was good friend of her father. She invited Annette to an Auxiliary meeting that included joining our Sisters for lunch.

"When I came back to the table, they said 'You're on the Board!'" said Annette who added that she could not say no after meeting the Sisters.

"It was full immersion, right away," said Annette. "I really enjoyed meeting the Sisters. Oh, the personalities!"

Over the years, Annette would similarly invite Rosalind and Joyce to join. Neither had a direct connection with our Community, but were moved by Providence to serve.

"Good people attract good people," said Rosalind. "You want to help the Sisters. They gave so much. They gave themselves."

Already a St. Francis Academy Alumna and Associate, Kathy joined in 2017 at the invitation of Sister Mary Ann.

"The group needed a secretary so I joined in on the fun," said Kathy. "I knew the Sisters from my grade school and high school days at the Academy. They are part of my Tribe and I am honored to be able to help provide a source of funding for the needs of the Community."

The Pittsburgh Auxiliary supported numerous projects benefiting our Sisters and ministries, including an elevator in our Franciscan Child Day Care Center, renovations to Mary Immaculate Chapel, an emergency alert system, environmentally efficient lighting, and handicap-accessible vans. Recent projects funded by the Auxiliary include handicap-friendly vehicles, stair lifts, bathroom renovations and other needs benefiting the



*The 2024 Auxiliary Board: (back row, l to r) Joyce Wilhelm, Kathy Antoniazzi, Rosalind Gorman, and Sister Mary Ann Lostoski; (front row) Shelley Carter and Annette Yousko.*

health, safety and quality of life of our Sisters.

The Auxiliary hosted successful fundraisers at our former motherhouse throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, including a popular retreat, afternoon tea, and Mother's Day brunch. They also threw holiday parties, ice cream socials, and other social events for our retired and senior Sisters. In 2015, after our Sisters moved to more sustainable homes and sold our Pittsburgh property, the Auxiliary adapted to host events in a new space at Nativity Church (part of Our Lady of Hope Parish) without the added culinary and custodial support of the motherhouse staff.

The first tea event held at Nativity Church was also Rosalind's first fundraiser. Adapting to the new space, they experienced a few setbacks that included a flooded kitchen.

"But, it worked!" said Rosalind adding that despite the challenges, the event itself was lovely and raised much needed support for the Sisters.

The move to Nativity Parish providentially brought Shelley to the board. A member of the Nativity Lady's Guild, her knowledge of the space and catering experience was invaluable. A passionate fundraiser, she also spearheaded the bus trips.

"I enjoyed helping out with the Spaghetti dinners," said Kathy. "Shelley did such a great job of cooking up a great Italian feast for those who came to eat."

After meeting Annette while volunteering at an animal rescue, Joyce joined the Auxiliary in February 2020 and helped with a spaghetti dinner fundraiser in March.

"Then the whole World shut down because of COVID," she said. "We were planning so much – Sister Francine's 90th birthday party, bus trips to the casino. Then everything changed."

Meetings resumed in June 2021, but plans for events and bus trips remained paused. The Board continued support by gifting donations for various needs of the Sisters and volunteering to help with mailings and other projects.

The Congregation's 100th Anniversary reignited the Auxiliary Board's event-hosting skills. Shelley catered the celebration at St. Thomas More Church and Board members helped with set up, baking cookies and whatever was needed.

*Continued on Page 10*

# Ana Claudia Begins her Franciscan Journey

In February, we officially welcomed Ana Claudia Santos Pinto as an Aspirant in Brazil. A successful professional in an administrative position, she felt a calling to explore religious life and Providence connected her to our Congregation where she began her journey of discerning her vocation with Sister Antonia Maria. She recently moved into our Novitiate House in Vila Alpina where Sister Maria Goretti will serve as her director during the next phase of discernment which includes assisting our ministries and continuing studies in theology, our Congregational curriculum and Community Life. The following is an excerpt from a letter to our Sisters where Anna Claudia writes about her recent experiences on her spiritual journey.



*Sister Adriana Aparecida Duarte, Ana Claudia and Sister Janet Gardner.*

On May 7-9 I experienced another Aspirant module, the second in a total of four that will take place throughout the year, at CRB. At this meeting, we continued with the theme of Interpersonal Relations with an approach to friendship and affection taught by Sister Maria Aparecida Pieroni. We made books that presented our stories to colleagues, trainers, and others present. We each had just 4 pages to tell the story of our lives from birth to the present day. Important detail here: I had to do it without writing words. We had to draw, make collages...we were encouraged to be creative. These were painful, resilient, miraculous, beautiful stories. We also watched the film from which the main content of the module to be worked on in those days was extracted. Authentic and complex emotions: Joy, anger, fear, sadness, surprise, disgust, contempt - these were some of the emotions worked on. We were invited to enter our interior and understand what emotions and feelings we exude most to what surrounds us. These were days of a lot of learning, listening, discovery, meetings, surrender. The daily exercise remains - leaving my "home" light, happy, filled with God's love, as we give our brothers and sisters what is within us.

May God fill us with his Love!

~ Ana Claudia, Aspirant

## Miracles in Bloom

by Sister Peg Markey



*Sister Peg with Maria and Lourdes in 2000 at Easter.*

questions from everyone about Lourdes and Maria! They were both adopted in 2000. I was very sad but happy for them to have families who loved them.

Now, 30 years later, Maria just received her Master of Arts degree and is a Patient Access Manager. Lourdes is a Behavior Technician and formerly worked in a day care. She and her husband Joe have three lovely little children. Seems amazing!

Caring for them for six years was one of the most wonderful blessings of my life! I am so proud of "my girls."

Christmas of 1994, after a summer as a volunteer caring for babies with AIDS, I began a wonderful ministry as a foster mother for children in the Casa de Esperanza program in Houston TX. Two little four-year-old girls who were very sick with AIDS were given to my care. Both their parents had died of AIDS, so Lourdes and Maria were orphans. I was so blessed to become their foster mother until they were 10.

Both girls were hospitalized several times but eventually got much better from the newly developed medications. I was able to bring the girls to Pittsburgh several times so our Sisters and my family got to know them well. I still get



*Maria receiving her college diploma.*



*(Photo by Neal Clipper, Abbey Photographers)  
Lourdes with her husband Joe and children.*

# A Testament to Unquenchable Love

## 800th Anniversary of the Stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi

“His unquenchable fire of love for the good Jesus was fanned into such a blaze of flames that so many waters could not quench so powerful a love.” ~ *Life of St. Francis* by St. Bonaventure

**E**ight centuries ago, in 1224, St. Francis received the gift of the stigmata, the wounds of Christ during a time of intense contemplative prayer in the hills of La Verna, Italy. The first documented stigmata in the Roman Catholic Church, this miracle continues to resonate with Franciscans, Catholics, and all who seek a deeper relationship with Christ.

“While Francis was praying on the mountainside, he saw a Seraph with six fiery and shining wings descend from the height of heaven. And when in swift flight the Seraph had reached a spot in the air near the man of God, there appeared between the wings the figure of a man crucified, with his hands and feet extended in the form of a cross and fastened to a cross... When Francis saw this, he was overwhelmed and his heart was flooded with a mixture of joy and sorrow. He rejoiced because of the gracious way Christ looked upon him under the form of a Seraph, but the fact that he was fastened to a cross pierced his soul with a sword of compassionate sorrow.” (*St. Bonaventure, "Life of St. Francis"*)

In mystical union with Christ's suffering, St. Francis felt extraordinary love and mercy flowing from his wounds, fully realizing the joy of Christ's victory over suffering and death. The stigmata was a testament to St. Francis' faithful love and devotion that continues to inspire us 800 years later.

In her reflections on the stigmata, Sister Joanne Brazinski feels a significant connection to an earlier part of St. Francis' journey – 20 years before - in front of the San Damiano Cross when God instructed him to “rebuild my church.”

“Thomas of Celano, Francis' first biographer, tells us that at San Damiano Francis was changed interiorly. Something powerful and real began in this experience. It was before the Cross at San Damiano that Francis encountered open-armed, unconditional, extravagant, self-giving love. This experience of God called him to respond in love and to follow the footprints of Christ. From this encounter, Francis begins to reflect on the person and life of Jesus Christ. Following Christ was a graced choice, a daily process of spending time with Christ, discovering Christ, imitating Christ and becoming more like Christ.”

Our Sisters and Associates choose to follow Christ and seek a deeper relationship through spending time in contemplative prayer, theological study and reflection, and striving to be as Christ-like as possible in our thoughts, words and actions.

“This 800th anniversary of the Stigmata of Francis, invites us all to ponder our response to open-armed, extravagant love,



to treasure our own experience of God, to appreciate the graced choices of our lives, and to reflect on the manner in which we are following the footprints of Christ and attempting to become more like Christ each and every day,” said Sister Joanne.

Reflecting on the stigmata, our hearts are opened to greater compassion for the suffering of others. In his April 2024 address to Franciscan friars from La Verna and Tuscany, Pope Francis said that the Stigmata of St. Francis reminds us that Christ's wounds are a call for us to reach out with His love to all, including stigmatized persons bearing “the scars of the sufferings and injustices they have endured or the mistakes they have made.” (*“Pope marks 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi's Stigmata” by Cindy Wooten, USCCB.org*)

“I appreciated knowing that for Francis he had asked for feeling the love of God deeply in his heart prior to the actual Stigmata — also to feeling the love for God's people,” said Sister Janice Campbell,

who was providentially baptized on September 17, the Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi. “Although I don't think I would be brave enough to ask for the wounds of Christ, I do, indeed, pray for the compassion of Christ that I may share with others.”

“Francis' stigmata reminds me that he wanted to imitate Christ completely, especially in Jesus's suffering and doing the will of His Father,” said Sister Peg Markey. “This is also a reminder of the much greater pain of immigrants and people, especially children, suffering from wars and starvation.”

The 800th anniversary of the Stigmata of St. Francis invites us to contemplation and reflection on how we are being called to love others – and all God's creation - as Christ loves us. Like St. Francis, we are challenged to do this while enduring our own suffering. St. Francis received the stigmata just two years prior to his death, during which time he suffered greatly experiencing pain and many health issues, including almost total blindness. Yet, he still witnessed to the Gospel and love of Christ, including composing the “Canticle of the Sun,” which we celebrate in 2025.

“My ministry is limited now, but I still wish to be of service to the Church and to God's people through serving as a Eucharistic minister, lector, and adult altar server/funeral planner,” said Sister Janice who celebrated her 50th Jubilee this year.

“I remember Francis' pain and try not to complain about my aging and the pains of an 85-year-old body,” said Sister Peg. “Listening with patience and empathy to the complaints of the pain of others seems to be my ministry now.”

# Shared Franciscan Roots

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God belong to a greater Franciscan Family deeply rooted in a shared faith, spirituality and dedication to a Franciscan way of life. Working together amplifies the reach and scope of our common mission.

## Third Order Regular

The Third Order follows a Rule that St. Francis intended for those living in the world. Secular Orders are persons embracing the ideals of St. Francis while remaining with their families and chosen occupations. Regular Orders, like ours, are those who have chosen vowed religious life dedicated to living in community.

Our leadership is active in the **International Franciscan Conference of the Third Order Regular (IFC-TOR)** which connects Franciscan religious congregations through representation, resources and opportunities for collaboration and support. Efforts to create and maintain solidarity among Franciscans include spiritual and material assistance, apostolate collaboration, shared information and communication, and formation assistance.

## Neumann-Bachmann Communities

The Neumann-Bachmann Communities share a Franciscan heritage that can be traced back to 1855 when Sister Mary Francis Bachmann, Sister Mary Margaret Boll and Sister Mary Bernardina Dorn found the Sisters of St. Francis of the Third Order Regular in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with the support of St. John Neumann, then bishop of Philadelphia. The Sisters of St. Francis of Syracuse, NY and the Sisters of St. Francis of Buffalo were founded from this congregation. Sisters from the Buffalo Franciscans established the Sisters of St. Francis Hastings on Hudson (New York City) and the Sisters of St. Francis of Millvale, who accepted and trained our fledgling Community in the Franciscan Way of Life.

Calling themselves the Neumann-Bachmann Communities, leadership from these six congregations came together annually for prayer, sharing, and collaboration. In the early 2000s, the New York and Millvale Communities joined together to form the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities.



*Sister Janet Gardner (left) and Sister Althea Anne Spencer (right) joined other Franciscans in February for a Listening and Learning Session sponsored by the Franciscan Federation.*

Today, the leadership of the three Neumann-Bachmann Communities continue to meet regularly in a spirit of solidarity to pray, share, and collaborate.

## Franciscan Federation

The Franciscan Federation serves as a collaborative organization of the broader Franciscan family, including vowed religious, associates, secular Franciscans, lay Franciscans, and all who seek to follow a Franciscan way of life.

The Federation provides national and regional opportunities to collaborate, gather, and celebrate. Offering opportunities for growth in the Franciscan tradition, they also offer education, webinars, and resources on topics of Franciscan interest, including human rights, ending human trafficking, working for peace, and caring for Creation.

For more information, please visit [franfed.org](http://franfed.org).

## Franciscans Action Network

The Franciscan Action Network (FAN) is comprised of Franciscan congregations, including the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God. Inspired by the lives of Sts. Francis and Clare, FAN is a grass-roots, social advocacy network designed to bring a coordinated and effective voice to matters of justice, peace and care for creation in the world. FAN works to amplify the voice of its members and use their collective power to advocate and act to improve social policy and social structures in the United States. As part of our efforts to serve those experiencing poverty, our

Congregation makes annual contributions to the FAN in support of its resources, advocacy and activities on behalf of all who are marginalized. This includes a Civility in Discourse program, the Institute for Peace program, and Franciscan Peacemaking in the Holy Land. FAN's efforts in the areas of poverty and human rights focus on economic justice, immigration and the elimination of torture. They also support various outreach efforts of Franciscan ministries and institutions. For more information, visit [www.franciscanaction.org](http://www.franciscanaction.org)

## Franciscans International

A global Franciscan force standing in solidarity with the world's marginalized communities, Franciscans International advocates for human dignity, peace, and environmental justice. Like with FAN, our Congregation makes an annual contribution to Franciscans International as part of our efforts to extend our mission to care for persons experiencing injustice, work for peace, and serve as good stewards of our common home. Using a rights-based approach, Franciscan International serves as a bridge between grass roots organizations working for peace, justice, and the integrity of creation and decision-makers at the United Nations. They also collaborate with other civil society and faith-based organizations, including Laudato Si' Action Platform and Child Rights Connect.

For more information, please visit [franciscansinternational.org](http://franciscansinternational.org).

# Our Franciscan Journey - Illinois

*Our Franciscan Journey” is an ongoing article series telling the story of our Congregation through the places Providence has called us to serve. The people and ministries of these places left an indelible mark on our hearts, and we cherish the friendships that continue to this day.*

Providence guided the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God to bloom in Pittsburgh, PA but our roots begin almost 500 miles away near Chicago, IL. During the immigration boom of the late 1800s and early 1900s, an influx of Lithuanian immigrants settled in Illinois, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Connecticut. The parishes and schools at the heart of these communities needed Sisters who understood the language and culture. At the time, many Sisters of Lithuanian heritage serving these communities belonged to the Polish congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth in Des Plaines, IL.

As World War I reignited historic tensions between Lithuanians and Poles, it became increasingly challenging for Polish orders serving in Lithuanian parishes and schools, as well as Lithuanian women serving in or hoping to join Polish religious communities. Seeking a peaceful resolution, Rev. John J. Sukaitis of St. Casimir Parish in Pittsburgh, PA, his assistant Rev. Magnus Kazenas and other Lithuanian priests began efforts to establish a new Lithuanian community to serve their parishes and schools. This included inquiring if the Sisters of St. Francis of Millvale in Pittsburgh, PA would house and train a new Lithuanian community in the Franciscan way. Mother M. Chrysostom Krill was favorable to the idea, but the time was not providential for such an undertaking.

In 1919, witnessing escalating tensions in parishes, the Lithuanian mem-

bers of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth unsuccessfully petitioned the Mother General in Rome for permission to establish a separate province. Monsignor Michael Krusas of St. George Parish in Chicago, IL also intervened by appealing to other religious orders in the Midwest to accept the Lithuanian Sisters. All requests were denied.

The priests and Sisters did not lose faith. In 1922, the Lithuanian Sisters again petitioned the Mother General in Rome. She sent her assistant Mother M. Clara Netkowski, who was more empathetic and open to a resolution. Monsignor Krusas was instrumental in negotiating the terms on which the Sisters would be released from the Nazareth Congregation. He then traveled from Chicago to join Rev. Sukaitis and Rev. Kazena to successfully petition the Sisters of St. Francis of Millvale to receive the Lithuanian Sisters and train them in the Franciscan Order. On March 12, 1922, our Franciscan congregation was founded. Fifteen professed Sisters, nine novices and two postulants left Des Plaines for Pittsburgh.

Sisters continued to serve St. Casimir Parish in Pittsburgh and St. George Parish in Detroit, MI, and were soon missioned to other Lithuanian parishes in Philadelphia, PA, Kenosha, and Hartford, CT. However, not all connections to Illinois were severed. Our Sisters taught at Immaculate Conception School in East St. Louis, IL from



*Members of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth (c. 1920s) who ministered to Lithuanian Catholic communities in the United States.*

1934-1968 and St. Mary School in Mt. Vernon from 1968-1996.

## A Powerhouse of Support

In 1926, the St. Francis Convent Auxiliary (Chicago Auxiliary) was organized by the parents, relatives and friends of our founding Sisters in Chicago, IL. Their mission was to support our fledgling congregation through various projects, including furnishing our convent and chapel, establishing scholarships for our prep school (later St. Francis Academy) and raising funds to support our Sisters in their ministries.

The Chicago Auxiliary would soon inspire similar groups in Pittsburgh, as well as in communities where our Sisters served such as Philadelphia, PA, Hartford, CT, Cleveland, OH, Grand Rapids, MI and Kenosha, WI. One of the earliest collaborations among the auxiliaries was when they joined the St. Francis Mothers Guild to raise funds to build the St. Francis Academy Building.

Over the years, the Auxiliary raised support for numerous projects benefiting our Sisters and ministries, including the construction of Mary Immaculate Chapel and later renovations and the Franciscan Child Day Care Center elevator. Under the faithful leadership of long-time president Sabina Henson, the Chicago Auxiliary's annual benefit dinners inspired generous support for our Sisters and ministries. In the early 2000s, the Auxiliary disbanded due to aging membership and other factors.



*Sister Anna Marie Jaskunas assists surgeons Dr. A. W. Modert and Dr. M. Hall at Good Samaritan Hospital in 1946.*

Today, living members of the Chicago Auxiliary and their families remain some of our most faithful friends and supporters.

### Heart of Our Healthcare Mission

In 1939, Dr. S.A. Thompson wanted to transfer a small hospital in Mt. Vernon, IL into other hands due to his health, increasing costs, and a shortage of nurses. He contacted our community at the recommendation of the Bishop of Belleville, IL where our Sisters had served. At first, we were not able to afford the venture. Then, in 1943, the price lowered and a local businessman agreed to purchase a part of the property with our Congregation paying the remaining cost.

Mother M. Aloysia and several other Sisters traveled to Mt. Vernon in 1944 to assume management of the newly renamed Good Samaritan Hospital. The hospital was much different than modern healthcare facilities. Without an elevator, patients were carried up the stairs and dresser drawers were used as bassinets for the nursery.

Our Sisters first lived in the hospital's cold damp basement until other accommodations could be found. They labored every day, cleaning rooms, mopping corridors, washing linens by hand and doing whatever was necessary to rehabilitate the facility. Despite their efforts, a new building was needed. The welcoming and supportive Mt. Vernon community helped raise the necessary funds. Mother Aloysia also applied for government funding, and Good Samaritan became the first hospital in the nation to receive funding from the Hill-Burton Act. The cornerstone for a new four-story, 80-bed facility was laid in 1950, with Sister M. Clare Patakis as the new administrator.



*Sister M. Assumpta Vosilius with a patient at St. Joseph Hospital in Alton, IL.*

In the 1970s, after operating Good Samaritan for two decades, then General Superior Sister M. Virginia Pask was open to expanding the congregation's healthcare ministry. At the same time, the Daughters of Charity were seeking a new congregation or organization to take over administration of St. Joseph Hospital in Alton, IL. The 200-bed facility was conveniently located just an hour and fifteen minutes from Good Samaritan. On April 18, 1974, our Congregation assumed management of St. Joseph Hospital, which expanded quickly. Eventually, a five-story professional building was built to serve both the physicians and patients.

During this time, our Sisters also engaged in pastoral and parish ministries throughout Illinois. In the 1980s, Sister Elise Mora ministered in parishes serving Hispanic communities in West Chicago.

In 1984, Good Samaritan Hospital administrator Sister M. Joanne Dumchus died suddenly, leaving a void that could not be filled. Under her leadership, the hospital had grown from 110 beds to 188 beds with a medical staff of 45 physicians. After her death, a lay administrator served for 18 months but was unable to sustain the quality of patient care standards while navigating the financial strain and challenges faced by many healthcare facilities at the time.

St. Joseph Hospital in Alton, was facing similar challenges. The inpatient census was dropping as more procedures were being performed on an outpatient basis. This forced a down-sizing of staff. Moreover, unemployment in both communities was on the rise while hospital costs were soaring.

Healthcare in the United States was changing and Provi-



*Hospital Administrator Sister M. Joanne Dumchus (center, desk) with Sisters serving at Good Samaritan in 1969.*

dence was calling our Congregation to more sustainable efforts. By 1986, our Congregation began contemplating withdrawal from both institutions citing the challenges of distance to Alton and Mt. Vernon, fewer Sisters to serve the hospitals, and the growing number of aging Sisters.

In 1988, St. Joseph Hospital was transferred to the Sisters of the Martyr St. George, but continued to struggle financially. It was sold to OSF Saint Anthony's Health Center a year later, and renamed St. Clare Hospital which continues to serve the Alton, IL community.

Good Samaritan was entrusted to the SSM Health Care Corporation sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Mary, who assumed management in 1991 and renamed it Good Samaritan Health Center. In November 2012, prior to the dedication of a new facility, Good Samaritan Regional Health Center invited a group of our Sisters to visit the new hospital, where they were given a tour of their chapel which houses many religious artifacts significant to our congregation and ministry in Mt. Vernon.

### Continuing Connections

Looking back on our Franciscan journey, the profound blessing of serving the communities of Mt. Vernon, Alton, Chicago and beyond has left an indelible mark on our hearts. We remain grateful for our family, friends and those we served in this blessed region who nurtured our roots and empowered our Sisters to confidently, joyfully go forward to answer the call of Providence.

*"A Celebration of Franciscan Spirit: Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God 1922-2000," by Eileen Leindecker Gimper, PhD was a source of historic information.*

# Academy Spirit in Full Bloom

The St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association's 23rd annual Tulip Luncheon on Sunday, April 21, 2024 brought together alumnae, Sisters and friends for a joy-filled afternoon filled with good friends, delicious food, and a few surprises. The event also celebrated the graduating and current SFA Legacy Scholarship recipients and welcomed new recipients from the class of 2028. Thank you, St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association for your Franciscan hospitality to our Sisters and guests. We are so blessed to witness your enduring friendships and all the good you are doing as a group and as individuals. Go Ciscans!

For more information about the Alumnae Association, Tulip Luncheon or other events, such as the Alumnae Mass on September 22 and Fall Bus Trip on October 5, please visit [saintfrancisacademyalumnaeandsisters.com](http://saintfrancisacademyalumnaeandsisters.com).



## Thank you and Blessings!



Over the summer, St. Francis Academy Alumnae Board president Wendy Hines Hayes '76 (pictured, on the right) and corresponding secretary Kathy Teitz Hornyak '78 (pictured, on the left) concluded their many years of Board service. Their dedication, generosity, and tireless efforts profoundly blessed our Sisters, SFA Alumnae and many others. As Wendy and Kathy go forward, we offer our prayers of gratitude and blessings. We are also grateful for their continued presence in our lives, including Wendy's ongoing service on our Franciscan Fest planning committee and other volunteer efforts.

Going forward, we congratulate the new SFA Board president, Maria Ammon '84. Thank you for taking on this responsibility in addition to all you do for the Board and our Sisters. We also joyfully welcome new SFA Board Members Deidre Geyer Small '85 and Dawn Pugliano Massaro '88. May God bless you!

## Auxiliary (continued from page 4)

The Auxiliary continues to support Community events, like our Franciscan Fest. The Board is also easing back into fundraising by hosting spring and holiday basket raffles at Our Lady of Hope churches.

"It's not a huge money maker, but it helps," said Annette. "The baskets help us give the Sisters more."

"We're here to serve. Whatever they need," said Joyce. "Brighter days are ahead!"

As they continue to adapt and embrace opportunities, including a pie sale fundraiser, Annette says the Sisters' faith inspires them to continue. She also credits past Board members she has known, including Addie Kearny, LaVerne Palko, Mary Scabilloni, Pat Capetta and Eileen Gimper who built a strong foundation of support.

"The Sisters are what it's about," said Annette. "I love them all."

The Pittsburgh Auxiliary is happy to welcome new members. For more information, please contact Sister Mary Ann at 412-477-4312 or [smalostoski@osfprov.org](mailto:smalostoski@osfprov.org).



Several Auxiliary Board members helped mail over 2,000 invitations for Franciscan Fest 2023, including Annette (far right) and Joyce (center) who are pictured with Associate Joan Ammon, Sister Mary Ann Lostoski and Sister Francine McDonald.

# In Prayerful Memory

## Sister M. Edward Urban, OSF

Sister M. Edward Urban, a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God for 72 years, died at age 91 on July 7, 2024. She was born in Lithuania in 1932 to her mother Anne and her American-born father, Anthony. At seven years old, her family moved to the United States, settling in Cleveland, OH. Sister Edward was taught by our Sisters at St. George school. Entering our congregation in February 1952, she earned a Bachelor's degree in Education from Duquesne University. Sister served as an elementary school teacher in Grand Rapids, MI, Elizabeth, NJ, New Kensington, PA, and Bethel Park, PA. In 1963, Sister Edward was missioned to Brazil where she served for 47 years in education, parish and pastoral ministry, including serving as principal at our Pius XII School's Escolinho (little school.) Blessed with a beautiful singing voice, Sister Edward often served as a cantor. She returned to Pittsburgh in 2010 and assisted in the Congregation's archives, volunteered at the Franciscan Child Day Care Center, and assisted with administrative projects for more than a decade. Faithfully embracing the challenges of age and declining health, Sister Edward never stopped singing and continued to minister through prayer and her Franciscan presence.



## A Different Way to Give: Planned Giving FAQ



Given from the goodness of your hearts, every gift, every cent, every kind word, every prayer has profoundly blessed our Franciscan mission, our Sisters and those we serve. We are eternally grateful. There is no “right way” to give. However, some planning can maximize the benefit to you, your loved ones, and charities near and dear to your heart.

### What are planned gifts?

Most people plan their giving by leaving a charitable gift in a will or trust, or by naming the Sisters as a beneficiary of an insurance policy or retirement plan, such as an IRA. Some donors also set up living charitable trusts that help maximize the impact of their giving and may have a tax benefit, especially under revised charitable giving rules. A trusted financial advisor can guide you regarding which is best for you and your beneficiaries that may include loved ones and charities.

### Who can help me in making a planned gift to the Sisters?

A professional advisor, such as a financial planner, an attorney, or an accountant can best help plan your charitable giving. It is recommended that persons seek a financial advisor who is a “fiduciary,” who must place a client's interest above his or her own, as well as disclose all fees, how they are compensated and any other conflicts.

### Do I tell the Sisters?

That's up to you. Like most charitable organizations, we prefer that you let us know about gifts in advance. This way, we can best express our gratitude for your generosity and thoughtfulness. To let us know, please contact our Development Director, Robyn Moeller at 412-885-7232 or [rmoeller@osfprov.org](mailto:rmoeller@osfprov.org).

### Planning is not right for me. How do I make a regular donation to the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God?

If you wish to give a one time or recurring gift to support our ministries, outreach and the care of our senior Sisters, please use the enclosed envelope or visit [osfprov.org/how-you-can-help/donate-now](https://osfprov.org/how-you-can-help/donate-now). For questions or other ways you can help, please contact Development Director, Robyn Moeller at 412-885-7232 or [rmoeller@osfprov.org](mailto:rmoeller@osfprov.org).

*Editor's Note: The above is for informational purposes. Always consult your financial advisor as to what charitable giving is best for you.*



Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God

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- I have moved or have a new e-mail. Please update my correct information included below.
- I'm receiving multiple copies of the Whitehall Franciscan.
- Please send me the Whitehall Franciscan only by e-mail, and remove me from the print mailing list.  
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benefitting the Sisters of St. Francis  
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**St. Thomas More Church  
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126 Fort Couch Road ♦ Pittsburgh, PA 15241

**Festivities Begin @ 1:00 PM**

(Doors open at conclusion of 11:30 Mass,  
which all are welcome to attend)

Admission is \$50 per person;  
\$95 per couple (2 guests);  
\$350 per table (up to 8 guests)

RSVP by Sept. 27  
412-885-7232 or [info@osfprov.org](mailto:info@osfprov.org)