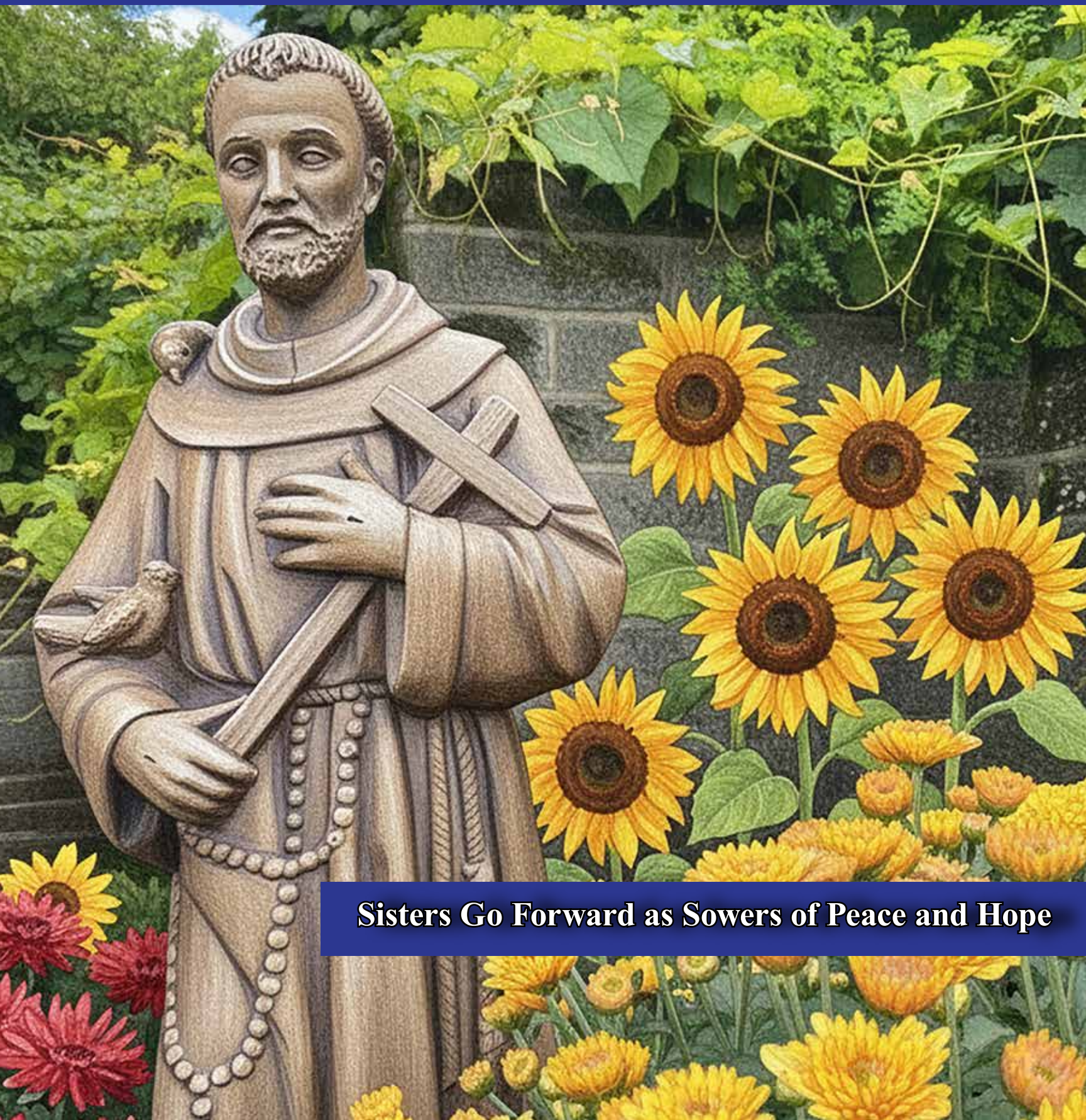


# The Whitehall FRANCISCAN

Vol. 34, No. 2  
Fall 2025

**The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God**



**Sisters Go Forward as Sowers of Peace and Hope**

# 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.

## In This Issue

- 2-3 24<sup>th</sup> General Chapter
- 3 Thank you, Sister Janet Gardner
- 4 International Collaborations  
Welcome Bishop Mark Eckman
- 5 Harvest Street Mission  
Sister Mary Ann Lostoski
- 6-7 Our Franciscan Journey - North East
- 8-9 Catholic Social Teaching
- 9 Our Franciscan Journey (cont.)
- 10 Sisters Place Concludes Mission  
Harvest Street Mission (cont.)
- 11 Management Collaborative for Religious  
Memorial: Sister Elisa Tanaka

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# God's Providence Never Fails

## Sisters Elect New Leadership Team and Invigorate Franciscan Mission to be Sowers of Hope and Peace

*"Because God loves us, we live with compassion, caring for our Common Heart and Common Home. We incarnate the spirit of prayer in our Franciscan religious life. Open to the Spirit, and faithful to our Charism, we respond to the Providence of God, listen to the cries of the people, and insert ourselves in the diverse realities of our world, joyfully sowing peace and hope."*

The above Inspirational Statement was adopted by the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God at our 24th General Chapter this past May 24 - June 4 in São Paulo, Brazil. During this significant milestone for our Congregation held every four years, Sister delegates representing the United States and Brazil fully embraced the presence of the Holy Spirit as they discerned how our Community will continue to live our Franciscan mission, respond to the needs of the world, care for each other, and go forward as "Sowers of Peace and Hope." Embracing contemplative prayer and discernment, our Sister delegates reviewed the current state of the Congregation and our ministries, and they created recommendations to guide the new congregational leadership team over the next four years. There were also many joyful moments coming together as Franciscan Sisters to share meals, attend Mass, and engage in various group activities.

In the final days of General Chapter, Sister Rute Almeida Guimarães was reelected as our General Minister, Sister Joance dos Santos was elected our Assistant General Minister and Sister Maria José da Conceição, Sister Joanne Brazinski and Sister Maria Goretti Avanzi were elected as General Councilors. Sister Joanne will also serve at our USA Area Minister. Our new leadership team took office on July 1, 2025, and will serve until July 2029.

Please keep our leadership team and Community in prayer as we go forward together into a new era as sowers of peace and hope. We also offer up our gratitude and prayers for the dedicated service of our outgoing General Council members who helped guide us into this present era of our Franciscan mission: Sisters Adriana Duarte, Janet Gardner and Neide Teixeira.



General Minister Sister Rute Almeida Guimarães (center), Assistant General Minister Sister Joance dos Santos (left), and General Councilors Sister Maria Goretti Avanzi (2<sup>nd</sup> from left), Sister Maria José da Conceição (2<sup>nd</sup> from right), and Sister Joanne Brazinski

# 24th General Chapter Memories



Sisters Joalice dos Santos and Janet Gardner



2025 delegates: (1<sup>st</sup> row, seated) Sisters Marlene Aparecida Avansi, Yolanda Marcelino, Glória de Souza, Maria José da Conceição; (2<sup>nd</sup> Row) Sisters Lucia do Nascimento, Janet Gardner, Carmem de Almeida, Adelma França de Sá Gomes, Rute Almeida Guimarães, Joalice dos Santos, Maria Goretti Avanzi, Joanne Brazinski, Adriana Duarte, Maria José Torres; (3<sup>rd</sup> Row) Sisters Neide Teixeira, Juliana da Silva Aires, Deise Santana, Hilária de Oliveira, Odete Pereira da Silva, Eliana da Silva, Antônia Maria A. Silva, Amélia Corsina de Oliveira, Vendete Barbosa de Oliveira, Althea Anne Spencer and Selma Marie dos Santos



Sisters Maria José da Conceição and Hilária de Oliveira



Sisters Juliana da Silva Aires, Althea Anne Spencer, Maria José Torres and Odete Pereira da Silva



Sisters Antônia Maria A. Silva, Glória de Souza, Joanne Brazinski, and Selma Maria dos Santos

## Sister Janet Concludes Ministry as USA Area Minister



At the 2025 Employee Recognition Luncheon, her final one as USA Area Minister, Sister Janet recognized maintenance director Dave Domostoy for 40 years of dedicated service.

In 2015, while serving as executive director of Beatitude House in Youngstown, OH, Sister Janet Gardner repelled down the city's tallest building to help raise funds for the organization that cares for women and children experiencing homelessness and poverty. This brave moment reflects her dedication and spirit as a leader, as well as her generosity and compassion for those entrusted to her care.

Our Sisters and staff in the United States were blessed to be entrusted to Sister Janet's care in 2017 when she was elected to our congregational leadership team and assumed the responsibilities as USA Area Minister, a ministry for which she was well prepared. Sister Janet served in leadership for decades, including as General Minister, punctuated by leadership breaks where she was called to ministries serving persons experiencing poverty, homelessness and related hardships.

Sister Janet embraced the challenges of guiding our aging USA Community with great faith, determination, and hope. Her compassionate leadership helped us adjust to change and endure challenges, including navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, consolidating our administrative offices into one location, and attending to the unique needs of each Sister, Associate, volunteer, and employee. After serving two terms as General Councilor, Sister Janet concluded her ministry as USA Area Minister in July. Our Sisters and staff in the USA are grateful for her leadership, compassion, and support for the past eight years. May God bless you, Sister Janet, as Providence calls you to new opportunities to serve as a sower of hope and peace.

# International Collaborations Promote Hope

by Sister Janet Gardner

The International Union of Superiors General (UISG) concluded its 23<sup>rd</sup> Plenary Assembly in June after five days of intense work and discernment under the theme "Consecrated Life: A Hope That Transforms." Around 900 Superiors General from 80 countries addressed the current challenges of women religious communities, sharing experiences and strengthening international collaboration. Included among them was our General Minister, Sr. Rute Guimarães.

The UISG finalized a Plenary Declaration that reaffirms the role of consecrated women as "bearers of a hope that transforms" in a complex global context. Sisters and consecrated women are called to be:

- Women of peace, resilient, standing at the foot of the Cross, who dare to weep over the sufferings of the world and to commit themselves, sometimes to the point of giving their lives.
- Women who offer their lives for free by being present at frontier places, who refuse exclusion and discrimination and who give consolation and attention to those who are rejected.
- Women who keep watch in the night and who, like the moon, reflect the light and let the stars sparkle around them.
- Synodal Women who engender evangelical and inclusive communities; women who weave, for our common home, a harmonious garment that makes the beauty of creation shine forth.
- Women prophets who, in old age, illness or wounds suffered, remain signs of hope, waiting and praying."



*Sister Rute Guimarães was elected to serve a second four-year term as IFC-TOR Councilor. She is joined by Sister Pacyfika Leman (Poland), Sister Lorella Chiaruzzi, Vice Pres. (Italy), Sister Daisy Kalamparambam, Pres (India), Sister Mary Elizabeth Imler (USA) and Sister Georgette Ngom (Senegal).*

Among the most notable outcomes at the Assembly is the launch of the "The Anna Trust", an initiative to support the care of elderly sisters, which is a growing concern for many religious congregations. In her closing message, Sr. Mary Barron, President of the UISG, emphasized the importance of "standing as resilient women of peace, who dare to stand at the frontiers and give comfort to those who are rejected."

The Council for the International Franciscan Conference of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis (IFC-TOR) also gathered during this providential time in Rome, and Sister Rute Guimarães was reelected for a second term on the IFC-TOR Council.

## Pittsburgh Welcomes New Bishop Mark Eckman



*Bishop Eckman graciously officiated Mass for the Jubilee celebrations of Sisters Elise Mora and Joanne Brazinski who were his teachers at St. Valentine School in Bethel Park.*

Providence never fails to fill us with hope. This summer, Pope Leo XIV appointed Bishop Mark Eckman to succeed Bishop David Zubik as the 13th Bishop of Pittsburgh. Our Sisters taught a young Bishop Eckman at St. Valentine Catholic School in Bethel Park, PA. Over the last six decades, we have been profoundly blessed to witness him grow into a faithful, dedicated, and compassionate servant of Christ. Bishop Eckman's journey took him to South Hills Catholic High School, Duquesne University, and St. Vincent Seminary. Ordained in 1985, he faithfully served as a parish priest for more than three decades in the Pittsburgh diocese, which included several parishes in the South Hills where our Sisters were present. He also served as Auxiliary Bishop from 2022 until appointed Bishop. Throughout his faithful journey, Bishop Eckman has remained a blessed presence in our lives, including joyfully serving as a celebrant at our 100th anniversary Mass. Our hearts are overflowing with hope as he faithfully answers the call to shepherd the Diocese of Pittsburgh into a new era. Congratulations and blessings, Bishop Eckman!

Our Congregation also extends our gratitude to Bishop David Zubik who faithfully served the Pittsburgh Diocese for 18 years. May God's peace rest upon you, Christ's love flow through you, and all the blessings of our Provident God be yours.

# Harvest Street Mission with the Ladies of Charity

By Sister Althea Anne Spencer

This summer, I had the privilege of volunteering with the Ladies of Charity from Our Lady of Hope Parish, where I also serve as a Pastoral Associate. Harvest Street Mission, directed by Jennifer and Jack Zebo, sponsors a weekly outreach to persons experiencing hunger and homelessness. This young couple first became involved with the ministry through a fellow parishioner from their church. When the founder of the mission moved, the Zebos took over organizing the weekly gathering in a small park on the North Side where food, clothing, and other necessities are distributed to persons in need. Harvest Street Mission serves others by partnering with churches, athletic teams, neighborhoods, small groups, corporate organizations, religious organizations, and community groups.

The Ladies of Charity of Our Lady of Hope Parish have been preparing and

servicing a Sunday lunch for Harvest Street Mission for several years. They do it only one Sunday a year because so many other groups, organizations, and churches want to help throughout the year.

The organization of this outreach is amazing. When the Zebos pulled their truck with attached trailer onto the side street, a group of regular volunteers appeared and began to unload folding tables and picnic tables and set them on the sidewalk and along the side of the park. There were two areas: one with clothing for individuals to select and another for food distribution. Before any of the



Sister Althea Anne Spencer (white and blue top) with the Ladies of Charity outside Our Lady of Hope Parish's Nativity Church.

clothes or food were given out, the two groups serving that day and the volunteers gathered in a circle in the little park

Continued on Page 10

## The Sister Behind the Raffle: Sister Mary Ann Lostoski



Fundraising raffles seem simple. Buy a ticket and hope you win. Plus, a good feeling of knowing you supported a charity, even if you do not win a prize. Behind the scenes, more work is involved than many imagine. Luckily, our Community hit the jackpot when Providence sent us Sister Mary Ann Lostoski.

In 2008, our Autumn Gala Committee was seeking a fun and cost-effective addition to our fundraising efforts. Tapping into her wealth of fundraising experience from more than four decades serving in Catholic schools as an educator and principal, Sister Mary Ann helped design a cash raffle based on the Pennsylvania Evening Lottery drawing that featured multiple winners every day for a month. A daily winner whose ticket number matched the 3-digit Pennsylvania evening lottery number would receive \$70 each weekday, \$100 on Saturdays, \$200 on Sundays or \$500 on one special day chosen for the grand prize. There are also three bonus prizes of \$20 given each day to participants whose ticket number is the number after, the number before, or the reverse of the number drawn.

The raffle was more popular than anticipated, and a second month was eventually added. Now held in October and February, the raffles have collectively raised around \$170,000 for our ministries and the care of our senior Sisters.

At age 84, Sister Mary Ann's infectious enthusiasm, detailed organization, and faithful perseverance continue to inspire many to take a chance and support our Sisters and ministries. Tickets sell out well in advance of each raffle because of her efforts and network of ticket sellers. If you're a regular, Sister Mary Ann knows your favorite numbers and you will receive a special reminder when chances go on sale. Once tickets are sold, Sister Mary Ann keeps the stubs secure and a backup record of who bought each ticket. Every winner receives a personal call from Sister Mary Ann - often within minutes of the drawing. Our Community has also reconnected with old friends and made a few new ones through her efforts.

In addition to managing raffles, Sister Mary Ann serves as the liaison for our Pittsburgh Auxiliary and eucharistic minister for Our Lady of Hope Parish, as well as supports the Community in whatever ways she is able. February 2026 raffle tickets will be available in November 2025, and make wonderful stocking stuffers or gifts for those who enjoy games of chance. For more information, contact Sister Mary Ann at 412-882-9911 or [info@osfprov.org](mailto:info@osfprov.org).

# Our Franciscan Journey

## Philadelphia, New Jersey and New York

"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 memories and friendships that continue to this day.

Wherever we are called to serve, Providence never fails to connect us with people who nurture our Franciscan spirit. There has always been a strong Franciscan presence in the Northeast Mid-Atlantic Region of the United States – Philadelphia, PA, New Jersey and New York. Our Franciscan heritage can be traced back to Philadelphia in 1855 when Sister Mary Francis Bachmann, Sister Mary Margaret Boll and Sister Mary Bernardina Dorn founded the Sisters of St. Francis of the Third Order Regular 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, NY, 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, PA, who accepted and trained our fledgling Community in the Franciscan Way of Life in 1922.

Providence led our Sisters to Philadelphia, PA, just one year after our founding to serve the Lithuanian-American Catholic community of St. George Parish and School as teachers and administrators. Our Sisters were also active in Parish ministry that included preparing children for First Communion and Confirmation.



Sister Ann Marie Lostoski taught 1st Grade at St. George in Philadelphia, PA from 1970-72.

According to an account written by our former archivist Sister Mary Jaskel, who entered our Community from St. George, "(Sisters) shared in the joy and sorrows of parishioners, visited the sick in homes and hospitals, participated in parish fairs and funerals, decorated the alters during the Liturgical seasons, and on other occasions, and engaged in a host of other tasks."

After 65 years, our Sisters concluded our mission at St. George School in 1988. Throughout our time at St. George, our Sisters were supported by a parish community deeply committed to Catholic values and education lead by pastors whose generosity and cooperation made them "true brothers in Christ," including Rev. Ignatius Zimblys, Msgr. Vito Martusevich, and Msgr. Joseph Anderlonis. The parish's indomitable spirit is one reason St. George continues to thrive as a Catholic school today. Many from the school and parish also continue to bless our Congregation through their friendship and generosity.

### New Jersey

New Jersey was also home to a large Lithuanian-American Catholic community in need of Sisters who understood their unique heritage and faith. In 1926, Rev. Joseph Simonaitis invited our Sisters to serve Saints Peter and Paul School in Elizabeth, NJ. When our Sisters arrived, they were astonished to see wall-to-wall desks with some students sitting on the windowsills. Over 725 students were



Sisters serving Sts. Peter and Paul Parish and School in 1931 included Sisters M. Paul Vaiskelonis (Principal), M. Imelda Tosh, M. Lawrence Christian, M. Francesca Walls, M. Ignatia Kiserauskas, M. Liguori Vitkauskas, M. Seraphim, M. Dorothy Patrick, and Sebastian Sliupas (postulant).

crammed into just eight classrooms. Our Sisters made it work until the school was expanded. Once again, we were blessed by the friendship and support of faithful pastors and parishioners during our seven decades serving the school and parish.

Sts. Peter and Paul was the first school that Sister Ann Marie Lostoski (then known as Sister Peter) was assigned to teach in 1961. A native of Cleveland, Ohio, this was Sister's first time on the East Coast. However, most of her excursions were limited to the school and parish, except at the invitation of their Pastor.

"It was almost unheard of at the time, but Father Peter would take us on parish bus trips. This is how I got to see the East Coast," said Sister Ann Marie. "He also lent us his car when we needed to go somewhere. Since I had my license, I got to drive!"

The parishioners felt like family of our Sisters with many young women from the parish joining our Community, including Sister Joanne Brazinski. Her younger sister Juliene was in Sister Ann Marie's 3rd grade class. Among the many kindnesses extended to our Sisters from the Brazinski family, their father, Joe, would let the Sisters use their family car when needed.

"Little did he know that his daughter



*Sisters Joan of Arc Urban and Lucy Marie Kadlauskas at St. George Parish in Brooklyn in 1947. It was here that Sister Joan of Arc met up with three trouble-making 12 year-old-boys - Joe, Chubby and John. In her own unique and gentle fashion, she got them to attend her catechism classes and found odd jobs at the parish to keep them occupied and off the street. Remaining in touch with Sister the rest of their lives, they each credited Sister Joan of Arc for keeping them out of gangs and prison.*

would be one of us,” said Sister Ann Marie. She returned to Sts. Peter and Paul to teach 3rd Grade from 1983 -1991. Our Sisters concluded our mission to SS Peter and Paul School in 1995. However, our Sisters continued to serve the parish until the early 2000s.

### **St. Francis Mission Center**

A year after our Sisters arrived in Elizabeth, NJ, they began traveling by train each weekend to teach Catechism classes to children belonging to one of five Lithuanian parishes: St. Michael Bayonne (Newark), Holy Trinity (Newark), Our Lady of Sorrows (Harrison), St. Ann (Jersey City) and St. Casimir (Paterson). In 1937, the St. Francis Mission



*Sister Hilária de Oliveira served St. James Parish in Newark, NJ.*

Center was established when Archbishop Thomas J. Walsh provided a furnished convent in Kearny, NJ, for Sisters serving these parishes. The Center moved to Harrison, NJ, in 1943 where our Sisters remained until the mission closed in 1959. Our Sisters continued to serve in schools and parishes into the 2000s.

Our Sisters also served Our Lady of Sorrows School in nearby Kearny, NJ, from 1964 until the school closed in 1989. Our Sisters continued to serve in parish ministry at Our Lady of Sorrows throughout the 1990s. Sister Charlotte Trojan also served as a pastoral associate at St. Cecelia Parish in Kearny, NJ, from 1989-1992.

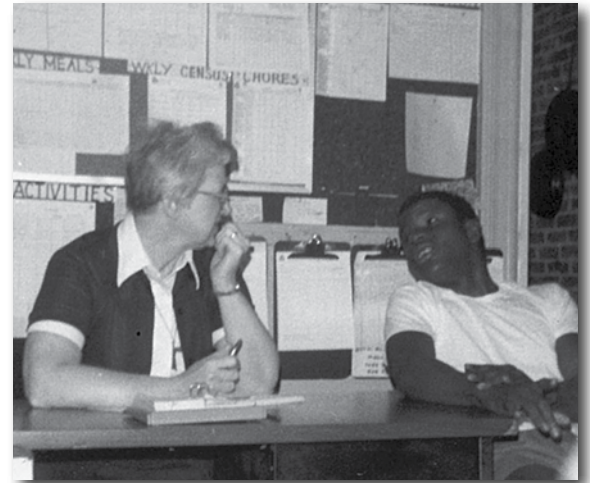
In the 2000s, Sister Hilária de Oliveira served as a pastoral associate at St. James Parish in Newark, NJ, where her ministry included serving the parish's Brazilian immigrant community by preparing Masses in Portuguese and assisting with religious education and other needs.

### **New York**

Shortly after the Franciscan Mission Center was established in the Newark Diocese, Providence called our Sisters across the bay to Brooklyn, where they served St. George and Queen of Angels Parishes. It was over an hour by train each way, but the growing Lithuanian population in Queens ensured that our Sisters did not have to endure this trek

for long. In 1939, at the request of Reverends John Balkunas, Casimir Paulionis and John Aleksionas, Most Rev. Thomas Malloy, Bishop of Brooklyn, granted permission to open a catechetical and pastoral center in Transfiguration Parish in Maspeth, Long Island for our Sisters serving Transfiguration, as well as St. George, Queen of Angels, and Annunciation Parishes in Brooklyn. Sisters taught catechism classes, visited the sick, and engaged in other parish ministries. They also helped prepare immigrants to apply for naturalization and become U.S. citizens. Our congregation concluded our ministry at Transfiguration Parish in 1986.

Our Congregation was also called to serve Catholic Schools in New York state which included St. George Parish and School in Rochester from 1930 until the school's closure in 1965. Our Sisters also served St. Casimir Parish and School in Amsterdam, NY from 1931 until the school's closure in 1957.



*Sister Miriam Racas at Covenant House in the 1980s.*

In the 1980s, several Sisters were called to New York City to serve in Pastoral Ministry.

Sisters Miriam Racas, Janet Gardner and Peg Markey and former Sister Eileen Kernan served Covenant House in New York, which offers shelter and support services for homeless youth who have endured traumatic and adverse experiences.

“I heard what Sister Janet and Miriam were doing, and felt called to work with women and children,” said Sister Peg. Covenant House was her first experience working directly with persons experiencing homelessness and poverty. But, it would not be her last.

**Continued on Page 9**

# Gospel Roots Nurtured by Christ's Love

## Pope Leo XIV Shines a Light on Catholic Social Teaching

No decision of a Pope is made lightly, including his choice of name. Inspired by a gentle reminder to “remember the poor,” Pope Francis chose inspiration from St. Francis of Assisi, which informed many facets of his papacy. His successor, Pope Leo XIV chose inspiration from Pope Leo XIII, who is credited as the “father of modern Catholic Social Teaching.”

“I chose to take the name Leo XIV. There are different reasons for this, but mainly because Pope Leo XIII in his historic Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* addressed the social question in the context of the first great industrial revolution,” explained Pope Leo XIV. “In our own day, the Church offers to everyone the treasury of her social teaching in response to another industrial revolution and to developments in the field of artificial intelligence that pose new challenges for the defense of human dignity, justice and labour.” (Vatican News; May 10, 2025)

Catholic Social Teaching can feel new and even radical when applied to modern issues, especially in a polarized political climate that discourages constructive dialogue and empathy. The reality is that, rooted in the Gospel and the teachings of Christ, Catholic Social Teaching has always been a central and essential element of the Catholic faith. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “The Church’s social teaching comprises a body of doctrine, which is articulated as the Church interprets events in the course of history, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit.”

“Time and again the prophets of the Old Testament defended the poor and powerless,” writes Stephen M. Colecchi, D.Min., Director of the Office of International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In the article, “Roots of Catholic Social Teaching Found in the Old Testament Prophets,” he notes that the words of prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah and Micah are later echoed by Jesus in the New Testament. “Through their powerful witness, the prophets nourish and inspire Catholic Social Teaching on the preferential option for the poor, workers’ rights, and justice and peace.”

Both drawing upon and adding to Catholic Social Teaching, papal encyclicals offer guidance and teaching on various matters, including social issues. Pope Leo XIII was not the first to address the Industrial Revolution’s impact on society. Pope Gregory XVI published the encyclical *Marari Vos* that touched on social and justice issues brought to light by in the early days of the Industrial Revolution. After more than seven decades of rapid technological and societal change, the Holy Spirit inspired Pope Leo XIII to write *Rerum Novarum* (*New Things*) to address deepening concerns and rapidly intensifying social issues, notably poverty, social justice and workers’ rights with pointed critiques of both socialism and capitalism. Pope Leo XIII’s approach set a precedent for the modern papacy by embracing the Church’s presence on the world stage as an advocate for social



“Once the demands of necessity and propriety have been met, the rest that one owns belongs to the poor.”

~ Pope Leo XIII

policy guided by the pillars of Catholic Social Teaching.

“*Rerum Novarum* gave the Church ‘citizenship status’ as it were, amid the changing realities of public life,” wrote St. John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus*. “This doctrine is still suitable for indicating the right way to respond to the great challenges of today.”

As the Holy Spirit guides Pope Leo XIV to shepherd the Church into a new era, there is no doubt he will continue the papal legacy that began with his namesake and the Church’s response to a myriad of social issues will embrace the tradition, depth and wisdom offered by Catholic Social Teaching.

To better understand the heart of Catholic Social Teaching, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) identifies the following themes:

### **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

Every person is created in the image and likeness of God. All human life is sacred and the dignity of each person is the foundation of society. People retain their dignity regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic status, or any unjust or prejudicial distinction.

### **Call to Family, Community and Participation**

Human dignity is realized in community with others and with all of creation. Society should contribute to the individual and the common good through our economic, political and social institutions. All people have a right to participate in society and a duty to seek the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

Every person has a fundamental right to life and human dignity that includes food, shelter, health care, education and employment. People have a right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and a responsibility to care for each other, our families, and society.

### **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. We are called to look at public policy decisions through the eyes of persons who are made poor and kept poor. A just society is achieved only when the needs of the poor in society are given priority.

### **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**

People have a right to decent and productive work, fair wages, private property and economic initiative. The economy exists to serve people, not the other way around. Work provides a person with an opportunity to contribute to the common good and to participate in the social and economic order. Living wages with benefits and good working conditions are essential.

### **Solidarity**

We are one human family. Our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, economic and ideological differences. The interconnection among all peoples calls us to value and respect the experience of all. We must also strive for reconciliation as we are called to work together for justice and peace.

### **Care for God's Creation**

Care for the earth is a requirement of our faith and how we show love and respect for God, our Creator. We are called to be stewards of the Earth, which includes care for our planet and all life that shares our common home. "Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society." (Pope Francis, *Laudato*

*Si'*, 49, 91)

Catholic Social Teaching offers a wealth of knowledge and guidance as we are challenged to go forward together as the body of Christ and follow His commandment to "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13:34). The USCCB advises that "the depth and richness of this tradition can be understood best through a direct reading of these documents." You are invited to join us in revisiting the resources below that were used in this article that offer links to Church documents, insightful reflections and discussions.

### **Sources on Catholic Social Teaching**

#### *Foundational Documents of CST*

[www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/foundational-documents](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/foundational-documents)

#### *Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*

[www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching)

#### *Roots of CST Found in the Old Testament Prophets*

Stephen M. Colecchi, D.Min.

[www.usccb.org/offices/new-american-bible/roots-catholic-social-teaching-found-old-testament-prophets](http://www.usccb.org/offices/new-american-bible/roots-catholic-social-teaching-found-old-testament-prophets)

#### *Faith and reason go together in the Church* - Tom Nash

[www.catholic.com/audio/cal/ama-80](http://www.catholic.com/audio/cal/ama-80)

## **Our Franciscan Journey** (continued from page 7)



*Sister Nancy Langhart served as a counselor at the College of St. Rose in Albany, NY.*

Providence called many of our Sisters who served at Covenant House to continue on the pastoral ministry path.

"The need in New York City was great. So many children and teens were served and saved from the streets," said Sister Janet. "However, this experience reminded me, a theology and music major, that I would need more education to continue this type of ministry. It led me to pursue a Masters in Social Work at Catholic University in Washington, DC."

Fluent in Spanish, Sister Elise Mora was called to serve as patient advocate at Lincoln Medical and Mental Health Hospital in the South Bronx in New York City in 1981. Later, she served as a counselor with Catholic Charities Immigration Services in the Archdiocese of New York City working with refugees, persons seeking political asylum, and immigrants. After ministries in Chicago and Pittsburgh, Sister Elise returned to New York in 2006 and served ten years as an adjunct professor in Languages at St. Bonaventure University in Olean, NY, where she also served as RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) coordinator. She was not the only Sister called to serve higher education in New York.

After many years serving as a guidance counselor at St. Francis Academy in Pittsburgh, Sister Nancy Langhart was called to New York to serve the Albany Diocese in 1989. She served as Assistant Director of Campus Ministry at the College of St. Rose in Albany, NY, then she served as Assistant Director of the Counseling Center until 2006. She also engaged in campus and pastoral ministry in Troy, NY.

Philadelphia, PA, New Jersey and New York were not just places we served, they were a second home to our Community where our Sisters always felt among family. Occupying a cherished space in our hearts, the memories of the people and ministries continue to nourish our spirit, and we are grateful for the blessing of those who remain present in our lives.

## Harvest Street Mission (continued from page 5)

and prayed together. With the enthusiastic “AMEN,” we all took our places to help distribute the “goodies.”

I was privileged to join the 12 Ladies of Charity on July 20 for the distribution of the meals. This particular Sunday was extra special. Our local chapter of Ladies of Charity received a donation from the National Office specifically for this ministry. Our dear brothers and sisters were treated to hot chicken dinners with coleslaw, chips and cookies along with water. On that very hot Sunday afternoon, 120 meals were given out. The response of gratitude from the people was overwhelming.

Once the meals were distributed and most of the clothing was given out, we all gathered again in the park and shared our experiences. One of the regular par-

ticipants graciously witnessed to her struggles and the impact of the Mission on her life.

Within a matter of a few minutes, all the tables and the little clothing left were packed into the trailer. All the volunteers headed to their vehicles, humbled by the men and women thanking us and praising the Lord. These people who suffer so much and have almost nothing, yet are so filled with faith and gratitude, deeply touched me. I'm so grateful to the Ladies of Charity for inviting me to join them to serve others.

The Ladies of Charity will be collecting underwear and socks for persons in need sometime this coming fall. For



Sister Althea Anne (left) with some of the Ladies of Charity distributing food at the Harvest Street Mission.

more information, visit [olhpg.org](http://olhpg.org). To learn more about Harvest Street Mission, visit [harveststreetmission.org](http://harveststreetmission.org).

## Sisters Place Leaves Legacy of Collaboration

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1) No matter how blessed, all seasons must end. After 32 years as a collaborative ministry of Catholic Sisters in Western Pennsylvania, Sisters Place concluded its ministry in the Spring of 2025. Embodied with the spirit of the 14 Communities of Catholic Sisters who founded the ministry in 1993, Sisters Place embraced a mission to serve families experiencing homelessness by providing safe and secure housing and offering programs and services to help residents heal and thrive. After a thorough review of finances and the current needs of the families served, the Sisters Place Board concluded that Sisters Place was unable to sustain services at the level of quality desired beyond 2025. The Board exhausted all available options before making the difficult and heart wrenching decision to conclude the ministry and focus resources on transitioning all families served to alternative housing and services.

“Making this choice to end our mission now gives us the blessing of time,” said Sister Janet Gardner, who served as Chair of the Member Board when the closing was first announced in February. “Time to transition families into alternative housing and programs, and time for staff to prepare for the conclusion of our mission and seek new employment.”

As of March 2025, all residents have found new housing. Other non-profits with whom Sisters Place collaborated over the years continue to provide services to the Hill Top Community.



At their final meeting, the Sisters Place Board was recognized for their faithful service, as was Lynette Vybiral (right with Sister Janet Gardner) who served as Development Director and took over as interim director as the ministry concluded.



During the interim until final dissolution of Sisters Place, a small Board was elected to attend to any matters, including allocating any remaining funds to similar organizations serving those experiencing homelessness in Western Pennsylvania. Sister Janet Gardner will serve as President, Sister Althea Anne Spencer will serve as Treasurer, and Sister Cynthia Wessel, SHS will serve as Secretary. Two congregations will also remain as Members until the final dissolution: Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God.

“The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God offer our heartfelt gratitude to all staff, board members, neighbors, and friends who supported Sisters Place’s efforts to care for families experiencing homelessness in Western Pennsylvania,” said Sister Janet. “May God bless the families of Sisters Place, who inspired us with their resilience, hard work, and determination.”

# Management Collaborative for Religious

As the needs of our Congregation evolve, Providence never fails to connect us with the individuals, organizations, and support needed to continue to live our Franciscan mission. Many of our present needs are shared with many religious communities in the United States who are faithfully enduring similar challenges. According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), the number of women in religious life in the United States has declined more than 70% since the peak in 1965.

“There are just over 500 communities of women religious in the U.S., and most have 50 or fewer members,” Thomas Gaunt, CARA’s executive director, told the Associated Press in 2024.

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God are one of these Communities. Thankfully, we are not alone and have been working with other smaller Communities in the Pittsburgh area to embrace opportunities to collaborate and share the increasing costs of administration and healthcare needs. After much prayerful discernment and discussion, our Community has partnered with the Sisters of the Holy Spirit, Benedictine Sisters and the School Sisters of St. Francis to share the cost of a team of financial professionals to help manage investments, donations, bills, health insurance, payroll, and other financial needs. Earlier this year, the Communities formed the Management Collaborative for Religious (MCR) that will be overseen by a Board of Directors comprised of the four Congregational leaders and one other representative chosen by each congregation. Jared Stango was hired to serve as Chief Executive Officer, along with an accountant already familiar with two of the Communities. They are diligently working to transition each

Community to MCR’s services by the end of 2025, and more staff may be added as needed.

Our Sisters offer our gratitude to Donnelly-Boland & Associates for serving us well over the past decade and continuing to offer their guidance and support through the transition period. We also are grateful for the support of our volunteer Investment Committee who continues to guide us to be good stewards of our finances as we plan for the future. Please keep our collaborating Communities and the MCR team in your prayers. All our Communities remain hopeful that this endeavor will lead to more collaborative opportunities to address other shared needs, including the care for aging Sisters.



*As part of the effort Sisters Joanne and Janet meet with the Donnelly-Boland & Associates team Kevin Boland, Samantha Lutz, and Braden Pavlik.*

## *In Prayerful Memory*

### Sister Elisa Tanaka, OSF



Sister Elisa Tanaka, a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God for 63 years, died at the age of 83 on August 27, 2025, at our Recanto Paz e Bem residence in Brazil. The youngest of six children in a Japanese-Brazilian family in São Paulo, Sister Elisa entered the Congregation as a postulant in February 1962 and professed her perpetual vows on January 26, 1969.

In 1972, she completed the Teacher Training course for Primary Education – Magisterium and dedicated her ministry almost exclusively to academic work at our Pius XII, São Miguel Arcanjo and Nossa Senhora do Carmo schools. Sister Elisa truly loved her work in education and is remembered as a great educator and literacy teacher. In addition to education, Sister worked with catechesis, including serving as a counselor of Religious Education. She also served as an assistant director and served in Parish ministry, especially catechesis. In 1984, She was missioned to São Miguel dos Campos, AL, Brazil, where she served in parish ministry.

In 2016, Sister Elisa was transferred to Recanto Paz e Bem, in order to take care of her fragile health, yet she still assisted with some internal work in the community when able. She also lovingly cared for the neighborhood birds.

Our Community gives thanks to our Provident God for Sister Elisa’s life, her peaceful spirit, and her unique way of manifesting the light and love of Christ. We offer our continuing prayers that she will rest in the peace and love of God in her eternal home.



Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God

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