

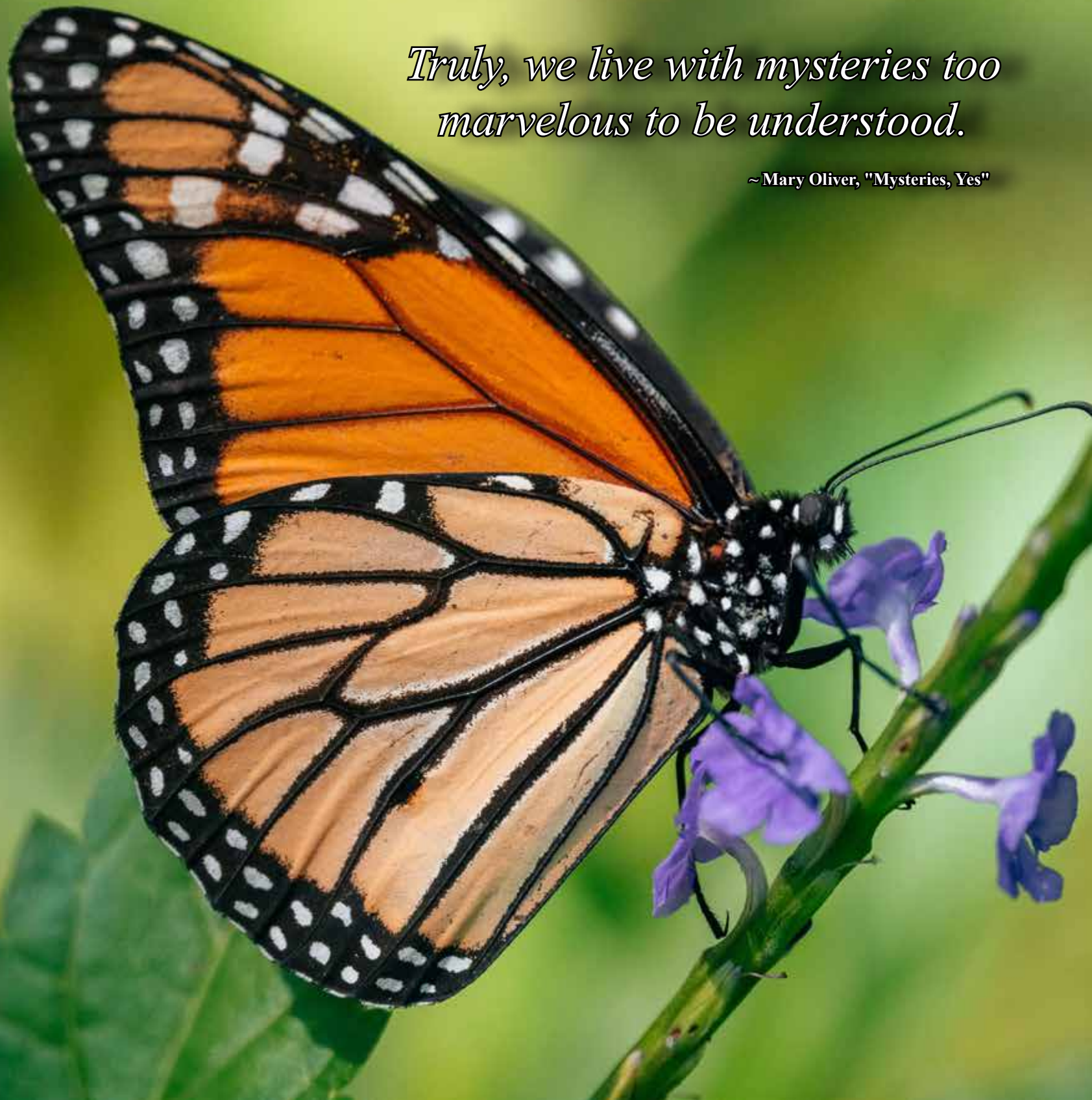
# The Whitehall FRANCISCAN

Vol. 35, No. 1  
Spring 2026

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God

*Truly, we live with mysteries too  
marvelous to be understood.*

~ Mary Oliver, "Mysteries, Yes"



# 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 Sister Ana Claudia Enters Novitiate Holy Family
- 3-5 2026 Jubilarians
- 6 10 Years in Barbacena
- 7 Catholic Sisters Week Standing Together for Compassion
- 8-9 Our Franciscan Journey
- 9 A Holy Family Reunion
- 10 What Donors Should Know in 2026 Meet our New Finance Team
- 11-12 Franciscan Fest

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# Embracing a Franciscan Jubilee Year

Pope Leo XIV announced a special Franciscan Jubilee year from January 10, 2026 - January 10, 2027 to commemorate the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Transitus of St. Francis of Assisi - his death and transition from earthly life to eternal life with Christ. In a letter to the Ministers General of the Conference of the Franciscan Family, Pope Leo wrote: "In this age, marked by so many seemingly interminable wars, by internal and social divisions that breed mistrust and fear, [St. Francis] continues to speak. Not because he offers technical solutions, but because his life points to the authentic source of peace." As Franciscans, we seek to embrace this year by connecting more deeply with our Franciscan charism as we continue to embrace lives of humility, service and peace rooted in the Gospel, our faith and love of Christ.



## Prayer to St. Francis of Assisi

Saint Francis, our brother, you who eight hundred years ago went to meet Sister Death as a man at peace, intercede for us before the Lord.

You recognized true peace in the Crucifix of San Damiano, teach us to seek in Him the source of all reconciliation that breaks down every wall.

You who, unarmed, crossed the lines of war and misunderstanding, give us the courage to build bridges where the world raises up boundaries.

In this time afflicted by conflict and division, intercede for us so that we may become peacemakers: unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace that comes from Christ

Amen

*Prayer by Pope Leo XIV on the opening of the Eighth Centenary of the Death of St. Francis of Assisi, January 2026.*

# Sister Ana Claudia Enters the Novitiate



Our Congregation is blessed that Sister Ana Cláudia Santos Pinto has chosen to continue her journey as a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God and entered our Novitiate in Brazil on February 21, 2026. For the next two years, she will be engaged in an intense period of study, prayer, and service in the ways of our Franciscan tradition and charism.

Prayers and blessings, Sister Ana Cláudia as you continue on your faithful journey!

*Sisters Rute Almeida Guimarães, Maria Goretti Avanzi, Ana Cláudia Santos Pinto, and Joanice Conceição dos Santos.*

# Celebrating Our 2026 Jubilarians!

**P**ease and Every Good! In our Franciscan community, Jubilee celebrations commemorate the passage of years a Sister has lived our Franciscan Charism and vowed religious life with faithfulness, humility and trust in our Provident God. Reflecting on the journeys of our Jubilarians, we see how the hand of Providence has guided each Sister to radiate the love of Christ. We give thanks for each Sister's enthusiastic "yes" to becoming a Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, her enduring ministry, and efforts to sow hope and peace.

## *75<sup>th</sup> Jubilee*

### **Sister M. Francine McDonald, OSF**



**S**ister M. Francine McDonald, OSF, was born in Grand Rapids, MI. Growing up on a farm as the youngest and only girl, she was doted on by her 10 older brothers but learned grit and a strong work ethic from her father with the seeds of devotion and faith sowed by her loving and patient mother. Sister Francine attended Sts. Peter and Paul Parish School, where she was taught by members of our congregation. Soon after graduating Grand Rapid's Catholic Central High School, Sister Francine entered the Congregation. Sister Francine earned a Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Education from Duquesne University. Her first teaching assignment was third grade at St. George School in Cleveland, OH. Sister's 44-years as an elementary teacher included serving parish schools in Moon Run, PA; Homestead, PA; Pittsburgh; Coopersville, MI; Elizabeth, NJ; and West Mifflin, PA. After she retired from full-time teaching, she served as a teaching assistant in Beaver, PA then as an auxiliary staff member at our former Franciscan Spirit & Life Center. She currently resides at the Nativity Convent in South Park, PA where she is engaged in the ministry of prayer and presence.

## *65<sup>th</sup> Jubilee*

### **Sister Odete Pereira da Silva, OSF**



**S**M. Sister Odete Pereira da Silva, OSF, entered the postulancy of the Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God on July 16, 1961, beginning a journey marked by fidelity and love for her religious vocation. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Work, which strengthened her commitment to human promotion and pastoral care. With a Franciscan spirit of simplicity, dedication, and zeal, her ministry has included serving as teacher, coordinator, principal, vocational promoter, provincial assistant, and councilor. She also served in health pastoral ministry at Pedro Leopoldo Hospital, social work at Pius XII School, and the formation of postulants, aspirants, and novices.

Carrying out her mission with dedication, wisdom, and a profound commitment to the promotion of life and human dignity, Sister Odete currently resides in the St. Michael the Archangel Community and coordinates the Saint Francis and Saint Clare Social Center in São Paulo.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

## 60<sup>th</sup> Jubilee

### Sister Janet Gardner, OSF



Sister Janet Gardner, OSF, a native of Denver, CO, attended St. Francis Academy and entered the community upon her graduation in 1966. She earned a Bachelor's degree from Carlow University and a Master's in Social Work from Catholic University. Sister Janet's initial assignments included teaching in New Kensington, PA, West Mifflin, PA and Kenosha, WI. She then assumed duties in Vocation and Formation ministry for the Congregation before being assigned as a case worker at Covenant House in New York City. Then, she served with Catholic Charities for three years as director of the county office in Waynesburg, PA.

In 1988, Sister Janet was called to Congregational leadership, which included serving as General Councilor with the responsibility of overseeing ministries. In the early 1990s, Sister Janet also helped establish Sisters' Place, a collaborative ministry of Catholic Sisters in Western Pennsylvania that served families experiencing homelessness. She then served as a pastoral minister in Alagoas, Brazil from 1996 through 1999. She was elected Assistant General Minister in 2000, then served as General Minister from 2004-2012. Sister Janet served as executive director at Beatitude House from 2013 until she was elected to General Council

in 2017, and assumed the responsibilities as our USA Area Minister. After two terms, Sister Janet concluded her leadership ministry in July 2025 and is presently serving the Community in various support and advisory roles.

## 40<sup>th</sup> Jubilee

### Sister Rute Almeida Guimarães, OSF



Sister Rute Almeida Guimarães, OSF, entered the postulancy of the Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God on August 27, 1984, beginning a journey marked by generosity and enthusiasm for our Franciscan mission. She holds degrees in Philosophy and Pedagogy, fields that supported her work in education, formation, and accompaniment of Sisters at various stages of religious life. Sister Rute's missionary journey has been marked by intense service in initial formation, serving as Director of Aspirants, Director of Postulants, and Director of Junior Sisters, as well as being part of the Initial Formation Team. She also worked in pastoral ministry, religious education, and administrative services in the communities and missions of the Congregation.

Sister Rute first served in leadership as a General Councilor, where she actively collaborated in the animation of the Congregation and coordinated important projects, such as the Revitalization Program of Recanto Paz e Bem, where she also served as community coordinator. Sister Rute is presently serving her second term as General Minister leading our Congregation to embrace faithfulness to the Gospel, dedication to our Franciscan Charism and the promotion of communion with Christ and

the Church. Her simple and welcoming presence, combined with serene joy and a spontaneous laugh that brightens the heart, are true reflections of Franciscan leadership exercised with closeness, lightness, and humanity.

# 40<sup>th</sup> Jubilee

## Sister Carmem Lúcia de Almeida, OSF



Sister Carmem Lúcia de Almeida, OSF, entered the Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God in 1986, beginning a journey in consecrated life marked by dedication and love for our Franciscan mission. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Theology and a postgraduate degree in Pastoral Ministry and Human Formation, which sustains and deepens her evangelizing service.

Throughout her religious journey, Sister Carmem has zealously dedicated herself to formation and pastoral ministry, working in catechesis, grassroots pastoral ministry, health pastoral care, and community accompaniment. Her formation ministry, marked by her commitment to evangelization and attentive care for people, includes serving on the Ongoing Formation Team and working in vocational ministry. She also served in leadership as a Provincial Councilor.

Sister Carmem currently ministers in Rodolfo Pirani and serves Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish where she collaborates in parish formation programs and offers support and fraternal presence to catechists. Faithful to our Franciscan charism, she also leads retreats and reflections focused on Integral Ecology, promoting a spirituality committed to the care of creation and the concrete living of the Gospel.

## Sister Maria José da Conceição, OSF



Sister Maria José da Conceição, OSF, entered the postulancy of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God on July 11, 1987, beginning a journey marked by zeal, dedication, and love for the mission. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Theology and a Professional Master's degree in Psychology, Development, and Public Policy.

After her initial formation, she served in Vila Zelina and Jardim Lenor, dedicating herself to formation with a focus on aspirancy and juniorate stages. She also served in leadership as a Provincial Councilor. Throughout her journey, she was part of the Ongoing Formation Team and served in community animation and pastoral ministry. Her mission also extended beyond borders, collaborating in the Congregation's international dimension and our Congregation's mission in Bolivia.

Sister Maria Jose served many years in our Barbacena mission, which includes St. Francis of Assisi School. Sister was then transferred to the Paz e Bem Community, dedicated to the care of elderly sisters or those with fragile health, where she presently serves as community coordinator and administrator. She also serves in leadership as a General Councilor

and coordinates Institutional Pastoral Ministry, using her gifts to serve our evangelizing mission with responsibility, sensitivity, and fidelity to our Franciscan charism.

*"You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."*

(John 15:16)

# Sewn Together by Faith and Hope: A Decade of Ministry in Barbacena

By Sister Maria José da Conceição OSF

*10-years-ago, Providence called our Community to serve in Barbacena, Minas Gerais, Brazil when we assumed responsibility for the administration of St. Francis of Assisi School that serves students and families from more than 20 neighborhoods in and around the city, many of whom experience poverty and related hardships. The following is a reflection from Sister Maria José da Conceição, who witnessed the blessings of our Provident God unfold throughout her many years of service in Barbacena.*

In 1922, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God was founded in Pittsburgh, PA. One of the main objectives of the Sisters was to educate Lithuanian children, adolescents and young people whose families had immigrated to the United States and sought to forge communities safe from the devastation of World War I. Just over a decade later, in 1938, five Sisters crossed the seas and arrived in Brazil in response to the request of the local Church to serve Lithuanian families who had settled in Vila Zelina, São Paulo. The seeds of hope and joy sowed by these Sisters grew into something far beyond what was ever imagined.

Sisters in both the United States and Brazil have always believed and continue to believe in education as a transforming force capable of changing trajectories and impacting generations. For those who trust in God's Providence, putting the seed in the ground is not simply an isolated gesture, far from the evangelizing mission. It is a sign of trust in God's overflowing love.

God's love transcends time, space, and culture. At the end of 2016, with faithful confidence, boldness and determination, the first steps were taken on a path of love, dedication and overcoming



ing challenges when the Congregation assumed responsibility for the administration of St. Francis of Assisi School in Barbacena, Minas Gerais, Brazil. The missionary presence of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God at the school consists of offering basic, quality education to children, adolescents and young people of high socioeconomic vulnerability.

Today, our greatest joy is to see the smile of God in the smile of those children, young people, adolescents and families. We trust in a Provident God, multiplier of joys, of possibilities. And, the Barbacena community is reaping the fruits of this arduous, challenging and enchanting mission.

St. Francis of Assisi School has a staff of highly qualified professionals, prepared to help the Sisters in the challenging mission of education. In addition to love, affection, dedication and qualified teaching, the school assists 380 students with basic needs: food, psychological referrals, school supplies, complete school

uniforms and, above all, a commitment that students move on from St. Francis of Assisi School to the city's Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology that offer professional and technological education programs.

Successes of over a decade of the Congregation's Barbacena ministries include.

- Families more present in the educational life of students;
- Decrease in domestic violence and abuse of vulnerable people;
- Approval of students at the Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology;
- Very low number of school dropouts for High School.

Pages written about the history of our past 10 years at St. Francis of Assisi School would echo the words of Cidinha Araujo: "The beautiful thing about this life is to be able to sew dreams, embroider stories, and untie the knots of our days". This blessed moment is overflowing with gratitude. Gratitude to God, and to all the people, who, in some way in the past decade, helped us to sew the dreams, embroider the stories and untie the knots of the lives of many families in Barbacena.



*Sisters Maria do Carmo Nogueira, Maria José da Conceição (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> from left) and Juliana da Silva Aires (2<sup>nd</sup> from right) with the Parish pastor and Barbacena families shortly after our mission in the region began in 2017.*

# Sisters Share Stories of Hope and Heart

March is a month of blessing for our Congregation. Since 2014, Catholic Sisters Week (March 8-14) has illuminated the mission, service, and faithful lives of Catholic Sisters throughout the world. Embracing the love, hope, and peace of Christ, Catholic Sisters have sown the seeds of education, healthcare, and community for centuries. Catholic Sisters Week 2026 was an opportunity to share our stories of hope and faith with persons discerning consecrated life, as well as others seeking to serve the Church, care for persons in need, be instruments of Peace, or other ways to embrace a life that witnesses to the love of Christ. This week also gave us many moments of joy with Sisters, friends and those who support ministries, outreach and vocations of Catholic Sisters.

Our Community Day also falls during Catholic Sisters Week on March 12. Blessed to celebrate our 104<sup>th</sup> anniversary, our Community gave thanks to our Provident God for our enduring Franciscan charism and the strong foundation of faith and hope built by our pioneer Sisters and strengthened by all the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God who have gone before us.



*During Catholic Sisters Week, Teen Leaders from our Lady of Hope Parish in Pittsburgh bought our Sisters and the Sisters of Charity dinner at St. Valentine's Fish Fry. In addition to the Fish Fry, Our Lady of Hope honored all Catholic Sisters during Mass and held a special luncheon on Sunday, March 8, which was the beginning of Catholic Sisters Week and International Women's Day. Pictured (left, front to back) Sister Althea Anne Spencer; Eliana da Silva and Joanne Brazinski; (right, front to back) Sisters Janet Gardner, Ann Marie Lostoski and Mary Ann Lostoski.*

## Standing Together for Compassion, Hope and Peace



*Associate Joan Ammon and our Sisters Janet Gardner, Joanne Brazinski and Eliana da Silva with Sister Marian Sgriccia, OSF, School Sisters of St. Francis (seated) were among Sisters and persons of faith gathered for a prayer vigil at the U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement field office in Pittsburgh.*

our immigration, asylum and citizenship systems. In response, throughout more than eight presidential administrations, we have joined Popes, Bishops, religious women and men, and other Catholic institutions in advocating for comprehensive immigration reform in the United States that is more just and compassionate, respects human dignity, and honors the sanctity of families and religious liberty.

As part of Catholic Sisters Week, congregations engage in service, prayer, or outreach that amplifies the need for acts of mercy and the humanity of those whom we serve. On Friday, March 13, our Community joined the Catholic Sisters of Western Pennsylvania to participate in an ongoing weekly interfaith prayer vigil at the U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) field office in Pittsburgh, PA endorsing compassion, dignity and respect for all, with particular concern for immigrants, migrants and refugees. Sisters and Associates joined Catholics, Protestants, Quakers and others of faith gathered for prayer, hymns and moments of silence. Throughout the prayer service, Sisters read the names and stories of persons who died in ICE custody. The vigil ended in a quiet moment for reflection and prayer for those inside the ICE facility, both detainees and agents, before all departed in peace.

**T**he thought of holding thousands of families in massive warehouses should challenge the conscience of every American. Whatever their immigration status, these are human beings created in the image and likeness of God, and this is a moral inflection point for our country." The words of Bishop Brendan J. Cahill, chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration, resonate deeply with us as Catholics and Franciscans. Our Congregation was initially founded to serve immigrants from Lithuania and many of our first Sisters were daughters of immigrants. Our mission quickly expanded, but concern for immigrants and refugees has remained ingrained in our efforts.

In the United States, our Community has hosted refugees from Cambodia and Vietnam, participated in a Catholic Charities initiatives to provide employment to persons fleeing war and religious persecution in Bosnia, and assisted Spanish and Portuguese speaking person in parishes, medical clinics and dioceses. Our Sisters have been deeply moved by the experiences of persons who have endured the labyrinth of challenges that make up

# Our Franciscan Journey - New England

"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.

Since the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock, New England has welcomed many newcomers to North America, including Lithuanians in the early 1900s. And, wherever Lithuanian Catholic communities grew, the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God were called to serve.

The heart of the Congregation's ministry in New England was Connecticut where Franciscan Sisters served for 80 years. In 1924, Rev. Msgr. John J. Ambot requested the Sisters serve the newly opened elementary school of the Holy Trinity Parish in Hartford, CT, that was seeking administrators and teachers who could provide students a quality education that incorporated Catholic values and Lithuanian traditions.

"Under the direction of Sister M. Ursula Venckus, OSF, the school grew and earned a reputation for excellence in studies and in general behavior," Sister M. Louise Shapp wrote in a 1998 account of the Community's presence at Holy Trinity. Soon, 9<sup>th</sup> grade was added in 1935, with 10<sup>th</sup> grade added the following year. When resources permitted the extension, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades were added in 1952.

"Holy Trinity was an unusual school," wrote Sister M. Louise, who



*Pictured left, Sister Gabrielle Maze at Holy Trinity High School in 1950.*

also served as principal from 1962-64. "Most students came from hard working families and realized the importance of discipline and education and Church. Money was scarce but was not the most important thing in the life of the school. Students were friendly and industrious and did not complain about taking turns for housekeeping tasks like cleaning blackboards or sweeping the classrooms after school. Everybody had a name – no one was unknown. Miracles of conversion of the school hall on the top floor into an enchanting dance hall for a ring day dance or prom were unbelievable. Performances of Gilbert and Sullivan musicals, as well as Christmas cantatas



*Sister M. Urban Kolash reads to Holy Trinity students in 1949.*

and school plays, attracted parents and friends and neighbors so that the hall was packed...it was a small school and there were no strangers there."

Holy Trinity served as Hartford, CT's first and only Catholic High School until the 1960s when the Archdiocese of Hartford decided to open regional Catholic schools. Holy Trinity would be transitioned to South Catholic Regional and classes began to phase out until the last class graduated in 1964. South Catholic Regional School opened in September 1961 with Sisters Imelda Tosh and Marguerite Dovidaitis joining the staff of several religious congregations, including the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Mercy. A plaque over the main entrance greeted students and visitors with: "There are no strangers here. We are all friends." Sisters served the school until it closed in 1991 due to low enrollment.

Sisters also served in pastoral ministry at Holy Trinity, St. Andrew, St. Casimir (New Britain), St. Peter Claver



*Catechism class with Sisters Rose Marie Stulpinas and Clarita Kadis at St. Andrew Parish in New Britain, CT in 1949.*

(West Hartford) and St. Anthony (Ansonia). In addition to Holy Trinity and South Catholic Regional, Sisters served at St. Andrew school in New Britain, CT (1939-56) and East Catholic High School in Manchester (1991-92.) Providence also called the Sisters to serve in Kennebunkport, Maine at St. Clare Parish and School from 1948-1952.

Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God who joined from New England include Sisters Anastasia Bendler, Clarita Kadis, Lawrence Christian, Helen White, Henrietta Puscaskis, Irene Pasekonis, Joan of Arc Urban, Lillian Yurksaitis, Marguerite Dovidaitis, Paulette Nork, Rita Masiunas, Rosemarie Stulpinas, Sylvia Krafton, and Therese Marquis.

In the 1990s new pilgrims were called to settle in New England, including immigrants from Brazil who were welcomed into Catholic parishes and communities. Sister Eliana da Silva served as a pastoral minister at St. Peter's Church in Danbury, CT from 1995-2004. Her ministry also included assisting at the Hanahoe Memorial Children's Clinic, where she served as an advocate and interpreter for Portuguese-speaking patients. The clinic was founded by Dr.



*Sister Eliana (center) assists a mother and child at the Hanahoe Memorial Children's Clinic in Danbury, CT as Dr. Ann Hines examines the patient.*

Ann Hines to provide free medical care for uninsured children.

More than two decades have passed since the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God have physically served New England. Yet, true to the plaque at South Catholic Regional

School, friendships have endured. Sisters strive to remain present through prayer and nurturing connections with former students, coworkers and parishioners in Hartford, Danbury and beyond.

## Holy Family Reunion

The neighboring countries of Lithuania and Poland share a deep and devoted Catholic faith. Before our Congregation was founded, young women of Lithuanian heritage interested in religious life were entrusted to the Polish congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth in De Plaines, IL. In the early 1900s, Providence called our pioneer Sisters to form an independent congregation, and we remain grateful for the grace shown to our pioneer Sisters by Sisters of the Holy Family that enabled the formation of our Community.

Sister Cynthia Meyer, CSFN is presently writing a history of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth and reached out to learn more about our Community's origins with their Congregation. On Wednesday, Mary 18, Sisters Joanne Brazinski and Janet Gardner hosted Sister Cynthia and a delegation of leadership of the Holy Family Sisters from the United States, Italy, Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine. Gathered at our administrative office in Pittsburgh, Sisters shared stories of our Sisters and ministries.



*(Front row) Sister Thea Krause, CSFN (Standing), Sister Filotea Tichonowicz, CSFN, Sister Alina Furczyk, CSFN, Sister Julitta Thustowska, CSFN (back row) Sister Amabilis Sikora, CSFN, Sister Cynthia Meyer, CSFN, Sister Joanne Brazinski, OSF, Sister Wieslawa Hyzinska, CSFN, Sister Beata Wilk, CSFN, and Sister Janet Gardner, OSF.*

# Finance Team Cares for Sisters



In late 2025, the Management Collaborative for Religious (MCR) began to administer the finances of our Congregation in Pittsburgh, as well as the congregations of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit, Benedictine Sisters and the School Sisters of St. Francis with whom our Community collaborates to share oversight, services and related costs. Our Sisters are grateful for the dedication and talents of Jared Stango and Stacey Nemcek (pictured with Sisters Joanne Brazinski and Althea Anne Spencer) who care for our Community through their efforts managing our donations, bills, health insurance, payroll, investments and other financial needs. Welcome to our Franciscan Family, Jared and Stacey!

## What Donors Should Know in 2026

Charitable gifts are given freely from the heart with altruistic donors expecting nothing in return. However, incentives for charitable gifts are included in the United States tax code. Recent changes will certainly impact donors in 2026, and more intentional charitable giving will empower charities to continue to reap the goodness made possible by generous hearts. What can donors expect in 2026?

### More Gifts Qualify for Tax-Deductions, Even if a Donor Does Not Itemize

In addition to continuing to be impactful by supporting our mission and the care of our Sisters, regular and one-time donors to the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God will receive more tax benefits in 2026. Taxpayers who take the standard deduction can now deduct a maximum of \$1,000 (single person) or \$2,000 (married persons filing jointly) in gifts or qualifying charities. This change could benefit around 90% of charitable donors.

### Major Donors Have a Smaller Deduction Window and Can Benefit from Planning

High-income donors will experience slightly less tax benefits in 2026 that can be offset by planning. Donors must now exceed 0.5% of their adjusted gross income before charitable deductions begin. This means the top marginal deduction rate drops slightly, from 37¢ to about 35¢ per donated dollar.

For donors affected by this change, some planning is recommended to maximize tax-benefits for your charitable giving. Strategies one may consider includes optimized timing, donations of appreciated assets, donor advised funds, or batching (bunching) when a donor consolidates multiple years of charitable contributions into a single tax year so that they meet a higher standard deduction threshold for a larger tax break in that year.

*Note: Information presented in the article was sourced from Giving USA and Manning & Napier. This article is for information purposes and not intended as legal or financial advice. Please consult a trusted legal, tax or financial advisor regarding your specific legal, tax, estate planning, or financial situation.*



### Planned and Legacy Giving Continue to Make an Impact

Planned giving through charitable bequests, donor-advised funds, and retirement-based giving are growing in popularity, as they allow donors to make a lasting impact benefiting charities of their choice while offering options to provide for the needs of donors and their loved ones. For example, in 2026 qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) allows donors age 70½ or older to transfer up to \$111,000 annually directly from a traditional IRA to a qualified charity tax-free and may offer other benefits depending on your unique financial situation.

### What Should Donors Do?

Donors concerned about how changes to tax rules will affect their charitable giving should seek guidance from a trusted financial advisor, ideally a fiduciary who is legally and ethically bound to act in your best interest.

# Franciscans and Friends Gather in the Fall

Franciscan Fest feels more like a family reunion than a fund raising event. Sisters, Associates, St. Francis Academy Alumnae, Auxiliary and friends gather for an afternoon to enjoy each other's presence, share a delicious meal, and take chances on winning cash, baskets and other prizes. Others, unable to be with us in person, join us in spirit through prayers, donations, sponsorships and other acts of support and solidarity.

Our 2025 Franciscan Fest was held on Saturday, October 11 at the beautiful St. Thomas More Family Center (Resurrection Parish) in Bethel Park, PA. Embracing our Franciscan roots, the program reflected on St. Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Creatures and offered our deep gratitude for all who have been our light in the darkness, fueling the spark of the Holy Spirit and sustaining us through friendship and solidarity with our Franciscan mission of hope and peace. Kevin Boland of Donnelly-Boland and Associates was presented a San Damiano Cross in gratitude for the firm's friendship, support and serving us well over the past decade, including offering their guidance as we transitioned our financial services to the Management Collaborative for Religious (MCR).

Our Sisters are grateful to our dedicated Franciscan Fest Planning Committee, all who joined us as guests and sponsors, Resurrection Parish and staff, and the many who offered support from afar through prayers, donations, and participation in our raffles. Each one of your contributions helped us raise over \$26,000 for our ministries, outreach and care of our senior Sisters in Pittsburgh. May God bless you all as we go forward together on our Franciscan journey called to be sowers of hope and peace.



## Franciscan Fest 2025



## Franciscan Fest 2026

Save the date for our next Franciscan Fest on Saturday, September 19, 2026 (more information on back cover.) As we prepare, our Community is seeking sponsorships and donations of gift cards and other items for raffle prizes, as well as volunteer bakers and servers. For more information about 2026 Franciscan Fest, please contact Robyn Moeller at [rmoeller@osfprov.org](mailto:rmoeller@osfprov.org) or 412-885-7232.

*Thank you, Franciscan Fest 2025 Sponsors!*

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*Save the Date*



Luncheon benefitting the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God

**Saturday, September 19, 2026**

St. Thomas More Church Family Life Center  
126 Fort Couch Road ♦ Pittsburgh, PA 15241

Festivities Begin @ 1:00 PM

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

## OCTOBER LOTTERY RAFFLE

*Drawings Based on the 3 Digit Evening PA Lottery*

**\$10 per Chance**

\$70 Winners Every Day in October

EXCEPT:

\$500 ST. FRANCIS DAY GRAND PRIZE  
on October 4, 2026 (St. Francis Day)

\$200 Every Sunday in October

\$100 Every Saturday in October

DAILY BONUS: \$20 paid to Number  
Before, Number After and Reverse\*

\*Example: If 123 was drawn on a weekday,  
Ticket # 123 would win \$70 and  
Ticket #s 122, 124 and 321 would each win \$20.

**Request Tickets & More Info:**

**Sister Mary Ann at 412-477-4321  
or e-mail [info@osfprov.org](mailto:info@osfprov.org)**

Note: Due to postal regulations, we cannot mail entire unsold tickets.  
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