

The Whitehall FRANCISCAN

Vol. 35, No. 2
Fall 2026

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God



“The civilization of love will not arise from a single or spectacular gesture, but from the sum total of small and steadfast acts of fidelity that serve as a bulwark against dehumanization.”

(Pope Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*)



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 *Magnifica Humanitas*
- 3 Sister Assemblies in USA and Brazil
- 4 Our Call to Pastoral Ministry
- 5 Ministry in Itinga, Brazil
- 6-7 Franciscan Family
- 8 Franciscan Fest 2026
- 9 70th Anniversary of LCWR
Pastoral Ministry (continued from pg. 4)
- 10 In Memory of Sister Peg Markey
Remembering Carol Stasik
- 11 In Memory of Sister Francine McDonald
Remembering Father Bernie Tickerhoof
- 12 A Message of Gratitude

The Whitehall Franciscan is a quarterly publication of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God
5802 Curry Road • Pittsburgh, PA 15236
412-882-9911
www.osfprov.org
facebook.com/osfprov

EDITORIAL BOARD

Sister Joanne Brazinski, OSF
Janet Gardner, OSF
Sister Althea Anne Spencer, OSF
Sister Janice Campbell, OSF
Robyn Moeller, Development Director
Proofreaders: Sister Janet Gardner, OSF
and Mimi DiGregory

Safeguarding Our Humanity

“Humanity, created by God in all its grandeur, is today facing a pivotal choice: either to construct a new Tower of Babel or to build the city in which God and humanity dwell together.” (Pope Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*)



In his first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in The Time of Artificial Intelligence*, Pope Leo XIV speaks to the Church and the broader global community, while building upon Catholic social teaching of modern Papal encyclicals from *Rerum Novarum* to *Laudato Si*.

Centering around the conviction that AI should serve humanity and the common good, Pope Leo expresses that technology is not inherently evil. Yet, “technology is

never neutral, because it takes on the characteristics of those who devise, finance, regulate, and use it.” Noting AI’s scale and speed, along with the potential of consolidating power and wealth amongst a few, the Pope raised concerns over effects on the poor, human dignity, social justice, and peace, as well as long-term effects on AI-driven systems, especially those concerning war and defense.

Magnifica Humanitas emphasizes that AI development should embrace diverse perspectives and communities and the technology must be directed toward the common good. Pope Leo calls upon governments to create “robust legal frameworks” and independent oversight to regulate the entities, corporations and individuals driving AI development to avoid prioritization of personal gain over humanity. Among other priorities were the shielding of children from AI risks, the protection of workers, and strengthening education systems that embrace critical thinking and media literacy that addresses AI generated content.

Reflecting upon the words of *Magnifica Humanitas*, we are called to choose humanity. Examining our own hearts and habits, we ask, “Is my personal use of AI just, ethical and supportive of the common good?” As individuals, we also recognize our responsibility to hold our government accountable for ensuring AI serves humanity. Voting, writing our leaders and signing petitions are some actions we can take. We can also show up to local government meetings concerning AI data centers, infrastructure and policy and support individuals and organizations who advocate for our humanity, our communities, and our common home.

Further Reading for Reflection

Magnifica Humanitas

www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html

AI Encyclical: Magnifica Humanitas (National Catholic Reporter article series)

www.ncronline.org/feature-series/ai-encyclical-magnifica-humanitas/stories

Pope Leo Releases First Encyclical: Four Key Takeaways (Newsweek)

www.newsweek.com/pope-leo-releases-first-encyclical-four-key-takeaways-11990278

10 Things Pope Leo Calls Us to Do in ‘Magnifica Humanitas’ (National Catholic Register)

www.ncregister.com/news/10-things-pope-leo-calls-us-to-do-in-magnifica-humanitas

Sisters Assemble in USA and Brazil

Each year, Sisters in the United States and Brazil gather 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 July 6-8, 2026 and were joined by our General Minister, Sister Rute Guimarães and Sister Eunice da Silva from Brazil. Beginning with a focus on our shared Franciscan charism, spirituality, and traditions, Sister Ruth led the Sisters in a reflection on the 800th anniversary of the Death of St. Francis. The second day was focused on reflecting on the present and planning for the future. The final day of assembly began with a retreat for Sisters and Associates led by Sister Nancy Celaschi, OSF of the School Sisters of St. Francis that delved deep into the life and death of St. Francis of Assisi. After the retreat, it was time for celebration with a special Mass and luncheon in honor of Jubilarians Sister Francine McDonald, 75 years, and Sister Janet Gardner, 60 years.



Sisters, Associates, and guests gathered for the Jubilee Mass: (first row, l to r) Sisters Janice Campbell, Mary Ann Lostoski, Janet Gardner, Francine McDonald, Rev. Fred Cain, Sisters Rute Guimarães and Theresa Codispoti; (middle row) Kathy Antoniazzi, Rosemary Byrd, Pat Enscoe, Joan Ammon, Mary Ann Garfold, Johannah Jones, Sisters Joanne Brazinski, Ann Marie Lostoski, and Sister Hilária de Oliveira; (last row) Sister Eliana da Silva, Lori Vallarian, Robbie Campbell, Sister Mindy Welding, IHM (Delegate for Religious for the Pittsburgh Diocese,) Sisters Althea Anne Spencer, and Eunice da Silva.



ACR Meetings in Pittsburgh included a special visit from Sisters Mary Norbert Long (center) and Donna Marie Leiden (second from right) of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. Also pictured are Sister Rute, Eliana, Hilária, Janice, Mary Ann, Eunice, Joanne, Janet and Ann Marie.

Sisters Rute and Eunice shared two weeks with our Sisters in the United States, which included visits to all our Sisters. They felt especially blessed by the wisdom, resilience, and faith of our elder members. A highlight was joining our Sisters at Nativity Convent for a 4th of July picnic, which was especially significant as the United States celebrated its 250th anniversary.

Feeling inspired by the USA Semiquincentennial, Sister Janet also took Sisters Rute and Eunice on a quick trip to

Washington D.C. where they visited the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception—the largest Roman Catholic Church in North America and the nearby Saint Elizabeth Seton Shrine in Maryland. They were also enchanted by the pandas and other beautiful creatures of creation at the National Zoo.

Our Assembly was held in Brazil on July 21-24, 2026 and had a similar schedule with additional focus on formation and vocations outreach. Our USA-based General Councilor Sister Joanne Brazinski traveled from Pittsburgh to be with our Sisters during this faithful gathering as well as additional leadership meetings.



Sisters Janet, Rute and Eunice at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC.

Christ's Love in Action

Pastoral ministry is the Church in action. Perhaps best defined as the practical application of the Gospel and Christ's love, both religious and laity embrace this ministry through evangelization, catechesis, and spiritual guidance; parish leadership and administration; and compassionate outreach to children, families, the sick, elderly, the poor, and others that may include service and advocacy. In this issue, we offer two perspectives from our Sisters to illuminate how our Franciscan Community embraces pastoral ministry. In the first article, Sister Janice Campbell, who presently serves as a part-time Pastoral Associate at Christ the King Parish in Pittsburgh recalls the many manifestations of pastoral ministry that our Sisters have engaged in throughout the years. In the other article, Sister Amélia gives a first-hand account of pastoral ministry at St. Anthony Parish in Itinga, Brazil.

Our Call to Pastoral Ministry

by Sister Janice Campbell

Over the years, many of our Sisters have engaged in pastoral ministry. Most of our Sisters began their ministries as teachers in numerous schools from the East Coast to the West Coast—just as many Sisters eventually dabbled in or became full-time Pastoral Associates.

One of those early pastoral ministers was Sister Shalome, who became a hospital chaplain after having been a teacher for 40 years. In 1974, Providence called Sister Shalome to train in Pastoral Services and receive her chaplaincy certification. Sister served in many pastoral capacities at our Good Samaritan and St. Joseph hospitals in Illinois—as well as in Fort Myers, Florida. Sister ministered wherever she could. Every time she got in the car, with whomever might have been her driver at the time, she prayed: “Our Lady of the Highways, pray for us ...” and off she and her driver would go to the next ministry stop.

Sister Theresa Codispoti was trained as an educator and spent at least a decade in the classrooms in various schools of the community: Mount Saint Peter (now Mary Queen of Apostles) in New Kensington, PA; St. George School in Philadelphia and St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin in Whitehall, PA (now part of the Mother of Mercy Academy.) In 1972, Sister Theresa “retooled” by obtaining a Masters degree in Religious Education—first ministering in that role at Saint Valentine Church followed by more than 20 years at SS Peter and Paul Church in Homestead, PA—this church was one of the early Lithuanian parishes in the Pittsburgh area having begun in 1900 and was rich in tradition.



Sister Theresa during her ministry at SS Peter and Paul Church in Homestead, PA.

The original SS Peter and Paul church was torn down and rebuilt, only to merge in 1992 with other churches in the area to form St. Maximilian Kolbe parish. This is when Sister Theresa resolved to continue to minister to those experiencing the hardship and difficulty of merging parishes. As a Pastoral Minister, Sister Theresa embodied the Providence of God to the many people who experienced loss and grief.

Sister Theresa continues to minister to those in the assisted living community where she currently lives—sometimes counseling other residents, sometimes listening to staff members and offering suggestions if they ask her guidance. Everyone knows Sister Terry!

The gift of our Providential God allows us, as Sisters, to share our charism with those who wish to unite with the Community as Associates. One of the first Associates, Mary Stojak—who just happens to be the niece of Sister Mary Jaskel (Sister Agnella)—is a fine example of one engaged in pastoral ministry. She has been Eucharistic minister, youth minister, and served on the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women in Alabama—where she led efforts to collect and deliver food, clothing, and necessities to persons in need. Mary reminds all of us “we have a wonderful example to follow, that of Saint Francis. His calling is our calling and with God’s help we can do it! It isn’t difficult. You have the example and the support of the Sisters, along with your fellow Associates. That’s your support system along with prayer and God’s help.”

Our Sisters have served in pastoral ministry in many forms. Whether that be Sister Ann Marie Lostoski when she served

Continued on Page 9



Sister Shalome in Washington, D.C. Food Bank Coordinator at Damien Ministries in Washington, DC in 1991 until 1994, which served persons suffering from HIV/AIDS.

Sowers of Hope and Peace in Itinga, Brazil

by Sister Amélia Corsina de Oliveira

Jequitinhonha Valley in Minas Gerais, Brazil is rich in minerals, including highly sought-after lithium. However, for many years, those living in and around the region called it the "Valley of Misery." It is here we are called to serve as a Franciscan presence in St. Anthony Parish and the city of Itinga.

St. Anthony Parish (Araçuaí Diocese) is made up of five urban communities and twenty-six rural communities, two of which are Quilombola communities (descendants of enslaved black Brazilians who escaped to remote areas of Brazil.) It is a land rich in culture, art, and poetry. Singing happens spontaneously in the beauty of a good, cheerful, persistent and hopeful people.

We are two Franciscan Sisters: Amélia Corsina de Oliveira and Vandete Barbosa de Oliveira, inserted in the midst of

ground of the lives of these families. Their faith, life, politics and the daily life of the people all come together. It is the Word of God illuminating life.

Powerful moments often occur at the meetings in the Catechetical Pastoral; catechists meet for moments of formation, where they try to implement the *Initiation to Christian Life*. We advise these catechists so that they can be true Missionary Disciples of Jesus, leading those being catechized to assume their baptismal commitment and be active members of the community.

We are also present in Family Ministry, Youth Ministry, the formation of new Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, celebration of funerals and celebrations of the Word of God in both Urban and Rural Communities, helping the people of God to welcome the Word on the Lord's Day.

The Catholic Church in Brazil, realizing the need for new vocations to assume the

various ministries in evangelization, encourages the creation of a "Vocational Culture" (Marriage Vocation, Priestly Vocation, Vocation to Consecrated Religious Life and Lay Vocation) that encourages formation for these vocations, through prayers, formation meetings and retreats.

Another dimension of our presence are visits to families, where we can listen, witness and be sensitive to the joys and pains of these people, often forgotten in their rights as citizens in our society. Hence the importance of the Social Pastoral, where together with volunteers, we



Sister Amélia and parishioners preparing food to give to persons in need.

collect food and share basic food baskets. Due to this need, we created a "Productive Backyards" Project, where, with the help of our Congregation, we distribute seeds, fruit tree seedlings and chicks to families who are encouraged to take care of their backyards by cleaning, planting and raising chickens. Participants then have vegetables, fruits, eggs and chickens for their livelihood, and can sell the surplus to help support their families. It is the living Gospel being translated into practice: "Give them something to eat," Jesus said to his disciples, and this Gospel verse illuminates this project.

In everything, Sister Vandete and I are grateful to God and the Congregation for sending us to this part of Minas Gerais: "Open to the Holy Spirit and faithful to the Charism, we exercise availability to the Providence of God, we listen to the cry of the people and we insert ourselves into the different realities of the world today, sowing peace and hope with joy."



Sister Vandete with the Missionary Action Community Task Force

these people where we seek to be a pastoral presence in the Parish. We work with the training of leaders that takes place every two months, on specific topics that aims to help these leaders animate the faith and life of the people in the community. It is beautiful and encouraging to see these animators, men and women, arrive from different communities, after a long journey by dirt roads, for this day of reflection, prayer and learning. It is an exchange of experiences where faith becomes practiced in the realities of these communities.

In the Bible circles, we are animators, together with the coordination of the various groups scattered throughout the area. This happens once a week, it is the Word of God touching the heart and the



Sister Amélia brings the Eucharist to home bound parishioners, and often stays to visit.

Our Franciscan Journey

Accompanied by Franciscan Hearts

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God have never journeyed alone. Providence has brought together groups of those with Franciscan hearts to accompany us on our mission. Each has profoundly blessed our lives and ministries and forged cherished friendships that continue to this day.

Franciscan Associates

The Franciscan way of life is open to all, not only vowed religious. Our Sisters are blessed to have our Associates accompany us on our spiritual journey.

Since 1989, laypersons in the United States called to our Franciscan way of life have joined our Community as Associates. A similar program began in Brazil in 2016. Associates make a yearly non-vowed commitment to the charism and mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God. Members participate in the formative experiences and spirituality of the Congregation, while still maintaining independent lifestyles and vocations.

Our Associates seek to live the Gospel in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. Members are enriched by the many aspects of community life embracing prayer, service, and presence. Associates and Sisters meet regularly for faith sharing, as well as gather for retreats, service projects and special occasions for the Community.

Some who are unable to attend meetings, faith-sharing and other in-person activities due to distance or health issues accompany us as Prayer Associates, who make the same commitment to our Franciscan mission and charism. The Community keeps in regular contact and shares materials used for Associate gatherings, study, prayer and private reflection. Prayer Associates also find unique ways to embrace the charism of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, including caring for others, pastoral ministry, and advocacy for peace and justice.

Associate membership is open to all practicing Christians



Sisters and Associates gathered for a retreat in 2025. Pictured (front, l to r) Audrey Patterson, Joan Ammon, Mary Ann Garfold and Sister Hilária de Oliveira; (second row) Sister Mary Ann Lostoski, Pat Enscoe, Jan Maddock, Rosemary Byrd, Johannah Jones, Sisters Janice Campbell and Mary Ann Lostoski; (back row) Lori Vallarian, Sister Eliana da Silva, Robbie Campbell, Sisters Janet Gardner and Joanne Brazinski.

who desire to share in the charism and mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God. For more information about the Associate Program, please contact Sisters Janice Campbell at sjcampbell@osfprov.org.

Lithuanian Catholic Community

There would be no Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God without the Lithuanian Catholic Parish Communities who persistently advocated for the creation of a new order of Sisters to serve their schools and parishes, including St. Casimir in Pittsburgh's South Side where our pioneer Sisters served before our Community was formed. St. Casimir Alumni Association supported our Community for many years. In the early 2000s, St. Casimir Alumni Association President John Foley was instrumental in the formation of a fundraising committee that developed and organized our successful Autumn Gala events. After his retirement, his sister Patricia White took over as the St. Casimir representative on the committee, which now organizes our Franciscan Fest. The Association concluded in the 2020s, but Pat continues to faithfully serve on the committee and keeps us connected with the many St. Casimir Alumni who remain dear friends and supporters of the Sisters.

The Knights of Lithuania (KOL,) local, regional and national, has supported the ministries and care of the Sisters for many years. Sisters and KOL members have supported one another's gatherings, programs and special events celebrating our shared faith and Lithuanian traditions. John Baltrus, who presently serves as Vice-President of the Pittsburgh Knights of Lithuania, has blessed us with his presence and service for many outreach and fundraising efforts, including our long-standing Autumn Gala/Franciscan Fest committee.



Rita Johnson, Vice-President of the Knights of Lithuania Supreme Council (national) presents a donation to Sister Janet Gardner along with Brian Johnson and John Baltrus, President and Vice-President of the Knights of Lithuania Pittsburgh Council at our 2024 Franciscan Fest. The generous gift from the Knights of Lithuania Charities helped us purchase new mattresses for senior Sisters in Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh Auxiliary

Our Provident God has always provided for the needs of our Sisters, often with the support of our auxiliary groups of faithful friends, family, and benefactors who raise funds for the needs of our Sisters and ministries. The most enduring has been our Pittsburgh Auxiliary.

Originating in the 1930s, the Pittsburgh Auxiliary was re-established in 1985 with a stronger emphasis on the relationship with the Sisters. Their successful efforts helped provide funding for an emergency alert system, environmentally efficient lighting, and handicap-accessible vans at the Pittsburgh motherhouse, as well as an elevator in our Franciscan Child Day Care Center and renovations to Mary Immaculate Chapel. Recent projects funded by the Auxiliary include handicap-friendly vehicles, stair lifts, bathroom renovations and other needs benefiting the health, safety and quality of life of our Sisters.

Auxiliary fundraisers included 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. After 2015, when Sisters moved from our Pittsburgh motherhouse, the Auxiliary adapted to host events and fundraisers in other spaces, including the churches of Our Lady of Hope Parish. They also continued to visit Sisters living in assisted living and skilled care communities.



St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association President Maria Ammon '84 (left) with all living past-presidents (sitting) Joann Binek '55, Linda Straub Cline '72, (standing) Wendy Hines Hayes '76, DeDe Kobosky Metro '69, and Lori Husak Lukich '85 at our 2025 Franciscan Fest.



The Auxiliary Board at our 100th anniversary in 2022: (back row, l to r) Joyce Wilhelm, Kathy Antoniazzi, Rosalind Gorman, and Sister Mary Ann Lostoski; (front row) Shelley Carter and Annette Yousko.

Today, the Auxiliary continues with 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. They continue to join our Sisters for holiday parties and gatherings, as well as provide vital support to events like our annual Franciscan Fest fundraiser.

St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association

Over 3000 students were educated at the St. Francis Academy in Pittsburgh, PA from 1926-1991. Beyond reading, writing and arithmetic, our Sisters and lay-educators prepared students to effect positive change through faith and action. More than three decades after the last class graduated, the spirit of St. Francis Academy is alive and thriving. Embracing Franciscan values, the SFA Alumnae Association invites alumnae, teachers and friends to come together as a community that cares for one

another, as well as our Sisters and many others.

The Association continues to nurture fledgling Franciscan hearts by sponsoring the SFA Legacy Scholarship that provides financial assistance and a community of support to young persons pursuing a Catholic education. The merit-based scholarship is awarded to incoming freshman at Seton-LaSalle High School, the only remaining Catholic High School in the area served by St. Francis Academy.

Since 2008, the Alumnae Association has awarded 31 scholarships of \$1,000 a year to assist with tuition, with each recipient receiving a total benefit of \$4,000. Awardees must remain enrolled in Seton-LaSalle, maintain their GPA of 3.0 and continue to demonstrate Franciscan values and the positive qualities of a student as outlined in the Seton-LaSalle handbook.

All this is possible because of the efforts of the dedicated SFA Alumnae Association Board which publishes a semi-annual newsletter and organizes events to foster relationships among members, including the annual Tulip Luncheon, Alumnae Mass, and bus trips. They also help connect alumnae interested in organizing class reunions. The SFA Alumnae Association generously sponsors our Sisters attendance at all their events, as well as enthusiastically supports our events like our Franciscan Fest fundraiser which would not be possible without the added alumnae-power to wrap baskets, run raffles, bake cookies, decorate, clean up and so much more with a cheerful and encouraging Ciscan attitude.

SAVE THE DATE

SFA Alumnae Association 2027 Events

26th Annual Tulip Luncheon

Sunday April 18, 2027 at South Hills Country Club

36th Annual Alumnae Mass

Sunday, September 19, 2027 at South Hills Country Club

For more information, visit

saintfrancisacademyalumnaeandsisters.com

A Radiant Gathering of Sisters and Friends

Autumn is Franciscan season! The Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4 and surrounding days are a joyful time to embrace our Franciscan spirituality and reflect upon our unique calling to witness to the love of Christ. This year has added significance. Pope Leo XIV proclaimed a Special Jubilee Year of St. Francis of Assisi, from January 10, 2026, to January 10, 2027, to honor the 800th anniversary of St. Francis' death. Expressing his hope that St. Francis of Assisi's "message of peace may find a profound echo in the Church and society today," the Pope invited the faithful to follow the example of St. Francis by striving to embrace Gospel lives and seek "peace with God, peace among human beings, and peace with creation."

(Letter of the Holy Father Leo XIV to the Ministers General of the Conference of the Franciscan Family on the Occasion of the Opening of the Eighth Centenary of the Death of St. Francis of Assisi)

At the precipice of Franciscan season, in the midst of this Year of St. Francis, was our 4th annual Franciscan Fest celebration. On Saturday, September 19, 2026, at the beautiful Bishop Mark A. Eckman Family Center at Resurrection Parish in Bethel Park, PA. Sisters, Associates, St. Francis Academy Alumnae, Auxiliary and friends gathered for an afternoon to enjoy each other's company, share a delicious meal, and take chances on many wonderful prizes. Beautiful music played by Jason Coll greeted guests and set a joyful tone for the event.

Sister Joanne Brazinski's presen-



Franciscan Fest 2026



tation during the program reflected on the relationship between Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi, their support of one another, and the legacy of their faithful lives. Shifting focus to the present, Sister Joanne offered deep gratitude for all who have been sources of light for our Sisters and the many who illuminate our path through their friendship, generosity and solidarity with our Franciscan mission of peace.

Our Sisters are grateful to our dedi-

cated Franciscan Fest Planning Committee, guests, sponsors, volunteers Resurrection Parish and staff, and the many who offered support from afar through prayers, donations, and participation in our raffles. All proceeds from Franciscan Fest and corresponding October and February Lottery Raffles helps provide for the care of our senior Sisters in Pittsburgh and supports our Community's ministries and outreach.

ST. FRANCIS SPONSORS



Saint Francis Academy Alumnae Association

ST. CLARE SPONSORS

DONNELLY-BOLAND AND ASSOCIATES
providing solutions since 1992



Comfort
Keepers.

MANNING
& NAPIER.

ST. CASIMIR SPONSORS

John F. Slater Funeral Home, Inc.

ASSISI SPONSORS

Buchanan, Ingersol & Rooney, PC

D'Alessandro Funeral Home & Crematory, Ltd.

Mele & Mele & Sons, Inc.

Michael Poremski & Son Plumbing and Heating Inc

70th Anniversary LCWR Assembly

Many Charisms, One Call, One Spirit

Sisters Maria José da Conceição, Maria Goretti Avanzi, and Joanne Brazinski participated in the 70th anniversary of the Leadership Conference for Women Religious (LCWR) in Orlando, FL from August 11 to 14, 2026. The Assembly's theme this year was: Many Charisms, One Call, One Spirit. LCWR represents about two-thirds of the nearly 35,000 sisters in the United States, and invited Congregations from all of the Americas to this year's gathering that welcomed Sisters from Canada, Brazil, Mexico, Guatemala, and other countries from Central and South America.

"The church needs you, and all the diversity and richness of the forms of consecration and ministry that you represent," Pope Leo XIV said in a pre-recorded messages to those gathered. "For with your vitality, your witness of a life centered on Jesus, you can contribute to waking up the world,"

Over several days, Sisters had the opportunity to listen to several women and men religious who spoke on the following themes:

- Many charisms: gifts for a wounded world;
- One call: responding in a mystical and prophetic way;
- One Spirit: listening to God in our time.

After the presentations, participants had time for reflection and sharing in small groups. It was a time of deep listening, respect, and learning. During the week, our Sisters also participated in the meeting of the Franciscan Federation, where many Franciscan women religious gathered.

The Assembly concluded with a Jericho Walk to lament, pray for and advocate on issues including forced migration, racism and climate change. Rooted in the Old Testament passage of Joshua marching seven times around the walled city of Jericho, the walk incorporated song, prayer and silence as a form of nonviolent public witness. Each circuit of the LCWR Jericho Walk addressed an issue - human dignity, racism, violence, poverty, etc – and between each circuit, participants prayed the Litany of Saints.

After celebrating many charisms at the LCWR Assembly, Sisters Maria Goretti and Maria José stayed a few extra days in Pittsburgh to reconnect with our Sisters and strengthen the bond of our shared Franciscan charism and mission.



Our Call to Pastoral Ministry (continued from page 4)



Sister Althea Anne (left) with some of the Ladies of Charity from Our Lady of Hope Parish volunteering with the Harvest Street Mission to distribute food and clothing to persons in need on Pittsburgh's North Side.

with Comfort Keepers, a service that enabled people to be able to stay home instead of moving into a nursing facility; or Sister Theodora as she managed the gift shop in our former motherhouse and touched the lives of volunteers and those who worked at our Motherhouse, seeking to make the purchase of a little gift for a loved one; or Sister Elise Mora working as an interpreter for those who spoke Spanish, and were unable to jump through the hoops of the legal/medical system when she worked at Lincoln Hospital in New York.

Today, in Pittsburgh, Sister Althea Anne Spencer serves as a Pastoral Associate at Our Lady of Hope Parish and Sister Janice Campbell serves as a Pastoral Associate at Christ the King Parish. Sister Mary Ann Lostoski and Associate Rosemary Byrd serve as Eucharistic Ministers for Our Lady of Hope bringing communion to residents of South Hills Square.

Our Associates aide us in pastoral ministry through many tasks, helping to get the message out to our many benefactors, helping to get the message out to our many benefactors, they study church documents, cardinal virtues, and aspects of Francis and Clare's Life, regularly gathering together and with our Sisters to grow in faith and spirit – and sometimes just have fun! Many Associates engage in pastoral ministry by serving as Eucharistic Ministers or readers in their local parish, bringing others to the awareness of our call to care for creation through advocacy work, or acting as a silent witness to the sacredness of life at an abortion clinic.

Simply by being present for others, those engaged in pastoral ministry remain vital to the building, preservation and strengthening of parish communities rooted in the Gospel that fully embrace the love and teachings of Christ.

In Prayerful Memory

Sister Margaret (Peg) Markey, OSF



Sister Margaret (Peg) Markey a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God for 69 years, died at the age of 87 on June 7, 2026. Sister Peg was raised in Whitehall, PA where she attended St. Bernard School and St. Francis Academy. Upon graduation, she entered the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God in September 1957. Sister Peg earned a B.S. and M.S. in Education from Duquesne University, as well as a B.A. in Liturgical Music.

In her lifetime, Sister Peg engaged in a variety of ministries which reflect her calling to care for others, especially children, serve the poor, and promote justice. For more than 18 years, Sister Peg served in Education ministry, which included teaching assignments at St. George in Philadelphia, St. Francis Academy and other Catholic schools in the Pittsburgh area. Providence then called her to serve as chaplain at the Youth Development Center in Waynesburg, PA and a case worker at Covenant House - a crisis shelter for youth in New York City. In the 1990's, Sister Peg served as a foster parent at Casa de Esperanza that served children and those suffering from the HIV-AIDS epidemic in Houston TX.

In the 2000s, Sister Peg served as a member of the congregational leadership team for eight years. She then volunteered at Beatitude House in Youngstown, OH, which provides supportive housing and other services for disadvantaged women and children. Returning to Pittsburgh in 2017, she served in our congregational archives, which included the massive undertaking of preparing over 100 years of photos, documents and historic information for the move to a permanent home at the Generalate in Brazil in 2023. She also planned liturgies and funerals, as well as assisted with other administrative needs of the community until entering the ministry of prayer full time in 2025.

Remembering Carol Stasik, Associate



Carol Stasik (left) with Joan Ammon, Audrey Patterson and Mary Ann Abt after a beautiful May Crowning program they gave our retired and infirm Sisters at our former Pittsburgh motherhouse in 2014.

Carol Stasik, an Associate of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God died on Sunday, December 21, 2025, at age 87. A gifted educator, singer and actor, Carol felt her most important calling was as a wife and a mother. Carol and her beloved husband of nearly 57 years, Michael raised two sons and were blessed with two granddaughters. She is also survived by her sister, and fellow Associate, Joan Ammon, numerous nieces, nephews and in-laws.

Carol was long-time teacher at St. Albert the Great grade school and received the Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching. After retirement, Carol used her acting abilities to help train medical students as a Standardized Patient at Pittsburgh Medical School. She also performed in musicals with the Pittsburgh Savoyards, Camelot Productions, and Jude Pohl Productions. As a singer, she shared her talents with our Sisters and St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association, served as a cantor in various churches, and sang with the Sweet Adelines and the South Hills Chorale.

Our Sisters are grateful for Carol's presence in our lives and the gift of her friendship. She truly embraced our Franciscan charism and radiated the joy, hope and love Christ to all.

Sister Francine McDonald, OSF

Sister M. Francine McDonald, OSF, a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God for 75 years, died at the age of 96 on October 9, 2026. Sister Francine 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 SS Peter and Paul Parish School, where she was taught by our Sisters. Soon after graduating Grand Rapids' 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 for 13 years.



In addition to her deep spirituality and faith, Sister Francine will be remembered for her humor, storytelling, and hospitality. Over the years, she mastered several recipes to make for Sisters and friends, including Lithuanian recipes for kugelis, potato pancakes and cold beet soup. She would also make ausukai (Lithuanian fried-dough cookies often pronounced oh-sookies) and macaroons to share with Sisters, guest and staff, as well as many family and friends to whom she would often mail the treats.

Remembering Father Bernie Tickerhoof

Father Bernard Francis "Bernie" Tickerhoof, TOR, a dear friend and collaborator with the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, was greeted by Sister Death on Sunday, May 10, 2026, at age 75. The youngest of four children to David and Magdalen Ann (Ruth), Fr. Bernie grew up in Johnstown, PA and graduated from Bishop McCort High School in 1968 before entering Franciscan Friars TOR. After earning a Master of Divinity at St. Francis Seminary, he was ordained to the priesthood on May 13, 1978. He also earned a bachelor's degree in history from Saint Francis College, a Master of Theology from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, CA, and a Doctorate in Ministry at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

As a Franciscan priest, Father Bernie thoroughly embraced retreat ministry serving at various retreat centers for over 30 years, including our Congregation's Franciscan Spirit & Life Center from 1996 – 2004. Father Bernie was a frequent program presenter and collaborator often working with Sisters J. Lora Dambroski and Barbara Zilch. Beloved by Sisters, guests and staff, he offered various retreats and programs and even served as director for several years.

One of his more unique offerings at the Franciscan Spirit and Life Center were Enneagram programs that were popular among both Sisters and laity. Father Bernie also provided spiritual direction and guidance to many of our Sisters, Franciscans and others well beyond his time at the Center. After serving at the Spirit and Life Center, Father Bernie was called to serve as Postulant and Novice Director within his own community in Loretto, PA for over a decade. Father Bernie also remained active within the Franciscan Federation — where he continued to



Father Bernie (right) with Sisters Janet and Althea Anne at the 2022 Franciscan Federation conference.

collaborate with Sisters from our Community.

Fr. Bernie's life reflected a deep faith, demonstrated through his passion for writing and tailored holistic spirituality, as well as leadership development. He is also fondly remembered for his love for continued learning, which was reflected in his ministry through storytelling, social justice work, ecumenism and inter-faith outreach, holistic spirituality, and ecological concerns. Fr. Bernie authored several books and articles on a variety of topics in spiritual life. His most recent book was *The One Body of Christ in a Quantum Age* — he was certainly a man of his time and for all ages. May God grant you rest and give you peace, our brother Father Bernie.



Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God

5802 Curry Road ♦ Pittsburgh, PA 15236

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Pittsburgh, PA
Permit No. 2544

A Note of Gratitude

The world we serve looks much different than when our Congregation was founded more than a century ago. Yet, our mission remains the same. We are, and have always been, Gospel women who go where Providence calls us to serve persons in need, care for all God's creation and work for justice and peace.

With our Provident God as the Center and Source of our lives, we remain grateful for the strong foundation built by our Sisters who have gone before us, as well as all who encouraged and supported our enduring Franciscan mission of hope and peace over the past 104 years.

Blessed by Providence, we have not journeyed alone. Your presence, support and prayers have been essential to the longevity of our Franciscan mission. Throughout our journey, you have been with us in classrooms, churches, and hospitals. You have been with us serving persons experiencing poverty, grief, violence and other hardships. And, you are with us today as we care for each other and all of God's creation.

Our journey is not over, and we remain grateful for your friendship, support and solidarity as we confidently, joyfully, go forward as sowers of hope and peace. May God's peace rest upon you, Christ's love flow through you, and all the blessings of our Provident God be yours.

If you wish to make a gift to further support our ministries, outreach and the care of our senior Sisters in the United States, please use the enclosed envelope or visit www.osfprov.org/how-you-can-help/donate-now. For questions or other ways you can help, please contact us at info@osfprov.org or 412-885-7232.

