

A Publication of the School Sisters of St. Francis - U.S. Province
Winter 2019-2020

Echoes *Horizons* *across the*

Angels Among Us

Sisters Helping Others
& Helping Each Other

A SISTER IN SERVICE
AT THE BORDER

OUR MISSION CONTINUES
AT MT. ASSISI PLACE

KOLBE ACADEMY
FINDS HOME AT
MONOCACY MANOR



Echoes Across the Horizons

Echoes Across the Horizons is published annually by The School Sisters of St. Francis | United States Province.

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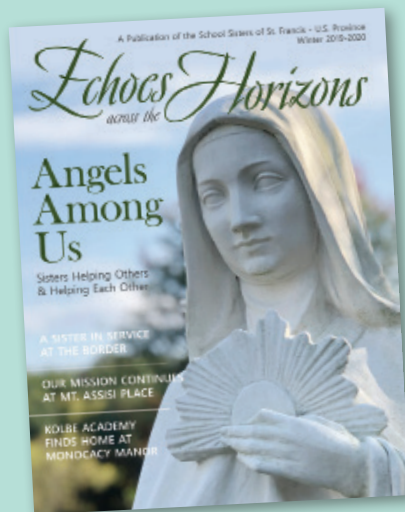
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ON THE COVER: A statue of St. Clare of Assisi watches over the sisters, retreatants and friends at Monocacy Manor in Bethlehem, Pa.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow the sisters on Facebook and Instagram for ongoing news and photos about happenings in our community. Our handle is @schoolsistersosf.



Sisters Marguerite Stewart, Francine Garganta, Georgette Dublino and Frances Marie Duncan enjoy the a seat in the sunshine during Farm Fest.

FUN ON THE FARM

It was the kind of fall day where it's warm in the sun and cool in the shade – pretty much perfect for fun and food outdoors at Monocacy Farm Project's fourth annual Food Fest in September. Our property in Bethlehem, Pa., was filled with young families who brought their little ones to meet the animals, make fall crafts and enjoy outdoor fun. Adults perused unique foods and crafts, music, organic chocolates and craft wines and whiskeys.

The event highlights the good works of Monocacy Farm Project, which, through partnerships with community organizations, provides low-cost fresh produce to needy families in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley and offers opportunities for green thumbs to farm their own plots and learn about sustainable food production. The 10-acre farming ministry was established by our sisters in 2013 to continue our century-long mission of helping the needy.

Along with **Bob Drake**, project director, **Sister Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster** has helped to grow the program incrementally in the past few years by securing grants from corporations and foundations who recognize the very real impact of putting fresh food on the tables of families who otherwise could not afford it. This year's event drew 800 patrons and raised more than \$20,000 to continue the farm's good works.

To learn more, pick your own produce, donate, or reserve a plot for planting, visit www.MonocacyFarmProject.org.



Sister Roseann Velas (center) pals around with vegetable mascots Sister Regina Ann Rokosny (left) and Gene Tallarico.





Labor of Love

INSIDE THE SACRED SPACE WHERE SISTERS CARE FOR SISTERS

It's in the soft light of early autumn slipping through the window that **Sister Xavier Bomberger** finds a few moments' peace. She sits quietly in the corner recliner that serves as her bed on weekend nights, keeping watch over the elder sisters in Villa Clare at Monocacy Manor in Bethlehem, Pa. It's in the quiet now – in the hours between lunch and dinner – that Sister checks her emails and revels in the silence.

A former provincial minister and general minister, her ministry these days – and during many times over her 57 years in religious life – is to care for those who cannot entirely care for themselves any longer. It's a labor of love to which she has been drawn many times over the years.

"My mother always wished I'd become a nurse," Sister says. "So I think that instinct was always within me."

It was as a young sister in 1970 that Sister Xavier first began helping out on weekends around Villa Clare, the space within Monocacy Manor dedicated to elder care. After many years of teaching and two tenures leading the

international congregation in Rome, Sister has returned to what seems her natural place.

Today's few moments of silence are much needed, as Sister Xavier is still grieving the recent loss of **Sister Ruth Zacharias**, who'd been under her care since 2017. "It's very emotionally draining," she says of each time a sister in her care is called home to God.

There is little time for rest. She tries to slip away twice a day for a few minutes of quiet time or prayer, but there are doctor appointments to schedule, home health aides with which to communicate, medications to organize and caretaker's notes to record. Her work is often interrupted by her cell phone or by the alerts of bedside monitors.

"My job is to let them be independent to the degree they can be and as long as they can be ... as long as they're safe," she says. She makes time in the evenings to sit with them in the TV room and to simply be present as their sister, not just their caregiver. Saturday evenings are for ice cream and chit chat.

Resourcefulness in elder care is not unlike that needed to oversee the international congregation as general minister, a role Sister Xavier filled from 2001 to 2011. She arrived in Rome to begin her first term on September 10, 2001. She watched in anguish and shock the next day as two planes hit the World Trade Center in New York City.

Sister returned in 2011 to care for her own aging mother, who she lost five years ago. She worked alongside **Sister Virginelle Makos** and then moved back into the Villa Clare ministry fulltime when Sister Virginelle moved onto other responsibilities. Sister Xavier has cared for others while caring for herself, working through two knee surgeries and a foot surgery that had her rolling through the Villa on an assistive scooter for nearly a year.

"I try to plan, but I always have to be flexible, attentive and focused," Sister says in her soft, serene voice. There's ►►

Above: Sister Xavier Bomberger enjoys a rare quiet moment at Villa Clare in Bethlehem, Pa.



During a recent visit to Vincentian Home in Pittsburgh, Pa., Sister Georgette Dublino (right) delivers a handmade lap afghan to Sister Grace Chermack, a gift from family for her 90th birthday. Also pictured is Sister Margaret Elaine Rovnak (center).

never anger, but sometimes frustration that those in her care still try to do too much on their own instead of asking for help. “It’s what I’m here for.”

She’s gained an informal education on the job and has been at this long enough to know her way around a medical chart and to instinctively sense when something isn’t right with one of the sisters under her care. She accompanies them to medical appointments so she can advocate for them and be sure of their treatment plans.

“The aides who come in often mistake me for an RN,” sister says. “I am grateful to them because every time they’ve come in, they’ve taught me something new.”

Sister helps others transition to Villa Clare when the time is right and helps them navigate their individual limitations in performing daily tasks. She assists them in getting to Mass and also in knowing when it’s okay to miss Mass on a particularly difficult day.

Whether its with the little things or with moving to the Villa full time, Sister’s

role is one of guidance. “Most come to the decision on their own,” she says. “It’s heartbreaking to watch them go through it sometimes,” she says. “But I also rejoice with them when they heal or overcome a health hurdle.”

It’s the kind of job where she serves others their meals before she eats her own – oftentimes standing alone for a quick bite – and where she always seems to be thinking ahead to what needs to be done next. It doesn’t seem to phase her.

“They’re my sisters,” she says. “And knowing that I’m helping them ... that’s what it’s all about.”

It’s a sunny afternoon in the midst of summer’s last gasp when **Sister Georgette Dublino** bounds out of her car and toward the entrance of Vincentian Home in Pittsburgh, moving at her trademark swift pace. Her tote bags are filled with supplies and goodies intended for some of the eldest members of the School Sisters of St. Francis who, due to their complex medical needs,

are in long-term care at the suburban facility. Sister makes one last check of her bags before beginning her Thursday afternoon rounds.

Today is a beautiful day, so Sister Georgette brings three elder sisters – one by one – to the outdoor courtyard for fellowship and sweet treats. She helps **Sister Grace Chermack** read the birthday cards that keep trickling in in honor of her 90th and shares chocolates and ice cream with **Sisters Margaret Elaine** and **Rose Ann Rovnak**, sisters by blood and in community.

These are duties she shares with **Sister Lorita Kristufek**, who does shopping for the sisters and handles special requests. Sometimes it’s new slippers or a preferred brand of tissues. Other times, it might be a sister’s favorite snack.

They collaborate on celebrating the elder sisters’ birthdays, feastdays and jubilees, as well, setting special places at dinner on feastdays, decorating bedrooms for special birthdays and being at the bedside during medical crises. ►►

"We must take quiet time ourselves to build up quiet from within, so we may bring Jesus to them," Sister Georgette says.

The pair plans regular enrichment activities – outings, discussion groups, spiritual activities and even video viewings where small groups gather together for popcorn and to binge-watch *I Love Lucy* marathons. All are currently following a short video series on *The Blessings of Aging* by **Sister Joan Chittister**, OSB. Its about giving the older sisters many opportunities to grow.

"She ministers to them with such grace, compassion and love," Sister Lorita says of Sister Georgette.

The Pittsburgh-based sisters are navigating a particularly challenging transition with the sale of Mount Assisi motherhouse complex. Fourteen sisters remain there as residents of Mt. Assisi Place, the personal care home carrying forward the sisters' Catholic mission. Such a change would take an emotional toll on anyone, much less Catholic sisters who first came to Mount Assisi as teenagers.

The elder sisters now have an ongoing responsibility to each other. "They too have a ministry," Sister Georgette says.

"We must take quiet time ourselves to build up quiet from within so we may bring Jesus to them."

SISTER GEORGETTE DUBLINO

"They have a mission to build community and to be present to the other residents."

Sister Marian Sgriccia, a nurse who spent 19 years as administrator of Marian Hall Home, works behind the scenes to monitor the conditions of and coordinate healthcare services for the elder sisters in Pittsburgh. Several other sisters also make regular visits to Vincentian Home so that members of the community are on site at least twice a week. "These are their last days on this earth. I feel we are accompanying them on life's journey, a step or two from entering heaven," says a frequent visitor. "It's very personal for me."

It's work that family does for family and sisters do for sisters. "Our work is so important, and we're constantly collaborating," says Sister Lorita. "God put us there to help them through new changes and to help them help each other." ■

WE WELCOME YOU IN 2020

A NIGHT AT THE RACES

Mt. Assisi Place, 1515 Quail Avenue, Pittsburgh Pa. 15202

6 p.m. Saturday, February 1, 2020

Enjoy a fun evening at the "horse races" while supporting our ministries. Tickets are \$15 and include food and beer. For tickets, contact Sister Marian Sgriccia at 412-761-2855.

STAR STRUCK GALA & SILENT AUCTION

Mullen Hall, 395 Bridle Path Road, Bethlehem, Pa. 18017

6 p.m. on Saturday, May 30, 2020

St. Francis Center for Renewal welcomes you for an elegant evening of dinner, silent auctions and presentation of the 2020 Women of Strength and Troubadour of Life Awards.

PITTSBURGH-AREA GOLF OUTING

Pittsburgh North Golf Club in Bakerstown, Pa.

11 a.m. Saturday, August 29, 2020

Register as an individual or bring a foursome for a fun day on the green, while supporting our good works. To golf, donate or volunteer, contact Sister Marian Sgriccia at 412-761-2855.

MONOCACY FARM FOOD FESTIVAL

Monocacy Manor, 395 Bridle Path Road, Bethlehem, Pa. 18017

Fall 2020 date to be announced

This all-ages event welcomes families to our Monocacy Farm Project for local artisans, face painting, raffles, farm crafts and activities, a tractor demonstration, farm tours, music and more. Donations of \$5 per person or \$10 per family are recommended.

HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR & BAKE SALE

Mullen Hall, 395 Bridle Path Road, Bethlehem, Pa. 18017

9 a.m. on Saturday, November 7, 2020

More than 70 area crafters and bakers show off their wares to create a wall-to-wall marketplace of unique decor, clothing, foods and more. Santa and Mrs. Claus hosts a day filled with the sights, sounds and scents of the holidays.

Sister Xavier helps Sister Amata Shina bring her lunch to the dining room.



Noteworthy

News & Notables from the Past Year



Sisters Elaine and Georgette share some laughs with 1978 grads Jenny Wolff, Diane Doyle and Angie Anzeloini

CELEBRATING '78

Sisters **Elaine Hromulak** and **Georgette Dublino** attended the 40th reunion celebration of the Mount Assisi Academy Class of 1978. Past faculty and students attended, and lots of fun and laughs were had by all. Everyone perused yearbooks and school newspapers and shared fond memories of their days at "The Mount." They also were happy to visit with **Lynn Cosgrove**, former member and associate, before her passing eight days later.

SPECIAL SEND-OFF

Residents and employees gathered in August to wish **Sister Marian Sgriccia** well in her retirement as administrator of Marian Hall Home. The group enjoyed cake and comradery, as Sister Marian spoke about how her 19 years with Marian Hall helped to shape the person she is today. With the recent sale of the Mount Assisi complex, the personal care home is now known as Mt. Assisi Place and has transitioned to new management. Sister Marian remains as provincial vicar and oversees the care of our elder sisters in the Pittsburgh area.



ENGAGING IN ERIE

Sister **Roselyn Kuzma** was among five sisters who shared their vocation stories during the Diocese of Erie's Miriam Dinner in March. About 30 young women attended the event to further their discernment. Sister Roselyn also was honored for 35 years of service during the Office of Faith Formation's 2019 Leader Recognition Dinner last spring.



SISTER OF STRENGTH

Mullen Hall in Bethlehem, Pa., was transformed into a Paris cafe in May for St. Francis Center for Renewal's ninth annual Star Struck Gala & Silent Auction. Among the honorees was our own **Sister Barbara DeStefano**, who garnered a 2019 Woman of Strength Award. The event team shares *un grand merci* with all the volunteers, donors and patrons who made the evening such a success in support of our retreat ministry of more than 70 years in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley.



Sister Adelina Garcia joins young people onstage during a hip-hop performance by Joe Melendrez.

SPREADING THE WORD IN TEXAS

Sisters **Adelina Garcia** and **Hilda Marotta** hosted *Listen! Oye!* – a spirit-filled high school youth conference at McNease Convention Center in San Angelo, Texas. The event included many engaging activities and powerful keynote addresses by hip-hop artist **Joe Melendrez** and former college football star **Damon West**. Teens learned about healthy relationships, discerning future goals, bullying, and finding meaning in life. After gathering in small groups to share experiences and challenges, many said they felt called to be disciples to their peers when they returned home.

PRESERVING SLOVAK HERITAGE

Sisters **Elaine Hromulak** and **Rosalia Giba** took part in the Spring National Board Meeting of the Slovak Catholic Federation in Passaic, N.J., in April. Since its inception in 1911, the federation has strived to maintain and support the faith and culture of the Slovak groups and organizations in the United States.

Road to Recovery

OUR NATION'S FIRST FAITH-BASED RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL MAKES ITS HOME AMONG THE SISTERS

Nestled neatly on the Monocacy Manor campus in Bethlehem, Pa., Mullen Hall stands in tribute to a time when young women roamed its halls as students of the former St. Francis Academy (SFA). Their enthusiasm for the everyday and their anticipation for the future brought a unique energy to its halls.

SFA closed in 1987, but these halls are alive again with hope for the future – one free of addiction, but filled with promise – as home to Kolbe Academy, the nation's first faith-based recovery high school. The pioneering program offers individualized academics in a safe, compassionate, Christ-centered environment. The goal is to set high school students in recovery from addiction on a life-long path to recovery and success.

Principal **John Petruzzelli** has a personality as colorful as Kolbe's walls. From his purple polo to his bright smile, John is the program's biggest advocate and most enthusiastic voice. "I truly believe that God puts you where you need to be," he says. "I'm supposed to be here."

John first heard about the project a few years back as principal of Bethlehem Catholic High School. **Dr. Brook Tesche**, chancellor of the Diocese of Allentown's Office of Education, gathered research showing that among those in recovery, the most successful credited a faith component as being pivotal. Intrigued from the start, **Bishop Alfred Schlert**, requested a business plan and promised his support. If and when the project got off the ground, John knew he wanted to be part of it.

"I've been touched by past students and even lost students to addiction," John says. "It's an incredible experience to walk

alongside these kids on their recovery journey."

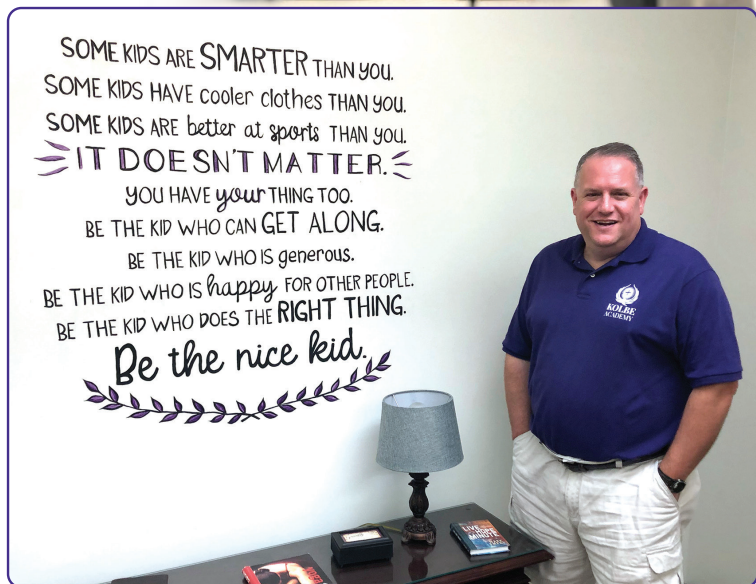
A handful of generous private donations and a considerable grant helped the school get off the ground earlier this year in time for the 2019-2020 school year.

As mental health issues often underlie addiction, social anxieties, family problems, depression and other challenges can make the mere act of walking into their own high school seem an insurmountable hurdle for addicted teens. Enter Kolbe Academy.

Each day starts with a check-in meeting, where students and staff share challenges and triumphs. It's a way to build rapport among the kids and teaching team before a day that includes seven academic periods, lunch, study hall and counseling sessions.

"They have an opportunity here to be part of an alternative peer group and steer clear of other groups that may have brought them to this point," John says. The team coordinates sober social activities, outings, visits to recovery centers and special activities like a cooking class and 12-step yoga. ▶▶

Principal John Petruzzelli shows off an inspirational wall etching in one of Kolbe's safe spaces.



KOLBE ACADEMY | On the Road to Recovery

“The kids really seem to be responding,” John says at the five-week mark of year one. “They absolutely love art and are very creative.”

The planning team set out to find a location at the heart of the Lehigh Valley and, after touring other locations, settled on Mullen Hall. “The campus is amazing. We couldn’t ask for a more pastoral setting,” John says. “Not to mention the connectedness with the sisters.”

The sisters welcomed the program to their property, as Kolbe’s mission closely aligned with their own charism. “Our sisters have always served where the need is greatest and also adapted to the needs of the changing times,” says **Sister Frances Marie Duncan**, provincial minister and Kolbe Academy board member. “Kolbe meets a very real need right now, and we are blessed to have them here.”

Kolbe made the building home by incorporating its colors – purple to

represent recovery and teal to represent the Blessed Mother – into the decorative palette. Most rooms include a purple wall, as do both ends of the main hallway, symbolic of the physical, mental and emotional journey students walk here. School swag – T-shirts, sweatshirts, caps and other items – have become popular among those involved with the school and those who, despite having no direct connection, appreciate its mission.

Kolbe intends to have students take part in service projects at St. Francis Center for Renewal and, come Spring 2020, adopt a garden plot at the neighboring Monocacy Farm Project as part of the science curriculum.

Even vendors who helped the school prepare for its August opening became engaged. “A lady helping to set up our software learned what we were doing and asked, ‘What can my husband and I do to help?’” John recalls. The couple purchased a laptop for the school.

Nearby organizations have reached out in many ways, and the school has received furniture and equipment from local universities and colleges. The building houses several safe spaces, rooms comfortably furnished for quiet time, if needed, and an open-door policy that allows students to approach staff at any time during the day for help.

“This has been so energizing for me,” John says. “It’s a rollercoaster at times and there are down days. But we are bettering ourselves too.” ■

Kolbe Academy welcomes support of any size to help grow its program and effectively serve more teens in need. To donate or purchase Kolbe merchandise, visit www.kolbe-academy.com or contact John directly at 610-866-0581 or principal@kolbe-academy.com. Kolbe also has an Amazon Wish List, and word of mouth also is invaluable to the program’s growth.



*Sister Grace
Chermack*
70 Years



Sister Karen Buco
60 Years



Sister Cecilia Jacko
70 Years



*Sister Frances
Marie Duncan*
50 Years

Our 2019 Jubilarians

Nothing solidifies summer in our community like our annual Jubilee celebrations, times of gratitude and renewal for sisters marking milestone anniversaries. Gatherings in Bethlehem in July and in Pittsburgh in August shined light on the enduring dedication – 250 collective years – to religious life by four of our sisters.

Golden Jubilarian **Sister Frances Marie Duncan** was

celebrated, as were **Sisters Karen Buco** (60th), **Grace Chermack** (70th) and **Cecilia Jacko** (70th). Family, friends, clergy and alumnae joined in on this pair of special Saturdays, each including liturgy and dinner.

Our community also paused to remember late **Sisters Susanne Cherney, Frances Pastusek, Lawrence Waxman** and **Martin Pavelko**, who would have celebrated jubilees this year.

IN FOND MEMORY | MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

S. Frances Jacko, OSF

March 23, 1925 - March 17, 2019

Sister Frances was born in McKees Rocks, Pa., the 12th of 15 children and the second of three Jacko daughters to enter religious life. She attended St. Mark Parish School and, during her time at Mount Assisi Academy in Pittsburgh, entered our congregation in 1942 and received the name of Sister Theophane, as she is best known among her former students. She professed first vows in 1943 and final vows in 1949.

With degrees from Mount Mercy College and Duquesne University, Sister spent most of her years as a teacher at Mount Assisi Academy, where she taught the elementary grades and then high school home economics, ceramics and sewing. She also ministered in Oregon, Ohio and in Chile, South America.

Sister Frances was the first driver for the local community at Mount Assisi. She also was the librarian, medical insurance coordinator and caretaker of the cars – all while continuing with her arts and crafts and ceramics classes. The last six of her 93 years were spent in the ministry of prayer.

Sister Frances is remembered for her life of Franciscan giving and for her willingness to help others. A prayerful person, she and Sister Julia spent many hours in the company of each other, praying their Rosaries for the needs of others. She was extremely dedicated and faithful in her ministries, and her high school girls loved her and the patience she exercised with them in their classes.

Sister Frances was energized through constant communication with God in prayer, sewing and needlework. She even made bridesmaid dresses for the weddings of some of her former students.

Sister Frances was present for the wake and funeral of Sister Julia. When someone expressed sadness at her loss, she replied, "We don't have to be in the same place to be together."



S. Ruth Zacharias, OSF

April 28, 1929 - September 11, 2019

Sister Ruth was born Dorothy Zacharias in Tresckow, Pa., as one of 10 children. Her early school years were spent at Tresckow Public School, before attending West Hazleton High School in Hazleton, Pa., and then Mount Assisi Academy in Pittsburgh, Pa.

Dorothy entered our community from St. Michael Parish in Tresckow in 1953 and was received into novitiate at Mount Assisi Convent, where she professed first vows in 1954 and final vows in 1959. Sister Ruth attended Mount Mercy College (now Carlow University) in Pittsburgh and took classes at Holy Family in Philadelphia, Pa., where in 1974 she earned a bachelor's degree in education.

Through 46 years in ministry, Sister taught at parish schools in Massachusetts, New Jersey and Pennsylvania and taught religion and prepared children for the sacraments at parishes in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. For the last 16 years, Sister Ruth was dedicated to prayer ministry while doing what she could in service to the community.

Sister Ruth recalled sleeping in army bunk beds and teaching 75 kindergartners during her earliest teaching days. A fan of bread and coffee, she was of slight build but had strong hands and a generous, gentle spirit. Sister loved to sew, volunteering her skills to the *Little Dresses of Love* project. She embraced the essence of her dignity in God's eyes through her immaculate personal appearance, graceful manner, neat surroundings and an exactness in all she did.

Sister Ruth was faithful to her commitment to God and her religious family, while remaining close to her family that lovingly called her "Sister Sunshine," for she always had a smile and, even in the midst of illness, was resilient.

Sister Julia Jacko, OSF

July 19, 1920 - December 11, 2018

Born in McKees Rocks, Pa., Sister Julia entered our community in 1935 from St. Mark Parish. Along with her sisters Frances and Ceclia, Sister Julia was the first of three of Jacob and Mary Jacko's 15 children to enter religious life. She graduated from Mount Assisi Academy in Pittsburgh, Pa., and upon entering our congregation, received the name of Sister Ernestine. She professed first vows in 1938 and final vows in 1944.

With a degree from Mount Mercy College (now Carlow University), Sister taught for 32 years at elementary schools in the Pennsylvania towns of Canonsburg, Charleroi, Ellsworth, Emmaus, Erie, Farrell, New Castle, Pittsburgh and Tarentum, as well as in Jersey City, N.J.

In 1974, she began three years in parish ministry in Ambridge, Pa., and went on to an eight-year ministry with the elderly. She regarded this time as the highlight of her ministry work. Sister also assisted Sisters Frances and Cecilia with the ceramics program at Mount Assisi. The last nine of her 98 years were spent in the ministry of prayer.

Sister Frances was her constant companion. The pair socialized with sisters and staff, worked in the ceramics room and sipped hot chocolate in the dining room. She also enjoyed playing cards, eating chocolate and doing needle work.

Sister Julia is remembered as quiet, gentle and private. She was a prayerful person who constantly had her Rosary in hand and prayed it throughout the day. Sister did not hesitate to express gratitude and always had a smile to share.

"Well done, Sister Julia," one family member wrote. "Enter into the heavenly feast you've waited for your whole earthly life!"

Mount Assisi Convent and Mount Assisi Academy (right) as they looked in 1961.

THE 'GLEAM ON THE HILLTOP' HAS NEW LIFE AS MT. ASSISI PLACE



STILL SHINING

Mount Assisi Convent, the Pittsburgh home of the School Sisters of St. Francis since 1928, has been sold to a group of local investors who are repurposing the buildings while also carrying forward the sisters' Catholic mission of service. Marian Hall Home, an 81-bed personal care home located on the property, has new management and a new name, Mt. Assisi Place.

The sale in August came amid a time of transition for religious communities around the region and nationwide. Due to aging membership and fewer sisters in the workforce, upkeep of large motherhouse buildings has become fiscally and physically unmanageable. The median age of the School Sisters of St. Francis is 79.1. The community now has 66 members who serve in

Pennsylvania, Texas, New Jersey, Rome and South Africa.

When the sisters put the building on the market in 2017, they did so with their mission in mind. They sought a buyer who would continue their commitment of service to those in need, in this case the elderly. For 106 years and as their mission states, the sisters have ministered to their neighbors according to the needs of the time. The community's primary ministry was teaching in Catholic schools but has, over the years, evolved to include elder care, retreat ministry, parish outreach and education, and social service.

"Our mission of caring for elderly was the most important thing in this process," says **Sister Marian Sgriccia**, provincial vicar and administrator of Marian Hall Home since 2000. "We feel very strongly

that the new owners are committed to carrying forward that mission."

The sisters' presence continues to be felt at Mt. Assisi Place, where two sisters remain on staff as nurses and artifacts of the community's century-long legacy in the Pittsburgh area are displayed throughout the building. Queen of Angels Chapel, built in 1968 as an addition to the convent, continues to host daily Masses coordinated by the sisters. In addition, 14 sisters are in personal care at Mt. Assisi Place.

"On a day-to-day basis, our residents won't see much change," says Sister Marian. "Life will continue in the way they are used to."

The same is true of Marian Hall's nearly 50 employees, Sister says, who are now employees of Mt. Assisi Place.

As for the alumnae who roamed its halls before Mount Assisi Academy

closed in 1978, the change is bittersweet. Although the buildings will no longer be exclusively associated with the sisters, the personal care home has long been a haven for aging parents and relatives of former students. A few also work and volunteer at the complex.

The sisters retain ownership of a large brick home at the foot of the property, known as San Damiano Convent, while also renting back Little Flower House, a large frame house adjacent to the main convent and included in the property sale. The Provincial Offices have moved to rented space nearby in Ross Township.

The sisters continue to operate three sponsored ministries – St. Francis Center for Renewal and the Monocacy Farm Project in Bethlehem, Pa., as well as the Franciscan Resource Center in San Angelo, Texas. The sisters of the United States Province continue to serve in Pittsburgh, Bethlehem, Erie and West Lawn, Pa.; in Somerset, Paterson and Lawrenceville, N.J.; in San Antonio and San Angelo, Texas; in Barberton, South Africa; and in Rome.



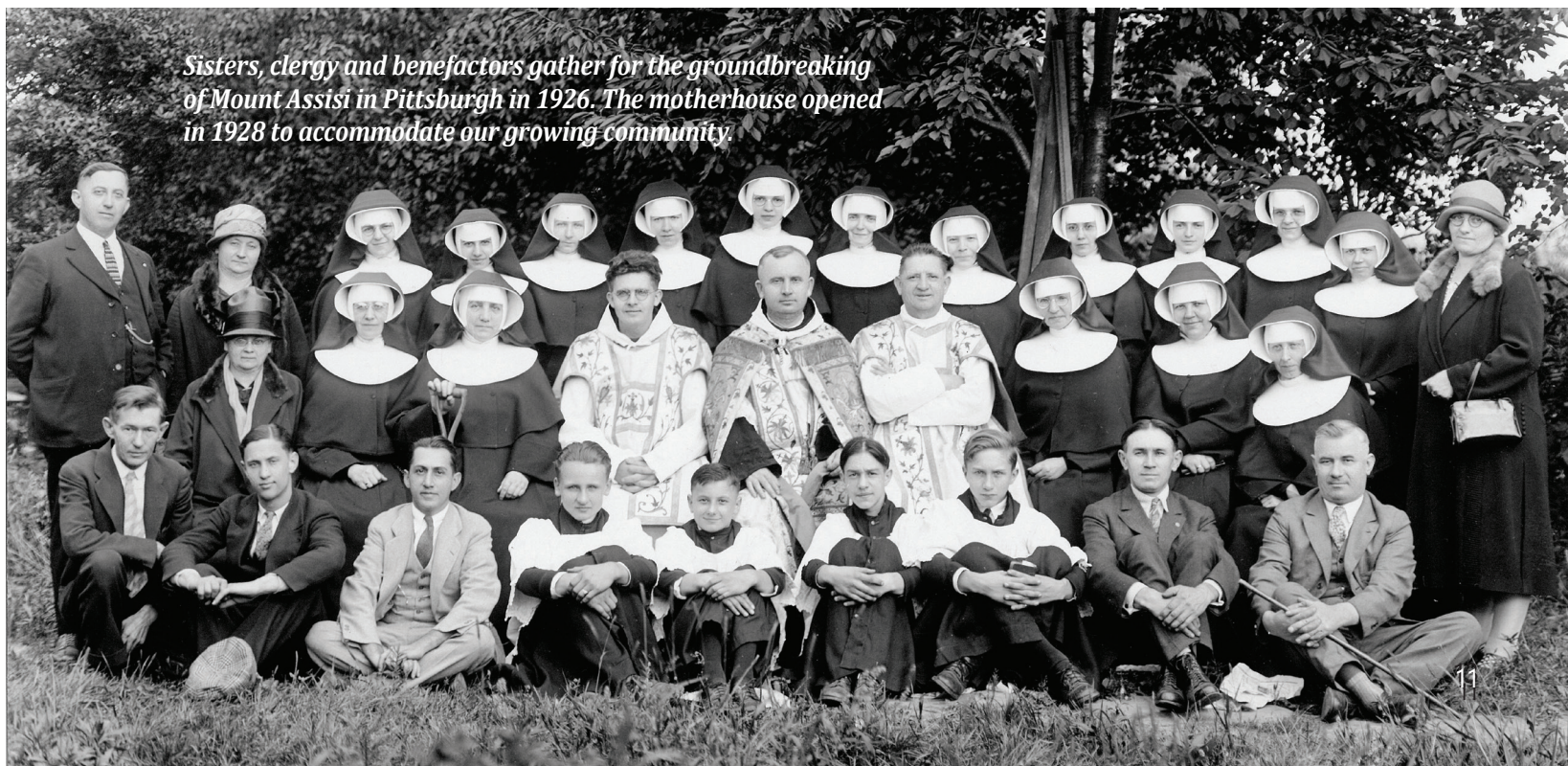
During the School Sisters of St. Francis final Spring Fling in April 2019, some of the many alumae in attendance – including many sisters – gathered for a photo and spontaneously broke into a rendition of ‘Gleam on the Hilltop,’ the alma mater of the former Mount Assisi Academy. The eldest to join in graduated in 1943.



HILLTOP HIGHLIGHTS

The School Sisters of St. Francis came to the United States in 1913 to establish schools for Eastern European immigrants. For 15 years, they lived and served at St. Gabriel Parish and Convent on Pittsburgh’s North Side. As their numbers grew, the sisters purchased the current property along Forest Avenue in Ross Township and erected a three-story motherhouse. A high school building (upper left) was added in 1938 to house the former Mount Assisi Academy until it closed in 1978. The addition that houses Marian Hall Home and the chapel was added in 1968 (lower left).

Sisters, clergy and benefactors gather for the groundbreaking of Mount Assisi in Pittsburgh in 1926. The motherhouse opened in 1928 to accommodate our growing community.





A TIME TO ACT

BORDER ENCOUNTER RECONNECTS TEXAS-BASED SISTER WITH REAL-TIME IMPORTANCE OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Sister Adelina Garcia returned from her service work at the Southern Border weeks ago, but part of her heart is still there. Her encounter with migrants and farmworkers in Texas, New Mexico and Mexico has stirred her soul and, by her own admission, left her with much to process.

“It was a long, but very powerful week,” Sister says. “Now more than ever, we must learn to be Catholic and practice our faith, be missionary disciples and a voice for the voiceless.”

Sister was part of a delegation who took part in a week-long Pastoral Encounter at the Border with Migrants, sponsored by Home Missions and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The delegation met with farmworkers, refugees and immigrants to hear their stories, share spirituality, and learn about conditions in their places of work and detention.

Upon their return to their regular ministries, members of the delegation share what they’ve learned in an effort to educate others about the humanitarian crisis along the border that separates the United States from Mexico and, all too often these days, migrants from their families.

The delegation included professionals from around the country who work in advocacy and awareness; minister to

“I thought I was really in touch with the border reality only to find there is so much I need to learn.”

SISTER ADELINA GARCIA

farmworkers, immigrants and refugees; and are active in youth ministry. Sister Adelina is assistant director of Evangelization & Catechesis with the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas. Her role in the diocese, fluency in Spanish, and past work with World Youth Day made her a perfect fit.

Over the course of a week in September, the delegation visited El Paso, Texas; Las Cruces and Hatch, N.M.; and Ciudad Juarez and Anapra in Mexico. They met with migrants and farmworkers, coordinated spiritual services and got a first-hand look at the factors that drive so many migrants from their homes in Mexico and Central America – from volcanic ash ruining coffee crops and, in turn, economies in Guatemala to the persecution of Catholics in Nicaragua.

“That day I saw the face of Christ,” said a young teen who’d been recruited by his youth minister to come help at the border. With tears running down his face, he relayed his experience in Hatch of reaching out to the refugees coming into their community last summer.

Despite meager conditions – rising at 3 a.m. and working through the day until 7 p.m. while wearing headlamps at times to see the crops they harvest – migrant farmworkers take great pride in their work. “They are so proud of the work they do,” she says. “One man said to me, ‘We plant the seeds, watch them grow, harvest them and put food on the table of the people – this is Eucharist.’”

The stories Sister heard were both painful and inspirational. In New Mexico, she saw migrants shed tears as they recounted how, during recent mass migration from Central America, ►

Above: Sister Adelina Garcia (seated third from left) with her fellow delegates to the Southern Border.

some people did not even want to touch them. A youth minister rallied her youth group to clothe, feed and build relationships with the migrants. “We remembered how the people would hide Jews in their homes during World War II,” the youth minister said. “We did the same here.”

“It is so easy to dehumanize people when we do not know them, have not met them, do not see them face to face,” Sister Adelina says.

**“It’s not just about them.
It’s about all of us.”**

POPE FRANCIS

In Ciudad Juarez, the four bishops with the delegation blessed migrants at Casa del Migrante who had been denied assylum and were boarding a bus for deportation to Honduras. They heard the story of a young man who grew up in Seattle and spoke no Spanish but who faced an uncertain future under the DACA program.

In El Paso, they prayed at the Wal-Mart store where 22 people lost their lives in a racially-motivated mass shooting in August, and encountered three elderly sisters who aid pregnant mothers by keeping Casa Vides running entirely on donations with no government funding.

They also learned that in El Paso – which considers itself a city without borders – the immigration crisis is amplified by a virtual wall of laws and 53 miles of physical wall that cost \$700 million, more than twice the \$257 million in aid to Guatemala needed to address the issue at its roots.

In the absence of government action, the people along the border step up to welcome the stranger and model hospitality. The Church, likewise, is challenged to reach into its Catholic Social Teaching toolkit and, as Sister says, “assist those who are displaced, accompany our brothers and sisters and practice our faith as Gospel people. We are called to be *Gente Puente* (Bridge People).

“I thought I was really in touch with the border reality only to find there is so much I have to learn,” Sister Adelina says. “There are heroes living there on both sides. We, as religious, can make a big difference.” ■

People, Prayer & Potential

SFCR WELCOMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The past few months have been spent listening and learning for **Gena Tallarico**, the new executive director of our St. Francis Center for Renewal (SFCR) in Bethlehem, Pa. Gena joins **Sisters M. Virginelle Makos, Anita Kuchera, Barbara DeStefano** and **Marguerite Stewart** in steering the ministry that has delivered spiritual programming to Pennsylvania’s Lehigh Valley for more than 70 years.

Along with her own deep sense of spirituality, Gena brings a background in nursing, communications, and health and human performance management to the post. She’s tapped into her experience in using a whole-health approach to help people “be all they can be and thrive in God’s world.”

She is tasked now with expanding the Center’s reach, touch and service and bring more people of all ages closer to God through retreats and special programming. The sisters have welcomed her with open arms, and she says she feels blessed to interact with a diverse retreat audience. “I know that this work is more of a mission than a job,” Gena says. “I feel that God’s hands were at work in my journey here.”

The journey has brought her back to her local community and a place she says already feels like home. In between raising their children and spoiling their grandchildren, Gena and her husband **Vincent Tallarico**, a former SFCR board member, have attended many programs at the Center over the years. “There is such a need for the services that the Center provides in today’s world,” Gena says. “All one has to do is pick up any newspaper today to see the need.”

While Gena thinks outside the box to develop new ideas, she does so with the Center’s legacy in mind. “I love the sisters’ charism – to serve the real-world needs in the community – and the Center’s focus – to be an oasis of peace and health for all of God’s people,” Gena says. “If we listen carefully, the rest will emerge with God’s plan.”

With a knack for engaging others, Gena Tallarico had no qualms about slipping into a fun tomato suit and interacting with children during a recent event on the St. Francis Center for Renewal grounds.



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Anonymous | Elaine Competty | Carl & Loretta Francis | Janet Freismuth | Scott & Jennifer Hehr | Christine Jacko | Dennis & Jane Jacko | Rosemary Janik & Family | Brian & Marian Jobe | Anthony & Patricia Kascak | Michelle Kennedy | Clare & Evelyn Knapp | Joseph & Sharon Krug | David & Molly Luke | Dale & Xina Matuza | Deborah Giglio Mueller | Florence Naser | Ralph & Julia Nauman | James & Roberta O'Brien | John & Della Pappas | Janice Savinis | Judy Simpson | Loretta Spitz | Margie Squiller | Nancy Munsch Weixel | John & Joan York

Remembering **SISTER JULIA JACKO**

Anonymous | Carl & Loretta Francis | Scott & Jennifer Hehr | Christine Jacko | Dennis & Jane Jacko | Rosemary Janik & Family | Ralph & Julia Nauman | Betty Obies | James & Roberta O'Brien | John & Joan York

Remembering **MARY JANITZ**

Karen Hahn | Francis & Rita O'Brien | Elizabeth Pammer

Remembering

SISTER GEMMA JERABEK

Joseph & Sharon Krug

Remembering **BERNADETTE JURICK**

Florence Braszo

Remembering

SISTER GENEVIEVE MARY JURICK

Judy Marteney | Betty Trepanowski | Mary Zaken

Remembering **WILLIAM KARLIK**

Slovak Catholic Sokol Wreath 54

Remembering **HELEN KLAPAK**

Michael Klapak

In Honor *and* In Memory

The following donations were made between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019
in honor of or in memory of special loved ones:

Remembering **THOMAS KLOPACK**
Eugene & Cheryl Achey | Ray & Rose
Albertson | Milissa Bolcar | John & Judith
Davco Jr. | Steven & Bess Dierolf | Shirley
Downey Fertal & Family | Stephen &
Joanne Fertal III | Eleanor Franges | Robert
& Kathleen Klopach | Jeff & Mary Ann
McGowen | Mary Rivers | Phillip & Deanna
Seagreaves | Dennis & Mary Ann Snell
| John Stofanak | Mary Stofanak | Jayne
Trent | Stephanie Turek

Remembering
SISTER FELICITAS KONECNY
Kathryn Thompson

Honoring
SISTER NORBERTA KRALOSKY
Florence Braszo | Roger & Frances Dice |
Thomas Hursen

Remembering
SISTER KRISTINA LAURINCOVÁ
Rev. Gary & Linda Walbert

Remembering
SISTER ROSEMARY MADEJA
Joan Madeja

Remembering **JOHN W. MANGA**
John Manga

Remembering **SISTER MARY MANGA**
John Manga

Honoring **SISTER HILDA MAROTTA**
Michael & Audrey Curry

Remembering
SISTER MARCELLA MELUCH
Mary Chamberland

Remembering
SISTER CONCEPTA MINO
Nancy Mayornick Gray

Remembering
JOSEPH & MARGARET MORAN
Gregory & Virginia Moran

Honoring **SISTER IRENE NOVAK**
Alexander Slafkosky

Remembering
STATE REP. MICHAEL O'BRIEN
Bob Nieder

Remembering **JAMES OLEXA**
Barbara Miller

Remembering **SISTER RENE PARENT**
Anonymous | Stephen & Pat Bedics | Roger
& Marcella Boulanger | Larry & Linda
Dull | Patricia Flemming | Deacon & Mrs.
Reuben Hartzell | Grace Kelleher | Theresa
Kresge | Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Lipsky |
Barbara Miller | Kathy Smith | Catherine
Timko | Arthur Unger & Sons | Villa Clare
Aides | Clare & Clarice Vresk | Rev. Gary &
Linda Walbert

Remembering
SISTER FRANCES PASTUSEK
Janice Briggs | Mr. & Mrs. Roy Endy
& Family | Patricia Flemming | Grace
Kelleher | Villa Clare Aides | Arthur Unger
& Sons | Anthony & Theresa Vitacco |
Clare & Clarice Vresk | Rev. Gary & Linda
Walbert

Remembering
JOHN JOSEPH PIKIEWICZ
Dennis & Janice Stazer

Remembering **AGNES RUYAK**
Anne Marie Varga

Remembering
SISTER THERESE SEDLOCK
Mary Mae Klassen

Honoring
S. BERNADE MARIE STEMNOCK
Lou Celesky

Honoring
SISTER MARGUERITE STEWART
Ruben Wilburn

Remembering
SISTER IMMACULATA VAVREK
Ray & Phyllis Diroll

PLANNING AHEAD?

Are you interested in including the
School Sisters of St. Francis in your
will or otherwise leaving a lasting
impact on any of our sponsored
ministries? Please reach out to our
Finance Office at **412-766-7349** for
more information.



GENEROSITY ON THE GREEN

We are grateful to the golfers, donors and volunteers who helped to make our 21st annual Golf Outing in September a huge success. Held at Pittsburgh North Golf Club, the event raised more than \$9,000 for our sisters' retirement needs. Our 22nd annual outing is planned for late summer 2020. Details will be available next June.





The School Sisters of St. Francis

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Pittsburgh PA 15229

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Sisters Kathy Kudlac (left) and Frances Marie Duncan among artifacts in the entryway of the new Provincial Offices in Pittsburgh.

PROVINCIAL OFFICE ON THE MOVE

With the sale of Mount Assisi Convent this summer (see Pages 10-11), our Pittsburgh-based Provincial Offices moved in August to leased space less than three miles away. **Sisters Frances Marie Duncan**, provincial minister; **Marian Sgriccia**, provincial vicar; and **Kathy Kudlac**, provincial councilor and secretary, conduct our province's administrative functions there. **Linda Hyde**, finance director; **Nicole Knupsky**, communications coordinator; and **Sister Karen Buco**, financial assistant, also work there.

The new space includes a small library of Franciscan literature, two large curio cabinets filled with artifacts from our congregation, photo archives, and records from the former Mount Assisi Academy. A centerpiece is the antique desk – maintained in nearly mint condition – used by **Mother Methodia Bradac**, who served as provincial superior from 1927 to 1951 and principal of Mount Assisi Academy from 1928 to 1935 and 1942 to 1947.

Our sisters also lease back a few spaces within Mount Assisi – now Mt. Assisi Place personal care home – for storage and office work.