

ECHOES

ACROSS THE HORIZONS



Blessings Abound



A PUBLICATION OF THE SCHOOL SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS | U.S. PROVINCE

WINTER 2020-2021

ECHOES

ACROSS THE HORIZONS

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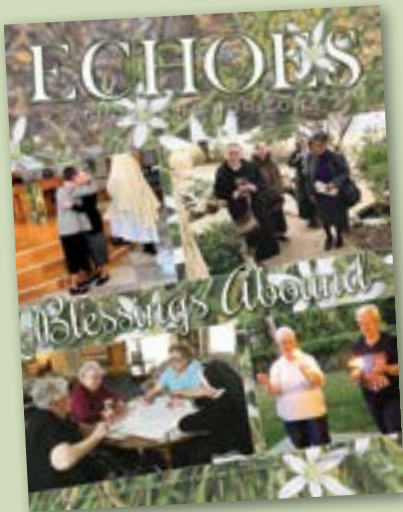
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Follow the sisters on Facebook and Instagram and visit our YouTube channel for ongoing updates from our community. Our handle is @schoolsistersosf.



WITH YOU ALWAYS

In Spirit

It would be quite an understatement to say that 2020 has been a trying year. We hope that you, like us, have been buoyed by your faith and the love of those you hold dear, even if social distancing means you must hold them from afar. You are on our minds, too, as we extend prayers to our family members, friends, alumnae and benefactors. Please know that we are with you in spirit and have crafted a few special ways to stay connected.

Ever Adapting: As you will read about in this issue, our St. Francis Center for Renewal has greatly expanded its catalog of online programming to provide spiritual enrichment to you wherever you are. If you haven't already done so, we hope you will register for one of our upcoming programs and connect with us through the wonders of technology.

Meeting a Need: During times when food pantries have become an increasingly critical resource, our Monocacy Farm Project has responded by continuing to provide fresh produce to needy families. The outdoor farming ministry has been one of the few avenues by which we've been able to interact with the community this year.

Weekly Connections: It has been our great pleasure to share good news with you weekly through our *Tidings in Troubled Times* and *Spiritual Sunday* email messages. We know that not all of you use email or computers, but we are always adding more names to our network of friends in faith. If you would like to receive our messages, share your email address by calling **412-761-2855** or dropping a line to administrationusa@schoolsistersosf.org.

Website Wonders: Soon you will hear from us about our annual spring raffle. As virtually all of our special events were canceled or adapted in 2020 due to the pandemic, these small fundraisers remain so important in continuing our ministries and caring for our retired Sisters. Patrons will be able to purchase tickets online or by mail this year. With the launch of our new website in late 2019, we can also accept online donations, whether to our annual appeal, in memory of loved ones or with special intentions.

Calling All Alumnae: We are so proud of our alumnae and consider ourselves blessed to have played a role, no matter how small, in your education and spiritual development. We enjoy hearing from you and encourage you to share updates about yourself by visiting the *Alumnae Portal* section of our website. There are special sections for each of our former high schools — Mount Assisi Academy in Pittsburgh, St. Francis Academy in Bethlehem and St. Francis Academy in San Antonio — and a general section for those we taught in parish schools.

Looking Ahead: We are not sure what the future holds, so this issue of *Echoes Across the Horizons* does not include dates for any special events in 2021. The health of our Sisters, retreatants, patrons and friends is our top priority, so we will not hold any large-scale events until it is safe to do so. This means that our ability to see you in person — which means so much to our Sisters — will remain limited for the time being. But we know you are with us in prayer and, like us, have faith that God is always present. May all of His blessings be yours. ■

www.SchoolSistersOSF.org



Administrators old and new gathered to bless the transition of Mount Assisi Convent to Mt. Assisi Place. Pictured are (from left to right) Kathy Jones, Diane Ott, Sister Kathy Kudlac, Dennis Jones, Michael Ott, Dr. Matthew Coppola, Cindy McCullough, Sister Marian Sgriccia, Kate Guay and Sister Frances Marie Duncan. Below, Sister Cecilia Jacko places a historical photo of Mount Assisi Convent at the altar.

IN GOOD HANDS

Queen of Angels Chapel at the former Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh, Pa., has hosted many blessed events over the decades, but perhaps none so monumental as *A Grateful Transition*, a special prayer service held in December 2019 to mark the transition of the former motherhouse property to Mt. Assisi Place personal care home.

The School Sisters of St. Francis have called Mount Assisi home since 1928, but aging membership and fiscal realities prompted the Sisters to sell the property in 2019 to 934 LLC, a group of Pittsburgh-area investors who have committed to carrying forward the Sisters' century-long mission of service.

The prayer service and reception that followed honored the Sisters' humble beginnings in the United States and their efforts to build the motherhouse — brick by brick by brick — to house their growing congregation, the thriving

Mount Assisi Academy (1928-1978) and, eventually, Marian Hall Personal Care Home (1970-2019) and Mount Assisi Academy Preschool (1980-2018).

Several of the Sisters carried bricks to represent the building's construction and a historical photo of the "Gleam on the Hilltop" in ceremonial procession. Blessings were bestowed upon the continued success of Mt. Assisi Place, the 81-bed personal care home that now occupies the property and that is home to 12 elder members of the School Sisters of St. Francis.

Following the prayer service, those assembled gathered in St. Francis



Library — the original motherhouse chapel — for a reception. The evening offered prayerful closure for and celebration of the property transition and the continued care of those in need — in this case the elderly — just as the Sisters envisioned when they broke ground on the Mount Assisi complex in 1926.

"It is kind of a time capsule," said **Sister Marian Sgriccia**, current provincial vicar and former administrator of Marian Hall Home for 19 years. "We hold in our hearts the years our Sisters built upon this hill to now, a time of rejoicing that our charism and faith can be continued through Mt. Assisi Place."

The Sisters continue to coordinate Masses and other spiritual activities at Mt. Assisi Place and have an enduring presence there, both in person and through artifacts throughout the building. ■



Beyond Bricks & Mortar

SFCR MEETS GROWING NEED FOR REMOTE PROGRAMMING

As has been the case with many small organizations, troubled times have presented challenges for our St. Francis Center for Renewal in Bethlehem, Pa., which closed its door to in-person programming in March with the rise of the pandemic. In response, the Center has expanded its online capability to better serve the homebound, which now includes all of us — young, middle-aged and beyond.

“We are not shying away from our mission or our work,” says **Gena Tallarico**, executive director. “With so much anxiety, loss and grief surrounding us, we believe that there has never been a time of greater need for the services that we provide.”

The Center conducted a survey in the fall to gauge the kind of programming that retreatants most desire. The responses have figured into the 2021 calendar of programs and retreats — virtual for now until onsite physical programming can safely resume — including everything from the popular *Simply Prayer* sessions to specialized programs focused on wellness, faith and self-reflection.

“We hope that we all will not only soldier on, but grow in ways that help us to emerge stronger and better for the journey,” Gena says.

The Center also hosted its 10th annual Star Struck Gala & Silent Auction entirely online in 2020. More than 100 items were auctioned during the week-long event. Many sponsors and donors also stepped up to support the program.

Calm Amid the Chaos

We crave reassurance and guidance from God, especially in stressful times. Treat yourself to an overnight or two in solitude with time to pray, to listen, to feel His presence. SFCR's clean and sanitized San Damiano hermitage apartment is open, and a select number of single rooms are available in the Center itself. Overnight stays are feasible for individuals or small groups of up to five.

Patrons are expected to follow COVID-19 safety protocols and are responsible for their own meals. The hermitage has its own kitchenette. Those who stay in the Renewal Center have access to a kitchenette in which to prepare and eat meals.

For information or to book a stay, call **610-867-8890** or email **stfranciscenter@gmail.com**.

“Thank you from the bottom of our hearts,” Gena says. “Your support is a blessing to the Sisters and staff and especially helps to sustain us — both spiritually and financially — during the COVID disruption.”

Supporters and friends have risen to the occasion and found ways to keep afloat the Center's mission to provide a Christ-centered environment of hospitality, caring and love and to remain an oasis of peace and healing for all God's people. ■

Special Sundays

OUR SISTERS SHARE TRADITIONS & ACTIVITIES THAT MADE SUNDAYS THE MOST SPECIAL DAY OF THE WEEK IN THEIR FAMILY HOMES



Sisters Rosaria and Amata Shina — shown here as young girls — still miss their daddy's special Sunday breakfasts.

THE VERY BEST BREAKFAST

"My Dad made the best bacon and eggs in Northampton! On any given Sunday morning, my sister, my mother and I would attend the 8 a.m. Mass. We walked to church because we had no car. When we returned, we were certain to find dad at the stove busy frying the bacon. When he had breakfast ready, he rounded us up to come to the table. Fresh coffee, extra crispy bacon, scrambled eggs — nice and soft — and toast were on the table waiting for us. This was a special Sunday treat. After breakfast, we cleaned up, and dad headed out the door to attend Sunday Mass. His breakfasts could stand the test of time with any that you might buy at Perkins!"

— Sister Amata Shina



"We attended Sunday Mass at St. Gabriel Church (on Pittsburgh's North Side). After Mass was our simple dinner, followed by family dancing. As custom had it, the dirty dishes were piled on the sink, the big kitchen table was pushed to the back, and my brother Frank turned on his prized Hi-Fi. The kitchen floor was the dance floor. Mom and Dad were too tired to dance, but they sang along with the polka songs. Everyone was enjoying the music and life."

— Sister Norberta Kralosky



"In my family home, Sundays were very special days. We children all went to the 9 a.m. Mass. My mother was already there from an earlier Mass, but she already had the big pot of soup on the stove. Our job was to make sure we cut the potatoes and carrots and put them into the soup so they would be ready when my mother came home. My dad went to Mass, and then the Slovak Club had their meeting. So after the noon Mass, we were all at home ready to eat our big pot of soup made with homemade noodles, of course. Oh, what a feast! We loved every spoonful. And by 3 p.m., my sister and I were in the swimming pool or sled-riding if it was winter."

— Sister Rosalia Giba



"I have fond memories of my childhood living in Greenfield, a suburb of Pittsburgh. Every Sunday, as a family — Mom, Dad, Ed, Steve, Chuck, Mary Lou and Rita May — we would go to St. Joachim Church for Mass. We would fill the whole bench. Afterwards, my dad would take the family for a Sunday ride.

The first stop was the classic main Isaly's store in Oakland, where we would get our favorite Skyscraper ice cream cones or Klondikes. Occasionally, dad would drive to Schenley Park. Mom would spread out a blanket, where we sat and had our picnic lunch. We would run and play in the park. There was a small merry-go-round and a large running fountain where we would frolic in the water."

— Sister Mary Lou Metro





NIGHT AT THE RACES

More than 250 people attended our 2020 Night at the Races fundraiser last February in Pittsburgh. The gymnasium at Mt. Assisi Place was filled with the sounds of laughter and anticipation, as the crowd took their chances on 10 races via video and a variety of great raffles. “We were also happy to welcome everyone back to ‘the hilltop,’ where Mt. Assisi Place personal care home now occupies the former Mount Assisi Convent property,” says **Sister Marian Sgriccia**, provincial vicar. “It was a chance to show people that our mission is still alive here.”

BASKETS OF LOVE

In keeping with our mission to help the poor and otherwise needy, our **Sisters Jo Goolish** and **Yolanda Escamilla** have been building baskets filled with household and toiletry items for needy families and those experiencing hard times in San Antonio, Texas. Among the baskets was one intended for a family with seven children who lost their home to fire.

A PLACE TO CELEBRATE

As shown in the photo below, the former Mount Assisi Academy science lab and convent crafts room has been repurposed into a community room to provide the 12 sisters at Mt. Assisi Place a space to gather and pursue their passions. In addition to hosting socials, the room has three computer stations and areas for sewing, puzzle-making, caring for plants, playing board games, doing crafts and sharing conversation.

Below: Sisters in the Pittsburgh area enjoy a pre-pandemic gathering in the former science lab turned community room at Mt. Assisi Place in Pittsburgh.

MFP CULTIVATES PARTNERSHIP

Sister Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster and **Eli Stogsdill**, managers of our Monocacy Farm Project ministry in Bethlehem, Pa., took part in a roundtable discussion with environmental studies and religious studies students at Muhlenburg College. The class, which is exploring the connection between ecology and theology, also plans to do hands-on learning and volunteering at the farm.

NEW YEAR'S BLESSING

New Year's 2020 marked an extra special celebration at San Damiano Convent in Pittsburgh, Pa., where our Sisters gathered to dedicate the new tabernacle and welcome the Blessed Sacrament to the chapel there. **Rev. Dennis Buranosky** celebrated Mass and blessed the tabernacle, then the Sisters enjoyed a reception and New Year's Eve celebration together. With permission from the Diocese of Pittsburgh for reservation of the Most Blessed Sacrament at San Damiano, the tabernacle was purchased in Assisi as a gift from the estate of **Sister Frances Marie Duncan's** aunt and community benefactor **Evelyn Amoroso**.

NEW PRAYER PARTNERS

Four members of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth recently moved from their former Pittsburgh motherhouse to Mt. Assisi Place, becoming fast friends and prayer partners with our 12 Sisters in residence there. The foursome often joins our Sisters for evening prayer and have attended birthday and feastday gatherings in our community room. The personal care home is growing in popularity among retired religious, as a diocesan priest recently moved in and a second priest is expected to arrive soon.





Sister Adelina Garcia reviews materials in preparation for the online conference in San Angelo, Texas.

Nurturing Faith Among Families

The Office of Evangelization & Catechesis in San Angelo, Texas — led by our own **Sisters Hilda Marotta** and **Adelina Garcia** — hosted its annual diocesan conference, *Nurturing Families in the Church Today*, entirely online in October. A keynote address by **Paul Jarzembowski**, national coordinator of youth and young adult ministries with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, was complemented by some wonderful breakout sessions. “Having young adults at the pastoral center made this possible,” says Sister Adelina.

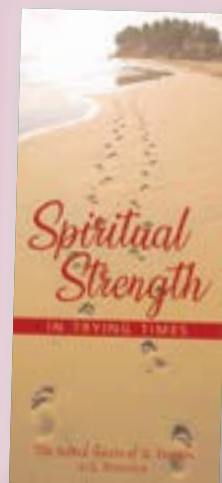
This fall, St. Francis Center for Renewal also hosted a special online program entitled *Practical Parenting for a Faith-Filled Family*.

Aside from their diocesan duties, Sisters Hilda and Adelina run our Franciscan Resource Center in San Angelo, which offers bilingual programming. While the pandemic has limited offerings, the FRC continues to host small groups for spiritual enrichment. To learn more, visit www.FRCSanAngelo.org.

Spiritual Strength in Trying Times

There's still plenty of time to answer the Sisters' 2020-2021 Annual Appeal, ***Spiritual Strength in Trying Times***, and make a contribution to support our good works. Donate online at our website SchoolSistersOSF.org or mail your donation to **School Sisters of St. Francis, 4900 Perry Highway, Suite 201, Pittsburgh PA 15229** before **June 30, 2021**, to be listed in next year's edition of *Echoes Across the Horizons*. We thank you and wish God's blessings upon you.

You will also find tucked into this issue of *Echoes Across the Horizons* a card and envelope with which to submit your intentions to our 2020-2021 Prayer Ministry. Requests are placed in the chapels at Monocacy Manor and Mt. Assisi Place for prayer throughout the year.



The Power of Prayer in a Pandemic

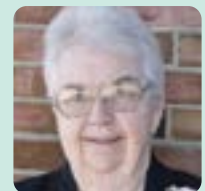
“The best thing we can give to each other is our prayers. Two years into retirement, I have found that prayer is the foundation of my day. And here we are in confinement, a perpetual retreat, a second novitiate. That statement — ‘Prayer is the foundation of my day’ — is truer than ever before.”

— Sister Pat Marie Buranosky



“If you like to read, here is an opportunity to catch up on all the books you wanted to read and didn't have time. Best of all, take your Bible; close your eyes; open to a page; say, ‘Lord, talk to me,’ and read the scripture passage to which your finger is pointing. Sit with God and listen to what he says to you.”

— Sister Barbara Ann Webster



“Despite social distancing, we are never alone. Our God is always with us. Humans and all of creation are interconnected, since God is the life-source of us all. No physical distance can take that away from us.”

— Sister Patricia Ann Mahoney



“My favorite place during this time is the tiny chapel in Antonia Hall at Mt. Assisi Place. It is peaceful and beautiful. There is no social distancing between Jesus and me!”

— Sister Roselyn Kuzma



From the Ground Up

Food insecurity ramped up in 2020 due to economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, making the work of our Monocacy Farm Project in Bethlehem, Pa., more crucial than ever.

Through its *Grow Healthy Community* initiative, the farm provides fresh produce to a dozen soup kitchens, food pantries and shelters throughout Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley, some of which saw the demand for food and services double in the past year. The farm also partnered with St. Francis Center for Renewal in hosting a food drive in early summer to help supplement local food pantries.

"Overall, our harvest was robust with high mid-summer support from our volunteers," says **Sister Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster**, project director. "Led by our new project manager, **Eli Stogsdill**, we provided several tons of produce in

FARMING MINISTRY PRODUCES RESULTS IN TIMES OF NEED

an ongoing, steady supply of donations to our partners in the emergency food system."

This very tangible impact came during a year when MFP was chosen as the 2020 Social Mission Partner of *Fig Bethlehem*, a publication that "energizes a thriving, sustainable local economy and highlights community revitalization efforts."

"In shining a light on the Monocacy Farm Project, *Fig* illuminates the urgent needs of underserved communities and of the Earth — our common home," says Sister Bonnie Marie.

The broad community threw its weight behind MFP too, as measured by the success of two fall fundraisers —

Pairing with a Cause, co-sponsored by Embassy Bank and nearby Black River Farms Vineyard & Winery, and the fifth annual Monocacy Farm Food Festival, which moved entirely online this year to auction food, farming and family-friendly items.

The farm's fastest growing effort is its *Pick-Your-Own* program, which welcomes area residents to the farm three times a week during the growing season to pick fresh vegetables and wildflowers in exchange for a donation. All donations benefit *Grow Healthy Community*.

MFP is cultivating its future, as well, partnering with Middle Atlantic Renewable Energy Association on solar panel installation to power the farm and reduce costs. In addition, renovations are planned to an existing building that will house a cultivating tractor, implements and field supplies. ■

Monocacy Farm Project runs on mission and the efforts of Sister Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster, project director; Eli Stogsdill, project manager; Amy Baringer, marketing and events coordinator; and Bob Drake, board member. Photo courtesy of Fig.



To support MFP's current programs or future initiatives, donate online at www.MonocacyFarmProject.org.



While in Texas, the Sisters did a little local shopping in San Antonio and visited with Sister Hilda Marotta and immigrants at the Franciscan Resource Center in San Angelo.

Special Visitors

Our Sisters throughout the U.S. Province enjoyed spending time with **Sisters Kveta Vinklárková, Livia Gardianová** and **Pacifika Jusková** — leaders of our international congregation — when they came for General Visitation in late 2019.

Over the course of more than four weeks, the General Administrators made extended stops in Bethlehem, Pittsburgh and Texas, sharing individual and group time with each Sister and taking in a few landmarks along the way. Among the highlights:

- A heart-filled Texas welcome in San Antonio by St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association, as graduates hosted the Sisters for dinner at Mi Tierra Restaurant
- A tour of New York City by boat, bus and on foot
- Sharing time with immigrants and hearing their migration stories during a gathering at our Franciscan Resource Center in San Angelo, Texas
- A tour of Pennsylvania's Amish country
- A trip to see Olgebay's Festival of Lights with the Sisters in the Pittsburgh area
- Taking in a performance of *The Miracle of Christmas* at Sights & Sound Theatre in Lancaster, Pa., while enroute from Pittsburgh to Bethlehem
- Tours of historical sites in Pittsburgh and Bethlehem

It is customary for the General Administration to visit each province worldwide during each five-year administrative term. New leadership teams for the international congregation and our own U.S. Province will be elected in August 2021.



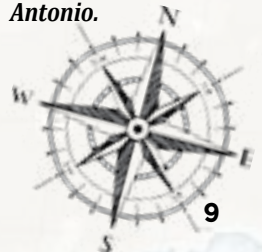
Sisters Yolanda Escamilla and Jo Goolish hosted our visitors during their stop in San Antonio, Texas.



The Sisters at Little Flower House in Pittsburgh have a time of group sharing with Sisters Pacifika, Kveta and Livia.



Sisters Livia and Kveta are serenaded by a Mariachi band at Mi Tierra Restaurant in San Antonio.



A New Normal

This year, we've witnessed devastating pain, loss of loved ones, fears and anxiety — all resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. We hear the question asked again and again: "Will things ever get back to the way they were ... back to normal?"

The response from many is "No." We can't go back. We must create a new normal — one of hope, of self-sacrificing love, of caring, of generous service. All qualities displayed by doctors, nurses, first-responders, volunteers. Neighbors helping neighbors, friends, relatives and, yes, even strangers giving of themselves with such loving care. "What can we do?" they've asked. Here at St. Francis Center for Renewal, we've received many calls from people asking how we are and if they can help us in any way.

Can this — *will this* — be the new normal that God is pointing us to?

Scripture is always a wonderful guide for us. Last spring, we celebrated the Easter season. It's quite interesting to note how what we experienced then and continue to experience relates to the passion and resurrection. Jesus suffered and died, the apostles were fearful and confused. But with Jesus' rising and His Spirit coming upon the disciples, a "new normal" for the church begins.

Perhaps no other gospel passage addresses hope more directly or more beautifully than the story of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. They've decided to take a walk. They needed desperately to get away from Jerusalem. They chose to go to Emmaus, about seven miles away. It was the first day of the week, after the worst weekend of their lives. As they walked, they were joined by a stranger.

"What are you talking about?" He asks.

"You don't know?" And they go on to tell

Jesus the story of the terrible weekend. They end by saying, "We had hoped."

Yes, the disciples were hoping ... hoping that Jesus was the Messiah, hoping he would free them from slavery ... hoping he would never die.

Hope.

We know the end of the story — the disciples invited Jesus to have dinner with them, and they finally recognized Him in the breaking of the bread. And He disappears.



A New Hope is re-kindled in the disciples. "Were not our hearts on fire as He spoke?" They quickly returned to Jerusalem to tell the others that they had seen Jesus. There they hear that Jesus had also appeared to Peter and John. Their hope was renewed, and the new church had begun ... new. Not like it was, but a new normal, fashioned after the love, compassion and spirit of Jesus.

God is here, but maybe we do not recognize Him.

In hearing this story proclaimed, I've always been perplexed that these disciples did not recognize Jesus. They were His disciples, with Him so much. Did He disguise himself? If so, why? The answer is no. Perhaps the disciples were so caught up in themselves, distracted, distraught and afraid. Certainly they never thought for one moment that He would come to them. But Jesus took the initiative and was present to them. And they finally recognized Him in the breaking of the bread.

This can so often happen to us. "Where is God in all this?" we ask, in all of this loss and this suffering? God is here, but maybe we do not recognize him. Recently on the news they showed destruction from tornadoes. They showed a house, completely destroyed, where they found a little 5-year-old boy completely unharmed. In the many stories of the coronavirus ... so many people doing so much good ... God is present. We are not alone!

Yes, God is present in this pandemic: In the suffering, and in the love of those who are trying and doing so much good to help one another. It is so important that this love, caring, giving of ourselves continues to grow so that we will truly have a new normal. Many of us are spending our time these days at home. What a very good thing it can be for us to spend this time in prayer, good reading and listening to God. He is present, and we are not alone! ■

A former vicar general of our international congregation, Sister Marguerite Stewart is a program facilitator and spiritual director at St. Francis Center for Renewal in Bethlehem, Pa.



Silver Linings

A small cactus is an example of how, even in nature, beauty can blossom in the harshest of conditions. While the pointy spines may prick our fingers, the colorful flowers that grow from within are to be treasured. This is not unlike all that we are experiencing in our world right now as, all around us, good deeds, simple acts of mercy and kindness and a newfound sense of appreciation have sprung up from the prickly problems of the pandemic. God has given us time to step back, slow down and readjust our collective focus to what is truly important in our lives. Peek around the sharp spines of life and see the lush blessings that bloom within our world. Like cacti, we too can thrive in harsh conditions.

"I believe we are learning to see what is truly essential in life. We are connecting more with people through email, texts, calls or writing. We are realizing that our actions have a grave impact on others, and that we are only as safe as the least safe person in the group ... our actions impact the whole."



— Sister Frances Marie Duncan



"The coronavirus pandemic has given me the opportunity to reflect more deeply than ever before on the universality of the Church and how connected we all are as the Body of Christ. Let's pray for each other always and live like those who are full of hope!"

— Sister Elaine Hromulak

"I have been awakened to the heroism, dedication and sacrifice of people who are truly an inspiration to me. I have come to recognize, in particular, the hard work of employees in all kinds of service jobs who get such little pay and can barely make ends meet for their families. Recognizing all this is, indeed, a silver lining in this difficult time our whole world is experiencing."



— Sister Georgette Dublino



"I feel that this pandemic has put us in a position to pay more attention to the present needs and struggles of our relatives, friends and my Sisters in community, as well as those of people around the world. It has helped me to realize, more than ever before, how much we all need God's help and each other."

— Sister Karen Buco

"This is a time to think about our lives because, before, we did not have enough time for anything. We were busy working and doing other things. Now God is giving us this time to think about Him and thank Him for all the graces we have received until now."



— Sister Gracy Kundukulam

IN FOND MEMORY | MAY THEY REST IN PEACE



S. Geraldine Ann Kasper

August 20, 1937 — February 9, 2020

Sister Geraldine Ann Kasper (formerly Sister Hyacinth) died on February 9, 2020, in Pittsburgh, Pa. She was 82 and in her 64th year of religious life. Geraldine Ann was born to John and Anna (Golitzko) Kasper in McKees Rocks, Pa. The eldest of three children, Geraldine Ann's early years were spent at St. Mark Catholic School in McKees Rocks, before going on to attend Mount Assisi Academy in Pittsburgh.

Sister entered the community from St. Mark Parish in 1955 and professed first vows in 1956 at Mount Assisi Convent. She held a bachelor's degree in education from Mount Mercy College (Carlow University) in Pittsburgh and a master's degree in theological studies from the Oblate College of the Southwest (Oblate School of Theology) in San Antonio, Texas.

Throughout 57 years of ministry, Sister Geraldine Ann taught in the Pennsylvania towns of Ellsworth, Farrell, Clymer, Perryopolis, Erie, Tarentum and Canonsburg. She also taught at St. Francis Academy in San Antonio, Texas. Later, Sister served as a pastoral minister and director of religious education at several churches.

Sister Gerry, as most called her, loved to read biographies and enjoyed doing crafts, shopping, watching good movies and visiting with family. In her later years, she loved to color adult coloring books and often colored postcard-size pictures with scripture quotes to share with others.

Gerry is remembered as a Godmother who loved the joy of children and knew how to not only be a Sister, but also a friend. As one Sister said, "The serenity of her spirit emanated from her and had a calming effect on others. Her gentle and peaceful spirit will be a lasting memory of her life."

S. Constance Frank

October 13, 1926 — March 28, 2020

Sister Constance Frank (formerly Sister Clara) died on March 28, 2020, at Mt. Assisi Place in Pittsburgh, Pa. She was 93 and in her 72nd year of religious life.

Born to Michael Paul and Emma Judith (Shuba) Frank in Pittsburgh, Pa., she was one of three children in a devoutly Catholic Slovak family. Michael had been taught by one of our pioneer sisters, Sister Constance Linhart. He named his daughter in her memory and insisted that she attend secondary school at Mount Assisi Academy, where she was salutatorian of her class.

Constance entered the community from St. Gabriel Parish in 1945 and was received into the novitiate a year later at Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh, where she was given the name of Sister Clara. She professed first vows in 1947 and immediately began teaching the elementary grades. Her final profession was in 1952. Sister Constance held a bachelor's degree in education from Mount Mercy College (now Carlow University) in Pittsburgh, and a master's degree in both music and theology from Duquesne University, also in Pittsburgh.

Throughout 37 years of ministry, Sister taught at parish schools in Pennsylvania and the high school grades at Mount Assisi Academy in Pittsburgh and St. Francis Academy in San Antonio, Texas. She was involved in retreat ministry in Arizona and West Virginia before serving 24 years at the former Marian Hall Home (now Mt. Assisi Place). She also served as liturgist for Mount Assisi Convent.

Sister Constance is remembered as an exceptionally talented liturgist who mastered the organ with great precision and discipline. Energized by correspondence courses she took to keep up with current theology, Sister loved solving crossword and word puzzles, reading anything theological and, of course, her music and the liturgy.



S. Rose Ann Rovnak

July 19, 1926 — April 5, 2020

Sister Rose Ann Rovnak (formerly Sister Justine) died on April 5, 2020, at Vincentian Home in Pittsburgh, Pa. She was 93 and in her 74th year of religious life.

One of 11 children, Sister entered the community in 1943 from Holy Family Parish in Erie, Pa.. She professed first vows in 1945 and final vows in 1951 at Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh. She held a bachelor's degree in education from Seton Hall University in New Jersey and also took courses at Mount Mercy College (now Carlow University) in Pittsburgh and at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Sister Rose Ann taught the elementary grades at parish schools in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Texas and West Virginia for a total of 38 years. She also attended the Beauty Academy of Pittsburgh and was awarded a diploma in beauty culture.

Sister Rose Ann spent 16 years in internal ministry as the community driver, administrator and director of building services at the former Mount Assisi Convent complex. During her retirement years, Sister remained faithful to prayer ministry.

Sister Rose Ann was a member of the local Ministerium, a group of local clergy and representatives of religious congregations who came together for prayer, fellowship and other ecumenical events.

Remembered for her faithfulness and graciousness in visiting our Sisters when they were hospitalized or in nursing homes, Sister Rose Ann enjoyed shopping for Sisters who could not get out themselves and often brought them treats to share.

Sister Rose Ann preceded in death by only months her blood sister, Sister Margaret Elaine Rovnak.

S. Margaret Elaine Rovnak

November 20, 1930 — August 20, 2020

Sister Margaret Elaine Rovnak (formerly Sister Michaeline) died on August 20, 2020, in Pittsburgh, Pa. She was 89 and in her 70th year of religious life.

Margaret Elaine was one of 11 children of Michael and Anna (Macosko) Rovnak, all members of Holy Family Parish in Erie, Pa. In 1948, Margaret Elaine followed in the footsteps of her elder sister, Rose Ann, in joining the School Sisters of St. Francis. Upon her reception into the congregation, Margaret Elaine received the name Sister Michaeline. She made her first vows in 1950 and final vows in 1955 at Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh, Pa. She earned a bachelor's degree in education with a major in social studies from Carlow College (now Carlow University) in Pittsburgh.

Prior to her final profession, Sister Margaret Elaine was already a veteran of teaching assignments in the Pennsylvania towns of Tarentum, Charleroi and Pittsburgh. She went on to teach grade school and faith formation classes in the towns of Barnesboro, Farrell, Canonsburg, Ellsworth, Perryopolis, Ambridge, Springdale, Erie and Clymer, Pa., and served for five years as principal of St. John the Baptist School in Perryopolis.

Sister Margaret Elaine had a gift for ministering to children, as well as to the elderly. While teaching first grade in Tarentum, she took special care of a child with Down Syndrome and, Sister taught first grade in Erie and encouraged vocations to the religious life and priesthood. One little boy who followed his vocation call and entered the seminary kept in touch with Sister for years. For 22 years, Sister was assistant high rise administrator at Vista South LLC in New Castle, Pa., where she loved playing bingo and talking with the residents.

Sister Margaret Elaine will always be remembered for her ability to celebrate anything with a home-cooked meal. Her haluski were fabulous, and she was energized by seeing people happy.



Sister Amata Shina works on a jigsaw puzzle in a common area at Villa Clare in Bethlehem, Pa.

Is Your Life Like a Jigsaw Puzzle?

SISTER AMATA SHINA REFLECTS ON GOD'S WILL

Any time that you happen to walk through Villa Clare, a section of our Monocacy Manor residence in Bethlehem, Pa., you'll notice that there is a puzzle in progress on the table. Many Sisters stop there and try to find some of the missing puzzle pieces.

Since we are confined to our Villa space during this pandemic, we have time to do things we might otherwise not. We recently completed two 1,000-piece puzzles. As we thought about it, we realized that our lives are just like jigsaw puzzles.

I like putting jigsaw puzzles together. They are time-consuming but, at the same time, they provide a great lesson in patience and persistence. Every piece counts toward making the finished puzzle the beautiful picture it is.

Just like each piece of the jigsaw puzzle is important to having a finished picture, the same is true with every human trait that we possess. We all have negative and positive traits ... things we like about ourselves and dislike about others. When we know how to use everything we have, we can embrace the fact that each puzzle piece is unique and very valuable to completing the puzzle.

Just like each puzzle piece needs to interlock with its compliment to fit together, the same is true for us. God has the right pieces to make the puzzle of your life fit. Our lives are truly masterpieces!

The only difference between our lives and the jigsaw puzzle is that our lives are not finished masterpieces. Our lives are always changing, but what does stay the same is that every trait that makes up our magnificent beings is always there. So, we are still masterpieces but not finished ones!

God is not finished with us. We are masterpieces in progress! ■



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It is with deep gratitude that we acknowledge and thank you, our generous donors, for your contributions. Only with your help are we able to continue our ministries. Therefore, you share with us in spreading the Gospel and building up God's Kingdom. Thank you for your support, and may God continue to bless you.

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Plenty of Peace to Go Around

The Catholic Sisters Leadership Council of Western Pennsylvania called upon local communities of women religious to take part in the *Peace Doves Project* leading up to the United Nations International Day of Peace on September 21. Our Sisters at Mt. Assisi Place in Pittsburgh and their friends from the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth rose to the challenge by trimming and decorating more than 150 peace dove ornaments to share with other residents of the personal care home and with parishioners of local churches.

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Love of Our Lady in Two Languages

Each Tuesday, **Sister Mary Martha Zammatore** connects with friends in faith to pray the Rosary online in a bilingual format through the Zoom online meeting application. "The group isn't big, but it is growing," Sister says. "It has always been a bilingual Rosary in honor of the Mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe to unite cultures in love." Sister accompanies prayers with song by playing her guitar. The group prays the Rosary beginning at 2:15 p.m. on Tuesdays and adds the Divine Mercy at 3 p.m. If you'd like to take part, email Sister Mary Martha at mzammatore@hotmail.com.

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A New Way to Associate

Our lay Associates in Bethlehem, Pittsburgh, New Jersey, Texas and Arizona have adopted Zoom technology as a means to meet and communicate while physical meetings are not currently possible. Guided by **Sisters Anita Kuchera, Rosaria Shina and Barbara DeStefano**, about 20-30 Associates gather virtually each month to catch up and share their perspectives on life during COVID-19 and to reflect on readings from *Francis & Jesus* by **Murray Bodo**.

In Honor & In Memory

The following donations were made between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020
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A MOST Unique Celebration

If you had asked **Sisters Carol Ann Papp** and **Anita Kuchera** a year ago if they'd be celebrating their 50th and 70th jubilees respectively while wearing face masks during a pandemic, they would have thought it a crazy question. But these are crazy times. And so, with health and safety protocols in place, Sisters Carol Ann and Anita marked milestones in religious life in a small, socially-distanced gathering at Monocacy Manor in Bethlehem, Pa., in August.

Sisters and guests were spaced throughout the cozy Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel and adjacent rooms as **Rev. Msgr. John Martin** — who also celebrated when Sister Carol Ann made her final vows back in 1977 — presided over the liturgy and renewal of vows. Sister Carol Ann's family members played and sang traditional and original songs as a musical backdrop. Afterwards, the Sisters shared a luncheon and, of course, cake.

Sisters Jo Goolish, Jeanne Marie Ulica and **Gracy Kundukulam** — who were unable to travel from Texas, Rome and Pittsburgh during the pandemic — have elected to postpone their milestone celebrations until next summer, when they will join our 2021 jubilarians. **Sister Margaret Elaine Rovnak**, who later died on August 20, also marked 70 years in religious life.



Sister Anita was all smiles while cutting the celebratory cake.



Sisters Anita and Carol Ann welcome Rev. Msgr. John Martin as celebrant.



To enable social distancing, Sisters Anne Kutch, Irene Novak and Amata Shina follow along from a room adjacent to the chapel.



Sister Carol Ann and her sister and brother-in-law with flowers donated in memory of their parents.



*Sister Anita Kuchera
70 Years*



*Sister Margaret Elaine Rovnak
70 Years*



*Sister Jo Goolish
60 Years*



*Sister Jeanne Marie Ulica
60 Years*



*Sister Carol Ann Papp
50 Years*



*Sister Gracy Kundukulam
25 Years*



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A Farewell Blessing

As many daily activities and spiritual rituals have been sidelined by the COVID-19 pandemic, our community has indefinitely postponed memorial Masses for **Sisters Constance Frank, Rose Ann Rovnak and Margaret Elaine Rovnak**, who died earlier this year. Before the weather turned colder, however, we hosted a unique visitation and committal service for the three Sisters in September at Mt. Assisi Place.

Urns containing the Sisters' cremated remains were arranged in the Mt. Assisi Place foyer for a short visitation that could be attended both by visitors who stayed outside and by the Sisters in personal care there, who stayed inside. Several members of the Rovnak Family and Sister Connie's niece attended to hear



blessings by **Father Donald Buchleitner**.

The group then processed to St. Francis Cemetery, where the urns were buried. Afterwards, guests attended a socially-distanced outdoor luncheon at San Damiano Convent. Formal memorial Masses for all three Sisters will be held when the pandemic wanes, hopefully some time in 2021.