

ECHOES

ACROSS THE HORIZONS



Sisters in Action

Extending Our Hearts & Hands to
God's People & the World Around Us

A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE

*This summer, our U.S. Province elected its 2021-2026 Provincial Administration.
Below, we invite you to learn a little more about each member of our leadership team.*



Sister Marian Sgriccia

Provincial Minister

Hometown: Clymer, Pa.

First Vows: 1968

Ministry Highlights

**Parish School
Teacher & Principal
1968-1990**

**Nurse at
St. Francis Hospital
1995-1999**

**Provincial Councilor
1997-2002**

**Administrator of
Marian Hall Home
1999 to 2019**

**Provincial Vicar
2016-2021**



Sister Mary Xavier Bomberger

Provincial Vicar

Hometown: Stowe, Pa.

First Vows: 1962

Ministry Highlights

**Parish School
Teacher & Organist
1962-1968**

**Teacher & Principal
St. Francis Academy
in Bethlehem
1970-1987**

**Provincial Minister
1989-1998**

**General Minister
2001-2011**

**Director of Villa Clare
2014-2021**



Sister Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster

*Provincial Councilor
& Treasurer*

Hometown: Allentown, Pa.

First Vows: 1986

Ministry Highlights

**Parish School Teacher,
Co-Principal & Tech
Coordinator
1986-2007**

**Provincial Councilor
& Treasurer
2007-2016**

**Provincial Treasurer
2016-2021**

**Director of
Monocacy Farm Project
2013 to Present**



Sister Patricia Ann Mahoney

*Provincial Councilor
& Secretary*

Hometown: Pittsburgh, Pa.

First Vows: 1967

Ministry Highlights

**Teacher, Caseworker,
Counselor, Chaplain,
Pastoral Associate &
Social Service Minister
1967-2002**

**Director of Franciscan
Spirit & Life Center
2004-2008**

**Social Service Minister
St. Paul Cathedral
2008-2015**

**Provincial Councilor
2011-2016**

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PROVINCIAL OFFICE

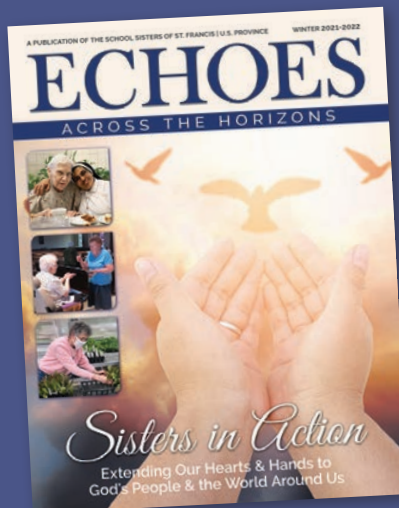
School Sisters of St. Francis
4900 Perry Highway, Suite 201
Pittsburgh PA 15229

PHONE

412-761-2855

VISIT US ONLINE

www.SchoolSistersOSF.org



EMAIL

administrationusa@schoolsistersosf.org

ADMINISTRATION

Sister Marian Sgriccia
Sister Mary Xavier Bomberger
Sister Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster
Sister Patricia Ann Mahoney

EDITING & DESIGN

Nicole Buchlmayer Knupsky

SOCIAL MEDIA

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

Aging with Grace & God

SISTERS FINDING STRENGTH IN SPIRITUALITY

“Aging carries its many blessings, as well as challenges,” says **Sister**

Marguerite Stewart, who, at 90 years young, still serves as spiritual director at St. Francis Center for Renewal in Bethlehem, Pa. “A real challenge for me has been accepting and working with loss of independence.”

Beleaguered by balance issues, Sister has stopped driving. She’s learned to lean on others to take her shopping and help her carry things. And she’s learning to accept her own limitations. “A real balance comes when I can humbly and gratefully accept help but, at the same time, continue to try to do what I can do,” Sister says. “Keeping a joyful and positive attitude in the face of this loss is a growing challenge.”

Such challenges and the strength that spirituality can bring are the focus of *Growing in Wisdom, Age & Grace: A Series for the Seasons of Our Lives*, an online program led by Patricia Herbst and presented by St. Francis Center for Renewal.

The subject matter resonates with so many, as witnessed by the response when Patricia led a pair of free-standing programs on the subject earlier in the pandemic. The current series permits a deeper dive into the aging process. Participants may attend any or all sessions, and attendance at the earlier programs isn’t necessary to engage in this important conversation (see next page for details).

Regardless of their varied physical limitations, there is a common aging aide to which our Sisters subscribe — their spirituality. **Sister Norberta Kralosky** finds that having an open, honest conversation with the Lord helps her to maintain inner peace in her 90s.

“As I prepare to sleep at night, I try to think of the day I just finished and talk to the Lord about it,” she says. “I say to God, ‘What did I do for you today?’ Then after some thought, ‘What did I do to you today?’”

Clearly, canes and hearing aids are far from the only tools available to society’s sagest citizens. As feeding the spirit is just as important as caring for the body, prayer can be an equally important part of the toolkit.

It’s an undisputed medical fact that, worldwide pandemic aside, people are living longer these days. Navigating this “third cycle of life” is of pressing concern for our country’s ever-aging population, including our Sisters. Here, they share their sage secrets to senior citizenship.



Sisters Irene Novak and Francine Garganta stay spry with fun activities that keep them moving, such as this bean bag toss game.

“Prayer eliminates the cloud of not knowing or, better yet, the cloud of thinking that I know it all,” says **Sister Barbara Ann Webster**, now 86, as she takes a “let go and let live” approach to aging. “Letting go of concerns about everything except what is in front of me and trusting in God’s plan, I accept each day, each hour, each moment.”

Continued on Next Page

“Letting go of concerns about everything except what is in front of me and trusting in God’s plan, I accept each day, each hour, each moment.”

— SISTER BARBARA ANN WEBSTER

Continued from Previous Page

Like Sister Marguerite and so many others, **Sister Irene Novak** has grappled with physical limitations and waning independence this year, her 88th. Prayer, she says, must be tempered with just the right amount of acceptance. “The most challenging part of aging is to accept what is with gratitude, instead of using prayer as a way of asking God to do things differently.”

Each day, says Sister Norberta, is another chance to — even now — learn and grow. “I think about the way I responded to the Lord today,” she says. “Perhaps I have done okay or, hopefully, I do better next time. The procedure is very effective. The Lord is very kind and forgiving and wants to help us.”

It’s important to count the blessings of maturity, as well, says Sister Irene. “There is no pressure to accomplish various responsibilities. Spiritually, I have more time to prepare for the afterlife.”

Sister Marguerite concurs. “Growing in age has brought depth to my life,” she says. “My prayer, reflection time and good reading have deepened. My eyes also have opened more to the beauty all around me — in people and creation. These all lead to great gratitude for life and all God’s gifts.”

Perhaps the key is in shifting our focus from what we cannot do any longer to what we *can* do.

“I am capable of a lot of things, but mostly I am capable of making others happy, no matter what my physical or mental ability,” says Sister Barbara Ann. “My advice to all my fellow travelers in life is go on. Do what you can for the sake of others. Just keep going.”

God is calling us to the challenges before us, and it is up to us as to how we respond.

“I challenge myself each day to truly be *alive*,” says Sister Marguerite. “To get up each morning, grateful for a new day and choose to live that day, asking God to walk beside me.” ■

Who Do You See When You Look in the Mirror?

Early in the fall, a chrysanthemum bush outside our convent had no flowers on it. Two weeks later, it was filled with gorgeous yellow flowers. Changes occur in nature just as they do in human nature. Consider the trees in fall, as their leaves are changing to a brilliant red, orange and yellow. So, too, do changes take place in our human nature.

“Everything changes.”

Everything we love and care about will change, transform, and eventually pass away. But that truth has two sides, for it is equally true that every moment brings with it new possibilities. Aging is beyond our control, but *how* we age is up to us.

A poem written by Stephanie Lawrence and published in March 2020 clarifies what I am trying to say about aging. A portion of it reads:

I look in the mirror and see a stranger looking back at me. Who's that person standing there with wrinkled skin and such gray hair? Could it be me?

Yesterday my hair was brown. My skin was smooth, tan all around. My shoulders straight, my posture proud. My voice had strength to call out loud ... my name.

And then I find today is here, and I am looking in that mirror. I see me, and suddenly I am my mother, don't you see? The hourglass of life begins at birth, and one day it will end. And through the sands of time are born new generations that will form.

And one day looking in that mirror, a girl will see a stranger there and wonder where she's seen somewhere that person with wrinkles and such gray hair.

When you look in the mirror, who do you see looking back at you? We know we are getting old, and we have accepted it. The “new me” is here to stay, and our job is to learn to live with it, adjust to it and enjoy it. We need to remember that change works both ways. It is not just wear and tear. It’s also new beginnings. ■



BY SISTER AMATA SHINA

Sister Amata Shina admires an ever-evolving chrysanthemum bush outside Monocacy Manor.

Growing in Wisdom, Age & Grace: A Series for the Seasons of Our Lives

The strength that spirituality can bring to the aging process is the focus of *Growing in Wisdom, Age & Grace: A Series for the Seasons of Our Lives*, an online program led by spiritual director Patricia Herbst and presented by our St. Francis Center for Renewal.

By sharing their own life experiences, the series invites participants to consider the pressing question of “What might God be calling us to in our ever-expanding lives?” The subject matter resonates with so many, as witnessed by the response when Patricia led a pair of free-standing programs on the subject earlier in the pandemic. The current series permits a deeper dive into the aging process.

Upcoming 2022 sessions are set for **January 20, March 3 and May 26**. Registration is \$20 per person per session. Call **610-867-8890** or visit www.StFrancisCtr.org.

Fueled by Faith

2021 JUBILARIANS CELEBRATE RELIGIOUS MILESTONES

In observance of pandemic safety protocols, our Sisters welcomed a limited number of guests to Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel at Monocacy Manor in Bethlehem, Pa., in July for the first of two celebrations honoring our 2021 Jubilarians.

Sisters Irene Novak (70th), Rosaria Shina (70th), Marguerite Stewart (70th) and Lorita Kristufek (60th) were joined by **Sisters Jo Goolish (60th), Jeanne Marie Ulica (60th) and Gracy Kundukulam (25th)**, who missed out on celebrating in 2020 due to the pandemic. A Mass celebrated by **Most Rev. Alfred Schlert**, bishop of the Diocese of Allentown, and **Msgr. Robert Kozel** and **Father Patrick Lamb** included renewal of vows and was followed by a dinner reception.

A second celebration planned for August in Pittsburgh was sidelined by pandemic precautions, but Sisters Lorita and Gracy were able to host smaller gatherings that day in their home convents with clergy and a few guests. Health concerns prevented **Sister Marietta Bankos (75th)** from joining the others, but she marked the occasion with the Sisters at Monocacy Manor.

Read features about each of our 2021 Jubilarians at www.SchoolSistersOSF.org. In 2022, 10 of our Sisters will celebrate milestones in religious life. ■



Sister Gracy Kundukulam offers Communion to Sisters Georgette Dublino and Elaine Hromulak during her private Jubilee celebration in August.



Sisters Yolanda Escamilla and Francine Garganta serve as candlebearers during the celebration in Bethlehem.



Sisters Jo, Jeanne Marie, Rosaria, Irene, Marguerite, Gracy and Lorita prepare to cut a special cake in their honor.



*Sister Marietta Bankos
75 Years*



*Sister Irene Novak
70 Years*



*Sister Rosaria Shina
70 Years*



*Sister Marguerite Stewart
70 Years*



*Sister Lorita Kristufek
60 Years*

Life's Most Important Lesson

Over the past year, alumnae honored members of the School Sisters of St. Francis who touched their lives back then and who they consider to have been especially influential in who they are now. The following is one of many **Then & Now** features available on our website at www.SchoolSistersosf.org. Have a story to share? Drop us a line at administrationusa@schoolsistersosf.org or call **412-761-2855**.

BY ELAINE JUHASCIK OLIVER | ST. GABRIEL SCHOOL & MOUNT ASSISI ACADEMY 1966

Then & Now

MEET US ON MEMORY LANE

Then ...

I don't remember thinking about nuns as a child, but I do remember seeing them from a very young age and, I suppose, learning from them, as well. My Slovak Catholic parents, neighborhood, church and school left me no choice. As it turns out, interacting with the nuns at St. Gabriel's and Mount Assisi Academy was quite a blessing. They "taught" me, both in and out of the classroom!

Book learning was good, challenging and interesting, but what I was taught by watching them *live* their faith and love was, by far, the most important lesson. Seeing God's Holy Spirit at work through them made me want that for my life. It made me want to search and try and strive and work towards that goal of mine. Isn't that what a truly good teacher encourages?

Two Sisters easily come to mind who led me on that search. The first was my first grade teacher, **Sister Anita Kuchera**. She was beautiful, inside and out. I was selected as a "recipient" of her Home Economics project of sewing a suit for one of her students. Because of this, I received access to the convent — enlightening, to say the least! I saw the Sisters living ordinary lives outside of school. They cooked, cleaned, read and sewed and did so with such joy and peace. I could just feel the love! This experience gave me insight into the joyful, peaceful life lived in communion with Jesus. Besides that, after many fittings and alterations, I got to wear my new green, box-pleated suit to Church on Easter Sunday!

Sister Kathleen Gelatko, who taught me in third grade, had a beautiful countenance and smile and just seemed to enjoy life. She enjoyed poetry and taught our class to appreciate it, as well. With her words of encouragement and the good grades she gave me, my passion for writing

poetry soared. I saw it as God's gift, considering how much enjoyment it's given me through the years and life's ups and downs. Thank you, Sisters, for helping to teach me, through example, the most important thing in life — a close, personal relationship with Jesus.

Now ...

Elaine married in 1969 and worked for many years as an executive secretary. Widowed since 1989, Elaine and her late husband, Chris, raised "three amazing children." She lives in Knoxville, Tenn., now, where she volunteers with the local Ladies of Charity food bank. In addition to precious time with her 12 grandchildren, Elaine loves long walks, reading, gardening and, of course, writing poetry.

Turns out that Elaine's beloved green suit was one of Sister Anita's sewing projects for a Home Economics class she was taking at Mount Mercy College (now Carlow University) at the time. Sister Anita spent three separate tenures teaching at St. Gabriel's in the 1950s and 1960s before spending nearly two decades teaching at our St. Francis Academy in Bethlehem, Pa. Among her specialties, of course, was Home Economics. Sister's passions then turned to retreat work, as she spent nearly 30 years as director of our St. Francis Center for Renewal (SFCR), also in Bethlehem. Sister Anita retired from SFCR in 2019, celebrated her 70th jubilee in 2020, and remains active as co-coordinator of our lay Associates program.

Sister Kathleen left the community in 1986, but continued her career in education, working with the Diocese of Pittsburgh and with children with special needs in Florida, where she lived for the last 25 years of her life. She died in 2009 at age 76.

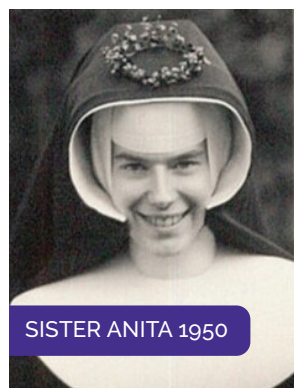
As for the whereabouts of that special green suit ... it lives on only in memory.



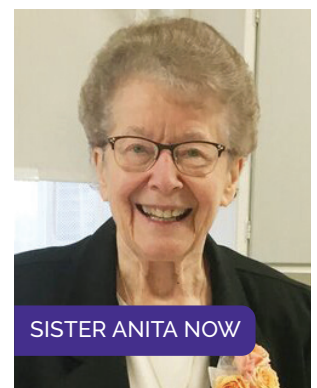
ELAINE 1966



ELAINE NOW



SISTER ANITA 1950



SISTER ANITA NOW

When Then Meets Now

"My home life was less than perfect for me, and 'The Mount' was my safe haven. I enjoyed every day and used to dream for many years of going back to school, even though I'd already graduated. **Sister Irene Kosak** gave me hope, and **Sister Magdalene Lovrich** made me feel worthy. **Sister Therese Sedlock** made my heart sing with joy. I loved every minute of the four years of school. They were the happiest of my whole life."

— *Patty Ryan*
Mount Assisi Academy 1964



Sister Magdalene

"Throughout my life, I have looked back upon my days at St. Francis Academy in Bethlehem, Pa. with fondness for the special place it was. **Sister Xavier Bomberger** was the matriarch of that special academy. She always treated the girls with love and respect and taught us that sometimes speaking more quietly, rather than yelling louder over the noise around, is the most effective way to be heard."

— *Jeanne Madej*
St. Francis Academy-Bethlehem 1987



Sister Xavier

"I know first hand that there are angels who come into our lives and do not realize the change they make. In **Sister Denise Olshausky** I found a flame that opened my soul like that of radiant sunshine and it entered my heart. It burned through me to make me transparent so that I may receive what I found had always been my own — love, understanding, patience, gentleness and acceptance."

— *Anita Cavazos Parazo*
St. Francis Academy-Texas 1976



Sister Denise



BETHLEHEM, PA.

Students from Clearview Elementary School in Bethlehem enjoy a hands-on experience at Monocacy Farm last summer.

Feeding the Hungry & Caring for Creation

Growth is always in season at Monocacy Farm Project, our sustainable farming ministry in Bethlehem, Pa. The generosity of donors and the hard work of our Sisters, employees and volunteers makes it possible to offer fresh, high-quality produce to people throughout Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley, regardless of their ability to pay.

"The impact is felt far beyond the fields along Monocacy Creek," says **Sister Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster**, director.

MFP freely distributes most of its harvest through about dozen community partner organizations in the emergency food system. With farm visits and educational programs for learners of all ages and abilities, the farm also cultivates knowledge and ecological awareness of the food system.

In 2021, MFP reached a growing number of families through its *Pick Your Own* program, two successful events on the farm — an inaugural *Spring on the Farm* kickoff and the sixth annual *Monocacy Farm Food Fest* — and fundraising partnerships with Black River Farms Vineyard & Winery, Edge Restaurant and Kimberton Whole Foods market.

The ministry also is a means by which our community sows the seeds of faith. "By connecting with the underserved, caring for creation and teaching others to do the same, we're living out our *Laudato Si'* action plan," says **Sister Marian Sgriccia**, provincial minister.

She's referring to Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical that challenges Catholics "and all people of good will" to roll up their sleeves in care for the environment and, by extension, the poor.

"As Franciscans, we're all about the relationship of God and nature and people," Sister Bonnie Marie recently told the *Allentown Morning Call*.

To reserve your garden plot, purchase a 2022 *Pick Your Own* membership or support MFP by donation, visit www.MonocacyFarmProject.org. ■

Noteworthy

News & Notables
from the Past Year

HELP FOR HAITI & MIGRANTS

Our Sisters followed in Francis' footsteps in a very tangible way this year by supporting Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in its efforts to help the people of Haiti and Central America.

Already battling storms and economic hardship, Haiti was devastated by a massive earthquake in August, killing more than 2,000 people and leaving countless more homeless. A collection among our Sisters and a matching donation on behalf of our religious community totaled \$3,500. CRS puts the funds to work immediately on the ground by helping those who lost their homes.

Leading up to the holidays, our Sisters again pooled their resources to support CRS work to aid migrants in Central America. "Our donations meet only a small fraction of the need," says **Sister Marian Sgriccia**, provincial minister. "But if even one family sees some relief, it is our blessing and calling to offer what we can."

HONORING HEROES AMONG US

St. Francis Center for Renewal, our retreat ministry in Bethlehem, Pa., hosted its 11th annual Star Struck Gala & Silent Auction in August, in Mullen Hall, one of the former academy buildings on the Monocacy Manor property. The event was reimagined as a reception with hors d'oeuvres, desserts and drinks rather than a sit-down dinner, a format that was well received by the 160 attendees.

The theme for the event was *Heroes Among Us*, paying tribute to unsung actors in our society who have helped us to get through the pandemic. **Mary Beth Mulicka** was honored as the 2021 Woman of Strength, and **Audrey Bova** received the 2021 Troubadour of Light award. The event raised nearly \$40,000 for the Renewal Center.

THE TRADITION CONTINUES

Our Sisters remain actively involved at Mt. Assisi Place, the personal care home that occupies the former motherhouse complex and Mount Assisi Academy buildings in Pittsburgh, Pa. We coordinate daily Mass for the elderly residents there and offer other opportunities for spiritual enrichment, including a weekly Bible study led by **Sister Georgette Dublino**.

Masses remain closed to the public due to the pandemic, but will eventually reopen when it is safe to do so. Sixteen of our Sisters live at Mt. Assisi Place — 12 in personal care and four in independent living — which carries on our Catholic tradition and is accepting new residents. Learn more at www.MtAssisiPlace.com.



Answering God's Call

Sister Frances Marie Duncan has wandered far from home, yet she seems to be exactly where she belongs, as the newly elected general minister of the School Sisters of St. Francis, leading our international community of some 350 Sisters, including 60 stateside.

When Sister boarded a plane for Rome this summer to attend the 2021 General Chapter — two weeks of leadership meetings at the international headquarters known as the Generalate — she had every intention of returning stateside and, if reelected provincial minister, piloting the U.S. Province through a second term. Instead, the international congregation offered its steadfast endorsement of her leadership qualities when it elected her general minister in July. She is only the fourth American Sister to serve in the top role in the congregation's 133-year history.

"I feel humbled by my election to this office," she says. "I pray that God will give me the wisdom to know what is mine to do and the strength to achieve it."

Sister Frances Marie believes we have much to celebrate about our work around the world — the Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Italy, India, Chile, Central Asia and, of course, the United States. "One of my main goals is to make the Sisters more aware of all the good that is happening in *all* of our jurisdictions," Sister says. "We should be as proud of our Sisters' ministries throughout the world as we are of those in our backyard and support them through our prayers and praise."

Helping the Hungry

SISTERS & GENEROUS LAITY TAKE A BITE OUT OF FOOD INSECURITY

Throughout Catholic Sisters Week 2021, our Sisters accepted the challenge set forth by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious to tackle the increasingly perilous issue of food insecurity. Our Sisters sprang into action by hosting food drives in Pennsylvania, Texas and New Jersey.

West Lawn, Pa. — Sisters Pat Brennan and Rosemarie Bartnicki engaged the young students and their families at St. Ignatius Loyola Catholic School to fill the stage in the school auditorium with bags and boxes of donations for Kennedy House soup kitchen in nearby Reading, Pa. The goods fortified the charity's efforts to serve daily lunches and provide weekly food distribution.

San Angelo, Texas — Sisters Adelina Garcia and Hilda Marotta, who both serve with the Diocese of San Angelo in Texas, set up a "Giving Box" at the Diocesan Pastoral Center to receive gift cards, cash and canned goods for needy families they'd identified within the diocese. "Because we also received monetary donations in addition to canned goods, we were able to assist families with additional needs," says Sister Adelina.

Pittsburgh, Pa. — Our Sisters collected nine large boxes of food, \$620 in gift cards and \$1,640 in cash donations from Sisters, friends and benefactors in Pittsburgh. Our community added another \$860 to provide a total of \$2,500 for the food ministries at two churches in Pittsburgh's north suburbs. The food and gift cards were delivered to a local parish food bank.

San Antonio, Texas — After **Sisters Jo Goolish and Yolanda Escamilla** appealed to alumnae and friends to donate food and household staples, generous donors dropped off



Sisters Marian Sgriccia and Frances Marie Duncan load up one of two vehicles headed from our Provincial Office to St. Sebastian Church just north of Pittsburgh.



Sister Yolanda Escamilla sorts through food donations collected in San Antonio.

more than \$4,000 in food items to the convent, where our Sisters created "Love Baskets" for needy families. The Sisters also donated nonperishable items to San Antonio Catholic Worker House, the Archdiocese of San Antonio Catholic Charities and San Antonio Food Bank. Friends and alums from the former St. Francis Academy, St. Joseph's Grade School, and St. Gerard Catholic High School & Regional Middle School all contributed to the effort. In the weeks following their food drive, the

Sisters collected an additional \$1,000 for Catholic Worker House.

Somerset, N.J. — Sisters Marie Therese Sherwood and Maria Derecola collaborated with the Catholic Community of St. Matthias, where they minister, to raise funds for Franklin Food Bank and Elijah's Promise, organizations that serve the needy in the Somerset area.

Bethlehem, Pa. — Sister M. Virginelle Makos and an enthusiastic team of volunteers received a steady stream of food donations during a one-day canned goods collection at Monocacy Manor. Generosity reigned over the four-hour drop-off window, including a full carload of food delivered by parishioners of St. Anne's Church in Bethlehem, Pa. The donations were sorted and delivered to New Bethany Ministries and Cay Galgon LifeHouse, nonprofits that serve underprivileged families in the Lehigh Valley.

"The issue of food insecurity is so broad and affects so many," says **Sister Frances Marie Duncan**. "It cannot be solved overnight, but we were happy to be able to make a small impact in each of our communities." ■



SOMERSET, N.J.

Sister Maria Derecola engages her second graders at St. Matthias Catholic School in Somerset, N.J.

Unfinished Business

As a second grade teacher, **Sister Maria Derecola** carries on our community's heritage of teaching and caring for young children. She shares both the classroom curriculum and the spiritual lessons to prepare her students at St. Matthias School and Parish in Somerset, N.J., to receive the Sacraments and to take on the real world.

"Every day, I can see the face of God in each student," she says. "They are a bright sign of what's important in life."

Sister's work pays tribute to the earliest days of our congregation's presence in the United States — dating back more than 108 years — as teachers and caregivers to the young children of Eastern European immigrants. There are much fewer Catholic schools these days, but the mission is ongoing.

"I love that I can personally carry on our mission of teaching and forming young minds into citizens and disciples of Christ," Sister Maria says. "The children bring joy, innocence and a love of learning. They are a blessing from God to me and our school." ■

Extending Our Hearts & Hands

In his social encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis draws upon the words of St. Francis of Assisi and urges us to unite "as a single human family" in which we are "brothers and sisters all." Through ministerial outreach, our Sisters extend their hearts and hands to God's diverse people, doing their small part to achieve social justice for all.

Reward Without Risk

In her work at Barber National Institute in Erie, Pa., **Sister Kevin Berdis** helps adults with intellectual, physical and behavioral challenges to learn skills and accomplish tasks that empower them to join the workforce.

"We are all God's people, regardless of our differences," Sister says.

As an associate instructor, Sister Kevin taps into experience earned over her six decades in education as both a teacher and principal. Her current "students" are adults ages 22 to 65 who, through a variety of vocational tasks, learn skills to prepare them for productive jobs in the community.

"I enjoy helping the clients find success and build up their self-esteem," Sister says. "It's wonderful to see them making their dreams come true." The benefits come back to her tenfold, she says. "Sharing compassion and patience with those I serve, listening to them and helping them to understand has truly deepened my love for God." ■



ERIE, PA.

Sister Kevin Berdis trains a client in housekeeping skills that will help him find success in the workforce.



Sisters Hilda Marotta and Adelina Garcia in the Franciscan Resource Center in San Angelo, Texas.

Graced By God

Sister Adelina Garcia has learned firsthand that, no matter how diverse their heritage, economics or circumstances, people remain united by their common search for faith. In the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis in the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas., she and **Sister Hilda Marotta** coordinate adult faith formation, lead retreats and teach theology and spirituality — oftentimes in bilingual format.

“Meeting people who are seeking the holy and want meaning in their lives excites me,” Sister Adelina says. “I accompany the marginalized and grow in my faith as I witness their faith. Together, we form the Body of Christ.”

In addition to leading workshops and retreats nationally, Sister Adelina has been involved in such national initiatives as *Journeying Together*, which ministers to refugees, migrants, seafarers and even circus travelers.

“Sometimes my work takes me outside of the Catholic community. Sometimes it takes me beyond the diocese and beyond Texas,” Sister says. “But, always, I am amazed by people’s openness and hunger for God.”

Sisters Adelina and Hilda also run our Franciscan Resource Center in San Antonio, coordinating bilingual classes, spiritual direction and mornings of reflection. The Center has finally reopened after a year lost to the pandemic, just in time to mark the Feast of St. Francis earlier this fall.

Eighteen years into her ministry, Sister continues to grow and says she gets just as much as she gives. “I recognize God in those I encounter. My relationships with those I serve help me to grow in my faith. I feel truly blessed and graced by God.”

“It has been a blessing and time of growth for me,” she says. I feel truly blessed and graced by God.” ■

Counting Blessings

Managing finances may not seem like spiritual work, but **Sister Regina Ann Rokosny** begs to differ. She was the only woman on staff when she started at St. Francis Retreat House in Easton, Pa., in 1995. She has seen the environment diversify and finds herself enriched by so many of God’s people that she encounters every day.

“The Franciscan spirit pervades the ministry,” she says. “I am humbled often by the faith of these people — men, women, students, workers — in spite of their struggles. Their pure, simple faith has made me reflect on my love for God.”

Sister also coordinates housekeeping at the retreat house, most of which is bathed in natural light pouring in from outdoors. “I try to make it feel like home. It’s my way of saying, ‘Welcome, rest awhile,’” she says. “It keeps me balanced.”

Math was her forte during her teaching days at St. Francis Academy in Bethlehem, Pa. In her current ministry as finance manager, her days are still filled with numbers — bookkeeping, payroll, tax reports, contracts. But she’s also been blessed to connect with those around her in ways that cannot truly be calculated, whether its fellow religious or retreatants who frequent the retreat house on their spiritual journey.

“I have had the pleasure of meeting many wonderful people,” Sister says. “There have been numerous times when I’ve listened to someone sharing their pain that *I* was the one who walked away feeling humbled and blessed.” ■



EASTON, PA.

Sister Regina Ann Rokosny in the smaller Portiuncula chapel at St. Francis Retreat House in Easton, Pa.

Lessons to Live By

The lessons that **Sister Carol Ann Papp**, a teacher at Northside Catholic Assumption Academy in Pittsburgh, Pa., imparts on her students extend far beyond the classroom and, if she's living up to her own expectations, lift them up in life, as well.

"My main goal is to help them understand their uniqueness in the eyes of God, to respect each other's uniqueness and to be kind and forgiving as God is kind and forgiving to us," says Sister Carol Ann. "Knowing and believing they are loved by God is the ultimate goal."

Sister teaches art to children in kindergarten through eighth grade and also teaches religion to the upper grades. She begins each class with a prayer, introducing students to various types of prayer and ways of praying. The art curriculum she develops and implements is a vehicle for her students' creativity and by which they can bring joy to others.

She subscribes to the saying "God, lead me where you need me." Even after 50 years in the classroom, Sister Carol Ann remains refreshed and excited to be with her students each day. She's also still a student herself, broadening her own outlook on the world through preparation for her classes.

"What I enjoy most is bringing Christ to those I work with and teach. Being part of a community of faculty members allows me to extend our mission, not only to the students, but also to all those I encounter throughout the school day." ■



PITTSBURGH, PA

Sister Carol Ann Papp reads to students at Northside Catholic Assumption Academy in Pittsburgh, Pa.



SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Sister Yolanda Escamilla (center) leads at seated exercise class at Living Days Adult Day Care Center in San Antonio, Texas.

Creative Caregiving

It's been 22 years, and **Sister Yolanda Escamilla** still draws inspiration from her work at Living Days Adult Day Care in San Antonio, Texas. "It's my most grace-filled ministry," she says

Sister coordinates creative art projects, physical exercise, games and spiritual services for the elderly, poor and sick who find daily refuge there.

"In their simplicity, they make me smile," she says. "I recall the joy St. Francis experienced as he went among the poor and simple."

Their success is her success, their triumphs — no matter large or small — are food for Sister's soul. "It allows me to be creative," she says. "I use my creativity to help them find some success in what they experience each day." ■

Blessings of the Day



The children that **Sister Pat Brennan** serves at St. Ignatius Loyola School in West Lawn, Pa., may have clothes and food, but she works each day to meet their other, less tangible needs.

She was a teacher there for many years, but even now, 32 years on and serving as a semi-retired aide and substitute teacher, she remains embroiled in the everyday hustle and bustle of parish school life. Whether taking part in morning prayer, coordinating the school's safety patrols, or helping teachers to stay organized, she knows it's the little things that can make all the difference.

"Children are needy in so many areas these days," Sister says. She believes the blessing of daily Mass helps to check some of the boxes. "I think it provides a carryover to take on and enjoy whatever and whoever the day will bring." ■

WEST LAWN, PA

A Hand to Hold

In her ministry at the Catholic Community of St. Matthias in Somerset, N.J., **Sister Marie Therese Sherwood** wears many hats, each plucked from the same rack of compassion.

As pastoral minister for social concerns, Sister spends time with parish families during the most difficult times of their lives — coordinating support groups, connecting with the poor and homeless, holding hands at the bedsides of the sick and dying, and facilitating the sacred rituals that bring closure to grieving families.

“The journey with the sick, the dying and their families bonds us together in a deepening relationship,” Sister says. “I make silent, loving glances to Jesus within my heart each time I walk into a hospital, make a home visit, sit with someone who is grieving, or assess the needs of individuals in outreach to the poor.”

She also cantors during Masses, sings in the choir and has a hand in promoting diversity, distributing more than 1,000 Giving Tree gifts each Christmas, and feeding families in challenging circumstances. Above all else, she considers it her greatest privilege to bring Eucharist to the sick and homebound.

“I carry Christ in a pyx in my pocket for a good part of the day and am intimately aware and in awe of the closeness of His presence,” Sister Marie Therese reflects. “These personal, grace-filled moments have deepened my relationship with God.” ■

SOMERSET, N.J.



**In faith and wisdom,
be sure to pass it on**

SISTER ANECE SALAY OFFERS SOUND ADVICE

It was a beautiful day when I left our former mission in South Africa to bring our student, Eunice, home from school. As we were nearing the mission, the weather changed. “Look at that!” I exclaimed. “The sun is shining on our Mission, and it is raining on the farm across the road.”

“That means the monkeys are getting married,” Eunice said. Her response was both curious and profound. Then she said nothing more.

Careful not to tread on some sacred African wisdom, I frankly but respectfully asked if she truly believed that. She nodded her head and offered a simple “hmmm” in affirmation. It was not to be questioned.

Pushing a bit further, I asked “Who told you this?”

“My Granny,” she answered. And that was the end of it.

Being raised at Granny’s house in Swaziland for the first seven or eight years of life had made an impact on my young companion. Granny had taught her many things practiced in the culture, and I knew “Grannies” were very special to many of our children.

You see, development of faith is not just what we teach. It’s everything that moves in the heart of the person to whom we teach it. If we tell them the wonders, they will discover “the more” of it themselves. We teach it, and we leave it in God’s hands. It isn’t until they have their own experiences — those small profound moments — that they truly get it.

From generation to generation, elders today must tell the children of the wonders, the mysteries of our faith. Big feasts and celebrations sometimes slip by with no mention of the “God of all Mystery.” If we are not the bearers of the Word, from where do our children and grandchildren learn? Even to each other we can bear witness. And we can learn just like Eunice did.

Not long ago, I reminded her of our short ride and our talk. *Did she and does she believe the monkeys were getting married?* As though we were treading on sacred ground, she just smiled. I think she was remembering the “bearer of the Word” — her Granny. I smiled too.

Jesus came to make known the mystery of God’s love for us. Take time today to share that great mystery and your experience of all it entails. Perhaps someone will ride on your wings of faith, just until they can share their personal experience of the Mystery of God’s Love. ■



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Blessings from Saint John Paul II

While attending meetings and gatherings at our international headquarters in Rome, our Sisters have been blessed to have audiences with popes over the years. **Sister Elaine Hromulak** thinks back with particular fondness to an encounter with **Pope John Paul II** 30 years ago. Her niece had just welcomed an infant son, 8 months old at the time, who was born with several impairments. "I said, 'Holy Father, I have a favor to ask.' I told him about the baby and asked him to pray for him. He asked me his name, touched my face and said, 'I will pray for Baby Joey.'" These days, "Baby" Joey is 30 and thriving, which Sister Elaine attributes in no small part to those promised prayers. "I feel so blessed that a saint touched me," she says. The moment was immortalized in the treasured photo above.

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— SISTER M. VIRGINELLE MAKOS

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Joan Hohns | C. Leblanc-Blatt | Paul & Nicola
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Phyllis Treff | Jeanne Ulica | Sister Jeanne
Marie Ulica

Remembering **GEORGE KLINE**
Kathleen Mangione

Remembering **ANDREW KRALOSKY**
Sister Norberta Kralosky

Honoring
SISTER NORBERTA KRALOSKY
Roger & Frances Dice

Remembering **RONALD KRYSIEK**
Robert & Sara Engelsberg | Thomas & Ellen
Krysiiek | Ellen Jo Malloy | Hannah Moses |
Annette Krysiiek Thompson

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SISTER ANNETTE KUCHTA
Darlene Maliszewski

Remembering **GEORGE KULANKO**
Jack & Joan Kulanko

Remembering
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John Kutch

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Remembering

MT. ASSISI ACADEMY TEACHERS

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Ruben Wilburn

Remembering

MARGARET RUIZ TORRES

Christine Luna Gonzalez | Gregory Ramirez | Rose Marie Ramirez | Ruben Wilburn

Remembering

SYLVIA ANNE VALDEZ-TORRES

Angel Torres

Remembering **MARY VOGEL**

Lorraine Darr

Remembering **WILLIAM YELLENIK**

Margaret Thoma

IN LOVING MEMORY

Sister Carolyn Mitrichka

Sept. 17, 1930 — Dec. 19, 2020

Sister M. Carolyn (Elizabeth) Mitrichka died on December 19, 2020, in Bethlehem, Pa. She was 90 and in her 72nd year of religious life.

Elizabeth was one of five children born to Michael and Elizabeth Mitrichka in Bronx, N.Y. Her early years were spent at Washington and Nathan Hale Public Schools in Carteret, N.J., before going onto secondary school at Mount Assisi Academy in Pittsburgh, Pa.

Elizabeth entered our community from Sacred Heart Parish in Carteret in 1944, and was received into the novitiate at Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh, where she was given the name Sister Carolyn and professed first vows in 1948 and final vows in 1953. Sister held bachelor's and master's degrees in education from Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J.

Over 42 years of education ministry, Sister Carolyn taught at parish schools in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. She also served as principal for seven years in New Jersey and served in parish ministry in Stowe, Pa., for 13 years. Sister remained faithful to prayer after moving to Holy Family Manor in 2017.

Sister Carolyn stayed in touch with several of



her former students throughout her life and was energized by prayer time, celebrations and mini-sabbaths. Her quiet, unassuming manner was a gift to our Sisters and fellow residents and prayer partners at Holy Family Manor.

"Sister Carolyn possessed a Franciscan heart and saw God in the beauty of creation," one Sister remembers. "She was a good friend, a faithful servant and a wonderful friend to so many."

Sister is buried in St. Francis Cemetery at Monocacy Manor in Bethlehem, Pa.

Sister Dorothy Bucko

Sept. 27, 1931 — Aug. 13, 2021

Sister Dorothy Bucko (formerly Sister Maria) died on August 13, 2021 in Bethlehem, Pa. She was 89.

Born to John Paul and Helen (Kametz) Bucko in Bethlehem, Pa., Sister Dorothy entered our community from Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish in Bethlehem in 1950, receiving the name Sister Maria. She professed first vows in 1951 and final vows in 1956, both at Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh, Pa.

Sister Dorothy's first assignments were in Pittsburgh Diocesan schools. She also served as organist, choir director and piano teacher. She went on to teach in parish schools in eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Massachusetts. She also served in music ministry in those parishes, earning a bachelor's degree in music from New York's Manhattanville College in 1973.

In 1983, Sister Dorothy was granted a dispensation from her vows. In 2008, she asked to re-enter the community, engaging in a year-long formation program to prepare for her first profession in 2009. After three more



years of formation and community service in both Pittsburgh and Bethlehem, Sister Dorothy professed her final vows in 2012. Afterward she continued to do community service in Bethlehem.

"She was genuinely interested in people," one Sister remembers of Sister Dorothy. "She was a quiet, gentle presence among the Sisters."

Sister is buried in St. Francis Cemetery at Monocacy Manor in Bethlehem, Pa.



The School Sisters of St. Francis
U.S. Province

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Introducing **Renewal** the Podcast

Good news tends to come all too infrequently these days. But it's always the focus of *Renewal*, a new podcast presented by our St. Francis Center for Renewal retreat ministry in Bethlehem Pa.

What's it all about?

The program is part of the Center's ongoing efforts to expand its reach across the street and across the globe. In *Renewal's* inaugural season, **Joanne Anderson**, host and SFCR executive director, introduces folks who are doing good works for others, exploring what "renewal" means in their lives, how they help to renew others, and how they renew themselves.

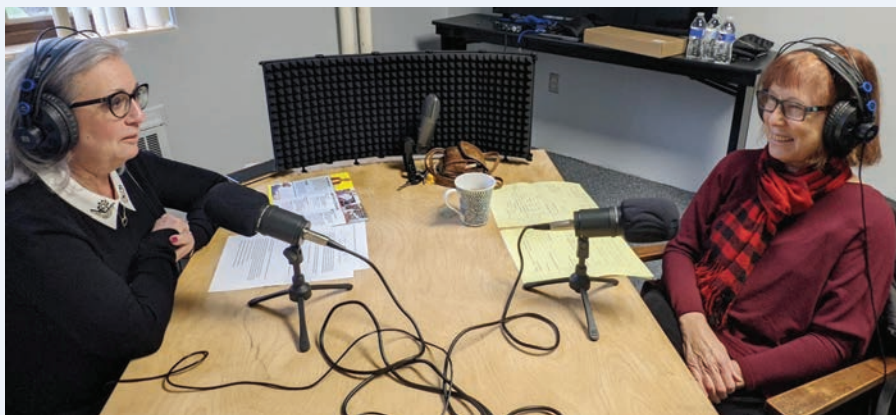
Early episodes feature inspiring conversations with **Veronne Demesyieux** of New Bethany Ministries and even our own

Sister Marguerite Stewart. Learn Veronne's personal reasons for entering her line of work and how she finds spiritual solace. Then hear all about Sister Marguerite's early days in Massachusetts and what has guided her along a spiritual journey spanning more than 70 years.

How can I listen in?

For those who aren't familiar with podcasts, they are much like the popular radio shows of yesteryear, except that you can listen *anytime* you'd like and from pretty much *anywhere* you'd like using a computer, smartphone or tablet.

Renewal can be heard on the Center's website at www.StFrancisCtr.org, as well as on popular platforms such as Apple Podcasts and Spotify. And the best part is it's completely free to tune in.



Joanne Anderson (left) interviews Dianne Elliot, an advocate for affordable housing and the homeless in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley, for an episode of Renewal.