



ECHOES *across the* HORIZONS

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

Autumn 2014 | Volume 7 Issue 1

Coming Up

Christmas Vespers

7 p.m. | Saturday,
December 13, 2014;
2 and 7 p.m. | Sunday,
December 14, 2014
*St. Francis Center for
Renewal*

Marian Hall Night at the Races Event

6 to 11 p.m. | Saturday,
February 7, 2015
Mount Assisi Convent

Mount Assisi Preschool Tea & Fashion Show

11 a.m. | Saturday,
March 28, 2015
Mount Assisi Convent

2015 Spring Festival

12 to 5 p.m. | Sunday,
April 26, 2015
Mount Assisi Convent

Fifth Annual Star Struck Gala

6 to 11 p.m. | Saturday,
May 2, 2015
*St. Francis Center for
Renewal*

Pittsburgh Jubilee Celebration

11 a.m. | Saturday,
June 20, 2015
Mount Assisi Convent

Bethlehem Jubilee Celebration

11 a.m. | Sunday,
August 16, 2015
Monocacy Manor

Preschool & Marian Hall Golf Outing

11 a.m. | Saturday,
August 29, 2015
Pittsburgh North Golf Club



Worldwide Sisterhood

U.S. PROVINCE HOSTS INTERNATIONAL MEETING

The School Sisters of St. Francis hosted a meeting of the major superiors of the congregation in May 2014 at Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh. General Minister **Sister Květa Vínklárková**, general council members and the ministers from Rome, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Italy, Chile and India were all in Pittsburgh to discuss the implementation of the decisions from the congregation's 20th General Chapter held in 2011, as well as to begin planning the 21st General Chapter in 2016.

Among the decisions of the last chapter

was to shine a light on the congregation's international nature. "Having our international sisters in Pittsburgh for this important meeting was a wonderful way to experience the diversity of our congregation, founded in Bohemia in 1888," says **Sister Bernadine Marie Stemnock**, provincial minister of the United States Province.

The congregation – home to 403 professed members serving in the aforementioned countries, as well as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and South Africa – celebrated its 125th anniversary and its 100th anniversary in the United States in 2013.

ABOVE: The gathering at Mount Assisi included (front row from left): **Sister Bernadine Marie Stemnock** (U.S. Province), **Sister Sara Carrasco** (Region of Chile), **Sister Jessy Mooleparambil** (Generalate-Rome), **Sister Valeria Ruggieri** (Italian Province), (middle row from left): **Sister Rossana Villablanca** (Generalate-Rome), **Sister Rose Thattil** (Region of India), **Sister Rosaria Shina** (U.S. Province), **Sister Nancy Celaschi** (Generalate-Rome), (back row from left): **Sister Magdalena Sumilasová** (Slovak Province), **Sister Baptista Nožková** (Czech Province), **Sister Regina Žuk-Olszewska** (Generalate-Rome), **Sister Květa Vínklárková** (General Minister-Rome), and **Sister Livia Gardianová** (Slovak Province).

Reaching By Teaching

OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS HONORED *for* WORK *with* ALL AGES

For the School Sisters of St. Francis, teaching is anything but new. After all, our Pioneer Sisters came to the United States more than a century ago to provide education to immigrant families.

Education remains a cherished tradition in the congregation and is carried forward every day by our Sisters in active teaching ministry with students from preschool through college. Not only are they still doing it after all these years, they are doing it well, as witnessed by the abundant accolades of 2014.

Meeting the Challenge

Junior Achievement of Western Pennsylvania selected **Sister Kevin Berdis** as its 2014 Educator of the Year. The award honors superintendents, principals and teachers throughout the region who inspire young people to succeed in a global economy. Sister Kevin received her award for her work as principal at Holy Family School in Erie, Pa., during Junior Achievement's annual meeting in Pittsburgh in June. The honor came as Sister Kevin and the inner-city school undertook the rigorous accreditation process of the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges. She awaits the final decision on the seven-year accreditation.

The accreditation process



Sister Kevin Berdis works with third graders at Holy Family School in Erie, Pa. Photo by Jack Hanrahan for GoErie.com.

Sister Frances Marie Duncan gets hands-on with chemistry students at St. Peter's Prep in New Jersey.



Sister Jo Goolish works with an art student at St. Gerard in San Antonio, Texas.

involved intense research and time. Evaluators spent four days at the school, observing and studying how it functions.

“Our bar is high here and I will not lower it,” Sister Kevin told *FaithLife*, the newspaper of the Diocese of Erie. “We have a strong Catholic identity here, and our academics are very strong. These are both things that people want for their children.”

The Art of Education

Sister Jo Goolish was named 2014 Teacher of the Year at St. Gerard Catholic High School in San Antonio, Texas. She was selected for the honor by her fellow teachers at St. Gerard, where she has been teaching since St. Francis Academy closed in 2002.

“A true educator, Sister Jo manages to extrapolate the very best from every student,” says Peter Rivera, principal at St. Gerard. “As an art teacher, she is gratified that her students’ artwork continues to amaze people.”

Many of Sister Jo’s students have their artwork displayed in homes and offices in the San Antonio community. She keeps her own skills sharp by designing a Franciscan notecard collection (see back page) and the annual Christmas card for our province.

Good Chemistry

St. Peter’s Preparatory School, an all-boys Jesuit high school in Jersey City, N.J., honored

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Reaching By Teaching: Educators Honored

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Sister Frances Marie Duncan by naming her its nominee for New Jersey's 2014 non-public school teacher of the year.

The school's administrative team and a selection committee announced the nomination in June at a faculty and staff assembly. Sister teaches chemistry and honors chemistry at St. Peter's Prep and is the assistant department chair. She serves as moderator for the National Honor Society and is the coordinator for the Prep Parents' Association, which runs major fundraising events as well as social, spiritual and educational gatherings for parents.

Sister Frances Marie says she feels humbled and challenged by the honor, recognizing that many of her colleagues



Sister Carol Ann Papp is honored at the Golden Apple Award ceremony in Pittsburgh.

Congratulations to our Sisters for continuing our century-old tradition of education in the United States!

are exceptionally dedicated teachers who could easily have been chosen as this year's nominee.

Apple for the Teacher

Sister Carol Ann Papp, principal of St. Irenaeus Catholic School in Oakmont, Pa., was among the 2014 recipients of the Diocese of Pittsburgh's 23rd Annual Golden Apple Awards. The award honors principals and teachers who devote their lives to education in Catholic schools. She was honored at a dinner in May, received a Golden Apple and a gift of \$6,000. Besides her family, **Sisters Bernadine Marie Stemnock, Jeanne Marie Ulica, Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster, Patricia Ann Mahoney, Regina Ann Rokosny, Joyce Burkhart and JoAnn Knaebel** shared the evening with Sister Carol Ann.

Indian Sisters Celebrate from Afar

Saturday, January 18, 2014 was an historic date for our Sisters from the Delegation of India, as they gathered in Thrissur to commemorate 25 years as members of the School Sisters of St. Francis.

Because **Sisters Gracy Kundukulam, Joycy Konikkara and Reena Varghese** were unable to attend the main celebration, one was held at Mount Assisi Convent. The liturgy that day was for the blessings on their delegation, and each of the Indian Sisters participated in some way during the Mass.

Sister Lorita Kristufek prepared a special song thanking the sisters for their sacrifice of leaving home to



Sisters Reena Varghese, Gracy Kundukulam and Joycy Konikkara live and minister in Pittsburgh. Sister Ancy Francis (not pictured), also from India, lives in Bethlehem, Pa.

come and minister here to our sisters. Everyone enjoyed delicious Indian food while the Indian Sisters shared stories of their beginnings, early formation and customs.

Recognizing their growth, the Indian delegation was promoted to a Region in

August by the General Administration. This is just one classification below becoming a province.

From its modest beginnings as a formation house in 1989, the Region of India is now home to 66 sisters.



Oplatky Available

Bring Eastern European tradition into your home for Christmas when you purchase oplatky, available each holiday season at Mount Assisi Convent.

Packages of these traditional Christmas wafers are available at the main reception desk. Free-will offerings are accepted in cash or by check made payable to "School Sisters of St. Francis."

For more information, call **412-761-6004**.

Stay in Touch!

We welcome alumnae and friends of our community to stay in touch with our Sisters by becoming a part of our regular mailing list. To be added or to update an address, contact Nicole Knupsky at nbuchlmayer@schoolsistersosf.org or call 412-761-6004.

Retreats, Gala top 2015 calendar

St. Francis Center for Renewal, located at 395 Bridle Path Road in Bethlehem, Pa., offers spiritual programming throughout the year. Upcoming highlights include:

Frozen No More: Women's Spirituality Weekend

January 9-11, 2015

Sisters Barbara DeStefano, Anita Kuchera, Rosaria Shina and Marguerite Stewart are joined by Barbara Martell and Elizabeth Knecht to help participants identify their own unique gifts and how to nurture them so they are no longer "frozen." *Cost: \$160 to 170 per person*

Encountering Jesus

6:45 to 9 p.m.

Wednesday, January 21, 2015

In his new book, *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, Father James Martin, S.J., helps us encounter Jesus in a new, vivid and exciting way with a seamless combination of stories from his real-life pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the most up-to-date biblical scholarship and profound spiritual reflections. Join us as Father Martin shares with us, via Skype, about the Jesus he loves. *Cost: \$25*

The Phenomenon of Near Death Experience & Life After Death

6:45 to 9 p.m.

Wednesday, February 11, 2015

Dr. Micah Sadigh, in his well-known signature style (rich in information, education and humor) shares his thoughts on death and life after death. *Cost: \$25*

Living Your Dash! 6:45 to 9 p.m. | Wednesday, March 11, 2015

The dash printed between the birth and death dates on a tombstone represents each step taken on earth, with its joys and sorrows, laughter and tears. Sister Marguerite Stewart leads a look at our present "dashes," focusing on what really matters. The evening will include a presentation, discussion and colorful representation of our "dashes." *Cost: \$25*

Celebrating Gifts of Easter: Peace, Courage & Joy

6:45 to 9 p.m. | Tuesday, April 7, 2015

Easter invites us to celebrate gifts from the Risen Jesus. Sister Melanie



Honorees Sister M. Xavier Bomberger, Caroline Centoram, Ashley Schellhaas (accepting for her mom Michele August Brady), and Barbara Ann Shotwell.

Gala Spotlights Strength

During its fourth annual Star Struck Gala and Silent Auction in May 2014, St. Francis Center for Renewal in Bethlehem, Pa., shined the spotlight on four wonderful women of strength: **Sister Mary Xavier Bomberger**, Caroline Centoram, Michele August Brady, and Barbara Ann Shotwell.

A donation was made in the name of each award winner to the charity of their choice. Each also received a stained-glass box handmade for them by Rick and Connie Taschner and reflecting original artwork by **Sister Jo Goolish**. Attendees enjoyed a wonderful dinner and dessert buffet, entertainment by "Sing for America," and a silent auction of great prizes. St. Francis Academy alumnae also reunited during the beach-themed evening.

The 2015 Gala will be held on Saturday, May 2. The event will feature the annual Woman of Strength award and shine its light on Knights of Columbus: Trinity Council 313 and Queenship of Mary Council 4050. The St. Francis Academy Classes of 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985 will celebrate their anniversary years of graduation.

Zvoboda leads an exploration of peace, courage and joy, using scripture, stories, poetry and humor. *Cost: \$25*

Spirituality for All God's People 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Saturday, April 18, 2015

The deep spirituality of the saints never fails to impress us. Join us as we learn how Father Walter Ciszek, a candidate for canonization, found the spirituality that led to his deep holiness. We will also reflect on how Jesus leads each of us to our own deeper spirituality through the beautiful lessons He teaches in the Gospels. *Cost: \$45 (includes lunch)*

Mary: God's Sublime Gift

6:45 to 9 p.m.

Wednesday, May 13, 2015

Three women have been invited to share their relationship with Mary and the impact she has made on their lives. Elizabeth Knecht will honor Mary through song and dance, and our traditional May crowning will be celebrated. *Cost: \$25*

Sacred Stories: The Gift of Spirituality Within Story

6:45 to 9 p.m.

Wednesday, June 10, 2015

Join Father Patrick Lamb and Larry "The Storyteller," as they present the value of story in our spiritual journey. Participants will examine storytelling in the scriptures, fables and their own lives. *Cost: \$25*

Women in Watercolor

August 1-7, 2015

Using a series of watercolors painted by Sister Doris Klein, CSA, this retreat invites us to explore the stories of several New Testament women who encountered Jesus at significant junctures in their lives. Sister Clare A. D'Auria, OSF, will lead us in prayer with these women who were tenderly touched by the Holy One. We will meet the Jesus who, without judgment, can lead us to balance, integration, healing and wholeness. *Cost: \$400 per person*

The Center also hosts monthly Twilight Retreats. For more information on these or the programs above, call **610-867-8890** or visit www.stfranciscenterforrenewal.org.

Our 2014 Jubilarians

This past summer, the School Sisters of St. Francis 2014 Jubilarians renewed their vows before **Sister Bernadine Marie Stemnock**, provincial minister, in celebrations held at both Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh and Monocacy Manor in Bethlehem.

This year, three Jubilarians – **Sisters Patricia Brennan, Ruth Zacharias** and **Aurelia Cerny** – celebrated their 60th jubilees for a combined 180 years of religious life.

The Jubilarians extend their collective gratitude to all who played a role in making their celebrations so joyous.



Sisters Patricia Brennan, Ruth Zacharias and Aurelia Cerny

HONORED IN MEMORY

Seven deceased sisters also were honored posthumously:

Sister M. Teresita Churilla | 80th

Sister M. Germaine Raskovsky | 80th

Sister M. Hermina Terek | 80th

Sister M. Annunciata Youhas | 80th

Sister M. Jeanne Schwartz | 70th

Sister M. Miriam Tomajko | 70th

Sister M. Annette Kuchta | 60th

In 2015, nine sisters will celebrate their jubilees, and 12 others will be honored posthumously. They will be featured in the Fall 2015 issue of Echoes Across the Horizons.

Sisters Welcome New Postulant

The School Sisters of St. Francis proudly welcome **Jerrylyn Obrero**, who became a postulant in October 2014. Postulancy is the first step in becoming a community member. Jerrylyn resides at Incarnation of Our Lord convent in Bethlehem, Pa. **Sister Marguerite Stewart** is her directress.

As Sister Bernadine Marie looks on, Sister Marguerite presents Jerrylyn with a tau.



Sister Joycy Konikkara, associate Heidi Moyer, volunteer Linda Barnett-Fung, and Sisters Mary Lou Metro, Joyce Burkhart and Karen Bucu share a smile on festival day.

Spring Festival Spells Success

Another wonderful Spring Festival is in the books in Pittsburgh, where beautiful weather and a bounty of generous patrons made for a very special Sunday in April 2014. Our hard-working sisters and irrepressible volunteers – particularly the associates who traveled in from Texas and Bethlehem – put on a fun-filled event jam-packed with delicious food, great prizes and fun, fun, fun! From bingo and books to crafts and cookies, there was something for all ages to enjoy. And the fun continued throughout May with our daily raffle ticket winners.

Our 2015 Spring Festival will be held from 12 to 5 p.m. on Sunday, April 26, at Mount Assisi. Look for our annual Festival letter arriving in your mailbox after Christmas.

Echoes Across the Horizons

is published annually by

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Busy Autumn for San Angelo Ministries

The fall semester of ministry in San Angelo, Texas has been busy and filled with opportunities to build relationships, learn more about one's faith, share faith and simply enjoy the presence of others.

The ministries of the School Sisters of St. Francis in this West Texas Diocese of San Angelo are leadership roles in the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis (**Sisters Hilda Marotta** and **Adelina Garcia**) and Campus Ministry for the students at the Catholic Newman Student Center (**Sister Kathy Kudlac**). All three sisters also direct activities at our Franciscan Resource Center, a sponsored ministry of the United States Province.

Interreligious Dialogue

The Franciscan Resource Center hosted a three-part series this fall, *Francis and the Sultan*. This program addressed the tension between Christians and Muslims throughout the ages and today. Participants actively engaged in discussions on the content. We were fortunate to have a Muslim couple participate, providing knowledge, insight and helping to facilitate questions during the discussion time. In light of the events that are taking place in the world today, this program was very timely and well received.

Student Events

At Angelo State University, Family Day was celebrated on September 27. As part of this annual celebration, the Newman Center hosts a breakfast for students and their parents. This is a time when the students do the cooking and serving for their parents and fellow peers. Bishop Michael J. Sis, Bishop of the Diocese of San Angelo, joined the students, parents and Sisters Kathy, Hilda and Adelina for this Family Day breakfast.

The Newman Center will celebrate its 50th anniversary of ministry to the students of the university in April 2015. Sister Kathy, her committee and the students are busy preparing for this historical event.



Sisters Adelina Garcia, Hilda Marotta and Kathy Kudlac (not pictured) enjoyed breakfast with families of Angelo State University students during Family Day festivities in September.



Participants in the *Francis and the Sultan* program share a round-table discussion.

Transitus

The Transitus, which commemorates the death of St. Francis of Assisi, was held at the Newman Center on October 3. Sixty friends, students and Secular Franciscans joined the Sisters in this annual event. Bishop Sis gave the blessing at the end of the service with a first class relic that belongs to the Secular Franciscans. A reception was held afterwards, and everyone expressed their gratitude for this year's service and anticipation for next year's event.

Diocesan Conference

The annual Diocesan Conference Day, held October 18 and sponsored by the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, focused on *Echoing the Word of God Together in Today's World*. This event is for parish leaders and anyone interested in furthering their personal

faith formation. Keynote presenters were Bishop Michael J. Sis and Anne Comeaux, former Diocesan Director of Catechesis from the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. Sisters Hilda and Adelina provided break-out sessions on various topics pertinent to ministry within the Church. The day was fully enriching and engaging for the more than 325 participants, including students from the Catholic Newman Student Center.

To learn more about the Franciscan Resource Center in San Angelo, please visit www.frccsanangelo.org.

Are You Interested in Religious Life?

Are you interested in religious life? Would you like more information about it?

The School Sisters of St. Francis Vocation Team hosts several events throughout the year to offer women of all ages a glimpse of religious life.

For more information, contact Sister Lorita Kristufek, vocation minister, at 412-761-6004.

Sister Doloretta Zugell | December 8, 1923 - January 16, 2014

Sister M. Doloretta (Mary Frances) **Zugell** died of health complications on January 16, 2014. She was 90. Born in Pittsburgh as the only girl among six children, Mary Frances worked for a number of years after high school before seriously considering religious life. A Capuchin friar at St. Augustine in Lawrenceville, Pa., suggested that she visit Franciscan motherhouses in the area.

She chose our community after visiting Mount Assisi Convent. In 1944, she became an aspirant and, in January 1945, entered postulancy. In August, Mary Frances was received into the novitiate, given the name Sister Doloretta, and professed her First Vows in 1946.

During her first years of ministry, Sister Doloretta taught second grade at St. Gabriel School on Pittsburgh's North Side and studied music. She also served as parish organist and taught Christian Doctrine in Perryopolis and Clymer, Pa. After professing final vows in 1951, Sister Doloretta spent 17 years teaching at Slovak parish schools in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and New Jersey. She graduated from Mount Mercy College (now Carlow University) with a bachelor's degree in education.



Her most beloved ministry (1976-1990) was organizing and producing the Diocese of Pittsburgh's weekly Mass for shut-ins, which aired each Sunday morning on WPXI-TV. Her love of the Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Mass made this ministry particular joyful. Each Saturday evening, she traveled to the TV station to film the Mass for the next morning. On weekdays, in every kind of weather, she took the bus into the city to her office to arrange all the details and write the script for the Saturday taping.

In 1979, illness kept Sister Doloretta from the office for a few weeks but not from her ministry.

She worked from home while recuperating, and never missed a broadcast. She retired in 1990, earning accolades from Cardinal Donald Wuerl, then bishop of Pittsburgh.

Sister Doloretta spent the next 13 years at Mount Assisi in prayer and community service until her health declined. She died peacefully in her 67th year of religious life. She will be remembered for her beautiful smile and faithfulness to prayer. To many of the sisters and her friends Sister Doloretta was known as "Dolly." After services at the cemetery, everyone sang *Hello, Dolly*, one of her requests.

Sister Roberta Ann Voytek | October 1, 1922 - March 3, 2014

Sister Roberta Ann (Anna) **Voytek** was born on October 1, 1922, in Erie, Pa. After graduating from Holy Family school, where she was taught by our sisters, she felt called to become a School Sister of St. Francis and entered Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh, Pa.

There she attended Mount Assisi Academy and, in August 1940, was received as a novice and given the religious name of Sister Roberta (which was later changed to Sister Roberta Ann). She professed her First Vows in August 1941, and began pursuing a bachelor's degree in education from Mount Mercy College (now Carlow University). In 1943 she was sent to teach in parish schools at St. Gabriel on Pittsburgh's North Side and St. Mark in McKees Rocks, Pa.

After professing final vows in 1948, Sister Roberta Ann taught for 32 years at parish schools in Pennsylvania, Texas and Oregon. In 1980, she was assigned to community service at the Generalate in Rome, Italy. When she returned, Sister worked at St. Frances Cabrini Church in Center Township, Pa., and in the Catholic Cemeteries Office for the Pittsburgh Diocese. She later spent time in San Antonio, Texas, ministering at St. Francis Academy and St. Joseph School. She came to live at Mount Assisi Convent in 2005.



While at the motherhouse Sister Roberta Ann was active in prayer ministry and did whatever community service she could. In 2010, she began to suffer from health problems and spent more time in prayer, always willing to help when asked. She died at age 91 in her 73rd year of religious life.

Former student Greg (John) Harnyak expressed his memory of Sister as "a gentle and kind teacher" and regarded his visit with her in 2013 as a good fortune to meet again his first formal educator. One of our sisters, whose native tongue was Slovak, recalls the patience Sister showed her while learning English. Another sister whom

she taught in grade school saw something in Sister Roberta Ann that inspired her to enter our community.

Always a quiet person with a simple and sweet smile, a gift as small as a Clark bar or an ice cream cone made her happy. Sister loved teaching small children, and high school girls always felt she respected them and accepted them for who they were. She will be remembered by many as a gentle, peace-filled, kind, unassuming and prayerful person. Her quiet presence will be missed by many.

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Sister Lawrence Waxman | February 1, 1925 - April 2, 2014

Sister M. Lawrence (Mary) Waxman grew up in Jessup, Pa. with five brothers and three sisters. Her association with the SS. Cyril and Methodius Sisters from Danville, Pa., drew her to religious life. Her aunt, who was living in McKees Rocks and attended St. Mark Catholic Church, told her about the School Sisters of St. Francis. She arrived at Mount Assisi Convent in September 1947, and joined other candidates who were seven or eight years younger. In February 1948 she became a postulant, was received into the novitiate in August 1948, and was given the religious name Sister Lawrence.



In 1992 she was asked to go to what was then Czechoslovakia to teach English to young sisters. Sister spent nine months in the village of Cetechovice in the former Czech Republic, teaching first-year novices, Czech students and a medical doctor. Sister Lawrence learned much about the sufferings of the sisters during the Communist era and marveled at their joy despite what they had experienced. In 1993, Czechoslovakia again became two separate countries, the Czech and Slovak Republics. She lived there during an historical moment in our congregation, returning home with many good memories and blessings.

In August 1949 she professed her First Vows and was assigned to St. Gabriel School on Pittsburgh's North Side. She also attended Saturday and summer classes at Mount Mercy College (now Carlow University) and held a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in elementary education from Seton Hall University in New Jersey. Sister Lawrence taught in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Massachusetts and served as principal at three schools in New Jersey. From 1991 through 2009 she was involved in pastoral ministry and pastoral care in West Lawn, Pa.; Clifton, N.J. and Bethlehem, Pa. where she assisted with many fundraisers.

Sister Lawrence was known as a community photographer, always ready with her simple camera to document gatherings. Her many albums tell the story of her love for the sisters and her community. In 2010, Sister Lawrence's medical problems made speaking difficult, yet she continued doing what she enjoyed most. She succumbed to pneumonia in April 2014. Sister Lawrence always showed a willingness to help others in need. Her sense of humor and joyful Franciscan spirit overpowered difficulties throughout her life and helped to make others happy.

Sister Mercedes Benko | April 19, 1930 - June 10, 2014

Sister Mercedes (Dorothy) Benko was born in Ambridge, Pa., where she attended Divine Redeemer parish grade school, staffed by our sisters. She started ninth grade at Ambridge High School, but answered the call to become a School Sister of St. Francis. She entered Mount Assisi Convent and completed high school at Mount Assisi Academy. In August 1947, Dorothy was received as a novice and given the name Sister Mercedes. She professed First Vows in August 1948, and was assigned to teach at Holy Rosary School in Clarksburg, W.Va., and St. Mark School in McKees Rocks, Pa. She served as organist and trained the choirs for the churches in parishes where she taught.



After making final vows in 1953, Sister taught for 12 years at parish schools in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. She also attended Mount Mercy College (now Carlow University), received a bachelor's degree in education and business education from Duquesne University, and taught business courses at Mon-Valley Catholic High School in Monongahela, Pa., until 1965 and St. Francis Academy in San Antonio, Texas from 1965 to 1978.

Sister Mercedes used her arts and crafts skills in ministry to the aged at St. John the Baptist parish in Perryopolis, Pa.,

from 1978 to 1980. In 1980 parishes needed coordinators for religious education, and Sister enrolled at Duquesne University to become certified. She was director of religious education and parish social minister at Divine Redeemer during the 1980s, then received permission to live at home from 1988 to 1994 to care for her mother, commuting each day from Ambridge to Mount Assisi to help in the finance office.

After her mother died in 1995, Sister Mercedes came to Mount Assisi, where she arranged the provincial heritage rooms, organized hundreds of community photos, and knitted and crocheted

beautiful pieces sold throughout the year and during the annual Spring Festival. Her energy level decreased after she was diagnosed with a serious blood condition. This did not keep her from arts and crafts. Even after being diagnosed with leukemia, Sister continued working, never complaining about discomfort or required weekly blood transfusions.

Sister Mercedes, who died at age 84 in her 66th year of religious life, was attentive to the needs of others and known for being kind, gentle and helpful. She maintained a giving and joy-filled spirit despite illness and will be remembered for her courage, hospitality, warm smile, participation in community activities and deep spiritual life.

Sister Anna Mae Kuzma | January 8, 1931 - October 13, 2014

Sister Anna Mae Kuzma (formerly known as Sister Roseleen), in her 66th year of profession, died at Vincentian Home on October 13, 2014. She was 83.

Sister Anna Mae entered the community from Holy Family Parish in Erie, Pa. in 1944 and professed her first vows in 1948 at Mount Assisi Convent Chapel in Pittsburgh, Pa. She received a bachelor's degree in education from Carlow University and master's degrees in education and religious education from Duquesne University.

Throughout her earlier years of ministry, Sister Anna Mae taught grades one through six in parish schools in New Castle, McKees Rocks, Canonsburg, Northampton and Clymer, Pa. She later taught Family and Consumer Sciences at Mount Assisi Academy from 1961 to 1968. She spent 10 years coordinating parish catechesis programs in Canonsburg, Center Township and Erie, Pa.

From 1981 to 1985 she served as vocation director for the former Pittsburgh Province. Throughout her religious life, she was known to encourage young men and women to enter religious life. Her nephew, Deacon John Paul



Kuzma, OFM, Cap., thanks Sister Anna Mae for encouraging him to become a Franciscan priest.

She used her gifts and talents as a campus minister at Penn State-Behrend Campus in Erie, Pa. until suffering a stroke in 1996. She then came to live at Mount Assisi and spent her remaining years in prayer ministry and reaching out to others.

Sister Anna Mae was very creative and, during her time at Mount Assisi, authored four books: *Tales of Franciscan Calls: The School Sisters of St. Francis*, *The Faith Journey of a God Jr.*, *The Shadow of a Great Rock* and *Surviving a Stroke with Style and Grace*. She also wrote to shut-ins, the elderly and those who needed

to hear God's "Good News" from someone who shared their sufferings.

Sister Anna Mae was the first child of 10 siblings. She was preceded in death by her parents Joseph and Anna. She is survived by her religious community, her brothers: Francis, Deacon Glenn, Paul, Joseph and Michael; her sisters: Therese Taft, **Sister Roselyn Kuzma**, OSF, Mary Ellen Haynes, Pauline Kisiel, and Marilyn Moore; 29 nieces and nephews, 44 great nieces and nephews, eight great, great nieces and nephews and many cousins, including Sister Ellen Gresock, OSF, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities.



The SFA Class of 1968 had a nice turnout for its 45th reunion, including Sister Elaine Hromulak (front row, center) and Lynn Cosgrove (front row, second from left).

Smiles in San Antonio

The Class of 1968 from St. Francis Academy in San Antonio, Texas, hosted **Sister Elaine Hromulak** and associate **Lynn Cosgrove** (former Sister Kenneth) for a wonderful, whirlwind weekend last year to celebrate the class' 45th reunion. The trip not only included the reunion itself, but also visits with families and friends. "We were totally exhausted," Lynn says, "but so grateful for the weekend celebrations with our beloved SFA girls." The visitors left behind a special message for their hostesses. "We encouraged them to continue living their faith and stay connected to and pray for the sisters," Sister Elaine says.



Preschool Thrives at Mount Assisi

Mount Assisi Academy Preschool, located in some of the very same classrooms in which Mount Assisi Academy students studied, continues to be a thriving ministry. Last year, the program had 104 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled and graduated 60 kindergarten-ready students in May. **Sister Eve Blostic** teaches religion, and **Sister Rosalia Giba** works in the preschool office. They join the small team of lay teachers under the supervision of long-time director Kathy Duncan. The 2014-15 session is under way with learning, fun activities, plays, field trips and vibrant fundraisers. It is not rare to have the grandchild of a Mount Assisi Academy alumnae enrolled! To learn more, visit www.mtassispreschool.org or call **412-761-0381**.

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Please note that this listing includes donations received between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014.

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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Take a bite out of the winter chill when you purchase delicious warmth through the weekly soup sale at Marian Hall Home in Pittsburgh. Various flavors are featured each week, including yummy varieties like Stuffed Pepper, Italian Wedding and Chicken-n-Dumpling to name a few. Soup is \$5 per quart. Place your order before noon on each Thursday through April 17, 2015 by calling **412-761-6004**. Orders are ready for pickup on Friday afternoons.



Spiritual Merchandise

Notecards, Cookbooks for Gifting

St. Francis Center for Renewal in Bethlehem has some wonderful items available for holiday or year-round gifting.

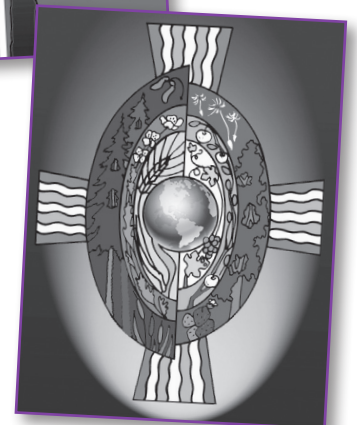
Sister Jo Goolish has added a new pair of designs to her *Canticle of the Creatures* notecard collection. The Brother Fire-Sister Mother Earth cards are now available, as are the Brother Sun-Sister Moon and Brother Wind & Air-Sister Water sets so popular in 2013. Each boxed set of six full-color notecards comes with accompanying envelopes for \$6 per box.

The Center also is offering its popular cookbooks again. *Peace & All Good: Recipes Celebrating the Holidays*, and *Peace & All Good: Recipes Celebrating Faith, Food & Friendship* are \$18 each.

Proceeds benefit Renewal Center programming. To order notecards or cookbooks, contact **Jan Gough** at **610-867-8890** or **stfranciscenter@gmail.com**.



Brother Fire



**Sister
Mother Earth**