

School Sisters of St. Francis

Mount Assisi Convent
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ECHOES *across the* HORIZONS

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

Autumn 2015 | Volume 8

Soup's On!

Take a bite out of the winter chill when you purchase delicious warmth through the weekly soup sale at Marian Hall Home in Pittsburgh, Pa. 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 16, 2016 by calling 412-761-6004. Orders are ready for pickup on Friday afternoons.



Oplatky Available

Bring Eastern European tradition into your home for Christmas when you purchase oplatky, available before Christmas 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."

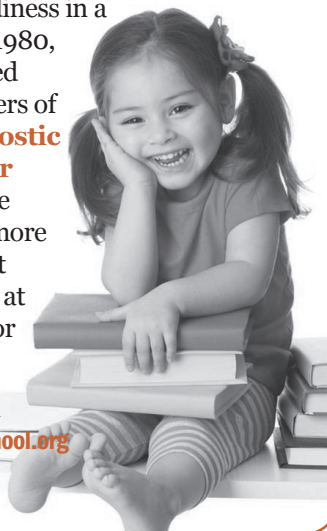
For more information, call 412-761-6004.

Mount Assisi Preschool offers innovative 'Almost 3' program

Mount Assisi Academy Preschool (MAAP) in Pittsburgh, Pa., is now enrolling children who are not quite 3 but would like to be introduced to school. The new *Almost 3* program meets on Monday and Friday afternoons from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. As with all MAAP classes, the curriculum incorporates language development, social skills, art, math, reading readiness, fine motor skills and gross motor skills.

Offering kindergarten readiness in a caring environment since 1980, the preschool is a sponsored ministry of the School Sisters of St. Francis. **Sister Eve Blotic** teaches religion, and **Sister Rosalia Giba** works in the preschool office. To learn more about the program, contact **Kathy Duncan**, director, at kduncan@maapreschool.com or 412-761-0381.

You can visit the preschool online at www.mtassisipreschool.org and also on Facebook.



Coming Up

Christmas Vespers

7 p.m. | Saturday,
December 12, 2015;
2 p.m. | Sunday,
December 13, 2015
*St. Francis Center for
Renewal*

Marian Hall Night at the Races Event

6 to 11 p.m. | Saturday,
February 6, 2016
Mount Assisi Convent

Mount Assisi Preschool Tea & Fashion Show

11 a.m. | Saturday,
March 19, 2016
Mount Assisi Convent

2015 Spring Festival

12 to 5 p.m. | Sunday,
April 24, 2016
Mount Assisi Convent

Fifth Annual Star Struck Gala

6 to 11 p.m. | Saturday,
April 30, 2016
*St. Francis Center for
Renewal*

Pittsburgh Jubilee Celebration

11 a.m. | Saturday,
June 4, 2016
Mount Assisi Convent

Bethlehem Jubilee Celebration

11 a.m. | Saturday,
August 20, 2016
Monocacy Manor

Preschool & Marian Hall Golf Outing

11 a.m. | Saturday,
August 27, 2016
Pittsburgh North Golf Club

SISTERS REACH OUT DURING YEAR-LONG OBSERVANCE



Celebrating Consecrated Life

Last fall, religious around the world began a memorable year of letting others know who they are by the way they live. **Pope Francis** declared this year-long observance as the *Year of Consecrated Life* (YOCL).

"Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, or living! It is possible to live differently in this world," Pope Francis said. "Religious follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way. It is this witness that I expect of you. Religious should be men and women who are able to wake the world up."

"More important than the programs we attend is the witness we give to others by our actions and attitudes in our homes, in our places of ministry and in the market place," says **Sister Bernadine Marie Stemnock**, provincial minister.

In each of the areas where our sisters minister, programs, activities and various services were held to build a stronger bond between religious and the laity:

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Our Sisters in the Pittsburgh area took part in the Catholic Sisters Leadership Council's

Continued on Page 3

ABOVE: Many of our sisters from New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania took part in a celebration of the *Year of Consecrated Life* at St. Matthias Church in Somerset, N.J. Sisters Anita Kuchera, Barbara DeStefano, Georgette Dublino, Regina Ann Rokosny, Roseann Velas, Aurelia Cerny, Amata Shina, Marie Therese Sherwood, Patricia Brennan, Marie Glodava, Jean Makovsky, Rosemarie Bartnicki, Teresa Misyak, Maria Derecola, Ancy Francis and Rosaria Shina all attended. Also pictured is Sister Elizabeth O'Hara, RSM, delegate for religious in the Metuchen Diocese.

On the Road Ministry

NEW PROGRAM BRINGS GOD'S GOOD NEWS TO HIS PEOPLE

In the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, **Sisters Anita Kuchera** and **Barbara DeStefano** have set out to let more people know of God's unconditional love for them through their new *On the Road Ministry* program.

Both sisters have spent many years ministering to retreatants at St. Francis Center for Renewal in Bethlehem, Pa. Now the new program offers an opportunity for them to minister to many others whom they have never met.

"Going on the road is an excellent means of meeting so many more of God's people," says Sister Anita.

The new program offers pastoral council retreats; parish missions; theological updates; Franciscan and women's spirituality retreats; retreats on the Mystics; sacramental formation;



Sisters Barbara DeStefano and Anita Kuchera collaborate on a program for their new *On the Road Ministry*.

liturgical ongoing formation; advent programs and Lenten retreats.

The sisters are available to conduct morning or evening programs for parish groups, women's guilds,

choirs, students and other gatherings.

"This way we can bring the Good News to those who are unable to come to us," says Sister Barbara.

Among their offerings is the

Life's Healing Journey retreat that can be conducted over a weekend. It leads participants through an intense journey from hurt to forgiveness with the use of teachings, personal work, processing with direction, prayer and ritual. Another weekend program is focused on women's spirituality and can be adapted for many topics. These and other retreats and programs can be presented at churches, schools and other venues.

Sister Anita has served for 39 years in retreat ministry in many and varied roles, including as director for 33 years. Sister Barbara has been in retreat ministry for 28 years and pastoral ministry for five years.

To learn more about the *On the Road Ministry*, its offerings and the ministry team, please visit www.ontheroadministryosf.org.



The End of an Era

In the nearly 40 years since Mount Assisi Academy closed in 1978, **Sister Frances Jacko** (formerly Sister Theophane) has remained in touch with a dedicated group of alumnae who she refers to as "my girls." They continued to come to Mount Assisi almost weekly for ceramics classes and a whole lot of conversation with their beloved former teacher, some even bringing their own daughters to take part. Upon Sister Frances' retirement earlier this year, many of "her girls" came one more time to celebrate her 90th birthday and give thanks for the lessons she has taught them about ceramics and life. At left, Sister Frances (wearing veil) and her sister, **Sister Julia Jacko**, are shown surrounded by alumnae.

Sister Martina Antalek
Henry & Carole Sepulveda

Sister Mercedes Benko
Ann Chawner
Rosemary Janik
Diane Panzak

Sister Audrey Berdis
Helen DiFalco

Lisa Bica
Robert & Lisa Stemnock

Walter Blair
Larry & Chris Golen

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Nancy Albright
John & Philomena Bracaglia
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Rev. Gary & Linda Walbert
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Mary Dobransky
Joseph & Joan Stelmack
Robert & Betsy Ann Swaditch

Sister Marcia Fidishun
Helen Bay
Karl & Valerie Bennett
Craig Ceol, Kersten Moyer & Family

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Dolores Fidishun
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Annette Gerwell

Stanley Golen
Martha Leigh Rose

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Jimmy & Marie Alexander
Stanley & Kathy Duncan
Anne Hunkele
Family of Art Hunkele Sr.
Edward & Linda Hyde
Eileen Mann

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Joseph & Sharon Krug

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Kenneth Dawe

Valentine & Mollye Jacko
Christine Jacko

Helen Kralosky
Frances & Roger Dice

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Marie Dworsky

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Roger & Frances Dice
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Michael Kuzma
Marilyn Moore

Sister Magdalene Lovrich
Rosemary Hutchinson
Rosemary Janik
Alberta Hromulak Kastelic
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Echoes Across the Horizons

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Celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life

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food drive last fall to kick off the YOCL, collecting more than 36 cartons of food for area food banks.

Then in February, Mount Assisi Convent hosted an open house for family, friends, alumnae and local parishioners. The day included tours, program overviews, fellowship and a DVD presentation.

The sisters at Mount Assisi opened their doors again in September for a prayer service and social attended by alumnae, friends and sisters from other communities.

Somerset, N.J.

In February, **Sisters Marie Therese and Sherwood, Maria Derecola** attended a Mass celebrated by **Bishop Paul Bootkowski** at the Cathedral of Saint Francis of Assisi in Metuchen, N.J. Then in March, **Sisters Bernadine Marie Stemmack** and **Rosaria Shina** attended a dinner for religious at St. Augustine's Parish in Kendall Park, N.J.

In April, Franciscan sisters in the Diocese of Metuchen gathered at St. Matthias Church for a Mass to celebrate the YOCL. During the liturgy, 26 sisters renewed their vows. The event provided an opportunity for religious to bring the assembled people of God to awareness about the many facets of their consecrated lives as Franciscan sisters.

Bethlehem, Pa.

Our Sisters in Bethlehem celebrated the YOCL with an open house at Monocacy Manor in February 2015. It included adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and reflections on consecrated life by **Father Dennet Jung**, OFM and closed with Benediction. Everyone enjoyed refreshments afterwards.

Erie, Pa.

Sister Roselyn Kuzma carried a candle for the deceased of our community as the Diocese of Erie, led by **Bishop Lawrence Persico**, celebrated a Mass to open the YOCL



Religious and laity joined forces in July to participate in a vocation awareness walk in San Angelo, Texas. Our sisters Kathleen Kudlac, Hilda Marotta and Adelina Garcia minister there.

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 at 412-761-6004.

and remember religious who died this past year. During the Prayers of the Faithful, the names of all deceased who had served in the diocese and died this past year were read aloud, among them that of **Sister Anna Mae Kuzma**. Our other deceased sisters were remembered in the Mass booklet.

Closter, N.J.

In May, a special liturgy to celebrate the YOCL was held at the Church of St. Mary in Closter, N.J., where **Sister Georgette Dublino** ministers. Religious from the surrounding area were invited to attend. Following the homily, all sisters renewed their vows together in the sanctuary, and a special *Alleluia* was offered by the congregation. Parishioners prepared food for a luncheon that followed. "It was truly a delightful and joy-filled experience," said Sister Georgette.

This September, Sister Georgette hosted a holy hour at St. Mary, which was

attended by sisters from three different communities, about 15 laity and three children. **Father Paul Cannariato**, pastor, gave a homily centered around a new vision for the parish in an effort to rebirth it into the spirit of the new evangelization.

San Angelo, Texas

Our sisters in San Angelo, Texas took their celebration of the YOCL outdoors in July when people from the towns of Ballinger, Brownwood, Coleman, Winters, Olfen and San Angelo gathered at *The Cross* in Ballinger to participate in a prayer walk for vocation awareness. Following the walk, participants enjoyed music by *Sacred Sound* and heard representatives of different vocations share their stories. The event included a Eucharistic Liturgy by **Father Hugh Wade** and lunch.

Reading, Pa.

This fall, **Sisters Rosemarie Bartnicki** and **Patricia Brennan** represented our community at a bilingual YOCL celebration at St. Peter the Apostle Church in Reading, Pa. The sisters greeted the people and answered thought-provoking questions about their call to religious life. "It gave us an opportunity to exhibit our joy in being called," Sister Patricia said.

Through celebrations and gatherings, our sisters observed the YOCL as a time to look to the past with gratitude, live the present with passion, and embrace the future with hope.

Gratitude
is a
flower
that
blooms
in noble
souls.

Pope Francis

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.

Visit Us Online
www.schoolsistersosf.org

Retreats, Gala top 2016 calendar

St. Francis Center for Renewal, located at 395 Bridle Path Road in Bethlehem, Pa., offers private individual retreats and spiritual programming year-round. Upcoming highlights include:

Women's Spirituality Weekend: Women of Mercy

January 8-10, 2016
Sisters Barbara Brown, Patricia Mahoney and Marguerite Stewart, along with Barbara Martell and Regina Bogle, will guide participants as they search for and discover the mercy within. Grow in mercy by choosing the path that calls us to develop and become a compassionate presence in the world. Become mercy by exploring how our lives become the reflection of our Father's love and compassion.
Cost: \$160 to 170 per person

Choose Life: Openness to Change

6:45 to 9 p.m.
Tuesday, January 19, 2016
God, in His love, challenges us to recognize the need and opportunity for change in our lives -- changes that will lead to a fuller and more meaningful life. Sister Marguerite Stewart guides us through an evening of song, prayer, input and sharing as we try to look at life with new eyes.
Cost: \$25

Downsizing with St. Francis: When Less is More

6:45 to 9 p.m.
Wednesday, February 24, 2016



According to historical records, it was on February 24, 1208 that Francis of Assisi recognized his vocation while praying in the tiny church called "the Little Portion." Sister Patricia Mahoney guides us as we look at ourselves and our world through the eyes of Francis and gain insights into simpler living and deeper prayer. Cost: \$25

Prepare Your Heart for the Holiest Time of the Year

6:45 to 9 p.m., Wednesday, March 16, 2016
Come journey with Sister Barbara Brown as we reflect on the three most profound days of the liturgical year. Prepare your heart and mind in a new and deeper way for the solemnity of Holy Thursday, the impact of Christ's



Sister Marguerite Stewart (left) helps honoree Sister Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster with her wrist corsage.

Gala Offers Guests 'Knight to Remember'

Some 220 people attended the fifth annual Star Struck Gala and Silent Auction in May 2015 at St. Francis Center for Renewal in Bethlehem, Pa. The event shined the spotlight on the Knights of Columbus Trinity Council, as well as three exceptional women of strength: **Sister Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster**, Helen Husser Ballek and Bridget Farley Muehlenkamp. Attendees enjoyed a wonderful Italian dinner, dessert buffet, silent auction, raffles of distinctive prizes and *A Knight to Remember* theme. Several classes of St. Francis Academy also reunited, and our Bethlehem associates helped with the event. Homemade kiffles made with love by **Sisters Loretta Motko** and **Marie Bernadette Kelleher** were a hit among the guests.

The 2016 Gala will be held on Saturday, April 30. The event will feature the annual *Women of Strength* award (nominations accepted through November 30, 2015). The St. Francis Academy Classes of 1966, 1971, 1976, 1981 and 1986 will celebrate their anniversary years of graduation.

Good Friday Passion, and his ultimate victory over sin and death. Engage your heart, soul and senses as we explore the powerful and joyous liturgy of the Easter Vigil. Cost: \$25

Day of Reflection: The Face of the Father's Mercy

8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Saturday, April 16, 2016
Pope Francis has declared a Jubilee of Mercy for the universal church. Jesus, the face of the Father's mercy, embodies the whole mystery of the Christian faith. Bishop Ronald Gainer will guide a day of focusing our thoughts and prayer on God's saving mercy. Cost: \$45 (includes lunch)

A Journey into the World Within: Optimal Well-Being, Creativity & Possibilities

6:45 to 9 p.m.
Tuesday, April 19, 2016
As the created beings of a majestic Creator, there are many gifts that reside within us. The ultimate purpose of these gifts is to help us better know our Lord and to be of better service to His creation. Dr. Micah Sadigh guides this exploration of the power of creativity that resides in each of us and how to put it to use for the good of all. Cost: \$25

Mary: Our Lady of Perpetual Help

6:45 to 9 p.m.
Wednesday, May 11, 2016
One of the many titles given to Mary is Our



Lady of Perpetual Help, a name originating in the 15th Century. Through time, many have sought her help in their need. Join us as Sister Mary Xavier Bomberger, Dolores Castline and Claire Hintze share their unique stories of Mary's influence on their lives. The evening will include prayer, sharing and our traditional May Crowning. Cost: \$25

St. Francis Center for Renewal also hosts an ongoing Bereavement Support Group; a Health, Wellness & Spirituality program; and seasonal baking seminars. For more information on these or the programs above, visit www.stfrancisctr.org or call 610-867-8890.

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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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Our 2015 Jubilarians

This summer, the School Sisters of St. Francis 2015 Jubilarians renewed their vows in celebrations held at both Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh and Monocacy Manor in Bethlehem. Eight Jubilarians celebrated a combined 485 years of religious life:

- Sister Genevieve Mary Jurick | 75th
- Sister Rose Ann Rovnak | 70th
- Sister Rosemarie Bartnicki | 60th
- Sister Rosalia Giba | 60th
- Sister Marie Glodava | 60th
- Sister Elaine Hromulak | 60th
- Sister Marie Bernadette Kelleher | 50th
- Sister Denise Olshausky | 50th

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



School Sisters of St. Francis 2015 Jubilarians (back row from left) Sisters Elaine Hromulak, Rosalia Giba, Rosemarie Bartnicki, Marie Glodava, (front row from left) Genevieve Mary Jurick, Rose Ann Rovnak, Denise Olshausky and Marie Bernadette Kelleher.

IN MEMORY

Thirteen deceased sisters also were remembered:

75th Jubilee

Sister M. Martina Antalek
Sister Agnes Marie Bartko
Sister M. Magdalene Lovrich
Sister M. Immaculata Vavrek
Sister M. Anne Weiss

70th Jubilee

Sister Pauline Bolecek
Sister M. Florence Crea
Sister M. Marcelline Goceljak

Sister M. Claudia Mamros
Sister M. Emilia Suchon
Sister Mary Louise Vrana

60th Jubilee

Sister Martha Ann Bupka
Sister M. Bernadette Giba

In 2016, eight sisters will celebrate their jubilees, and five others will be remembered posthumously. They will be featured in the Fall 2016 issue of Echoes Across the Horizons.



Sowing the Seeds

In August 2013 many of us gathered in Pittsburgh and Bethlehem to celebrate our six Pioneer Sisters' arrival in the United States 100 years ago. Each person received a small packet of seeds symbolizing how our presence here grew from those six Pioneer Sisters. Those seeds reached all the way to the Czech Republic, Slovakia, India, Central Asia, Chile and South Africa, taken there by the sisters attending the celebration. This spring, Sister Veronika Řihová planted those seeds in the garden at the Motherhouse in Prague, and they turned out to be the beautiful blue "Forget-me-not" flowers in this picture. We, too, are like seeds called to "bloom where we are planted."

Pope Francis' Visit Offers Glimpse of Evangelical Living

Major superiors, novices and novice directors from religious communities around the country were invited to take part in a special event during Pope Francis' visit to the United States in September 2015. **Sisters Bernadine Marie Stemnock** (provincial minister), **Regina Ann Rokosny** (novice directress) and **Claire Marie Obrero** (novice) were present for the canonization of St. Junipero Serra, OFM at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception. Sister Claire Marie shares her experience:



I am thankful to Sisters Bernadine Marie and Regina Ann for providing me the opportunity to see **Pope Francis**, to be with other religious in Washington, D.C., and to attend the Mass in Philadelphia, Pa.

September 23, 2015 | Pope Francis Urges Us to Walk Forward

On that day the sun shone brightly while people were joyfully waiting for Pope Francis in the Basilica in Washington, D.C. It was perfect weather for a beautiful celebration of faith, hope and unity. I could see from the faces of the people and the energy coming from each individual that they were there waiting for Pope Francis not because he is the leader of the biggest Christian community in the world, but because they longed to hear good news; *news* that would give them reason to live happily; *news* that would help them see with new eyes and alleviate the painful reality that inflicts the dignity of human persons; *news* that would encourage them to face the different issues that affect the moral life of every individual in various stages of life, as well as activities that exploit

the beauty of creation.

As the Pope departed, the people's faces glowed with the splendor of the richness of his message of hope, joy and trust for the future that touched us all. My experience in Washington, D.C. was indeed a turning point -- to ponder and reflect as I continue to ask myself, "What can I contribute to this society?" Who dreams of building a civilization of love and truth -- the Gospel way of living -- as Pope Francis encourages us to walk forward in spite of its struggles?

September 27, 2015 | What It Means to be God's Family

One of the things I noticed was the difference between the weather in Washington, D.C. and the weather in Philadelphia; Wednesday was sunny, and then it was a bright cloudy Sunday. The weather made me think of the symbols the Bible used to present the presence of God among his chosen people. In Washington, D.C. Pope Francis appeared as a bearer of the Light; and in Philadelphia, through the bright clouds, God made Himself present in our midst, and through Pope Francis, brought us comfort and consolation.

While we were held up for several hours waiting to reach the checkpoint to participate in the outdoor Mass on Benjamin Franklin Parkway, we sang, danced, chatted, prayed the rosary in different languages and -- most of all -- cared for each other. It was a taste of what God's family is all about.

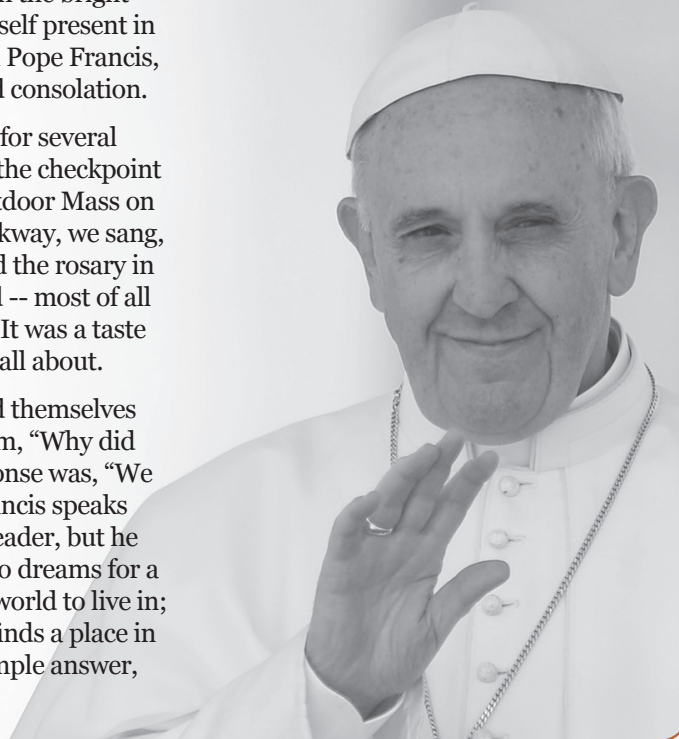
I met people who called themselves agnostic and asked them, "Why did you come?" Their response was, "We came because Pope Francis speaks not only as a Catholic leader, but he speaks as one of us, who dreams for a peaceful, safe and just world to live in; where the golden rule finds a place in our hearts." It was a simple answer,

yet they grasped the profound message of the Pope for both believers and nonbelievers.

Others asked me if I thought the Pope's message would influence the minds and hearts of America's political leaders. I responded that the Pope acts as a humble and true ambassador of Christ; he sows the seeds and makes clear what the Catholic Church teaches and strives to live. It is up to us to make those seeds grow and blossom and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we may be able to make a difference wherever we are.

The Pope's visit was spiritually enlightening and culturally enriching for me personally. Getting a close glimpse of Pope Francis and experiencing the people at the two events I attended encouraged me to see the joys and pains, the hopes and dreams of our society with the eyes of God's mercy; to participate in our world's successes and failures with a compassionate heart; and to embrace all of humanity and God's creation with passion and love.

-- Sister Claire Marie Obrero



Sister Magdalene Lovrich | September 1, 1920 - May 21, 2015

Sister M. Magdalene (Mary) **Lovrich** was born in Mammoth, Pa., and raised with her brother and two sisters. Being of Croatian descent, the family belonged to St. Florian Catholic Church, the worship place of many immigrants from Eastern Europe. Her father worked in the local coal mine, and the family moved frequently as the mines closed.



Mary attended German Township High School in McClellandtown, Pa. for three years. At the end of the 1938 school year, she knew she would not return in the fall because she felt a call to dedicate her life to God, but was not sure where or how. When asked how she met our sisters, she responded, "At the convent with my suitcase! The Lord led me there. I asked our pastor for a convent address and he gave me Mount Assisi. I wrote, and Sister Gerard responded. My pastor brought me here. The rest is history." She completed her last year of high school as a postulant and graduated from Mount Assisi Academy in 1939.

Mary entered the novitiate in August 1939 and received the name Sister Magdalene. She professed First Vows in August 1940 and began her ministry of teaching and furthering her education. Her teaching career was spent at Central Catholic High School in Allentown, Pa.; Mount Assisi Academy in Pittsburgh, Pa.; and Mon Valley Catholic High School in Monongahela, Pa. She served as principal of Mount Assisi Academy from 1954 to 1970. She was very intelligent and had no difficulty earning her degrees while teaching and taking summer courses. She received a bachelor's degree from Carlow University (then known as Mount Mercy College) in

1945 with a major in mathematics and minors in English and Latin, and a master's degree in English from Duquesne University in 1953. She then completed a four-summer Theology Institute at Carlow and post-master's work in secondary school administration at Duquesne.

In addition to teaching, Sister Magdalene had other responsibilities. She was appointed as prefect of candidates from 1950 to 1954, scheduled college courses for the sisters from 1954 to 1967, and prepared sisters for their final vows from 1955 to 1966. From 1973 to 1981 and 1984 to 1993, Sister Magdalene served as a provincial councilor and secretary. She spent

the summers of 1978, 1979 and 1981 at the Generalate in Rome working on the rewriting of the Constitutions for our congregation. She took computer classes to be more efficient, skills she used as archivist from 1993 until she retired in 2012. She then devoted the remainder of her life to prayer.

Remembered as kind, gentle and patient, Sister Magdalene was an example to others by her life of prayer, especially the celebration of the Holy Mass and her love of the Eucharist. Her example of doing all things well was very noticeable, and her meticulous and intellectual insights manifested a woman of great wisdom and knowledge of our history.

She was passionate about many causes and was reluctant to compromise, even in the face of opposition. Her students were very grateful to have had her as their teacher and many recalled her quote: "Repetition is the mother of learning." May she rest in peace!

Enjoy a Night at the Races

Marian Hall Home, a sponsored ministry of the School Sisters of St. Francis, will host its annual Night at the Races event on Saturday, February 6, 2016 in the Mount Assisi Gymnasium. Doors open at 6 p.m., and races begin at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15. Admission includes food and beverages. You can also buy and name your own horse for \$10. In addition to the horse races, there will be a treasure chest cash drawing and raffles of great prizes. Marian Hall is located on the grounds of Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh, Pa. To purchase tickets or horses, call **412-761-6004**.



Never Too Soon To Think Spring

The Monocacy Farm Project, located on the grounds of Monocacy Manor in Bethlehem, Pa., is accepting garden plot reservations for the 2016 growing season. Plots measure six feet wide by 25 feet long. The requested donation for plot rental is \$100 for the season. Rental includes access to water via non-toxic hose, organic mulch and organic crop cover seed. A limited supply of vegetable, herb and fruit seeds is available. To inquire, contact **Bob Drake**, project manager, at bdrake@schoolsistersosf.org or **610-867-8494**.

Sister Ann Margaret Bolf | February 9, 1923 - June 27, 2015

Sister Ann Margaret (Anna) Bolf was born in Patton Township, now Monroeville, Pa., to parents born in Austria of Croatian descent. Her father was a painter, and her mother was devoted to raising six children. Anna attended Westinghouse Memorial High School and, after graduation, worked for Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company. She was commended in 1945 for work there that aided the War Department.



As a young adult, Anna attended retreats at Mount Assisi Convent. After becoming acquainted with our sisters, she made the decision to answer God's call. She entered the convent in 1950, joining candidates that were 13 and 14 years her junior. In August 1951, Ann was received into the community as a novice and was given the name Sister Louis. The following year, she made her first profession and began her ministry of teaching.

After Vatican II, she asked to use her baptismal name and was known as Sister Ann Margaret. She taught in parish schools in Hellertown, Barnesboro, Charleroi, North Side Pittsburgh, Clymer, Canonsburg, Erie, Tarentum, Farrell, Perryopolis and Ellsworth in Pennsylvania, and in Clarksburg, WV. She also served as principal in Ellsworth, Perryopolis and Erie, Pa. She later worked as director of religious education in Perryopolis, Clymer and Canonsburg, Pa. Sister was asked to use her gifts to help troubled children at St. Joseph Home for Children in

Dayton, Ohio, where she spent four years. Her training in parish social service also was welcomed in St. Catherine of Sweden in Wildwood and in Canonsburg, Pa.

During those years of ministry Sister Ann Margaret continued her education and earned a bachelor's degree in education from Carlow University, a master's degree in education from Duquesne University, certification for teaching the mentally challenged, and certification in special education for K-12 from the Department of Education in Ohio. There was one particular "degree" she was proud of; that was from the Clown College of the Jolly Jesters in Erie, Pa.

Sister always enjoyed making others happy because she herself was a happy person.

In 2000, Sister Ann Margaret came to Mount Assisi Convent to minister to the retired sisters as their driver. When she could no longer drive, her ministry was that of prayer. When in active ministry, she enjoyed traveling for leisure and pilgrimage, accompanying parishioners, family members and our sisters to Hawaii, Medjugorje, Mexico City, Rome and Scotland. Sister Ann Margaret took her final trip on June 27, 2015, when she died very peacefully.

Sister will be remembered for the joy and happiness she spread to others, the warmth in her smiling eyes, her compassion for others, her love of sports, and her generosity in gift-giving. May she rest in peace.

Sister Virginia Cummings | April 30, 1926 - July 10, 2015

Sister Virginia "Ginny" Cummings was in her 39th year of profession when she died at Mount Assisi Convent Motherhouse in Bellevue, Pa. at age 89. Sister Ginny was an alumna of Mount Assisi Academy in Bellevue and later moved to Maryland until she entered the community from Our Lady of Hope in Dundalk, Md. in 1973.



She professed her first vows in 1976 and made final profession in 1980. She was the first community member who had been married before entering. She raised a family of two sons as a single working mom. Her unique vocation was the subject of a news obituary in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* following her death.

While in the community, Sister Virginia attended Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh. She spent her first six years in ministry teaching the business courses at St. Francis Academy in San Antonio, Texas. She later taught in Clymer and Erie, Pa. After she received her certificate from Duquesne University as a director of education, she ministered in the parishes

of Divine Redeemer in Ambridge, Pa.; Most Holy Name in Pittsburgh, Pa.; and Immaculate Conception in Clarion, Pa. This was followed by five years of ministry for the Catholic Cemeteries Association of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

At Mount Assisi Convent Sister Virginia became the driver for the sisters, accompanying them to the hospital at all hours of the day and night. When she no longer could drive, her ministry became one of prayer.

Sister Ginny will be remembered as a very sociable person who made friends wherever she ministered. She possessed a delightful sense of humor and took pride in her knack for selling raffle tickets for the sisters' fundraisers over the years.

Sister Virginia was the daughter of the late Roland C. Skeen and Frances (Hanenberg) Skeen. She was preceded in death by her brothers Arthur and Francis and her son Richard Michael. She is survived by her religious community, her son David, her brother Roland, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews. May she rest in peace.

Sister Marcia Fidishun | August 22, 1933 - April 14, 2015

Sister M. Marcia (Eleanor) Fidishun, OSF was born in Jeanesville, Pa. and baptized in St. Michael Church in Treschkow, Pa., one of eight children born to parents of Slovak descent. Her father supported the family by working in the coal mines, while her mother was a homemaker. After three years of high school in Hazleton, she went to work at Tung-Sol Electric Inc. assembling radio and television tubes. Eleanor stayed close to the Church and became a member of St. Michael's Sodality, where she met our sisters who came to Treschkow to teach CCD.



Eleanor was 22 when she heard God's call. In 1955, she came to Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh, Pa. to begin a new chapter in her life. By the end of her postulancy she had completed high school at Mount Assisi Academy. She entered the novitiate in August 1956 and received her religious name of Sister Marcia. She professed her first vows in August 1957 and final vows in August 1962.

After novitiate, Sister Marcia taught primary grades in Bethlehem and Hellertown, Pa., then was missioned to Guttenberg, N.J. She continued her education by taking courses at Carlow University in Pittsburgh and Seton Hall University in New Jersey. After final vows, Sister Marcia taught in Worchester, Ma.; in Emmaus, Stowe, Hellertown and Bethlehem, Pa; and in Clifton, New Milford and

Guttenberg, N.J. From 1985 to 1988, she was principal of SS. Cyril & Methodius School in Clifton, N.J. After more than 30 years in grade schools, Sister Marcia spent 14 years teaching in preschool and after-school care. Her last years of active ministry were spent as a clerical aide in the finance office at Monocacy Manor.

For many years Sister Marcia suffered from a severe varicose disease of her left leg, requiring aggressive treatment and eventually the use of an electric scooter. Still she was often the first one in chapel each morning and worked conscientiously as long as she was able. When her health declined, Sister moved to Holy

Family Manor in Bethlehem, Pa., where she spread joy and hope to the residents and became known for her listening ear. They received encouragement to endure their pain and suffering by the example she gave. Sister Marcia often prayed for and with them and was a comfort to their families.

Sister Marcia will be remembered for her gift of joy and happiness and dressing up as Mrs. Claus each Christmas. The sisters knew her as a woman of prayer, faithful to her consecrated life. Sister Marcia loved her religious community and her family. She was faithful in sending cards for every occasion. It was said that once you were a part of her life, you were a part of her correspondence. May she rest in peace.

S. Anna Catherine Melichar | November 12, 1916 - September 18, 2015

Sister Anna Catherine Melichar (formerly known as Sister Bonaventure) was in her 83rd year of profession when she died at Mount Assisi Convent in Bellevue, Pa. at age 98. She was the eldest member of the U.S. Province.

Sister Anna Catherine entered the community at age 13 from St. Michael Church in New Castle, Pa., in 1930 and professed her first vows in 1933. She received a bachelor's degree from Carlow University in Pittsburgh, majoring in English and minoring in history and Latin; and a master's degree in education from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, majoring in history and minoring in government. She also studied economics at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh; economics/international relations at Penn State University and the University of Pittsburgh; and conversational Spanish at the University of Mexico and San Antonio College, both in San Antonio, Texas.

Sister taught the middle grades for nine years in parishes where our sisters ministered, then spent 13 years teaching social studies and Latin at Mount Assisi Academy. She spent a year in the history department of La Roche College in



Allison Park, Pa., followed by three years as a missionary in Chile, South America during the 1973 Chilean coup d'etat, teaching in grade schools operated by the community.

After returning from Chile, she taught religion, English and history at St. Francis Academy in San Antonio, Texas for 12 years, and then put her clerical skills to work at St. Frances Cabrini in Center Township, Pa.

Among her many talents, Sister Anna Catherine was well versed in Czech and Slovak. After the fall of Communism, she was asked to teach English to the sisters in the Czech and Slovak Republics from 1991 to 1993. She

later spent a year at the Generalate of the School Sisters of St. Francis in Rome, Italy as a translator. In 1995, at the age of 79, Sister Anna Catherine retired at Mount Assisi Convent and made herself available for community services.

During her free time she collected needed items for the missions and packed and sent them worldwide. She entertained the sisters during meals with many jokes and stories, and her memory was a gift for anyone who needed to know a bit of history. May she rest in peace.

St. Francis Center for Renewal in Bethlehem, Pa., recently welcomed a new administrative team: **Sister Barbara Brown** as the new director and **Sisters Patricia Ann Mahoney** and **Marguerite Stewart** as the assistant directors. The Center expressed its gratitude to outgoing administrators **Sisters Barbara DeStefano** and **Anita Kuchera** for their many years of heartfelt and dedicated service. Their new *On the Road Ministry* is featured in this issue of *Echoes Across the Horizons*.



Sisters Patricia Ann Mahoney, Barbara Brown and Marguerite Stewart lead our sponsored ministry at St. Francis Center for Renewal in Bethlehem, Pa.



Sister Roselyn Kuzma had a great 2015! She witnessed her nephew **John Paul Kuzma**, OFMCap become a priest in June and was present at his first Mass at her family's home parish, Holy Family in Erie, Pa. She attended a mass of Thanksgiving at St Mary's in Cumberland, Md., where Father John Paul is stationed. Then she was honored by the Dioceses of Erie for serving 32 years in the diocese as a director of religious education (DRE). **Bishop Lawrence Persico** presented her an engraved clock at the celebration. Sister is in her eighth year as DRE at St Boniface Parish in Erie.



Three years ago, a shy and sweet sister arrived at Mount Assisi Convent from India to work as a nurse in Marian Hall Home. This April, **Sister Reena Varghese** returned to

India, having completed her ministry work in the United States but as the very same sweet, humble person who arrived. Sister Reena lives in Thrissur, while furthering her nursing education.

Sister Joycy Konikkara also returned to India this past year after 10 years of service to our sisters and the residents of Marian Hall and Antonia Hall.

Through all the goodbyes, we also said hello to **Sister Ancy Francis** from India, who has come to minister to our infirmed sisters in Villa Clare and Antonia Hall. This is Sister Ancy's second term of ministry in the U.S.

Sister Jeanne Marie Ulica was the School Sisters of St. Francis' 2015 recipient of the Diocese of Pittsburgh's *Manifesting the Kingdom Award*. The award is given by **Bishop David Zubik** to consecrated women and men and laity who demonstrate the presence of Jesus in their lives and who have provided exceptional service to the Church through their work, lives and ministry. Sister accepted the honor during a special Mass at St. Paul Cathedral in June.

Sister Kevin Berdis, principal at Holy Family School in Erie, Pa., attended Junior Achievement of Western Pennsylvania's Annual Meeting in June to accept the organization's Educational Leadership Award on behalf of her school. The award recognizes those who have had their entire student population participate in Junior Achievement during the current academic year.



Before leaving for their return trip to Prague, the Czech sisters (wearing veils) shared a smile with (from left) Sisters Eve Blostic, Karen Buco, JoAnn Knaebel, Marietta Bankos, Marian Sgriccia, Bernadine Marie Stemnock, Pat Marie Buranosky and Rosalia Giba at Mount Assisi.

Remembering Sister Eliška

Our sisters were sad to see a wonderful visit come to an end in August when they bid farewell to **Sisters Zdislava Nosková** and **Maxmiliána Bendová**. The two sisters from the Czech Republic spent most of August in the United States visiting with our sisters in Pittsburgh, Bethlehem, Erie and New Jersey to gather information that will be beneficial in working toward beatification of **Sister M. Eliška Pretschnerová, OSF** (inset).



While here, Sisters Zdislava and Maxmiliána offered a presentation about Sister Eliška's life and work and gathered witness and testimony from our sisters about their encounters with the

beloved leader who helped the congregation persevere through Nazi occupation and Communism in Europe. Sister Eliška died in 1992.

Sisters Zdislava and Maxmiliána also took in popular sites and sounds during their visit, including a trip to New York City to see the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and the 9/11 Memorial. They also visited Niagara Falls, toured Pittsburgh and visited locations of our earliest roots in the United States.

They will take the testimonials gathered here back home to include in the rigorous process of moving Sister Eliška toward sainthood.



Sister Frances Marie Duncan (far right) is pictured with students and food pantry volunteers at St. Peter's Prep.

Sister Frances Marie Duncan coordinated students and volunteers this summer at St. Peter's Prep Food Pantry in Bayonne, N.J. Sister is a chemistry teacher at the school, which opens its food pantry monthly for poor families in the area. During the school year, sophomore retreat students run the pantry. But during the summer months it is an entirely volunteer effort.



Following her promotion to novice, **Sister Claire Marie** (center) celebrates with Sisters Ruth Zacharias, Damian Baloga, Mary Xavier Bomberger, Frances Pastusek and Marguerite Stewart.

Postulant **Jerrylyn Obrero** became a novice in June during a simple ceremony in Bethlehem, Pa. **Sister Bernadine Marie Stemnock** received her into the novitiate, and **Sister Marguerite Stewart**, Jerrylyn's postulancy directress, also participated. Now known as **Sister Claire Marie Obrero**, she will reside at Monocacy Manor throughout her novitiate with **Sister Regina Ann Rokosny** as her directress.

Sister Kristina Laurincová from the Slovak Province is living with our sisters in Bethlehem, Pa. while studying at nearby Moravian University. She is pursuing certification in Spiritual Direction.



This year, the Diocese of San Angelo celebrated 50 years of active student-centered ministry at Angelo State University. Sister Kathleen Kudlac has been director of campus ministry for five years at the Newman Center there, which opened in 1965 to minister to the university's Catholic students. The celebration included an open house, Eucharistic liturgy, presentations, buffet dinner and much reminiscing.

The Catholic Sisters of Western Pennsylvania won "Best Non-Irish Marching Women" at this year's City of Pittsburgh St. Patrick's Day Parade. Our community was represented by **Sisters Pat Marie Buranosky, Geraldine Ann Kasper, Virginia Rose Carroll, Karen Buco, Lorita Kristufek, Jeanne Marie Ulica** and associate **Laurie Merwin**. Our contingent dressed all in green and braved the rainy chill to pass out candy to kids along the parade route and represent the very vital role of sisters in the Pittsburgh area.

Sister Jo Goolish received an award from the Franciscan Federation in Indianapolis this summer, honoring those who are able to bring "power to the powerless" through artistic expression. The federation recognized Sister Jo's ability to do so through her artistic work for our province and with the students at St. Gerard Catholic High School in San Antonio, Texas where she teaches art.

Sister Jo is pictured below with Father Thomas Nairn, OFM, senior director of ethics at the Catholic Health Association of the United States in St. Louis, and Sister Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ, PhD, professor of philosophical theology at the Franciscan School of Theology in Oceanside, Ca.



SISTERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT