

Volume 27.2 Fall/Winter 2024

Good NEWS

A Publication of  THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

For the Love of Chester

Also in this issue:

- Walking a Journey of Faith:
Discerning God's Presence
- People & Places
- Foundation Annual Report

Commitment Statement

We recommit ourselves to “rebuilding the Church” by living the passion of the Gospel in the discerning spirit of our Franciscan charism and tradition.

We are willing to take the necessary risks to be a healing, compassionate presence in our violent world, especially with women, children, and those who have no voice.

We desire to reflect this commitment in our dialogue with the entire Church, in our own governing structures, and in our relationship with one another as sister.

Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, choose to live the Gospel in the prophetic spirit of Francis of Assisi and our Foundress Mother Francis Bachmann. With Jesus Christ as Brother, we live as sister with one another, with the entire human family, and with all creation. Calling ourselves and one another to continuous conversion of heart, we commit ourselves to a life of contemplation, poverty, and humility.

As vowed women of the Church, we respond with diverse gifts in a spirit of collaboration and of mutual service to the needs of others, especially the economically poor, the marginal, and the oppressed. Seeking to participate in the Spirit's action in the world, we direct our personal and corporate resources to the promotion of justice, peace, and reconciliation.

Filled with trust in the goodness of God, we move forward.

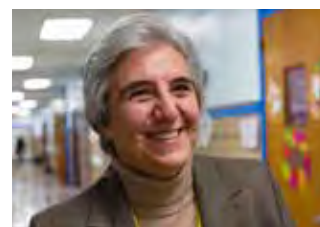
POINT OF VIEW

To act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8b

The two articles featured in this edition of Good News explore what it means to unearth the treasure within us and cultivate the fruits to enhance the lives of others.

“Walking a Journey of Faith Discerning God’s Presence” focuses on the art of spiritual direction, its definition, and its role as an invitation to accompany another on their spiritual journey. The venture beckons us to consider “a road less traveled” as Robert Frost inspired us. A depth and quality of life await those who desire to live with purpose.



**Sister Theresa Firenze, OSF
Congregational Minister**

As the body needs care, so does the spirit. Spiritual direction is an opportunity to embrace a process that fosters a deepening of our relationship with God. The spiritual “director” encourages and guides the “directee” to discover and nurture this relationship. This path may be traveled over years or even a lifetime, yielding benefits and blessings one can hardly imagine! Investing time, prayer, and energy are responses to God’s invitation. The purpose is learning to love oneself, which in turn enhances the quality of our relationships with others.

Being committed to growing as a loving, caring person inspires us to invest our time with and for others. “For the Love of Chester” presents real examples of generous hearts reaching out to journey with others.

The ways that the Sisters of St. Francis have ministered and continue to minister among the people of Chester, Pennsylvania, have evolved over time. The vision of Mother Francis Bachmann remains alive and well! The sisters work with the people of Chester to learn and to understand and provide solutions to real needs. When a project or a solution is implemented, the sisters continue the dialogue, assessing current priorities, evaluating effectiveness, and determining what may need to be discontinued. By listening to residents, providing food and necessities, and advocating for systemic change, we hope to improve the quality of life in Chester.

Will you accept the challenges to pursue spiritual direction? Will you give of yourself to work with others to enrich the life of another? “No Risk! No Gain!” May the words of Mother Francis Bachmann give you the courage to respond.

May God Bless You Always and in All Ways!

Theresa Firenze, OSF



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Spiritual direction, something much needed in today's world, is different from therapy or counseling—it's intentional spiritual companionship and guidance with a focus on where the Holy Spirit is moving a person.

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The purpose of *Good News* is to further the Gospel mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia by sharing the good news of the congregation with our friends, family, companions, and sisters. Through this publication, we hope to share the charism of our congregation and invite others to become involved in our mission.

Good News is published twice per year (spring/summer and fall/winter) by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. We welcome your feedback and comments; correspondence should be addressed to *Good News* at the address above.

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On the cover: Sister Maggie Gannon talks with Maria and her son, whom she considers “dear friends” at ACCESS. Many people first come to ACCESS as strangers but leave as friends. Maria and her son come for some of the classes ACCESS offers, such as ESL class.

For the Love



(Above) Sister Jean Rupertus loved her tenure at the Chester Community Coalition, where she made many friends in Chester. Now Sister Patricia Millen is the program director and continues the work of the sisters with this important organization.



(Left) First graders at Resurrection Parish Elementary School in Chester around 1955, and also (below) during a fire drill. Today, (above) the sisters are still committed to the full education of Chester children, as evidenced by their involvement in Drexel Neumann Academy, which opened in 2007.



“CHESTER HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PLACE FOR
THE CONGREGATION THAT WAS REVERED.”

of Chester

During her term as congregational minister, Sister Lynn Lavin, OSF, had a dream. “I saw



Former Congregational Minister Sister Lynn Lavin's vision helped sustain the congregation's commitment to the people of Chester.

our foundress, Mother Francis Bachmann, walking the streets of Chester,” Sister Lynn recounted. “She moved among the people, engaging them in conversation; she was in relationship with them.”

Chester, Pennsylvania, just 15 minutes from Our Lady of Angels Convent in Aston, had fallen on hard times. Violence, poverty, and crime were all on the rise, and Sister Lynn's vision came at a pivotal moment.

Sister Mary Peter Kerner, OSF, had been living in Chester and conducting a needs assessment as part of “The Bachmann Project” and just requested to start a program that would offer aid to those in need in this once-thriving community. Sister Lynn presented her vision to the leadership team, who enthusiastically endorsed Sister Mary Peter's initiative. This led to the 2009 establishment of Anna's Place, a Franciscan hospitality center, named in honor of Mother Francis Bachmann whose birth name was Maria Anna.

While troubling statistics have cast Chester in a negative light, “Chester has always been a place for the congregation that was revered,” said Sister Lynn. Many of the sisters grew up

there and attended Resurrection School, our first mission in Chester which was staffed by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia beginning in 1918. For many, including Sister Jean Rupertus, OSF, and Sister Donna Roccio, OSF, “the Rez” was the place where they first met the sisters and discovered their vocations. However, the school closed in 1992 and was torn down.

“Chester gets a bum rap, but that's not our experience,” said Sister Maggie Gannon, OSF. Sister Maggie has served at several of the sisters' ministries in Chester, including Anna's Place, which remained a treasure in the community until it closed in 2022. By no means, though, did its closure represent the end of the sisters' work in Chester. The sisters were a presence there before Anna's Place and will continue to be a presence there well into the future through several other ministries that promote environmental justice, education, advocacy, and community building.

Sisters Julie McCole and Maria Orlandini talk with Chester residents at Anna's Place. Anna's Place was a Franciscan Hospitality Center opened by the Sisters of St. Francis for neighbors to gather for educational and social activities.

Advocating for Quality Living

At the same time Resurrection School was closing in 1992, another very important organization was founded: Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living (CRCQL). Under the leadership of Zulene Mayfield, CRCQL was formed

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Activists protest the Covanta Incinerator.

According to Sister Nora, in the summer, trucks will be lined up outside the incinerator for days on end to deposit trash from multiple states.

"The citizens of Chester have to live with those noxious odors every day," she said.



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in response to residents' rising concerns about the overwhelming number of waste facilities being built in Chester.

This is an issue that Sister Nora Nash, OSF, feels particularly passionate about, and which, after years of working in corporate social responsibility, led her to volunteer with CRCQL. Turning things around in Chester requires looking at many different issues playing out within city limits,

not the least of which is environmental degradation. "The citizens of Chester have a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences from a number of polluting industries," said Sister Nora. Chester, with a mostly low-income and minority population, has repeatedly been exploited by such industries—the very definition of environmental racism. Even now, Penn America Energy is proposing to construct a terminal in Chester for the transfer and sale of liquid natural gas (LNG).

The possibility of an LNG plant in Chester is only the tip of the iceberg, though, when it comes to how the city is exploited by dangerous industries. Chester residents already suffer from adverse effects on their health caused by other companies in their city.

"In 2019 the Covanta incinerator (now known as Reworld) was cited as the largest of its kind in the country," Sister Nora said, referring to an incinerator that receives trash not just from Delaware County, but from Philadelphia; New York City; Ocean City, Maryland; and other parts of Pennsylvania. Children in Chester are five times more likely to suffer from asthma, a fact linked to the chemicals pumped into the air. Likewise, cancer rates among all Chester citizens are higher than those in other cities. Recently CRCQL held a memorial service for Chester residents who have died due to such health complications. Sister Nora hadn't expected a huge turn-out, but on the night of the event,

Right & Bottom: The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia joined over 250 people to stand in solidarity and march with the citizens of Chester in their fight for clean air and a safer environment. Sisters Mary Beth Antonelli, Marie Patrice Feeney, Patricia Kane, Eileen Hennessy, Kathleen McCabe, Theresa Elitz, and Diane Tomkinson led the 2024 Environmental Justice March with CRCQL's Zulene Mayfield. Several other sisters joined the procession on the Assisi House bus.



“the room was packed” with people bearing photographs of departed loved ones.

CRCQL’s advocacy is crucial in raising awareness and pressuring regulatory agencies like Pennsylvania’s Department of Environmental Protection and the National EPA to act. Equally important is Sister Nora’s work with the Chester Water Authority, which faces privatization potentially tripling water costs for residents—threatening access to this basic human right. All these issues combined underscore Chester’s position as an environmental justice community worth advocating for.

Positive Places

When thinking about quality of life, it’s not enough only to look at issues of health and the environment. One also must look at what exists within the city to make it an enjoyable and welcoming place to live, such as having the option of a Catholic education. Years ago, when the decision was made to close the last Catholic school in Chester, four institutions rallied to form Drexel Neumann Academy (DNA). St. Katharine Drexel Parish, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Neumann University, and the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia all contributed the personnel, resources, and financial support to make this happen. The school opened its doors in 2007; without it, there would have been no opportunity for a Catholic education within the city.

“A unique and fabulous model of an independent Catholic school was developed,” said Sister Maggie, who formerly



▲ Drexel Neumann Academy provides a safe place for children to have a Catholic education in Chester. The staff work to prepare the students not only for their academic future, but also for life by providing a strong educational foundation and a model of peacemaking.



At ACCESS, “We’ve never turned anyone away,” says Sister Maggie Gannon. Events such as a water ice truck visit allow ACCESS staff to engage with the community in a way that makes them feel seen and safe. The goal is to build relationships so that residents come for any help and services that they might need. These services include food relief, laundry, shower facilities, ESL classes, sewing classes, Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous meetings, and much more.



ministered as founding president at DNA until 2019. This model of a Pre-K through 8th grade included extended school days and summer sessions, making it possible for parents without childcare to work. “It was heartwarming to see the joy the parents got from the success of the children,” said Sister Maggie. “And they really have been extremely successful. One of our graduates is now on the City Council in Chester.”

Sister Maggie currently serves at ACCESS, which opened in 2022. ACCESS is an anagram meaning, “A Community Center Established by the Surgent Family for Society.” While not a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis, ACCESS embodies several of the sisters’ values and shares

a common goal of offering hospitality to those in need in Chester, a service previously begun by the sisters at Anna’s Place.

“This place is so wonderful, I can’t even begin to express it,” said Sister Maggie. Jack Surgent, a former Sisters of St. Francis Foundation board member and long-time supporter of the sisters’ work in Chester, approached her and Sister Cathy McGowan, SSJ, former principal of DNA, about five years ago with the idea of creating ACCESS. “The city donated the land to us to build the property,” Sister Maggie said. “We built a beautiful building, where we provide food relief to 1600 people per month. We also offer ESL classes, AA and Narcotics Anonymous meetings, sewing

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HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Use your voice to fight against the environmental racism happening in Chester. Protest damaging industries such as the Covanta Incinerator, write to your representatives, and participate in events with organizations such as CRQCL to raise awareness.
- Volunteer or donate to organizations like ACCESS so that they can continue their good work. Spread the word so that others can recognize the need these places serve in a community and support them.
- In the spirit of the sisters, ask yourself, “where do I most see a need?” In what ways are you able to help address that need, either by making donations, volunteering your time at an established organization, or beginning a new program to fill a void?
- Get to know the sisters. Attend events at Cantic House or at local community days and rallies to hear more about the work they’re doing and about the issues facing the people of Chester.



Sister Julie McCole greets visitors at ACCESS and offers residents loving support. Sister Julie is no stranger to Chester. As the former director of Anna's Place, she notes both places represent ministries in tune with our Franciscan spirit of hospitality. “We are all sister and brother here.”



Some Chester residents bike or walk to ACCESS to get the aid they need, as gas prices and poverty levels limit access to motor vehicles.

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classes, showers and laundry services... so many wonderful things happen here.”

Addressing Violence

While CRCQL seeks environmental justice, DNA offers quality Catholic education, and places like ACCESS and the former Anna's Place strive to meet a variety of citizens' needs, the Chester Community Coalition (CCC) aims to address violence in the city. CCC opened in 2018 after Sister Jean Rupertus, OSF, and Fran Stier applied for a three-year anti-violence grant from Catholic Health Initiatives with the mission “to heal the psychological and emotional impact of homicides and reduce trauma-related violence in the City of Chester.”

Sister Pat Millen, OSF, recently moved from Spokane, Washington, to take over the role of program manager at the CCC. “One thing I bring to the organization is my background in and drive for advocacy efforts,” Sister Pat said. “I recently went to Harrisburg for an anti-gun violence event sponsored by Ceasefire, PA. Organizations came from all over the state to meet with legislators.” Initially, the legislator sent one of his aides in his place to meet Sister Pat. When he heard she was a woman religious, however, he came out himself. She let him know that over 500 women religious are a part of the group Nuns Against Gun Violence, a fact which impressed him. Sister Pat helps the CCC have a presence at community events.

Every week, Sister Pat attends a staff meeting at the CCC, both to participate in

team-building exercises and to hear about the people the organization serves. At a recent meeting, the CCC discussed six different people provided with care the previous week following violent incidents. Two of those people were from the recent Delco Linen Company shooting, where a disgruntled employee opened fire and killed two coworkers. Another person was a victim of intimate partner violence. Whatever the



The support offered by the CCC, in part due to Sister Jean Rupertus, includes both aid for the victims of violent crimes and help for members of the community to cope with the aftermath of a violent event.

case may be, the CCC seeks to address all violence. “Violence is contagious, and trauma is the vector by which violence travels. If we can help people cope, we can reduce violence,” shared Sister Jean.

Right at Home

While the sisters have long been a presence in Chester, Sister Diane Tomkinson, OSF, admits that “it’s a different experience to drive to minister in Chester, versus actually living there in solidarity with its residents.”

► Sisters Diane Tomkinson and Pat Millen with Briana Noce, the young adult engagement minister for the Sisters of St. Francis, stand outside of Canticle House in Chester. Canticle House, an intentional community where sisters and lay people can live together both intergenerationally and interculturally, sits less than five miles from the Covanta Incinerator (below).



This insight helped shape the sisters' newest initiative in Chester: an intentional living community. In summer 2024, the sisters officially opened Canticle House, a place that seeks to see both sisters and lay people, particularly young adults, living together in the name of shared values. "It was very intentional to be in Chester," said Sister Diane, who spearheaded the endeavor. "We want to be part of and learn from this community, so we can really see how we can best be supportive."

Sister Pat Millen is also a resident of Canticle House. "This home is bringing us together with a common goal," she said. "It's an opportunity for us as Sisters of St. Francis to share what our lifestyle is—our time of prayer, our faith sharing, our coming together for meals...living together as a community and sharing our response to social justice concerns."

Sister Diane has big plans to turn the home into a place where a sustainable lifestyle can flourish. She intends to create a garden with pollinator plants and for Canticle House to become a zero-waste home. She is also looking into ways to conserve energy. The model for Canticle House involves residents pitching in a reasonable monthly fee to help cover rent, utilities, and food. As she and Sister Pat prepare to welcome future residents, Sister Diane quotes Mother Bachmann. "No risk, No gain!" she said. "We're trusting in the providence of God."



▲ Father Bob Iannelli, pastor at St. Katherine Drexel parish in Chester, blesses Canticle House during a recent open house and blessing ceremony. Many Chester residents and sisters attended.



◀ St. Francis graces the entry door.

On Our Way

It's easy to hear stories about a place like Chester on the news and assume the worst, but that doesn't concern the sisters. Instead, their focus is on how to recognize the best in people and help a community flourish.

"The people of Chester are really in many ways fighting for their lives," said Sister Lynn. "One of the things that we say about our charism is that every person, every

creature, everything, is to be treated with dignity and respect. That's foremost in our minds with anything we do in Chester."

"Chester is a city that's filled with hope and beautiful people," Sister Maggie said. "Just like everybody else, we've had a few heart-breaks...but we're on our way back up."

The dream continues. ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact goodnews@osfphila.org.



▲ Sisters Karen Pourby, Barbara McNamara, Patricia Warman, Theresa Firenze, Marie Patrice Feeney, and Mary Beth Antonelli, join Sister Thomasann and receive flowers from the OLMC community.

Who are the 'Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia'?

Through this section we hope to share a glimpse of our congregation and the individuals who make real its mission.



PENNSYLVANIA

On May 9, 2024, Our Lady of Mount Carmel School and Parish community gathered for a special Mass honoring **Sister Thomasann Quinn** who left Doylestown after 40 years of service. "To say the community will miss Sister Thomasann is an understatement of epic proportion. The indelible mark that sister leaves behind cannot be put into words. Her impact goes deeper; it speaks to the soul of each person who has had the honor, pleasure, and privilege to know and love her," said school principal, Dawn Parker. Six of our sisters—Sisters Barbara McNamara, Marie Patrice Feeney, Karen Pourby, Theresa Firenze, Mary Beth Antonelli, Pat Warman, and Dolora Curley—joined the students, faculty, staff both present and past, and countless others as a beautiful tribute unfolded. The 7th and 8th grade students processed into the church presenting symbols that reminded everyone of Sister Thomasann...the true Face of God to all!

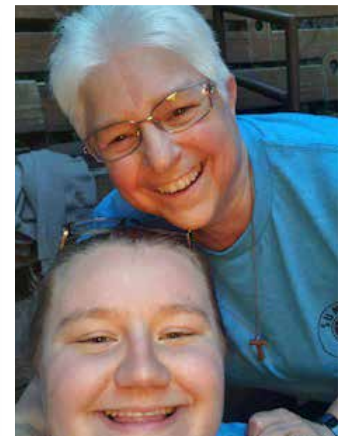


TEXAS

From April 21-26, **Sister Maria Orlandini** attended an immersion experience to the US-Mexico border. Organized by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and supported by the staff at Mission Society of St. Columban, the aim of the trip was for participants to learn more about the root causes of migration, bear witness to the conditions faced by migrants on

◀ Sister Maria Orlandini stands in front of a portion of the very large border wall.

both sides of the border, and visit some of the faith-based organizations providing accompaniment and support services. She was joined by a great group of sisters, associates, and partners in ministry, as well as several experts in the field of migration. Presentations were given from immigration lawyers, representatives of local advocacy groups and resistance movements, officials from U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, staff from migrant shelters within the Annunciation House network, and religious missionaries serving along the border. This diverse range of speakers provided the group with a rich understanding of the border's historical context, as well as its contemporary policing, notably through "Operation Lone Star"—the Texas state government's crackdown regime on unauthorized migration.



▲ Sister Christine Still shares a light moment with "Scuba," Camp Don Bosco's waterfront director. In her role Sister Christine offers campers prayerful experiences and quiet moments from the loud camp environment.



OREGON / WASHINGTON

In June 2024, **Sister Christine Still** graduated from a two-year spiritual direction program at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Oregon—making her a certified Franciscan Spiritual Director. She graduated with 20 other cohort members from around the world. This hybrid program allowed people



Sister Maria Anna Dela Paz credits her time with the Jesuit Volunteer Corp for sparking her interest in religious life. "It opened my eyes to living in an intentional community, living simply, and working towards social justice." She happily professed final vows as a Sister of St. Francis on August 11, 2024.

from Singapore to Zimbabwe to Canada and across the United States to participate. The group studied and prayed with several different faith traditions, worked in dyads and triads, learned about breath work, discovered a bit about the meaning of dreams, delved into discernment and grief work, created altars, and so much more. Sister Christine used some of her new skills at Camp Don Bosco—an Archdiocese of Seattle Catholic Youth Organization camp, located in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. There she assisted staff in leading prayer, tended to emergency situations, handled family or interpersonal situations, and helped with homesickness, misunderstandings, and miscommunications, among many other duties.

PENNSYLVANIA

On August 11, 2024, **Sister Maria Anna Dela Paz, OSF**, professed her final vows (perpetual profession) as a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia. In front of the more than 200 gathered in person and over livestream, Sister Maria (Peaches) dedicated herself freely and unreservedly through the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, according to the Rule and Life of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis and the Constitutions of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia all the days of her life. Sister Maria recently left her role of associate university minister at the University of San Diego to pursue full-time graduate studies. Sister Maria Anna, filled with trust in the goodness of God, may you move forward into the future of God's promise.



▲ Sisters Cathy McGowan and Maggie Gannon pose with their Boys and Girls Club award.



PENNSYLVANIA

Sisters Maggie Gannon, OSF, and **Cathy McGowan, SSJ**, were honored on April 22, 2024, by the Chester, Pennsylvania Chapter of the Boys and Girls Club of America. During the Club's Annual Fundraiser Dinner, Maggie and Cathy each received the Mr. George Carter Person of the Year Award for their ministry at the ACCESS Community Center and their service to the people of Chester. The evening gathering of over 200 people was hosted by Dray Clark, National correspondent for *NewsNation* team and a native of Chester, along with the Club's Chief Executive Officer, Derrick T. Billups, Sr.



Sister Margaret Bender with Father Michael Laicha during the special mass in her honor. (Photo compliments of Carl Minieri and the Catholic Witness)

PENNSYLVANIA

At the end of May 2024, **Sister Margaret Bender** was celebrated as the last religious sister in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania. The Sisters of St. Francis had served in the Diocese of Harrisburg for over 100 years. Sister Margaret, whom pastor Father Michael Laicha said would be hard to envision the parish without, was honored at a farewell Mass and luncheon on the feast of Pentecost hosted by St. Cecilia Parish. According to an article published in the *Catholic Witness*, "In addition to those who attended the Mass in person, nearly 1,000 people tuned in to the livestream of the Mass on the parish's Facebook page

Walking a Journey of Faith:



Spiritual direction is not about telling someone what to do, but rather, about helping them to see how God is already on their journey with them and how God loves them unconditionally.

Sister Julia Keegan reads a passage from the bible as she works with someone she spiritually guides. They talk in a bright, quiet space to promote a feeling of peace and introspection. Many of those who come to see Sister Julia are on the precipice of change in their lives and find great comfort in her words and wisdom.

“COMPANIONING WITH SOMEONE IN
THEIR JOURNEY IS TO LOOK AT WHERE
GOD IS WORKING.”



Discerning God's Presence

“**W**ho are You, Lord my God, and Who am I?” These deeply significant words are attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. They speak to a deepening relationship with God, which is not only critical to the Franciscan charism, but also the main purpose of spiritual direction.

“People might come in asking, ‘What should I do?’” said Sister Julia Keegan, OSF, spiritual director at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Aston, Pennsylvania, referencing the fact that many people initially seek out spiritual direction when faced with a major life decision. “But it’s not my job to tell you. You decide what is yours to do. My job is to walk with you as you discern.” This is a sentiment echoed by Sister Patricia Novak, OSF, when asked about her role as spiritual director at The Little Portion in Spokane, Washington. “Director isn’t really the right word,” she said, referring to her title. The relationship between a director and the person seeking direction is a mutual one focused on the needs of the directee, not a hierarchy. “It’s really spirit companioning,” Sister Patty said. “It’s the Holy Spirit that’s directing.”

Visually, this message hit home for Bill Casswell when he began spiritual direction with Sister Julia five years ago. In his first session, there was a chair for him, a chair for Sister Julia, and a chair left open for the Holy Spirit. “She said, ‘there’s a seat for the Holy Spirit because that’s who’s working between us,’” Bill remembered. His wife had passed a year prior and, navigating his grief, he had



Most spiritual direction sessions are an hour long. At the end of each direction time, Sister Patricia Novak sends the person off with a special blessing from a basket full of blessings. Often these randomly picked blessings are an affirmation of things shared in the direction session.

begun a journey of self-reflection that eventually led him to connect with Sister Julia. In trying to explain the importance of spiritual direction, Bill claimed, “I don’t think I can do it justice.”

A Ministry of Love

“It’s important to look at people’s image of God and help it grow into a sense of God’s extravagant love,” said Sister Julia. She cherishes witnessing the transformations of people who begin spiritual direction

with an image of a harsh, judgmental God. “To see their belief transform from a punishing God—a God they are afraid of—to a God they recognize as being passionately in love with them, is beautiful,” she said.

Bill recalled feeling that, “God was always out there somewhere; He wasn’t nearby. He was watching, and you were going to be judged. Now, I feel He’s closer to me than I am.”

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At the beginning of each spiritual direction session, Sister Patricia Novak takes a brief time to breathe and pray with the person so that they can become grounded and centered for the time of sharing. Often people come from busy days of rushing around.

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To help seekers find this deeper relationship with God, Sister Patty stresses the importance of being fully present to them—listening is a huge part. “I sit and listen to their story in a sacred way that’s confidential, so they feel heard,” she said. Being in the stillness of “holy listening” enables spiritual directors to recognize and point out where God is showing up. While both sisters have undergone intensive training programs to become spiritual directors, simply demonstrating this peaceful respect and compassion remains the most important thing.

“When you experience compassion in somebody else, you realize the compassion of God and the need for self-compassion,”

said Sister Julia. Compassion is at the core of any relationship in spiritual direction, and relationship is key to being Franciscan. “They know I’m a Franciscan,” said Sister Patty. “Sometimes that’s why people come to me. Even if they’re not Catholic, there’s an affinity with St. Francis and what his spirituality is about. People of various faith traditions have connected with me as a spiritual director because of this.” Regardless of someone’s religious background, she noted, God shows up in their life. “Companioning with someone in their journey is to look at where God is working,” Sister Julia said. The “structural” parts of religion, such as which services people attend or which prayers they say, are secondary.

Defining the Question

Spiritual direction is different from therapy or counseling—it’s intentional spiritual companionship and guidance with a focus on where the Holy Spirit is moving a person. “The main thing is to have people define the question, ‘What does God want me to do?’” said Sister Julia. “That’s the most difficult thing, because we think it’s black and white: I’ll do this or that.” However, thinking of a choice purely in terms of Option A or B is a dead end. To go deeper, “is a matter of saying, ‘these are the gifts God gave me, and how can they best be used?’”

While examining one’s gifts might only seem relevant to making professional decisions, this question also extends to decisions regarding personal relationships. Relationships can be complicated and



Ever since the Covid-19 pandemic, more and more spiritual direction sessions are offered online over Zoom, giving those at a distance an opportunity to connect on a spiritual level with a director of their choosing.

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Consider seeking spiritual direction. Spiritual direction fosters a person’s personal, intimate relationship with God. Learn more and find a spiritual companion through one of our Franciscan Spiritual Center’s websites: Aston, www.fscaston.org/ or Oregon, www.francisspctr.com/. You can also visit, www.sdicompanions.org/.
- Take a cue from spiritual directors such as Sisters Julia and Patricia by being fully present to those with whom you are in conversation. Practice putting your own thoughts aside for a moment to listen to others more fully and help them to see where the good is working in their lives.
- Make it a point in your life to focus on the love that shows up for you and for others, instead of dwelling on the negative or believing that God is absent. Return to the sisters’ concept of “defining the questions.” What would God want you to do? Where is God showing up in your life?
- For the sisters to be able to offer their services, there is a small fee for sessions. However, no one is ever turned away from spiritual direction for financial reasons. Consider making a gift that will help to cover the cost of spiritual direction for someone in need.

confusing; directees may need to evaluate and discern the best path forward. Sister Julia shared, “We look at the relationship and see: ‘What builds a deepening of my ability to be who I am? Where is it evident in this relationship?’” Once the seeker has landed on the proper question, it suddenly becomes much easier to see what they’re called to do.

For Bill, some of his questioning was centered around whether he should ever marry again, and whether he’d have the blessing of his late wife. “I loved deeply and knew I could again, but wanted to get myself right with God first,” he said. By no means was he certain about having a new romantic relationship, but after learning to be still and really listen to what came forth, he eventually found himself embracing that part of life once again.

Direction for Directors

When asked about the importance of spiritual direction, Sister Julia said, “I ask why it’s also important for me. I, too, can get so tied up in the busyness of everyday life that I don’t see where God is...it’s good to have someone objective.” She freely admits that in her own life, she was not always able to see God at work. “During a difficult time, I had a spiritual director who kept asking, ‘Where’s God in all this?’” she said. “I kept saying, ‘I don’t know, I don’t think He’s there.’ Then I heard, ‘I was there sitting with you. I was there crying with you.’ It’s amazing to get in touch with that so that when you see someone going through something similar, the compassion pours

out because you’ve been there, and you’ve seen God transform you during it.”

For this reason, both sisters agree that it’s important they, as spiritual directors, also

be in spiritual direction. “For anyone wanting to become a spiritual director,” Sister Patty said, “they would need to be in spiritual direction themselves to really understand what it is.”

A Deep Need

Oftentimes, it’s easy for people to deprioritize spiritual and mental well-being when work and family demand their attention. “There was someone I’d seen for a while, who said, ‘Sometimes, I feel like it’s frivolous to come,’” said Sister Patty. “But is it really? It’s a form of self-care. A way to understand God’s work and what you’re invited to. We do a lot of things for self-care. We go for massages, treat ourselves to coffees, etc.,” Sister Patty pointed out. Caring for one’s spirit is just as important, if not more so, as caring for one’s physical being, and although there is a small charge for sessions, Sister Patty emphasizes that it’s flexible depending on someone’s circumstances.

For Bill, it’s his spiritual practices that he prioritizes over other forms of self-care. “As life gets busy, it’s the last thing I’ll let go of,” he said, because it’s these practices that influence everything else. One of his biggest breakthroughs came by recognizing that even his work was spiritual. “Work was about getting a paycheck,” he said, until Sister

Julia pointed out that it was a part of being whole. Now, he feels it is more of a vocation than a “job,” and he relates more deeply to those he works with.

In addition to his work life, his personal life has also undergone a shift. In March 2024, Bill remarried. He doesn’t know if this would have happened if he hadn’t been attuned to the messages he was receiving from the spirit. On the day of his wedding, Sister Julia was there to celebrate with the couple.



Sister Carol Warnke is a spiritual director that recently relocated to Assisi House from the west coast. She still connects with many of her directees over Zoom, but also occasionally takes a session outside of Assisi House.

An Awareness of God

In today’s world, where people are often disconnected from their spiritual side, spiritual direction is needed more than ever.

As Sister Julia and Sister Patty have found, there is an incredible benefit that comes from devoting one’s life to helping others become more aware of God’s love and compassion. It makes them more aware, as well. “It’s an amazing ministry,” said Sister Julia.

“You get to witness how God is present in people’s lives... Whatever God wants to happen, will happen.” ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact goodnews@osfphila.org.



Sister Julia surrounds herself with items that reflect the spirit’s presence in the room during a session.



“I LOVE WATCHING THE STUDENTS PRACTICE THEIR SKILLS AND INTERACT WITH THE SISTERS.”

Helping Sisters Be Their Best Selves



Physical therapy at OLA began in 2016 with Sister John Celeste Weitzel, who noticed the trouble some of the sisters were having with balance and weakness and wanted to help.



▲ DPT student Thomas Loftus works with Sister Mary Griffin on balance after getting Sister Mary Walsh set up.

The pro bono physical therapy clinic at OLA launched in 2022, building upon Sister John Celeste Weitzel's PT services for sisters, which she had provided since 2016. You may have read about her ministry in the Winter 2019 issue of *Good News*. As Sister John Celeste prepared to retire, she reached out to Karen Wientjes, a professor in Neumann University's Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) Program, offering to donate her unused equipment. Karen recognized this as a chance to extend Sister Celeste's mission of care. "I envisioned an opportunity for our PT students to establish a clinic at the convent," Karen explained. She collaborated with Scott Biely, the program director, and Sister Mary Beth Antonelli, OLA's Wellness Services Coordinator, to bring this vision to life. Their combined efforts resulted in a clinic that not only serves the sisters but also provides hands-on experience for aspiring physical therapists.

► Karen Wientjes supervises DPT student Sarah Strba as she places a stimulation device on the back of Sister Kathleen Swan.

Karen is no stranger to working with religious sisters, having worked at Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital and Mercy Health System, attending retreats, and joining a medical mission trip to Peru. She first met the Sisters of St. Francis when she joined the faculty at Neumann in 1998. In 2015, she was invited to join the sisters' Wellness Community of Interest Group. The following year, she began serving on the Senior Sisters Advisory Council and helped coordinate Gathering Day activities and programming. These interactions encouraged Karen to seek more opportunities for the NU DPT students to engage with the sisters. She began taking small groups of students to Assisi House to help the sisters review their medications. She also began editing wellness articles for the sisters and having students assist with the sisters' annual health assessments.

Scott Biely started working at Neumann in 1997 and became director of the DPT program in 2020. "I enjoy the interactions with the sisters and getting to know them and what they have done in their lives," said Scott. "I also enjoy seeing improvements and hearing someone say, 'I can walk better than I could before,' or 'My neck feels so much better.'" Scott believes the benefits for the students are beyond measure. He shared, "They get the chance to practice their skills, which will make



them better physical therapists, not only from a skill perspective but also from an empathy perspective."

Named "Celestial Steps," after Sister John Celeste, the clinic is open from 8 A.M. to 12 P.M., Monday through Thursday. Scott and Karen supervise DPT students as they work with sisters. Sisters who want to participate in Celestial Steps must first get a script for physical therapy from their primary care physician. Then, they can schedule an appointment with Karen or Scott, have an initial assessment, and set goals for their treatment. Each time a sister visits the clinic, a student takes her blood pressure and asks how she is feeling. Because Celestial Steps is a pro bono clinic, Karen, Scott, and the students receive no financial compensation for their work, but the rewards are great. "I love the way they live their mission and values," Karen shared, "Their kind spirits

and compassionate hearts come through in every interaction. They are a very welcoming and inclusive group, giving you a greater sense of belonging."

The work Sister John Celeste began to help sisters keep a spring in their step has continued through the dedication of Karen, Scott, and their students. According to Scott, "It really is a win-win for the PT program and the sisters. The experiences that our students have had will help to shape their abilities and their approach to patient care." Karen added, "I am grateful for this opportunity to work with the sisters. It is wonderful to be able to offer my skills, see them improve, and help them feel better. But I would like them to know that the benefits of working together go both ways. The sisters bring such light and peace to my life—many thanks." ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact goodnews@osfphila.org.

▼ The clinic has been in a few different locations throughout the years, but it is currently operating out of the south dining room at OLA. Karen and Scott supervise DPT students as they work with sisters at Celestial Steps.



HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Make a donation to the Sisters of St. Francis in support of Neumann University.
- Maintain your own health and fitness as you age. Exercise improves your strength, flexibility, and posture which in turn will help with balance, coordination, and fall reduction.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Everyone has within a piece of good news.

See more good news at www.osfphila.org

Sisters of St. Francis Foundation 2023 Annual Report

Dear Friends,

*"Love cannot remain by itself—it has no meaning.
Love has to be put into action and that action is service."*

— Mother Teresa

Your goodness to us brings to life the words of Mother Teresa in how you have cared for others through your loving support of our sisters and our ministries. This report reflects how you helped us care for the materially poor and marginalized, especially women and children.

Mother Teresa visited Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1995 and walked the streets and met the people. Mother Teresa saw the needs of the dear people and the importance of caring for them. The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia continue to provide a presence in Chester and seek to put the Gospel message into action through the care of community members. One of our sisters who has ministered in Chester for almost 20 years often comments she comes closest to Christ in the people of Chester.

Your kindness shown to our sisters, the people of Chester, and the other ministries we support is a true reminder of God's loving care and goodness.

With prayers of gratitude and joy!

Sr. Deborah Krist, osf.

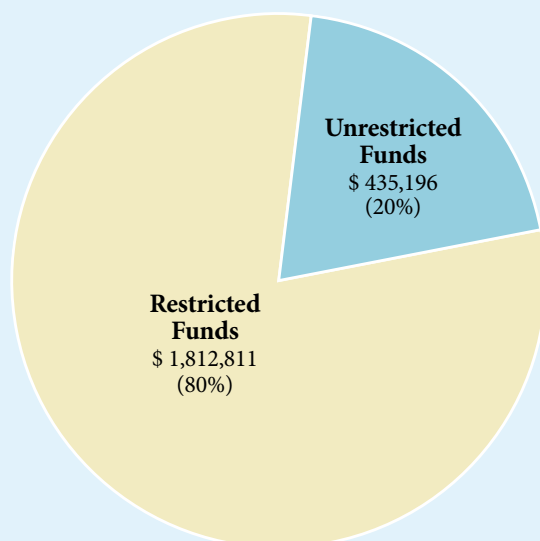
Director of Mission Advancement

FISCAL YEAR 2023

Total Donations: \$ 2,248,007

Unrestricted Funds: \$ 435,196 (20%)

Restricted Funds: \$ 1,812,811 (80%)



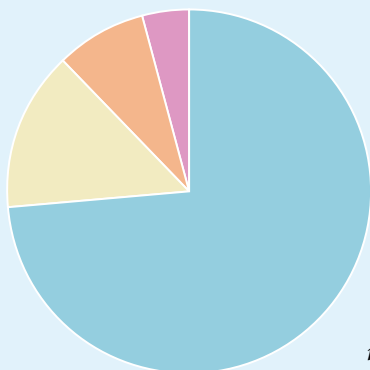
Sources of Donations: Website/Social Media Donations, Direct Mail Appeals, *Good News*, E-news, Memorial Gifts, Memorial Cards, Grants, Recurring Gifts, Estates, Inheritances, Franciscan Night, and Annual Golf Tournament.



The Sisters of St. Francis assume operational costs of the foundation.

Distribution of Unrestricted Funds: \$ 238,134*

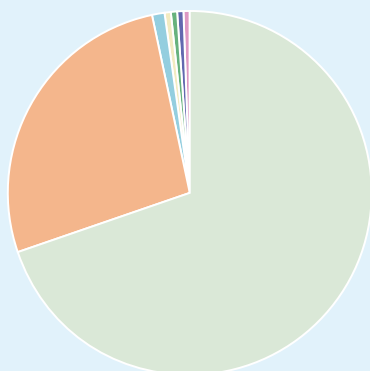
* Distribution includes funds received in FY 2022 (\$5,000 released in FY 2023)



- Sisters' U.S. Ministries \$ 174,260 (73%)
- Assisi House Capital \$ 33,875 (15%)
- Shelter & Social Ministries \$ 20,000 (8%)
- Ministries Outside the U.S. \$ 10,000 (4%)

Unrestricted funds were designated by the congregational leadership to support the elder care of our retired sisters and to assist in various ministries—for example, helping to improve lives through social ministries such as at the Ministry of Caring and Transitions. In addition, it helps support the advocacy efforts of Franciscan Action Network and for CHI St. Joseph Medical Center to provide quality medical care.

Distribution of Restricted Funds: \$ 1,812,811



- Assisi House Capital & Specific Needs \$ 1,272,531 (70%)
- Retirement \$ 490,739 (27%)
- Shelter & Social Ministries \$ 23,580 (1.3%)
- Parish & Spiritual Ministries \$ 11,861 (<1%)
- Ministries Outside the U.S. \$ 11,525 (<1%)
- Education \$ 2,275 (<1%)
- Memorials \$ 300 (<1%)

Distribution of Restricted Categories

Assisi House Capital & Specific Needs: Phase one — unit renovations, audio/visual equipment, safety doors, and small animal therapy; **Retirement:** Assisi House, General Retirement; **Shelter & Social Ministries:** Anna's Place, Access Center in Chester, Transitions, Clare of Assisi House, St. Mary's Shelter, discretionary fund for the poor; **Parish & Spiritual Ministries:** Franciscan Spiritual Centers, OLA Chapel collections; **Ministries Outside the U.S.:** Africa, Haiti; **Education:** Drexel Neumann Academy & The Catholic High School of Baltimore; **Memorials:** trees and benches.



In Memoriam

Sister Agnes St. Joseph Bresnen
July 25, 2024

Sister Janice Hallacher
(formerly Sister Victor)
July 23, 2024

Sister Carmel Gregg
(formerly Sister Ancilla)
July 16, 2024

Sister Leonora Juliani
(formerly Sister Marie Rita)
July 10, 2024

Sister Maria Gross
(formerly Sister Joseph Catherine)
June 26, 2024

Fr. Cyprian Rosen, OFM, Cap.
(honorary Sister of St. Francis)
June 24, 2024

Sister Carmel Mahoney
June 14, 2024

Sister Doris Johnson
(formerly Sister Joseph Marian)
April 9, 2024

Sister Joan Buntz
(formerly Sister Josephine Mary)
March 31, 2024

Sister Jude Connelly
March 28, 2024

Sister Eleanor Horneman
(formerly Sister John Magdalen)
March 14, 2024



With hearts filled with gratitude, The Sisters of St. Francis

Thank You!

Therefore, every dollar that our donors give is used solely for the ministries and elder care.

Focus

► After serving as the director of the Franciscan Volunteer Program for five years, Sara Marks went on to pursue her PhD in Organizational Leadership. She admits that she “grew by leaps and bounds not only as a professional, but personally by my interaction with young people engaged in their faith.”



SARA MARKS

“THE THING THAT I ADMIRE MOST ABOUT SARA IS HER FRANCISCAN JOY AND THE ABILITY TO MAKE EVERYONE FEEL LIKE THEY ARE PART OF COMMUNITY NO MATTER THE SITUATION.”

— COMPANION, PATRICIA ST. CLAIR

In whatever form I live this life, wherever I find myself living it, I am not only 100% Franciscan, but I am also from the family of OSF Aston. I wear it like a coat of arms, my clan, my family, it’s from where I come!” That’s how Sara Marks describes herself.

While attending West Chester University, Sara was very involved with its Newman Center and participated in Busy Person’s Retreats. She was intrigued by one of the “spiritual directors”—the very personable Franciscan vocation director, Sister Debbie Krist—and a seed was planted. While attending spring retreats hosted at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Aston, Pennsylvania, Sara met Sister Mary Pat Johnson. “She was the dearest of spiritual grandmothers with whom I stayed connected until her death,” Sara wrote. The seed sprouted! When Sara succumbed to the begging of her friend to attend a Come and See Retreat, a seven-year journey ensued which ended in Sara’s applying to become a sister with the congregation—and the seed grew roots.

As time passed, Sara realized that vowed religious life was not for her. However, she credits the sisters with whom she lived—Sisters Joan Dew, Maureen Stout, and Kathy Pollard—with nurturing her formation experience and maintaining her ongoing relationship with the congregation. Building and directing the Franciscan Volunteer Program: No Risk, No Gain was one of life’s highlights for Sara. Most recently, Sara served as the Executive Director of the Franciscan Federation and continues to offer facilitation and consulting with Catholic nonprofits, particularly with women’s religious congregations. She remains connected with the Sisters of St. Francis as a companion in prayer and offers her musical gifts of voice for cantoring and choir besides playing the flute for the liturgical celebrations at the motherhouse.

Within the walls of her grandfather’s 17th-century stone farmhouse, Sara currently lives in an intentional community with a former Sister of St. Joseph, Connie Murphy, and former Franciscan Volunteer, Rachel Dunlap, who claims that Sara’s Franciscan identity changed her life. When time allows, Sara enjoys the company of friends gathered around a table sharing deeply in life, love, and laughter over delicious homemade food and a bit of wine!

► Connie Murphy, Sara Marks, and Rachel Dunlap live life as a community in faith and love with each other intentionally. Her experience as a vowed religious brought Sara to this community and a deep understanding of how she felt called to live it.



▲ Sara loves to travel and enjoy all of God’s creation. She “embodies her Franciscan identity most readily in how she engages in mutual relationship with everyone and all creation,” Rachel shared.

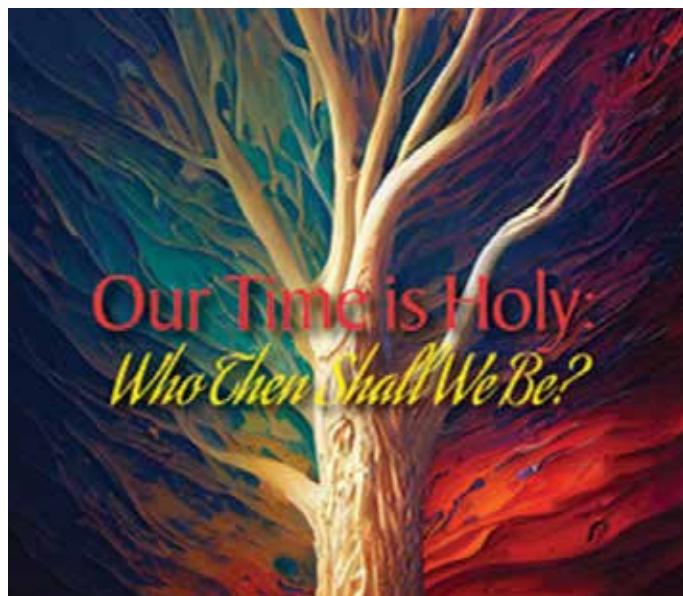
“Who Then Shall We Be? A Contemplative Prayer for the World”

On August 16, 2024, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia joined numerous other congregations of women religious for a virtual contemplative experience. This event, entitled “*Who Then Shall We Be? A Contemplative Prayer for the World*,” was held in solidarity with almost 700 participants at the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) national assembly in Orlando, Florida.

The hour-long live stream offered a space for reflection on the world’s fragility and our role as bearers of the Gospel message. Rooted in the belief that acknowledging global pain is essential before embracing new realities, the prayer experience encouraged participants to engage in lament and grief as a pathway to renewal.

For over 150 years, women religious congregations have evolved their service to address changing societal needs. Initially focused on direct service, such as education and healthcare, they expanded their efforts to address systemic issues, engage in political advocacy, and now, recognizing the need for a broader transformation, work to bridge societal divides and combat polarization.

This evolution aligns with the Second Vatican Council’s call to “read the signs of the times.” Women religious communities remain committed to understanding significant political, social,



and economic developments at local, national, and global levels, interpreting them through theological, spiritual, and ethical lenses. LCWR’s 2023-2028 Call to Action urges women religious congregations to unite in transforming consciousness, both individually and collectively. The goal is to implement change that creates a ripple effect of peace and harmony through prophetic actions and words, ultimately leading to collective transformation in our divided world.

This contemplative experience exemplifies the ongoing commitment of women religious to spiritual reflection, social awareness, and transformative action in service of a more just and harmonious world.



Catholic High Franciscan Charism Leadership Program

For one week every summer, the Sisters of St. Francis host students and staff from The Catholic High School of Baltimore for a Charism Leadership Program. This year six students and two staff members came to Our Lady of Angels Convent in Aston, Pennsylvania, at the welcome of Sister Diane Tomkinson, Charism Engagement Minister. The students took a tour of Our Lady of Angels, given by Sister Kathleen Parisi, highlighting the chapel, Heritage Hall, and the breathtaking views from the 5th floor Cantic Room. They also listened to the history of Mother Francis Bachmann and heard stories from missions in Africa and Alaska.

Also included was a visit to St. Peter the Apostle Church and the St. John Neumann Shrine in Philadelphia. Dr. Patrick Hayes from the Redemptorist Archives walked the group through the church, diving into its history and unique architectural details. The next stop was the shrine museum, where they learned more about St. John Neumann, his pioneering attitude, and his crucial role in this congregation’s beginnings. Students also toured Neumann University and visited sisters at Assisi House, where they sang the school song together. They rounded out their experience by helping harvest vegetables at Red Hill Farm, the sisters’ Community Supported Agriculture Farm. The program anticipates hosting more students next year.



TCHS students pose with garlic they hung at Red Hill Farm (above), and with Sister Diane Tomkinson at St. Peter the Apostle Church.

Donor Spotlight

► Thanks to the lessons learned from Sister Andrea Likovich, Valerie — a nurse practitioner — has continued with her love of music and performs in a local band in Louisiana.



VALERIE PALMERE SCOTT

“VALERIE WAS A JOY TO TEACH, AND I LOVED WATCHING HER VIBRANT PERSONALITY UNFOLD AS SHE PLAYED GUITAR, SANG, AND TOOK ON VARIOUS ACTING ROLES ON THE TCHS STAGE. I CONTINUE TO BE SO IMPRESSED BY HOW SHE HAS CHOSEN TO LIVE HER LIFE AND BE COMMITTED TO HER FAITH, HER FAMILY, AND HER CAREER.”

— SISTER ANDREA LIKOVICH



▲ Valerie remembers so much about her teenage years at Catholic High, but especially the care of the sisters, “I can never fully convey how thankful I am for the positive impact the sisters have had on my life, then in high school and all through my life.”

Valerie Palmere Scott’s life has been profoundly shaped by the Sisters of St. Francis. Growing up in Baltimore, Maryland, Valerie first met the sisters in elementary school at St. Anthony of Padua School. Sister Marilyn Sands was her first-grade teacher. “When I met her, I wanted to be a sister. It was my first, ‘What do you want to be when you grow up’ answer. She was just so loving, and kind.”

Valerie’s connection with the Sisters of St. Francis deepened during her years at The Catholic High School of Baltimore. Here, she encountered numerous sisters who would leave indelible marks on her life—one she still corresponds with today. Valerie met Sister Andrea Likovich in 9th grade after stumbling into a play tryout and making it into the fall musical. The director, Sister Andrea, began for Valerie a love of music that she carries with her to this day. “She was incredibly supportive,” Valerie reminisces. “She guided me with a firm, no-nonsense hand that kept me from harm.” Valerie stayed connected with Sister Andrea throughout high school, participating in Glee Club, Folk Group, and Acapella. “She influenced my life so much. I found true joy and happiness through performing,” Valerie shared. Sister Andrea speaks highly of Valerie as well, “From what she has shared with me over the years, I can concur that Valerie is an incredible example of a true Christian.”

After graduation, Valerie moved to Louisiana and became a nurse practitioner, crediting her success to her education saying, “I felt better prepared for college because of the quality education I received at TCHS.” Now married with two daughters, Faith and Claire, Valerie maintains her connection with Sister Andrea through yearly correspondence. She also supports the sisters financially whenever possible, though she humbly admits, “I don’t give much, but I do what I can. These sisters dedicate their entire lives to Christ’s love and then share it with others. I don’t think they’re appreciated as much as they should be.” Valerie’s story is a testament to the lasting impact of the Sisters of St. Francis—their dedication to education, their nurturing spirits, and their ability to inspire generations of students to lead lives of purpose and faith.

► Valerie and her husband, Scotty, enjoy hiking and backpacking. The whole family including daughters, Faith and Claire, backpacked 126 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Virginia a few years back.



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Canticle House, an intentional community in Chester, Pennsylvania, invites young adults and other spiritual seekers to live together in community as sisters and brothers. We intend to nurture hope, celebrate diversity, and make choices for the healing and well-being of our Earth through practicing authentic, relational, and sustainable living. Your donation can help us shape and support this new ministry. Thank you!

Support our New Intentional Community!



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Visit our website at www.osfphila.org

Celebrating A Combined 965 Years of Service

On June 9 we honored sisters celebrating 25, 50, and 70 years of religious profession with a special jubilee liturgy at Our Lady of Angels Convent in Aston. Father Cyprian Rosen, OFM Cap., presided over the liturgy during which the jubilarians renewed their vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience—vows which they had professed 70, 50, or 25 years ago and which they continue to live out daily.

▼ The 2024 jubilarians who renewed their vows during the liturgy.



Following the liturgy both jubilarians and their guests gathered for a luncheon at Our Lady of Angels Convent. Collectively the 15 jubilarians represent 965 years of service in multiple ministries, including: education, health care, childcare, social services, prayer ministry, parish ministry, diocesan ministry, congregational ministry, and eldercare. Their ministries have taken them to 23 states and 25 dioceses, including Africa and Puerto Rico.

ANNUAL *Craft Fair*

Join us for the Sisters of
St. Francis Annual Craft Fair!
Come for handmade items,
jewelry, clothing, food,
and more!

All proceeds support the
elder care of our retired sisters.

Friday, November 22, 2024
11 A.M. - 2 P.M.

Neumann University
Student Multi-Purpose Hall
John J. Mullen
Communication Center
One Neumann Drive, Aston PA



▲ Fire drill at Resurrection School in Chester, Pennsylvania in 1955, when enrollment totaled 800 students. The school opened in September 1918 on the corner of 10th and Highland Streets. Beginning with Sr. Amanda as the first principal, the Sisters of St. Francis enjoyed a rich history of teaching at the school until 1989. The school closed in 1992. Read more about our history in Chester on page 3.