

Volume 28.2 Fall/Winter 2025

NEWS

A Publication of  THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

Also in this issue:

- Canticle House:
Where Prayer,
Purpose, and
Community Meet
- People & Places
- Foundation
Annual Report

A Vote Against Silence—
**Journeying
Toward
Racial Justice**

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

“Love one another as I have loved you.”

John 13.34

Jesus first gave the command to his disciples, “Love one another as I have loved you,” but his words continue to echo across generations. He calls each of us—here and now—to embrace this commandment in our daily lives. The articles featured in this edition of Good News exemplify the many ways our sisters, companions, benefactors, coworkers, and friends are living out this Gospel mandate today.

“A Vote Against Silence—Journeying Toward Racial Justice” traces the development of a corporate stand against racism, grounded in Gospel values. After attending a conference, two Sisters of St. Francis returned with a renewed conviction: racial injustice demands a bold, transformative response. Their experience sparked the Facing Racism Task Force, which fostered education and dialogue within the community. Through learning opportunities, reflection on institutional practices, and confronting racial bias, the congregation has deepened its understanding of systemic racism and the suffering it causes. Many have experienced a personal conversion of heart, realizing that true transformation is both essential and possible. This conversion helps us see others as God sees them—offering hope and revealing that embracing our differences leads to deeper, more harmonious relationships.



**Sister Theresa Firenze, OSF
Congregational Minister**

Canticle House, an intentional community in Chester, Pennsylvania, provides a living example of what it means to love one another with purpose. Canticle House is grounded in Franciscan shared ideals of nurturing relationships, offering hospitality, seeking environmental and social justice, and living contemplatively, in a way that integrates reflection and action. Currently, two Sisters of St. Francis and two college-aged men live in this rented, three-story house with space for more. They pray together, share meals together, contribute to the care for the home, and are present to one another's needs. This provides residents with the opportunity to grow spiritually, personally, and professionally. With a deep commitment to Franciscan values, this “long-time dream” community unfolds amidst the “...poverty, violence, and environmental racism” that persists in Chester. Canticle House serves as a hope-filled sign that choosing to live the Gospel message of loving one another is possible.

May God bless you always and in all ways!

Theresa Firenze, OSF



12



11



16

VOLUME 28.2
FALL/WINTER 2025

INSIDE *Good* NEWS CONTENTS

Point of View2

A Vote Against Silence—Journeying
Toward Racial Justice4

The Sisters of St. Francis commit to dismantling racism, amplifying diverse voices, and advocating for racial justice—an effort rooted in prayer, reflection, dialogue, and a new corporate stand against silence and complicity.

Written by Sara McDermott
Photography by Andrea Cipraini-Mecchi
and the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia

People & Places10

Canticle House: Where Prayer,
Purpose, and Community Meet..12

An intergenerational community in Chester, Pennsylvania, Canticle House offers young adults and sisters the opportunity to live out Franciscan values together—fostering spiritual growth, sustainability, and a commitment to environmental and social justice.

Written by Sara McDermott
Photography by Andrea Cipraini-Mecchi

Franciscan Ministry on the
Wind River Reservation:
Then and Now..... 16

Foundation Annual Report 18

Focus..... 20

Donor Spotlight 22

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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: Friends and companions of the Sisters of St. Francis, Colleen Collins and Brenda Fincher are united in their commitment to creating a more just and equitable world.

The Dismantling Racial Discrimination Committee members—Colleen Collins, Brenda Fincher, Sister Mary Kennedy, Sister Rochelle Liu, Sister Maria Orlandini, Kim Peaks, Rita Michele Proctor, Sister Mary Vandergeest, Demetria Bailey, Sister Barbara Gallagher, Kya Johnson, Sister Pat Millen, and Sister Kate O'Donnell—met monthly to carry forward the goals of their strategic action plan.



► Companions Colleen Collins and Brenda Fincher work diligently together on the sisters' work of dismantling racism. Both of these women have been touched by racism in their own way, so, to them, it's personal.



A Vote Against Silence— Journeying Toward Racial Justice

✧ RACISM SHOWS UP IN WAYS THAT GO FAR BEYOND VIOLENCE AND DEROGATORY TERMS. IT'S DEEPLY WOVEN INTO HOW PEOPLE THINK, SPEAK, AND PERCEIVE THE WORLD.

In a now-infamous clip from the television program *Uncensored*, Australian interviewer Jana Wendt asked Toni Morrison, the Black, Nobel Prize-winning author of such books as *Sula*, *The Bluest Eye*, and *Beloved*, whether she ever planned to incorporate White characters into her stories “in a substantial way.” Toni, calm and composed, responded, “You can’t understand how powerfully racist that question is, can you? ... Even the inquiry comes from the position of being in the center.”

This brief but powerful exchange is a striking example of how racism can operate in subtle, often unexamined ways. Most people agree that overt acts like physical violence or racial slurs are wrong, and because they avoid such behavior, they believe they aren’t racist. What many fail to see is that racism shows up in ways that go far beyond violence and derogatory terms. It’s deeply woven into how people think,



and perceive the world. The exchange on *Uncensored* is a prime example of how “White” is seen as the default. Racism isn’t just about bias, it’s systemic, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized.

“When someone claimed they didn’t realize something they said, did, or witnessed was racist, I didn’t believe them,” said Brenda Fincher, a companion of

◀ The sisters’ efforts to address this highly important issue was inspired by the document *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love—*

A Pastoral Letter Against Racism, which was released in 2018 by United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The letter is a powerful invitation for all the people of God to “face courageously the vice of racism, ... reach out generously to the victims of this evil, to assist the conversion needed in those who still harbor racism,

and to begin to change policies and structures that allow racism to persist.” Scan the QR code to read the letter in its entirety.



the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and a member of the Dismantling Racial Discrimination (DRD) Committee. She spoke during a presentation on *Open Wide Our Hearts*, a pastoral letter issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops that calls on people of faith to confront and address racism.

continued on page 6



The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have always followed the path of serving God's people wherever a need existed. Their history is marked by caring for the sick when others would not, teaching children who otherwise would have gone without an education, and traveling westward to serve on Native American reservations. Today, the sisters continue this mission by focusing on understanding the roots of inequality in all its forms—even within their own congregation.



continued from page 5

"I've since changed my mind," said Brenda, who also leads her Black Catholic Advocacy Circle. "I now understand they're not lying—they genuinely believe what they're saying." This is one of the key difficulties when it comes to educating people about racism. It's difficult to get people to examine how they may have been complicit in racism when they don't believe they've done anything wrong. It takes courage—not only to start the conversation, but also to look inward and confront uncomfortable truths.

"We want to recognize racism is a sin and root it out of our hearts," said Colleen Collins, director of the companions and

a DRD committee member. This means helping people become comfortable with feeling uncomfortable as they uncover the different ways in which racism shows up—so that it can be understood and addressed.

The Inspiration

In 2019, Sisters Maria Orlandini, OSF, and Pat Millen, OSF, traveled to Ohio to attend an assembly of the Justice Conference of Women Religious. The main topic at hand: racism. "The speaker brought us to realize all the ways in which we are racist without realizing it," said Sister Maria. By the end of the event, both Sister Maria and Sister Pat

felt strongly that the Sisters of St. Francis, as a congregation, needed to do something to combat racism, and that they could begin by looking at themselves to uncover things they may not have been aware of in their own behavior. They started reaching out to sisters who would be sensitive to the issue and soon formulated a plan to educate the community about the insidious ways racism might be present in their own lives.

"It's not about making people feel guilty," said Sister Maria. "It's not about feeling bad over things in the past. It's about the fact that we can't move forward and change unless we're aware of how it is happening."

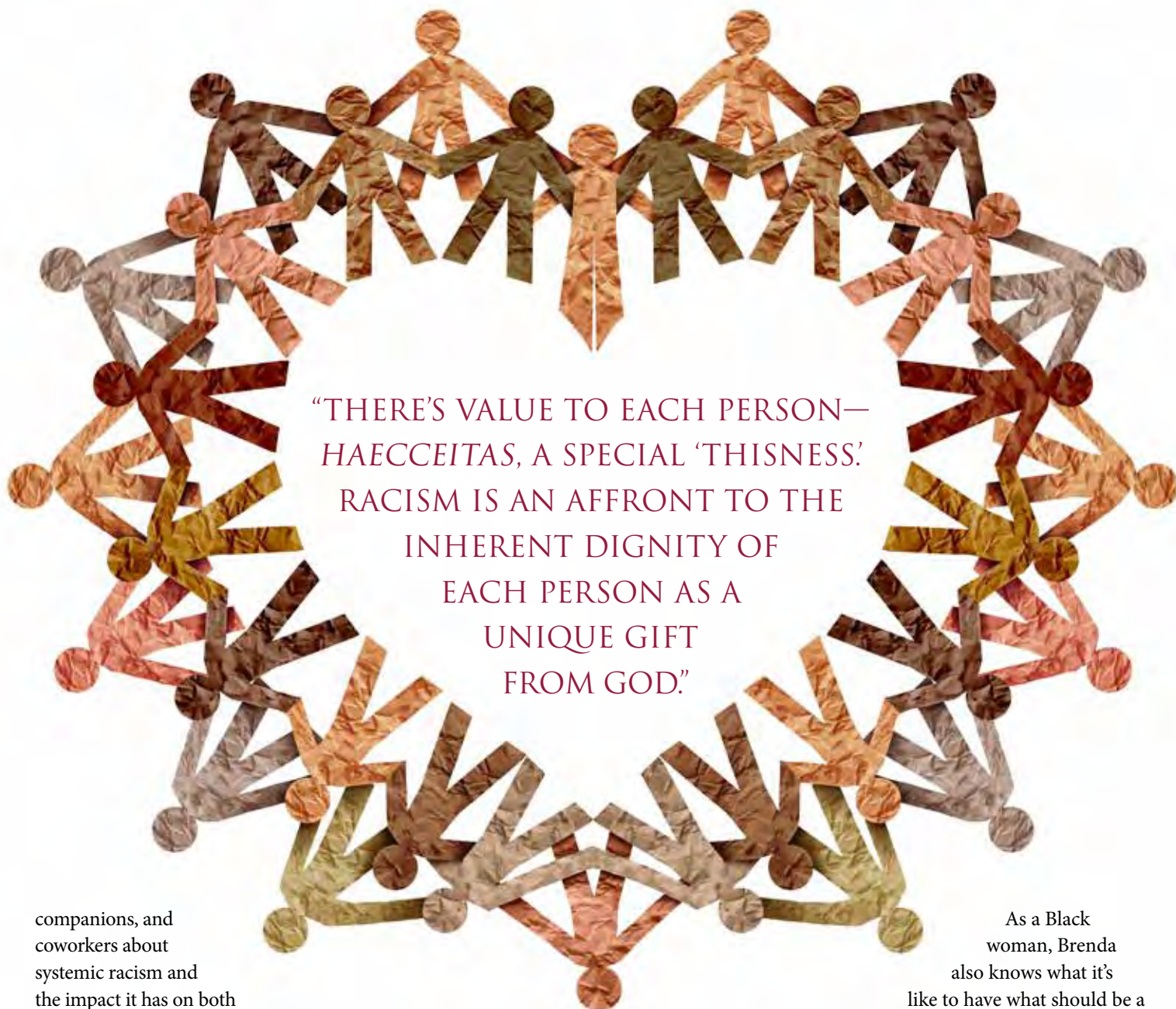
That fall, the Sisters of St. Francis formed the Facing Racism Task Force, which would later become the Dismantling Racial Discrimination Committee. The task force's objective was to educate sisters,



Continuing their commitment to justice, the Sisters of St. Francis and their companions advocate for change by addressing racial discrimination and inequality through action—such as joining marches for peace and clean air in Chester, Pennsylvania.



In Chester, as in many communities across the nation, gun violence takes a heavy toll—one that disproportionately impacts historically marginalized groups because of deep-rooted inequities in our systems and institutions.



“THERE’S VALUE TO EACH PERSON—
HAECCEITAS, A SPECIAL ‘THISNESS.’
RACISM IS AN AFFRONT TO THE
INHERENT DIGNITY OF
EACH PERSON AS A
UNIQUE GIFT
FROM GOD.”

companions, and coworkers about systemic racism and the impact it has on both individuals and society as a whole.

“As Franciscans, we have a fundamental belief in the dignity of each person,” said Colleen. “There’s value to each person—*haecceitas*, a special ‘thisness.’ Racism is an affront to the inherent dignity of each person as a unique gift from God.”

Colleen’s own life experiences have led her to be deeply passionate in her work against racism. As a White adoptive mother to four Black children, she has been in the position to witness firsthand how her children are treated compared to how she is treated—particularly when people don’t realize she is their mother. She’s seen people speak to them harshly, noted how police are quicker to pull them over when they’re with their Black friends

and not their White friends, and experienced how their teachers often expect less of them than their White counterparts.

“People would seem sure that my boys were dangerous,” Colleen said. “It didn’t matter how educated or well-behaved they were.”

Colleen realized how, while she would feel perfectly safe in a space, her children wouldn’t. They constantly had to ask themselves, “Is this a safe space for me?” That became part of what drove her in her commitment to dismantling racism. “Hopefully, someday, my kids will feel as safe as I do,” she said. “But for now, that’s not the case.”

As a Black woman, Brenda also knows what it’s like to have what should be a

“safe” space feel hostile. She recalled two instances in her church where people made racist comments in reference to Gospel music, even going so far as to use racial slurs. Fortunately, the priest made a strong statement about the sin of racism following these incidents, for which Brenda was grateful.

“People also take in what they don’t hear,” said Brenda. Too often, when someone sees or hears something racist, they choose to stay silent, not wanting to get involved. But bystanders take their cues from that silence. If the priest hadn’t spoken up, the unspoken message would have been that racist comments are acceptable. Many deeply ingrained biases

continued on page 8

continued from page 7

are shaped by this kind of consistent, passive reinforcement over time.

A police officer Brenda knew shared a memory from his childhood: his mother would often say that “bad things happen” in a local neighborhood where Black people lived. At the time, he didn’t think much of it. But as an adult, he realized he had developed a fear of that part of town—fear rooted not in personal experience, but in the messages he had absorbed growing up. As a police officer, recognizing that internal bias was especially important, so it wouldn’t cloud his judgment on the job.

Creating A Plan

It wasn’t enough to simply form the Facing Racism Task Force. Once formed, it was time to come up with a clear plan for tackling this very complex and sensitive issue. The task force set to work offering group book discussions, webinars, special events, and publishing and posting articles in the congregation’s internal newsletter and website, all of which encouraged sisters and companions to think more deeply about racism. For

“BY TAKING A CORPORATE STAND, WE’RE SAYING WE WANT TO BE DIFFERENT. WE WANT TO BE AN EXAMPLE OF A DIFFERENT WAY OF BEING.”

Gathering Day 2023, a yearly event where the congregation comes together, racism was the central focus. Sister Anita Baird, DHM, gave a presentation on racism and how it has shown up in religious institutions.

To continue to move sisters and companions along this path, the committee developed a strategic plan for 2023-2025 which set four key goals. The first was to continue to provide educational opportunities to learn about the complexities of systemic racism. The second, more sensitive objective, was to acknowledge any past harm that had been caused by their institutional actions and to move toward reconciliation. For example, examining

the reasons behind the congregation’s predominantly white makeup, even as its ministries have focused on diverse communities. The third goal was to recognize the importance of building relationships with people of varying racial backgrounds.

“We feel most comfortable with people who are like us,” said Sister Maria. “True change comes from exposure. It comes with getting to know the other as a person and not avoiding people because they look different or have a different accent. If we simply remain among our own groups, nothing will change.”

“You will miss out on gifts from God if you don’t associate with those who look different,” said Brenda. “God has us all as



▲ Since the Facing Racism Task Force first formed back in 2019, the committee—now known as the Dismantling Racial Discrimination Committee—has been working to educate themselves, the sisters, and companions about the sin of racism.



▲ In August 2025, sisters and companions celebrated their newest corporate stand at the Gathering Day liturgy.

► Sister Anita Baird, DHM, gives a stirring presentation on the history of racism within religious institutions for the sisters and companions at Gathering Day 2023.



In May 2025, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia formally took a Corporate Stand against racism. This is an effort they've only invoked six other times in the congregation's history, and a powerful statement to the world about how they stand against racism.



▲ Read the declaration online.

a perfect puzzle. If you lose any pieces, the picture's not complete." As a result, the committee works to provide opportunities for people of different races to build relationships.

While all these components to the strategic plan were vital, one more was needed in order to bring about significant change. The fourth and largest goal of the committee was to develop a Corporate Stand on Dismantling Racism and bring it before the congregation for a vote.

Taking A Stand

The corporate stand was a key part of the committee's plan. It would mean that the collective voice of all the sisters was behind the issue—presenting a strong, unified front. "A corporate stand gives us the ability to speak out as the Sisters of St. Francis, as a whole," said Colleen. This ability is vital when impactful events take place. For instance, when George Floyd was killed in 2020—a pivotal event in American history—the sisters couldn't release a statement about the racially-fueled tragedy that would be representative of the entire congregation.

The process of taking a corporate stand is no small task. It requires that all sisters be thoroughly educated on the issue—engaging in deep prayer, reflection, and dialogue to discern what they believe is right before a vote can take place. Some sisters expressed concern about speaking

out, believing they should not address racism publicly while still actively working to dismantle it within themselves. Others viewed this as precisely why they must speak—recognizing that racism is not only a problem in our world but also within their own community. On Friday, May 2, 2025, the corporate stand passed with overwhelming support. This allows the congregation to now act and speak out against racism with one voice.

In their corporate stand, the sisters committed themselves not only to dismantling racism in themselves, but also to amplifying diverse voices, advocating for racial justice, and speaking up in the face of racist words or actions.

A New Beginning

Now that the corporate stand has been achieved, "My hope is that people don't just think this work is finished," said Sister Maria. "It is just the beginning. It's saying we're aware, and we want to become antiracist."

"In life, we do the best we can with what we know," said Colleen. "So, we'll combat racism by educating ourselves, challenging discriminatory systems and policies, speaking out against prejudice in our communities and relationships, and actively working to unlearn internalized



How You CAN HELP...

- Educate yourself on the variety of ways in which racism can manifest. It goes far beyond acts of violence and racial slurs. Through education, raise your level of awareness about what constitutes racism and what you can do to better understand and address it in all its forms.
- Engage in personal reflection to uncover biases within yourself. Recognize that these may be difficult to identify, as many are learned and internalized over time. Consider how you and those close to you may be carrying racist ideas and take intentional steps to unlearn and dismantle them.
- Support groups that actively seek to combat racism, whether by participating in them, promoting their good work, or contributing financially to their endeavors.
- Since "true change comes from exposure," try to build relationships with people of different racial backgrounds. This helps move past seeing others as "different" and broadens your view of the world.
- Join events focused on combating racism—such as discussions, book clubs, marches, or sit-ins—and be an active part of the solution

biases through reflection, dialogue, and sustained action."

"It's so important to face this, and to not run away, because racism is something that's deeply embedded in our lives," Sister Maria said. "By taking a corporate stand, we're saying we want to be different. We want to be an example of a different way of being. It's a beginning, not an ending." ■

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

Two of the most popular residents of Assisi House—budgie parakeets Francis and Clare—are well-cared for by Sisters Stephanie Unger, Albert Mary McSwiggin, and Mary Theresa Coll (inset), who share their love of talking to the birds and socializing them with sisters and visitors alike.



Enjoy the story and short video published by Philadelphia's 6ABC Action News.

PENNSYLVANIA

At **Assisi House**, the sisters' retirement home in Aston, Pennsylvania, two cherished budgie parakeets—Francis and Clare—bring joy, laughter, and even a bit of conversation. Gifted by a visiting priest, the birds live in the home's library, where they are often visited, spoken to, sung to, and prayed with by sisters. Francis, the male budgie, has an astonishing talent: he talks in full sentences. His hushed, gentle voice was recently captured on video by visitor Kari Keefer, drawing hundreds of views online and featured in both the *Delco Times* and on 6ABC News. Francis speaks with warmth and kindness—offering phrases that reflect the Franciscan spirit. Though camera-shy, he loves watching himself and will chat excitedly

in response. Francis reminds all who meet him of the joy found in unexpected places—and of the loving companionship shared within Assisi House's walls.



CALIFORNIA

The East Bay Sanctuary Covenant (EBSC) shared heartfelt moments from **Sister Maureen Duignan's** farewell celebration which took place in late April. Over 200 people gathered to honor and celebrate Sister Maureen's enduring legacy and profound impact. Throughout the event, many shared personal stories of how she had touched their lives. For 40 years, she has been a guiding force at EBSC, dedicating herself to protecting, advocating for, and supporting low-income immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Her compassion and commitment have left an indelible mark on both EBSC and the broader immigrant community, ensuring that her legacy will continue for years to come. In recognition of her lifelong dedication, EBSC has established The Sister Maureen Duignan Fund for Compassionate Advocacy. This fund will provide direct financial assistance to undocumented immigrants in need and support special projects that reflect Sister Maureen's unwavering spirit of service. All contributions are fully tax-deductible and will continue her vision of direct support for vulnerable immigrants and asylum seekers. Learn more at www.eastbaysanctuary.org.

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.

► Sister Maureen Duignan worked with families at EBSC for 40 years. Established in 1982, the center provides support, protection, and advocacy to low-income and indigent refugees and immigrants.





Group picture of those attending the event to celebrate 30 years of Sister Mary Jo Chaves creating and offering a Franciscan Hermitage experience at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Marylhurst, Oregon.

NATIONAL

On June 6, sisters and companions on both the East and West Coasts were invited to wear orange and participate in local events in honor of **National Gun Violence Awareness Day**. June is recognized as a month to call for an end to gun violence, draw attention to its devastating impact, and demand life-saving change. This effort aligns with “Toll the Bells: A Cry for Peace,” a national event held in Philadelphia and across the country. In Aston, Pennsylvania, those in the area gathered at the motherhouse to pray and join a roadside demonstration advocating for gun law reform. At 1 P.M., the chapel bells rang for 10 minutes—a call to action honoring victims of gun violence and encouraging all to get involved in efforts to bring about change.

Julie Prey and Sisters Christa Marie Thompson, Catherine Ginther, and Julia Mulvihill wear orange and join in the demonstration outside Our Lady of Angels Convent to help end gun violence.



OREGON

On Saturday, June 28, 2025, the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Marylhurst, Oregon, celebrated 30 years of the Hermitage Retreat—created and led by **Sister Mary Jo Chaves**. The gathering brought together staff and past retreatants to remember, reflect, celebrate, and recommit to this deeply Franciscan retreat experience. The event honored the retreat’s enduring themes and Sister Mary Jo’s decades of dedicated service. Sister Theresa Lamkin, who attended the celebration, shared, “Thirty-seven years ago, I attended this retreat. It is by far the best retreat I have ever experienced! I still carry it in my heart.” To learn more about the Franciscan Spiritual Center’s programs, visit www.francisspctr.com.

PENNSYLVANIA

Red Hill Farm, owned and operated by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, is a cornerstone of the congregation’s commitment to environmental stewardship. This year, the farm proudly celebrated 25 years as a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiative. Serving 120 members, including the sisters, the CSA offers a weekly supply of locally grown, seasonal vegetables harvested at peak ripeness. The

farm also includes a U-Pick garden where members can harvest their own berries, herbs, and cut flowers. Since its founding, Red Hill Farm has been dedicated to organic and sustainable growing practices, using cover crops and compost to nourish the soil, and managing pests and weeds without synthetic chemicals.



“I take great pride in farming and being a good steward of the land,” said farm manager, Margaret Lilley (right), seen here with her recent Pennsylvania House Citation, presented by Red Hill Farm member and State Representative Leanne Krueger (left). Red Hill Farm offers more than just fresh produce, it offers members a sense of community by giving tours and hosting events like the Farm-to-Table dinner.

In early summer, the 25th anniversary was marked with a joyful on-site celebration. In recognition of this milestone, Pennsylvania State Representative Leanne Krueger—a CSA member herself—requested a House Citation to honor the farm’s legacy and contributions. She presented the citation on Monday, July 28, at Red Hill Farm, where it was graciously accepted by Farm Manager Margaret Lilley.



Canticle House, a new intentional community in Chester, Pennsylvania, brings to life a long-time dream. Sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, it is a sustainable, advocacy-driven community where Sisters Diane Tomkinson and Pat Millen live with young people, sharing life, hopes, dreams, and spirituality.



Canticle House: Where Prayer, Purpose, *and* Community Meet

✠ “WE WANTED TO CREATE SOMETHING,
NOT FOR YOUNG ADULTS, BUT
WITH YOUNG ADULTS.”

In early 2024, brothers Chibuzor and Chimaijen (Chima) Nwaeme were living at a boarding school in their native Nigeria, holding onto a dream to attend college in the United States. One

day, they noticed a laminated image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help discarded in the trash. “We didn’t feel comfortable seeing it

Brothers Chibuzor and Chimaijen (Chima) Nwaeme.

there,” Chibuzor recalled. “Our Lady wanted us to find her.” They rescued the icon,

cleaned it up, and placed it in their room. From that moment on, they prayed to her daily—especially as they navigated the long, uncertain journey of applying to U.S. universities and securing student visas.

When they were finally accepted to Widener University in Chester, Pennsylvania, Chima called it “a miracle.” But once in the U.S., a new challenge emerged: finding a home where they could focus, pray freely, and feel truly supported.

A Long-Time Dream

Around the same time that the Nwaeme brothers found the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Sister Diane Tomkinson, OSF, was working on a miracle of her

own: the creation of a multi-generational, intentional community that would live according to Franciscan values.

Sister Diane’s inspiration came, in part, from her own experience meeting with an intentional community of young adults in 2019 while enrolled in the sabbatical program at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California. “I got to know a number of young adults who were graduate students there,” she said, “and a lot of them wanted to hang out with the sisters.” They wanted to hear the sisters’ stories and learn how they had managed to sustain themselves throughout their lives of service. This encouraged Sister Diane to become increasingly interested in how



Mealtimes are a special part of life at Canticle House—a daily chance for residents to share what's happening in their lives and feel supported. With everyone taking turns cooking, the table is always filled with new dishes and experiences.

sisters could share their way of life with younger generations.

“One of the things we hear from young adults, especially since Covid, is that there’s a sense of isolation and a desire for community,” said Sister Diane. “We wanted to create something, not *for* young adults, but *with* young adults. A place where people in their twenties and thirties could come together in a supportive environment.”

When Sister Diane began her ministry as Charism Engagement Minister in fall 2021, she began exploring various forms of intentional communities and entered into dialogue about the idea with congregational leadership. Then, in 2023, Sister Patricia Millen, OSF, also became part of the conversation. Sister Pat had just accepted becoming a part-time volunteer with the Chester Community Coalition (CCC) and would be making a cross-country move from her long-time home in Spokane, Washington. Unaware of what Sister Diane had in mind, Sister Pat called her for advice



The home was aptly named after St. Francis of Assisi’s Cantic of the Sun, which is a profound, joyful praise of God through all of creation, embracing nature, humanity, and even death as a unified family under the Creator.

on housing. Soon, the community became a goal that they were both working on together, and was a dream realized when leadership approved the idea in late 2023.

Despite the fact the endeavor was an initiative of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, being a Franciscan would not be a pre-requisite for joining. The vision was for the community to be open to anyone who wanted to live the shared ideals of nurturing life-giving relationships, offering hospitality and welcome, seeking environmental and social justice, and living contemplatively, in a way that integrated reflection and action. The community would also strive to live a sustainable lifestyle by planting a pollinator garden, composting, and using mostly recycled goods.

“It’s part of our Franciscan vision of inclusion,” said Sister Diane. “A person of any faith can be part of this, if they want to commit to living those values. They don’t have to live like a nun.” Instead, the goal would be to live and learn together in a way that provided an opportunity for sisters to impart their knowledge to

continued on page 14

continued from page 13

a new generation. "A lot of times, we as sisters need to share our wisdom," said Sister Pat. "It's one of the greatest gifts we have." Living with young people would provide the perfect opportunity to do that. "In return," Sister Diane added, "we sisters learn from the gifts, questions, and dreams of young adults as we seek to respond to the needs of our world today."

Finding Home

Now that the idea had the support of the congregation, the time had come to find the perfect location. After reflection, both sisters felt strongly that the community should be based in Chester, where sisters had served for so many years.

"Our sisters have had quite a lot of ministries in Chester, but we haven't had anyone living in Chester for quite some time," said Sister Diane. Chester, once a thriving city, is currently coping with several issues, including poverty, violence, and

environmental racism. Choosing to live in Chester was a mark of solidarity with its citizens. In Sister Pat's work with the CCC, she noted that at meetings, attendees were often asked whether they were Chester residents. "We can now raise our hands and say we are," said Sister Pat.

In addition to being based in Chester, the location of the house within the city was also very important. Soon, Sister Diane found the perfect spot: a three-story brick structure for rent just one block from St. Katherine Drexel Parish and Drexel Neumann Academy. It is also within easy walking distance of Widener University and an easy drive to a number of other universities with young adults interested in activism, making it accessible for potential residents.

The sisters named the new intentional community home, Canticle House, in honor of Saint Francis' Canticle of Creation.

Divine Providence

Trusting that they would soon have residents moving in, the sisters settled in and began offering some initial programming. Meanwhile, Chibuzor and Chima had begun life at Widener University, just down the road, studying mechanical engineering and computer science respectively.

The brothers lived in the dorms but soon found that wasn't the right fit. Apart from being a financial strain, there were too many distractions for them to concentrate on their work. Additionally, they felt awkward praying in rooms with roommates who didn't share their spirituality.

They were both members of the choir at Saint Katherine Drexel and asked the choir director if she knew of any places that might be good for them. Without hesitation, she told them about Canticle House.

The image of Our Mother of Perpetual Help that the Nwaeme brothers initially found in the trash in their native Nigeria is now pride-of-place in their new room at Canticle House. In part, the brothers credit their prayers to the icon for helping to lead them to their happy life at Canticle House, based in Franciscan values.



The theme of life in Canticle House is community, sustainability, and family. That means shared chores and shared down time. All residents pitch in to care for their home, and all residents also enjoy leisure time together.



Soon, they were meeting with the sisters and submitting applications.

In February 2025, Sisters Diane and Pat welcomed the brothers as new residents at Canticle House. Since then, the four housemates have adopted a shared daily rhythm that includes prayer, meals, and special activities.

A Family

When it comes to living at Canticle House, Chima said, the best part is that it “feels like a family.” Nights spent around the dinner table hold a special place in all the residents’ hearts. “It’s a support system,” said Chibuzor. “The sisters care about how you are doing and ask about your day and the projects you’re working on.” For two young men so far from home, these things are deeply important.

Everyone takes turns cooking, and the brothers have learned how to make several new recipes. Each resident pays a modest monthly fee that, in addition to rent and utilities, also covers groceries for the household.

At first, some of the brothers’ friends were skeptical of their choice. They got questions like whether the sisters were allowed to watch TV or drink wine, to which Chibuzor laughed, “Of course. They’re human beings.” The brothers have encouraged friends to visit for various events at the house, and the friends are often surprised by how much fun they have. In fact, when Canticle House hosted a Super Bowl party, one visitor didn’t want to leave. “He was asking, ‘when can I come back?’” Chibuzor said. He’s not surprised

by this reaction, though. “The sisters wow me all the time.”

Chima, likewise, has been equally impressed. Through faith-sharing, he feels he has gotten in touch with the sisters’ Franciscan charism. When he made his confirmation just a few months ago, he selected Francis as his confirmation name.

In a time when religious life is going through a period of tremendous change, Sister Diane noted that “this new thing that’s emerging,” in terms of an intentional community where religious and lay people of all ages live together, “may be a seedling of what religious life will look like in the future.”

The Right Place

The room Chibuzor and Chima share at Canticle House is on the third floor, across the hall from Sister Diane. The icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is now on display in this new bedroom, having made the journey along with the brothers from Nigeria. They still pray to her every night and feel that these prayers helped lead them to their new home. Two additional bedrooms lie empty just waiting for the right applicants to come along and join the family.

“We needed the right place to stay,” said Chibuzor. “And we got so much more than we expected.” ■

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

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- At the center of Sister Diane’s dream was a desire to connect more with younger generations. Where in your life might you be able to reach out to someone of a different generation, to either benefit from their wisdom or help them benefit from yours?
- If you know someone in their 20s or 30s who is looking for a new living situation that would be based in the same values as this intentional community, share information with them about Canticle House. It might just be their perfect fit!
- Attend events, or encourage young people to attend events, at Canticle House. This provides an opportunity to meet the sisters and see firsthand what life at Canticle House is all about.
- Going from the example set by Canticle House, look at how you might be able to create more balance in your own home. How are chores and responsibilities currently divided among your family members or roommates? Are meals truly a time for connection?

Since beginning her ministry at St. Stephen's Indian School in 1973, Sister Teresa Frawley has dedicated her life to serving the Arapaho and Shoshone people in Wyoming.



Franciscan Ministry on the Wind River Reservation:

Then and



"There is great interest among the native people to have their children go through the sacramental events," explained Sister Teresa when interviewed for the 2000 edition of Good News.

THE MINISTRY WAS NEVER JUST ABOUT SCHOOLS OR PARISHES, IT WAS ABOUT WALKING TOGETHER, LISTENING DEEPLY, AND HONORING EVERY PERSON'S DIGNITY.

When the Franciscan Sisters arrived at St. Stephen's Mission in 1892, they came in response to a heartfelt plea from Arapaho Chief Black Coal: "We have many children. We very much want a schoolhouse and someone to teach our children to read and write. Then when Sunday comes around, we would be glad for someone to teach our children about the Great Spirit."

That call for education and spiritual presence reached Bishop James O'Connor of Omaha, whose diocese then included Wyoming. With \$5,000 and the help of Father John Jutz, a German Jesuit, the new mission was established in 1884. After an invitation from the Jesuits and with support from St. Katharine Drexel, six Sisters of St. Francis made the long journey west—by train to Rawlins, then 175 miles by stagecoach—arriving dusty, exhausted, and deeply committed.

For more than a century, the sisters have ministered among the Arapaho and Shoshone people on the Wind River Reservation. In the early years, they taught at St. Stephen's Indian School and cared for those in need of food, clothing, and transportation—offering presence, comfort, and prayer.

From the Classroom to the Community: Sister Teresa's Journey

One of those sisters is Sister Teresa Frawley. She began her ministry at St. Stephen's Indian School in 1973 and—apart from an eight-year break—has been on the reservation ever since. In 1992, she was asked to help at St. Joseph's Church in Ethete for one year. That "temporary" assignment has now lasted over 30 years. St. Joseph's was established by St. Stephen's Mission to serve Native people at the western end of the reservation. When we first told Sister Teresa's story in 2000, her move to Ethete was still new. Today, she remains a steady, compassionate presence in a small parish with no resident priest.



A few years ago, Sister Teresa had the honor of being given her own Indian name: Be-uh Gwee-uh-Guh-sa Wipa (Eagle Wing Woman)—a testament to her commitment to the Shoshone people.



St. Joseph's was established by St. Stephen's Mission in 1968 to serve the native people at the western end of the reservation. The assignment was for one year until the Jesuits hired someone for the position. Sister Teresa is still in Ethete doing whatever needs to be done in the small parish with no resident priest.

Much of her ministry—visiting homes, leading prayer, offering comfort at funerals—remains constant. But she reflects that *she* is the one who has changed the most: “Perhaps the ministry hasn’t changed as much as I have,” Sister Teresa said, “As I learn more each day about how the tribal members conduct their lives and ceremonies. The ceremonies are very central and important, and I am in awe at how everything falls in place when they gather.” She speaks with reverence about the sacred practices she has been invited to witness, including cedar blessings, paint ceremonies, and the powerful drum songs that accompany funerals and other gatherings. These spiritual exchanges have deepened her understanding and shaped her ministry.

A Changing Landscape

While the Franciscan spirit endures, the past 25 years have brought change. In 2010, the Jesuits ended their direct ministry on the reservation, and St. Stephen’s Mission came under the Diocese of Cheyenne.

Challenges persist—severe poverty, substance abuse, and lack of employment still weigh on many families. Yet despite hardship, there is resilience, connection, and a strong sense of cultural identity that continues to flourish.

The Future of Franciscan Presence

What lies ahead for Franciscan ministry on the Wind River Reservation? Sister Teresa believes the spirit of the sisters lives on in those who have walked with our sisters, who now carry the values of compassion, presence, and deep respect for life in their hearts. “I believe we’ve been blessed in many ways, even as we’ve brought blessings to the people here,” she says.

A few years ago, Sister Teresa received a special honor from Shoshone elder Ivora Ray, who gave her the Indian name: *Be-uh Gwee-uh-Guh-sa Wipa* (Eagle Wing Woman). In Native culture, the eagle is a sacred symbol of strength, vision, and connection to the Creator. To be named after this revered creature is a deep and lasting blessing.

A Ministry That Lives On

As we look back on more than 130 years since the Sisters of St. Francis first arrived at St. Stephen’s, we honor a legacy built on love, service, and shared humanity. Their ministry was never just about schools or parishes, it was about walking together, listening deeply, and honoring every person’s dignity.

Sister Teresa was recently named one of eight Lumen Christi Award finalists in the Diocese of Cheyenne, Wyoming, for her years of ministry there.



“This year’s Lumen Christi Award finalists are ordinary people doing extraordinary things in the name of their faith and on behalf of the Catholic Church,” Father Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension Society, said. “Their stories are a reminder to us of the hope and transformation the Church brings into communities throughout America every day.”



◀ Read The Catholic Extension Society’s article about Sister Teresa’s ministry as well as the other finalists.

We look forward with hope that the seeds planted by the sisters will continue to bear fruit in the lives and hearts of the Wind River people for generations to come. ■

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

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 2024 Annual Report



Sarah O. Hanley
Director of Mission Advancement
Sisters of St. Francis Foundation

Dear Friends,

With heartfelt gratitude, I am pleased to share this year's annual report, which reflects the strength and stability of the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation. Your generosity—combined with sound investment, stewardship, and careful planning—enabled us to meet essential needs, care for our aging sisters, and respond compassionately to those most in need. Together, we continue to live out the Gospel call to serve those who are poor, sick, and marginalized—work that remains at the heart of our Franciscan mission.

This year, the foundation built on its strong position by working with our dedicated Board of Trustees to develop a strategic plan that will guide our mission-driven efforts in the years ahead. This forward-looking approach ensures that our resources will continue to support the sisters and their ministries with faithfulness, compassion, and care.

The numbers in this report tell a deeper story—one of community, commitment, and hope. Each contribution represents a partner in mission, walking with us in humility and joy. We are especially grateful to those who have included the foundation in their estate plans, helping to secure the future of our mission. Thank you for your ongoing partnership, your trust, and your belief in our shared calling. We look ahead with confidence and peace, knowing we are blessed by your continued support.

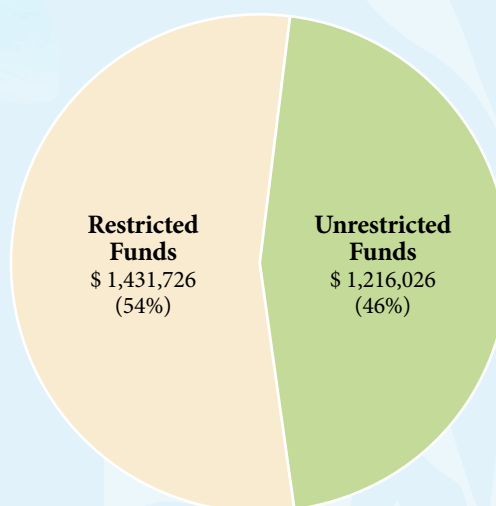
Peace and all good,

FISCAL YEAR 2024

Total Donations: \$ 2,647,752

Unrestricted Funds: \$ 1,216,026 (46%)

Restricted Funds: \$ 1,431,726 (54%)



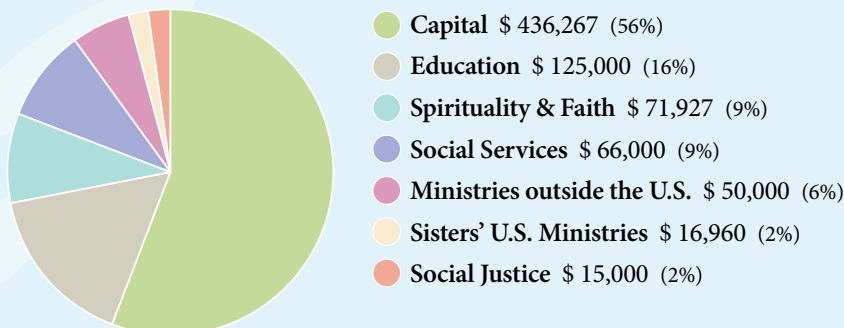
Sources of Donations: Website/Social Media Donations, Direct Mail Appeals, *Good News*, E-news, Memorial Gifts, Memorial Cards, Grants, Recurring Gifts, Estates, Inheritances, Franciscan Night, Holiday Craft Fair, and Annual Golf Tournament

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

Thank You!

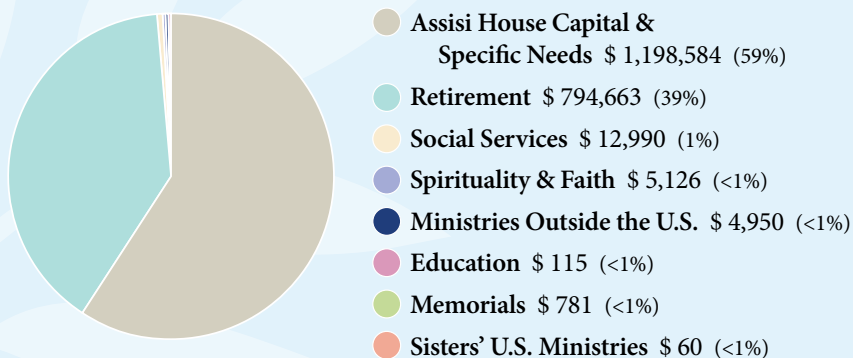
The Sisters of St. Francis assume operational costs of the foundation.

Distribution of Unrestricted Funds: \$ 781,154



Thanks to unrestricted funds designated by congregational leadership, we were able to provide compassionate care for our elder sisters and strengthen ministries that help to improve lives. These funds fueled education and spiritual growth, offered hope to immigrants, empowered women and children, sustained community centers, and fought food insecurity and homelessness. Together, we supported organizations such as ACCESS Chester Community Center, African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC), Franciscan Federation, Mercy Ministry Community Resource Center, Neumann University, Support Our Aging Religious (SOAR), The Catholic High School of Baltimore, The Ministry of Caring Transitions, and our Young Adult Intentional Community, along with various shelters and soup kitchens serving those most in need.

Distribution of Restricted Funds: \$ 2,017,269



Distribution of Restricted Categories:

Assisi House Capital & Specific Needs: Phase two renovations, acuity devices, animal therapy, audio/visual equipment, safety doors, and transportation; **Retirement:** Assisi House, general retirement; **Social Services:** ACCESS Chester Community Center (Chester, PA), Catholic Social Services, OLA Chapel special collections, and St. Francis Inn (Philadelphia, PA); **Spirituality & Faith:** Cantic House Intentional Community, Formation, and Franciscan Spiritual Centers; **Ministries Outside the U.S.:** Africa, Haiti; **Education:** The Catholic High School of Baltimore; **Memorials:** trees and benches; **U.S. Ministries:** Red Hill Farm.



This year, the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation unveiled a new logo, symbolizing our enduring mission and the values that guide our work. In addition, we launched dedicated social media pages to share updates, celebrate the impact of our supporters, and strengthen connections within our community. These platforms provide new opportunities to engage with our mission and witness the difference your generosity makes.



In Memoriam

Sister Gerald Helene Connelly
June 20, 2025

Sister Magdalen Mary Dunne
June 16, 2025

Sister Francis Anita Rizzo
June 10, 2025

Sister Margaret Oman
(formerly Sister Margaret William)
May 3, 2025

Sister Mary Catherine Lewandowski
(formerly Sister Anne Christi)
April 30, 2025

Sister Marian William Fitzgerald
April 3, 2025

Sister Jean Margaret McDevitt
March 21, 2025

The sisters are deeply grateful for the generosity of others that helps sustain their lives in community. Your gifts make it possible for them to share in prayer, celebrate one another—as when, pictured below, Sister Thomasann Quinn retired from her 40-year ministry in Doylestown, Pennsylvania—and continue the work that still lies ahead. Thank you for walking this journey with us.



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

► As activities coordinator at Assisi House, one of Lauren's important roles is to welcome and orient new residents, encouraging them to take part in the many social and life-giving activities available.

FoCUS

"LAUREN IS DEDICATED TO ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OUR SISTER RESIDENTS. SHE COMPASSIONATELY AND SKILLFULLY PROVIDES ACTIVITIES THAT ARE MEANINGFUL, PURPOSEFUL, AND ENJOYABLE."

— SISTER MAGGI GRECO, OSF



LAUREN CINTRON

Ask any of our elder sisters living at Assisi House, and they'll tell you the planned activities are vital to their physical and mental health—and often the highlight of their day. These enriching programs are made possible through the thoughtful planning and coordination of Activities Coordinator Lauren Cintron.

"In the Activities Department, we walk with each sister resident in loving kindness and respect," Lauren shared. "We do this by providing social and spiritual engagement in accordance with Franciscan values."

Lauren's role extends well beyond organizing a calendar of events. She thoughtfully designs programs that nurture each sister's physical, social, and intellectual well-being.

Whether celebrating seasonal and liturgical traditions or creating opportunities for leisure and community service, Lauren ensures every activity brings connection, joy, and meaning. "We provide sisters with the opportunity to continue ministering to the economically poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed through various corporal works of mercy," she explained. These efforts include letter writing, making sandwiches, packing backpacks, and more. For Lauren, this is more than a job—it's a ministry, offering emotional and spiritual support, along with a compassionate presence, to women who have devoted their lives to serving others.

Lauren is no stranger to the Sisters of St. Francis. She grew up across the street from Neumann University, the college sponsored by the sisters. She learned about the position at Assisi House from a family friend, Karen McEvoy, who was also working with the sisters and encouraged her to apply. Since stepping into the role five years ago, Lauren shared, "I like to make sure each program is thoroughly planned and prepped so everything runs smoothly. Of course, there's the occasional hiccup, but my department stays flexible to serve the sisters as best we can."

Outside of work, Lauren enjoys spending time with her husband, TJ, their young son Caspian, and her stepchildren, Jovan and Jaella. She loves cooking, decorating, shopping, and strolling around Media or relaxing in her backyard. At the center of it all is her family. "My new little family has been pieced together just perfectly, and I couldn't have asked God for anything more," she said. Between work and home, Lauren feels "truly blessed."

Lauren and her husband, TJ, are newlyweds who welcomed their son, Caspian, last August. TJ is of Spanish descent, and Lauren enjoys trying her hand at the traditional recipes he grew up with to share with their family.



▲ Lauren, shown here with Sister Maggie Gannon from ACCESS Community Center, helps the sisters live out their corporal and spiritual works of mercy by leading community service projects like food and school supply drives for families and children in Chester, Pennsylvania.

Celebrating 170 Years— Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia

This year on Founders' Day—April 9th—the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia joyfully celebrated 170 years of proclaiming the good news of God's faithful presence in the world. On April 9, 1855, Bishop John Neumann invested the three founding members in the habit of St. Francis, giving them new names: Maria Anna

Boll Bachmann – Sister Mary Francis;
Barbara Boll – Sister Margaret; and
Anna Dorn – Sister Bernardine.

◀ Read our
full history on
our website.

These were women of
deep faith and unwav-
ering courage who laid
the foundation for a
legacy of service, compassion, and
dedication to those in need.

Despite the hardships she faced,
including the loss of her husband,
Mother Francis Bachmann, the

congregation's first superior general, embraced God's call to serve the poor and marginalized, establishing a community of women committed to living the Gospel through acts of love and mercy. She inspired her sisters with the guiding wisdom: *"No risk...No gain"* and the steadfast commitment that *"As long as God does not stop giving to us, we shall not stop giving to the poor."*

From those humble beginnings, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have continued to walk in her footsteps, responding to the needs of the times with faith, hope, and generosity. As we honor this milestone, we give thanks for the past, celebrate the present, and look forward to carrying Mother Francis' mission forward into the future. We thank God for all those women who have gone before us and on whose shoulders we stand. We also ask that God's continued love and guidance remain with us as we discern the next steps of our Franciscan journey.

Sisters Speak Out: Prayer and Public Witness for Immigrants and a Just Economy

On June 24, sisters from religious congregations across the nation gathered in Washington, DC, to uplift a prophetic public voice in response to the alarming events taking place in our country. These actions include but are not limited to the dismantling of public institutions; mass deportations of immigrants; abduction of international students; narrowing of space for freedom of speech, dismantling of environmental protections; and threats to public officials and educational institutions. The moral voice of women religious is uniquely trusted and in a position to elevate our collective voices to uplift Gospel values, challenge destructive policies, dispel disinformation, and embody compassion and hope. The Sisters of St Francis of Philadelphia participated in Washington and held a Sisters Speak Out Echo Event at Our Lady of Angels Chapel which included prayer, reflection and action.



Welcoming Pope Leo XIV

With hearts full of joy and reverence, we welcome Pope Leo XIV, formerly Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost. A native of Chicago, Pope Leo is the first American-born pope and brings with him a unique blend of global pastoral experience and deep intellectual and spiritual formation.

Our community shared this message on the occasion of his election: *"With hearts full of joy and reverence, we, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, offer our heartfelt congratulations to Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, now Pope Leo XIV. As women committed to Gospel living, peace, and care for creation in the spirit of Sts. Francis and Clare, we welcome your papacy with deep hope for the future of our Church and our world. We offer our prayerful support as you embrace this sacred responsibility for the People of God. May the Holy Spirit guide you with wisdom, compassion, and courage as you lead us in truth and love. Know that you are held daily in our prayers—asking God to bless you abundantly with strength and grace."*

As we enter this new chapter under the leadership of Pope Leo XIV, we do so with profound hope. We trust that his commitment to community, dialogue, and the Gospel will continue the spirit of Pope Francis and illuminate new paths for the Church to walk with the suffering, protect creation, and witness to Christ's love. We continue to pray for Pope Leo XIV as he begins his ministry as Bishop of Rome and universal shepherd. May his Augustinian wisdom, missionary heart, and commitment to justice and peace guide us all ever closer to the Kingdom of God.

► Celebrating heritage, service, and unexpected family ties, Oonagh Kersey is a grateful and joyful member of the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation board.



Donor Spotlight

OONAGH KERSEY

“OONAGH AND HER FAMILY ARE SUCH A GRACIOUS PRESENCE TO US.”

— SISTER DEBORAH KRIST, OSF



▲ Golf Tournament Fundraiser, September 2023 – (Left to right): Oonagh, Patricia McGroary (Oonagh's mom), Sister Isabel Haughey, and Pat McGroary (Oonagh's dad).

► Left to right: Michelle (daughter), Lee (husband), Jennifer (daughter), Jeremy (son-in-law), Oonagh, and Christopher (son).



Oonagh Kersey, a dedicated member of the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation board, brings both financial expertise and heartfelt commitment to her role. A first-generation American with proud Irish roots, she blends a busy career as Director of Accounting at Aon in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania, with a deep appreciation for family, tradition, and community.

Her connection with the Sisters of St. Francis began when former board member Bill Fegley invited her and her husband, Lee, to a fundraising event. “From the moment we arrived, I was inspired,” Oonagh recalled. “I felt drawn to the sisters’ mission of service and the strong sense of community.” The couple soon became regulars at events such as the golf tournament, Franciscan Night, and the Christmas Craft Fair.

A surprising and deeply personal moment occurred when she brought her parents to an event. While chatting with the sisters, her father, Pat, discovered a family connection—Sister Isabel Haughey, a resident of Assisi House, turned out to be his cousin. “To learn of that connection—it was breathtaking,” said Oonagh. “It made my involvement even more meaningful.”

Oonagh is continually moved by the sisters’ humble, joyful, and peaceful presence and their quiet, yet powerful impact. “They live their mission with grace,” she said. One ministry she especially values is the sisters’ prayer life. “Knowing that the intentions of my family and friends are remembered daily brings me great comfort.”

As a board member, Oonagh lends her talents to strategic planning, outreach, and fundraising, helping support the sisters’ ministries to those on the margins. Outside of work and volunteering, she enjoys time with Lee and their grown children. Whether relaxing at the beach or hosting family dinners, Oonagh treasures these moments of connection. “Our gatherings are full of music, laughter, and stories—they remind me that life’s greatest blessings lie in relationships.”

Her bond with Sister Isabel has made her journey with the foundation even richer. “Reconnecting and swapping stories with Isabel have been a beautiful gift,” she said. “It shows how deeply our lives and spirits can intertwine.”

Oonagh encourages others to get involved. “Attend an event. Volunteer. Give what you can,” she said. “Together, we can help the sisters continue their legacy of compassion and care.”

To learn more about upcoming events and ways to get involved, visit the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia website (www.osfphila.org) or contact the foundation office.

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- Red Hill Farm, Aston, PA*



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Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia



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- | | |
|--|---|
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For more information contact: the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation, (610) 558-7713, OSFF@osfphila.org.

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Visit our website at www.osfphila.org

Celebrating A Combined 750 Years of Service



On Sunday, June 8, more than 150 members of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and their companions gathered in Our Lady of Angels Chapel in Aston, Pennsylvania, to honor the congregation's 2025 jubilarians—celebrating 70 and 50 years of religious profession. Together, the 11 jubilarians represent a remarkable 750 years of collective service across a wide range of ministries, including education, healthcare, childcare, social services, prayer ministry, parish and diocesan ministry, congregational service, and eldercare. Their ministry work has extended across 14 states and 24 dioceses—and beyond the United States to Africa, Puerto Rico, and Ireland.

A multi-day celebration was enjoyed by our Jubilarians and their guests.

Pictured: (Top row) Sister Angela Mary O'Connell; Sister Sheila Byrne; Sister Maria Orlandini; Sister Thomasann Quinn; Sister Mary Carmel Earls; Sister Mary Rita Paratore. (Front row) Sister Magdalen Mary Dunne; Sister Maria de Guadalupe Diaz; Sister Frances Acton; Sister Marie Francine Campbell. Not pictured: Sister Rose Vattilana.

► In January 1946, three Sisters of St. Francis arrived in Pensacola, Florida, to open Our Lady of Angels Hospital—the first hospital for Black mothers in the South. Facing severe personnel shortages, Mother Veronica initially planned to deny Fr. John Raleigh's request, until she learned 80 other congregations had already declined. Because Black women had long been denied healthcare, many babies and mothers died in the hospital's early years. That began to change as more women accessed the facility's prenatal clinic. During their 18 years in Pensacola, the sisters helped deliver over 11,000 babies. Read more about how the Sisters of St. Francis are working to dismantle racism in the congregation and beyond on page 4.



Our Franciscan Spiritual Center in Aston, PA, has a fresh slate of programming, including Yoga, Tai Chi Chih, Men's Spirituality Group, and more!

Visit our website for full details

