

Volume 29.1 Spring/Summer 2026

Good NEWS

A Publication of THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

Also in this issue:

- Hope that Crosses Borders
- People & Places
- Sharing the Good News

A Mission
of Presence
and Service
Sisters Reflect on Ministry Abroad

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

Whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers or sisters, you did for me.

Matthew 25:40

Mother Francis Bachmann encouraged the sisters of her time—and continues to encourage us today, 171 years later—to be faithful to living the Gospel.

To be Good News is the essence of her message, a call that remains as urgent now as it was at our founding.

“The future of our loved institute is in your vigilant keeping. Treasure its interests as a sacred duty.”

— *Admonitions 8*

The stories in this issue of Good News bring this call to life through the lived experiences of our sisters. These are not simply stories of ministry—they are stories of transformation. Through their willingness to serve, our sisters were changed in mind and heart. They stepped beyond familiar boundaries, embraced ministry in new places, and opened themselves to the gift of being shaped by the people they encountered.

A Mission of Presence and Service highlights the experiences of more than a dozen of our sisters, each sharing a glimpse into her missionary journey. Their reflections reveal a consistent truth: that the heart of mission is not found in what we do, but in how we are present. Their stories invite us to look more closely at the relationships formed across cultures and continents—and to recognize the quiet, profound ways God is revealed in those encounters.

In Hope That Crosses Borders, Sister Linda Sariego offers a deeply personal witness to that same truth. Her journey—from an early call to religious life, through unexpected challenges, to a lifetime of ministry among Hispanic communities and migrants—speaks to the power of trust, courage, and accompaniment. Her story reminds us that hope is not passive; it asks something of us. It calls us to show up, listen, and walk with one another.

Together, these reflections invite each of us to pause and consider our own lives.

How have we touched the lives of our brothers and sisters?

How do we welcome those who enter our lives?

Do we take time to truly savor the moments we are given?

Are we willing to forgive, to begin again, to remain open?

Do we give thanks each day for the gift of one another?

As you read, may you come to recognize the many ways you make a loving difference—often in ways you may never fully see. And may we carry forward the wisdom of Mother Teresa, who so simply reminds us: “Love them anyway.”

May God bless you always and in all ways!

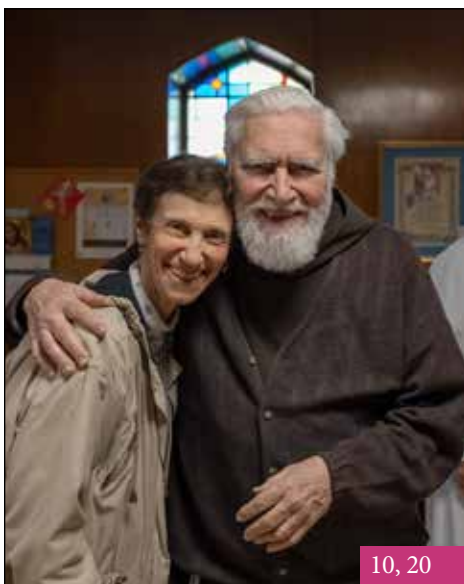
Theresa Firenze, OSF



Sister Theresa Firenze, OSF
Congregational Minister



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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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As part of our Franciscan commitment to caring for Creation, *Good News* is printed on sustainably manufactured paper using environmentally friendly LED-UV inks.

Please share this publication with a friend, and recycle it after reading.

On the cover: Sister Julie Mulvihill, the congregation's only sister currently serving in mission ministry abroad, has ministered for nearly 22 years at Nyumbani Children's Home in Nairobi, Kenya, an orphanage founded in 1992 to care for children affected by HIV/AIDS. "The faith and spirit of the children here is amazing," she says. "They have so little, yet they constantly remind me that 'God is good.' Their witness has deepened my own faith."

Every mission begins with a conversation. In 1976, Sisters Corda Marie Bergbauer and Eleanor Horneman met with Bishop Adrian in Zambia to discern the possibility of opening a Sisters of St. Francis ministry in Zambezi, Diocese of Livingstone—a conversation that would become the first step in a transformative chapter of the congregation's history.



A Mission of Presence and Service

Sisters Reflect on Ministry Abroad

They thought they were traveling to change the world. Instead, the world changed them.



With smiles, prayers, and great anticipation, Sisters Mary Lonergan, Nora McCarthy, Anne Mancini, and Marie Joseph Kerr receive a joyful send-off from Congregational Minister Sister Rose Cecilia Case before departing for Zambia in September 1976. It was a historic day—the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia's first mission in Africa—and the beginning of a journey that would forever shape both the sisters and the congregation.

It is good to be here.” Sister Nora McCarthy wrote those words in a letter home in 1979, ten months after arriving in Africa as part of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia's first mission on the continent. Alongside Sisters Marie Joseph Kerr, Anne Mancini, and Mary Lonergan, she had stepped into a world far different from the one she had known before.

The hardships were real, but so was the beauty they encountered—in the landscape, in the resilience and faith of the people they met, and in the way their experiences would shape their hearts.

In the years to follow, many other Sisters of St. Francis would travel to communities around the globe, discovering how mission work would change them in ways they never expected. They would often face difficult and even dangerous situations, but their predominant experiences would be ones of growth.



The memories of mission endure long after the journey ends. Sister Mary Loneragan (left) shares a treasured tapestry she received during her ministry in Guatemala with Sisters Mary Kennedy and Caroline Sweeney who also brought meaningful keepsakes from their own years of service abroad.



◀ Sister Mary Loneragan and Sister Marie Joseph Kerr, Zambia

✧ “IT WAS MORE ABOUT BEING THAN DOING.”

For example, when Sister Marian Leaf found herself in the middle of a coup attempt upon landing in Zambia in 1985, it would have been easy for her to panic. However, during the hours spent waiting

at the airport to see what fate held in store, she learned a valuable lesson: look to the locals. “No one was panicking. They were calm,” she said. This told her that she could be calm, too.

Sister Mary Kennedy, whose own work took her to Puerto Rico and Guatemala, agreed. “It was more about *being* than *doing*.”

Where The Need Is

Prior to 1979, missionary work was not an option for the Sisters of St. Francis. But this would change due to one of the congregation’s core principles: “always go where the need is.”

When the congregation was first founded, sisters moved to minister wherever there was suffering, causing their good work to ripple out across the country. As the world became more interconnected in the twentieth century, though, there were no longer any borders on where “needs” could emerge—or be met. Help was required all around the globe. As a result, the decision to enter into missionary work was not born

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The children of Zambia captured Sister Marian Leaf’s heart during her 12 years of ministry there. The experience was so fulfilling that she later chose to continue serving in another remote mission, spending 14 years accompanying Native Alaskan communities in the Y-K Region of western Alaska (see page 16 for more about that ministry).

“They taught me what it means to stop—really stop—and listen,” said Sister Mary Loneragan of the people she worked with in Africa and Guatemala. The headmistress at a large dormitory in Africa where Sister Mary ministered once told her: “The thing about westerners is, you see the problem and not the person. You see the project and not the people.”

Gaining this kind of perspective is at the heart of what makes missionary work so valuable, and this bit of wisdom would go on to have a major impact on Sister Mary’s way of thinking. Instead of overly focusing on problems to be solved, she instead learned to dial in to the person in front of her.



◀ Sister Mary Beth Antonelli traveled to the Dominican Republic as a Companion in Mission. She credits the experience with helping her discover her vocation, saying,

"Being with the people there was instrumental in my vocation. Their sense of gratitude and deep faith touched my heart."



◀ A joyful moment with Sister Pat Smith during that trip reflects the hospitality, friendship, and deep faith of the sisters that also helped to make the experience so transformative for her.

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out of strategy... it was simply a response to need.

Expansion into a new ministry or a new geographic location always followed the same pattern—and missionary work was no different. A bishop would reach out to the congregational leader with a specific need, and the sisters would enter into discernment about whether they were being called to respond. If the congregation believed the invitation aligned with their mission, those who felt drawn to serve were invited to put their names forward.

While she was hesitant when she first signed up, Sister Frances Cassidy ultimately went on to serve in Zambia, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Kenya. "I just put my name down," she recalled, thinking back to the meeting where missionary work was first discussed. "I was willing to take a chance." Her experience reflected what many sisters felt in those early days—uncertainty, mixed with trust that the call itself was worth answering.

From the beginning, the sisters were clear about their goals for missionary life. These ministries were never about proselytizing, but about presence and service. Sister Pat Hinton, who ministered in the Dominican Republic, remembers spending six months preparing for her mission work. "We were told, 'You're not going there to impose; you're going there to be with,'" she said. "And that's always stuck in my mind."

Over time, the congregation's commitment to missionary work began to shape not only *how* sisters served, but *where*.

Sisters increasingly took an active role in discerning where they might be most needed. Sister Caroline Sweeney crusaded for the congregation's first foray into Nicaragua. "I heard about Nicaragua getting rid of a dictator," she said. Knowing the people would need support, she asked if she could go. "The first response I got was, 'But, we're not there.' And I said, 'Well, I'll be the first, then!'"

A Worldwide Legacy

With this kind of pioneering spirit, the sisters' missionary experiences proceeded to unfold across multiple countries and decades—from Africa, to the Caribbean, to Central and South America, and to the Central Pacific. Among other things, sisters provided healthcare, service to the poor, and education.



Sister Frances Cassidy, Kenya



Sister Caroline Sweeney, Nicaragua

Sister Kathleen Swan (also seen at right, middle), Antigua, West Indies



Sister Carol Ann Warnke (also seen above, far left), Antigua, West Indies



Sisters Pat Hinton (also seen above, far right), Joanne Smith, Theresa Elitz, and Elizabeth Conception, Dominican Republic

THE SISTERS' LIVES BECAME PERMANENTLY INTERTWINED WITH THE PEOPLE THEY SERVED AND THE PLACES THEY LIVED. BOTH ARE STILL PART OF THEIR INTERNAL FABRIC, LONG AFTER RETURNING HOME.

"We started schools in Africa for children who were turned away from the public schools because they did not own shoes," said Sister Marian. "We held class in bars that were empty during the day, in churches, under trees... wherever we could." Sisters were also the first to offer special needs education in the area. "Prior to that, if a child had a disability, they were just hidden away in the home," she said.

Even as sisters focused on addressing community needs, they frequently found

themselves navigating perilous and unstable situations. Sister Mary Kennedy recalled how she arrived in Guatemala during a time of deep turmoil. "Four priests had been assassinated," she said. "Hundreds of catechists were killed, and it was a war zone."

In places marked by physical threat and instability, the sisters' response was not withdrawal, but deeper solidarity. "It was nothing to be stopped by the military at gunpoint," Sister Mary said. "But I loved

every second I was there. And part of me is still there... God is present in all cultures... and all people deserve love and respect because we are all made in God's image."

At times, sisters chose to live as simply as those they served. The decision was intentional. By sharing living conditions, they removed any sense of separation between themselves and the local people. "What we call limitation here would be called riches there," observed Sister Carol Ann Warnke, whose ministry took her to Antigua and other islands in the Diocese of Saint John's-Basseterre in the West Indies.

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"Antiguans live in poverty. But their simplicity, security, and faith in God could only be envied," said Sister Kathleen Swan who served in Antigua for some time. "If you ask them, 'how are you doing today,' the answer always was, 'thank God for life, sister, thank God.' They didn't give you a list of complaints... even though their lifestyle indicated they were disadvantaged people, they were respectful, faithful, and gracious to their island." The people being served simply longed for presence—for sisters to sit, to listen, and to get to know their lives.

"MISSION WORK DOESN'T END. IT JUST CHANGES FORM."



Sisters Moira Frawley, Caroline Sweeney, and Mary Kennedy, Guatemala



Sister Mary Kennedy treasures this tapestry from Guatemala as a reminder of a place that forever changed her. Despite serving in the midst of violence and unrest, she remembers most the people whose faith and resilience taught her that "God is present in every culture, and all people deserve love and respect because we are all made in God's image."

The presence the sisters provided was perhaps most noted when, in Antigua, the health clinic that had been previously opened by Sisters Catherine Ellen Kearney and Theresa Yanda was closed following the opening of a government clinic.

"The people asked that we reopen ours," said Sister Kathleen. "The problem, they explained, was that in the government clinic, it was in and out—sit, be seen, go—no talking. The Franciscan clinic gave people a chance to see and spend time with each other, as well as talk to the sisters."

That same commitment to presence showed up wherever the sisters ministered. In Nicaragua, "I became very aware of how women were second class citizens," said Sister Caroline. "The machismo of the men really got to me. And so, I asked for money to build a Women's Center... I wanted to build up the women."

A similar impulse guided the work of Sister Elizabeth Pepe in Mexico, where she helped establish a women's cooperative. "It was a sewing cooperative," she said. "I'd help them market their products." She supported often-overlooked women in gaining a measure of financial independence.

The sisters helped create places where women could come together—to learn, talk, and begin imagining different futures for themselves and their children.

The Ultimate Gift

Looking back, the sisters see their years spent internationally as a gift that expanded their understanding of humanity, community, and God.

But not only did the sisters who participated in missionary work feel they had been given a gift by their congregation—they also recognized that the gift continued through what they were able to bring back home. After completing





Sisters Kathleen Swan and Margaret O'Brien display the flag of Antigua and Barbuda, a cherished reminder of the people who welcomed them into their lives. "If you asked someone, 'How are you today?' the answer was always, 'Thank God for life, Sister, thank God,'" recalls Sister Kathleen. Though many lived with very little, their faith, gratitude, and joy left a lasting impression on the sisters who came to serve them.

their experiences abroad, they returned with an expanded worldview that could then be shared with other sisters, opening the congregation's eyes to important issues.

Sister Margaret O'Brien reflected on what it felt like to be the only White person entering a large cathedral packed with people in Antigua, where she served. "It struck me. For the first time, I understood—just a tiny bit—what it feels like to be a minority," she said. "And what it must feel like the other way around, for someone trying to make an entry into White culture." Other sisters returned with similar stories.

These experiences had a major influence on which corporate stands the congregation decided to take as they moved forward. Over time, the sisters took stands on immigration, human trafficking, and racism—all of which became priorities following testimony from the missionary sisters.

"Mission work doesn't end," said Sister Carol Ann. "It just changes form." The lessons sisters carried home reshaped how they lived, what they noticed, and the causes they chose to support—all rooted in a deeper understanding of where their commitment and advocacy could make a difference.

Full Hearts

For many of the sisters, missionary work didn't only shape who they were—it continues to shape who they are still becoming. "It has really broadened me and sustained me in a sense of meaning and religious life," said Sister Carol Ann. "This is still what interests me and gives me clarity as a Franciscan."

Additionally, the relationships formed through missionary work remain close to sisters' hearts. Sister Mary Lonergan often recalls a former student from Zambezi who died years after she had taught him. His words never left her. Every letter he wrote ended with the same heartfelt line: "I still hear your voice ringing in my gut." For the sisters, this sums up how their lives became permanently intertwined with the people they served and the places they lived. Both are still part of their internal fabric, long after returning home.

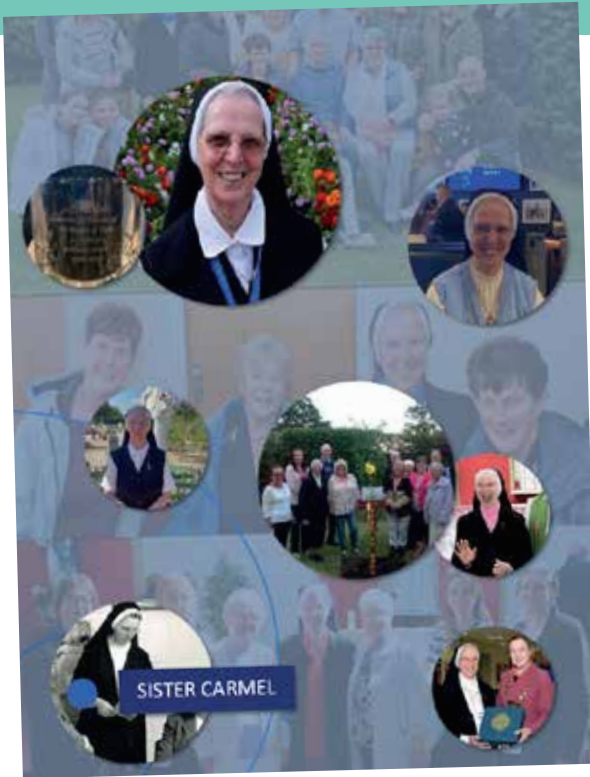
Looking back, none of the sisters would describe their work in terms of sacrifice. Instead, they simply feel moved by how much they were changed, enriched, and blessed by "going where the need was." As Sister Kathleen put it: "I received far more than I ever gave." ■

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

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- **Support missionaries through prayer and encouragement.**
Religious sisters, priests, and lay missionaries serving around the world depend on both spiritual and practical support. Remember them in prayer, learn about their ministries, and encourage those who have answered this call.
- **Practice the ministry of presence.**
Sisters repeatedly discovered that people often needed someone to listen more than someone to solve their problems. Make time to visit a neighbor, call someone who is lonely, or simply be fully present to the person in front of you.
- **Learn from another culture.**
Read a book, attend a cultural event, or get to know someone whose background differs from your own. As sisters have learned, genuine relationships help replace assumptions with understanding.
- **Support organizations that empower local communities.**
Whether through education, healthcare, women's cooperatives, or community development, many organizations work alongside people rather than for them. Consider donating, volunteering, or advocating for ministries that respect the dignity and gifts of those they serve.
- **Ask yourself, "Where is the need?"** The Sisters of St. Francis expanded into missionary work by responding to need wherever it arose. Reflect on where that need exists in your own community—and how you can answer it through compassion, service, and accompaniment.

PEOPLE & PLACES



Sister Mary Carmel Earls was honored with a joyful celebration and a special two-page tribute in the Beacon of Light Counselling Centre Annual Report as she retired after 34 years of ministry in Ireland. The tribute concluded with the Irish blessing, Go gcoinní Dia i mbos A láimhe thú, Sister Carmel—“May God hold you in the palm of His hand”—a fitting expression of the community’s love and gratitude for her faithful service.

IRELAND

After 34 years of ministry in the Parish of Saint Peter the Apostle in North Clondalkin, Ireland, **Sister Carmel Earls** recently moved to the United States, leaving behind a community transformed by her compassion, vision, and joyful spirit. During her years there, she co-founded both the Carline Education Learning Centre for young people with educational challenges and the Beacon of Light Counselling Centre, which has grown into a vital community mental health ministry. When she recently celebrated her 70th Jubilee of religious life, Bishop Paul Roche honored the 90-year-old sister, calling her “a remarkable woman” whose joy, faith, and enthusiasm have “radiated the love and goodness of God to countless people.”

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 its mission real.

On Easter Sunday, Sister Mary Ruth Thomas celebrated her 100th birthday with her sisters, birthday cake, lots of joy, and warm wishes from the wider community, including coverage by local newspapers and television news stations.



KENYA

Sister Julie Mulvihill was recently recognized as the MASK Creative Teacher of the Year for her inspiring work with the children of Nyumbani Children's Home in Kenya. Presented by the Margaret A. Snyder Foundation (MASK), the award honors educators who use creativity and innovation to help young people thrive. Through art, storytelling, and hands-on learning, Sister Julie has created an environment where children are encouraged to discover their talents, build confidence, and grow in hope. Her ministry reflects the Franciscan belief that every child is a gift with unique potential waiting to flourish.



Created by 16-year-old Calvin of the COGRI Art Club in Nairobi, Kenya, led by Sister Julie Mulvihill, this award-winning artwork reflects the creativity nurtured through the program. Sister Julie was recently named MASK Creative Teacher of the Year. See more art entries: bit.ly/4bdyPMY



PENNSYLVANIA

Easter Sunday brought a joyful double celebration as **Sister Mary Ruth Thomas** marked her 100th birthday surrounded by her Franciscan family and friends. A nurse, educator, and healthcare leader, she devoted decades to caring for others, from teaching at St. Agnes Hospital in Philadelphia to leading the pioneering Medi-Call mobile health program that brought free screenings and health education into neighborhoods. Reflecting on her century of life, Sister Mary Ruth offered simple wisdom that has guided her ministry: “Love your brothers and sisters. That’s all you need to do. Just love them.”



PENNSYLVANIA

The parish community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, recently honored **Sister Thomasann Quinn**, by dedicating its newly revitalized prayer garden in recognition of her 40 years of faithful service to the parish school. The Sister Thomasann Prayer Garden stands as a lasting tribute to her prayerful presence, compassionate spirit, and unwavering commitment to generations of students and families. More than a beautiful outdoor space, the garden reflects the deep gratitude of a community whose lives have been enriched by her faithful Franciscan witness and enduring legacy.



PENNSYLVANIA

After more than three decades of accompanying Neumann University students, **Sister Marguerite O'Beirne** has earned a distinction few can claim—she has her own bobblehead! Created as a fundraiser for the university's athletic program, the collectible features Sister Marguerite with her signature cup of tea, honoring the countless ways she has encouraged and supported student athletes over the years.



Read more about Sister Marguerite and her devotion to Neumann University students.



A beloved presence at Neumann University for more than 30 years, Sister Marguerite O'Beirne, poses with her new bobblehead—a playful tribute to the lasting impact she has made on generations of student athletes.



Sister Thomasann (second from right), pictured here with (L-R) Sister Mary Beth Antonelli, Bishop Christopher Cooke, and Father Matt Guckin, continues to inspire a community whose gratitude is now beautifully reflected in a newly revitalized Prayer Garden on the grounds of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Doylestown, Pennsylvania.



PENNSYLVANIA

For decades, **Sister Marie Angela Presenza** has quietly shaped the Franciscan mission through her leadership, wisdom, and generous service. Recently, Neumann University recognized those lifelong contributions by presenting her with its President's Distinguished Alumni Award, honoring graduates whose lives reflect exceptional leadership and dedication. A graduate of Our Lady of Angels College (now Neumann University), Sister Angela has served in education, parish ministry, and leadership, including many years on the Neumann University Board of Trustees. Since 2004, she has also nurtured the spiritual lives of countless people as program coordinator at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Aston. Her enduring commitment continues to inspire the Neumann community and all who know her.



MARYLAND

After more than 20 years of volunteer ministry at UM St. Joseph Medical Center in Towson, Maryland, **Sister Mary Frances Flood** was recently honored at a special Mass and reception celebrating her retirement. As the last Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia serving at the hospital, Sister Mary Frances leaves behind a legacy of compassionate presence and faithful service that has touched patients, staff, and the wider community. The celebration also honored the congregation's longstanding ministry at St. Joseph and included a moving video, narrated by Sister Mary Frances, reflecting on the sisters' enduring impact there.



Watch the full tribute video, narrated by Sister Mary Frances Flood.



In a moving tribute video shown during her retirement celebration, Sister Mary Frances Flood reflects on more than a century of Franciscan presence and compassionate service at UM St. Joseph Medical Center.



Sister Linda shares a moment with longtime friend Tony Volpe. The two attended Our Lady of Consolation School together as children and now continue their ministry in the same parish, where Tony serves as sacristan, prepares the church for each liturgy, arranges the flowers, and coordinates other countless behind-the-scenes details.



Sister Linda rehearses with cantor Sal Raddi before Mass. Elsewhere in the church, parishioners gather to pray the Rosary in Spanish—a cherished tradition of a vibrant community that warmly welcomes Hispanic families new to the neighborhood. Once an Italian national parish, Our Lady of Consolation has become a thriving spiritual home for a growing Hispanic community.

Hope *that* Crosses Borders

✠ “THE GREATEST GIFT OF KNOWING A SECOND LANGUAGE IS THAT IT ALLOWS YOU TO EXPERIENCE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CULTURES, NOT JUST OBSERVE IT.”



A baby Sister Linda in her baptismal gown with her older brother Francis—both answering God’s call in their own time, as he would later become a priest (see page 20).

When asked to hold a retreat at Our Lady of Consolation Parish in Philadelphia, Sister Linda Sariego gave serious thought to her theme. She finally landed on one she felt was central to her life experiences: “The Foolishness of Hope.”

When people hear the word “foolish,” they might automatically think of something negative. To Sister Linda, “foolish” can apply to anything that requires faith and trust. “It’s impossible to have hope without a little bit of foolishness,” she said. “And you can’t trust in the good—despite things not always appearing to be good—without hope.”

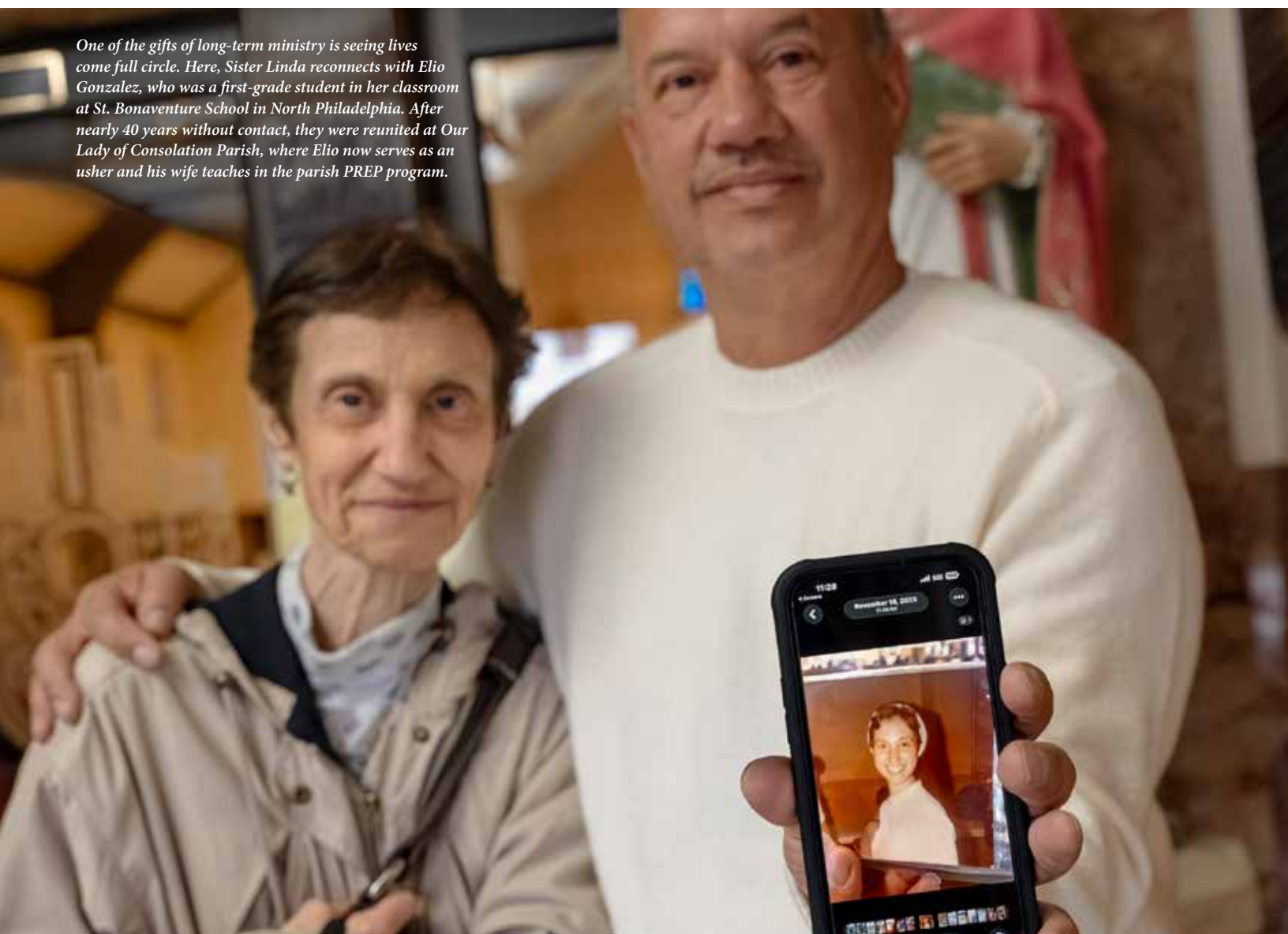
Hope is something that sustained Sister Linda during her own journey to become a Franciscan sister. She knew from an early age that she felt called to religious

life. She entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia at seventeen, but had to leave due to illness during her first year. She returned home and began working at a bank, wondering, “maybe God *wasn’t* calling me,” she said. However, after a year, she felt even more convinced that religious life was right for her. She reapplied and was accepted into initial formation. Now, in 2026, she is celebrating her 50th Jubilee anniversary.

A Calling Within A Calling

Sister Linda grew up in an Italian-Spanish family where it wasn’t uncommon to hear multiple languages spoken in the home. She picked up plenty of foreign words but never became truly fluent in anything other than English. It wasn’t until later in life, when she began to feel a strong call to serve the Hispanic community, that her

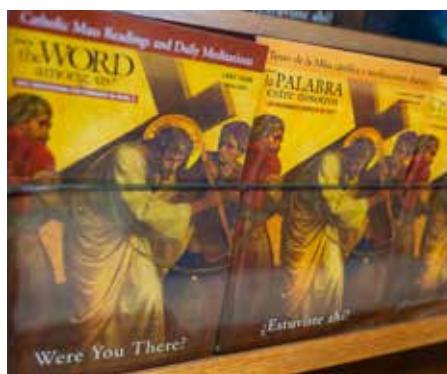
One of the gifts of long-term ministry is seeing lives come full circle. Here, Sister Linda reconnects with Elio Gonzalez, who was a first-grade student in her classroom at St. Bonaventure School in North Philadelphia. After nearly 40 years without contact, they were reunited at Our Lady of Consolation Parish, where Elio now serves as an usher and his wife teaches in the parish PREP program.



Spanish-speaking skills took off. The greatest gift that knowing another language provides, Sister Linda said, is that “It allows you to experience the connection between cultures, not just observe it.”

This is a gift she has used throughout her life. Now a full-time language professor at Neumann University (formerly Our Lady of Angels College, her alma mater), Sister Linda emphasizes this with her students. “In terms of teaching,” she said, “it’s just me. I’m all I can give. But if you like learning the language, then you’ll someday get to talk to someone that you might never have reached otherwise.”

When Sister Linda first became a sister, she had no idea that she was destined for this type of work. She knew, first and foremost, that she wanted to be a teacher. It was when she was sent to teach



At Sister Linda’s parish, most of the materials can be found available in both English and Spanish. For her, translation work is about more than words—it is a way of building bridges. By adapting materials and leading workshops, she helped open the life of the Church to Spanish-speaking communities.

second grade at St. Bonaventure, a school in Philadelphia with a large Hispanic population, that she realized she felt a powerful draw to work with the Hispanic

community. “They helped me grow,” she said. “They have a strong spirituality. A sense of living.” She knew, with the same kind of certainty she’d felt about religious life, that this was where she was called to be.

At the time, the sisters had not yet foreseen how great the need would become for ministry among Spanish-speaking groups. Still, Sister Linda trusted that God had given her this calling for a reason and felt compelled to prepare herself. She sought permission from the congregation to find a program that would help her improve her Spanish and, not wanting to go far from home, enrolled at nearby Chestnut Hill College.

It wasn’t long before that preparation was put to the test. Congregational leadership

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called with a request that would stretch both her resolve and her sense of place. “They needed someone in Puerto Rico for a year,” she recalled. Though she had tried to avoid going far from home, she recognized the call for what it was—and she said yes. “It was like God was laughing, to take someone who had been scared of distance and give her this opportunity... but it was life-changing.”

While there, Sister Linda acted as the parish associate to a pastor who spoke only Spanish, despite the fact her Spanish-speaking skills were still developing. Her role included driving out to numerous *barrios* (neighborhoods) to minister to the members of the parish. It was often challenging but also confirmed for her that this was what she was meant to be doing.

After a brief return to teaching when she came home, Sister Linda pursued a role as a social worker in Philadelphia and found herself working with Hispanic families through the Family Life Office. Without even knowing it, she was building a foundation that would lead her to fulfill a very important duty.

In 1991, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia launched an ambitious nine-year renewal effort to re-energize parish life and respond to the challenges of a changing Church. For Sister Linda, one truth was impossible to overlook: any renewal that ignored the region’s growing Hispanic population would be incomplete. She began leading workshops, translating materials, and quietly building bridges across language and culture. That work did not go unnoticed. Soon, diocesan

leadership invited her to serve as an associate to Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua—a role no woman had held before, on a team composed entirely of men.

Continual Growth

Sister Linda went on to complete service trips in El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. She was able to see firsthand the conditions in which some people lived—and to live with those conditions herself. In one instance, she shared a long, straw mattress with ten other people. In another, she was taken to a river to bathe—only to learn that the river water itself was so polluted that in order to bathe, she would have to use some of her carefully-rationed bottled water. But her predominant memory of these times is simply the kinship she felt with the people she was serving. While she might not have

For Sister Linda, language creates connection, and connection changes lives. Whether serving alongside Neumann University students at a Kids Against Hunger volunteer event, where they prepared vegetarian meal packages for families around the world (right; see page 18 for more information), exploring Madrid during a March 2025 study abroad experience with Dr. Chakars (bottom left), or teaching Spanish at Neumann University (bottom right), Sister Linda encourages her students to see language as a way of connecting with people they might never have encountered otherwise.



During her 2024 service in El Paso, Sister Linda encountered this former gymnasium turned shelter—an experience that was both humbling and transformative, shaped by the strength and faith of those she served. She reminds us that, despite common misconceptions, migrants are simply “people trying to come for a better life.”

been able to fathom these experiences early on in her life as a sister, as she continued to follow her calling, she also continued to grow and become increasingly ready to meet new challenges.

One of her most profound experiences unfolded not overseas, but within her own country. In 2024, Sister Linda volunteered to serve in El Paso, Texas, assisting at the Mexican border. At first, she hesitated. “I didn’t think I was courageous enough,” she admitted. She knew that those arriving in the United States carried immense burdens—many fleeing trauma in their home countries, only to face uncertainty and hostility as they searched for safety and belonging. The work felt overwhelming, perhaps beyond her. Then a different understanding took hold. “I’m not saving these people,” she said. “I’m accompanying them.”

That mindset changed everything. By turning her focus to simply being present with the people she would serve, Sister Linda was able to move forward. She just needed to arrive with hope.

One of the most important things Sister Linda wished she could impart to others was “just what a migrant is.” So many Americans believe migrants come to the U.S. to steal resources and be a drain on the system. In reality, said Sister Linda, “they are just people trying to come for a better life.”

The people she worked with had seen their families torn apart and witnessed horrific atrocities. In one instance, a mother with a small son ran out of money along their journey. While they were given some food each day, it wasn’t nearly enough, and the mother would give her rations to her son.



She herself would go without. Still, they made the difficult journey against seemingly impossible odds.

“They had experienced so much,” Sister Linda said of the people in El Paso. “Sometimes I felt it was like a whole generation with PTSD... I just wanted to know who they were, why they came. I was enriched by knowing them.”

Finding Peace

All of Sister Linda’s work at the border, and throughout her life, led her to a profound realization. There is a popular quote by Orson Welles that “we’re born alone, we live alone, we die alone.” Yet Sister Linda points out that even if “we think we die alone... we don’t live alone. And, while living, we want harmony.” She was able to see, firsthand, that there are so many ways of living, all around the world—but that at the root of it all is connection. Everyone is connected, with far more similarities than differences. “It’s the only way for peace,” she said. “To connect with each other, in even a small way.” Her life’s work has been about forging this connection, and realizing that by connecting, people offer each other something priceless:

Hope, which is anything but foolish. ■

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

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- **Welcome someone new.** Whether it’s a new neighbor, parishioner, coworker, or family in your community, a warm welcome can help someone feel seen, valued, and at home.
- **Learn another language—or a few phrases.** Even a simple greeting in another person’s language communicates respect and opens the door to meaningful relationships.
- **See the person before the issue.** When conversations turn to immigration or other difficult topics, remember Sister Linda’s words: migrants are “just people trying to come for a better life.” Seek to understand individual stories before making assumptions.
- **Support ministries that accompany migrants and refugees.** Volunteer, donate, or advocate for organizations that provide hospitality, legal assistance, education, or other services to people rebuilding their lives.

Sisters Ellen Callaghan, Pat Millen, and Kathy Radich began ministry at St. Mary's Parish in Alaska in 1997. Located near the Bering Sea, the region is remote—accessible only by a two-hour flight from Anchorage.

“THEY WERE LIVING THE GOSPEL BEFORE THEY EVER HAD THE WORDS FOR IT.”

Ministry

Seeds of Hope Blossom in Alaska:



In a region where travel often means small planes, snowmobiles, or four-wheelers, and communities are separated by vast stretches of land and water, the work of ministry looks different—but the call remains the same.

The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have long responded to that call in Alaska's

Yukon-Kuskokwim (Y-K) Region, which spans hundreds of thousands of square miles and is home to small, close-knit Yup'ik communities. What began decades ago as a collaborative effort with the Diocese of Fairbanks and the Jesuits has grown and evolved—shaped by the needs of the people and the realities of life in remote villages.

In the early 1990s, recognizing the challenge of ministering across such a vast area, the diocese established regional leadership and supported the creation of the Native Ministry Training Program (NMTP). The goal was simple but essential: to prepare local leaders to sustain parish life in communities where priests could not always be present.

Sisters of St. Francis were invited into that work soon after. Sister Kathy Radich who began her ministry in the region in 1997, worked alongside others to train catechists, liturgy leaders, and community members—often traveling by small plane from village to village, sometimes in unpredictable weather, offering support, formation, and encouragement.

Today, that early vision has come to fruition in a powerful way.

As of recent years, Sister Kathy's role in the region is Coordinator of Rural Ministries where she oversees personnel, planning,

policies, and ministries of the 24 parishes in the region. She is the only Sister of St. Francis—and the only woman religious—remaining in the Y-K Region. But rather than signaling an ending, her presence reflects a transition long hoped for: local leadership has taken root. The training and formation once led primarily by missionaries is now carried forward by Yup'ik leaders themselves.

The ministry continues through what is now known as the Ukveryamta Tungiinun (UT) Program—“the work of our faith and belief”—led by a team of ministers who work closely with Sister Kathy. Together, they focus on evangelization, leadership development, integrating liturgy with daily life, and using new tools like social media to reach younger generations.

That integration is essential. In Yup'ik communities, faith is not separate from life—it is woven into it.

“The Yup'ik people are deeply Franciscan in the way they live,” Sister Kathy reflects. “In many ways, *they* have taught *me* what it truly means to be Franciscan.”

She points to a way of life rooted in respect—for one another, for the land, and for all of Creation. In their subsistence lifestyle, there is a deep awareness that everything is gift, received with



Oftentimes after services, everyone gathers for a community meal (below). Local favorite dishes are served, including Muktuk (above, right) which is whale skin and fat; and Aquataq (above, left) which is Eskimo ice cream—a dessert made of white fish, seal oil, sugar, and blueberries.





Sister Marian Leaf, who served in the region for many years, reflects on the strength of village life: "Those who come regularly carry the parish and hold the faith for the entire village. When others come at times of crisis, we are there."



In Aniak, greetings of peace are shared in big hugs—a sign of welcome, trust, and connection. It also reflects a deeper need in the region: fostering more women as spiritual companions in the villages, where for now, support for women often comes only when members of the Ukveryaramta Tunginun (UT) team or Sister Kathy are able to visit.

on the Margins

gratitude and shared with care. Respect is taught from a young age and lived out daily. Hospitality is a given, and extended family is central, with communities ensuring that no one is left without care or support.

There is a joy that permeates village life—a spirit expressed in laughter and gentle teasing, a sign of belonging and acceptance. Long before missionaries arrived, the Yup'ik people held a deep awareness of a Creator who provides for all. "The values were already there," Sister Kathy notes. "They were living the Gospel before they ever had the words for it."

At the same time, the region faces real challenges. Following the pandemic, many communities have seen a decline in

participation, and in villages with small populations, even a slight decrease has a significant impact. The departure of the Jesuits—who long served the region—has also brought change, as new priests from around the world step into ministry, often for shorter assignments.

More recently, an unexpected disaster added to the strain. In October, the remnants of a typhoon caused severe damage in two villages, displacing nearly 1,500 residents. In the months since, much of the ministry has focused on meeting immediate needs while helping families navigate the long road of rebuilding.

Yet even in the face of these challenges, the mission remains steady. The focus continues to be on empowerment—forming local

leaders, strengthening communities, and ensuring that the spiritual life of each village does not depend solely on the presence of a priest. There is also a growing desire to foster a truly Yup'ik Church, led by those who understand the culture from within and can carry the faith forward in authentic and enduring ways.

Sister Kathy may be the one present each day, but the ministry is sustained by the wider congregation. Many sisters have served in or visited the region, building relationships and understanding the needs of the communities, while others support the work through prayer and targeted fundraising efforts. Together, they ensure the mission continues.

In Alaska, as in so many places, the work has changed form. But the call to "go where the need is" endures—now lived out in new ways, and in the hands of those who have made it their own. ■

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



◀ *Sister Kathy Radich (center) joins members of the Parish Pastoral Council in St. Marys—Liz Joe, Lulu Beans, Mary Pauken, and Flora Pauken. Their leadership reflects the mission's long-standing goal of empowering local people to guide and nurture the spiritual life of their own communities.*

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Neumann Community Celebrates 60 Years Through Service

The Neumann University community marked the conclusion of its 60th anniversary celebration in a fitting way—by serving others. After challenging students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends to complete 60,000 hours of service during the anniversary year, the university exceeded its goal and gathered on March 13 for Charter Day Mass followed by a large-scale meal-packing event benefiting Kids Against Hunger.

Inside the Mirenda Center Gymnasium, volunteers worked side by side to fill, weigh, seal, and package more than 30,000 nutritious vegetarian meals that will be distributed to children and families in need around the world. Among the volunteers were Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and employees from Our Lady of Angels Convent, who joined the university community in living out the Franciscan values of service and compassion.

The day also included a special moment of recognition as Sister Theresa Firenze, OSF, accepted the Mission Value Participation (MVP) Award on behalf of the Sisters of St. Francis in appreciation of the congregation's longstanding commitment to Neumann University's Franciscan mission.

The celebration was a joyful reminder that service remains at the heart of the Neumann community—and that when people come together in a spirit of generosity, they can make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.



▲ (Clockwise, Left to Right) Sister Pat Smith, COO Florence Smith, Sister Lydia Etter, CFO Clinton Walters, Sister Pat Hutchison, and Sister Regina Dalton are all smiles as they pack nutritious vegetarian meals.

► Sister Kathy Dougherty gave a stirring Homily at a special Charter Day Mass in Our Lady of Angels Chapel.



Raising Franciscan Voices for Justice

This past fall, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia joined hundreds of Franciscans from across the country at the third annual Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the Franciscan Action Network (FAN). Religious sisters, friars, Secular Franciscans, students, and lay leaders gathered to strengthen their advocacy skills and raise a united Franciscan voice for peace and justice.



After a fruitful meeting, the Pennsylvania delegation posed with Trevor McLean, Legislative Counsel for Congresswoman Madeleine Dean.

Representing the congregation were Sisters Patricia Millen and Diane Tomkinson, who joined Neumann University students, campus ministers, and Companions Director Colleen Collins as part of the Pennsylvania delegation. After participating in workshops on nonviolent communication and effective advocacy, the group met with congressional staff to discuss the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and immigration, encouraging support for legislation that upholds the dignity of every person.

Through prayer, dialogue, and advocacy, the conference reminded participants that Franciscan peacemaking is more than an ideal—it is a call to faithful action and hope.

Taking a Stand for Peace

In response to the growing violence and conflict affecting communities around the world, The Sisters of St. Francis recently adopted a new corporate stand on peacemaking, affirming that lasting peace cannot be achieved through violence and echoing Pope Leo XIV's call to reject war. Approved through a congregation-wide referendum, the statement expands the sisters' 2003 corporate stand that opposed the war in Iraq into a broader commitment addressing the realities of violence and conflict throughout the world today.

Rooted in the Gospel nonviolence of Jesus Christ and inspired by the witness of St. Francis of Assisi, the declaration rejects military

actions that violate the sovereignty of nations and the God-given dignity of every person. It also opposes the use of nuclear and chemical weapons, recognizing the devastating impact they have on humanity and all of Creation.

"As Franciscans, we look to St. Francis, who crossed enemy lines to encounter Sultan Malik al-Kamil during the Fifth Crusade," said Sister Kathleen McCabe. "His example reminds us that dialogue, humility, and love are more powerful than violence."

The sisters also acknowledge the profound human and environmental cost of war, mourning the suffering of civilians and military personnel alike, the displacement of families, and the destruction of communities and ecosystems.

More than a statement of belief, the corporate stand is a call to action, reaffirming the sisters' conviction that peacemaking is not passive, but an active expression of the Gospel—one that invites all people to choose reconciliation, compassion, and hope over violence and division.



In Memoriam

Sister Elaine Thaden
(formerly Sister Joseph Maureen)
May 7, 2026

Sister Rose Vattilana
(formerly Sister Andrew Mary)
April 13, 2026

Sister Noelita Marie Rodriguez
March 6, 2026

Sister Jean Wickenheiser
(formerly Sister James Marita)
February 12, 2026

Sister Nora Nash
(formerly Sister Therese Mary)
January 30, 2026

Sister Regina McCloskey
(formerly Sister Mary Norbert)
January 22, 2026

Sister Moira Frawley
December 22, 2025

Sister Maureen Stout
(formerly Sister Richard Cecilia)
October 13, 2025

Sister Lynn Patrice Lavin
September 16, 2025

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SISTER DOLORES LORETTA HERBECK
SISTER PATRICIA ANNE MOORE
SISTER DOLORES MARIE SAMBUCCO
SISTER KATHLEEN SHADELL
SISTER THERESA ULSHAFFER

50 years
Professed 1976

GOLDEN JUBILARIAN

SISTER ELIZABETH ANNE DEWAELE
SISTER LYDIA ETTER
SISTER THERESA MARIE FIRENZE
SISTER ANNE THERESA HALL
SISTER KAREN ROSE POURBY
SISTER KATHLEEN MARY RADICH
SISTER LINDA MARIE SARIEGO

25 years
Professed 2001

SILVER JUBILARIAN

SISTER MARGARET GRACE GANNON
SISTER THERESA MARIE LAMKIN

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Focus

“THROUGH HIS LONG-STANDING RELATIONSHIP WITH US, HIS KINDNESS, AND HIS WONDERFUL SENSE OF HUMOR, HE HAS TRULY BECOME LIKE A BROTHER TO US ALL.”

— SISTER MARY FARRELL, OSF

► *Fr. Francis with his sister, Sister Linda— affectionately known to each other as “yfb” (your favorite brother) and “yfs” (your favorite sister)... a distinction safely secured in a family of two.*



FR. FRANCIS SARIEGO, OFM CAP.

Fr. Francis, Father Sariego, Francis, Butch—he answers to many names, depending on who is calling. But at Assisi House, one thing is certain: his presence is a steady and familiar part of daily life.

For more than two decades, Father Francis Sariego, OFM Cap., has served as chaplain to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia at Assisi House. Each day, he celebrates the Eucharist, gathering the sisters in prayer, and accompanies them through the rhythms of community life—from joyful jubilees to the quiet reverence of funeral liturgies as sisters embrace Sister Death. In recent months, he has also extended his ministry to the congregation's motherhouse, continuing a longstanding relationship with the congregation.

That relationship began early—and runs deep. Raised in the Tacony neighborhood of Philadelphia, Francis grew up just a few blocks from Our Lady of Consolation Parish, where the Sisters of St. Francis served. As a young altar server—and often the sisters’ “errand boy”—he became part of their daily lives. Even now, he recalls those early experiences with affection, often sharing stories of the sisters who shaped his childhood. That connection is also personal: his sister, Sister Linda, is a member of the congregation.

Born into a culturally rich family, Francis and Linda were deeply influenced by their Italian heritage and the example of their parents, Gilda and Frank, whose generosity and faith helped nurture their vocations. Francis joined an Italian religious community at 17, completed his seminary studies in Rome, and ministered in the U.S. and Canada. Feeling called to a new path, he later transferred to the Capuchins.

At Assisi House, that spirit is evident in both word and action. His homilies weave together Scripture, Franciscan insight, and everyday experience—often with a touch of humor. He is known for his beautiful singing voice, his quick wit, and his welcoming presence. Whether presiding at liturgy, greeting sisters in the hallway, or preparing a meal—even on short notice for a small crowd—he brings warmth and generosity to all he does.

Fr. Francis connects easily with others, offering hospitality in English, Spanish, or Italian. Even with a full schedule, he continues to serve his home parish, celebrating Spanish and Latin Masses each weekend at Our Lady of Consolation in Tacony. In quieter moments, he enjoys listening to Spanish and Italian music or settling in with an audiobook.

Unfailingly dependable, Father Francis is known for the simple message he shares each day as he arrives and departs: “Peace, love, and joy.” He is a beloved presence among the sisters, accompanying them with faith, gratitude, and a lifelong connection that has come full circle.

◀ *Fr. Francis enjoys a moment before daily Mass with Sister Mary Farrell and his sister, Sister Linda. For decades, he has been a steady presence among the sisters—there for daily moments, both big and small, from jubilees to holidays and everything in between.*



▲ *Fr. Francis with his sister Linda and his parents on his ordination day in Italy. Born to an Italian mother from Calabria and a father of Spanish heritage, and raised with his maternal grandparents, his early life was deeply rooted in Italian culture.*





Space to Pause

On opposite sides of the country, two places quietly offer the same invitation: come, slow down, and breathe.

Our Franciscan Spiritual Centers—one in Aston, Pennsylvania, and the other in Marylhurst, Oregon—have long been places where people step away from the noise of daily life and reconnect with something deeper. While each center has its own rhythm and setting, both share a common purpose rooted in the Franciscan tradition: creating space for reflection, renewal, and meaningful encounter.

In Aston, that invitation takes shape in both quiet moments and shared experiences. The center envisions itself as a contemplative place of simple beauty that honors creation and reflects the Franciscan values of hospitality, mutuality, and simplicity.

“PEOPLE ARE SO USED TO BEING PLUGGED IN ALL THE TIME. PART OF WHAT WE OFFER IS THE CHANCE TO UNPLUG—TO STEP AWAY FROM THE CONSTANT NOISE—AND IN THAT QUIET, BEGIN TO NOTICE A SENSE OF RENEWAL THEY MAY NOT EVEN REALIZE THEY’RE LONGING FOR.”

That vision comes to life through programs that invite people to reflect and grow. Some come to notice the sacred in everyday life; others to reconnect with their bodies and the natural world. Whether through quiet prayer, guided retreats, gentle movement like yoga, or small groups gathered in conversation, each offering encourages participants to slow down, pay attention, and recognize the spirituality already present in daily life.

Julie Prey, the Aston center’s director, sees all of it as part of a larger rhythm. “People are so used to being plugged in all the time,” she said. “Part of what we offer here is the chance to unplug—to step



Although they lead Franciscan Spiritual Centers nearly 3,000 miles apart, Julie Prey (above right, standing on the ramp) and Christine Naylor share the same mission of creating spaces where people can pause, reflect, and grow. During Christine’s visit to Aston, they walked the Center’s labyrinth and visited one of the Hermitages, two of the many experiences offered by each Center that supports reflection, renewal, and spiritual growth.

away from the constant noise—and in that quiet, begin to notice a sense of renewal they may not even realize they’re longing for.”

That same spirit carries across the country to Oregon, where the story begins with the Sisters of St. Francis journeying westward in 1885, eventually becoming known locally as the “Palatine Hill Franciscans.” Today, the Center carries that legacy forward on the former campus of Marylhurst University.

There, individuals and groups gather for spiritual direction, retreats, and programs designed to deepen connection and encourage growth. Christine Naylor, who directs the Oregon center, describes that work in deeply human terms. “We often say that God is a humble God,” she reflected, “one who meets us where we are—even in suffering. Part of this work is helping people recognize that they are not alone in those moments—that God is already there, walking with them.”

Across both locations, there is a common hope—to foster communities where the Franciscan spirit can take root and thrive. One retreat at the Aston Center captures that spirit with a simple question: *Where is God in all this?* In a world filled with responsibilities, distractions, and constant movement, it is a question many carry but rarely pause long enough to explore.

For both centers, the invitation remains the same: step away, even briefly, and discover what has been there all along.

Donor Spotlight

► Pat DiNicola and her husband, Art, enjoy life's simple pleasures together—walks, music, good books, and time with family and friends.



PAT DINICOLA

"PAT HAS BEEN A FAITHFUL COMPANION TO ALL SHE ENCOUNTERS. SHE SEES THE FACE OF CHRIST IN OTHERS SO CLEARLY—AND REFLECTS THAT SAME PRESENCE BACK TO THOSE AROUND HER."

— SISTER MAGGIE GANNON, OSF



▲ A perfect night for Pat—combining a few of her favorite things: time at the ballpark cheering on the Phillies and being with some of her favorite people. Pictured (left to right): Bishop Timothy Senior, Bishop of the Diocese of Harrisburg and Pat's sister-in-law's brother; Myra DiNicola; Pat; and her husband, Art.

Over the years, Pat DiNicola has come to know the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia not as a single group, but as a tapestry of individuals—each with her own story, gifts, and way of living the Franciscan spirit. It is that variety, and the relationships it has made possible, that has brought Pat her greatest joy.

Her connection to the sisters began as a student at Our Lady of Angels College (now Neumann University), where she first encountered their thoughtful approach to learning and life. During a welcome message, President Sister Madonna Marie Cunningham spoke about the importance of critical thinking—an insight that stayed with her long after her college years. "It was an impactful lesson," Pat shared. "This was my first encounter with the wisdom of the sisters."

That foundation carried into her more than 30 years as a teacher at St. Francis deSales School in Lenni, Pennsylvania, where the Franciscan presence was part of daily life. "Sister Mary Farrell, who was my principal for 20 years, was a daily inspiration of the joy that Franciscan values can bring," Pat shared. In a close-knit community, Pat worked alongside the sisters, helping to educate students academically, socially, and spiritually. Over time, she taught generations of families—students whose parents, and even grandparents, had once sat in the same classrooms.

Along the way, it was often the simple lessons that stayed with her most. Fellow teacher Sister Stephanie Unger once encouraged her to always "give the other person the better share"—a piece of wisdom Pat carried into both her classroom and her daily life. And her relationships with the sisters have continued well beyond the classroom. One began with an invitation to tea at Assisi House, where Pat and her mother met Sister Frances Ann Harper. What started as a visit grew into a meaningful friendship, marked by shared stories, laughter, and a love of crafts.

Across classrooms, community spaces, and friendships, Pat has come to treasure these relationships. Today, she serves on the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation Board of Trustees, a role she once hesitated to accept. "It has been an enriching experience," she shared. And in those connections, she has found not only friendship, but a lasting appreciation for the many ways the Franciscan spirit is lived each day.



◀ Pat, her mother, Ann O'Grady (seated, center rear), and their friend Mary Ford (seated, center front) are among the regulars at the crochet group at ACCESS in Chester. The gathering offers crafters a welcoming place to stitch, talk, laugh, and enjoy one another's company. Standing in the center is Sister Cathy McGowan, SSJ, executive director of ACCESS, with Sister Maggie Gannon at left, whose hospitality helps make the group feel like home.

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A multi-day celebration was enjoyed by our Jubilarians. Pictured: (Standing, back row, left to right) Sister Maggie Gannon; Sister Elizabeth DeWaele; Sister Theresa Firenze; Sister Karen Pourby; Sister Lydia Etter; Sister Linda Sariego; Sister Kathleen Radich; and Sister Theresa Lamkin. (Standing, middle row) Sister Anne Therese Hall; Sister Gertrude Carocci; Sister Patricia Anne Moore; Sister Dolores Sambuco. (Front row) Sister Dolores Herbeck; Sister Theresa Ulshafer; Sister Mary Anne Gallagher; and Sister Kathleen Shadell.

A Legacy of Faithful Service

Recently, we joyfully celebrated 16 Jubilarians marking 25, 50, and 70 years of vowed religious life. Together, these extraordinary women represent 890 years of faithful service, a remarkable witness to lives dedicated to God and to the Gospel.

Their ministries have reached across 27 dioceses in 13 states, Puerto Rico, and beyond, touching countless lives through education, healthcare, parish ministry, social justice, spiritual direction, administration, and compassionate outreach to people on the margins.

Gathering with companions and sisters, the Jubilarians were celebrated with a special Mass of thanksgiving, giving thanks not only for years of service, but for the relationships, faith, and countless moments of grace that have shaped their vocations. Their witness continues to inspire new generations to serve with courage, compassion, and hope. *See page 19 for the full list of our Jubilarians.*



▲ When the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia first answered the call to mission work abroad in September 1976, they couldn't have imagined how profoundly the experience would shape their hearts—or how the perspectives they brought home would influence the congregation's ministries and corporate commitments for years to come. Pictured here in Mukandadunka, Zambezi, in 1979 are (left to right) Sisters Anne Mancini, Nora McCarthy, Mary Lonergan, and Marie Joseph Kerr, whose experiences echoed those of many sisters who served across the globe. Inside, our sisters reflect on the people, places, and encounters that forever transformed their lives. See full article on page 4.

Join us for a day of golf, fellowship, and friendly competition while supporting the mission and ministries of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia!



Visit our website for full details

Monday, September 28, 2026
Penn Oaks Golf Club
West Chester, PA