

# The Whitehall FRANCISCAN

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The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God



“ALL OF US CAN COOPERATE AS INSTRUMENTS OF GOD FOR THE CARE OF CREATION, EACH ACCORDING TO HIS OR HER OWN CULTURE, EXPERIENCE, INVOLVEMENTS, AND TALENTS.”

~ POPE FRANCIS, *LAUDATO SI*

# Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, commit ourselves to the evangelical life of continuous conversion in the tradition of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis according to the example of our founding Sisters.

Called together by a good and provident God, we cultivate an intimacy with God that is nourished by Sacred Scripture, by the Eucharist, by our gift of self to others and in reverence for all creation.

Faithful to our Charism, we go to those to whom Providence sends us and conscious of our mission in the Church, we assume the commitment of evangelization and liberation, especially with the poor and oppressed. We witness to God's overflowing love by our lives and service, promoting justice, peace and reconciliation among all.

In simplicity and joy, we are signs of hope, for we believe that Jesus Christ is with us in the power of His Resurrection.

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# Embracing Vocations

**"Each (vocation) is lovely in itself, but only when they are put together do they form a picture. Each of us shines like a star in the heart of God and in the firmament of the universe." ~ Pope Francis (2022)**

While each individual's vocation is unique, in the Catholic Church there are four general categories: marriage, single life, priesthood, and religious life. Our vocations as Catholic Sisters are shaped by our Franciscan spirituality. Yet, as highlighted in the pages of this issue of the Whitehall Franciscan, we are blessed by many whose Franciscan vocations are complementary to our own - ordained and religious, married and single. Confidently, joyfully, we go forward together to create a more Franciscan world as we work for peace and justice and care for our common home and our common heart.

In December 2022, our General Leadership announced that 2023 would be a Year of Vocations for our Congregation. Throughout this year, we are called to celebrate and deepen our own



*As a pastoral associate, Sister Althea Anne Spencer witnesses to her religious vocation by serving Our Lady of Hope Parish in Pittsburgh. She is pictured above volunteering at the parish festival. Outside of parish ministry, she serves as a spiritual director for those seeking to deepen their relationship with God.*



*Our Community in Brazil engages in advertising to encourage religious vocations.*

religious vocation as Franciscans, as well as promote vocations wherever we serve. Our Vocation Animation Team in Brazil has created a schedule of vocation encounters with the youth in areas where we serve in Brazil. In the United States, our Sisters continue to pray for and encourage religious vocations. Sisters throughout our Congregation will hold monthly retreats and faith-sharing services on various themes related to our Franciscan vocations. Our Third Order Regular Rule states, "Following Jesus Christ in the example of Blessed Francis, let them recognize that they are called to make greater efforts in their observance of the precepts and counsels of Our Lord Jesus Christ." This Vocation Year reminds us of this call.

## Sister Adelma Makes Perpetual Vows



Provisionally, during our Congregation's Year of Vocations, Sister M. Adelma de Sá Gomes professed her perpetual vows on February 4 at Our Lady of Carmel Parish in Vila Alpina where she served in pastoral ministry. Sister Adelma has been in formation with us for 10 years serving in various missions in Brazil. Presently, she serves our Recanto Paz e Bem Community by caring for our elderly Sisters.

Blessings, Sister Adelma, as you commit to your vocation as a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God!

# Caring for the Earth. Caring for You.

Embracing the theme “Caring for the Earth. Caring for You,” Catholic Sisters Week 2023 focused on efforts of Sisters to care for our common home. Worldwide, we use an estimated 17,000 plastic bottles a minute - and 500 billion plastic bags a year (EarthDay.org). Shockingly, only 5% of all plastic is recycled, according to a 2022 report from Greenpeace. More than recycling is needed to keep plastic out of landfills, oceans and our bodies. Catholic Sisters Week, held March 8-12, brought attention to the growing plastic pollution and possible solutions, including encouraging everyone to “refuse to use” disposable water bottles and other one-time use plastics.

As Franciscans we are especially committed to care for our common home and, in doing so, better care for each other. Three of our schools in São Paulo, Brazil have installed solar panels which provide them with clean renewable energy. Emphasizing Franciscan values, our schools also teach students how to be good stewards of the Earth. In the United States, we advocate for environmental issues and engage in socially responsible investing that excludes companies that harm the earth.



*Pius XII School is a green oasis in urban São Paulo. Their ecological sustainability efforts include solar panels, an eco-trail for students and forest and greenspace preservation.*



*Sister Elise Mora recycles what she can at Paramount Senior Living. She will often collect abandoned cups, plates and utensils before they are thrown away so that can be recycled or reused.*

Our Sisters’ efforts also include recycling, using reusable water bottles and shopping bags, conserving energy by turning off lights and appliances, and buying food locally at farmers markets when possible. Recently, our Sisters in the United States collectively made the switch to laundry detergent sheets that reduce the amount of plastic in landfills and help conserve water.

One of our most outspoken Sisters about environmental issues, Sister Elise Mora has embraced opportunities to care for the Earth throughout her 68 years of ministry. In the early 2000s, while serving in leadership, she initiated our employee environmental committee at the Pittsburgh Motherhouse expanding our efforts to include recycling, energy-efficient lighting, and waste reduction. Today, at the age of 86, Sister Elise continues to live by example and encourages her neighbors at Paramount Senior Living to recycle and conserve resources.

When it comes to plastic pollution and many other issues harming our planet, we all must be part of the solution. Each one of us can do something to care for the Earth – our common home. God trusted us with the care of all creation. Let us trust that God will guide us through any challenges we face.

## Ways to Care for Our Common Home

- Recycle and learn local rules as to which items can be recycled and how.
- Use reusable water bottles, thermoses, shopping bags, straws, utensils, plates, take-out containers and other common disposable items. If there is no reusable substitute, choose biodegradable versions.
- Switch to energy efficient light bulbs and appliances, and turn off/unplug when not in use.
- Take showers instead of baths. Wash laundry with cold water, and air-dry clothes and dishes when possible.
- Plant trees and native plants. Practice eco-friendly gardening/lawn care.
- Choose sustainable and locally grown food when possible.
- Eat less meat – especially beef. Meal prep and compost to reduce waste.
- Shop second-hand stores, thrift shops, garage sales and other used items.
- Carpool, use public transportation, bike or walk when possible.

### More Ideas and Information

World Environment Day (United Nations)  
[worldenvironmentday.global](http://worldenvironmentday.global)

Earth Day  
[earthday.org](http://earthday.org)

National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration  
[oceanservice.noaa.gov/ocean/earthday.html](http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/ocean/earthday.html)

# Celebrating Our 2023 Jubilarians!

## *60<sup>th</sup> Jubilee*

### **Sister J. Lora Dambroski, OSF**



A native of New Kensington, PA, Sister J. Lora Dambroski entered the community after graduation from New Kensington High School. She served as an educator in schools where our Sisters served including St. Anthony in Detroit, MI, and St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin, St. Valentine, James Lavelle, Holy Trinity, and St. Francis Academy in the Pittsburgh area. In 1978 she moved to Adamstown, MD to serve as Associate Director of the Christian Brothers Retreat Center. Sister J. Lora moved back to Pittsburgh in 1983 to serve as Formation Director and was elected to serve in leadership as General Councilor, then Assistant General Minister. In the early 1990s, Sister J. Lora served as construction coordinator for the massive undertaking of renovating the Pittsburgh campus including the Motherhouse, Franciscan Child Day Care Center in the Academy building, and construction of townhouses for the Sisters. She then served as retreat and program director at the Franciscan Spirit and Life Center before being elected USA Provincial Minister in 2000. During this time, she was also elected to serve in the Presidency of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). From 2009 to 2012, Sister J. Lora ministered as

a spiritual director and retreat facilitator then was elected to leadership as General Councilor until 2017. After her term in leadership, she returned to spiritual direction. Sister Lora earned her B.S. and M.S. degrees at Duquesne University, as well as a Master of Christian Spirituality at Creighton University

## *70<sup>th</sup> Jubilee*

### **Sister M. Conceição Rodrigues, OSF**

### **Sister Suzana Kirkila, OSF**



Born in Piranguçu, Minas Gerais, Sister Maria Conceição Rodrigues joined the Congregation in July 1952. Three of her sisters are also members of our Congregation: Sisters M. Maristela, M. Mercedes, and M. Marisa. Sister M. Conceição has a degree in Literature and Theology, with specializations and postgraduate degrees in Education, Psychology, Religious

Education, and English. Her ministries focused on education and she served as a teacher and director at Pius XII, Our Lady of Carmel and St. Michael the Archangel Schools. She also served as Provincial librarian and translator for the General Leadership. Sister M. Conceição's other ministries include teaching catechism classes at the Nossa Senhora do Carmo Parish in Vila Alpina, teaching English and Religious Education at Our Lady of Carmel. In 1997, she participated in the Pilgrimage to Assisi. Currently, Sister M. Conceição resides in Recanto Paz e Bem engaged in the ministry of presence and prayer.



Sister Suzana Kirkila entered the Congregation in July 1952 and earned a degree in education with additional studies in pastoral care and catechesis. Sister Suzana's education ministry included teaching at Pius XII School. For many years she served rural communities in Cipó, São Paulo through parish and pastoral ministry, which included catechetical

preparation, liturgical services, visits to the sick, youth ministry, and enrichment workshops for women. She also provided pastoral services to persons experiencing poverty who set up camps on vacant government agricultural land as part of the landless farm workers movement seeking agrarian reform in Brazil, including giving unused or unclaimed land to persons who experience unjust barriers to land ownership. Sister Suzana resides in Recanto Paz e Bem, where she is engaged in the ministry of presence and prayer, interceding for our missions and persons experiencing poverty, homelessness, and other hardships.

# 65<sup>th</sup> Jubilee

## Sister Flávia Quintanilha , OSF



Sister Maria Flávia Quintanilha was born in Cruzeiro, São Paulo and joined the Congregation in March 1958. Sister Flavia's education prepared her to serve as a teacher and nursing assistant, with specializations in elementary education and catechism. She served at Pius XII, Our Lady of Carmel and St. Michael the Archangel Schools in São Paulo, St. Clare and St. Francis of Assisi Social Center in Vila Alpina, São Paulo, and the Dr. Eugênio Gomes de Carvalho Maternity Hospital in Pedro Leopoldo, Minas Gerais. Her ministries included nursing, coordinating uniform and handicraft sales, chapel and pastoral care for employees, catechesis and various administrative duties in personnel and finance. Currently, Sister M. Flávia resides in Recanto Paz e Bem, in São Paulo engaged in the ministry of presence and prayer.

# 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee

## Sister M. Isabel Rosa, OSF



Sister Maria Isabel Rosa, was born in Matozinhos, Minas Gerais and first encountered our Sisters when her family moved to Pedro Leopoldo, where our Sisters operated the Dr. Eugênio Gomes de Carvalho Maternity Hospital. She joined the Congregation in July 1973. Sister Maria Isabel earned a degree to become a nursing assistant and technician,

with a focus on Alzheimer's care and the elderly. She also completed courses in human and community development and Franciscan and catechetical studies. She served in healthcare ministries in various hospitals including Dr. Eugênio Gomes de Carvalho Maternity Hospital in Pedro Leopoldo, as well as in ministries of the Diocese of Penedo, Alagoas. She also served at Bom Pastor Hospital in Guajará-Mirim, Rondônia where she engaged in healthcare and pastoral ministries. In Nossa Senhora d'Ajuda Parish in Itinga, she served in childcare ministry, catechesis, visiting the sick, and other pastoral ministries to persons experiencing hunger and poverty. Sister Maria Isabel Rosa presently serves in Vila Zelina, São Paulo at St. Michael the Archangel School.

## Sister Maria do Carmo Pereira, OSF



Providentially, Sister Maria do Carmo Pereira grew up in Pedro Leopoldo where our Sisters served and inspired her to join our Congregation in August 1973. Sister's education prepared her to serve in education ministry, specializing in Early Childhood Education, school management, and guidance counseling with additional studies in school administration

and psychology. Sister Maria do Carmo served at Pius XII, Our Lady of Carmel, and St. Michael the Archangel Schools in São Paulo and St. Francis of Assisi in Barbacena, Minas Gerais. She also served as Provincial Councilor, in addition to engaging in pastoral ministries in São Paulo, IV Centenário (Paraná), Água Branca (Piauí), and Barbacena (Minas Gerais). In Paraná, she served as director of the child daycare center serving the municipality and local parish. Currently, Sister Maria do Carmo lives and serves at the Recanto Paz e Bem Community in São Paulo.

# The Heart of a Franciscan

## A Glimpse Into the Life of Associate Mary Stojak

Franciscans are everywhere! Some, like our Sisters, are called to vowed religious life. Others are called to embrace a Franciscan way of life in different vocations. Our Associate Program in the United States welcomes laypersons deeply committed to our Franciscan charism who wish to make a non-vowed commitment to the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God. Like our Sisters, our Associates serve wherever Providence has called them to be present.

"I always felt a part of the Sisters," said Mary Stojak, our longest serving Associate who lives in Montgomery, AL.

An Associate since the program was founded 34 years ago, Mary's journey with our Congregation began decades earlier, shortly after she was born on the 4th of July in Philadelphia, PA. Mary was taught by our Sisters at St. George parish school. She always felt all our Sisters were family, and these relationships deepened during visits to our Pittsburgh motherhouse with her grandmother to visit her aunt, Sister Mary Jaskel.

With a solid foundation of Franciscan values from our Sisters, Mary contemplated vowed religious life, even attending St. Francis Academy for a short time. God had other plans that would still call Mary to a life of service inspired by St. Francis of Assisi and would take her beyond the borders of Pennsylvania.

In 1967, Mary married US Air Force Lt. Anthony Stojak and dutifully served as a military spouse through his service in the Vietnam War and numerous assignments across the United States and world, including Greece and Germany. All while raising 4 children and remaining very active in the parishes where they were stationed. The Stojak family eventually settled in Montgomery, AL and grew to include 5 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

Throughout the years, Mary served her parish in various capacities including secretary, bookkeeper, Eucharistic minister, historian, librarian and youth minister. She also served on the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women and led efforts to collect and deliver food, clothing and necessities to persons in need.

"We have a lot of poor people here (Alabama)," said Mary recalling when she assisted a family who reached out to the Parish in need of beds. When beds were donated and delivered, it was discovered that the family - a single mother and child with a disability- were living in an empty house and needed much more.

"We filled up that whole house," said Mary recalling immediate efforts to get donations of furniture, clothes and other necessities, as well as help the family sign up for much needed assistance and services. The parish was even able to provide Christmas gifts and decorations for the family.

In addition to her parish service and personal acts of charity, Mary has served on numerous boards, committees, and leadership positions serving persons experiencing poverty and hunger, women, children, and military spouses and families.

"No matter what I've done, I've gotten 100% from volunteers and persons involved," said Mary. "God always came through."



Mary embraced challenges as opportunities to learn, grow in her faith and serve others. When she began working on the Respect Life Committee, she said that she knew little about pro-life issues at first.

"In the beginning, I asked God for help," she said. "And, I learned an awful lot. I'm still learning."

Mary's work with Respect Life and the pro-life movement included writing a grant for the Counseling Outreach for Pregnancy Emergency (COPE) Center in Montgomery, which continues to offer alternatives to abortion and support services. In 2006, Pope Benedict XVI awarded Mary the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Cross in recognition of her dedication to the pro-life movement.

When our Congregation began the Associate Program in 1989, Mary joyfully accepted the invitation to join and began a deep study of the materials provided by the Community. Throughout the years she has also taken seminars and classes to support her vocation and spiritual growth.

"Since I live at a distance, Sister Barbara (Zilch) thought one of my ministries could be sending birthday or feast day cards to the sisters," said Mary, adding that she had been writing to several Sisters on a regular basis and was blessed to expand her efforts. "It gives me great joy to put a smile on the Sisters faces when they receive the card. I always feel that a card is not enough and so I include a letter or cartoon, prayer card, etc."

In recent years, Mary has taken a step back from many of the boards, committees and positions that have been part of her life for decades.

"I was supposed to quit when I was 65. Now, I'm almost 80," said Mary adding that it is now time for a new generation to take over. "I'm now the advisor."

In her retirement, Mary cares for her great-grandchildren when they do not have school – or whenever she is needed. She also continues to serve on the Alabama State Association of Parliamentarians, Retired Officers' Wives' Club of Maxwell Air Force Base, and Jarrow Club for Seniors.

Mary also renewed her commitment to serve as an Associate of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God.

"There is always something you can do. Even at a distance, I can do," said Mary. "We have a wonderful example to follow, that of St. Francis. His calling is our calling and with God's help we can do it! It isn't difficult. You have the example and the support of the Sisters along with your fellow Associates. That is your support system along with prayer and God's help."

# Thank you, Bud!

At the end of 2022, Edwin “Bud” Ellis, Jr. retired from the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God Investment Committee, culminating more than 40 years as a trusted advisor and friend to our Congregation. Our first lay financial advisor, Bud has successfully guided our short and long-term financial planning that has enabled us to continue our Franciscan mission, as well as care for our Sisters throughout their earthly lives. We are especially grateful for his steady presence and advice during challenging moments, which helped empower our Congregation to best discern how God was calling us to go forward with resources available.

Our investment committee was Bud’s last remaining professional commitment and he chose a Providential moment to retire. Presently, we are blessed by service of several dedicated and experienced professionals on the committee. Learning from Bud, each has proven they are capable of continuing to expertly guide our Congregation to be good stewards of our assets and maximize the impact of our generous benefactors through strategies like socially responsible investing.

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God offer our deepest gratitude to Bud for his many years of service to our Sisters and those we serve. We pray that Bud’s days are filled with peace and joy as he devotes his time and energy to his greatest loves – his wife Sherry, children and grandchildren.



*Bud and Sherry Ellis joined us for our Centennial Gala in 2022. Bud was honored with the San Damiano Award at the 2016 Autumn Gala for his dedicated friendship and support of our Franciscan mission.*

# Blessed by our Franciscan Volunteers



*Our Christmas card mailing volunteers included Sisters Ann Marie Lostoski, Mary Ann Lostoski, Associate Johannah Jones, Sister J. Lora Dambroski, Associates Janet Maddock, Margo Fittipaldo and Sister Janice Campbell.*

*Over 2,000 Gala invitations were stuffed and mailed by our dedicated helpers who included our Administrative Assistant Mimi DiGregory and Associates Michaele Fisher and Mary Ann Garfold.*

*Note: Not pictured here are our Auxiliary members who volunteered for mailings and catered our 100th anniversary luncheon.*



*SFA Alumnae Wendy Hayes, Maria Ammon and Linda Cline sold raffle tickets at the Centennial Gala. With more than three decades of Tulip Luncheon experience, our St. Francis Academy Alumnae volunteers do much of the work for the Gala raffles, including donating prizes, wrapping baskets and coordinating drawings.*

# Ending Human Trafficking

**“No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.”**

~ United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Slavery is one of the oldest injustices in the world that flourishes in societies that value material wealth over human life and dignity. Centuries of struggle has made it illegal in most of the world. Yet, it persists with an estimated 25 million enslaved people worldwide – including the United States. God is calling us to continue to fight against modern-day slavery.

## What is Human Trafficking

An egregious violation of human rights and dignity, human trafficking uses force, fraud, or coercion to force persons into involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. Control is often established through violence, psychological abuse, exploitation of romantic or family relationships, and false promises that include well-paying jobs, education, citizenship, and debt forgiveness.

Generating an estimated \$150 billion a year, human trafficking is so woven into our society that most of us don't realize when we are using products and services provided by the labor enslaved persons in industries such as manufacturing, farming, mining, textile production, electronics, fishing and domestic services. According to Polaris, which monitors human trafficking, experts believe that there are more situations of labor trafficking than we know about, but sex trafficking is much more recognizable and reported more often.

Anyone can be a victim of trafficking, but economically and socially marginalized and under-served persons are especially vulnerable. According to the US Department of Homeland Security, risk for exploitation is increased by psychological or emotional vulnerability, economic hardship, lack of a social safety net, political instability and environmental disasters – natural and human-assisted.

Human trafficking does not always involve moving persons across borders, but according to US Dept. of Homeland

Security, traffickers use immigration laws and language barriers as a means to control persons whom they are exploiting. Most persons being trafficked stay quiet and do not reach out for help because of fear of their traffickers. But, they also fear authorities, especially in situations where they have been forced into illegal acts or violated immigration laws. Sadly, in these cases, the victims are prosecuted more than the traffickers

In recent years, there have been great strides in getting countries to criminalize human trafficking and better prosecute traffickers. But, this alone is not enough to curtail human trafficking. According to Polaris analysis of human trafficking data from during the Covid-19 pandemic, “trafficking is a dynamic crime that will morph to fit the circumstances. That makes it even more difficult to reduce trafficking through law enforcement alone.” (“*Human Trafficking During a Pandemic: What We Can Learn From a Snapshot in Time*,” [polarisproject.org](http://polarisproject.org))

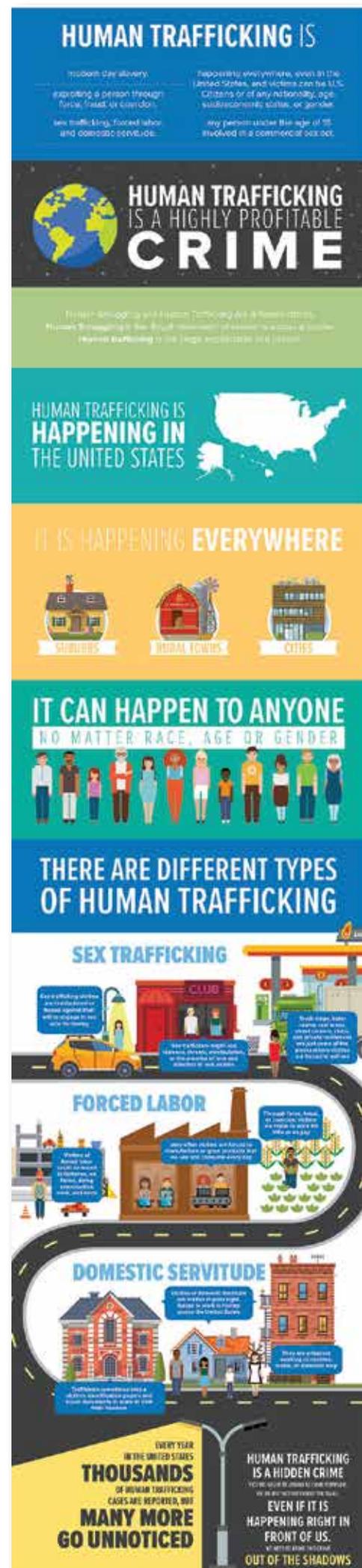
Ending human trafficking requires strategies that focus on prevention through empowering those targeted by traffickers and addressing the causes of human trafficking.

The United States' National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking involves a whole-government approach with coordination and collaboration among federal agencies, state and local governments and other countries, as well as community groups, businesses, corporations and anti-trafficking organizations.

President Joe Biden's 2022 *Proclamation on National Human Trafficking Prevention Month* states that the plan “links anti-trafficking initiatives to our wider efforts to counter illicit financing; advance gender and racial equity; expand the rights and dignity of working people; and promote safe, orderly, and humane migration.”

(Continued on page 9)

*Infographic courtesy of the US Dept. of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign: [www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign](http://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign)*



## What We Can Do to End Modern-Day Slavery (continued from page 8)

In the fight against human trafficking, there is still much left to do. But, we can each do something. And, we are stronger together.

Catholic Sisters have been concerned with human trafficking for several decades through the work of individual Congregations and Sisters. The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God is a member of the Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT)- a collaborative, faith-based national network working to abolish modern-day slavery. USCSAHT was formed in 2013 by 15 sisters who were engaged in anti-trafficking work. A year later, they joined Talitha Kum International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking in Persons, then grew to become a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization governed by a Board of Directors in 2016. Our congregation first connected with USCSAHT as a sponsor of the Stop Trafficking newsletter which continues to serve as an excellent monthly resource with current and in-depth information on the causes and solutions to human trafficking.

Presently, we are just one of over 100+ religious congregations of Catholic Sisters, groups and individuals whose membership dues support the dedicated professional staff, board members and volunteers at the heart of the organization's ef-

forts to educate the public, increase access to survivor services, and advocate for legislation and policies to end trafficking and empower survivors, as well as prevent it from happening in the first place.

### Helpful Resources

**US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking:**  
[sistersagainstrafficking.org](https://sistersagainstrafficking.org)

**The Polaris Project:**  
[polarisproject.org](https://polarisproject.org)

**Blue Campaign:**  
[dhs.gov/blue-campaign](https://dhs.gov/blue-campaign)

**Stop Trafficking Newsletter**  
[stopenslavement.org](https://stopenslavement.org)

**2022 Trafficking in Persons Report:**  
[state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report](https://state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report)

## Join the Fight Against Human Trafficking

- Become informed and inform others. Talk about human trafficking to your family, neighbors, and friends. Use social media to share information and resources. A good place to begin is the websites for the National Human Trafficking Hotline, US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking, Polaris Project or the Blue Campaign.
- Urge your state and federal representatives to support legislation and policies that support efforts to help survivors, protect vulnerable persons, criminalize human trafficking, and address underlying issues that cause human trafficking.
- Advocate for the training of law enforcement personnel, medical professionals, and other first responders so that they are better able to recognize trafficking and persons being trafficked.
- Support local agencies and organizations that provide shelter and other services to support and empower survivors of trafficking.
- Know and Promote the National Human Trafficking hotline (right)
- Become a conscientious consumer.
  - Purchase fair trade goods, certified as produced without child or slave labor.
  - Learn Your Slavery Footprint ([slaveryfootprint.org](https://slaveryfootprint.org)).
  - Use the US Government's List of Goods Produced by Child and Forced Labor to help know what goods are tainted by slavery.
  - Contact companies, brands, and retailers encouraging them to investigate and prevent human trafficking in their supply chains.

### NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE

**1-888-373-7888**

**[humantraffickinghotline.org](https://humantraffickinghotline.org)**

**Text HELP or INFO  
to BeFree (233733)**

# A Gathering of the Franciscan-Hearted Franciscan Fest Sunday Luncheon in October



This October, Franciscan Fest is coming to Pittsburgh! A successor to our Autumn Gala, Franciscan Fest continues the tradition of a fall gathering of the Franciscan-hearted where we share a delicious meal, enjoy each other's presence, and take a chance on the many basket, 50/50, and cash raffle prizes. Reimagined as a Sunday luncheon, the event will be more accessible to our Sisters and many of our guests. Join us!

## FRANCISCAN FEST 2023

Sunday, October 15 @ 1:00 PM

St. Thomas More Church in Pittsburgh, PA 15241

Admission is \$50 per person, \$95 per couple, or \$350 for a table of 8. Reservations are required. Those unable to attend will still be able to participate in our basket and cash raffles. For more information, please contact Robyn Moeller at 412-885-7232 or [rmoeller@osfprov.org](mailto:rmoeller@osfprov.org).

## Basket Raffle Donations Needed

The Sisters humbly request your help for our Franciscan Fest basket raffle fundraiser. We will gratefully accept donations of baskets or items to use as prizes. Ideas for donations include gift cards, appliances, kitchen accessories, decor, books, craft supplies, bath and body items, games, and non-perishable food or beverages.

**Another way to support our efforts is by becoming a Franciscan Fest Sponsor!**

For more information about ways to support this special event, please contact Robyn Moeller at [rmoeller@osfprov.org](mailto:rmoeller@osfprov.org) or 412-885-7232.

## Celebrating a Shared History

As our Community concluded our Centennial Year, Whitehall Borough began its 75th anniversary Celebration. Our Sisters are grateful to the Borough, which was home to our Motherhouse campus and St. Francis Academy. Many of our Sisters continue to live in the area, and the former Academy building remains and is used by Seton Center Child Day Care and the Allegheny County Intermediate Unit. The "Whitehall Franciscans" offer our prayers and blessings to our neighbors in Whitehall, as they celebrate 75 years!

Sister Janet Gardner serves on the Whitehall Borough Historical Society Board and assists with outreach and historic preservation of Whitehall Borough. For more information, visit their website:

[whitehallboroughhistoricalsociety.org](http://whitehallboroughhistoricalsociety.org)



Development Director Robyn Moeller (left) joined the Whitehall Borough Historical Society as they planned their new website in February at Nativity Convent. Pictured (left to right) are Sister Janet, Al Bathe, John Wotus, Bob Motts and Hal Plusa.

# Remembering LaVerne Palko

**O**ur dear friend LaVerne (Seiler) Palko died in October 2022, at the age of 96. For more than eight decades, she was a faithful presence through every milestone, challenge and celebration of our Congregation in Pittsburgh. A graduate of St. Francis Academy, she was the oldest active member of the Alumnae Association. She was also a dedicated member of the Pittsburgh Auxiliary Board for 37 years. She served as treasurer for many years and helped raise much needed funding for ministries, projects and the care for our retired Sisters with whom she forged many deep and meaningful friendships.

LaVerne was a parishioner of St. Columbkille Church for over 60 years where she served as a member of the Christian Mothers Guild and the Ladies of Charity. She was employed for 10 years as a Communications Specialist for Trans World Airlines (TWA), and later with Calgon Corporation/Merck & Co., Inc. LaVerne was preceded in death by her devoted husband of 51-years, Gil, and is survived by her loving family, which includes her three children, seven grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

We will profoundly miss LaVerne's earthly presence with us, and give thanks to Provident God for her life, Franciscan spirit, and unique way of manifesting the light and love of Christ to all.



*LaVerne (far right) was part of the original steering committee of the Pittsburgh Auxiliary in 1985. Other member pictured are Sisters Felice Jucius, Marlene Wehar, Nancy Lippert, Yvonne Noiegott, and Loretta Zak.*

## In Loving Memory

### Sister Marita Dargis



**S**ister Marita Dargis, a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God for 78 years, died on at the age of 97 on November 5, 2022.

During World War II, Sister Marita worked as a riveter in a factory before entering the Congregation in 1944, several years after her older sister, Sister Delphine. She earned a Bachelor's

degree in Education from Carlow University and a Master's degree at Duquesne University.

Sister Marita served as an educator for over 50 years. While From 1962-1968, she taught 7-8 grade in DuBois PA, while also serving as principal. She later served as principal at Holy Trinity School, Moon Run PA for five years while teaching 7-8 grade science classes. Gifted with creativity and a love of science, she contributed student projects to the Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science and her students were awarded six National Science Foundation Grants. She also taught junior high students and served as principal at St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin.

After concluding her education ministry, Sister Marita served as a pastoral assistant at Sts. Peter & Paul in Elizabeth, NJ. In 2013, she returned to Pittsburgh and engaged in the ministry of prayer and presence while continuing artistic pursuits and spiritual studies.

### Sister M. Sylvia Krafton



**S**ister M. Sylvia Krafton, a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God for 85 years, died on January 29, 2023 at the age of 101.

Born in Lawrence, MA, to Lithuanian immigrant parents she was one of 11 children. Her mother, a lay Franciscan, was especially influential in her decision

to pursue a religious vocation. Sister Sylvia attended St. Francis Academy and entered the congregation in 1938. She earned a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Education at Duquesne University.

For four decades, Sister Sylvia taught children in elementary schools in Amsterdam, NY, Elizabeth, NJ, Kenosha, WI, Mt. Vernon, IL, as well as Pittsburgh, Esplen, and DuBois, PA. She also served as director of the after-school R-T-R (Reading-Thinking-Reasoning) Program at the Motherhouse in Pittsburgh. Sister and her staff taught reading and math skills to eager learners and achieved outstanding results. She also coordinated the craft program in Pittsburgh, and engaged in home care ministry caring for family members at various times throughout her life. In 2008, she entered into the ministry of presence and prayer.



Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God

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# OCTOBER CASH RAFFLE

*Drawing Based on the 3 Digit Evening PA Lottery*

**\$10 per Chance**

\$70 Winners Every Day in October EXCEPT:

\$500 ST. FRANCIS DAY GRAND PRIZE on October 4

\$200 Every Sunday in October  
and

\$100 Every Saturday in October

DAILY BONUS: \$20 paid to Number Before, Number After and Reverse

\*Example: If 243 was drawn on a weekday, 243 would win \$70  
and 242, 244 and 342 would each win \$20.

**Please Contact Sister Mary Ann at 412-477-4321  
for tickets or more information.**