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# The Whitehall **FRANCISCAN**

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God



*Moving Forward  
Together in Hope*

## Mission Statement

We, 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.

Called together by a good and provident God, we cultivate an intimacy with God that is nourished by Scripture and Eucharist and a reverence for all creation.

Faithful to our Charism, we go to those whom Providence sends us, and conscious of our mission in the Church, we witness to the Kingdom by our lives of service.

We will be instruments of justice and peace among those in need of evangelization, healing, and reconciliation, especially the poor and oppressed.

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

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# Let Us Dream...Brothers and Sisters All

A message from General Minister Sister Joanne Brazinski, OSF

**O**n October 4, 2020, the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti - On Fraternity and Social Friendship* was promulgated. In it, Pope Francis calls all people of the Earth to a spirit of inclusion that "transcends barriers of geography and distance." He challenges all of us to authentic dialogue that can help lead us to "social consensus" based on fact and reasoning. He reminds us that authentic dialogue is necessary for building a better world; authentic dialogue demands that we be persons who deeply respect the other's experiences and values.

Pope Francis calls for the cultivation of a "culture of encounter." We are called not just to see and to hear, not just to pass people by, but also to really look, to listen and to give attention. He reminds us that a society that espouses a culture of encounter facilitates right relationship among human persons and involves a spirituality that emphasizes a personal friendship with God who first encounters us in love.

His wisdom reminds us that "it is not enough to be passersby on the digital highways, simply 'connected;' connections need to grow into true encounters. We cannot live apart, closed in on ourselves . . . the digital world can be an environment rich in humanity; a network, not of wires but of people." (Pope Francis' Address on World Communications Day)

As we begin to reflect on the truths of this encyclical and prepare to celebrate Christmas, the relational dimension of our lives is front and center. We desire to be with family and friends. We desire to spend time with those we love, to share memories with them and to dream together. Pope Francis' encyclical invites us to dream of a future where violence and racism no longer have a place in our world. He invites us to dream of a society that cares for the Earth and for one another, to dream of a connectedness that gives us security and freedom. We are encouraged to dream of peace and challenged to work for it as we recognize the dignity of every single human person.

This issue of the Whitehall Franciscan highlights some of the ways that we, as Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God, are dreaming with others, each group bringing the richness of beliefs and convictions to shape a future that builds bridges and relationships. As you read the articles in this issue, we invite you to dream with us.

Material from the August assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) challenges us to work at dismantling racism. The resolution of the Franciscan Federation invites us to further reflection on *Laudato Si'* and to embrace our responsibility to hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. We are invited to explore the environmental changes happening as well as the human roots of this crisis and challenged to action that makes a difference in shaping the future of our planet. We reflect on the life of Sister Thea Bowman as a woman of faith and remember the many faithful witnesses of healing, wholeness and encouragement that are part of the fabric of our lives. We are called to build bridges of care and solidarity that reach out beyond ourselves. Join us in dreaming together of a world that is more human, more relational, more caring, more just, and more inclusive.

Blessings of peace!



# *Greccio to Pittsburgh to Albuquerque*

## Franciscans Embrace the Christmas Crèche

No matter the season, a good Christmas story will always spark joy. A week after Easter, while sheltering at home during the early days of the pandemic, Sister Mary Ann Lostoski's spirits were lifted by a letter from Mary Lou Gonzales, whom she met in 2017 at a Canossian Sisters' retreat in New Mexico. During their brief time together Sister shared memories of organizing Crèche Display events at the former Pittsburgh motherhouse.

"I never forgot those details and focused on making that dream come true within our own Franciscan parish," Mary Lou wrote in her letter. "Thank you, Sister Mary Ann, for sharing your vision, excitement and fundraising ideas with me."

By many accounts, the tradition of the Christmas crèche originated in Greccio, Italy in 1223, when St. Francis of Assisi recreated the Christmas scene in a cave with a manger, ox and donkey. Franciscan biographer Thomas of Celano and St. Bonaventure both describe a miraculous scene in their accounts. Villagers arrived carrying torches and candles and experienced a beautiful Christmas Mass where Francis himself gave the sermon. As Francis intended, those in attendance witnessed the "Word made flesh" and the extravagant love of Christ who chose a humble and vulnerable arrival as a poor infant.

"For I wish to recall to memory the

little child who was born in Bethlehem. I want to set before our bodily eyes the hardships of his infant needs, how he lay in the manger, how with an ox and ass standing by he lay upon the hay," said St. Francis. (*Thomas of Celano*)

In 2003, inspired by the Greccio story and other crèche displays, Sister Mary Ann organized a public crèche event hosted by our Community that featured hundreds of nativity scenes from our Sisters, family and friends. This popular holiday event and fundraiser continued until 2014. Today, a simpler virtual Crèche Display is shared online via the Community's website, e-mail newsletter and Facebook page.

Inspired by Providence, Mary Lou persistently worked for two years to organize a meaningful and memorable crèche event for her community in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In December 2019, her parish's ministries collaborated on a crèche display as part of their festivities for Posadas – a nine-day novena of prayer and worship observed in many Hispanic parishes in the USA and Latin America, usually from Dec. 16- 24. The parish's celebration also featured children's activities, festive food, prayer, scripture readings and a reenactment of the Nativity.



Sister Mary Ann Lostoski (right) shows children some of the hundreds of nativity scenes at our 2007 Crèche Show.

For their crèche display, parishioners lent a wide range of creches representing various cultures and backgrounds. "There were miniature nativity scenes, life-sized scenes, children's hand-made nativities – every type imaginable," wrote Mary Lou. "We also set up special lighting, Christmas trees, poinsettias, and battery-operated luminaries around the display tables to create a special walking path for visitors to experience seeing all the various nativity scenes."

Though the pandemic may change plans for 2020, we pray that Mary Lou and her parish will continue to share the original Christmas story of hope, peace and love for many years to come.



## Virtual Crèche Display

JOIN US TO REMEMBER THE TRUE REASON FOR THE SEASON

Advent & Christmas 2020

Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God Facebook Page  
[facebook.com/osfprov.org](https://facebook.com/osfprov.org)

Do you have a special crèche or nativity scene that helps you remember the joy of the Christmas season? Please join us and share your photos via [info@osfprov.org](mailto:info@osfprov.org) or Facebook, to include in our virtual Creche Display.

# Care for God's Creation

## The Earth is our Common Home

"The signs of the times show clearly that human fraternity and the care of creation form the sole way toward integral development and peace, as already indicated by the saintly Popes John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II," said Pope Francis on October 4, 2020, the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, when signing the new Encyclical "Fratelli Tutti" at St. Francis' tomb. We will further explore its meaning and teachings in future issues of the "Whitehall Franciscan." In this article, we revisit the Pope's preceding encyclical, "Laudato Si'", which establishes a strong Franciscan foundation for present and future Catholic social teaching.



Did you know that we are in the midst of celebrating the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis' ground-breaking encyclical, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*? The Vatican has designated that a special *Laudato Si'* Anniversary Year is taking place from May 24<sup>th</sup> of this year through May 24, 2021.

In *Laudato Si'*, the Pope urges society to move away from the myth of continuing human progress at the expense of the Earth's resources and calls on all of us to realize that any future progress which fails to respect the Earth is a false economy. *Laudato Si'* is meant to be a worldwide wake up call to help humanity recognize the destruction that humans are causing to the environment and each other. It complements what the Church's Catechism says, that it is our responsibility to care for our world and not "steal" resources from future generations.

This encyclical is not the first effort from the Church to present Catholic "care of creation" teaching, as the Pope builds on the examples of saints and previous pontiffs, including St. Francis of Assisi, St. John of the Cross, St. Bonaventure, Pope Paul VI, St. John Paul I and Pope Benedict XVI.

Pope Francis goes a step further, however, by saying that humanity faces not just different crises detached from one another, but one complex crisis exhibited in various ways: the apathy and harm toward the environment is not only about pollution, but includes threatening attitudes toward other humans as well as economic practices that harm people and the

land and resources they depend on.

The Pope's encyclical is also unusual in that it brings the Church's ongoing teachings on the environment to everyone. Normally, papal documents are addressed to the bishops of the Church or the lay faithful. However, Pope Francis addresses his message in this encyclical to **every person on the planet**. "I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation that includes **everyone**, since the environmental challenges we are undergoing, and their human roots, concern and affect us all."

The vision that the Pope called for in his encyclical is far-reaching: He describes the unending exploitation and destruction of our environment and says indifference, the persistent quest of profits, the extreme faith in technology and political shortsightedness of our leaders are to blame.

The most vulnerable victims, he declares, are the world's poorest people, who are being dislocated and disregarded.

The Pope also speaks about what is termed the "throwaway culture," an outlook that sees everything as disposable, consumable or temporary, including our relationships with one another. The Holy Father insisted that Integral Ecology, putting the human person at the center of all our activities in this world where everything is interconnected, was the key for building a better future.

Truth is, the current COVID-19 pandemic has clearly shown us the vulnerability and instability of our modern world, underlining the Pope's prophetic words on the need for caring for Mother Earth. The virus has shown us that we are all interconnected and we cannot live in ignorance of the other person or in isolation from others. It has revealed that it is our duty to protect not only the environment, but the society in which we live.

"After COVID-19, nothing will be the same," says Aloysius John, secretary general of Caritas Internationalis. "As Pope Francis said, it is time for everyone, governments and civil societies, to make the conversion effort to which the Holy Father exhorts us in this prophetic encyclical."

### Read the Encyclicals Online

Both *Laudato Si' - On Care for Our Common Home* and *Fratelli Tutti – on Fraternity and Social Friendship* are available to read online at:

[www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/encyclicals/index.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/encyclicals/index.html)

# *Responding to the Cry of the Earth*

## Sisters Support Franciscan Federation Resolution

**A**s members of the Franciscan Federation, the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God have fully embraced the following resolution that aligns with our Franciscan mission. We invite you to join us as we continue to prayerfully discern and reflect upon the resolution and resources, as well as how we are called to respond.

### **Statement of Resolution**

We, the members of the Franciscan Federation, recognize our responsibility to hear the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor. We recognize our continual need for conversion and to act to heal the world and the people who live in it.

### **Rationale**

In 1979 Pope John Paul II declared St. Francis of Assisi the Patron Saint of those who promote Ecology with these words. "Francis offers Christians an example of genuine and deep respect the integrity of creation." Five years ago, Pope Francis released *Laudato Si'* promoting an integral approach to environmental and social issues. "Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."

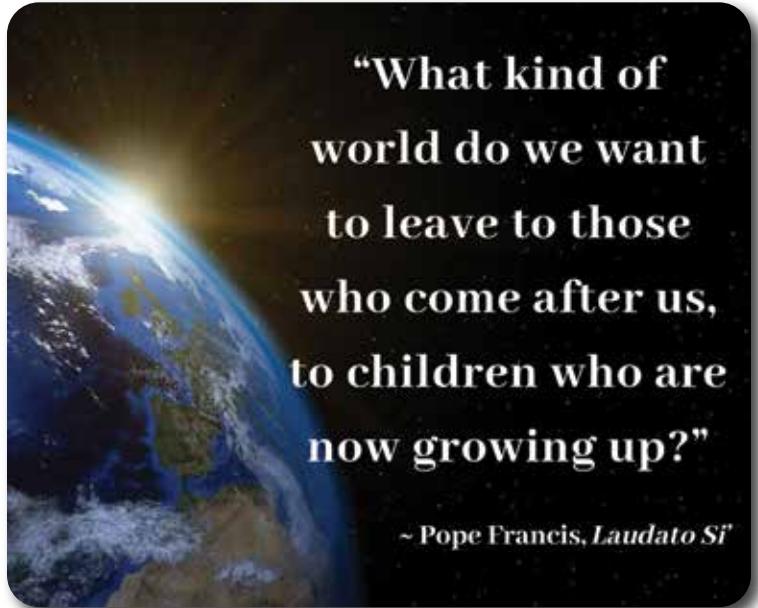
The Earth and all creatures are entrusted to humankind by the Divine Creator to enjoy, tend, nourish and protect. Earth is precious and sacred. With gratitude, we Franciscans will do our part to confront the ecological crisis, work to reverse the harm done to this precious gift and by our witness, and encourage others to tend and care for our sister, Mother Earth.

### **Call to Respond**

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis critiques consumerism and irresponsible development, laments environmental degradation and global warming, and calls all people of the world to take "swift and unified global action." This encyclical has moved us to respond to both the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor through action and prayer to the challenges posted by the current climate crisis.

In order to respond with concrete attention, let our Call to Action be a collective Franciscan voice to respond to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor. We propose that all Franciscans and Franciscan Hearted People join Franciscan Action Network and take at least one action to transform public policy related to care for creation and care for the poor. This may include:

- Eliminate all plastic water bottles
- Reduce meat consumption, especially beef
- Support climate action bills being considered by your state legislature
- Use teleconference (zoom, go to meeting, skype) and other alternative communication to avoid travel
- Evaluate your carbon footprint: [carbonfootprint.com](http://carbonfootprint.com)
- Learn about socially responsible investing with resources from the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility: [iccr.org](http://iccr.org)



**"What kind of  
world do we want  
to leave to those  
who come after us,  
to children who are  
now growing up?"**

~ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

### **Join Us and Learn More**

US Conference of Catholic Bishops  
[www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/index.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/index.cfm)

Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
[lcwr.org/social-justice/climate-changeenvironment](http://lcwr.org/social-justice/climate-changeenvironment)

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility  
[www.iccr.org/iccrs-issues/environment](http://www.iccr.org/iccrs-issues/environment)

Catholic Climate Covenant  
<https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/>

Global Catholic Climate Movement  
<https://catholicclimatemovement.global/>

Franciscan Federation  
<https://franfed.org/>

# *Profiles of Faithful Witnesses*

## Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman, OSF

Perhaps you've heard or read about the Sister Thea Bowman Catholic Academy, located in Pittsburgh's Wilkinsburg community. According to the school's mission, it is a Christ-centered institution, rooted in African American Catholic spirituality.

But who is Sister Thea Bowman and why is she so important to the Black Catholic community?

Born Bertha Elizabeth Bowman on December 29, 1937, in Canton, MS, she was reared as a Methodist until age nine when she asked her parents if she could convert to Catholicism. This was because of the inspiration of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity who were her teachers at Holy Child Jesus School in Canton.

At age fifteen, she told her parents she wanted to join the Franciscan Sisters' community and left the familiar Mississippi terrain to venture to the unfamiliar town of La Crosse, WI, where she would be the only African American member of her congregation. At her religious profession, she was given the name Sister Mary Thea in honor of the Blessed Mother and her father, Theon.

Two years into her formation, she was stricken with TB and spent a year in a sanatorium. Upon recovery, she completed her novitiate and earned her BA in English. She went on to receive her MA in 1969 and her PhD in English Language in 1972.

Gifted with a brilliant mind, wonderful voice and a vibrant personality, Sister Thea conveyed the message of God's love through a teaching career. After 16 years teaching at the elementary, secondary and university levels, the bishop of Jackson, MS, invited her to become the consultant for intercultural awareness. In that role, she gave presentations across the country, at lively gatherings that blended singing, gospel preaching, prayer and storytelling. Her programs were targeted at breaking down racial and cultural barriers. She encouraged people to communicate with one another so they could understand other races and cultures.

She averaged 100 public appearances a year spreading her message of joy, hope and pride. She was even interviewed on *60 Minutes*.

In 1984, she was diagnosed with breast cancer but continued to travel and lecture with passion and vitality while battling her disease. Sister Thea vowed to "live until I die." Even when it became increasingly painful and difficult to travel as the cancer metastasized to her bones, she was undeterred from witnessing and sharing her infinite love for God and the joy of the Gospel.



"We unite ourselves with Christ's redemptive work when we reconcile, when we make peace, when we share the good news that God is in our lives, when we reflect to our brothers and sisters God's healing, God's forgiveness, God's unconditional love."

~ Sister Thea Bowman, OSF

*Photo courtesy of Sister Thea Bowman Cause for Canonization website: [www.sistertheabowman.com](http://www.sistertheabowman.com)*

Donned in her customary African garb, she would arrive in a wheelchair with no hair (due to her chemotherapy treatments) but always with a joyful disposition and pleasant smile.

She didn't let her illness deny her an opportunity to address the U.S. Bishops at their annual meeting in 1989 at Seton Hall University. She spoke to the bishops as a sister having a "heart to heart" conversation with her brothers. During her talk, she explained what it meant to be African American and Catholic and she enlightened the bishops on African American history and spirituality.

Sister Thea urged the bishops to continue to evangelize the African American community, to promote inclusivity and full participation of African Americans within the Church leadership and to better understand the necessity and value of Catholic schools in the African American community. When she was finished, she invited the bishops to move together, cross arms and sing with her, "We Shall Overcome."

Sister Thea died on March 30, 1990 at the age of 53 in the home where she was reared in Canton. She said she wanted inscribed on her tombstone the simple, yet insightful words: "She tried." She spoke, "I want people to remember that I tried to love the Lord and that I tried to love them." Sister Thea is buried alongside her beloved parents in Memphis, TN. She is often called Mother Teresa with "soul."

The U.S. bishops endorsed the sainthood cause of Sister Thea Bowman on November 14, 2018. For more information, please visit: [www.sistertheabowman.com](http://www.sistertheabowman.com)

# *Responding to Global Crises*

## Sisters Gather for First LCWR Virtual Assembly

**S**isters Joanne Brazinski and Janet Gardner attended the first virtual assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) on August 12-14, 2020. Over 900 religious from across the globe attended the virtual gathering via Zoom with the theme of “God’s Infinite Vision: Our Journey to the Borders and Beyond.” Recognizing that the world has been irrevocably changed through the experiences of recent months, participants explored the impact of COVID-19 and new understandings of racism on the mission and lives of Catholic Sisters. Through presentations, prayer, and small group conversations, LCWR members shared insights and resources on how to lead and respond to the needs of religious congregations and a world experiencing uncertain and challenging times.

Members also further developed three important LCWR initiatives:

- **Five-year Commitment to Work on Dismantling Racism**

Responding to new understandings about racism, LCWR members were invited to examine, recognize, and take steps to address and eliminate racism within themselves, their congregations, their ministries, and LCWR as an organization.

- **Designated Fund to Support the Future of Religious Life in the United States**

LCWR officers announced the creation of a fund that will support projects impacting the future of religious life, particularly the lives of young women religious. The LCWR national board approved the seeding of this fund with one-million dollars from the proceeds of the sale of its Silver Spring, Maryland headquarters in 2018.

- **National Conversation on the Emerging Future of Religious Life**

LCWR leadership initiated a conversation challenging members to create new ways for the mission of religious life to thrive well into the future. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) executive director Rev. Thomas Gaunt, SJ presented data gathered through a recent survey that suggests this is the moment for US religious congregations to find new ways to organize and collaborate. LCWR officers noted that the accelerated pace of change in religious communities points to an urgent need to work across religious congregations to create new sustainable structures that assure a future for religious life. Urging leaders to seriously discern the current reality of aging members, along with the entrance into religious orders in the United States of approximately 200 women each year, LCWR officers said this is “a clear call to our generation of leaders” to create new ways to organize the body of US women religious for mission and service.

For more information about LCWR and thier initiatives, please visit [lcwr.org](http://lcwr.org)



## Prayer to End Racism

**God of Heaven and Earth, you created the one human family and endowed each person with great dignity.**

**Aid us, we pray, in overcoming the sin of racism.**

**Grant us your grace in eliminating this blight from our hearts, our communities, our social and civil institutions.**

**Fill our hearts with love for you and our neighbor so that we may work with you in healing our land from racial injustice.**

**Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.**

**Amen.**

Prayer courtesy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' "A Prayer Service for Racial Healing in Our Land." [www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/prayer-service-for-racial-healing.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/prayer-service-for-racial-healing.cfm)

# Franciscan Ministries Updates

## Sisters Offer Peaceful Encouragement to Women Voters



August 18, 2020 was the 100th anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution which guarantees women their right to vote. As we celebrate this milestone, we give thanks for all who advocated, protested and struggled so that all women are empowered to have their unique voices heard. Before the 2020 elections, Sisters joined efforts to remind and encourage women to vote for whomever they believe is the best candidate. Sister Janet Gardner (pictured) wrote to twenty women as part of efforts of MomsRising to motivate mothers to vote.

*(Editors note: Our Sisters believe in the right of each person to make their choices based on their own values and beliefs, and no candidates or political parties were endorsed.)*

## Sister Althea Anne Prepares a New Space

For those seeking spiritual direction and massage therapy, Sister Althea Anne Spencer has prepared a new serene, reflective and Franciscan space at our Nativity Convent offices. Sister and our Community are grateful to her ministries former home, St. Sylvester Parish and all the staff for their more than five years of hospitality and solidarity.

During the pandemic, Sister Althea Anne has been able to continue spiritual direction ministry as needed by adhering to social distancing, mask wearing and other precautions. Resuming massage therapy ministry is more challenging, and Sister is preparing to cautiously offer her services on a limited bases as permitted by state and local authorities, faithfully following all CDC guidelines and recommendations of health officials.

For more information about spiritual direction or massage therapy, please contact Sister Althea Anne at [saspencer@osfprov.org](mailto:saspencer@osfprov.org).



## Franciscan Child Day Care Center Expands Offerings



Our Franciscan Child Day Care Center continues to do an excellent job keeping children and staff healthy and safe during the pandemic. With many schools going partially or fully online, the Center is also adapting to meet the changing needs of families by expanding their school-age program beyond before and after school care. During days designated for remote learning from home, children in our school-age program may attend online classes from our Center, which also provides a certified teacher to assist with learning and school work. Our Center also continues to offer a safe space before, after and between classes for homework, play and other activities.

For more information about the Franciscan Child Day Care Center, please visit [franciscanchilddaycare.org](http://franciscanchilddaycare.org).

# Sisters and Schools in Brazil Embrace Challenges

Like schools throughout the world during the pandemic, our schools in Brazil continue to serve children and families in new and creative ways, including remote learning, hybrid classes, and in-person instruction with masks, social distancing and other health precautions. Below are a few glimpses into the lives of students, teachers, Sisters, staff and families as they learn and grow together during this moment in time.



*São Miguel Arcanjo School in São Paulo held a drive-through welcome to let students know their teachers miss them and are eagerly awaiting a return to traditional classrooms. Pictured left, Sisters Joaíce, Selma and Isabel Rosa awaiting the arrival of students, who were just as eager to see their teachers and administrators in person.*



*St. Francis of Assisi School in the impoverished region of Barbacena serves students with little or no access to the Internet or computers. Staff bundled up educational materials and delivered them to several neighborhood drop-off areas where they also met with parents and children to orient them to the new semester of learning from home.*

*Students at Pio XII School are adapting to hybrid remote and classroom learning schedules. Children attending smaller, in-person classes wear masks and work at socially distanced desks. The school has also installed pedal operated hand sanitizer dispensers.*



*Sister Selma organized a drive through blessing of the animals for the family pets of São Miguel Arcanjo School in honor of the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi.*



*For the International Day of Peace on September 21, Pio XII School organized a drive-through art project for children to express their desires for peace as part of the international movement "Chalk 4 Peace". The wall filled up quickly, and children who participated received chalk and a vase with a sunflower seed to enjoy at home.*

# *Autumn Gala of Solidarity*

## Sisters Virtually Gather with Friends and Benefactors

In this year of doing things differently, our 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Autumn Gala was temporarily replaced with a simpler online event that offered a Franciscan message of hope and peace to all able to join us. Held on the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, our Autumn Gala of Solidarity celebrated and gave thanks for all who sustain our Franciscan mission through prayers, generosity and support. The video presentation featured a message from our General Minister, Sister Joanne Brazinski, as well as a Franciscan blessing from our Sisters in the USA and Brazil. In addition, our basket raffle drawing was live on Facebook, where we also announced the Grand Prize winner of our October Cash Raffle.

"Our friends and benefactors really came through with the Autumn Gala of Solidarity and showed their support," said Sister Mary Ann Lostoski, who serves on the Autumn Gala Committee and organizes the October and February Cash Raffles.

During this difficult time for so many, we were humbled and profoundly grateful for the outpouring of support from our friends and benefactors who sent us well wishes, prayers and donations to support our ongoing ministries and outreach efforts, as well as the care of our senior Sisters. We were also blessed that this special Gala made a double impact. Each donation we received for our needs was matched by an anonymous donor, and these matched funds were designated to help persons experiencing poverty and other hardships during the COVID-19



*The Autumn Gala of Solidary Raffle Drawing was successfully live-streamed on Facebook thanks to the above team of helpers: (left to right) Mimi DiGregory, Sister Janet Gardner, Sister Althea Anne Spencer, Kathy Antoniazzi, Robyn Moeller, and Sister Mary Ann Lostoski.*

pandemic. Thanks to those who joined us in solidarity, we were able to share more than \$6,800 with the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank and Catholic Relief Services from the matched funds. We remain grateful to all who joined us for our Autumn Gala of Solidarity, and would like to especially thank the following groups and individuals who helped make this special event possible:

- Our Autumn Gala Committee who embraced the challenges and possibilities of 2020 to successfully transform our Gala into an online event,
- Our generous raffle prizes donors, especially our Associates, Auxiliary, St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association, Maria Ammon, Kathy Antoniazzi, Mimi DiGregory and Lori Lukich,
- Sister Mary Ann Lostoski, who coordinates our October and February Cash Raffles,
- Mimi DiGregory, our administrative secretary, for her essential and creative assistance,
- Robyn Moeller, our Development Director, for her event co-ordination and video production efforts,
- Sister Joanne Brazinski, Sister Janet Gardner and all our Sisters, Associates, Staff, Volunteers, St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association, Auxiliary and friends who always say "yes" when we ask for help and go above and beyond to give us the gift of their time, talents and support.



*Sister Janet Gardner delivers one of two boxes filled with chocolate to our Chocolate Basket winner Becky Badders, who is the grandniece of the late Sisters Frances and Marianne Walters. Other lucky winners include St. Francis Academy Alumna Sharon Matey (300 Cheers!, Travel in Style & Butler Golf package), Associate Joan Ammon (Easy Cooking Under Pressure), Isabel Blaha (Scare Up Some Cash), sister of Sisters Ann Marie and Mary Ann Lostoski and John Yurgelevic (Relax & Rejuvenate), who is the nephew of the late Sister Ona Buswink.*

**Watch the Autumn Gala of Solidarity Message and Blessing on our YouTube Channel: <https://youtu.be/f20QG28h1L8>**

# *Gratitude in the Time of Covid-19*

## Thank you for your Solidarity to our Franciscan Mission

"On days when I feel the heaviness of these times and the depression of so much sickness and death, and suddenly I experience the presence of the Spirit that lifts me, I know that someone is praying for me and I give thanks to God," said Sister Althea Anne Spencer. "The gift of positivity is catchy and in these days we need to support one another with encouraging words and smiles, notes and calls, humor and laughter."

During this year that continues to challenge us, the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God remain grateful for the gift of our extended Franciscan family, especially your faithful friendship, support, and solidarity to our Franciscan mission that sustains us as we weather challenges and embrace new possibilities to share the love of Christ with others.

"The support of our friends and family gives me the feeling that people have not forgotten us or our work with people and children, even though we are small in number," said Sister Ann Marie Lostoski.

As we endure the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises together, we are more grateful than ever for the support of our friends and benefactors, which is vital to our ongoing ministries and outreach, as well as the care of our senior Sisters.

"I would like to give our friends and benefactors a giant hug and thank you," said Sister Francine McDonald. "They have been so good to us during our time of confinement and continue to this day. It has instilled more in me what the Lord has taught - that it is more blessed to give than to receive. They give without counting the costs and we should do likewise."

As we near the end of 2020, we are very aware of the many persons and organizations asking for assistance, especially as we all deal with the economic fallout of the pandemic. Please know that if you are able to support our ministries and outreach efforts, we are grateful for your generosity during such challenging times.

Thank you for being a faithful member of our extended Franciscan family. May we be connected in prayer and in spirit as we celebrate the fact that we are all connected, interrelated, all brothers and sisters, made in the image and likeness of our incredible God.

*For information about how you can help support our Sisters and mission, please contact our Development Director, Robyn Moeller at 412-885-7232 or [rmoeller@osfprov.org](mailto:rmoeller@osfprov.org).*



## CARES Act Benefits for Donors

If you give to charity, you may benefit from recent changes to the CARES Act that allows for an additional deduction for charitable gifts of up to \$300 that you can claim on your 2020 taxes. Or, if you are itemizing, you can elect to deduct up to 100 percent of your adjusted gross income (AGI.) (As always, please consult a trusted financial advisor for more information about what is best for you.)



Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God

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## FEBRUARY CASH RAFFLE

*Drawing Based on the 3 Digit Evening PA Lottery*

\$10 per chance

\$70 Winners Every Day in February EXCEPT:

\$500 GRAND PRIZE on February 14

\$200 Every Sunday in February

and

\$100 Every Saturday in February

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.

For more Information, please call Sister Mary Ann Lostoski at 412-477-4321