

The Whitehall
FRANCISCAN

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The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God

Confidently, Joyfully, We Go Forward!
Come with Us!

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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Celebrating Providence Reflecting on Our Centennial Year

Our Centennial year, 2022 has been a blessed time of celebration for our Sisters and friends. On the March 12 anniversary of our founding, we were joined by more than 300 friends at a Centennial Mass and luncheon at Resurrection Parish in Pittsburgh, PA. In August, we celebrated our 100th anniversary with a nationally televised Mass Our Lady of Aparecida Shrine in São Paulo that also commemorated the arrival of our Sisters in Brazil 84 years ago (pictured below). In October, we transformed our annual Autumn Gala fundraiser into our Centennial Gala celebration (more on pg. 10.) Additionally, each of our schools and missions in Brazil held special celebrations in honor of our 100th anniversary.

Throughout our 100th year, we were blessed to celebrate so much more than the passage of time. We celebrated a Provident God who has been and continues to be the Center and Source of our lives, the Sisters who have gone before us, on whose shoulders we stand, and all on our journey whose friendship, support and prayers have been essential to our Franciscan mission.

As we conclude our 100th year as Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, we invite you to continue to journey with us as we confidently, joyfully go forward to answer the call of Providence.



Our Lady of Aparecida Shrine in São Paulo, Brazil held a nationally televised Mass celebrating the 100th anniversary of our Congregation's founding and 84 years in Brazil. The Shrine's rector was our student in Vila Alpina.

The Church Alive!

A Ministry Update from Sister Althea Anne Spencer

On December 1, 2021, I began a new ministry serving as one of two new Pastoral Assistants for Our Lady of Hope Parish in Bethel Park, PA. My faithful coworker, Cathy Miltzer began the same day. Our Lady of Hope is made up of four consolidated parishes: St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin, St. Germaine, St. Valentine, and Nativity.

Cathy and I hit the road running - learning all the rubrics of preparing and conducting a funeral with approximately three funerals a week. In our second month, we had a total of 29 funerals. Together we organized binders for the families to select readings and music and we have the binder at the Mass. Approximately a month after each funeral, I do a follow-up call with family members. In the process, I have been able to reconnect a few sisters with former students.



Two months into our position we began receiving calls from parents for baptisms which had been on hold due to the pandemic. I meet with the new parents for baptismal preparation. The highlight is watching the parents with their baby during the class. We coordinate with women of the parish who provide the child with a white handmade garment and gift.

In March of 2022, we began scheduling and arranging for weddings, many that had also been put on hold due to Covid. Assisting each couple as they prepare for their special day is joyful. We developed a wedding preparation booklet as an additional resource.

With four churches coming together, Cathy and I coordinate the various individuals and organizations that reach out to the home-bound in the Parish. We have been blessed to work with compassionate individuals who work together to collect names and addresses, make house calls, write letters, send cards, and take the Eucharist to our shut ins. Funneling this information comes through our office.

Preparing the weekly Universal Prayers, the monthly Eucharistic Ministers listing, contacting servers for funeral liturgies, and assisting individuals with sacramental information are all in a day's work. No two days are alike other than the blessings that come from all I encounter. This is also my third year with the RCIA program in the parish. It is such an enriching experience to journey with the men and women who are progressing in their faith journey and/or joining the church.

The best part of this position is the people! I work with amazing folks. I continually encounter and minister with people of deep faith. It's here that I truly experience The Church Alive!



Cathy Miltzer and Sister Althea Anne Spencer serve as Pastoral Assistants at Our Lady of Hope Parish.

Sister Hilária Begins Ministry at Seton Center



After serving at our former Franciscan Child Day Care Center for over a decade, Sister Hilária de Oliveira began a new ministry as a child caregiver at Elizabeth Seton Center in Brookline, PA caring for young children. A ministry of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill for more than 30 years, Elizabeth Seton Center offers child care, senior services and other support for families.

Before the Franciscan Child Day Care Center closed this past September, our Board connected with Elizabeth Seton Center, which had expressed interest in opening a child care facility in our space. An exploratory period followed with the Franciscan Child Day Care Center offering available assistance and Elizabeth Seton Center doing due diligence to ensure viability of a child care center. Seton Center also offered employment to our caregivers, as well as found space for several of our families at their Brookline facility.

In October, Seton Center's Board gave final approval for sponsoring a new day care center in the Franciscan Child Day Care space. The Franciscan Child Day Care Center Board also approved the agreement, which included giving the new center furniture, toys and supplies from our Center and other assistance.

Elizabeth Seton Center officially took over the Franciscan Child Day Care space on November 1, 2022 and are preparing to open on January 4, 2023 - the feast day of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. Sister Hilária will be joining them as a caregiver at the new center.

Hearts Aligned with our Franciscan Charism

Franciscan Associate Programs Thrive in USA and Brazil

Each one of us has a charism – gifts from God that allow us to live the Gospel in relation to the world around us. Each religious order also has a charism lived by members, and persons discerning religious life often choose a Community based on this charism. But, what if you are not called to be a Sister or Brother, but your heart aligns perfectly with a charism of a religious order?

In the 1960s, Vatican II directed religious congregations to revisit their roots and examine their unique charism - and redefine it in terms of the needs of the contemporary world. Laity were also encouraged to take a more active role in the Church. Providentially, this led to the modern Associate movement that has blossomed over the past 50 years.

Rooted in Franciscan spirituality and trust in our Provident God, the charism of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God has been shared with many people over the last century. In 1989, seeking to better connect and be in community with persons who share their charism, the Community formed an Associate Program in the United States. A similar program began in Brazil in 2016.

“Serving as an Associate means that I can continue to share in the Charism of the Sisters and grow spiritually through my faith sharing with Sisters and fellow Associates,” said Pat Enscoe the Community’s Director of Nursing, who has been an Associate for more than 20 years. She was first introduced to the Sisters as a nurse at the Pittsburgh Motherhouse, where she developed meaningful connections with Sisters and their charism.

Associates make a yearly non-vowed commitment to the charism and mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, and members participate in the formative experiences and spirituality of the Congregation, while still maintaining independent lifestyles and vocations.

INSPIRED by Francis of Assisi to follow Jesus Christ in total responsiveness to the Providence of God,

WE EMBRACE the evangelical life in Community, striving to live the poverty of Jesus Christ and to proclaim peace in the joy of the Spirit.

Charism of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God

“Serving as an Associate has enriched my life as a Catholic woman. I have the chance to spend time with women who have given me memories that bring peace,” said Michaele Fisher who has been an Associate for more than a decade. She met the Sisters as a volunteer taking the Sisters shopping, and she continues to help when needed.

Together with the Sisters, Associates seek to live the Gospel in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. Members are enriched by the many aspects of community life and share their charism through prayer, service and presence with the Sisters as well as with other Associates. In addition to supporting one another in prayer, Associates and Sisters meet regularly for faith sharing, as well as gather for retreats, service projects and special occasions for the Community.

“Our serving others was emphasized when we collected clothing for the homeless and we studied the encyclical *Laudato Si* encouraging our own care for the earth by recycling and care for the poor. Also, we serve each other every time we meet, forming mutual relationships of faith and community,” said Joan Ammon. Though familiar with the Sisters from when her daughter attended St. Francis Academy, Joan was introduced to the Associates eight years ago by her sister, Carol Stasik.

“I went to one of the meetings, and I was hooked,” said Carol. She was invited to the meeting by Audrey Patterson, a long-time Associate who had worked as the Motherhouse Activities Director and joined the Associate program with encouragement from then-Associate Director, Sister Maria Rainaldi.

Some who are unable to attend meetings, faith-sharing and other in-person activities due to distance or health issues serve as Prayer Associates, who make the same commitment to the Community’s mission and charism. The Community keeps in regular contact and shares materials used for Associate gatherings, shared study, prayer and private reflection. In addition to prayer and spiritual enrichment, Prayer Associates often find unique ways in which they are able to live the charism.



The first group of USA Associates made their formal commitment in 1989. Pictured are Nancy Kryger, Sister Barbara Zilch, Kathy Horgan, Valerie Gawlas, and Sister J. Lora Dambroski, who served as Associate Director. Sisters Barbara would also serve as Associate Director.

Continued on page 5

Associates (Continued from page 4)



USA Associates include (back row, left to right) Joan Ammon, Carol Stasik, Kathy Antoniazzi, Pat Enscoe, Michaele Fisher, Mary Ann Abt, Margo Fittipaldo, Johannah Jones, MaryAnn Garfold (front, left to right) Audrey Patterson, Sister Janet Gardner, and Rosemary Byrd.



Sisters Rute Almeida Guimarães, General Minister (2nd from left), Maria Goretti Avanzi (Center in gray), and Neide Teixeira (right) with our Lay Franciscans in Brazil.

“Since my aunt, Sister Mary Jaskel, was a member of our community and because the Sisters taught at my grade school, I always felt like they were my family,” said Mary Stojak who has been an Associate since the early days of the program. “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. I have done this since the late 1980s. 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 some cartoon, etc.”

“Each Associate is a blessing. We are grateful to our Provident God for the connection with those who share our charism,” said USA Associate Director Sister Janet Gardner. “Confidently, joyfully, we go forward together!”

Associate membership is open to all practicing Christians who desire to share in the charism and mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God. For more information about the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God Associate Program in the United States, please contact Sister Janet at sjgardner@osf-prov.org or 412-882-9911.

In Loving Memory

Sister Maria da Salette Nogueira Amazonas



Sister Maria da Salette Nogueira Amazonas, a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God for 70 years, died at the age of 95 on July 8, 2022, at our Paz e Bem residence in Brazil. She served many years in education ministry teaching kindergarten children. Sister also served as director of the Magisterium Course and served in missions in the northeast of Brazil. Musically talented, she enjoyed playing the guitar and singing popular Brazilian songs.

Sister M. Sofia Pereira



Sister M. Sofia Pereira, a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God for 67 years, died at the age of 85 on September 22, 2022 at our Paz e Bem residence in Brazil. In 1959, before her perpetual profession, she was one of the first 3 Sisters ministering at Dr. Eugênio Gomes de Carvalho Maternity Hospital in Minas Gerais, where she served as a nursing technician and was especially skilled at caring for small and premature infants. Later, she dedicated herself to pastoral ministry serving persons in need. A quiet and prayerful Sister, she also used her artistic talents to sew, make cards, and other handcrafts.

Sisters Move to Paramount Senior Living

"It feels like a luxury hotel," said Sister Theresa Codispoti when asked about her first night as a resident of the Paramount Senior Living in Bethel Park, PA.

For the past eight years, Sister Theresa has happily resided at the Baptist Homes Community in the South Hills. This past September, they announced that they were closing the facility in December 2022 – giving residents less than 90 days to find a new home. A committee of Sisters immediately formed to review and assess assisted-living facilities and found Paramount Senior Living was the perfect fit, as it offers quality care, needed amenities and an excellent location just 5 minutes from our Sisters living in Pittsburgh's South Hills.

Sister Terry moved to Paramount in early October and has begun establishing relationships with residents and staff so that she may offer her friendship, prayers and support as part of her



Sister Marita Dargis (top left) is ready to embrace life at Paramount Senior Living. Sister Elise Mora, right, enjoyed lunch with Sister Mary Ann Lostoski while setting up her new room in October 2022.



Mary Jane Klein helps Sister Theresa Codispoti move into her new home at Paramount Senior Living in Bethel Park, PA. A former member of the Community, Mary Jane remains a great friend to our Sisters.

ministry of presence. Remaining in the South Hills she is also able to continue to be present for those she befriended during her many years in education, parish and pastoral ministry in the area, including more than 20 years serving Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Homestead, PA.

Provisionally, Paramount also had space available for Sisters Marita Dargis and Elise Mora - our remaining Sisters living at Westminster Place in Oakmont when the Community was seeking to move closer to home. They joined Sister Theresa in late-October and are settling into their new community.

"We are grateful for this blessed opportunity to remain close as we continue to care for our common heart," said USA Area Minister Sister Janet Gardner. "After eight years missioned in Oakmont, Providence has brought our Sisters home!"

St. Pius XII Students Live Franciscan Values



St. Pius XII Franciscan School students, teachers and parents volunteered to paint homes for poor elderly neighbors in Brazil. They served with the Vila Vicentina Program, which gives elderly persons their own house rather than a nursing home setting.

Providence Provides for a Chapel in Itinga

In the rural municipality of Itinga in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, Sisters Amélia and Vandete minister to St. Anthony Parish. Their pastoral ministry includes serving several small church communities belonging to the parish experiencing extreme poverty. In need of a chapel, one of these communities - St. Jude Thaddeus - has been meeting in local homes, as well as outside on a plot of land donated to the parish. The long-term-plan of the faithful community and their pastor, Fr. Adilson, has been to build a chapel to serve as an accessible and permanent space for worship, fellowship and service of the Church. Due to scarcity of resources, this aspiration seemed like a reality for a distant future. God had other plans.

In 2021, USA Area Minister Sister Janet Gardner received a call from Marion Nelson of Spokane, Washington. Her 91-year-old father, Robert Mattos is of Portuguese descent and was searching

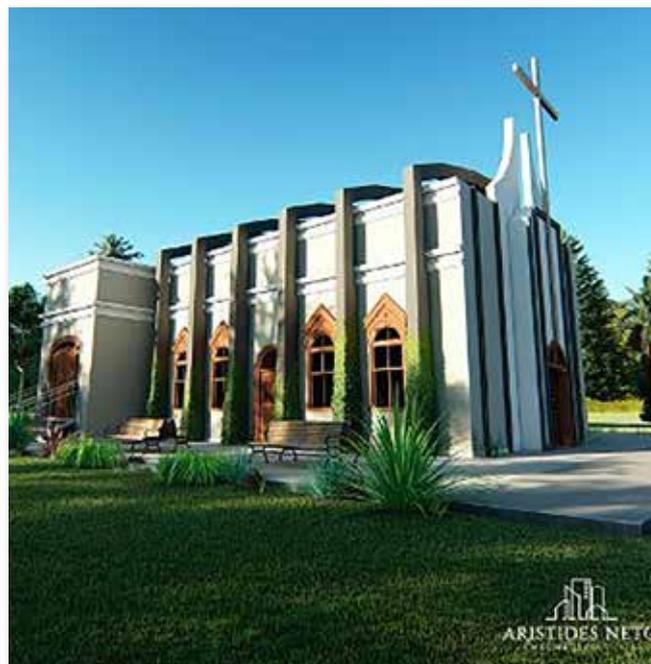


Sister Amélia and Fr. Adilson serve parishioners of St. Jude Thaddeus.

for an opportunity to fulfill his lifelong desire to build a chapel in a poor area in Brazil. Providentially, Mrs. Nelson searched the Internet and found our congregation.

Inquiring with our Sisters in Brazil, Sister Janet learned of the needs of the St. Jude Thaddeus community from Sister Amélia. Mr. Mattos pledged \$25,000 for their chapel. However, after receiving final plans from the architect, the project engineer set the needed budget to complete the chapel at \$38,000, leaving the project short on funds.

God's Providence never fails. As Sister Janet was composing an e-mail informing Mrs. Nelson about the budget challenges, our long-time friend and benefactor Trudy Comba was visiting Sister Francine at Nativity Convent. Stopping by to say "hello," she asked Sister Janet if there were any needs in Brazil. Without hesitation, she offered to cover the needed \$13,000 for the chapel project. Subsequently, Mrs. Nelson and her siblings gave a contribution for chapel pews in honor of their father.



Pictured is the architect's design of what the chapel will look like when completed.

Since funding was acquired, the city donated a larger tract of land for the project. Water and electricity are being hooked up and construction began around the Feast of St. Jude on October 29, 2022, which is also Mr. Mattos' birthday. The small, yet mightily faithful St. Jude Thaddeus community has also been working to acquire furnishings and other necessary items for the chapel to best serve as a worship and gathering space.

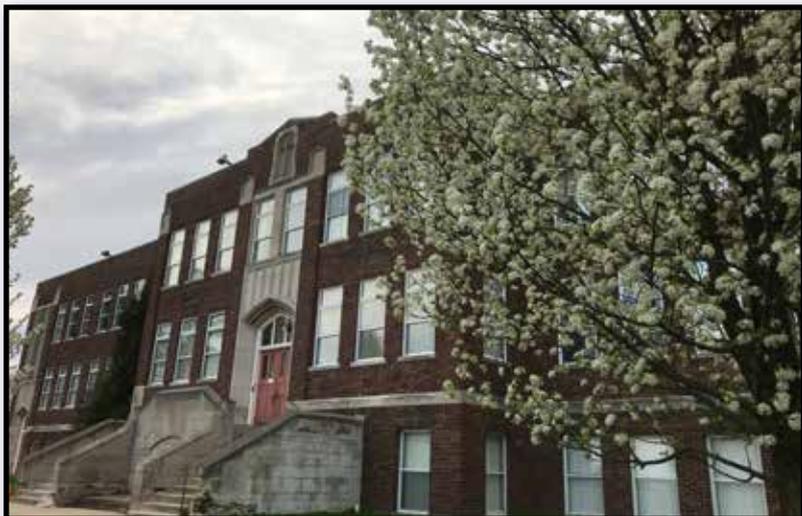


Providence called Robert Mattos to help build a chapel to serve the poor in Brazil. .



Faithful benefactor Trudy Comba, gives Sister Janet Gardner a donation of the remaining funds needed to complete the chapel project.

St. Francis Academy Memories



St. Francis Academy was the first all-girls Catholic high school in Pittsburgh's South Hills. Founded and sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, the Academy served as a bastion of Catholic Education from 1926-1991. When the Whitehall Borough Historical Society formed in June 2022, Sister Janet joined them and was asked to serve as secretary. They wished to include the rich history of the Sisters and Academy in their efforts and choose a photo of St. Francis Academy to feature in their 2023 Calendar. We also worked with the SFA Alumnae Association to prepare a display for the historic society, and wished to share some of the photos we found with our *Whitehall Franciscan* readers.

Note: Those interested in a 2023 Whitehall Borough Historical Society Calendar, should contact the group at Whitehallhistory100@gmail.com.



1926 - 1929: St. Francis Academy (SFA) began in the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God's Motherhouse Convent. During the first few years, the Academy educated only young women called to religious life. Pictured are Sister Jean Leon, Rose Gregor, Sisters Emma, Aurelia and Cecilia as young students.

In 1929, the school opened up to serve the general public as an elementary and high school. St. Francis Academy received full accreditation in 1933.



In 1939, Construction began on the St. Francis Academy building that could accommodate up to 300 elementary and high school students. In 1941, the St. Francis Academy building was officially dedicated by Bishop Hugh Boyle. The elementary was phased out by the 1950s as local parishes established their own elementary schools.



The Academy teachers offered students a solid foundation of writing and grammar, mathematics, arts and sciences, while instilling Franciscan values of serving persons in need, caring for the Earth and all creation, and striving to be instruments of peace.



The Sisters' 33-acre campus created opportunities for learning outside the classroom. Until the mid-1960s, Academy students learned about ecology from Rev. Joseph Skripkus, who served as the Sisters' Chaplain and planted over 14,000 trees, shrubs and plants on the property.



The Academy offered opportunities for students to develop their musical talents including Liturgical music services, choir and musical productions. United We Sing connected students to the Lithuanian musical heritage of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God.



St. Francis Academy's curriculum included business classes that prepared students for success in the work force, as well as community leadership and other endeavors. College prep courses were also offered to prepare students for academic pursuits beyond high school.



In 1958 the Activities Hall was built for assemblies, physical education classes and drama activities, as well as sports events with Basketball being the most popular sport offered. Pictured are fans gathered to watch a game in the 1970s, and include (front row, left to right) Sisters J. Lora, Margaret (Peg), Nancy (Theresa Marie), and Rosalie.



The Ciscans basketball team's championships included Catholic Girls High school diocesan basketball league in 1964-65; 1965-66, 1966-67 and 1974-1975. In 1978, the academy was accepted into WPIAL, and the Ciscans won the WPIAL championships in 1984-85; 1988-89; 1989-90 and 1990-1991.



Graduation ceremonies held in Mary Immaculate Chapel celebrated the graduates' academic achievements and spiritual growth. The Ring Day ceremony (pictured, left) was also a meaningful tradition for students. Senior class "ring sisters" would bestow class rings to Juniors. To many, their class rings serve as a tangible representation of the importance of their education and unique experiences during their time at the Academy.



Homeroom photo of the graduating class of 1991, which would be the last group of students to graduate from the academy.

The Gala of a Century

After two years as a virtual event, our annual Gala dinner returned bigger and better than ever thanks to our faithful friends and supporters. On Sunday, October 2, 2022, our Sisters were joined by 138 guests at the South Hills Country Club for our Centennial Gala. The afternoon began with friendly socializing amongst light refreshments at a reception that featured more than 20 basket raffle prizes, a cash raffle and 50/50 drawing.

After a delicious meal, attendees were surprised when our program began with a special guest – Sister M. Timothy (aka Sister Mary Ann Lostoski) - in full habit who told the story of our founding in 1922. She was followed by Sister M. Edward Urban speaking about our journey to Brazil and Mr. Len Barcoucky of the Knights of Lithuania who spoke about our deep connection to the Lithuanian people. Then Sisters Janice Campbell, Althea Anne Spencer and Theresa Codispoti spoke about our 100 years of education, healthcare, parish and pastoral ministry. Sister Janet concluded the program by acknowledging those with whom we collaborate, as well as the many friends and benefactors who have journeyed with us.

The Gala has been our major fundraiser for 18 years. The outpouring of generosity of our friends and benefactors made this year's Centennial Gala our most successful to date with over \$40,000 raised to support our ministries and outreach efforts, as well as the continued care of our Sisters in the United States.

Our Sisters are extremely grateful to all those who were responsible for making this year an event to remember. We especially want to applaud the Gala Committee for their organization, efforts and guidance. Additionally, we would like to thank all those in attendance, our sponsors and benefactors, everyone who bought raffle tickets or donated prizes and the many volunteers who stuffed invitations, helped decorate, and said “yes” to whatever we needed.



St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association President Wendy Hayes and Sister Mary Ann Lostoski (aka Sister M. Timothy) honored our past in vintage clothing once worn by students and Sisters.



Thank You!

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You are a Gift of Providence

The world we serve looks much different than when our Congregation was founded more than 100 years ago. Yet, our mission remains the same. We are, and have always been, Franciscan religious women who go where Providence calls us to serve persons in need, care for all God's creation and work for justice and peace.

With our Provident God as the Center and Source of our lives, we remain grateful for the strong foundation built by our Sisters who have gone before us, as well as those who encouraged and supported the founding and continued existence of our Congregation.

Blessed by Providence, we have not journeyed alone. Your presence, support and prayers have been essential to the longevity of our Franciscan mission. Throughout our journey, you have been with us in classrooms, churches, and hospitals. You have been with us serving persons experiencing poverty, grief, violence and other hardships. And, you have been with us as we care for each other and our common home.

Our journey is not over, and we remain grateful for your friendship, support and solidarity as we confidently, joyfully, go forward. May God's peace rest upon you, Christ's love flow through you, and all the blessings of our Provident God be yours.

If you wish to make a gift to further support our ministries, outreach and the care of our senior Sisters in the United States, please use the enclosed envelope or visit www.osfprov.org/how-you-can-help/donate-now. For questions or other ways you can help, please contact our Development Office at development@osfprov.org or 412-885-7232.

