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.

Celebration of a Century
A snowstorm cannot stop Franciscans!
On our 100th anniversary, March 12, 2022, Sisters, Associates and friends gathered at Resurrection Parish (St. Thomas More Church) in Pittsburgh for a centennial celebration that included a Mass and reception. The Mass was also shared online for those unable to attend due to weather, distance or other reasons. Our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who joined us in person or in spirit, as well as all who gifted our Sisters with prayers, kind messages, and generous support. We are truly humbled and overwhelmed by all the love extended to us for our 100th anniversary.

Blessings and gratitude to all whose efforts and talents gifted us with a beautiful Mass, reception and an abundance of Franciscan hospitality, including:

- Bishop David A. Zubik, Bishop David J. Bonnar, Bishop Mark A. Eckman, Rev. Fred Cain, Rev. Bernie Tickerhoof, and other clergy for the beautiful Eucharistic Liturgy;
- Bishop Eckman and Resurrection Parish for hosting;
- Daniel Kovacic, Schola choir, and Resurrection Parish musicians;
- The St. Francis Auxiliary for sponsoring the event, as well as 40 years of financial support for our Congregation;
- Shelley Carter and crew who catered the reception;
- Our Franciscan Associates, St. Francis Auxiliary, and St. Francis Academy Alumnae for the delicious and beautiful baked goods for the cookie table;
- Janet DiGregory who made and donated the Centennial cake and cupcakes;
- 100th Anniversary Committee and helpers for all the preparation and untiring work to make this event a truly meaningful celebration for all of us;
- Mimi DiGregory and Robyn Moeller for the behind-the-scenes organization, printed materials and assistance;
- Dominique Murray Photography for giving us beautiful photos and donating her time and talents.

(Confidently, Joyfully, We Go Forward! “God is with us!” (Joshua 1:9))

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Sister Janet Gardner, Mimi DiGregory and Sister Mary Ann Lostoski review printed materials.

Auxiliary Members Rosalind Gorman, Joyce Wilhelm Annette Yousko and Marie Papp.

St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association’s DeDe Kobosky Metro and Wendy Hines Hayes deliver cookies to Sister Janet Gardner for the reception.
Symbolic items carried during the procession included our Franciscan Rule and Constitution (Sister Rute Guimarães), Lithuanian sculpture representing our roots (Sister Mary Ann Lostoski), Our Lady of Aparecida representing Brazil (Sister Maria Goretti Avanzi), and our Memory Book of deceased Sisters (Sister Eliana da Silva). (Photos: Dominique Murray Photography)


Former students of our Sisters Bishop David J. Bonnar of Youngstown and Bishop Mark A. Eckman of Resurrection Parish with their teacher, Sister Elise Mora, (Photo: Dominique Murray Photography)

Pittsburgh’s Bishop David A. Zubik served as Celebrant. (Photo: Dominique Murray Photography)

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Whitehall Franciscan
We were blessed to be joined in prayer by friends like Lonna Brown, who served many years as a nurse at our Pittsburgh motherhouse. (Photo: Dominique Murray Photography)

Johannah Jones lovingly spoke about her experience as an Associate of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God (Photo: Dominique Murray Photography)

Daniel Kovacic (piano), Schola Choir, and Resurrection Parish musicians provided heavenly music. (Photo: Dominique Murray Photography)

Nancy King, a caregiver for our Sisters at Presbyterian SeniorCare, and Associate Chris Lipinski sample appetizers prepared by volunteer caterer and Auxiliary Board member Shelley Carter. (Photo: Dominique Murray Photography)

Marilou McFeaters-Briggs of our Franciscan Child Day Care Board with Sister Maria Goretti Avanzi and General Minister Sister Rute Guimarães, who traveled from Brazil to join our USA Sisters. (Photo: Dominique Murray Photography)

Joann Holzer, Sister Alma Pukel and Sister Francine McDonald reconnected at the reception.

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An Enduring Act of Sisterly Love

Sisters Place serves as a beacon of hope to many single-parent families experiencing poverty and homelessness in western Pennsylvania. As the United States experiences one of the most severe affordable housing crises in history, the work of Sisters Place continues to be as essential today as when founded almost three decades ago by an enterprising group of 14 Communities of Catholic Sisters – including the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God.

In 1993 with the support of these religious communities, grants and tenacious fundraising, the newly formed Sisters Place began the process of purchasing and renovating individual town homes in Clairton, PA. Just outside of Pittsburgh, this location was chosen due to the critical need in the area at the time. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded the agency a grant of $1 million for the acquisition, rehabilitation and operation of permanent supportive housing for single mothers and their children. With additional grants and loans, construction began in 1996. A short six months later, the first family moved into Sisters Place as part of the agency’s Permanent Housing Program.

A Transitional Housing Program was added in 2000, with additional funding from HUD. This program continues to enable families to live in rent-assisted housing for up to two years while working or attending school.

In 2011, a second permanent housing component was added to serve other disadvantaged families. As need intensified, the program was expanded to include single fathers, two-parent families and multi-generational households (those headed by retired grandparents) into the program.

In 2016, after Allegheny County voted to eliminate transitional housing from its HUD options, Sisters Place requested and was granted the opportunity to help ten more families in need of permanent housing. In 2017, the agency initiated the privately funded Empowerment Housing Program to assist an additional five families not eligible for HUD federal housing.

Moving into the City

In 2021, Sisters Place relocated its housing and programs to the Hilltop area of Pittsburgh where there is greater access to resources than they had in their former location, including public transportation, a higher ranked school district and better access to grocery stores, employment opportunities, Pittsburgh’s many colleges, universities and trade schools and other essential community support.

Sisters Place staff, volunteers and supporters embrace the core values of opportunity, empathy and diversity in their efforts to help others overcome the barriers of poverty and homelessness. Beyond providing safe and secure housing, the organization provides programs and services that focus on advancement and wellness that empowers individuals and families. Counselors serve as advocates to ensure every person receives benefits to which they are entitled. Life skills coaching, education opportunities, job readiness training and other programs empower parents to succeed in the workforce. If applicable, residents must also adhere to recovery contracts, CYF directives or probation/parole mandates. Child development specialists work closely with both parents and children and offer programs that include mentorship, a learning center, computer and library access, field trips, guest speakers and a summer camp. Opportunities to learn, to explore and to discover talents are integral to the program’s developmental and educational curriculum.

Over 90 percent of Sisters Place families transition safely into independent housing. More than 60 percent attend workforce development or post-secondary education. Over a third of parents find full or part-time work, and over half increase their household income.

Our Congregation is blessed to continue to support and serve Sisters Place. Sister Althea Anne Spencer, recently concluded nine years of Board ministry at Sisters Place, including four years as Board President. Sister Janet Gardner was recently elected Chair of the Member Board comprised of representatives from the founding communities. One of the leaders instrumental in making Sisters Place a reality in 1993, she also served as the first Board President.

For more information about Sisters Place, and ways you can join their efforts, please visit SistersPlace.org.
Sisters Celebrate Jubilees

Sister Maria da Salette Nogueria Amazonas

Sister Maria da Salette Nogueria Amazonas was born in the interior of São Paulo and entered the congregation at the age of 25. 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. At the age of 95, Sister Maria da Salette currently resides in our Recanto Paz e Bem Community where she is engaged in the ministry of presence and prayer.

Sister Ann Marie Lostoski, OSF

Sister Ann Marie Lostoski was raised in Cleveland, OH and entered the community in 1957 at the same time as her twin, Mary Ann. Sister Ann Marie earned a BA in Education at Mercy College (now Carlow University), as well as additional certifications at Duquesne University. Sister Ann Marie has had a long and varied career in education ministry that included teaching in Catholic elementary schools in Bethel Park, PA, Philadelphia, PA, Grand Rapids, MI, West Mifflin, PA, and Elizabeth, NJ, where she served for nearly a decade, her longest education assignment. After retiring from teaching, Sister continued to serve in Catholic schools in food service. In 2005, Sister Ann Marie was called to senior care and served more than 15 years at Comfort Keepers as a companion for seniors.

Sister Mary Ann Lostoski, OSF

Sister Mary Ann Lostoski grew up in Cleveland, OH and entered the community in 1957 with her twin, Anne Marie. As a member of the congregation, Sister Mary Ann continued her education, earning a B.Ed. and M.Ed. at Duquesne University. She served many years in education and school administration, including teaching assignments in Catholic elementary schools in Rochester, NY, Coopersville, MI (One of her pupils was our Sister Althea Anne Spencer.), Mahanoy City PA, Moon Run PA, Cleveland OH, and Elizabeth, NJ. She also served as principal at Mt. St. Peter in New Kensington, PA, Holy Trinity in Moon Run, PA, Saints Peter and Paul in Beaver, PA, St. Clare of Assisi in Clairton, PA and St. Joan of Arc in South Park, PA. In the 2000s, Sister Mary Ann served in leadership as a USA Provincial Councilor and as co-coordinator of Assisi Hall, the former residence for senior and infirm members in the USA. A gifted fund raiser, Sister has served as liaison to the Pittsburgh Auxiliary and organizes our February and October Raffles.
Sister Margaret Markey, OSF

Sister Margaret (Peg) Markey was raised in the South Hills of Pittsburgh, where she attended St. Bernard School and St. Francis Academy. She entered the Community in September 1957 and earned a B.S. and M.S. in Education from Duquesne University, as well as a B.A. in Liturgical Music. For more than 18 years, Sister Peg served in education ministry, which included teaching assignments at St. George in Philadelphia, St. Francis Academy and other Catholic schools in the Pittsburgh area. Providence then called her to other ministries including chaplain at the Youth Development Center in Waynesburg, PA and a case worker at Covenant House - a crisis shelter for youth in New York City. In the 1990’s, she joyfully served as a foster parent at Casa de Esperanza that cared for children suffering from the AIDS epidemic in Houston TX. In the 2000s, Sister Peg also served as a member of the congregational leadership team for eight years. She then volunteered at Beatitude House, which provides supportive housing and other services for disadvantaged women and children in Youngstown, OH. Presently, she serves as an archivist and assists with planning liturgies and funerals, as well as other administrative needs of the community.

Sister Antonina Ferreira, OSF

Sister Antonina Ferreira was orphaned at a very young age and raised by the Cenacle Sisters, who introduced her to our congregation. She attended St. Michael the Archangel Franciscan School. She served in education, as well as prepared many First Communion groups. Her Pastoral ministry included serving in our missions in the northeast of Brazil. Sister Antonina currently resides in our Recanto Paz e Bem Community.

Sister Ruth Maria Ratkevicius, OSF

Sister Ruth Maria Ratkevicius grew up in a Lithuanian neighborhood in Vila Zelina, São Paulo and attended St. Michael the Archangel Franciscan School. She served as teacher, and helped coordinate CEFEPAL - the Franciscan formation course. She also served in our Lithuania mission and spent time in the United States engaged in various ministries. Sister Ruth Maria currently resides in our Recanto Paz e Bem Community, where her ministry includes caring for the garden.

Sister Maria da Glória de Souza, OSF

Sister Maria da Glória de Souza grew up in Vila Zelina in São Paulo, Brazil with her family home on the same street as our Sisters’ convent. She attended St. Joseph Parish School where our Sisters served, and our St. Michael the Archangel Franciscan School before joining the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God in July 1957. Much of her ministry has focused on St. Pius XII Franciscan School, including 25 years serving as school administrator and subsequent years serving in administrative and finance positions. In 1996, Sister was elected to leadership and served on the General Council, whose offices were in the United States. This was the first time that a Brazilian-born Sister was elected to general leadership. Upon returning to Brazil, Sister Glória resumed her ministry at Pius XII Franciscan School, as well as served in provincial leadership for several years.

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Sister Eliana da Silva, OSF

Sister Eliana da Silva was born and raised in São Paulo, Brazil, where she entered the community in 1962. She joined Sisters in the United States in 1979 to serve in the motherhouse infirmary and later cared for infants at our Franciscan Day Care Center as a Group Supervisor. In 1995, she moved to Danbury, CT, assuming the position of pastoral minister at St. Peter’s Church, which included ministering to the local Brazilian community. She returned to Pittsburgh in 2004, and served as a certified nurse assistant at Marian Manor in the city’s North Hills prior to being appointed as co-community life minister at Assisi Hall, our former residence for senior and infirm Sisters. Today, she continues to care for our senior Sisters living at Presbyterian SeniorCare and Baptist Homes, which includes regular visits where she is attentive to our Sisters’ needs and ensures that they are receiving the best care possible. She also uses her sewing talents to mend clothing and create items for our Sisters.

Sister Amélia Corsino de Oliveira, OSF

Sister Amélia Corsino de Oliveira was born in Minas Gerais, Brazil. She attended our St. Michael the Archangel Franciscan School, as well as completed the Magisterium, which trains elementary school teachers. In her early religious life she engaged in education ministry serving young children, including preparing them for their First Communion. Sister Amélia was later called to pastoral ministries, which reflect her deep love for the poor, whom she serves with great love and affection. She served in leadership and as Formation Director, as well as in pastoral ministry in missions outside of São Paulo. She also engaged in leadership training, a ministry she continues to this day. Sister Amélia currently serves in Itinga, Minas Gerais, which is one of the poorest areas in Brazil.

Sister Helena Ângelo de Sousa, OSF

Sister Helena Ângelo de Sousa was born in Ceará, northeast of Brazil. She attended our St. Michael the Archangel Franciscan School and entered the Congregation at age 27. She served many years in education ministry at St. Michael the Archangel Franciscan School, and prepared many young children for First Communion. Within our Community, she is also known for being blessed with a beautiful singing voice.

Sister Elisa Tanaka, OSF

Sister Elisa Tanaka grew up in São Paulo. She is our only Sister of Japanese heritage. Her ministry included many years assisting with clerical duties at several of our schools in Brazil. Sister Elisa currently resides in our Recanto Paz e Bem Community, where her ministry includes caring for the neighborhood birds.
In Loving Memory

Sister Miriam Racas, OSF

Sister Miriam Racas, a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God for 81 years, died at the age of 97 on May 16, 2022. Born April 6, 1925 in Detroit, MI, Sister Miriam joined the community in 1941 from St. George Parish and earned a B.A. and M.A. in Education at Duquesne University. She served more than 50 years in education beginning at St. Casimir in Pittsburgh, PA, and followed by assignments at St. Joseph in DuBois, PA, St. George in Philadelphia, PA, SS Peter & Paul in Elizabeth, NJ, St. Peter in Kenosha, WI, St. Valentine in Bethel Park, PA, Holy Trinity in Moon Run, PA, St. George in Rochester, NY, and SS Peter and Paul in Grand Rapids, MI. She served as principal at St. Casimir, St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin and St. Valentine Schools in Pittsburgh, PA as well as Mt. St. Peter in New Kensington, PA, Holy Trinity in Moon Run, PA, St. Mary Magdalen in Homestead, PA, James Lavelle in West Mifflin, PA, and SS Peter and Paul in Grand Rapids, MI. Sister Miriam also served as principal of St. Francis Parish School in Gallup, NM as part of the Franciscan Neumann-Bachmann inter-congregational mission to serve the poor in Roswell and Gallup, NM, including Hispanic and Native American communities.

Sister Miriam ministered at Covenant House in New York City, spent two years in our Utena, Lithuania mission as a pastoral minister, served as a dietary manager at the Franciscan Spirit & Life Center, and volunteered for various ministries. In retirement, Sister Miriam served as the Receptionist Coordinator at Pittsburgh motherhouse for 9 years. In 2016, Sister Miriam moved to our Presbyterian SeniorCare Community in Oakmont, PA where she ministered through prayer and presence.

Sister Acâcia de Paula Ribeiro, OSF

Sister Acâcia de Paula Ribeiro, a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God for 68 years, died at the age of 87 on May 14, 2022 at our Paz e Bem residence in Brazil. She served in education ministry in Brazil, including St. Michael the Archangel Franciscan School and Our Lady of Carmel Franciscan School. She also served in parish, vocation and formation ministry. Sister Acâcia served at the Center for Franciscan and Pastoral Studies for Latin America (CEFEPAL) for many years. She also served vulnerable persons as a hospital chaplain in São Paulo.
Growing Up Franciscan
Franciscan Child Day Care Center Concludes its 40 Year Journey

Concluding a blessed chapter of our journey that began four decades ago, our Franciscan Child Day Care Center in Pittsburgh, PA, will close in August 2022. Humbly beginning with just a handful of children, our Community never imagined God’s plan for the Center to bloom into one of our most enduring ministries that served hundreds of children and their families. As we prepare to end this chapter of our story, join us as we remember and give thanks to our Provident God and all who made this blessing possible.

The seeds for the Franciscan Child Day Care Center in Pittsburgh, PA were planted in the late 1970’s when our Community began to recognize an increasing need for quality child care in the area. This was especially apparent to our Sisters serving families with young children in parishes and elementary schools.

In 1982, the Franciscan Child Day Care Center opened on the ground floor of St. Clare Hall – the former dormitory for St. Francis Academy. Under the guidance of Sister Marietta Zvirblis, the Center grew from caring for 13 toddlers into a full-fledged day care facility caring for over 60 infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

As waiting lists grew and wishing to respond to the need for a Before and After School program, the Center moved to a larger renovated space in the former St. Francis Academy building in 1994. A Noah’s Ark theme was chosen to reflect the Franciscan concern for all creation, as well as the property’s Peace Site designation. Each classroom was named after an animal, and walls were christened with the children’s handprints.

Embracing the philosophy that “each child is a unique and unrepeatable gift of God”, each classroom’s curriculum provided a variety of age-appropriate learning experiences to promote each child’s physical, intellectual, social and emotional development. As a ministry of the Sisters, the Center also embraced Franciscan values, including love of neighbor, peace and justice, and care for all creation. Our Sisters also remained actively involved in the Center serving as caregivers, Board members and volunteers.

“We have a special partnership with parents,” said Mrs. Merlo. “We work together to provide the best care for each individual child.”

In 2015, the Sisters’ property was bought by PennCove Realty Group, and a special agreement was made for the Franciscan Child Day Care Center to continue operating from the property until 1996.

“The love the Sisters give is wonderful, and you just can’t find that kind of added bonus elsewhere,” said parent Joyce Bollmer in an interview with the Tribune-Review in 1994.

Over the next two decades, the Center continued to grow and thrive in the peaceful and nurturing embrace of our Sisters, Board, caregivers and directors, including Sister Marietta, Carol Unrue, Sister Linda Kaman, RSM and Sandra Merlo, who guided the Center for the past 18 years. Growth during this time included an outdoor playground assembled by a volunteer group of parents in 1995 and the installation of an elevator in the building in 1999 thanks to the generosity of friends and benefactors. Additionally, the Center added Before and After School and Summer Programs for school-age children.

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ciscan Child Day Care to remain in the Academy Building—a blessing that allowed us to continue our mission of service to children and families in the area. By 2017, the Franciscan Child Day Care Center served over 90 families with approximately 130 children entrusted to their care.

Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how essential child care is to families, employers and communities. It also placed added strain on a fragile child care system in the United States that was especially felt by independent and non-profit organizations. The Franciscan Child Day Care Center persisted through the unique challenges of the past three years. However, despite the best efforts of staff, families and the Board, the Center was not able to recover from the financial losses of closures, increased operation costs, staffing shortages, and a 60% drop in enrollment. Recognizing that the Center was not able to continue to provide affordable child care at the level of quality desired and properly compensate caregivers for their dedicated service, the Board made the difficult decision to close the Franciscan Child Day Care Center as of August 19, 2022.

“We offer our heartfelt gratitude to all the families, caregivers, staff, neighbors, Whitehall Borough, donors and others who enabled us to serve children and families for 40 years,” said Sister Janet Gardner, who serves as Board President. “Though heartbroken, we look to the future with hope because you gave us this blessed opportunity to sow Franciscan seeds of peace, love for our neighbors, and care for the Earth in the hearts of future generations.”

Note: At press time, another child daycare provider has begun negotiations to use the Center’s space to expand their program and continue to offer this vital service to families. The top floors of the building continue to be used by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit that provides Head Start and other early childhood education programs.
Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God

CENTENNIAL GALA

Join us for a special Autumn Gala celebrating our 100th Anniversary!

October 2, 2022
at the South Hills Country Club

Reception with Raffles at 3:00 PM  •  Meal & Program at 4:00 PM

$75 per person  $525 per table of 8

All proceeds benefit the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God.

For more information about attending, raffle tickets or other ways you may participate, contact Robyn at (412) 885-7232 or info@osfprov.org