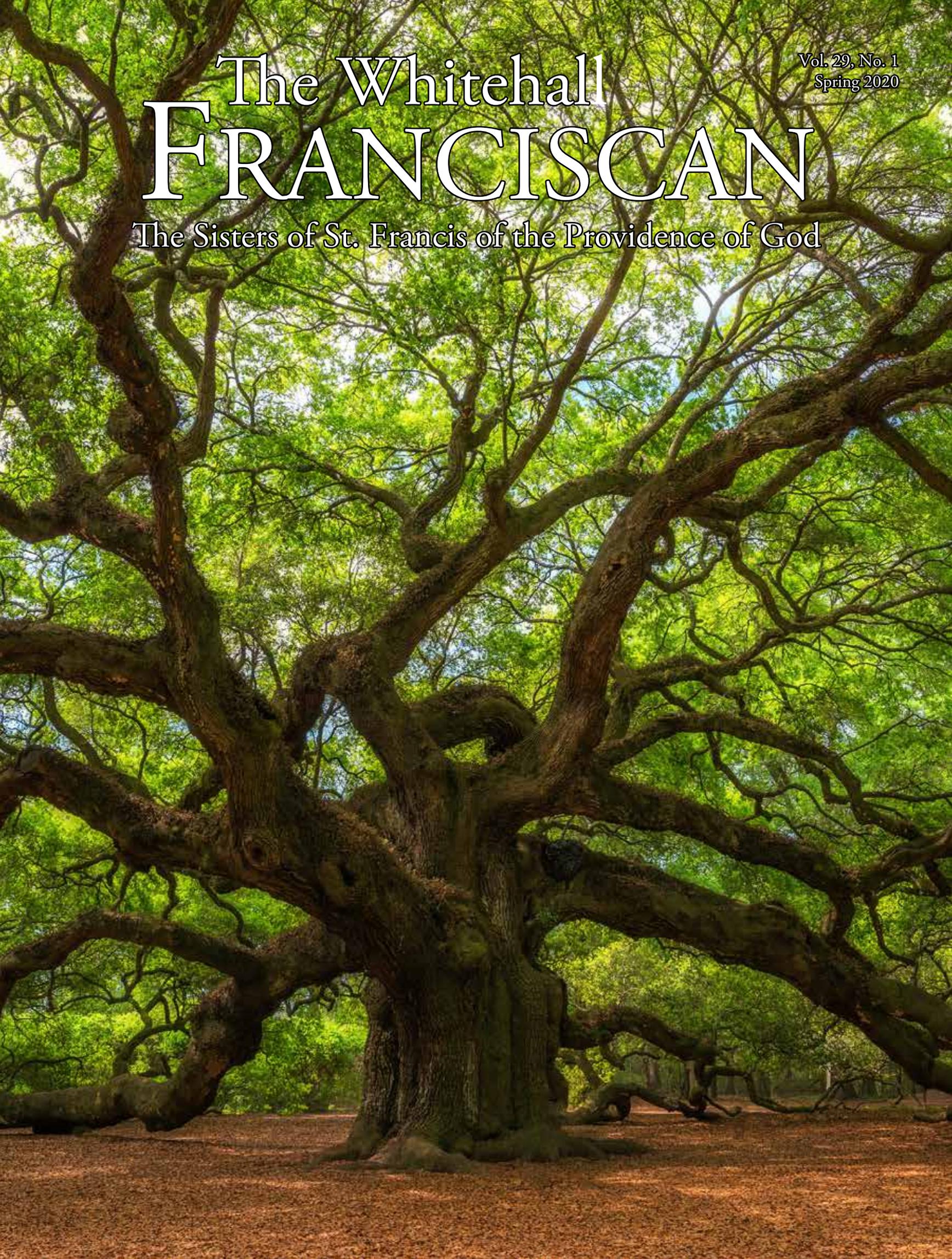


Vol. 29, No. 1  
Spring 2020

# The Whitehall FRANCISCAN

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God



## 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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Cover Photo: Angel Oak Tree in Johns Island, South Carolina estimated to be 400-500 years old. (Shutterstock)

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# Connection, Communion, Presence, Grace

A message from General Minister Sister Joanne Brazinski, OSF

**"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe"** ~ John Muir, conservationist (1838-1914)

The field of science has tried to explain for a long time that everything we observe is not *separate* but rather a participant in a vast web of relationships. The world is an integrated whole, not simply the sum of many separate parts. Nothing operates independently. Living systems and the cosmos itself are best understood as integrated parts, networked relationships. What about us as human beings on this planet?



Whether we want to admit it or not, everything and everyone is interconnected, interdependent and interrelated. We are part of a natural and social web of life that supports and sustains us. We are connected to Mother Nature and dependent on her for the things we need to keep us alive. We are also connected to family, friends, communities and a myriad of other groups. Thoughts, words and actions that flow from an awareness of this connectedness contribute to our own well-being, that of others and that of the earth.

Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, etc. - with all the technology available to us, we are a people perhaps more lonely, estranged and lost than at any other time on this planet. Cave paintings of more than 30,000 years ago show handprints on top of one another indicating a sense of belonging, connection, togetherness. What would we use today as an image of our connectedness? What are the choices we make each day about being connected?

As human beings we are social creatures; we like to know that we belong. However, we must go beyond just a sense of tribal belonging and move towards understanding and appreciating our wider universal interconnectedness, interdependence and interrelatedness. Our connectedness must be with a sense of goodwill towards all beings and a sense of care for our *Common Home*. In Pope Francis' Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Querida Amazonia*, he challenges us: "If everything is related, then the health of the society's institutions has consequences for the environment and the quality of all human life . . . If care of ecosystems are inseparable, this becomes especially important in places where the forest is not a resource to be exploited; it is a being, or various beings, with which we have to relate." Experiencing this wider connection expands our life and provides a wider context for seeing and experiencing life itself. When we forget that everyone and everything is connected and regard ourselves as separate and independent, we can easily resort to purely self-focused thoughts and actions. When we remember our common humanity and interconnectedness we think more "we" and "us," and less "I" and "me."

Margaret Wheatley describes joy as *the experience of connection, communion, presence, grace*. Think about the real moments of joy in your own life. I would suspect that many, if not all of them, happen when you are with others - the birth of a child, the wedding of a friend, the graduation of your son or daughter, family gatherings, enjoying time in nature together, etc. When we are connected with others and with nature, we enter a sacred world, a world of communion, the reality of belonging, of being present with and for one another. This relational dimension of our lives often indicates something about our interior health and sense of wholeness.

In this issue of the *Whitehall Franciscan*, we share with you, our readers, the joy of welcoming Deise Santana Santos as a novice into our Congregation and the joy of celebrating the five women who commemorate their jubilees this year. With them, we celebrate commitment, fidelity and loving service. As Franciscan women, we are aware that what affects one of us in the human community affects us all. As a Congregation, we are part of a network of relationships, connected with others concerned about life choices: human trafficking, immigration, climate change, the promotion of peace, etc. Joy is the experience of connection, communion, presence and grace. As part of the human community, global community, cosmic community, we are interconnected, interrelated and interdependent for Life. In these next weeks, we invite you to be aware of your own moments of connection, communion, presence, and grace. Take time to give thanks for these moments and celebrate them with those you love and cherish.

# Franciscan Happenings

## LCWR Commits to Fight Racism, Welcome Immigrants and Help Stop Climate Change

Nearly 700 members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) voted unanimously to commit the organization and their member Congregations to fight racism, welcome immigrants and help stop climate change. The vote took place at the organization's 2019 conference.

The vote was a result of nearly a year of work drafting and forming the statement and came at the end of a session exploring the ways racism, migration and climate change are interconnected.

"We are heartbroken by the myriad ways our one human family and Earth, our common home, suffer from disconnection, indifference, violence and fear in the face of racism, migration and climate crisis," the resolution reads in part. "Responding to God who loves all creation into being, we recommit ourselves to create communion and examine root causes of injustice."

The resolution closes with a pledge that Sisters "will use our collective voice, resources and power in collaboration with others to establish justice which reflects God's creating love." Immediately after it passed, the Sisters began to do just that: calling and e-mailing the White House and members of Congress and sharing their message on social media.

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God are long-time members of the LCWR and support its fight against racism, its welcoming of immigrants and its goal of stopping climate change.

We invite our readers to join us, not only through prayer, but also by learning more about these issues and contacting their elected representatives with their concerns. To read the resolution, please visit: [LCWR.org](http://LCWR.org).



2018 LCWR Conference attendees, including Sister Janet Gardner, gathered on the steps of the St. Louis Old Courthouse where Dred Scott sued for his freedom in 1846. There, members stood in silent prayer to remember victims of racism, as well as the systematic elimination of racism throughout the nation and the world.

## Community Blessed with Novice in Brazil



General Minister, Sister Joanne Brazinski, Sister Deise Santana Santos and Sister Antônia Maria A. Silva, Novice Director.

On February 2, 2020, our Community welcomed Deise Santana Santos into our Novitiate in Brazil. As she moves from postulant to novice, Sister Deise has further dedicated herself to prayer and service while living and contemplating the vows, religious life and charism of our Franciscan Community.

Please join us as we continue to pray for Sister Deise, women in our formation program and all persons discerning religious life.



Sisters from our Community in Brazil welcome Sister Deise.

# 2020 Jubilee Celebrations

Each year, we celebrate the jubilees of our Sisters who have been shaped by God's hand into women full of grace with a clear vision and deep faith. In a Franciscan community, jubilee is important. It is a celebration that commemorates the passage of years in which a Sister has lived the vowed life with faithfulness and fidelity. We hope you will be touched by their faith as many of you have been touched by their presence in your lives.

## 65<sup>th</sup> Jubilee

### Sister Elise Mora, OSF



Sister Elise Mora, OSF, came to our Congregation from Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in Las Vegas, NV. She began her ministry as a first grade teacher at Holy Trinity School in Moon Run before moving to St. Valentine and St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin schools. Then she embarked upon a 12-year period as the head of the language department and Spanish teacher at our St. Francis Academy. In 1981, Sister Elise began a new phase in her ministry that took her to the Bronx in New York City where she was a patient advocate at Our Lady of Mercy Hospital. She once described this period as having a profound impact on her. "The experience of working and living in the South Bronx during a time when it was synonymous with urban blight and violence changed me and I've never looked at the world in the same way since. I will always carry those people in my heart."

After seven years in the Bronx, Sister Elise worked as an Immigration Counselor in Manhattan. She then relocated to Chicago to serve as a Pastoral Associate before moving back to Pittsburgh upon her election as a general councilor for the Congregation. She also assumed the responsibilities as Liturgy Director and Justice, Peace and Environment Coordinator. During this time Sister Elise continued to serve as an adjunct instructor at St. Vincent College in Latrobe.

In 2006, Sister Elise moved to Olean, NY, where she spent ten years as an adjunct professor in Languages teaching Spanish at St. Bonaventure University. Upon her return to Pittsburgh, she became a volunteer Spanish teacher at St. Thomas More School. Throughout these years, Sister Elise continued to address the social justice needs of immigration and the environment. Her volunteer commitments included visiting Spanish-speaking inmates at the state prison in Greensburg, PA and teaching English to Cuban refugees at Ft. Indiantown Gap, PA. Sister also participated in numerous projects and services on behalf of the poor or disenfranchised in soup kitchens, shelters, housing, conscience-raising and other events wherever she ministered.

Sister Elise holds a B.A. from Carlow University and a Master's in Spanish from Millersville University. She also earned her M.A. in Religious Studies from Loyola University in Chicago.

### Remember When

Highlights from the years our USA Jubilarian Entered

- Fidel Castro comes to power in Cuba.
- Alaska & Hawaii become the 49<sup>th</sup> & 50<sup>th</sup> states.
- NASA introduces the first astronauts to the world, including John Glenn, Jr. and Alan Shepard, Jr.
- Mattel's Barbie Doll is introduced.
- Bonanza premieres on NBC, the first weekly TV series broadcast completely in color.
- Xerox launches the first commercial copier.

# Blessings, Jubilarians in Brazil!

## 65<sup>th</sup> Jubilee

### Sister Yolanda Marcelino, OSF



**S**ister Yolanda Maria de Jesus Marcelino was born in Poços de Caldas, a city in the south of Minas Gerais in southeastern Brazil. She joined the Congregation on December 1952 and professed her first vows in 1957. Sister Yolanda earned degrees in Literature and Pedagogy (study of teaching methods and practices). She dedicated herself to Education ministry in our

Congregation's schools and related ministries, such as adult literacy programs and co-founding our Saint Clare and Saint Francis of Assisi Social Center in 1993.

Sister served in Formation ministry, as well as on several of our Congregation's Leadership teams. She presently resides at our Generalate, where she assists with translations. She also continues to serve as an advisor to our Pius XII Franciscan School in São Paulo.

### Sister M. Sofia Pereira, OSF



**S**ister Maria Sofia de Souza was born in Brasópolis, a city in the state of Minas Gerais, in southeastern Brazil. She joined the Congregation in February 1954 and professed her first vows in 1957. In 1959, before her perpetual profession, she was one of 3 pioneer Sisters at Dr. Eugênio Gomes de Carvalho Maternity Hospital in Minas Gerais, where she

served as a nursing technician. Especially skilled at caring for small and premature infants, Sister delivered several babies during her ministry.

Between 1990 and 2009, Sister dedicated herself to Pastoral service in the north and northeast of Brazil, as well as central São Paulo. Sofia now lives at Recanto Paz e Bem, where she creates crafts with great perfection and engages in the ministry of prayer and presence.

## 25<sup>th</sup> Jubilee

### Sister Neide C. Teixeira, OSF



**S**ister Neide Camparotto Teixeira was born in Lobato in the state of Paraná, in southern Brazil. She joined the Congregation in 1994. She professed her first vows in 1998 and earned a degree in Theology.

Sister Neide has dedicated herself to Pastoral work in the missions served by our Congregation. She also served as coordinator

of the Vocational Animation Team, as well as a member of the Formation Team. Since 2014 she has resided at our Generalate in São Paulo and serves at Pius XII Franciscan School, as well as General Chapter Planning Committee Chair.

### Sister Vandete Barbosa de Oliveira, OSF



**S**ister Vandete Barbosa de Oliveira was born in Palmeira do Índios, in the state of Alagoas in northeast Brazil. She joined the Congregation in 1994. She professed her first vows in 1998, then studied nursing and cared for our Sisters for several years. From 2007 to 2011, she served in our Bolivia mission, providing healthcare services to the people of Guayaramerin.

Sister served in our formation house then worked at Saint Michael the Archangel Franciscan School, while studying for her undergraduate degree in Nursing. She was then assigned to Recanto Paz e Bem in 2018 to help care for our Sisters. Presently, she is assisting at our Novitiate and will finish her nursing courses in June 2020.

*We've Failed to Remember...*

## *We Are A Nation of Asylum Seekers*

*In late June, 2019, a photo of a migrant father and his daughter lying dead in the reeds at the edge of the Rio Grande River elicited shock reactions around the world. The photo of the two – Óscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez and his almost two-year old daughter, Valeria – became a symbol of the humanitarian crisis at the U.S. southern border and, for some, highlighted a number of the restrictive immigration policies that have led to this crisis.*

Those seeking asylum to the United States is nothing new. The Irish and the Germans came to America because of crop failures; the Poles due to war and poverty. Likewise, the Italians, Lithuanians and so many others, all seeking food, shelter, education and the hope for a decent future.

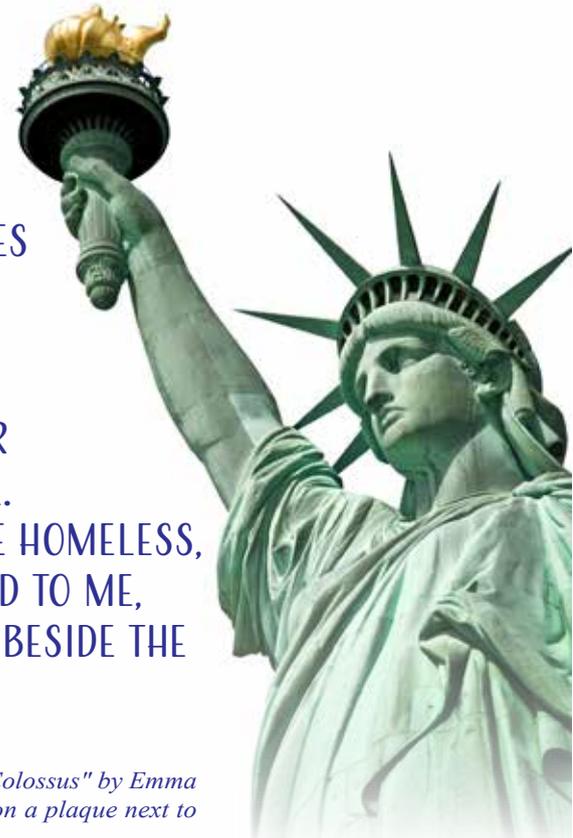
Today, the majority of those seeking the same things come from Central America, mostly Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador where rampant crime, violence and corruption is driving hundreds of thousands to flee. So often, people ask, “Why do they have to come here?” It’s no secret that providing food and shelter for their families is nearly impossible where they now live. Furthermore, the drug cartels are terrorizing both urban and rural communities, raping women and killing practically for sport.

It is often asked, “Why don’t these people just follow the rules to come here legally?” Truth is, it’s easier said than done, and for all practical purposes, it’s becoming nearly impossible. Under the United States’ current system, only the rich and well-connected can get a visa.

### **The Demise of America’s Asylum System**

It used to be the policy of the U.S. government that migrants could obtain asylum in the United States if they have “credible fear” of persecution in their home countries on account of their race, religion, nationality, political opinions or membership in a

GIVE ME YOUR  
TIRED, YOUR  
POOR, YOUR  
HUDDLED MASSES  
YEARNING TO  
BREATHE FREE,  
THE WRETCHED  
REFUSE OF YOUR  
TEEMING SHORE.  
SEND THESE, THE HOMELESS,  
TEMPEST-TOSSED TO ME,  
I LIFT MY LAMP BESIDE THE  
GOLDEN DOOR!



*Excerpt from "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus that is featured on a plaque next to the Statue of Liberty.*

“particular social group,” such as a tribe or ethnic group. Once they were granted asylum, they could obtain social services through refugee resettlement agencies and apply for a green card one year later. This is no longer the case.

Historically, most asylum seekers apprehended while trying to cross the southern border would have been placed into deportation proceedings. However, they would be released into the U.S. while awaiting a decision on their cases. Under the current administration, this has also changed dramatically.

In the three years since the current administration took power, the U.S. asylum system has almost become unrecognizable. The administration has built up, layer by layer, a series of impediments in Central America, at the border, in detention centers and in the immigration courts that have made obtaining asylum nearly impossible.

#### **Here are but a few of the restrictions.**

Early on, the administration issued a sweeping rule that prevents migrants from being granted asylum if they passed through any country other than their own before arriving in the U.S. – meaning most asylum seekers showing up at the U.S. southern border who are from any country but Mexico are effectively ineligible for asylum (although some migrants



"FOR I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD, I WAS THIRSTY AND YOU GAVE ME DRINK. I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOMED ME, NAKED AND YOU CLOTHED ME. I WAS ILL AND YOU COMFORTED ME, IN PRISON AND YOU CAME TO VISIT ME. I ASSURE YOU, AS OFTEN AS YOU DID IT FOR THE LEAST AMONG YOU, YOU DID IT FOR ME." ~JESUS

*(Matthew 25:35-40)*

would still be eligible for other protections). The administration also brokered agreements with Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador that could allow the U.S. to return asylum seekers to those countries.

When first elected, the Mexican President promised not to do the U.S.'s "dirty work" in solving the migration crisis. However, when the current U.S. administration threatened to impose tariffs on all Mexican goods, the Mexican president did an about-face – he deployed 15,000 troops to detain thousands of migrants. If detained and deported by Mexican authorities, asylum seekers may never even be able to reach the U.S. border to claim asylum.

Immigration agents who process asylum seekers – either after they stood in line at a port of entry or after being caught trying to cross without authorization – will usually send them back to Mexico under the "Remain in Mexico" policy. As an alternative, authorities can instead choose to detain them at facilities inside the U.S. The current administration has done so systematically, setting out to indiscriminately prosecute and detain anyone who tries to cross without authorization, even if they ask for asylum, under its "zero tolerance" policy.

As a result, record numbers of asylum-seeking families are sent to detention centers who typically would have been released under previous administrations. The rationale – the practice of releasing families, what Trump called "catch and release" – was encouraging migrants to come to the U.S. and keeping them in detention would deter further migration.

Getting in line at the U.S.-Mexican border doesn't work anymore. If asylum seekers reach the border, they can either line up at a port of entry and wait to be processed or try to cross the border without authorization. However, immigration officials started limiting the number of asylum seekers they processed, forcing the others to wait in Mexico, where shelters are at capacity and many are forced to sleep in the streets. Small wonder their prospect of crossing the border without authorization has become a more attractive option.

"It creates a huge incentive for migrants to cross the border between ports of entry in an unauthorized manner, step on U.S. soil, and then make what is known as a 'defensive' asylum claim," said Christopher Wilson, deputy director of the Mexico Institute at the Wilson Center. (*Politifact.com*; "Fact-checking Julián Castro's claim that asylum 'metering' caused drowning of father, daughter.")

Space does not allow us to list the many other impediments, but needless to say, we are no longer a nation of asylum seekers.

## How We Can Help

**Pray** - Pray that persons seeking asylum be granted mercy, hope and justice.

**Give** - Support the work of organizations helping families caught in crisis and asylum seekers who have been separated from their children at the border.

**Speak out** - Contact your Senators and Representatives with your concerns that treatment of asylum-seekers at the border be just and humane.

## Learn More

*The following resources were used for this article and can provide more information on this complex issue.*

**Justice for Immigrants** (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops)  
[www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org)

**Migration Policy Institute**  
[www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org)

**Catholic Legal Immigration Network**  
[cliniclegal.org](http://cliniclegal.org)

## Prayer for Migrants and Refugees

Jesus, when you multiplied the loaves and fishes, you provided more than food for the body, you offered us the gift of yourself, the gift which satisfies every hunger and quenches every thirst! Your disciples were filled with fear and doubt, but you poured out your love and compassion on the migrant crowd, welcoming them as brothers and sisters.

Jesus, today you call us to welcome the members of God's family who come to our land to escape oppression, poverty, persecution, violence, and war. Like your disciples, we too are filled with fear and doubt and even suspicion. We build barriers in our hearts and in our minds.

Jesus, help us by your grace,

- To banish fear from our hearts, that we may embrace each of your children as our own brother and sister;
- To welcome migrants and refugees with joy and generosity, while responding to their many needs;
- To realize that you call all people to your holy mountain to learn the ways of peace and justice;
- To share of our abundance as you spread a banquet before us;
- To give witness to your love for all people, as we celebrate the many gifts they bring.

We praise you and give you thanks for the family you have called together from so many people. We see in this human family a reflection of the divine unity of the one Most Holy Trinity in whom we make our prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen

*Prayer from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB.org)*

# Franciscan Spirit in Action

## Saint Francis Academy Alumnae Association Continues School's Legacy



Among the many blessings they give to our Sisters, DeDe Kobosky Metro '69 and Linda Straub Cline '72 serve as part of the SFA Alumnae team that coordinates and runs the raffles at our Autumn Gala. Linda also serves on the Gala Committee with several other Alumnae.



SFA Legacy Scholarship Chair Clare Horne Rex '67 (center) with 2019 Legacy Scholars Monife Obiri and Caroline Zini.

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God educated over 3,000 students at St. Francis Academy in Pittsburgh. Beyond the academic curriculum, the mission of our Sisters and lay-educators was to prepare students to bring about positive change through their faith and actions. Today, we are blessed to witness alumnae continue to exemplify our Franciscan values and live as instruments of God's love and peace.

The St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association brings alumnae, teachers and friends together to serve as a community of support for one another, as well as engage in charitable endeavors. Beneficiaries of their generosity include our Sisters and those we serve, the Franciscan Child Day Care Center and Sisters Place - a supportive housing ministry for single parent families. In 2008, the association established the SFA Legacy Scholarship to provide financial assistance and a community of support to young persons pursuing a Catholic education. As of March 2020, the SFA Alumnae Association has awarded 22 scholarships and will award two additional scholarships at their Tulip Luncheon in April.

The SFA Alumnae Association publishes a semi-annual newsletter and organizes events to foster relationships among members, including the annual Tulip Luncheon, Alumnae Mass, fall vendor and craft show, and bus trips. The Association generously sponsors our Sisters attendance at these events, as well as enthusiastically supports our events like our Autumn Gala fundraiser. They also help connect alumnae interested in organizing class reunions.

For more information about the St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association, please visit: [saintfrancisacademyalumnaeandsisters.com](http://saintfrancisacademyalumnaeandsisters.com) or e-mail [sfaalumnaeandsisters@yahoo.com](mailto:sfaalumnaeandsisters@yahoo.com).

## St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association Events (All Alumnae, Family & Friends Welcome)

### 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Tulip Luncheon

Sunday, April 19, 2020  
10:30 am – 2:30 pm

Hilton Garden Inn/Southpointe  
1000 Corporate Dr; Canonsburg, PA 15317

### 30th Annual SFA Alumnae Mass

Sunday, September 20, 2020  
11:00 am – 1:30 pm

South Hills Country Club  
4305 Brownsville Rd; Pittsburgh, PA 15236

### Fall Bus Trip: Cuyahoga Excursion

Saturday, October 17, 2020

Departs from SFA Alumnae Office  
Advent Church next to St Pius X  
3010 Pioneer Ave; Brookline, PA 15226

For more information about events, please visit [saintfrancisacademyalumnaeandsisters.com](http://saintfrancisacademyalumnaeandsisters.com) or contact the Alumnae Association at [sfaalumnaeandsisters@yahoo.com](mailto:sfaalumnaeandsisters@yahoo.com)

# Can't We All Get Along?

*With the recent rise in tensions in the Mideast, we thought it appropriate to talk about the bonds among Christians, Muslims and Jews dating back to the Old Testament.*

**A**t a previous Franciscan Federation Conference in Buffalo, NY, attended by several of our Sisters, one of the main topics for discussion was the relationship between Christians, Muslims and Jews.

As we know, today's world is divided on numerous issues, not the least of which is the discord between Christian and Jewish nations and their Muslim counterparts. Trapped in the middle of this dilemma are countless Muslim refugees fleeing the Middle East, a region plagued by violence and war for far too long. The fact is, they are simply in search of a safe space in which they can raise their families in peace. Yet, there is an enormous amount of mistrust among the people of other faiths as these families are mistakenly assumed to be seeking refuge in Christian nations to encourage the campaigns of ISIS, Boko Haram and other terrorist groups.

Perhaps it would be helpful if we were to examine our faith histories. You might be surprised to discover there is much which unites us rather than divides us.

Genesis 21:5, 8-20 tells us that Abraham and his wife, Sarah, were "advanced in years" and had no children. Since the fulfillment of God's promise required offspring, as they got older, the couple began to worry about whether Abraham would ever have an heir. It's further described that Sarah gave her slave girl, Hagar, to Abraham so as to produce an heir. From this brief union came a son, Ishmael.

About fifteen years later, a son was born to Abraham and Sarah. His name was Isaac. Sarah, worried that Ishmael might share in Abraham's birthright, demanded that Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael away. Scripture describes how Abraham was deeply troubled by this but God instructed him to "heed the demands of Sarah" because it was through Isaac that descendants would bear his name. However, God assured Abraham that he would also make a great nation of Ishmael, "because he too is your offspring."

So, Abraham dispatched Hagar and her son to the desert with "some bread and a skin of water." This looks like rather scant resources but it was thought that the pair would soon reach an agreement. But plans didn't work out that way. Soon their resources were used up, so Hagar sent Ishmael away in order not to see him die. Ishmael began to cry. God heeded the boy's cry and a messenger called to Hagar: "What is the matter, Hagar? Don't be afraid; God has heard the boy's cry. Arise, lift him up and hold him by the hand: for I will make of him a great nation." Hagar then saw a well; she filled the skin with water and let her son drink. "God was with the boy as he grew up." Ishmael had three wives, twelve sons and one daughter. He was the ancestor



*Jerusalem, as seen above from the Mount of Olives, is a city of major significance for the world's three largest monotheistic religions: Judaism, Islam and Christianity.*

of several Arab tribes and the forefather of Muhammad who would establish a "great nation." Ishmael is mentioned ten times in the Koran alongside patriarchs and prophets.

Let us consider the parallels in the lives of Ishmael and his half-brother, Isaac, who also fathered twelve sons who would become leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel. Isaac's children, the Hebrew people, lived in Egypt for two hundred years until Moses led them into the Promised Land, a land also inhabited by the descendants of Ishmael.

These lands are familiar to Christians as the birthplace of Jesus. He was born, lived his entire life and died there on the cross. Matthew 1:1-17 begins the Gospel, "A record of the origin of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac . . ." and continues on until ". . . and Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." Thus there are fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile in Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.

Indeed, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are together regarded as "Abrahamic" religions, insofar as all three share common roots which are traced back to Abraham. All three emphasize their special covenant with God, for Judaism through Moses, Christianity through Jesus, and Islam through Muhammad.

Reflecting on our shared Abrahamic origins poses the question, "Can't we just all get along?" This invites us to see all persons through God's eyes. We can all agree that bombings and threats of violence toward Muslims and their houses of worship are not okay. Neither are unjust laws which bar them from our country because of their faith.

Let us work to promote peace and not discord. Let us remember the admonition of Jesus, "Love one another as I have loved you." (John 13:34)

# The Gift of Ageing in Place

## Senior Sisters Benefit from the Generosity of our Auxiliary, Sarah Fund Donors and Pittsburgh Diocese

All of our Sisters living and serving in Pittsburgh are over age 60 – many in their 80s and 90s. The blessing of growing older comes with many humbling challenges to which we must adapt. Through God's Providence, our Community was recently blessed with the support needed to adapt two of our homes to be more safe and ac-



*Sister Francine McDonald shows off one of the newly renovated senior-friendly bathrooms at Nativity Parish.*

cessible – giving our Sisters the gift of aging in place from which they can continue to minister and serve others.

In December, a generous gift from our Auxiliary and additional support from our Sarah Fund donors funded much needed renovations of two bathrooms at Nativity convent, a former parish rectory. Safety improvements included walk-in-showers, hand rails and higher toilets that benefit the health and quality of life of our Sisters and guests. Nativity convent often hosts Community gatherings, as well as meetings of our Auxiliary, Autumn Gala Committee and others. Sisters recovering from medical procedures or illnesses also stay with our Sisters in Nativity convent.

At 80-years old, Sister Peg Markey remains actively engaged in ministry, including overseeing our Congregation's archives and assisting with administrative needs and Community functions such as funerals and jubilee celebrations. Living with mobility challenges due to age and lasting effects from a car accident over 40 years ago, she was unable to safely navigate stairs to access her home's laundry facilities and garage.



*Sister Peg Markey demonstrates her home's new stair lift that gives her safer access to laundry facilities and the garage.*

In early 2020, our Community was blessed with a grant from the Pittsburgh Diocese Religious Retirement Fund for the purchase and installation of a straight rail stairlift that provides Sister Peg safe access to all the spaces of her home.

Thank you to our Auxiliary, Sarah Fund Donors and the Pittsburgh Diocese for your generosity and support which allows our Sisters to continue to live and serve Pittsburgh.

## Sister Althea Anne Spencer Appointed to Serve as St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association Moderator

Sister Althea Anne Spencer was recently appointed the new moderator for the SFA Alumnae Association, taking over from the late Sister Barbara Zileh who served as moderator for almost two decades. In her new role, Sister Althea will represent the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God on the SFA Alumnae Association Board serving as an advisor and moderator.

Sister Althea Anne taught at St. Francis Academy for 11 years in the business department. In addition to education ministry, she has also served in leadership and vocation/formation ministry for our Community. Sister Althea Anne presently ministers as a spiritual director, group facilitator and massage therapist. She serves as Sisters Place Board President and Treasurer for the Franciscan Federation, as well as on the Franciscan Child Day Care Center Board and Pittsburgh Religious Vocations Council.



*Sister Althea Anne Spencer with SFA Alumnae Association Board Members Maria Ammon '84, Lori Husak Lukich '85 and Angela Zinger Walker '85 at the 2015 Autumn Gala.*

# In Prayerful Memory

## Sister Dolorita Butkus, OSF



Sister Dolorita Butkus, OSF, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God for 78 years, passed away on December 21, 2019, at the age of 97. Born in Elizabeth, NJ, she attended Sts. Peter and Paul School under the guidance of our Sisters and graduated from Battin High School. She was one of three children of Lithuanian immigrants, Joseph and Lenora. She described her family as “very close-knit where there was much love, gentleness, kindness and consideration.”

Sister entered the Congregation in January, 1941, once explaining how she “had never been to Pittsburgh.” She began her ministry as most of our Sisters did, as a teacher for three years, before enrolling at St. Francis School of Nursing in Peoria, IL where she trained to be an R.N. While serving at Good Samaritan Hospital in Mt. Vernon, IL, she trained as a certified registered nurse anesthetist and registered respiratory therapist. Sister served as the Director of Respiratory Therapy at Good Samaritan for 25 years.

Her ministry took a different direction in 1975 when, following studies in pastoral care, she was named Director of Pastoral Care at both Good Samaritan and St. Joseph Hospital in Alton IL, as well as hospitals in Joplin, MO and Omaha, NE, ministering for the next 15 years. She remarked, “I hope to bring Christ to the people of God . . . to make the love of God real through me, through my ministry.”

In lieu of a trip for her 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee, Sister asked to live at a hermitage at Mount St. Francis in upstate New York. She loved her time there and often joyfully spoke of the experience.

In 1992, after the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, Sister volunteered, at the age of 70, to pioneer our newly established mission in Lithuania. Here, she helped establish St. Clare Hospice for the elderly poor where the staff continues to provide terminally ill patients with professional and loving care. Housed in a building that had been vacant for three years, she began the hospice with practically nothing, obtaining donations of beds, mattresses, sheets and linens. Her voluminous correspondence to her many friends back in the U.S. as well as donations from various U.S.-based Lithuanian organizations also brought much needed funding.

Once again responding to the needs of those on the margins of society, she and Sister Michelle Garas, another member of our Congregation, established a food distribution program in 2005. With a grant from Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, they regularly distributed over 300 bags of groceries on a designated Sunday each month to those most in need. Their food bank continues today. Concerning her time in Lithuania, Sister once wrote, “Our people deserve our very best, our 100 percent.”

In 2014, due to health concerns, Sister Dolorita moved to Westminster Place, Presbyterian SeniorCare in Oakmont, where she continued to spread God’s love and offered counseling and consolation to other residents.

## Maximize Blessings with Recurring Gifts

Every donation – no matter the size – profoundly blesses the lives of our Sisters and those we serve. The timing of a gift can magnify such blessings, which is why a growing number of our donors are choosing to make recurring gifts.

### What is a Recurring Gift?

Recurring gifts are planned donations where the same amount is given at the frequency of your choosing – monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or yearly. These gifts can be modified or stopped at any time. Convenient and flexible, recurring gifts are designed best fit your lifestyle and budget. Many of us pay bills or subscribe to monthly services, and monthly giving can be a natural extension. Or, quarterly or semi-annual gifts may better fit into your life and budget.

### How Do Recurring Gifts Benefit the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God?

If we know when we are going to receive a gift, our Sisters can better plan how to use the gift. Reliable support allows us to better budget and plan our ministries, outreach and care of our senior Sisters. It also helps us prepare for emergencies and times when we receive less support.

### How Are Recurring Gifts Made?

Some of our donors set up recurring gifts through their bank or credit union so that the Sisters receive a check each month or other frequency. Others choose to set it up with a credit card via our secure online giving site - [www.osfprov.org/how-you-can-help/donate-now](http://www.osfprov.org/how-you-can-help/donate-now) - or by calling our Development Office at 412-885-7232.

*Editor's Note: The above is for informational purposes. Always consult your financial advisor as to what charitable giving is best for you.*



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