

# The Whitehall FRANCISCAN

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Fall 2023

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God



# 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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# We Give Thanks for YOU!

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

Blessed by Providence, we have not journeyed alone and give thanks each day for you - and each person whose 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. The *Whitehall Franciscan* is just a glimpse of the love of Christ we've been blessed to witness thanks to the many with Franciscan hearts who respond to the needs of our Sisters and those we serve. Such generosity and kindness has had a profound impact on our efforts to care for our common home and our common heart.

As we go forward into the final months of 2023 with grateful hearts, please know that you are counted among our special blessings and remembered in our prayers. May God's peace rest upon you, Christ's love flow through you, and all the blessings of our Provident God be yours.

Peace and Every Good!



Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God



## Please Remember Our Sisters in Your Year End Charitable Giving



If you wish to make an end-of-year 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](http://www.osfprov.org/how-you-can-help/donate-now). For questions or other ways you can help support our Sisters and ministries, please contact our Development Office at [development@osfprov.org](mailto:development@osfprov.org) or 412-885-7232.

# Celebrating and Growing Together

This summer, our Sisters in the United States and Brazil gathered in Pittsburgh and São Paulo for our annual Assemblies of Corporate Reflection (ACR) where they renewed the dedication to our Franciscan mission to care for our Common Home and Common Heart.

Sisters in the United States met in Pittsburgh from June 21-23, 2023 beginning with a day of reflection that included contemplating the gift of aging and opportunities to embrace our Franciscan spirituality and mission in each season of our lives. A memorial service was also held at St. Casimir Cemetery in gratitude for the gift of each deceased Sister who faithfully contributed to the life and mission of our Congregation. After ACR concluded, our Sisters in the United States celebrated Sister J. Lora Dambroski's 60th Jubilee. As an added blessing, our Sisters in the US were joined for ACR and Jubilee by our General Minister, Sister Rute Guimarães and Councilor Sister Neide Teixeira from Brazil. During their visit they joined USA-based General Councilor Sister Janet Gardner to visit to each of the seven communities of our Sisters in Pittsburgh.

ACR was held in Brazil from July 10-14, 2023 and had a special focus on formation and vocations outreach. Sister Janet traveled from Pittsburgh to be with our Sisters during this faithful gathering. After ACR concluded, our Sisters recognized Jubilarians. Sisters M. Conceição C. Rodrigues and Suzana Kirkila are celebrating 70 years, Sister Flávia Quintanilha is celebrating 65 years, and Sisters Maria do Carmo Pereira and M. Isabel Rosa are celebrating 50 years as Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God.



# Archives Journey to Brazil

**M**irroring the journey of our first Sisters to serve in Brazil, this summer our Archives moved from Pittsburgh to its new home at our Generalate in São Paulo.

Throughout the years, the mission of the Archives of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God has been to collect, preserve and make accessible documents, photographs, records, artifacts and other materials related to the Congregation's history. More than facts and information, the Archives preserves the story and heritage of our Community, Sisters and ministries within the vital context of our Franciscan spirituality, mission and charism.

Mother M. Aloysia Yurgutis was the first Sister to take on archivist work from 1950-56 while she served as General Council secretary. Sisters in leadership continued her efforts. In 1969, a fireproof repository room was included in the newly constructed wing to our Pittsburgh Motherhouse to house all the important materials collected.

Mother M. Loyola Sebelskas was appointed the Congregation's first official Archivist in 1976. She was succeeded by Sister Mary Jaskel and lay archivists Emily (White) Oxenreiter and Dennis Wodzinski. Archives assistants included Sisters Beatrice Siratavic, Marianne Walters and M. Edward Urban with other Sisters volunteering as needed.

Sister Peg Markey volunteered to assist Sister Mary Jaskel for a summer in the early 1990s. Deeply interested in our Community's history, she excelled and Sister Mary encouraged her to continue serving in the archives.

"I told her, you do not want me, because I clean out," said Sister Peg recalling Sister Mary's faithful dedication to preserving every piece of our history and heritage for future generations.

In 2015, our Archives needed some cleaning out. After the sale of our Pittsburgh campus, our Archives moved from the Motherhouse to new administrative offices where a climate controlled and secure suite served as a repository. Additionally, the Archives received an onslaught of files, records, photos and



*Sister Peg Markey (front) and Sister Janet Gardner with workers from South Hills Movers as they packed up the final boxes of archives documents and photos to ship to our Generalate in Brazil.*

other materials submitted by Sisters, leadership, ministries and offices during this time of change. All of it needed sorted and organized to be preserved. There were also many duplicate, triplicate and extraneous materials to remove from our Congregational archives at this time.

When our Generalate (Congregational Offices) transferred to São Paulo in 2016, it was decided that, when ready, our Congregational Archives would follow. Providence called Sister Peg back to lend assistance. She took over the archives in 2017, when Mr. Wodzinski was called to serve as a Diocesan Archivist – first for the Greensburg, then Pittsburgh Diocese.

Following guidelines set by past archivists, Sister worked tirelessly for six years to sort, preserve and prepare files, photos and items for the journey. During this time, conditions in the basement office suite became less than ideal and the Archives moved to a space in the former St. Francis Academy building, which Sister Peg felt invigorated her efforts. She also felt knowing the Sisters helped her organize and discern why something may be important to an individual's journey, but not necessarily need to be preserved going forward.

Sister Peg was also assisted for a year by Dr. Eileen Leindecker Gimper, who wrote our Congregational History. USA Area Minister Sister Janet Gardner offered guidance for tougher decisions, as well as did much of the physical labor of moving boxes, shredding, and taking paper to be recycled. Photos and certain documents were also scanned and saved electronically, so our Sisters and staff in the United States have quick access when needed.

In early 2023, the Archives were ready for the journey. South Hills Movers was commissioned to pack up more than 160 boxes of documents, photos and artifacts per customs regulations.



*Sister Mary Jaskel served as our Congregational Archivist from 1990-2005.*

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**

# Franciscan Eucharistic Ministry Team

Our former campus in Pittsburgh, Mt. Providence, looks much different than when our Sisters called it home. Yet, our Franciscan spirit remains through the presence of our Sisters for those living on the grounds. Sister Mary Ann Lostoski, and Associate Rosemary Byrd serve as Eucharistic ministers for Our Lady of Hope Parish, a consolidation of Nativity, St. Valentine, St. Germaine and St. Gabriel of the Sorrow Virgin churches. Every Tuesday, they bring Communion to around 40 residents of South Hills Square.

“We weren’t expecting so many people. The first time we did it, we ran out of hosts,” said Sister Mary Ann. “Now we make sure we have extra.”

As interest in receiving Communion in the South Hills Square community grows, Rosemary and Sister Mary Ann also answer the call to visit and bring Communion to residents unable to leave their rooms. Beyond sharing the Eucharist, Sister Mary Ann and Rosemary have formed friendships with residents through listening as they share blessings and challenges, praying for them and their loved ones, and sharing opportunities to join our Sisters for events, food drives, and various outreach efforts.

“There is a lot of connection to St. Gabes,” said Sister Mary Ann who has been blessed to reconnect with residents from St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin, where she taught in the school for many years.

After visiting South Hills Square, Sister Mary Ann brings Communion to our Sisters at Paramount Senior Care with the exception of Tuesdays when Mass is offered at the facility. On those days, they stay longer at South Hills Square to share coffee and embrace friendship with residents.



*Sister Mary Ann Lostoski (above) and Associate Rosemary Byrd (left) serve Communion to residents at South Hills Square.*

## Visiting with Anne



*Anne Kolicius and Sister Janice Campbell during a visit in April. (Photo: Bill Kolicius IV)*

Just after her 99th birthday Anne (Skrabis) Kolicius was visited by Sister Janice Campbell, where she reminisced about her Lithuanian heritage and family including humorous stories of her late-father and heartfelt memories of her loving husband Bill, who died in 2008. A loving and devoted mother and grandmother, she proudly shared with Sister Janice updates on her children and grandchildren.

Earlier this year, Sister Janice concluded her hospice ministry, but remains in Pittsburgh’s North Hills serving Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish – a consolidation of St. Mary of the Assumption Church and St. Ursula Church, where she has served for over a decade as a pastoral associate which encompasses caregiver ministry, bereavement group facilitation, and assisting families with funeral planning. She also continues to serve our Community by driving Sisters to appointments, community gatherings and outings.

Sister Janice’s ministry of presence in the Parish includes offering friendship, counsel and prayers, as well as visits with parishioners and bringing Communion to those unable to attend Mass. She has been blessed by cherished friendships with parishioners, including Anne. Known as an excellent hostess, she would often invite Sister and other members of the Church to her home for tea. After the loss of her

husband, Anne participated in a parish bereavement group facilitated by Sister Janice, who recalled Anne’s supportive friendship with another widow whom she met in the group.

“In her later years, Anne took example from the phrase she read in the Magnificat magazine: “my mission is to spread love” which actually was quoting Saint Therese of Lisieux,” Sister Janice shared. “She lovingly established her mission of smiling and presence to people. She always had a smile over my 20 years of knowing her.”

Sister Janice’s visit with Anne concluded on a beautiful note. After sharing her gratitude and joyful anticipation of her 100th birthday in April, she sang Sister Janice a Lithuanian song taught to her by her mother.

# Let Justice and Peace Flow

## Christians Around the World Unite for the Season of Creation

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the word “creation” has a broader meaning than “nature”, for it has to do with God’s loving plan in which every creature has its own value and significance. Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion.

(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 76)

Creation is crying out to us all. In just the past few months we’ve witnessed unprecedented wildfires in Canada, floods in the north east United States, and record-breaking heat waves throughout the world. As we approach the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, this season calls us – and all persons of faith to embrace our role as stewards of the Earth and all God’s creation.

The Season of Creation from September 1 – October 4 invites more than 2 billion Christians around the world to come together to renew our relationship with God and all creation, and commit ourselves to go forward in hope to care for our common home. The seeds for the Season of Creation were planted in 1980 when Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I proclaimed September 1 as a day of prayer for creation for the Eastern Orthodox Christians. Seeking to unite Christians, the World Council of Churches later expanded the day into a special month-long observation concluding on the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology. Pope Francis made the Roman Catholic Church’s observation of the season official in 2015, the same year *Laudato Si’* was published.

“The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion... The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things.”

(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 219 & 233)

As Franciscans, the Season of Creation is an opportunity to embrace our mission to care for our common home. The Catholic Church’s observation recommends contemplative prayer, reflection and action where the faithful are encouraged to:

- **Reaffirm our personal vocation to be stewards of creation.** This includes reflecting on our daily habits and re-

## Changing Habits to Care for the Earth



Our Sisters have been recycling for decades, but even this good habit needed some adjustments. Much plastic isn’t recycled due to cross contamination, and in recent years our Sisters have been doing our best to only include items accepted by our municipality, wash out containers and recycle things like paper and glass separately. Sisters Francine McDonald and Mary Ann Lostoski are pictured taking paper to a paper recycling drop-off bin.



This past spring, our Sisters switched to laundry detergent sheets and wool dryer balls in an effort to reduce plastic usage in detergent packaging and dryer sheets. Our USA Area Minister Sister Janet Gardner is pictured carefully reviewing the different brands of laundry detergent sheets available.

lationship with creation, learning more about environmental concerns and related injustices, and discerning what actions we can take to better care for the earth and each other.

- **Thank God for all Creation.** Striving to truly see God in all creation, we are grateful for the beauty, wonder and life that surround us.
- **Ask God for guidance and help in the care of creation.** We are also called to examine our conscience and seek pardon for the sins committed against creation.

*("Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Establishment of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation," 2015 & United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2017)*

**"Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."**

(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si,* 49)

"Let Justice and Peace Flow," is the theme for Season of Creation 2023 calling us to be instruments of peace and care for the most vulnerable persons among us. The cries of creation include persons experiencing poverty, famine, war, displacement, diseases, and other hardships often intensified - or directly related to - rising temperatures, extreme weather, biodiversity loss, pollution and other environmental suffering. Our response must go beyond ecology and address issues of injustice.

This Season of Creation, you are invited to join Sisters and Associates in our Franciscan mission to care for our common home. Every Wednesday during the Season of Creation, our Sisters will send out a special issue of our e-mail newsletter that will include a reflection and resources. This will also be shared on our website – [osfprov.org](http://osfprov.org) - and Facebook page - [facebook.com/osfprov](https://facebook.com/osfprov). To sign up for our e-newsletter, please visit [www.osfprov.org](http://www.osfprov.org) or e-mail [info@osfprov.org](mailto:info@osfprov.org).

*For more information on the Season of Creation, please visit:*  
[seasonofcreation.org](http://seasonofcreation.org)



2023  
**SEASON OF CREATION PRAYER**

**Creator of All,**  
From your communion of love life sprung forth like a mighty river and the whole cosmos came into being.

On this Earth of overflowing love, the Word was made flesh and went forth with the life-giving waters proclaiming peace and justice for all creation.

You called human beings to till and keep your garden. You placed us into right relationship with each creature, but we failed to listen to the cries of the Earth and the cries of the most vulnerable. We broke with the flowing communion of love and sinned against you by not safeguarding the conditions for life.

We lament the loss of our fellow species and their habitats, we grieve the loss of human cultures, along with the lives and livelihoods that have been displaced or perished, and we ache at the sight of an economy of death, war and violence that we have inflicted on ourselves and on the Earth.

Open our ears to your creative, reconciling and sustaining Word that calls to us through the book of Scripture and the book of creation. Bless us once again with your life-giving waters so that the Creator Spirit may let justice and peace flow in our hearts and overflow into all creation.

Open our hearts to receive the living waters of God's justice and peace, and to share it with our suffering brothers and sisters, all creatures around us, and all creation.

Bless us to walk together with all people of good will so that the many streams of the living waters of God's justice and peace may become a mighty river all over the Earth.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation, Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

**Let Justice and Peace Flow**  
Season of Creation 2023

**SEASON OF CREATION**

*Prayer courtesy of seasonofcreation.org*

**"Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience."**

(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si,* 217)

# Investing in a Franciscan Future

## St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association Legacy Scholarship

The future is Franciscan! More than three decades after the last class graduated, the spirit of St. Francis Academy is alive and thriving. Embracing Franciscan values instilled at the Academy, the SFA Alumnae Association invites alumnae, teachers and friends to come together as a community that cares for one another, Sisters and various charitable endeavors. For the past 15 years, the Association has also nurtured fledgling Franciscan hearts by sponsoring the SFA Legacy Scholarship that provides financial assistance and a community of support to young persons pursuing a Catholic education similar to the one experienced at the Academy.

Embracing the Franciscan values of charity and service to others, the merit-based SFA Legacy Scholarship is awarded to incoming freshman at Seton-LaSalle High School. The only remaining Catholic High School in the area served by St. Francis Academy, Seton LaSalle is a merger of the all-girls Elizabeth Seton High School and all-boys South Hills Catholic High School. St. Francis Academy often partnered with these two schools for dances, service projects and other activities. Since 2008, the Alumnae Association has awarded 31 scholarships of \$1,000 a year to assist with tuition, with each recipient receiving a total benefit of \$4,000. Awardees must remain enrolled in Seton-LaSalle, maintain their GPA of 3.0 and continue to demonstrate the positive qualities of a Seton-LaSalle student as outlined in the student handbook.

Scholarship criteria includes academic achievement, community service, and admiration of St. Francis of Assisi expressed in a 500-word essay focusing on the following Franciscan values:



*Class of 2023 Legacy Scholars Monife Obiri and Caroline Zini, who plan to pursue the fields of business and engineering.*

- Commitment to Prayer
- Patience
- Care and concern for animals and the environment
- Loyalty to family and God

After being graded by rubric by the scholarship committee, each essay score is combined with community service and grades to create an overall impression of the candidate. Scholarships are awarded to candidates with the best scores,

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## ST. FRANCIS ACADEMY EVENTS

### ALUMNAE FALL BUS TRIP TO AMISH COUNTRY - WALNUT CREEK, OH

October 7, 2023 (RSVP by September 17)

### 32<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL ALUMNAE MASS

October 22, 2023 at South Hills Country Club

### 23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL TULIP LUNCHEON

April 21, 2024 at South Hills Country Club

For more information, visit [saintfrancisacademyalumnaeandsisters.com](http://saintfrancisacademyalumnaeandsisters.com)  
or call Wendy Hayes at 412-443-1880



grades and community involvement. Invited to attend all Alumnae Association events and gatherings, scholars are encouraged to build lasting and supportive relationships with alums. The Tulip Luncheon serves as an introduction of new scholars to Alumnae, and new and graduating scholars are invited to speak where they express their gratitude and share their Catholic school experience and hopes for the future.

The number of scholarships awarded each year is determined by funding received for the scholarship through fundraising at the Tulip Luncheon, Alumnae Mass and other SFA Alumnae Association events, as well as generous donations to the scholarship fund. Providentially, multiple scholarships have been awarded each year for more than a decade thanks to the generosity of the Alumnae and friends dedicated to preserving the legacy of St. Francis Academy and encouraging future generations to embrace Franciscan values.

*For more information about the SFA Legacy Scholarship, please contact Clare Rex at 412-276-7132 or [billrex@comcast.com](mailto:billrex@comcast.com). All support for the Legacy program is welcome and appreciated. Donations may be mailed to SFA Alumnae Association, PO Box 14590; Pittsburgh, PA 15234*



*Scholars at the 2023 Tulip Luncheon included (First row, left to right) Collin Jacobs, Julia Skainiak, James Darcy, Megan Harris, SFA Legacy Scholarship Committee Chair Clare Rex, (second row, left to right) Caroline Zini, Patrick Weldon, Nicholas Skainiak, James Farnan, Paul Farnan, Eli Jacobs and Caroline Zini.*

## Peace and Every Good, Pat!

"Of all my jobs, this has been my biggest blessing," said our devoted nurse Pat Enscoe, who recently retired after caring for our Sisters for more than a quarter century, and serving as a registered nurse for almost twice as long. Providence brought Pat to our Community in 1997 when she joined us as a nursing supervisor in the newly renovated infirmary of our Pittsburgh Motherhouse. Her wealth of knowledge and experience included many years serving in geriatric care, and she had a good understanding of the unique needs of our growing number of elder Sisters in the United States.

Petite and soft-spoken, Pat served each of our Sisters with gentle compassion as a caregiver, advisor, advocate and friend. She always went above and beyond attending to the needs of our Sisters, as well as any staff in need of medical attention or advice.

"Each one of them is special," said Pat. "They feel like family."

Forming meaningful connections with our Sisters and our Franciscan mission, Pat was called to become an Associate after only working with the Sisters for a few years. Throughout her time with us, Pat stepped up to serve as Director of Nursing. After the sale of the Motherhouse, she continued to serve our Community as a nurse and helped coordinate the care of Sisters in assisted living facilities, as well as those living independently.

As an Associate, Pat continues with us on our Franciscan journey and will remain present in the lives of our Sisters. At age 79, she has no plans to slow down and her retirement will include spending precious quality time with her other family—her three children, seven grandchildren, and eleven great-grandchildren, as well as two living sisters and many nieces and nephews. Pat also hopes to do more volunteer work and said that she feels called to volunteer with hospice care and hopes to find an opportunity after she takes a well-deserved respite to visit family.

Thank you, Pat, for being a faithful and loving member of our Franciscan family! As you go forward on your journey, may you be blessed with peace, joy and all the gifts of our Provident God.



*Our dedicated nurse Pat Enscoe (left) celebrated 25 years with our Sisters in 2023 and was recognized by Sister Janet Gardner (center) at our Employee Recognition alongside Mimi DiGregory (right) who also celebrated 25 years. Mimi began working for our Community in the Franciscan Spirit and Life Center where she offered hospitality to groups, retreatants, and other guests. In 2015, Providence called her to serve in our administrative offices where she continues to share her administrative, organizational, and artistic talents.*

# St. Jude Thaddeus Chapel Update

In 2021, St. Jude Thaddeus community in Itinga, Minas Gerais, Brazil had a dedicated pastor, faithful parishioners and a small plot of donated land. But, they lacked the funding and resources to build a chapel to serve as their permanent home. Blessed by Providence, two years later, their chapel is almost completed.

Guided by the hand of Providence, then 91-year-old Robert Mattos from the of state Washington reached out to our USA area minister Sister Janet Gardner in Pennsylvania seeking to fund a chapel in an impoverished area in Brazil to honor his Catholic faith and Portuguese heritage. Sister Amélia serves the rural municipality of Itinga – which included the St. Jude Thaddeus community and the providential connection was made. Construction on the chapel began in 2022 thanks to the generosity of Mr. Mattos and additional support from Trudy Comba, a long-time benefactor of our Sisters and ministries.

Moving forward, the rural location of Itinga presented challenges with infrastructure – electricity, water sewage, etc., as well as finding qualified workers. St. Jude’s pastor, Fr. Adilson, took on the role of supervising the chapel construction and often stepped in to do what was needed, included mixing all of the cement needed for the foundation, floors and walls.

Overcoming these challenges, the chapel project continues to move forward and will be consecrated the weekend of October 28, 2023 - the Feast of St. Jude Thaddeus, the community’s patron..



*Sister Amélia and parishioners blessed the chapel land during a special service before building began.*



*The first walls of the chapel (above) and Fr. Adilson mixing cement (right.)*

## Archives Journey to Brazil (continued from page 4)

**“The documents of the Church bear witness to the spread of the Kingdom of Christ in this world. The worthy and adequate preservation of these documents, from the most humble to the most precious, becomes a service to the truth.” ~ Saint John Paul II**



*Sister Beatrice Siratavic, Archivist Dennis Wodzinski and Sister Marianne Walters in 2009 with one of the many displays they created to share our story with Sisters, staff and visitors.*

The final hurdle was dealing with customs in the United States and Brazil, which required a Sister to meet the shipment when it arrived. Providentially, Sister Joanne Brazinski was able to travel to Brazil to meet our Archives when they arrived at the port of Santos, the same port where our Sisters first arrived in Brazil more than 85 years earlier.

Our Congregational Archives are safe and secure at the Generalate in São Paulo, but there is still work to do in the United States. Sister Peg continues to organize and review materials to decide what is to be sent to our Congregational Archives, what needs kept in the United States, and what is no longer needed by the Community.

“I never thought I would want to do this, said Sister Peg. “But, I really love it.”

*Information and inspiration provided by former archivist Sister Mary Jaskel’s article in the February 1999 edition Whitehall Franciscan,*

# Franciscans Celebrate Christmas in June

Eight centuries ago, St. Francis of Assisi sought to celebrate Christmas in a new way and organized a Mass and live Christmas crèche in the woods of Greccio, Italy. This act of faith began the tradition of crèches and nativities in our churches, homes, and shared spaces which continue to serve as a reminder of the profound gift of the Incarnation and humility of Christ's arrival as a helpless infant in a lowly stable.

This past June 9-12, Sisters Althea Anne Spencer and Janet Gardner attended the Franciscan Federation's Annual Conference in St. Louis, MO that honored the 800th anniversary of St. Francis and the first nativity at Greccio. Separated from the noise of the secular holiday happenings, Christmas carols took on a new meaning as speaker Sister Ilia Delio, guided participants to embrace the true essence of the Incarnation and challenged all to live a fully incarnated life. Younger Franciscans also shared their experience of Francis of Assisi and their hopes for the future.

Sister Janet was elected the Chair of the Convocation of Congregational Leaders, a new structure approved by the leaders as the Federation simplifies its structure and expands membership. Going forward, the Franciscan Federation is seeking to expand beyond religious women and men to include many others with Franciscan hearts: associates, youth, educational institutions, Secular Franciscans and others seeking to embrace Franciscan spirituality and serve as instruments of God's peace.



*Sisters Janet Gardner and Althea Anne Spencer at the 2023 Franciscan Federation in St. Louis, MO.*

## 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Christmas at Greccio



Eternally memorable is the Christmas at Greccio in 1223. Francis of Assisi, desiring to experience as closely as possible the first Christmas, invited the people of the countryside to join in celebrating this most beautiful feast.

Carrying torches and candles, they made their way up the mountainside to a clearing where an ox and ass stood beside a hay-filled manger. Nearby, an altar was prepared and the Mass celebrated.

It is said that during the celebration the Child Jesus was seen asleep in the manger. As Francis reached for Him, the child awakened and smiled at the little man who loved Him so much.

Thus, through the ages, the crib continues to hold a special place of prominence during the Christmas season.

*(adapted from Thomas of Celano)*

## Virtual Crèche Display

JOIN US TO REMEMBER THE TRUE REASON FOR THE SEASON

### Advent & Christmas 2023

Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God Facebook Page

[facebook.com/osfprov.org](https://facebook.com/osfprov.org)

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



Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God

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FRANCISCAN FESTIVITIES

BUFFET LUNCH

COOKIE TABLE



FRIENDSHIP

BASKET RAFFLE

CASH RAFFLE

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

**Sunday, October 15, 2023**

St. Thomas More Church Family Life Center  
126 Fort Couch Road ♦ Pittsburgh, PA 15241

**Festivities Begin @ 1:00 PM**

(Doors open at conclusion of 11:30 Mass, which all are welcome to attend)

\$50 per person ♦ \$95 per couple ♦ \$350 per table (8 guests)

*Reservations required. Please RSVP by September 22, 2023*  
RSVP or Questions: 412-885-7232 or [info@osfprov.org](mailto:info@osfprov.org)