

Volume 23.1 Spring 2020

# Good NEWS

A Publication of THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

## Uncovering *the* Roots of Injustice

*Energized for  
Advocacy*

Also in this issue:

- Life's Detours Shape a Dynamic Ministry
- People & Places
- Sharing the Good News

## Commitment Statement

We recommit ourselves  
to “rebuilding the Church”  
by living the passion of the Gospel  
in the discerning spirit  
of our Franciscan charism and tradition.

We are willing to take the necessary  
risks to be a healing, compassionate  
presence in our violent world especially  
with women, children, and those who  
have no voice.

We desire to reflect this commitment  
in our dialogue with the entire Church,  
in our own governing structures, and  
in our relationship with one another  
as sister.

## Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of  
Philadelphia, choose to live the Gospel  
in the prophetic spirit of Francis of Assisi  
and our Foundress Mother Francis  
Bachmann. With Jesus Christ as Brother,  
we live as sister with one another, with  
the entire human family and with all  
creation. Calling ourselves and one  
another to continuous conversion of  
heart, we commit ourselves to a life of  
contemplation, poverty and humility.

As vowed women of the Church, we  
respond with diverse gifts in a spirit of  
collaboration and of mutual service to  
the needs of others, especially the  
economically poor, the marginal and  
the oppressed. Seeking to participate  
in the Spirit's action in the world, we  
direct our personal and corporate  
resources to the promotion of justice,  
peace, and reconciliation.

Filled with trust in the goodness of  
God, we move forward.

## POINT OF VIEW

*S*t. Francis of Assisi's personal conversion was a combination of many life experiences. One day the Gospel was being read about how Jesus sent out his disciples to preach. After Mass Francis begged the priest to explain the Gospel to him. The priest clarified that Jesus' disciples should not possess gold or silver or carry on their journey a wallet, neither bread, staff, nor shoes, but instead, they should preach the kingdom of God. Francis immediately exclaimed, “This is what I want; this is what I seek; this is what I desire with all my heart.” Thereafter Francis lived the Gospel with a passionate heart, embracing poverty and contemplative prayer, caring for the outcast, and sometimes traveling to faraway lands to preach the Gospel. He inspired those around him with words that were simple and profound gestures. He reached their hearts and filled them with wonder.



**Sister Mary Kathryn  
Dougherty, OSF  
Congregational Minister**

*In this issue of Good News, we read of two sisters who also have a passion for Gospel living and for sharing the message of the Good News. Sister Clare D'Auria has a unique gift for relating stories and scripture passages to contemporary real-life experiences. Through her retreat programs and spiritual direction and as pilgrimage leader, she helps people to see the holy and sacred in their everyday lives. When she preaches the Gospel through her programs, people are deeply touched and their hearts are filled with wonder as they experience the truth of her message. They are awakened to the presence of God in their lives.*

*Sister Maria Orlandini's passion is justice. Just as Francis viewed all humanity and creation as brother and sister, Maria also strongly holds a similar world view. Migration issues, the reasons causing many to flee their homelands, and the inhumane treatment of those held in detention are simply not acceptable. Sister Maria refuses to stand by and do nothing when our brothers and sisters are suffering. Her love and care for those displaced motivates her to protest the wrong—even to the point of arrest. Her passion for creating a good life for others is grounded in the Gospel.*

*What do you want, what do you seek, what do you desire with all your heart? May God bless you with a passion for Gospel living that fills those you encounter with wonder!*

*Blessings,*

*Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty, OSF*





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*Sister Clare D'Auria has a knack for speaking publicly about Franciscan spirituality but it wasn't an easy road for her. By overcoming her fears and listening to God's voice within, Sister Clare found her niche in the ministry of spiritual direction and retreat work—a voice that many people now eagerly seek out.*

Written by Sara McDermott  
Photography by Andrea Cipraini-Mecchi

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The purpose of *Good News* is to further the Gospel mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia by sharing the good news of the congregation with our friends, family, companions, and sisters. Through this publication, we hope to share the charism of our congregation and invite others to become involved in our mission.

*Good News* is published three times a year (spring, summer, winter) by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. We welcome your feedback and comments; correspondence should be addressed to *Good News* at address above.

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*On the cover: Sisters Maria Orlandini (left) and Marie Lucey stand on the steps of the Capitol protesting the call to end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. DACA is a program that gives immigrants brought to the U.S. as children the option to defer deportation and become eligible for work permits.*





# Uncovering *the* Roots of Injustice

*Energized for Advocacy*





◀ Sister Maria and Susan Gunn, director of the Maryknoll Office of Global Concern, used life jackets to emphasize their message during a protest in Washington, DC (left). The 18 faith leaders who attended each wore a life jacket representing the journey of 1,000 refugees.



▲ Sister Maria was later arrested for civil disobedience.

◀ Three generations of a family survive on money they make by recycling metal and plastic that they gather from the streets of San Pedro Sula, capital of Cortés Department, Honduras. They are just one of many families suffering from extreme poverty as a result of the actions of their government.

“THEY ARE READY TO FIGHT, TO GIVE THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR COUNTRY.”  
A CERTAIN PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION, HOWEVER, HAS REACHED THE POINT WHERE THEY FEEL THEY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO FLEE.”

How do you express the feeling of having your hands cuffed behind your back?” Sister Maria Orlandini mused, recalling the three times she was arrested this past year. One of the recent arrests took place in the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington, DC, on July 18, 2019. The Catholic Coalition in DC had banded together in the rotunda to protest the unjust treatment of immigrant children at the border as part of a campaign dubbed “Stop the Inhumanity.”

In this act of civil disobedience, the group formed a circle, chanted slogans, and

sang songs hoping to get their message heard. Despite several warnings from police delivered over a megaphone, the group did not disband. One by one, each participant was cuffed and taken to jail. “The feelings surrounding the event are mixed,” Sister Maria said. “On one hand, you feel good that you are using your physical body to do something good. But on the other, it is sad that it has to come to this to get your point across.” Members of the protest cheered for one another as they were apprehended, encouraging one another to stay the course.

All 71 people who took part in this peaceful protest were taken into custody but, according to Sister Maria, “We knew going in that we’d be risking arrest.” Knowing this allowed them to prepare physically, mentally, and spiritually. “This is not a spur of the moment decision,” said Sister Maria. “You have to prepare mentally, pray about it, and make sure you are ready to deal with the consequences—and carry only your ID and the \$50 bail money in your pockets.”

This incident marks one event in the “Stop the Inhumanity” campaign. As part of this  
*continued on page 6*





Franciscan Action Network staff join with many other faith groups from various denominations to stand up and fight for justice for immigrants and refugees. In the words of former FAN executive director Patrick Carolan, "Action is a form of prayer."

"THERE'S A LOT OF INJUSTICE IN THE WORLD BUT I WORK WITH SO MANY GOOD PEOPLE—PEOPLE DOING RIGHT... WE CAN'T JUST STAY SILENT AND ALLOW THESE THINGS TO GO ON. WE MUST ALWAYS DO WHAT LITTLE WE CAN."

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six-month campaign, religious and other community members continued to perform approximately one such action per month in an effort to effect change wherever they saw unjust treatment of children. "Small children have been torn from their families and put into cages," Sister Maria explained regarding the current situation at the U.S.-Mexico border. "They say that this has stopped but it hasn't. We cannot stand by and do nothing. Besides, it's easier to get arrested when you know you'll be released," Sister Maria said, only half-joking. "Compare that to what's happening to activists in places like Honduras right now where protestors don't know if they'll ever be released and where they may even be tortured or killed."

People in the United States need to know what's happening in other countries so they can better understand why people are trying to come to the United States in the first place."

## A Passion for Justice

"I always knew I wanted to be a missionary," Sister Maria recalled. "Since the age of 12 or 13, I wanted to bring Jesus' love around the world." Soon the boundaries of her home country of Italy proved to be far too limiting. When she was nineteen, Sister Maria joined the Canossian Daughters of Charity and applied to be a missionary. Her first "mission," though, was to travel to England and learn to speak English. It wasn't until 1983 that Sister Maria was sent to New Mexico in the United States. She was disappointed: "I thought of the U.S. as a privileged country," she reminisced. "I wanted to go to impoverished countries where I could do the most good." She did, however, come to love New Mexico's beautiful landscapes and its people and found it difficult to leave when she finally received a call to go to Africa.

Sister Maria spent six years on the leadership team in Tanzania, actively contributing to the well-being of the congregation and becoming close to the young sisters and the African people. After she came back to the U.S., she was discerning what to do next—not quite feeling fulfilled. While on sabbatical at a retreat center in Boston, she met Sister Marie Lucey, OSF,







A lot of work goes on behind the scenes for Sister Maria. She surrounds herself with inspiration in her workspace, such as the Martin Luther King Jr. photo above.



The Tau Cross is a symbol that all Sisters of St. Francis wear with pride. However, Sister Maria's is special. She bought the handmade cross in El Salvador. Instead of a traditional Jesus, the campesino (Latin American farmer) signifies that the people of Latin America are still crucified like Jesus on the cross.

▼ Many Franciscans, along with Catholic leaders from all over the country, gather together in Newark, New Jersey, to defend the rights and dignity of immigrants by demanding an end to the immoral detention of children at the border.



▲ Sisters Maria Orlandini and Marie Lucey share a passion for justice as well as a close friendship. Both sisters work for FAN and use their voices to advocate for change. Here they gather outside the courthouse in Greenbelt, Maryland, during a vigil for refugees.

who was also in a period of discernment and transition in her life. The two talked a lot during that time and became good friends. As Sister Maria learned more about the Franciscan way of life, she felt called to become a Franciscan and to pursue more fully her call to "do the most good."

## The Ugly Truth of Migration

Studying the root causes of migration have become one of Sister Maria's chief objectives as director of advocacy for Franciscan Action Network (FAN). She wants people to know that those who come to our country are not doing so on a whim but are fleeing difficult circumstances and have been left with no other choice.

Her passion for this issue goes hand in hand with her other work in FAN, an organization that the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia had a key role in forming. Inspired by the Gospel of Jesus and



A group of environmental activists from Tocoa, a remote city in the northern Atlantic coast of Honduras, were awarded the prestigious Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award in Washington, DC. The award was granted to the Municipal Committee for the Defense of Commons of Tocoa who, since 2010, have fiercely defended their main water source, the Guapinol River, from being contaminated by an iron oxide mine, owned by one of the most powerful families of Honduras. Sister Maria met with the group during their visit to talk about the present situation in the Bajo Aguan region.

the work of Sts. Francis and Clare of Assisi, FAN works to change public policy as it pertains to core values within the Franciscan charism. Given the belief that humanity is rooted in God's love for all creation, any violation of human rights is something that FAN, sometimes referred to as "The Franciscan Voice on Capitol Hill," actively seeks to combat.

"We work with a number of other Catholic organizations and coalitions," FAN former executive director Patrick Carolan said. "While the charisms of the respective

groups might differ, what they all share is a desire to see Christ's love properly reflected in the events of our time." In addition to immigration, FAN also deals with issues of human trafficking, gun violence, and climate change.

## Delegations to Honduras

Recently Sister Maria's work has centered on Honduras and she has participated in two delegations to this struggling country. Honduras is the latest of the Latin American countries whose people have been plagued

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with corrupt elections, destruction of their land, poverty, and contamination of drinking water. “They have no choice but to emigrate,” Sister Maria said.

Sister Maria feels strongly about the role the U.S. played in creating hardships in Honduras. “If we wanted to, we could have used our influence to curtail the political

corruption,” she said, referring to the 2017 reelection of President Juan Orlando Hernandez, who was technically not eligible to run another term. He changed the laws to allow himself to do so. It is widely believed that voting results were also tampered with to ensure his victory. This prompted outrage in the country, leading to rampant protests and dozens of deaths. “Because the U.S. government endorsed instead of challenged

feed themselves, let alone to make money through farming. This is due primarily to the drought and land exploitation. The river that provides many citizens with their sole source of drinking water is now in danger of becoming contaminated owing to mine run-off. Citizens continue to fight the government against giving permission to the mining companies to mine so close to the river. “With no clean water, people



▲ During the Root Causes Delegation, an international delegation of 75 faith leaders involved with issues of social justice and immigration, traveled to Honduras led by the SHARE Foundation, Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Justice Team.



▲ Sister Maria Orlandini talks with people living on the sidewalk outside the embassy in the Honduras capital of Tegucigalpa. Nearly 80 families have been forced out of their homes by the powerful families in the area who are slowly depriving people of their land.

the election results,” Sister Maria explained, “We have basically said to the world that it’s okay to be unlawful.”

The first thing that struck Sister Maria upon visiting Honduras was its joyful, welcoming culture. Almost immediately after, though, she was taken aback by both the poverty and the lack of water. Driving away from the airport, she was quick to remark on how dry everything looked and learned that Honduras is currently in a four-year drought. As they drove along the highway, she also spotted several homes that were “extremely flimsy and run down—barely a building, much less a home.”

The Honduran people live closely with their land and their livelihood depends on what they’re able to grow. It has become increasingly difficult for families to grow even a meager amount of vegetables to

won’t know what to do,” Sister Maria said. “For this reason, many are willing to put their lives on the line” by fighting for or leaving their homeland.

Yet another hardship is the seizure of land. In some cases, families may have lived and worked on a piece of land for 30 years or more. However, since real estate reform never took place in this country, actual deeds and papers surrounding their ownership do not exist. The government, along with large corporations, has taken advantage of this fact to line its pockets and use the land for palm oil farming. “While in Tegucigalpa, the capital, we visited the U.S. embassy to speak to the appointed attaché about all that we had seen,” Sister Maria recalls. “The sidewalk outside the embassy was packed with approximately 80 people who, overnight, had been evicted from their land and didn’t know where else to go.





*Fellow protestor Valeria Bejar from the Disciples of Christ holds a sign and the rosary while waiting to pray prior to the DACA march.*



*Various groups of protesters combine forces to march on Washington. While many come from different religious denominations, they all share a common goal for justice. The blending of their voices makes them stronger.*

## HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- There is a great divide in our country over immigrants and refugees. Educate yourself about current immigration laws, not only for your own knowledge but also so that you can help inform others (including immigrants) about immigrant rights and the current state of affairs.
- Write to your congressperson and state representatives about current policies that trouble you and changes you'd like to see.
- Volunteer to aid refugees or donate to organizations that help support them.
- Consider going on a mission trip to aid those struggling in third world countries. You will be able to learn first-hand about the issues they are facing.
- Visit FAN's website to learn more about the issues in which they are involved and to donate to their organization. <https://franciscanaction.org/>
- Use the enclosed envelope to make a donation to the Sisters of St. Francis for their various ministries and advocacy efforts.



*Sister Maria Orlandini with her FAN coworkers: Kevin Hamzik, Timothy Burgey, Jason Miller, and Sister Marie Lucey.*

There were multiple generations—grandparents, parents, and children—sitting on cardboard sheets with small oil tanks for cooking. They were dirty, breathing in smoke from cars,” Sister Maria explained. “Children looked at us with imploring eyes—powerless. We could only promise to speak for them.”

Simply by being present in solidarity with the people of Honduras, Sister Maria, along with the other members of the delegation, brought comfort and recognition to the people's struggles. They attended peaceful protests similar to the ones in which they themselves had participated in the U.S. to ensure better treatment of the protestors. When police did show up, they would be less likely to become violent if they knew that Americans were present. Honduras has become increasingly militarized and the threat of violence looms in its citizens' daily lives. In this way, the delegation acted as a shield for Honduran activists.

Another goal of the delegation was to meet with local officials in an effort to hold them accountable. Although the delegation managed to land a rare meeting with Mayor Adán Fúnez of Tocoa, Sister Maria admits that not much was accomplished. “He denied that the country was militarized and insisted on blaming the people for being restless and fighting each other,” she said.

Despite all of this, many Hondurans still feel deeply bound to their home. “They are ready to fight, to give their lives for their country,” Sister Maria said. A certain percentage of the population, however, has reached the point where they feel they have no choice but to flee.

## Campaigning for Human Rights

Sister Maria acknowledges how difficult it can be to maintain a sense of inner hope when there seems to be so much wrong in this world. “There's a lot of injustice in the world but I work with so many good people—people doing right,” she said. Fighting alongside these people for these causes helps to lift her spirit and keep her strong in her faith. “Besides,” she continued. “What other choice is there? We must speak up. We can't just stay silent and allow these things to go on. We must always do what little we can.” ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).

# PEOPLE & PLACES



*The Portland companions enjoyed a potluck dinner, the beautiful surroundings, and their time together.*

**W**ho are the ‘Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia’? Through this section we hope to share a glimpse of our congregation and the individuals who make real its mission.

## OREGON

Members of our Companions in Faith groups on the west coast have been busy both socially and spiritually. The **Portland Companions** held their annual potluck supper at the home of Jeanne Kiernan and her daughter Katherine. It was a time for sharing and relaxing and continued growth in relationship with one another, celebrating the past year together while looking forward to another year of sharing the mission of the Sisters of St. Francis.

Companions and sisters from various parts of Oregon and Washington—Klamath Falls, Tacoma, and Portland—also gathered at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Milwaukie for a retreat presented by Sister Anne Amati on the spirituality of our foundress, Mother Francis Bachmann. Sister Anne related the life of Mother Francis as a parable and suggested writing one’s own life as a parable. She described Mother Francis both as widow and as friend of Lady Poverty and explained that the persons and events of Mother Francis’ life happened simultaneously, resulting in the creation of something new and unexpected. To close the retreat, participants prayed a litany of Mother Francis, calling on her as a woman of courage, honesty, integrity, relationship, hospitality, suffering, faith, faithfulness, and prayer. The day served as a time of community, presence, and sharing in the heart of Mother Francis.

► Sister Eleanor Joseph Peck reviews the history and differences of various Christian denominations.

## DELAWARE

The 2019 celebration of St. Francis Day at St. John the Beloved School in Wilmington held a special significance—both a celebration of the yearly feast and a time of “Goodbye”—eliciting sadness for the ending of an era and gratitude for what had been. The liturgy honored both **Sister JoAnn McPolin**, who was retiring after 30 years of service in the parish, and our sisters who had ministered in the parish for more than 62 years. JoAnn is the last of our sisters to have ministered at St. John’s. For the opening procession at the liturgy, one of the students from the parish school dressed in the traditional brown habit cinched with the white cord. Another child wore a replica of our original habit.



## PENNSYLVANIA

In June we enjoyed a visit with our Muslim friends from the **Zubaida Foundation**. This time our gathering was held at our motherhouse in Aston. Prior to the gathering, Imam Numaan Cheema indicated that his members were interested in the differences between the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations. Sister Eleanor Joseph Peck joined us for the session and delineated the history of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformation and the wide variety of Protestant sects in existence today. In outlining the differences, she focused on topics such as styles of worship, sacraments, creed, authority, and belief in Mary and the saints. She also spoke about the five solas—factors or statements that lie at the heart of Protestant religious beliefs. Our gathering, as always, ended with dinner.





## MARYLAND

**Sister Kathleen Daus** recently received the Franciscan Heritage Award presented by the Catholic High School of Baltimore. This annual award is presented to an alumna of Catholic High who demonstrates each of the Franciscan Core Values: Personhood in Community; Loving Service; Ongoing Conversion; Witness to Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation; and Stewardship. The purpose of the award is to recognize the school's alumna for joyfully serving the poor, leading initiatives for social justice, empowering others to reverence creation, and giving witness to the Franciscan spirit in the world. The recipient must also be a person of deep faith and prayerfulness, must reflect the joy and humility of the Franciscan Spirit, be dedicated to cocreating a more just world, and be a person of such integrity that Catholic High will take pride in her recognition.



*Sister Kathleen Daus is the most recent alumna of the Catholic High School of Baltimore to receive the Franciscan Heritage Award.*



## DELAWARE

When **Sister Mary Smith** began her new ministry as part of the wellness team at St. Ann School in Wilmington, she brought with her both a gift and a bit of history. She recalled the fact that our sisters were invited to open the school in 1899. Upon arrival she recognized that "the Franciscan spirit still pervaded these halls." And the gift? Sister Mary brought with her a statue of St. Francis which now graces a table near the school's front door—greeting students, staff, and visitors as they enter the building.



*Sister Dominica LoBianco delivered a welcome address to the DACA marchers when they stopped in Media on their way to Washington, DC.*

## PENNSYLVANIA

A group of our sisters were on hand in Media to welcome the core members of the "Home is Here" DACA marchers on their way to Washington, DC, where the Supreme Court would hear the case and begin proceedings to determine the fate of the program. **Sister Dominica LoBianco** welcomed the marchers in the name of the Sisters of St. Francis. "In the name of Christ and of all believers in God, we join you in beseeching the Supreme Court to look favorably upon DACA and to approve of the TPS status already granted to many... We salute your courage to leave your native country, begin life anew here, and strive to better yourselves. Your steadfastness in working toward citizenship inspires us. Your perseverance encourages us to move forward to strive diligently for reform of our immigration laws."



## WASHINGTON

**Sisters Patricia Millen and Elaine Thaden** participated in several events sponsored by the Advocacy Committees of St. Ann's and St. Aloysius' Parishes in Spokane. The first was the Prayer Vigil for Immigrant Children Separated from Their Families. More than 200 people came to hear the stories of eight children who died in border facilities in either El Paso or the Rio Grande Valley. In October the sisters participated in the "Prayerful Witness: Walking in Solidarity with Immigrants Program." Sister Patricia welcomed attendees and explained the focus of the gathering. Guest speakers included faith leaders; leaders of conscience; John Culton, legislative director for Senator

Patty Murray; committee member Greg Cunningham; Rev. Gen Heywood; Megan Utemei, immigration counselor and outreach director for Senator Murray; and Rev. Andrea Castro Lang, pastor of Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ. After the presentation the group undertook a prayerful walk to the Intermodal Center where they blessed the walls of the center.



## WASHINGTON, DC

In November a group of our sisters traveled to Washington, DC, to attend the annual **Franciscan Action Network (FAN)** benefit during which executive director, Patrick Carolan, announced his retirement. During his nine years of service, Patrick lived and loved FAN, nurturing, growing, and building it into the respected organization it is today. Many Franciscan men's and women's congregations as well as individuals from various organizations with whom FAN collaborates attended the event. Sisters Miriam Eileen Murray, Catherine O'Donnell, Julia Keegan, Dominica LoBianco, Marie Lucey, Patricia Smith, and Maria Orlandini as well as Companions Patricia and Paul St. Clair were in attendance.

▼ *Sister Patricia Millen welcomed participants to the Prayerful Witness: Walking in Solidarity with Immigrants gathering.*





Sister Clare D'Auria

✠ “THIS IS PART OF THE FRANCISCAN WAY OF SEEING THINGS—  
THAT YOU SHOULD ‘COME AS YOU ARE.’”

# Life's Detours *Shape a* Dynamic

*St. Francis of Assisi has been a huge part of Sister Clare's life and ministry—from her own education to her call to religious life to being a guide for the Franciscan Pilgrimage programs.*



*Sister Clare receives Holy Communion from Father Murray Bodo, OFM, in the side chapel of San Damiano during a pilgrimage to Assisi. Father Bodo, a Franciscan priest and author, has studied and written about St. Francis, taught his life and spirituality, and for 34 years led pilgrimages to Assisi.*



*Giving a homily in the chapel at St. John Lateran in Rome was a highlight for Sister Clare because it is considered the “mother church” of the Roman Catholic faithful. After dreaming of St. Francis holding up this collapsing church, Pope Innocent III realized that God would use this man to “rebuild His church,” and gave St. Francis his approval for the Order.*



Before she was a professional public speaker—routinely giving presentations to as many as 200 people—Sister Clare D'Auria was terrified to get up in front of a crowd. When, as a high school senior, she was selected to give a salutatory address to 747 of her peers, she was a wreck. Her father, a book binder and a significant figure in her life, advised her that “it [was] a good thing to be nervous.” That was little comfort to Clare, though, as she approached the podium in Philadelphia's Convention Hall and saw hundreds of eyes staring back at her. Yet once she began to speak, she claims that “a core peace settled” in her. Despite her fear, she had an intense realization that through her speaking, she could share important messages and help others. It was a life moment so profound that, even recalling it decades later, her eyes fill with tears.

Through her work with the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Aston, Pennsylvania, Sister Clare now travels approximately 50% of the year, leading retreats all over the country with summer, Advent, and Lent being especially busy times. Her retreats are often booked years in advance and are typically geared toward women, religious, and seniors.

“It can be nerve-wracking but once you start speaking, you judge whether those attending are with you,” Sister Clare says. “If you get a sense that they are, you start to relax.”

Thinking about the “performance” aspect of public speaking reminds her of an amazing opportunity she had as a teenager when she got to interview Julie Andrews on the 1,000<sup>th</sup> performance of *Camelot* for her school paper. A question Andrews received over and over was whether or not



*Attendees of Sister Clare's seminar sit quietly at breakfast before the morning session. The entire retreat is silent so that attendees can truly focus on their spirituality.*



# Ministry



*Sister Clare steps up to the podium during a retreat to give a presentation entitled The Epiphany Cycle: The Journey of Transformation. Having overcome her fear of public speaking, Sister Clare is now a highly revered presenter and spiritual director.*

she got bored giving the same performance every night. Andrews responded by saying she was never bored; every night was different because every night the audience was different. Similarly, Sister Clare finds that no matter how many times she speaks, those attending are always different and that impacts her own experience.

## The Path Not Chosen

Even after Sister Clare's graduation, public speaking didn't come easily. Despite the fact she held an interest in journalism and even harbored fantasies of being the next Walter

Cronkite, it was something she had to consciously work on. As a college senior and a sister at Our Lady of Angels Convent, she experienced another major turning point.

Sister Clotilda Schmidt, then director of the Juniorate (a program where sisters could earn their bachelor degrees), asked to see Sister Clare one night after dinner. The request was so unusual that Sister Clare was certain she was in trouble. What she learned, though, was that she'd been assigned to teach English at St. Hubert's High School in Philadelphia. "Back then, you didn't get a say in where

you were sent," she recalled. These orders had come from Mother Agnes MacIntyre, the superior general. It was not an offer Sister Clare could refuse, despite the fact that she felt completely unprepared. Seeing her distress, Sister Clotilda told her to go to chapel and get herself together. In chapel, Sister Clare prayed for guidance. She held a Bible and asked God to send her help in the form of the Word. "I opened the Bible and put my finger down at random," she remembers. "It landed on Romans 10:14-15." The passage read: "But how can they call on him in whom they

*continued on page 14*

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have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring [the] good news!'—It was yet another sign that Sister Clare was called to spread the Good News to others. Since then, she has realized that even those things she was reluctant to do in life have contributed greatly to her overall growth and good.



▲ Oftentimes in retreats, Sister Clare notices people frantically taking notes trying to remember every detail. She reminds them to relax; whatever God's calling them to learn will stand out in their memories.

▼ Sister Clare's personal mission centers primarily around connections—connecting people to their spirituality by helping them relate to various symbols and stories.

Her work as a teacher of English would later greatly influence Sister Clare in connecting the stories and passages found in scripture to the art, music, poetry, and events of everyday life, making her retreats more effective for attendees. For example, she recently used Disney princesses (Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, and Cinderella) to illustrate important messages delivered through Jesus' parables, helping others to see their "importance in our own lives."

This ability to relate the stories and passages from scripture to modern experiences and culture has also come in handy in her one-on-one ministry as a spiritual director. Sister Clare meets regularly with approximately 25 people for spiritual direction, some of whom she's been seeing for

over 15 years. Sister Clare feels that it is a privilege to serve others in this way: to meet them where they are and truly listen to what they have to say. "This is part of the Franciscan way of seeing things—that you should 'come as you are,'" she said. She recognizes people coming for guidance are very vulnerable and holds their confidence in her as a sacred trust.

## Being a Guide - Sharing a Gift

In addition to using her talent for communication here at home, Sister Clare spent many years guiding others on spiritual journeys abroad through the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs. In this capacity, she led numerous pilgrimages to Assisi and Rome. During its 45 years of existence, the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program has guided over 20,000 pilgrims on such trips.

"You feel the holiness," Sister Clare said of visiting the holy places significant in the lives of Sts. Francis and Clare. "People say Francis made Assisi but when you're there, you can also feel how Assisi made Francis. It's a place so rooted in relationships, in enjoyment and appreciation of life. It gets in your blood and bones when you go there."

Because of her own experience in congregational leadership, the trips led by Sister Clare were almost exclusively pilgrimages for employees serving in leadership positions in Franciscan sponsored institutions. This prompted her to offer her lectures through the lens of being a leader. Her presentations focused in particular on St. Clare as a leader. "As a sister, a servant, and a mother," Sister Clare said, "she knew how to collaborate with others. St. Clare didn't want to be called 'abbess'; she wanted to work alongside other sisters and serve them. But even though she was kind and approachable, she didn't hesitate to discipline someone if the situation called for it. You knew she had your back—like a mother—but also that she would tell you when you were wrong. That's a great model of leadership for both men and women."

While all aspects of a pilgrimage to Assisi are important, one of the moments Sister Clare found most meaningful was leading pilgrims on their visit to the Portiuncula. This small, 13x37 foot church is where St.







*Moments for silent prayer are built into the sessions so that attendees are able to look inward and discover what God is calling them to take from the experience.*

Francis, his order already established, had a vision. In this experience, Christ asked Francis what he would want if he could have anything in the world, promising that his request would be granted. Francis answered that he would want for all who came to this church to know their sins were forgiven—a radical request at that time in history when punishment for sins was widely accepted as unavoidable. Jesus granted this request now known as “The Pardon.” Although Francis’ experience is celebrated each year on August 2, thousands of pilgrims journey to this church throughout the year to pray for forgiveness and healing.

The small church is now housed inside a massive basilica.

*A statue of Clare of Assisi is part of the Colonnades in St. Peter’s Square, located directly in front of St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City. Sister Clare feels a distinct connection to St. Clare and sees her as “sister, servant, and mother.”*



Pilgrims enter the Portiuncula through an archway over which is inscribed, “This is the door to eternal life,” and across a threshold that reads “This place is holy.” After the pilgrims walk through the church and exit out the side, Sister Clare remembers receiving them when they come out. Many are sobbing, touched by the deeply personal and spiritual event they have just experienced.

## The Book Binder’s Daughter

Reflecting on how her work resonates with others, Sister Clare attributes this to how she connects stories such as those found in scripture with people’s everyday lives. After this life-long search for connection, she was surprised when an attendee at one of her retreats provided a connection to her own life that she herself had overlooked. “You’re a book binder’s daughter,” the woman told her. “And here you are, binding us to the Word.” Sister

# HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Attend a retreat in your area to give yourself time and space for reflection and growth. Check out what our Franciscan Spiritual Centers have to offer. Aston, PA: [www.fscaston.org](http://www.fscaston.org), Milwaukie, OR: [www.francisspctr.com](http://www.francisspctr.com).
- Further facilitate your personal and spiritual growth by developing a regular practice of meditation. Start small; even focusing your mind on a set point for just one minute at a time will help develop this skill.
- Have a fear of public speaking? Develop your own command of public speaking by taking a public speaking course, looking at online resources, or enrolling in your local Toastmasters chapter.
- Keep a journal where you can reflect on your daily life and draw parallels between your experiences and daily scripture readings.
- When listening to others, remember to be fully engaged with what they are saying. Reserve any judgment and allow them to “come as they are.”

Clare’s skill for connecting modern life with the Word of God has served to bind people all over the world more firmly to the God of goodness and love.

Sister Clare may not have wound up on the 6:30 P.M. news like Walter Cronkite but she says that what she has found in her life has been even better. “There’s so much dismay on the news,” she said. “I’m so fortunate; I get to spread only good news.” ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).

# SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

*Everyone has within a piece of good news.*

— Anne Frank (adapted)

See more good news at [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org)

## Blessing of St. Francis of Assisi

If you have ever visited the Sisters of St. Francis' motherhouse in Aston, Pennsylvania, you may have been lucky enough to be blessed by our sisters. With their right arm outstretched, palm open as if resting on the person's head, the sisters sing a musical composition of "The Blessing of St. Francis." But what you might not have known is that this song originated here at Our Lady of Angels Convent. The year was 1944 and Sister M. Bonagratia, a music teacher, was asked to take the Scripture verses found in Numbers 6:24-26 and create a piece of music to be used by the congregation and hopefully by the wider Franciscan community. The piece was registered with the United States Library of Congress with a copyright on March 7, 1944, and granted by Cardinal Dougherty on December 18, 1944. In

1946, music publishers J. Fisher & Bro. responded to a

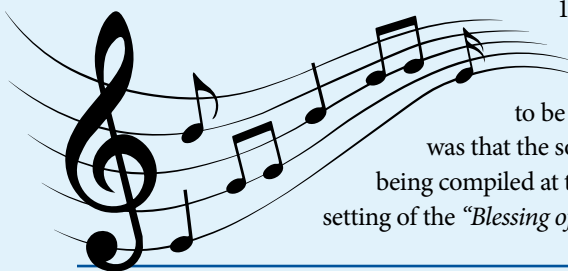
letter from Sister Clotilda requesting that the publisher overtake future printings, the composition

to be treated as a regular publication. The hope of this act

was that the song would be included in the list of Franciscan music

being compiled at the Santa Barbara Mission and so make the musical

setting of the "Blessing of St. Francis of Assisi" better known to the world.



Sister M. Bonagratia, Sister of St. Francis, music teacher, and creator of "The Blessing of St. Francis."

## Catholic High Celebrates 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The Catholic High School of Baltimore, one of our congregationally sponsored ministries, recently celebrated a major event—their 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Through the efforts of the provincial, Mother Mary Generosa McCafferty, the building was constructed

on the west side of Baltimore's Edison Highway. Classes began in September 1939 with 254 freshmen. Eighty years later the school continues to offer quality secondary education in the Franciscan tradition for young women in grades 9-12. A special 80th anniversary celebration was held on September 13

for former faculty and alumni. In addition, an open house on October 19 offered families individual tours, classroom demonstrations, and an auditorium presentation. Many of our Assisi House residents were Catholic High graduates. Although they could not attend the event, they sent a video of congratulations to be shared during the celebration.



Sisters Marie Michelle Michel, Virginia Spiegel, Dolara Taylor, and Margaret Lewis joined in the Catholic High 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration.

## Welcome to Our Newest Franciscan Volunteer

In August we welcomed the newest member of our Franciscan Volunteers: No Risk, No Gain Program. Katherine Stevick, a graduate of Houghton College in western New York, began her year of service with us at a beautiful commissioning Mass on August 31. Katherine chose Red Hill Farm, our CSA in Aston, as her ministry. During her year of service, she is living in community with Sisters Elise Betz, Mary Killoran, and Diane Tomkinson at their convent in Wilmington, Delaware.



Katherine Stevick (middle) enjoys working on Red Hill Farm and growing in her spirituality with fellow farm workers, Madison Rios and Geoff Merz.



## Sharing Our Charism with the Next Generation

Our Office of Young Adult Engagement has been hard at work developing a new programming schedule. The goal of these efforts is to engage young adults in relationship with the Sisters of St. Francis through a variety of avenues: advocacy work, service opportunities, liturgical experiences, our volunteer program, and the creation of a faith-based podcast and coffeehouse gatherings. *Brewing Faith*—our podcast where younger Catholics ask the questions and, together with the Sisters of St. Francis and through a Franciscan lens, we look at the future of our Church—is already up and running. Download it on iTunes, Apple Podcasts, Google Play, or check it out at: [www.osf-phila.org/about/brewing-faith-podcast/](http://www.osf-phila.org/about/brewing-faith-podcast/).



### In Memoriam

Sister Mary Jane Yassick, OSF  
(formerly Sister Michael Mary)  
August 31, 2019

Sister Marie John Holland, OSF  
October 18, 2019

Sister Kathleen Tobin, OSF  
(formerly Sister Oliveria Joseph)  
October 31, 2019

Sister Ann Joseph Hartman, OSF  
November 12, 2019

Sister Mary Breen, OSF  
(formerly Sister St. Patrick)  
November 24, 2019

Sister Regina Lanahan, OSF  
(formerly Sister William Mary)  
November 27, 2019

Sister Kathryn Miller, OSF  
(formerly Sister Lillian Francis)  
December 3, 2019

## Honored by the Irish Hall of Fame

Sister Marguerite O'Beirne was honored by the Delaware Valley Irish Hall of Fame (DVIHOF) at the Commodore Barry Arts and Culture Center in Philadelphia. The DVIHOF honors members of the Irish community who play a role in preserving and continuing Irish traditions. Sister Marguerite was selected in recognition of her life-long dedication to Catholic education and ministry as well as for her service to the Irish community. Based on her educational experience in elementary, secondary, and collegiate education, she has contributed to numerous educational publications and presentations and has been recognized as a Top 100 Irish American Educator. She is also actively involved in the Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick and the Irish American Business Chamber and Network.



Sister Marguerite O'Beirne

CELEBRATING

*Jubilee*

AS SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF  
PHILADELPHIA

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*70 years*  
Professed 1950

DIAMOND JUBILARIANS

SISTER ANNA LOUISE AHERNE

SISTER FRANCES CALHOUN

SISTER JOAN DREISBACH

SISTER MARIA GROSS

SISTER GLORIA PATRICIA KELTZ

SISTER GENOVEVA MORALES

SISTER CATHERINE ALEXIS MURRAY

SISTER MARGARET OMAN

SISTER FLORENCE LEONE POCH

SISTER FRANCIS ANITA RIZZO

SISTER MARY RUTH THOMAS

SISTER MARGARET MARY WHELAN

*50 years*  
Professed 1970  
GOLDEN JUBILARIANS

SISTER REGINA DALTON

SISTER ANNE PATRICE HEFNER

SISTER GRACE ANDREW JEFFERY

SISTER LYNN PATRICE LAVIN

SISTER KATHLEEN FRANCIS MCCARRON

SISTER ELEANOR MOORE

*Recognize a name? Would you like to reconnect or send a congratulatory note? Send communications to Florence Smith; 609 S. Convent Road; Aston, PA 19014; [communications@osfphila.org](mailto:communications@osfphila.org)*

# FoCUS

► Sister Christa Marie Thompson, Donna's 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, claims that "Donna is Franciscan peace and joy with her listening heart, supporting voice, and smile...No question, no request, no problem is too much for her...helping others is her greatest joy."



## DONNA CASAPULLA

"DONNA IS FRANCISCAN  
PEACE AND JOY WITH  
HER LISTENING HEART,  
SUPPORTING VOICE,  
AND SMILE."

Born in Wilmington, Delaware, Donna Casapulla is part of a large, close-knit Irish/Italian family and has been connected to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia from the start. St. Francis Hospital was where she and her six siblings were born and where her parents passed away.

Educated at St. Anthony of Padua School, Donna credits the Sisters of St. Francis with giving her a solid foundation for her academic and spiritual development. She savors childhood memories of trick-or-treating at the convent and being the first grade angel for the Christmas Eve Midnight Mass and May Procession.

Having worked and volunteered at St. Francis Hospital for almost 40 years, Donna says that "the colleagues are like family to me." She helps plan events for the Feast Week of St. Francis of Assisi and dresses the hallway walls of the hospital with numerous sayings of St. Francis. A favorite outreach activity is helping to collect lunches that staff donate to feed the hungry and homeless at Emmanuel Dining Room. "We love to practice the St. Francis Way!" she explained.

Sister Margaret Aloysius McGrail was one sister who, by her example, made a particularly profound impression on Donna. In Donna's own words, "She was one of the most selfless people I ever met. She changed my life in many ways by teaching me to focus on what is truly important: family, being humble, loving, giving and kind." Of the few sisters working at the hospital now, Donna comments, "I admire each of them so much. They always have the right words to make people feel appreciated and are always so thankful for any kindness shown to them."

It comes as no surprise that Donna enjoys sisters' visits to St. Francis Hospital and says that they "will always be my very special friends because of their carrying on the genuine spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. It has been an honor for me to reconnect and to meet with so many of these sisters. I am so happy and proud to have these wonderful women in my life."

► The mother of three and grandmother of nine, Donna feels fortunate to have her family members living in close proximity so she can attend various activities and all can gather easily for holiday and special event celebrations.



▲ According to Cathy Weaver, Senior Vice President, Mission Integration at St. Francis Hospital, "Donna is a champion of the Mission and Core Values and a character in the very best sense of the word. Everyone knows and loves her."



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- Red Hill Farm, Aston PA



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## First in Safety

Providing a safe work environment for Pennsylvania's workers requires complete commitment by employers and employees. For this reason, the safety initiative provides Pennsylvania employers and employees with the information and technical assistance needed to develop comprehensive safety practices in the workplace. It also recognizes the successful employer/employee joint safety program which results in the achievement of safety excellence. After a lot of work and focused attention, Our Lady of Angels Convent and Assisi House, are now number one in the state of Pennsylvania for safety and were nominated for the Governor's Award for Safety Excellence—a highly competitive award.



## Franciscan Night – Derby Style

The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia invite you to join us for Franciscan Night: Derby Style on May 2, 2020, at Our Lady of Angels Convent. Don your best hat, watch the derby, and raise your bets to support the care of the sick and elderly sisters and the Franciscan Volunteer Program! Come and enjoy the evening as we celebrate life in a joyful Franciscan spirit with food, beverages, raffle drawings, and casino-style games. Learn more about the sisters and the many ways in which they have served God's people. Support the growing needs of our retired Franciscan sisters who have spent their lives reaching out and caring for others and the Franciscan volunteers as they join the sisters in living out the call to loving service. Visit our website to learn more: [www.osfphila.org/events](http://www.osfphila.org/events).



◀ Although Puerto Ricans have been citizens of the United States since 1917 and can move freely between the island and the mainland, many of the Spanish-speaking natives can relate to the issues going on in places like Honduras and Guatemala. In 1945 Mother Veronica sent the first sisters to Barranquitas, Puerto Rico, to staff a local school, La Academia Monsenor Willinger, and to offer an extensive catechetical program. The children there were not wealthy but were eager to learn the way of those from the states. Sister Maria Orlandini, a missionary at heart, has visited Honduras twice to learn about the root causes of migration and strives to help immigrants coming to the United States to find their way. Read more about her story on page 4.