

Volume 24.1 Spring 2021

Good NEWS

A Publication of THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

Also in this issue:

- Small Parish in the Hills Brings Light to Many
- People & Places
- Sharing the Good News

Finding a Safe Haven *at* Mary's Harbor

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

It is important to have a “sacred space,” a place where we can encounter the divine in prayer, solitude, and silence. This can be a chapel, a quiet nook in the home, a garden, or a sacred place in our own hearts. They are the places where we come home to ourselves and discover a deeper meaning to life and its activities. Here we encounter God, truth, and the reality that God loves us and desires good for us, for others, and for all creation. We come to realize that all of life is connected and interdependent. We grasp the fact that we are called to move beyond ourselves and to care for our brothers and sisters.



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

*In this issue of Good News, we read of Cuan Mhuire, several dwellings throughout Ireland providing treatment and rehabilitation services to those suffering from a variety of addictions. Our Sister Maria Oman has served here for the past 28 years. She provides morning meditations and assists residents throughout their counseling and programming. As the residents progress through their treatment, they find acceptance and a sense of belonging. They are trained in new skills, proficiencies that will enable gainful employment. They come to know the truth of who they are and discover their unique giftedness. They recognize that they **belong** in the community. This sacred space is a place of healing and growth.*

*Tucked away in the hills of Lenni, Pennsylvania, is St. Francis de Sales Parish, another sacred space nourishing the people of God. Sister Betty Kirk serves as the parish service director, assisting parishioners who desire to reach out and serve their brothers and sisters in need. The weekly liturgy, the scripture readings, silence, and reflection nurture this community as they seek to live the Gospel each day. This parish has generously responded to Jesus' call to “**love one another as I have loved you.**” Throughout the pandemic, they have made generous donations to alleviate the suffering of those who are unemployed and food insecure by providing money, gift certificates, food, and blankets. In addition to these gifts, they are also generous in sharing their personal talents. Prayer groups, knitting circles, cooking, and an outreach to those suffering with cancer are labors of love from this community and an expression of their faith in action. The “spark of the divine” is alive and well in the parishioners of St. Francis de Sales.*

May we all find a “sacred space” where we are supported and encouraged to share the gifts we have been given by our loving God.

Blessings,

Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty, OSF



VOLUME 24.1 SPRING 2021

INSIDE *Good* NEWS CONTENTS

Point of View.....2

Finding a Safe Haven at Mary's Harbor..... 4

Cuan Mhuire (Mary's Harbor) is the largest voluntary provider of addiction treatment services and residential rehabilitation in Ireland with five major treatment centers. For the past 28 years, Sister Maria Assunta Oman has provided needed support to assist individuals battling addiction in working through the process of recovery—allowing them to blossom and succeed by living a better life.

Written by Sara McDermott

Photography provided by Cuan Mhuire

People & Places.....10

Small Parish in the Hills Brings Light to Many 12

St. Francis de Sales Parish, the little church on the hillside of Lenni, Pennsylvania, recently celebrated their 125th anniversary. Sister Elizabeth (Betty) Kirk, who has been ministering at the parish since 1990, shares the various ways in which the parishioners witness to the Gospel and help others in the community on a daily basis—sharing the “spark of the divine” that is in their hearts..

Written by Sara McDermott

Photography by Andrea Cipraini-Mecchi

Sharing the Good News18

Focus.....20



Communications Office

609 South Convent Road
Aston, PA 19014
Tel (610) 558-7726
Fax (610) 558-6131
goodnews@osfphila.org

Managing Editor

Florence Smith

Assistant Editors

Sister Ann Marie Slavin, OSF
Winnie Hayek

Editorial Board

Dr. Joseph Glass
Sister Helen Jacobson, OSF
Sister Jacqueline Marie Kotz, OSF
Sister Mary Lonergan, OSF
Sister Carol Ann Warnke, OSF

Graphic Design

Geneen Pintof

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 twice per year (spring/summer and fall/winter) by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. We welcome your feedback and comments; correspondence should be addressed to *Good News* at the address above.

Visit our website! www.osfphila.org



The environmental savings by printing this document with FSC certified stock on an FSC certified press are:
Trees preserved for the future: 43; Lbs water-borne waste not created: 124.17; Gallons wastewater flow saved: 18,266; Lbs solid waste not generated: 2,021; Lbs net greenhouse gases prevented: 3,979; BTUs energy not consumed: 30,459,240

On the cover: A moment of respite in a beautiful setting can make all the difference in a person's well-being. The mission of Cuan Mhuire is to be a place where people can find a sense of belonging, family, friendship, support, and peace.



Sister Maria Assunta Oman, OSF, leads a group therapy session at Cuan Mhuire Limerick. The support that those receiving treatment find in their group sessions is key to their recovery. The program is based on the philosophy of total abstinence and strives to restore the confidence, self-respect, and sense of responsibility of all participants.

Finding a Safe Haven *at* Mary's Harbor

“WE BELIEVE THE PLACE AND THE SETTING WITHIN WHICH THE PROGRAMS ARE OFFERED ARE JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE PROGRAMS THEMSELVES.”

Working as a nurse at St. Vincent's Hospital in Athy, Ireland, Sister Consilio Fitzgerald, RSM, a Mercy Sister, would often see “men of the road.” These were homeless men, the majority of whom suffered from alcoholism. According to the hospital rules, they could be admitted for one night but in the morning, they would be sent on their way. Sister Consilio quickly realized that their “lack of roots” made true recovery from their addiction impossible. She felt a tremendous need to help them and began to dream of providing a home base where they could both recover and build a better life. “I was interested in them and found them to be intelligent, often well educated people. Some of them had even changed their names because they didn't want to be recognized. They were so ashamed of their lifestyle,” she said. “As time went on, I began to realize more and more that these people were my brothers. I said to myself, ‘Someday, somewhere, somehow, I will have a place that these people can call home.’”

The Mustard Seed

Soon after her time at the hospital, Sister Consilio was transferred to work at the Convent of Mercy, also in Athy. She hadn't been there long when “men of the road” began to call upon the convent. One in particular came to see her consistently—a man named Paddy whom she'd met at a local AA meeting that he had organized. Though Sister Consilio was under the impression that he kept calling because he saw she wanted to learn about addiction, he soon confessed that it was because the visits helped him to stay sober. A few weeks later, he asked if he could bring another person who was suffering from alcoholism to see her and soon there were a number of regular “callers.”



The need to aid those struggling with alcoholism and addiction was evident. Mother Sacred Heart, the superior of the convent at the time, saw the good work Sister Consilio was doing and granted her the use of a small music room for her meetings. Two years later, Sister Consilio was granted the use of the “Old Dairy,” a small building on the grounds, and Cuan Mhuire was born. That was in 1966.

Plant a Seed. Watch it Grow.

From those humble beginnings, Cuan Mhuire has now grown to be the largest voluntary provider of Addiction Treatment Services and Residential Rehabilitation in all of Ireland. It has five separate centers throughout the country, most of which are located on former estates that are surrounded by lush farmland. In these idyllic settings, residents often comment that they have found peace for the first time in (their) lives. The name Cuan Mhuire, which means “Mary's Harbor,” reflects the safe haven that these facilities offer to those who need to heal and recover.

continued on page 6

▲ Clients may engage in a variety of training while in recovery, including woodworking. This piece features a quote to remind all those receiving treatment of their focus.



The original location in Athy is set amid the beautiful countryside of County Kildare, Ireland. Since its opening in 1966, four additional addiction treatment centers have been opened across Ireland in Limerick, Galway, Kildare, and Down.

THE FOCUS IS NOT ONLY ON DEALING WITH THE UNDERLYING PROBLEMS CAUSING THE ADDICTION, BUT ALSO ON DISCOVERING EACH PERSON'S "UNIQUENESS, GOODNESS, GIFTEDNESS, AND REAL PURPOSE IN LIFE."



Sister Maria Oman works with a client to prepare a guided religious meditation for the group. Each client is immersed in a routine of both spiritual and physical growth each and every day. It is by developing all parts of themselves that they are better able to overcome addiction.



Reaching out to God for help and seeking to understand our own self-worth are two central messages garnered from the healing that Cuan Mhuire provides for the affected folks within its walls.

continued from page 5

"We believe the place and the setting within which the programs are offered are just as important as the programs themselves," says Sister Maria Oman, OSF, a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia who has worked at three different Cuan Mhuire locations over the past 28 years.

Cuan Mhuire serves approximately 2,500 people per year and has helped over 100,000 people since 1966. It has been likened to the mustard seed in the Gospel—symbolizing how miraculously it has grown from just a simple wish to do good.

Serendipity

When Sister Consilio was first contacted by Sister Maria, a native of Ireland, Sister Maria was working in the U.S. However, her father had fallen ill shortly after the death of her mother and she strongly felt the need to return home to be with him. To make this possible, she was encouraged to look for any work she could find in Ireland.

Although Sister Maria's background was in teaching, when she heard that Cuan



Mhuire would be opening two new locations and was in need of extra help, she reached out to Sister Consilio. She described receiving unconditional love from the other sister who, upon hearing about Sister Maria's situation, said, "You take care of your father and we'll take care of you." When Sister Maria stressed that she had no experience in the areas of addiction and rehabilitation, Sister Consilio simply said, "I've never met a nun who couldn't do something."

Twenty-eight years later Sister Maria is still a fixture at Cuan Mhuire and is currently stationed at Cuan Mhuire, Bruree.



Woodworking is just one of many training programs provided at Cuan Mhuire. Such programs help residents to acquire valuable skills that will serve them in the future, helping them to bridge the gap between rehabilitation and reentering the regular world. For many, the training received at Cuan Mhuire leads to gainful employment.

On a regular day, she keeps residents moving through their programs and meetings starting with the morning meditation. For this the staff use a meditation model developed by John Maine, a now-deceased Benedictine monk. The practice centers on silence, simplicity, and stillness. For many of the residents, it leads to an inner sense of tranquility that is vital to resisting their addictions.

At the Bruree location, there are 23 beds for women and 26 beds for men. People move into their bedroom and begin their official program after completing a 14-day detoxification process. Sister Maria helps

residents before and after this process as well as during their counseling.

Levels of Treatment

There are different levels of counseling and treatment at Cuan Mhuire, which treats not only alcoholism and drug addiction but also eating disorders and addictions to gambling. According to Sister Maria, they find that many residents are “cross-addicted”—struggling with addictive behaviors in more than one area. All areas of addiction must be treated in order for true healing to take place.

Part of Cuan Mhuire’s success is recognizing that there are different levels of needs when it comes to treatment. In addition to the detoxification program and the meditation practice, people in recovery also engage in individual therapy, group therapy, and work therapy. Sister Maria explained that group therapy often becomes an unparalleled support system. Here, residents can become part of a culture of recovery and be inspired by witnessing the progress of others. They also find acceptance within their group that can help them to forgive themselves

continued on page 8

continued from page 7

and to move forward. “Until we accept ourselves as we are, there is no recovery,” Sister Maria says. “We get to know ourselves, warts and all.... Our group becomes a warm and loving family for us until we learn to love ourselves.”

While programs typically last either 12 or 20 weeks, residents are encouraged to do longer stays if need be, particularly when they are at high risk of relapse. Upon completion of their time at one of the facilities, Cuan Mhuire also offers those in recovery a two-year program that provides aftercare to them and their families.

One vitally important aspect of Cuan Mhuire’s operations is the availability of transitional homes to those who need them. Nearly 40 percent of people who come to Cuan Mhuire are homeless at the time of admission. Simply to be thrown

out into the world after completing their program could be detrimental to their progress. To prevent relapse from happening, the transitional homes offer a safe, familial atmosphere where they can stay after their program while they gain their independence and eventually secure their own accommodations.

Recovery in a Pandemic

In addition to other types of therapy, Cuan Mhuire traditionally offers a monthly Family Day meeting which family members over the age of 11 can attend. This gives relatives an opportunity to ask questions about addiction and to learn more about their loved one’s needs during this trying time.

The recent pandemic put a stop to large family gatherings for the time being, although families can still participate in small, private counseling sessions. Cuan Mhuire recognizes the importance of family in the healing process and stresses how these meetings can help family members to better understand addiction and support someone on the road to recovery.

The outbreak of Covid-19 has also posed difficulty in terms of the number of residents Cuan Mhuire can accommodate at any given time. While the maximum wait time for a bed in the past was seven days, it now might take as long as 10 weeks for someone to secure their spot. Any incoming residents must also undergo Covid testing, which can further delay the process.

Additionally, Covid has put all of Cuan Mhuire’s fundraisers on hold. In a regular year, the organization may coordinate concerts, walks, or even fashion shows to help generate income and keep Cuan Mhuire accessible to all.

While such events cannot take place currently, they continue to hold craft and gift fairs, church collec-

tions, and street collections in Cork and Limerick. Cuan Mhuire is also supported with donations from the Friends of Cuan Mhuire, which includes supporters who live as far away as Boston and New York.

The Value of the Individual

Treatment at Cuan Mhuire is very much about the individual. Oftentimes, Sister Maria says, “People only focus on the addiction when the real questions need to be ‘Who am I?’ and ‘What am I meant to do?’”

People seeking treatment often feel dejected as a result of their addictions and won’t receive help if they are treated as a statistic or defined by their struggles. The focus is not only on dealing with the underlying problems causing the addiction but also on discovering each person’s “uniqueness, goodness, giftedness, and real purpose in life.”

To that end, the work therapy component of treatment is incredibly valuable. Residents can acquire basic skills during work therapy which will help them to have a better life upon completion of their program. All residents participate in work therapy each day. Some work in the coffee bar, the kitchen, or the dining rooms. Others work on the grounds doing digging, weeding, planting, and sowing. While the farm staff is mostly permanent, occasionally there will be a farmer in treatment who takes part in milking the cows and other farm work. Additionally, Cuan Mhuire offers roles doing recycling; house-keeping; and training in woodwork, pottery, crafts, and basic computer skills.

In addition to helping residents learn “to cope without the crutch of a chemical substance,” Sister Maria said, “These activities provide training and retraining. They help the person to practice old skills and acquire new skills. They help develop a sense of responsibility and self-worth which is so important for the person in recovery from addiction.”

◀ *Many clients are surprised by how much they enjoy the hands-on work involved in the program. Some end up turning these skills into a job—or at least a much-loved hobby. Pottery, for instance, is one program where the act of molding clay can take on meditative properties, helping clients find an inner peace while also developing a new skill.*



Outdoor spaces are pivotal to recovery and allow folks times of quiet contemplation. Those at Cuan Mhuire believe that the place and setting within which the program is offered are just as important as the program itself.



All is Possible

The long-lasting effects of the programs and training are evident. Sister Maria recalled men whom she treated back in 1993 who are still sober and who send her Christmas cards each year. Once, on a pilgrimage to Lourdes, she noticed a familiar-looking young man pushing an invalid in a wheelchair from the grotto. She was delighted when she realized that it was a man who had gone through the program. While he had struggled—enrolling many times before finally being rehabilitated—he had now found professional success and was giving back by devoting himself to charity work.

Little could Sister Consilio have known how her wish to provide a home to those “men of the road” would come to fruition. That small seed of an idea truly did have the strength of a mustard seed. What eventually grew from her vision would prove that with God, all things are possible. Sister Maria Oman treasures being part of that mustard plant now grown into a sheltering tree of life in Ireland. ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact goodnews@osfphila.org.

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Consider donating either to Cuan Mhuire or to a similar addiction recovery center in your area. Such facilities depend upon the generosity of others in order to continue to serve their vital function. This is especially true recently as the Covid-19 pandemic has shut down the majority of fundraising events.
- Familiarize yourself with the warning signs of addiction and substance abuse so that you'll be better able to offer support to anyone in your life who needs a recovery program.
- When it comes to those struggling with addiction, reserve judgment. Every person's path and story are different. By following Cuan Mhuire's example of loving acceptance and respect for those struggling with addiction, you increase the chances that anyone in your life who is in need of help will be open to receiving that help.
- If you own or work for a company that sponsors fundraising events for various causes, consider hosting a fundraising event to benefit Cuan Mhuire or a similar organization.
- Consider donating to the ministries of the Sisters of St. Francis that support those in need, using the enclosed envelope.

PEOPLE & PLACES

► Some of the art projects done by Nyumbani Children that showcase their talent.



KENYA

Sister Julie Mulvihill continues to work with the children at Nyumbani Children's Home in Kenya. Like the rest of the world, the people of Kenya are struggling to maintain health in the midst of a pandemic. In a recent article, Sister Julie explained the steps taken to protect the children from Covid. For example, the Nyumbani children wear masks to school. When they return each day, they have their temperatures taken, shower, and wash the clothes they wore to school. One of their main projects each year is what Sister Julie calls their Saturday Program, which includes time for quiet reading in the library, computer lessons, and an art program. However, the Nyumbani "family," like most families, is no stranger to mishaps. Just when she thought everything was set to resume her Saturday Program for 2021, Sister Julie was informed that the computer lab could not be used because the needed extension cords were missing and some of the computers had stopped functioning. The art program was also not able to function because the people conducting the program could not get the Covid test. So...for the early days, at least, the only Saturday class will be in the library.



Sister Anne McNamara received recognition from the City of Destiny Awards.

MASSACHUSETTS

Sister Betsy Goodwin joined women religious from various congregations for the 2021 Annual Anti-trafficking Prayer Vigil—an event coordinated by the Boston area Catholic Sisters Anti-trafficking Coalition. An article by Marilyn McGoldrick, CSJ, published in the January issue of *More Update*, shared a quote from Sister Betsy's welcome: "For each of us, our lives and our world have experienced disruption after disruption during the past year. What has not been disrupted are the incidences of Human Trafficking-Modern Day Slavery. We gather once again to pray for an end to this evil, and the restoration of respect for the dignity of each person." The vigil allowed time for individual reflection, a video presentation, and prayer as well as a visit from a woman who, at one point in her life, had experienced the reality of human trafficking.



WASHINGTON

For 34 years the City of Destiny Award has been honoring community volunteers and organizations whose outstanding contributions help make Tacoma, Washington, a better place. Although this year's presentation was in a virtual format, it still provided the same recognition and appreciation for our community. **Sister Anne McNamara** was honored with the Lifetime Service Award for her more than 60 years of dedication in caring for, healing, and ministering to God's people and for her service to CHI Franciscan Health Systems. The award was presented by Tacoma city council member Lillian Hunter. In an update, Ketul Patel, CEO of CHI Franciscan, also congratulated Sister Anne, citing her current service as vice chair of the CHI Franciscan Board and chair of the Wellfound Behavioral Health Hospital Board, her membership on the Milgard Breast Center Board of Directors, and her current service on both the Franciscan Executive Board Committee and the Franciscan Quality and Value Board Committee.

Who 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.



The Christmas Village designed and set up by Sister Angela Sutera.

PENNSYLVANIA

Our sisters in **Assisi House**, our retirement residence in Aston, began 2021 with a New Year's Reflection Discussion. Each sister had an opportunity to write any thoughts or memories about the year 2020 and then share them with one another. The goal of the activity was to engage in a bit of introspection which involved taking the time and effort to refocus the mind on the positive while also providing an opportunity for self-growth. The sisters enjoyed the reflection and enlightened one another with thoughts and guidance of their own. They considered the idea that, although 2020 was a tough year for many, we can hopefully learn how to care for one another again. The discussion also allowed the sisters time to listen to one another and to share the struggles that they endured during the past year. There was a sense of calm, understanding, hope, and compassion that filled the room because the experience allowed the sisters to open up to their friends.

In addition, **Sister Damian Marie Jackson**, a resident of Queen of Peace Hall in Assisi House, held a guided reflection presentation in the chapel for the residents. During her presentation, entitled "What Is God Asking of Me at This Time in My Life," Sister Damian invited the sisters to reflect



WASHINGTON
Sisters **Christine Still**, **Jude Connelly**, and **Anne McNamara** in Tacoma donated goods to a tiny house village during Catholic Sisters Week. Sisters Carmel Gregg and Carol Ann Warnke donated a trunk load of goods

on the question and then provided them with three answers: "to act justly, to live tenderly, to walk humbly with God." She explained that, although we already possess these qualities, we need to pray for the grace to continue to do so. Sister Damian has held many retreats during her years in min-

istry and this particular one provided the Assisi House sisters with an opportunity to set aside time to listen to the voice of God and to hear what is in their own hearts.

VIRTUAL

Our **Companion Retreat Day** was held on February 27, virtually this time. Both companions and sisters attended via Zoom. The theme of this year's retreat was "The Primacy of Christ." Sister Marian Leaf's presentation addressed the topic, stressing the meaning of the phrase and the role it plays in each of our lives. Patricia St Clair, director of our Franciscan Companions in Mission Program, provided copies of the specified reading prior to the retreat. During the afternoon, time was provided for both personal and shared reflection. The companions very much appreciated the time to renew and refresh their Franciscan hearts with the sisters but many look forward to a time when all can meet again annually in person.

to Tacoma's St. Ann Parish food pantry. In addition, our sisters and companions in Spokane also did a great job collecting food for Caritas Food Bank! The goal of Catholic Sisters Week this year was to help communities struggling with food insecurity due in part to Covid-19. Read more about our efforts on the East Coast on page 21.



Sister Damian Marie Jackson delivers a guided reflection for the sisters in Assisi House.

PENNSYLVANIA

Despite pandemics, deaths, and political battles, God is still God. And at the motherhouse in Aston, Christmas was still Christmas—with a few alterations. Usually a manger scene is set up in the Magnolia Room on the first floor. However, instead of the traditional large stable scene, **Sister Angela Sutera** set up an entire Christmas village. The manger—set in the midst of the village and its residents—held the central spot where villagers came to visit and to adore the new-born infant. Although we were not able to gather for our usual employee Christmas luncheon, **Sister Eleanor Moore** found a way to "celebrate safely." Several days before Christmas, she invited employees to "Come and enjoy our gourmet hot chocolate bar with all the 'bells and whistles.'" She also invited them to take a guess at the number of pieces of candy in a nicely decorated jar.

Sister Elizabeth (Betty) Kirk, OSF, came to St. Francis de Sales to minister 31 years ago and hasn't left since. She is moved by the parishioners on a daily basis because of their boundless efforts to serve others.



Sister Betty Kirk talks with Sisters Marijane Hresko, Mary Beth Antonelli, and Kate O'Donnell. Many sisters in the area continue to attend Mass at St. Francis de Sales Parish because many believe that the energy of the parish is infectious.

Small Parish in the Hills *Brings* Light

“IT IS TRULY INSPIRING TO SEE THE GOODNESS OF OUR PARISHIONERS AS THEY REACH OUT AND MINISTER TO PEOPLE WITH VARIOUS NEEDS.”



The active nature of this small community is deeply rooted in their prayer. The parishioners are described as a true example of the Church in action. Here, Lydia Lil and Cathy Hawes pray the rosary as part of the church's prayer group.

Lenni, Pennsylvania, contains a labyrinth of streets set into steep hills. Navigating the area is difficult and even people living nearby are often unfamiliar with the terrain. Many inhabitants of the small mining town have been there for generations with homes dating back to the 1800s. Hidden in this virtually unknown neighborhood is a

gem: the parish of St. Francis de Sales. The parish, established in 1894, has a more active congregation than many larger parishes in better known regions. The congregants tirelessly develop new programs to benefit others. Father Alan Okon, the pastor of St. Francis de Sales, describes parishioners as “a true example of the Church in action as they bring God’s loving and compassionate presence to all through their various projects.”

As parish services director, Sister Elizabeth (Betty) Kirk is the go-to contact for parishioners who desire to live the message of the Gospel through their involvement in church programs or groups. According to Sister Betty, if ever there has been a need for people to look inward to see what they can do for others, “it is certainly now as the whole world has become one family suffering from the coronavirus and its spiritual, economic, and moral effects.”

Like many other parishes, the members of St. Francis de Sales discovered that the recent pandemic, while dreadful, brought out the best in most people. The clearest manifestation of this is the increase in donations and in an awareness of the needs of many.

Exterior of St. Francis deSales Parish in Lenni, Pennsylvania. This parish may be tiny but she is fierce.



to Many

Although many parishioners attend Mass virtually, they also stop by to make a private church visit and to donate goods. Those who attend Mass in person on the weekend often leave donations as well. These donations support two charities, in particular, Anna's Place and the Mother Katharine Drexel Center, both in Chester, Pennsylvania, an area of real poverty.

Beyond inspiring generous giving, the global shut-down also caused many to consider what they're doing to bring about good. People have slowed down and become more reflective. As Sister Betty puts it, "You start with the understanding that silence has a purpose in your life. You couldn't before because you didn't have as much opportunity for silence. This has made people more conscious of what is really important and should be valued."

Sister Betty felt that the current pandemic also broadened her own spiritual awareness. While in the past she tended to pray specifically for those in the United States, the worldwide crisis prompted her to offer prayers for the entire world. Though the events of 2020 were tragic, she pointed out how tragedy often "breaks you open to receiving all God's people."

Unique Gifts

One thing Sister Betty stressed is that "God is in you and you are a gift to the world, and you have to discover what your gift is." Everyone has different skills when it comes to taking meaningful action. No one is here by chance; they are here because the Lord has something for them to do with the gifts that they have been given. The parish's namesake, St. Francis de Sales, was a proponent of quiet reflection in order for each individual to hear God's plans.

This attitude has been adopted by many parishioners of St. Francis de Sales. They all bring their unique talents to help create various outreach programs. Community groups range from prayer groups, to knitting circles, to a "Caring Cooks" program. There are also groups that collect goods such as socks, gloves, and hats for "Joy of Socks" or food for "Breakfast Bags." Both programs are led by parishioner Cathy Hawes. While the parish no lon-

ger has a school, it still offers a program to prepare children to receive their first Holy Communion. Sister Anne Marie Stegmaier, IHM, the director of religious education, encourages the children, along with their parents, not only to participate in the religious education program but also to be involved in parish outreach. Barbara Jones, another congregant, leads the Church Environment Committee which decorates and beautifies the church during liturgical holidays.

One of the main focal points of service is the Cancer Care Ministry led by Lydia Lill. Lydia, who first approached Father Okon with the idea in 2015, is currently assisted by at least 12 helpers. They meet monthly to pray for more than 20 individuals who are struggling with cancer; they also write letters and call to check on them.

Yet another congregant, Anne Fernandez, got the idea to start a Prayer Shawl

continued on page 14

continued from page 13

Ministry. This group knits prayer shawls, baby blankets, and lap blankets for those who need them. A natural next step was to send some of their completed work to the cancer patients being tended to by the Cancer Care Ministry.

“It is truly inspiring to see the goodness of our parishioners as they reach out and minister to people with various needs,” said Father Okon.

Gospel in Action

In the midst of global turmoil, the parish recently celebrated its 125th anniversary. While Archbishop Nelson J. Perez offered the televised celebratory Mass, the reception had to be cancelled. None of this dampened the giving spirit of the congregation, however. In addition to creating a special anniversary book, they generously donated money that went toward building a home in Honduras.

In September 2021, Sister Betty will have been at St. Francis de Sales for 31 years. For her, coming to the parish was life-altering. In the convent, she said, her daily needs are well met. For example, she explained that she has a car for her use whenever needed. A congregant family, by comparison, may have one car that needs to be shared by 10 people. Working directly with these people and learning about their daily struggles has opened Sister Betty’s eyes and helped her to better serve them.

In the prayer groups that Sister Betty runs each Wednesday night, she takes the current week’s liturgy and simply asks, “What are these readings saying to us?” She creates handouts about what touched her from the readings. These help people to reflect more deeply as they listen to the readings at Sunday Mass and to identify what resonates with them. Sometimes it’s just a word within a reading—for example, “disaster”—that can cause a person to reflect because it stirs something in their head or heart.

St. Francis de Sales Parish has such boundless enthusiasm for the world around them that they have many active subgroups that are responsible for so much good. In addition to the prayer group, this is a sampling of a few additional groups.



Pictured this page, top to bottom: (Top) The Church Environment Committee, which regularly transforms the parish space for holidays and special events, created these window decorations for every window in the church. (Center) The Cancer Care Team meets in the church to pray and do outreach for over 20 cancer patients. (Bottom) Ribbons on the pews help keep parishioners attending Mass at a safe distance from one another. The Church Environment Committee is also responsible for this.



While Sister Betty has been instrumental in moving proposed programs forward, her goal has always been to facilitate things so they can be taken over by others. She wants all outreach to thrive even if she’s not there. In terms of her own unique, individual gift, she realizes her strength lies in organizing. When people approach her with ideas they’d like to implement, she’s able to figure out the logistics of what’s possible, ensure that meeting space is available, and get the events on the calendar. The parishioners handle the rest.

When asked why she believes that the congregants of St. Francis de Sales are so active, Sister Betty said that they “truly understand what it means to follow in the footsteps of the Lord. They know that the Gospel needs to be carried out in acts of love, forgiveness, acceptance, and giving.”

Personal Acts

The work of the congregants extends beyond creating service programs; it is also manifested in their everyday behavior.

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Get involved at your own parish. Find out which different outreach groups already exist and give of your time and talents to help fulfill those missions that resonate with you.
- If you aren't seeing opportunities to volunteer (or to volunteer for a cause that is important to you), consider starting your own outreach group. At St. Francis de Sales, parishioners approach those in charge to present their ideas, which has led to the creation of numerous groups and ministries. Find out who you can go to at your parish to do the same and start something special.
- Begin a personal practice that brings more good into the world. Just as Agnes Bakow makes it a point to tell each Black person she encounters that she believes Black lives matter, identify a cause that you feel needs special attention and dedicate yourself to doing what good you can in that space.
- Donate funds to your parish or to St. Francis de Sales to help them continue to spread their good work and positive messages throughout their communities.
- Consider donating to the ministries of the Sisters of St. Francis that support those in need, using the enclosed envelope.



Pictured this page, Clockwise: (Top Left) Cathy Hawes sorts socks that have been donated by parishioners as part of the "Joy of Socks" program. These socks are collected and sent to areas with the greatest need. (Top) Joanne Sunick and Philomena D'Orozio crochet together at a safe distance with the shawl group. In addition to knitting shawls, baby blankets, and lap blankets for those in need, the group knits items for cancer patients who are cared for by the Cancer Care Ministry. (Left) Agnes Bakow shows off a rubbing from the parish bells which her father rang twice a day for most of his life. Additionally, Agnes has made it her personal mission to support the Black community by telling each Black person she encounters that she believes Black lives matter; it has become a meaningful personal routine.



For example, when the Black Lives Matter movement gained momentum in 2020, Agnes Bakow, a widow in the parish, felt called to action. She made the decision that every time she saw a person of color—no matter where she was—she would go up to them and say, "I just want you to know that I believe Black lives matter." This is a bold move that many people might not feel comfortable taking but it is one that's proven to be rewarding. The reactions to her statement range from surprised thanks to tears of gratitude. People often exclaim that they've never had anyone say this to them before—to which she offers an apology for the fact that more people aren't sharing this sentiment. Agnes encourages others to do this as well.

Similarly another congregant goes out of her way to make sure that those in positions which are often overlooked will be reminded of their worth. Her personal practice is to simply tell the cashiers in every store she goes to, "Thank you so much for being here." These personal acts serve to make the world a better place.

Spark of the Divine

For her own inspiration, Sister Betty regularly turns to powerful quotes. One in particular, from the East Indian-American spiritual teacher Eknath Easwaran, resonates with her: "Our supreme purpose in life is not to make a fortune, nor pursue pleasures, nor to write

our name in history, but to discover the spark of the divine that is in our hearts." That spark of the divine is alive and well in the hearts of the parishioners of St. Francis de Sales. ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact goodnews@osfphila.org.

What's New With the Companions in Mission



During a November 2019 Mass and celebration at Our Lady of Angels Convent, the congregation recognized 18 companions who have been associated with us for 25 years or more. In addition, each year all companions are encouraged to join in a recommitment ceremony.

“WE HOPE THAT THE OVERALL CONNECTION THE LAITY FEELS WITH THE COMMUNITY WILL DEEPEN.”

In 2018 we published an article on our Franciscan Companions in Mission program—the associate program of the Sisters of St. Francis. This is a follow-up to highlight what has changed!

In 1986 the Sisters of St. Francis established a companion relationship with lay women and men with Franciscan hearts to live out and share the mission of the congregation. Companions learn about Franciscan spirituality and charism alongside the sisters, incorporate the teachings into their own lives, and take what they have learned and experienced with them on their life journey.

What has changed? Perhaps the most noticeable change to the program came

when Patricia St Clair, a lay companion since 1986, became the director of the program in late 2018. In 2017 she was offered the position of assistant director and was promoted to director when Sister Jeanne Nisley retired—a job that Patricia felt was truly heaven sent.

Over the past two years, Patricia worked with leadership to expand the ways in which the sisters engage with laity. The program has become more inclusive and allows individuals to participate at whatever level feels comfortable and conducive to their lifestyle. In many ways the past two years have allowed both sisters and companions to embrace a more flexible understanding of the companion relationship that both honors the commitment



Patricia St Clair, director of the companion program, recognizes that times are changing and is open to exploring any and all possible ways of making connections between the sisters and the laity.

of our long-standing companions and welcomes a new way of doing things. One such way is by formally inviting former members, former Franciscan Volunteers, and others to continue in relationship with the sisters.

In addition, the pandemic forced us to consider new avenues for engaging with one another. This time has taught us to adopt technological means to connect—Zoom gatherings providing the primary “meeting space.” Companions from both the East and West coasts have formed new bonds that in years past were not possible. This has taught us that relationship building does not cease to exist because physical space cannot be shared. As we move forward in the year to come, we will hold onto these learnings and continue to implement virtual gathering spaces to further the relationships that have recently begun.

Mary Beard, a long-time companion from the Klamath Falls area, began her relationship with the sisters in 1993. She explained that she thoroughly enjoys the continued participation with the sisters and equates the program with a “constant consciousness of looking at, living in, and interacting with the world in which we live through a Franciscan lens.” She said, “What I love most about the program is the benefits it brings—holding each other in prayer, the shared journey, and that we

are not walking it alone, constantly being challenged to be brother and sister with all people and all of creation. It allows us to be enriched by the varied backgrounds, experiences, outlooks, insights, and involvements of our members while at the same time being so much ‘of one heart, one faith.’”

Patricia hopes to expand experiences like those Mary has had by bringing the program forward into the future. In recognizing various generational needs as we move toward welcoming younger adults, we are exploring new ways to formalize the companion commitment. It is important to honor the commitment that some of our companions have made for 15, 20, and even 30 years while also allowing for the flexibility of new and younger people to explore a level of commitment that they are comfortable making. This may mean that some people will continue to engage in formalized commitments as companions while others build the relationship outside of formalized commitments. We hope that in the future the companion program will grow not only in number but also in programming. By strengthening the relationship between

▶ *Companion Mary Beard lights a candle before a meeting of the Klamath Falls group. The group meets regularly to study the Franciscan tradition, plan retreats, share experiences, and pray.*

individual sisters and companions, we hope that the overall connection the laity feels with the community will deepen.

Mary Beard noted that over the years group leaders were always sisters. However, lay companions now serve as coordinators of most groups. As the sisters’ median age continues to rise and the number of new sisters remains low, it is important that we have laity willing to carry the charism and the ministry work of the congregation forward into the future. Mary acknowledged that to “companion means walking together in one spirit, one mission.” Patricia agreed, stating that “the sisters have gifted us with their charism and now it is time for us to gift it to others.”

While the overall goal of the program has not changed, it has grown in ways that allow for flexibility and creativity—and that is the work of the Spirit! Patricia said, “Francis and Clare were always open to the movement of the Spirit—finding ways to meet people where they are and being willing to change for the sake of the charism. This is our commitment to ongoing conversion and we, as companions, hope to carry that into the future. Franciscans are itinerant—traveling along this journey of life open to all possibilities.” ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact 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

Justice Cafés

Looking for a program to help build community? Want to deepen your spirituality through the lens of social justice? Join a growing movement of young adults acting together for justice! Earlier this year we engaged in planning for monthly Justice Cafés which were created by one of our cosponsored



ministries—the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center (IPJC) in Seattle, Washington. The format identifies a specific topic and offers information, prayer, questions for reflection and sharing as well as action steps to follow. The first virtual Justice Café had 16 participants—sisters, companions, and young adults—thus fulfilling the hoped for inter-generational community of companions, sisters, young adults, and friends. The conversation in both large and small groups focused on essential workers and was both enlightening and enriching. Topics for March, April, and May included Education Equity, Earth Justice, and Criminal Justice. Anyone interested in attending a Justice Café should visit our website: www.osfphila.org/events.



Helping Others through Lived Experience

Orting, Washington



Companion Tod Gunther has been making news lately from Orting, Washington. *The Los Angeles Times* recently featured him in a front page article and over the summer a documentary was made sharing his story. He is being regarded as the only homeless man who has ever governed a U.S. city. By day he slept with rats and panhandled on the streets of Tacoma and by night he was a city councilor on TV approving million dollar checks. Tod says these were the “darkest days of his life.” But through it all, like Francis of Assisi, he came to see the “un-homed” not simply as a problem to be solved but also as a set of gifts. “Our country’s unofficial national anthem, ‘God Bless America,’ was written by formerly homeless Irving Berlin,” he said. Another formerly homeless individual, Charles Goodyear, invented the vulcanized rubber used on our car and airplane tires. If you’d like to know more about Tod’s unique story, look up “Governing From Beneath a Bridge” on YouTube at https://youtu.be/X_eAB2yIQH8. In the video, Tod gives us some tips on how to engage with people who are homeless. The next time you see an unhoused person, he says, “be like St. Francis and sit down and say hi — everyone is worth dignity — and you aren’t what your house is, like you aren’t what your nose is.” Wise words. Congratulations on living our values, Tod!



Tod Gunther, a companion from Orting, Washington, knows from experience the experience of homelessness.



Joe Biden stops by to greet our sisters at a Ministry of Caring event in Wilmington, Delaware, in 2014.

Welcome, President Joe Biden!

The inauguration of Joe Biden as the 46th president of the United States marked the commencement of the four-year term of Joe Biden as president and Kamala Harris as vice president. The Sisters of St. Francis offered our blessings to the president and vice president and will continue to pray for them and their families throughout their term in office. Many of our sisters know Joe Biden personally through his work and parish affiliation in Wilmington, Delaware. On the Sunday prior to the inauguration, approximately 10 Catholic organizations, based in the Washington, DC area—including LCWR and FAN—gathered virtually for a preinauguration prayer service. Sister Marie Lucey joined in leading the over 100 participants from all over the world in the Prayer of St. Francis. As the gathering ended, everyone was invited to pray for PEACE during this time and for our world.



In Memoriam

Sister Francis Anne Harper
October 1, 2020

Sister Emily Ann Herbes
(formerly Sister Marie Antoinette)
October 14, 2020

Sister Margaret St. John Brocato
October 14, 2020

Sister Loretta Francis Mann
December 21, 2020

Sister Catherine Therese Keller
December 24, 2020

Sister Agnes Marie O'Brien
(formerly Sister Timothy Marie)
January 6, 2021

Sister Hildegard Grogan
January 20, 2021

CELEBRATING

Jubilee

AS SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF
PHILADELPHIA

Congratulations to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia celebrating milestones in their religious life! Join with us in congratulating them on many years of service to the people of God as Sisters of St. Francis.

70 years
Professed 1951

DIAMOND JUBILARIANS

SISTER ST JOSEPH BRENNION

SISTER MARY LOUISE BURCHELL

SISTER KATHLEEN VERONICA CARROLL

SISTER JOAN COOPER

SISTER JOHANNA CURRAN

SISTER MICHAEL KATHLEEN DEANE

SISTER IMELDA DOOLEY

SISTER ELEANOR CECILIA GETZ

SISTER LORETTA FRANCIS MANN

SISTER MARY O'MAHONY

SISTER MARY DOMINIC PISCOTTA

SISTER ROSE CHRISTOPHER SHERIDAN

50 years
Professed 1971

GOLDEN JUBILARIANS

SISTER DONNA MARIE DANGELMAIER

SISTER LINDA MARIE DECERO

SISTER MARIE BARBARA MCNAMARA

SISTER PATRICIA THERESE MISZCZUK

SISTER BERNICE PELCZAR

SISTER KATHLEEN POLLARD

SISTER ANN DAVID STROHMINGER

SISTER JANET THIEL

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

Focus

"WE ARE SO VERY GRATEFUL
FOR THE TIME AND TALENT
THESE TWO INDIVIDUALS
HAVE SHARED WITH US
OVER THE YEARS."

— SISTER KATHY DOUGHERTY

Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow: *Two Long-Term Employees Leave OLA*

KAREN McEVoy • Karen McEvoy was a delightful fixture at Our Lady of Angels Convent for just about 25 years. She began working as an administrative assistant for the Communications Office in 1997. Although her job description outlined her role as consisting of secretarial functions and responsibilities for both communications and pastoral services, Karen brought much more than that with her to the convent each day. Always ready to lend a hand to the sisters, Karen was often found helping to mail a package, make copies, or print labels. Sister Ann Marie Slavin worked with Karen closely over the years and said, "One of Karen's greatest assets is her manner of dealing with people—both in person and on the phone."

Karen became a member of the annual golf tournament committee for the foundation and was also an integral part of planning the employee picnic year after year. After years of working for the Sisters of St. Francis, Karen felt deeply connected with their Franciscan charism. So she opted to become a Franciscan Companion in Prayer and has been such for many years. So what is next for Karen? She was happy to enjoy some time off during Covid-19 to spend with her new grandson and has begun looking for what is next on her life's journey. One thing is for sure—wherever she goes, she takes with her the love of and for the Sisters of St. Francis and staff at OLA.

MARY BETH OBERG • Mary Beth Oberg met the Sisters of St. Francis when she first began working at St. Francis Hospital in Wilmington at the age of 25. While working there she obtained her master's degree in human resources. In 1986 she transferred to St. Mary's Hospital in Philadelphia as the assistant director of human resources. After a couple years she transferred to Franciscan Health Ministries (which later became Catholic Health Initiatives). In early 2010 she began working at Our Lady of Angels Convent as the director of human resources. Now after more than 30 years of working with and for the Sisters of St. Francis, Mary Beth has decided to retire. Mary Beth was much more than human resources. She made herself available in many ways to the sisters and staff over the years—from helping with events to encouraging one-on-one talks. One thing Mary Beth will take with her when she goes is a saying from the sisters, "God will provide." Mary Beth stated, "How true and comforting I found these words to be on many occasions during my time with the sisters."

In retirement, Mary Beth plans to spend more time with her husband, Rex, visiting both their mothers, taking classes in gardening and wine tasting, and learning more hobbies that invigorate both the mind and the spirit. She also plans to travel and spend more time with family.



▲ Karen McEvoy was always a welcoming presence at OLA.



▲ Mary Beth Oberg and her husband Rex.

Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia Join Efforts to Help Food Insecurity Issues

This year's Catholic Sisters Week was celebrated from March 8-14. In honor of this week, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious invited all sisters and associates to join a collaborative effort to serve persons in need and to bring much needed awareness to the current issue of food insecurity and its underlying causes such as Covid-19, poverty, unemployment/underemployment, and inconsistent access to healthy food. Our sisters responded to the invitation by having a food drive on March 12 and 13, asking for nonperishable items, grocery store gift cards, or cash donations.

The outcome of the food drive was beyond our expectations. People came with their cars filled with food. As each pulled in, one of the sisters greeted the donors with a "Thank You" card. Our team of sisters, companions, friends, students from Neumann University, a senior from Cardinal O'Hara High School, and a second grade student from Drexel Neumann Academy helped to unload the donations, storing them all in the back of the large truck. Among the visitors was our representative, Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon, and her husband, Mark Stewart, who came bearing food donations and gift cards. A number of people made monetary donations. All told we completely filled the truck top-to-bottom with donated goods and were able to gift more than \$9,000 to Anna's Place in Chester, Pennsylvania.



Neumann University students store donations in the truck on day one of the food drive.



Training workshops for teachers, staff, and pupils help in peace-building skills at Reseau Shalom.

Social Justice Grant Funds

In March 2020, shortly before the pandemic shut down many of our activities, we celebrated the many ways in which our Social Justice Grant Fund has, over the years, made a difference in the lives of many people in various parts of the world. In the ensuing months, Sister Albertus Dougherty shared a series of articles on ways in which some grants enriched the lives of many. These are just a few of the organizations that received grants over the years.

- ▶ **Rosa Vera Fund:** Facilitates preventive health and social interventions for children and healthcare workers in Montero, Bolivia
- ▶ **Reseau Shalom deTransformation de Conflit et de Reconciliation:** Peace and environmental education of children and youth for sustainable development in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa
- ▶ **El Porvenir:** Hygiene education and construction of latrines in San Lorenzo, Nicaragua
- ▶ **Bannakaroli Brothers:** Nursing education of one of the brothers so that he can be a source of health care for people in the area as well as funds for making hosts for Catholics in Kampala, Uganda
- ▶ **A Woman's Concern:** Breast Feeding Essential Kits for new mothers in Lancaster, Pennsylvania
- ▶ **Mary's Pence:** Coaching program for women in Mexico and Central America to learn business and leadership skills
- ▶ **After School Activities Partnerships:** Seminars to assist people in Philadelphia in becoming advocates for equity, diversity, and inclusion within their community
- ▶ **Neighbors to Nicaragua:** Nutritional needs for Centro de Oportunidad in Nicaragua
- ▶ **DePaul, USA:** Meeting Transportation Needs of Homeless Individuals—provides housing assistance and transportation in Philadelphia
- ▶ **In His Image International:** Sew Much Hope Project—provides opportunities to gain skill and experience in sewing and business engagement for women impacted by disability in Bulenga, Uganda.

Donor Spotlight

JEAN BRENNAN

► Jean and her husband John, a retired CEO of a multinational company, have six children and 13 grandchildren, which they love to spend quality time with.



▼ Jean chats with the sisters during the cocktail reception at the Union League of Philadelphia. Both Jean and John love giving back, not only by giving monetary donations but also by serving on boards of various Catholic schools and on the foundation board.



“POPE JOHN XXIII SAID, ‘DO NOT WALK THROUGH TIME WITHOUT LEAVING WORTHY EVIDENCE OF YOUR PASSAGE.’ THERE IS NO DOUBT JEAN AND JOHN BRENNAN HAVE LEFT WORTHY EVIDENCE OF THEIR PASSAGE IN THEIR FAITHFUL GOODNESS. MANY LIVES HAVE BEEN CHANGED BECAUSE OF THEIR QUIET GENEROSITY AND KEEN AWARENESS OF THE NEEDS OF OTHERS.”

— SISTER DEBORAH KRIST

Jean Brennan and her husband, John, were introduced to the Sisters of St. Francis through their ministry of education. After moving to Yardley, Pennsylvania, their four oldest children enrolled at St. Ignatius of Antioch School—started by the Sisters of St. Francis. At the time, Sister Mary Ann Potenza was the principal. As the years progressed, all six of their children graduated from St. Ignatius. The youngest child was born at St. Mary’s Hospital in Langhorne, which was also founded by the Sisters of St. Francis. Sister Clare Carty, whom Jean got to know years later, was CEO at the time. When John’s mother suffered a stroke in New York, she was moved to Immaculate Mary Home in Philadelphia. She lived there for six years when the home was under the supervision of Sister Corda Marie Bergbauer.

“Seeing first hand how the sisters and their endless ministries are so far-reaching—serving people from all walks of life—we continue to support the sisters with financial contributions,” Jean remarked. “We are grateful to the sisters for all they have done and continue to do in their many ministries.” The Brennans support the many efforts of education and are also very committed to donating to Assisi House. “It is important to us that the sisters who gave their entire lives to serve others be well taken care of in their retirement,” Jean said.

In addition to making donations, Jean served on the foundation board for several years and was involved in many fundraising events. The couple hosted a “thank you to donors” cocktail reception at the Union League of Philadelphia and have plans for other gatherings in the future.

Jean encourages anyone who feels inclined to get involved with the sisters in whatever capacity they can—be it volunteering at one of their many ministries or making a monetary contribution. “A donation to the sisters can be a few dollars. It doesn’t have to be a huge sum of money,” Jean said. “One example of an easy way to give is using the beautiful prayer cards which the sisters will send out on request for a minimal donation. Cards can be sent for anniversaries, birthdays, death, etc. For sure, there is no better source of prayers than those from the Sisters of St. Francis—including from the retired sisters in Assisi House.”

► Jean (center) helps present the check of funds raised at the 2016 Franciscan Night. She explained that “donating to the sisters is very safe in that you know everything is going immediately to those in need. The sisters are the most selfless people and are always looking to support their diverse ministries.”



Let's Hear From You!

- ____ Please add my name to the mailing list for *Good News*. (This is a secure list to which no other mail will be sent unless you request to receive information.)
- ____ I am receiving duplicate copies of *Good News*. Enclosed is the address label that contains the mailing address to be removed from your mailing list. (Mail card and address label in envelope.)
- ____ Please remove my name from the mailing list; I no longer wish to receive *Good News*.
- ____ Please add my email to your e-list so I can receive my copy electronically. In addition, please remove my address from your hard copy list.
- ____ Please send a copy of *Good News* to the following individual:

Name _____ E-Mail Address _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Select areas of interest to receive information about the congregation.

- ☐ Companion Program ☐ Franciscan Spiritual Centers (select one): ☐ Aston, PA ☐ Milwaukie, OR ☐ Young Franciscans
- ☐ Community Supported Agriculture: ☐ Sisters of St. Francis Foundation ☐ Vocations ☐ Young Adult Engagement
- Red Hill Farm, Aston PA



Join Our E-News Mailing List!

Visit www.osfphila.org to sign up. It only takes a minute to enter your email address to receive prayerful, entertaining, and informative e-news from the Sisters of St. Francis twice per month.



Join us!



Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia



SrsOfStFrancis



sistersofstfrancis

Link directly to our pages from our website homepage: www.osfphila.org

SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS FOUNDATION

When does a simple request Blossom into a Miracle?



When the seeds
of kindness are planted
with gifts of Hope and
Compassion
giving birth to
something new by
willing hearts like you!

- ☐ **Online** – Make a secured gift online at www.osfphila.org
- ☐ **Check** – Send a check or money order payable to: The Sisters of St. Francis Foundation; 609 S. Convent Road; Aston, PA 19014
- ☐ **Prayer/Memorial Cards** – Gifts can be made to the Sisters of St. Francis in memory or in honor of a loved one. Contact Sister Kathleen Parisi at kparisi@osfphila.org or (610) 558-7714 to request cards.
- ☐ **Recurring Gift** – Contribute money on a recurring basis. Contact Elaine Twadell at (610) 558-6132 or etwadell@osfphila.org.
- ☐ **Bequest** – Give a gift through your will to help the sisters. Contact Sister Deborah Krist at dkrist@osfphila.org or (610) 558-7713.
- ☐ **Planned Giving** – Tax advantages are available through planned giving, including bequests, securities, life insurance, and other individual retirement withdrawals. Contact Sister Deborah Krist at dkrist@osfphila.org or (610) 558-7713.
- ☐ **Foundation Support** – If you or a family member have a foundation, contributions to the Sisters of St. Francis may be made through your foundation.

I would like to be contacted.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE NUMBER: ☐ HOME ☐ CELL _____ E-MAIL _____

Please tear out this page and mail completed to:

GOOD NEWS, Communications Office, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, 609 S. Convent Road, Aston, PA 19014-1207

Visit us online at www.osfphila.org or call us at (610) 558-7726

SPRING 2021 23



Visit our website at www.osfphila.org

Combatting Racism – Transforming Our Hearts



As previously shared, the Sisters of St. Francis now have a **Facing Racism Taskforce** which is charged with sharing information/resources with our sisters and companions as we continue to reflect on individual and congregational racism. The resources shared will help us deepen our understanding of the call to bring peace to a world of racial injustice. We can only address racism if we are aware of racism and the many ways it plays out in our society. So far the taskforce has provided monthly prayers on racism

for our consideration and sharing as well as monthly discussions with sisters, companions, and young adults via Zoom as we work towards “Transforming Our Hearts.” A three-part series to continue conversation about the role of religious life in addressing and dismantling racial injustice is also being offered. Additional resources continue to be posted and shared to invite us to a deeper understanding as we prayerfully consider and act on the need for racial justice and an end to racism. We urge everyone to take a hard look at themselves and those around them and to do their part to help combat racism in our world today.



▲ *The Sisters of St. Francis have had a presence at St. Francis de Sales Parish and School in Lenni, Pennsylvania, since 1895. During that time the sisters began teaching the children from the parish at the motherhouse, Our Lady of Angels Convent. With the opening of the school in 1910, the sisters were transported each day by horse and buggy—and eventually by car—from the motherhouse, over the hill, to St. Francis de Sales. This was the daily routine for many years until 1960, when the present convent was built. Although the school no longer exists, the sisters’ presence remains within the parish. See page 12 to learn about St. Francis de Sales Parish and all the good this little church on the hill does.*



Brewing Faith Podcast

Have you listened to Brewing Faith lately? Brewing Faith is a podcast where younger Catholics ask the questions and, together with the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and through a Franciscan lens, look at the future of our Church. Sister Marian Leaf follows Sara Marks in bringing you the podcast, which has focused on discernment, the Incarnation, human nature and our sexuality, welcoming the LGBTQ community, and sports and spirituality to name a few. Give it a listen! You can search for it on your Apple or Android phone under podcasts or from our website: <https://osfphila.org/about/brewing-faith-podcast/>.