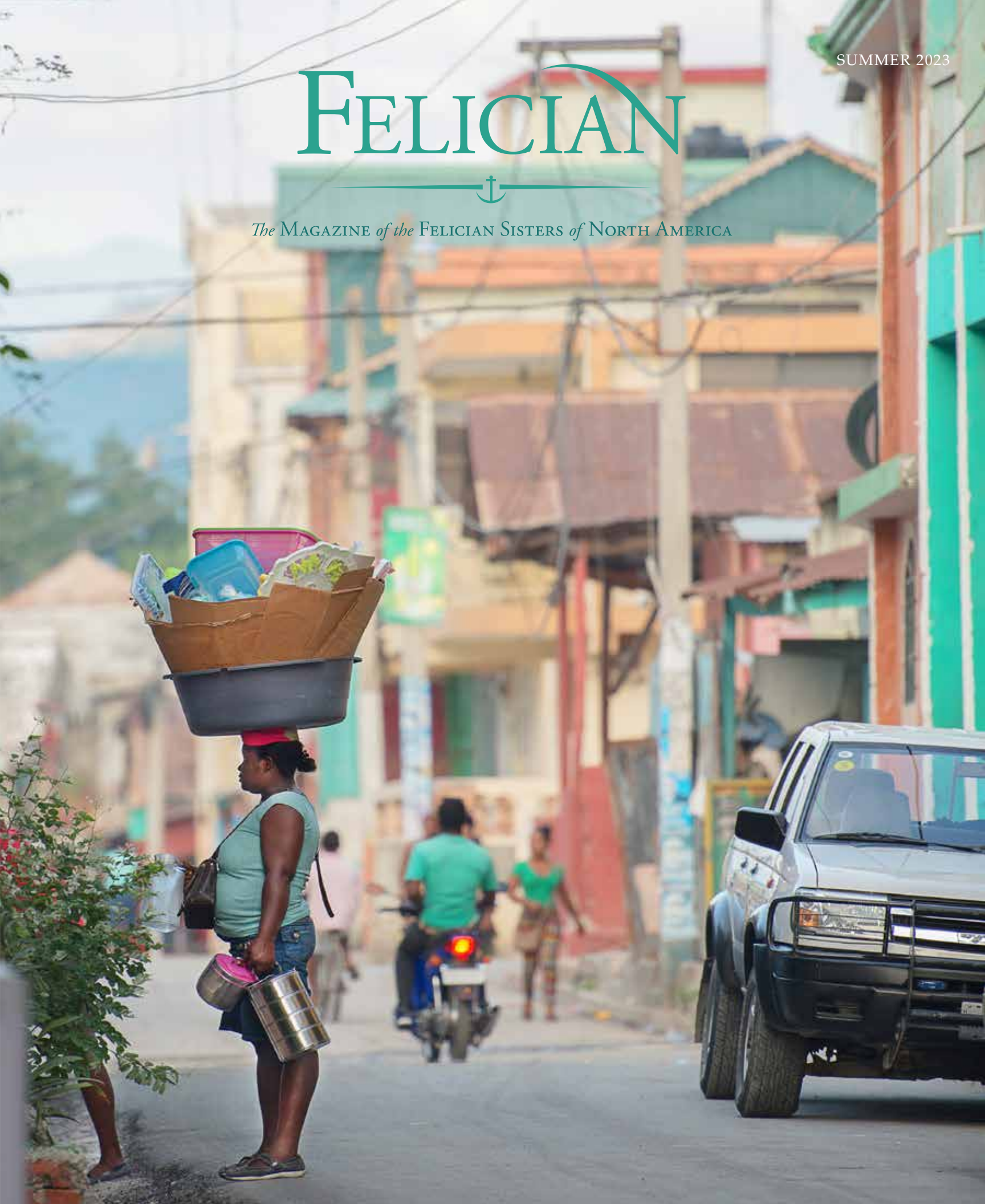


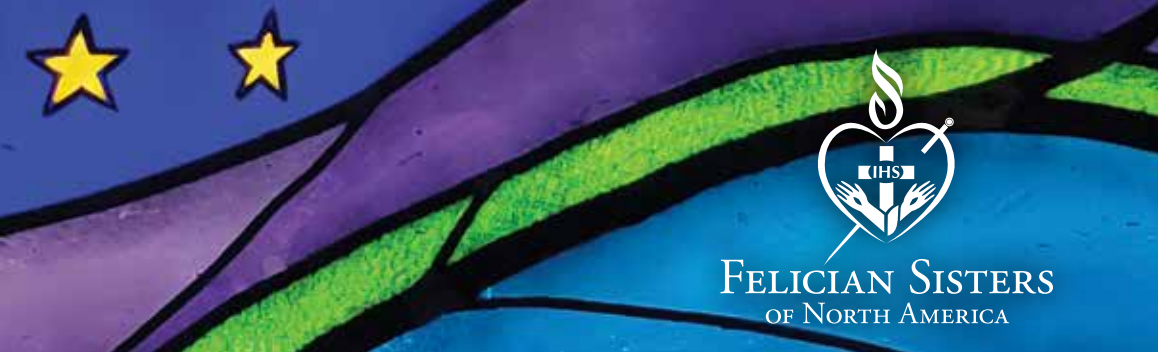
SUMMER 2023

FELICIAN



The MAGAZINE of the FELICIAN SISTERS of NORTH AMERICA





FELICIAN

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yearly for our friends, benefactors, staff,
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OUR MISSION

As Felician Sisters we are called by God to cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world.

2021-2027 PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

Elected by the sisters to oversee the lives
of the sisters, ministries and governance
of Our Lady of Hope Province:

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OUR LADY OF HOPE PROVINCE

Founded in Poland in 1855, the Felician Sisters
of North America are a congregation of women
religious inspired by the spiritual ideals of their
foundress, Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska,
and Saints Francis of Assisi, Clare of Assisi
and Felix of Cantalice. The first Felician
Sisters arrived in North America in 1874. They
established eight provinces across the United
States and Canada and in 2009 united into
one: Our Lady of Hope Province.

Pioneers of social services, the Felician Sisters
founded and continue to sponsor more than
50 ministries throughout North America and
Haiti. Constantly evolving to meet the needs
of the time, they continue to follow God's will
and Blessed Mary Angela's directive to "serve
where you are needed."

WATCH & SHARE



Watch a video about Sr. Catherine's
experience at RTLTC and her reflection
on what it meant to her formation.



Approaching Her Vows, A Novice Reflects on "Gifts" She Received

A second year novice, Sr. Catherine
Marie-Elizabeth Rotterman spent six
weeks working at Response to Love
Center (RTLTC) in Buffalo, NY as part of
her formation journey to becoming a
Felician Sister. RTLTC Assistant Director
Mike Gilhooly says Sr. Catherine had
such presence working with guests,
even the most gruff gravitated to her.

Read about Sr. Catherine's second-year
service experience on page 36.

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YouTube



Sign up for our monthly electronic
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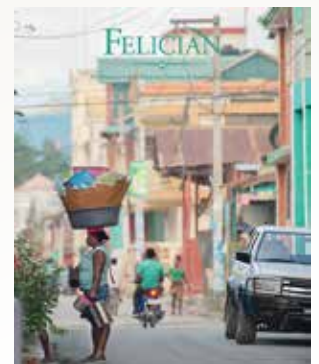
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Cover

Elliott Cramer photographed Jacmel, Haiti in 2016 and was awed. "I am blessed for having the opportunity to witness and capture 'love at work' through the Felician Sisters and their missions. I am grateful, and pray that the visuals I make share their powerful stories and spread awareness about the good works they do in God's world."

cramerphotovideo.com





Dear Friends,

As I read the articles and stories in this issue and travel throughout the province, I marvel at how Blessed Mary Angela's charism pulses throughout North America! It pulses through St. Felix Centre in Toronto, Response to Love Center in Buffalo, the haven provided for a Ukrainian family on our Enfield, CT campus, the St. Felix Pantry and Navajo outreach in New Mexico, Volunteers in Mission (VIM) in Detroit, McGuire Memorial in New Brighton, PA, the St. Joseph Child Care Center in Livonia, MI and the desert rescue missions along the Mexican/U.S. border. **Our sisters, associates, lay partners and ministries are truly responding to the message: "Go where you are needed!"** And of course, Blessed Mary Angela's model was Mary who, as Christianity's first example of radical Gospel living, brought Christ into the world.

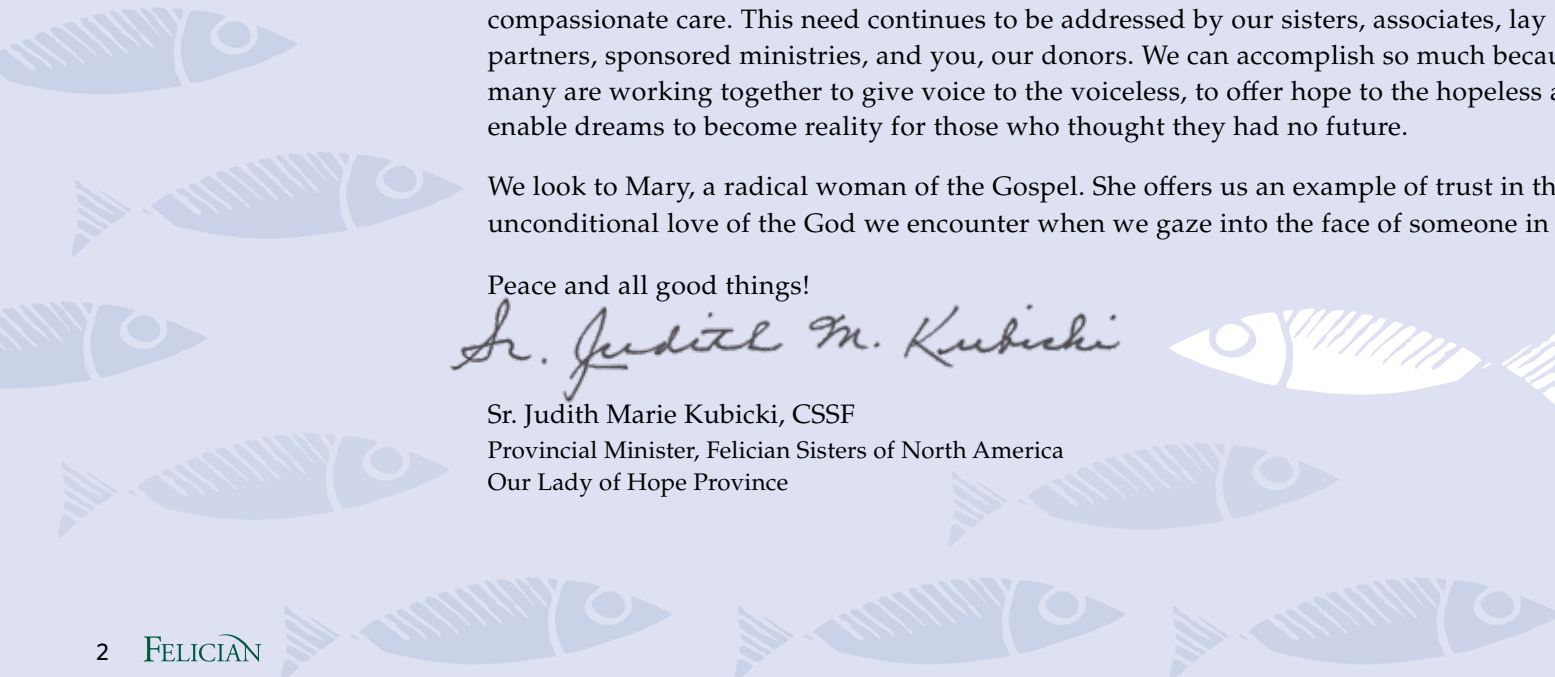
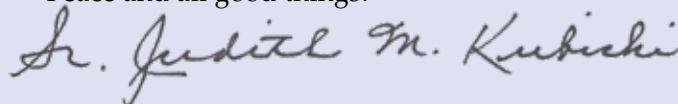
There are two striking images of Mary in this issue. Legend attributes the ancient image of Mary as "Our Advocate" (Advocata Nostra) to St. Luke. The contemporary sculpture of Mary by Southwest artist, Susan Vertel, portrays her tending to the mundane but essential activity of gathering water for her family. In both artworks, Mary is portrayed as a woman attentive to the needs of others. She did this during her earthly life, and she continues to do so today as our advocate before the Lord.

When we cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world, we begin by addressing the basic needs of those we encounter: the need to be respected, safe, healthy; to thrive, to love and be loved. Matthew 25: 34-36 makes it clear that our first task as Christians is to engage in the corporal works of mercy: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and visiting the imprisoned. When we do these things, Matthew tells us, we minister to Christ. Indeed, we are all members of the body of Christ in our world. We need to spend time reflecting on this radical idea over and over again.

This issue of *Felician* magazine is filled with stories of encounter with those in need of compassionate care. This need continues to be addressed by our sisters, associates, lay partners, sponsored ministries, and you, our donors. We can accomplish so much because so many are working together to give voice to the voiceless, to offer hope to the hopeless and to enable dreams to become reality for those who thought they had no future.

We look to Mary, a radical woman of the Gospel. She offers us an example of trust in the unconditional love of the God we encounter when we gaze into the face of someone in need.

Peace and all good things!



Sr. Judith Marie Kubicki, CSSF
Provincial Minister, Felician Sisters of North America
Our Lady of Hope Province

Dear Felician Sisters...



Good Influence

Sr. Mary Imeldis Lubash taught me in second grade at St. Linus School, and she is my all-time favorite teacher. I have fond memories of her classroom, as we hatched chicks, learned cursive, and made the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion. I always said that I was going to be a sister and a teacher, like her. Although I did not become a sister, I did become a teacher!

Because of Sr. Imeldis's influence in my life, I am in my 14th year in education, working as an assistant principal. Sr. Imeldis had an amazing impact on my life. The positive experience she established in second grade created my lifelong love of learning. I am grateful to her for supporting me and the hundreds of other students she taught.

Kelly Foliard

My Friend, Loretta

Seventy years ago, I went to Holy Trinity elementary school with Loretta. Eight years later, we "graduated" and Loretta moved to Coraopolis, PA to live with the Felician Sisters. Since then, I have seen her dedicate her heart, mind and spirit to honor God in so many ways. She was a teacher, a principal, and a provincial minister. Whatever leadership role she was given was accepted and addressed with vigor!

We have spoken only a few words in the last several years, but I witnessed a true example of intelligence, humility, and her die-hard commitment to the cause. She is

my shining example of sainthood, and it has been my honor to witness her spirituality.

May the Good Lord bless Sr. Mary Christopher Moore for making this a better world!



Cathy Bialomizy Kranz

Saved Through Detention

Sr. Hortulane at Immaculate Conception High School in Lodi, N.J. was my French instructor. She happened to notice there were a few students who were not doing well in their studies and took it upon herself to keep these students after school to find out what was happening at home first, then try to counsel us during the hour she detained us.

My home life was not conducive to helping me with my studies. My dad was unpredictable when it came to his drinking, then bringing strange people home afterwards from the tavern he had been in. Very often, we would get a call in the middle of the night to drive across the George Washington Bridge to pick him up and drive him home. Invariably, when we'd arrive, my dad would not be there because he took the Red 'n Tan bus across the George Washington Bridge where he'd fall asleep and be dropped off at the last stop in New York State. Needless to say, when it came to school and the work involved, I would be fighting myself to stay awake and try to do a decent day's work in class.

At times I thought of suicide. My home life combined with the failures at school put my self esteem at its ebb.

Thank goodness for Sr. Hortulane, who helped us get on the right track to do well, not only in class, but at home as well. Today, I am a wife, mother, grandmother, and great grandmother who loves her husband of 57 years and our adopted son, who has given us beautiful families to share with for the rest of our days. Sr. Hortulane is forever in my prayers. Thank you.

Anonymous



Deo Gratias!

I have many wonderful memories of the Felician Sisters. Mainly I would like to acknowledge three sisters who influenced my life and supported me through the years at St. Stanislaus in Amsterdam, NY.

+Sr. Mary Bernice Pikul was my principal. Sr. Mary Edna Korona has been a dear friend to me and my family for many years. Sr. Jeanne Marie Akalski was my third grade teacher.

These three women always were, and are, a positive influence in my life, who gave constant support and encouragement through their gentle loving ways. For that I am always grateful! Deo Gratias!

Daniel



Rock on, Sr. Marilyn!

What a wonderful time it was to learn to really play the guitar under Sr. Marilyn Minter's guidance. I played for many years, with some of the songs that she wrote. "Be Still" is still my favorite of hers. I have watched her involvement in Haiti and also so many YouTube videos of her in interviews and playing music. What God has given her in many talents, she has used for his glory. Rock on, Sister Marilyn!

Kathleen

SEND YOUR THOUGHTS, MEMORIES & PICTURES to: FelicianMagazine@FelicianSisters.org or via mail to: *Felician* magazine, Felician Sisters of North America, Office of Mission Advancement, 871 Mercer Road, Beaver Falls, PA 15010-6815.

Felician Sisters and Ministries

LIVING MORE RADICALLY

The word radical comes from the Latin word for “root,” so **living more radically means getting back to the root or foundation of our existence as children of the gospel.** Jesus is the root of everything we do.

Imitating Jesus is radical, because Jesus treated lepers and outcasts with compassion. He showed solidarity with those on the margins of society, spending time with hated foreigners, tax collectors and disreputable women. He spoke out for the voiceless, and he challenged injustice. We hope you find inspiration in the stories of Felician Sisters and ministries who challenge us to live the gospel more radically by following the example of Jesus.

United for Ukraine

In Ukraine, there is a saying that when you save a child, you save the future. Tearfully, Victor Borodii thanked the Felician Sisters for saving his three children — giving them a safe place to live during the war in their homeland. The Felician Sisters are taking part in Uniting for Ukraine, a federal program that allows “humanitarian parole” for Ukrainians displaced by the Russian invasion.



“They are our good neighbors,” says Sr. Maryann Agnes Mueller, who helped to arrange sponsorship for the family. Victor and Iryna Borodii, along with their three children, Mariia, Daniil and Antonina, are living in the former chaplaincy behind **Our Lady of the Angels Convent in Enfield, CT.**

Because of the pandemic and then the war, the children had attended school virtually since 2019. Now enrolled in schools, they are happily getting to interact with other children, and their parents are learning too — taking English classes one evening each week.

Thanks to a family from Enfield Montessori School, Iryna’s parents have also been sponsored. Vira and Vasyl arrived in early May and are living in part of the former Blessed Mary Angela convent on campus. The family proudly displays both Ukrainian and American flags on their house.

Lodestar Award

On May 4, Sr. Mary Jean Sliwinski, provincial sustainability coordinator, accepted the Lodestar Award on behalf of the Felician Sisters of North America. She shared, “The Felician Sisters commit to addressing our choices and model behaviors that demonstrate our commitment to decreasing our carbon footprint, reducing the destruction of our planet and implementing changes to better care for our Sister, Mother Earth.”

The Felician Sisters take pride in their nationwide project that involved the installation of solar panels at six Felician properties across the U.S. Combined, they are expected to avoid 110 million pounds of CO₂ emissions over their 35-year operating life.



International Women's Day

St. Felix Centre in Toronto, ON celebrated the contributions of women amid the challenges they face, in the following excerpted social media post:



St. Felix Centre

March 8

Today we celebrate all of the incredible women that make up St. Felix Centre. Our Centre was founded by a group of strong and compassionate women, the Felician Sisters, who truly cared about making a difference for the people in their community. Today, that same legacy is carried forward by many resilient women in various levels of our organization. From our board of directors, senior leadership team, frontline staff, volunteers and donors, and of course, our wonderful female guests and residents — each of them contributes a special energy that makes St. Felix Centre who we are!

- It is important to recognize the harsh realities of women experiencing homelessness and the work that we must all do to make the world a fairer place for women in our communities.
- Women are more likely to experience hidden homelessness. In fact, **7% of women in Canada have experienced hidden homelessness in their lives.**
- Women experiencing homelessness are more likely to be victims of violence and assault. **37.4% of women experiencing homelessness have experienced some form of sexual assault.**
- **21% of single mothers in Canada raise their children in poverty.** Lack of childcare and child-friendly services makes it even more difficult for women to access housing supports.

Creating affordable permanent housing is the only long term solution to homelessness for women and girls — and we are committed to making this a reality. We are thrilled that our Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) project will soon provide a safe, welcoming, and permanent home for women to thrive with their families, and provide the support they need to reach their true potential.



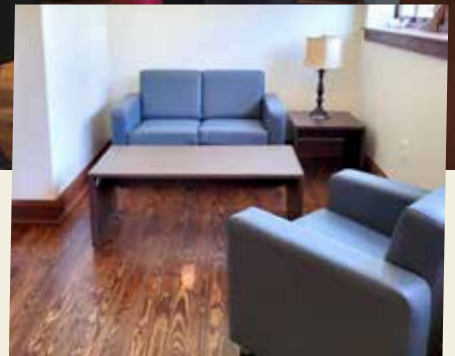
Read about St. Felix Centre's RHI Housing project on page 21.

From the top: Sr. MaryAnne Olekszyk (left), former mission director Iris Bartraw and Sr. Mary Blaise Podruczny; kitchen staff; office staff; board members walk in solidarity with people experiencing homelessness during the Coldest Night of the Year event.





Official Ribbon-Cutting: Sr. Mary Francesca Buczkowski (center) was joined by officials Dana Greenberg, NYS Homeless Housing and Assistance Corporation; James Lonergan, Delta Development; Lenny Skrill, NYS Office of Housing Community Renewal; Sr. Anne Marie Jablonicky; Diane Benczkowski, Cheektowaga Town Supervisor; and Ben Upshaw, CB-Emmanuel Realty, LLC.



Angela's House Breathes New Life into Buffalo Motherhouse

The opening hymn “All Are Welcome” resounded through the halls of the former Villa Maria Academy where sisters, guests and future residents joyfully joined in song at a March 12 ceremony marking the opening of **Angela's House in Buffalo, NY.**

Since the closing of the high school in 2006, the Buffalo sisters have prayed daily to Blessed Mary Angela for a “ministry for our academy building that would embrace our Felician values and mission.” A fulfillment of these 15 years of intercession, **Angela's House now offers 67 affordable senior housing units, 12 of which are supportive units for special needs residents and formerly unhoused people.**

Sr. Mary Francesca Buczkowski, Sr. Jeremy Marie Midura and Sr. Anne Marie Jablonicky collaborated with

developers, New York's government housing services and housing ministries for homeless people and women veterans to give new life to this beautiful and historic 80,000 square-foot building. During the renovation, original features were salvaged and reused, including the hardwood flooring and wood doors. Some of the original signage on the rooms provides reminders of their past: “Biology Lab,” “Chemistry Lab” and “Laundry.”

At the opening event, Felician Sisters of North America Provincial Minister Sr. Judith Marie Kubicki led a prayer of blessing, while Sr. Mary Therese Chmura, local minister at Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent, addressed the new residents. Felician Sisters presented

The U.S. senior population has grown 26% in the past 10 years.

Rent has increased 28% since 2019.

Forbes.com

each new resident with a welcome gift and prayed over them: “Lord, we ask your blessing upon them. Be their shelter when they are at home, their companion when they are away and their welcome

when they return. May they always know your peace.”

At the announcement of the project, Governor Kathy Hochul said, “All New Yorkers deserve a safe, stable place to live — especially seniors and older adults who have experienced homelessness.” By reimagining their space and welcoming strangers into their home, with song, prayer and solidarity, the Felician Sisters have contributed significantly to a vision of justice and peace — and a more equitable future for all.



Students Share Creativity

Sisters residing at the **Felician Care Center in Buffalo, NY** received a visit in early spring from students from Response to Love Center (RTL) who arrived with 120 hand-decorated Easter eggs and 40 Easter baskets they prepared as gifts for the sisters. But the real gift was in the visit — sharing stories, hugs and singing “Happy Birthday,” in both English and Bengali, to one sister turning 92 and another turning 102!

The students are adult immigrants who currently rely on social services. RTL also provides ESL and cooking classes to the diverse neighborhood that includes people who have relocated from Bangladesh, Yemen, Afghanistan, Burma and India.

Good Grief

“Loss is the underpinning to every human experience,” says Debbie Vallandingham, director of grief care services at **Angela Hospice in Livonia, MI**. Unfortunately, when people experience a loss, they often don’t know how to discuss the accompanying grief, which can lead to feelings of isolation. Originally created to help Felician Sisters confronting bereavement from Covid-19 losses, Angela Hospice launched *Good Grief: A Guidebook for Spirituality, Health, and Connection in the Midst of Loss*. Since its founding in 1985, Angela Hospice has been helping people through the grieving process. The *Good Grief* guidebook and journal has now been adapted for the community and offers a roadmap, with coping mechanisms, inspirational stories and insight throughout its 84 pages. Through a grant from the St. Francis Fund, the book is free to download via the Angela Hospice website: AngelaHospice.org/GoodGrief.



FACT Conference Supports ASD Students and Teachers

When Sr. Mary Annelle Velivis gave the invocation at the 3rd annual Felician Autism Collaboration in Teaching (FACT) Conference, she fittingly adapted the Prayer of St. Francis to the occasion, praying “where some see disability, we may reveal to them extraordinary gifts.”

Held annually at **Felician University in Lodi, NJ**, the FACT conference meshes well with the university’s mission, since it both educates students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and trains students in the School of Education with programs in Behavior Analysis and Autism Studies. Dr. John Burke, the Felician University professor who has chaired the conference committee every year since its inception, is a pioneer in early intervention for autistic children.

On a campus that values inclusivity, conference participants learned practical and relevant information to support individuals with ASD. More than 300 participants left the conference with updated information and resources to support individuals with autism, as well as a renewed sense of service for these individuals.

More resources are available at Felician.edu. Search for: International Center for Autism and Disabilities Research in Education (I-CADRE).



Walking the Talk

In an Honors Theology course for seniors from **Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School in Coraopolis, PA**, a lesson on Catholic social teaching helps students gain empathy for people without homes.

“Evicted” from their lockers, students had to carry all of their belongings with them wherever they went for a 24-hour period of time, using backpacks and garbage bags.

While no other student is permitted to touch their things if left unattended, faculty members and coaches were encouraged to take belongings for the duration of the eviction, as often the homeless have their things stolen if they are not watched carefully. Students later wrote reflections about their experience.



Child care in Michigan is almost equal to the cost of college tuition. 40% of Michiganders live in areas considered “child care deserts.”



1.1 Million students experienced homelessness in 2020-21.

- 39% were Hispanic
- 26% were White
- 24% were Black
- 11% were Asian, American Indian or Pacific Islander

St. Joseph Joins Child Care Family

High-quality child care can transform a community by meeting the needs and alleviating the worries of working parents. When Trinity Health-Oakland Hospital in Pontiac, MI was looking for new management for its campus child care center, they reached out to a trusted name in early childhood education.

The Felician Sisters Child Care Centers (FSCCC), based in Livonia, MI, was the perfect choice. FSCCC also manages Montessori Center of Our Lady and St. Mary Child Care Center, also located in Livonia.

The new center opened October 3, 2022 as **St. Joseph Child Care Center**. It provides employees of the hospital a loving and positive environment for their infant through pre-kindergarten children, in addition to serving the surrounding, diverse community. President of FSCCC, Karen Richter emphasizes that the center focuses on high-quality care and education for the children, while sharing the mission with families and team members.



All three centers provide parents with safe places for children to receive loving care and early childhood education during work hours.





Helping Suit Students

In support of students achieving their professional goals, staff from the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office gathered and donated dozens of pieces of professional attire to Suits U, a small clothing shop located on the campus of **Felician University in Lodi, NJ**.

Felician University expressed its gratitude on social media to Chief Jason Love, Liz Rebein and Shannon McMorrow of BCPO, who coordinated the donation. Suits U provides professional suits, dresses, shoes, purses and other professional attire to students who lack resources to obtain proper business clothing for job interviews or internships. Instead of paying, students "pay it forward" by volunteering service hours.

Águilas Saves 500 Lives With Plans to Do More

Since 2012, Águilas del Desierto (Eagles of the Desert) has helped those lost in the deserts on the U.S./Mexico border, located and buried the dead — helping to bring closure for the families. They find men, women and children on their searches and have become experts in their work. According to Sr. Maria Louise Edwards, president of Águilas, **data proves that funding received in 2019 helped transform Águilas from a body recovery to live rescue group**: 47 lives were saved from 2012 to 2019. With funding, from 2020 to June 2023, 500 lives were saved.

Yet, heart-wrenching calls for help have grown from a few hundred to thousands.

Águilas has plans that will help to save more lives. Sr. Maria Louise is seeking funds to support the following initiatives:

- Creating a 24/7 hotline call center with a dedicated coordinator.
- Expanding their communication range with upgraded radios and equipment.
- Dispatching more searches per month by raising funds for the gas, food, radios, gear and permits required for 30 volunteers.
- Building a volunteer structure on a 4-acre border property owned by Águilas to give searchers a safe place to rest, eat and shower. Currently, volunteers sleep on the ground in the open desert.
- Developing their acreage further with a "Search and Rescue" station, to house first responders who can react to distress calls immediately.



If you would like to help Águilas del Desierto work towards these goals, consider volunteering or making a donation. Visit [AguilasDelDesierto.org](https://www.AguilasDelDesierto.org).

Fearless Felician Thwarts Robbers

Sr. Mary Johnice Rzadkiewicz bravely confronted a couple of would-be thieves climbing onto the **Response to Love Center in Buffalo, NY** — presumably to steal the gutters and downspouts for scrap. Fortunately, Sr. Johnice heard noise on the roof and in the early-morning darkness, she knocked over their ladder and yelled, “Get out of here! This is God’s house!”

“They could have come here for food or clothing. They could have come for a kind word, some guidance, but they chose a different route,” Sr. Johnice said.

Response to Love Center has a soup kitchen, food pantry and thrift shop — as well as education and training programs — all intended to meet the basic needs of its neighbors and build community.

When they heard the police had been called, the men jumped down and fled. Sr. Johnice will keep the ladder, which she has named “Jacob’s ladder” after the Bible story of Jacob’s dream about a ladder that connects heaven and earth. She said the center had never had a ladder tall enough to reach the roof.



FV on the GO

Felician Village in Manitowoc, WI, was excited to announce Felician Village On the Go — an innovative program to engage older adults in their community. Funded by Felician Sisters, “FV on the Go” offers rides to “at Home” members and ambulatory independent and assisted living residents, seven days a week.

Members and residents can schedule a ride to attend appointments or run errands.



Connect, Create, Change

In FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) competitions, teams of high school students build industrial-sized robots to play in a difficult field game, forming alliances with other teams, raising funds to meet their goals and advancing appreciation for STEM in their communities.

Holy Name of Mary College School in Toronto, ON’s team was one of only three all-girls FIRST teams in Canada this year. They not only won the district competition in Ontario, but also came away with the coveted Engineering Inspiration Award in recognition of their team’s initiatives and efforts to respect, appreciate and promote engineering and technology within and outside their community.

The team’s motto, “Connect, Create, Change,” has led them to work beyond their competition robot on efforts such as Engineering Career Night, Alumnae Chats and DropIN Coding at HNMCS, as well as global outreach: hosting virtual coding workshops for all-girls schools in Trinidad and Tobago. These young women empower others through their powerful example of action and advocacy. Follow them on social media at [@HolyNameOfMaryCollegeSchool](#).



First Seeds of the Season

Kindergarten and first grade students in the **Mooncrest Neighborhood Program in Moon Township, PA** set up the garden for summer flowers.

To learn more, visit Mooncrest.org.

20 Years Mounted for Meals

Palm Sunday marked a two-decade tradition of the Erie County Sheriff's Mounted Reserve Unit saddling up to collect non-perishable food and cash donations for **Response to Love Center in Buffalo, NY**. Sr. Mary Johnice Rzdakiewicz expressed her gratitude for the food drive and fundraiser saying that funds will help purchase extra food needed, especially because of budget cuts that have affected pantries across the country.



Big Fish Wins Five Gene Kelly Awards!

Congratulations to the cast and crew of *Big Fish* on seven nominations — and five wins — at the 2023 Gene Kelly Awards for Excellence in High School Musical Theatre! The students from **Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Coraopolis, PA** had the opportunity to perform at the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts at the awards ceremony.

Big Fish won in the following categories:

- ★ Best Musical
- ★ Best Lighting Design
- ★ Best Crew/Technical Execution
- ★ Best Vocal Ensemble
- ★ Best Dance Ensemble



Nuns Against Gun Violence

Target the Ghost Gun Menace

Sr. Maryann Agnes Mueller | Provincial Justice and Peace Coordinator

After meeting and talking at a Justice Conference for Women Religious (JCWR) in St. Louis, MO, a group of sisters from more than 50 congregations formed a national coalition: “Nuns Against Gun Violence.”

We partner to combat gun violence by working for justice in the following areas:

legislative - at local, state and federal levels

pastoral - to help heal and provide trauma support to survivors

cultural and communal - to change the narrative on gun violence and its many manifestations across patriarchy, racism, xenophobia, misogyny, white supremacy, and religious nationalism.

I am proud that the Felician Sisters of North America are part of this group. As a former teacher, I am horrified whenever I hear of school children being victims of gun violence. In my home state of Connecticut, I recently prepared testimony for the Senate Judiciary Committee, in support of our governor’s bill to make Connecticut’s ban on ghost guns more enforceable.

The use of ghost guns in U.S. crimes has risen more than 1,000% since 2017.
U.S. Department of Justice

Ghost guns are unserialized and untraceable firearms that can be bought online and assembled at home. They are often sold through “ghost gun kits,” are widely available and can be purchased by anyone,

including prohibited purchasers, domestic abusers, and gun traffickers — without a background check. Both the kits and guns are sold at gun shows and online every day throughout the country. **They undermine all of the life-saving policies that state legislatures have fought so hard to put in place, and they represent an increasing threat to public safety.**

In my own home state, from 2020 to 2021, the number of ghost guns seized in Hartford, New Haven and Waterbury more than tripled, to 53. In those three cities in just the first three months of 2022, 34 ghost guns had been recovered.

Moreover, ghost guns are finding their way into the hands of school shooters. The law should require that all ghost guns be registered.

Community gun violence is an urgent crisis that demands a substantial public health response to save lives. As a longtime advocate for violence prevention policies, the American Public Health Association recognizes that a comprehensive public health approach to addressing this growing crisis is necessary.

We all can take action!

We can join together to read the names and stories of victims, pray for their families and friends and commit to dismantling the gun violence that is devastating our nation.

Many of our sisters in care centers make frequent calls to government leaders demanding change. Join them by calling:

- **Senate Majority Leader Schumer at 202-224-6542**
House Speaker McCarthy at 202-225-2915
- **Ask for a vote on an Assault Weapons Ban to end easy access to deadly weapons of war.**

Sign a petition to support ghost gun regulation at: ActionNetwork.org. 🌱

A woman wearing a blue dress and a headscarf stands in front of a rustic wooden structure. The background is filled with lush greenery, including banana trees. The scene is set in a rural, possibly agricultural, area.

Living in Haiti

A paradise... if not for chronic earthquakes, hurricanes, flooding, cholera and starvation... Haiti is beloved by its people, who withstand the worst and somehow remain eternally hopeful.

With civil unrest coming to a head, Haiti faces its darkest hours. Escalating gang violence, rampant kidnappings and gang rapes threaten the lives of Haitians — especially women and children — every day.

Violent demonstrations reached Jacmel last fall. While the sisters were determined to stay, the U.S. Embassy urged them to leave the country for the safety of the people at the mission, who would likely be targeted if the sisters remained.

Sisters Mary Inga Borko, Marilyn Marie Minter, Mary Izajasza Rojek and Mary Julitta Kurek continue to pray and stay in touch with the mission staff on the ground, who risk their own safety to keep the mission running. "It is the most difficult time for them," says Sr. Inga. They share their stories on the following pages.

■ HAITI

On the Frontline Tchery Louis

Many young doctors leave Haiti due to lack of opportunity. With only 25 physicians per 100,000 Haitians, the health care workforce in Haiti cannot meet the needs of the people. Needless sickness and death occur. Felician Mission Haiti's sponsors Tchery Louis, supporting him through medical school.



I am Tchery Louis, a 6th-year medical student in Haiti. I am writing with great sadness and frustration to share my experience and the health situations of hospitals where I have had the chance to do my internships for the last several months. Recently, I worked at L'Hôpital Sainte-Thérèse de Hinche. It was a very good experience in my career as a medical student, but also very difficult because of the social, economic, and political situation in my country.

Recurring insecurity and instability in Haiti, as well as the blocking by criminal gangs of the country's main oil terminal in the capital, Port-au-Prince, mean that the fuel needed to supply hospitals is not delivered, which repeatedly causes the hospital to stop functioning. Additionally, many healthcare workers cannot get to work and provide patient care. The current situation is also having a negative impact on the replenishment of medicines and medical supplies.

Lives are being lost in Haiti because hospitals do not have access to fuel or the necessary equipment for people suffering from trauma or life-threatening infections. It is sometimes difficult for us to admit new patients. It is increasingly difficult to ensure sterile conditions for medical procedures, including caesarean sections and others that require surgery.

I see patients dying because they don't have money to buy medications that we prescribe. First aid materials are not always available and often patients cannot buy them in pharmacies, saying, "Doctor, I don't have money to buy them." Often I use what I have for my own needs or ask other students to contribute with me to help people find medicine and food. Our health system is currently going through a difficult period. My fellow students and I know there is great need for our services. The current health situation in Haiti is a big challenge for patients and for doctors. Please, keep us in your prayers.



In August 2022, a wave of gang violence in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince caused chaos and anarchy. Gangs blocked roads and terrorized the people. Their control of the capital has expanded rapidly to 80%.



Cholera has infected 20,000+ Haitians as of January in areas where people have been displaced.

3,000+ people have been displaced and forced to live in inhumane conditions

Keeper of the Keys Annette Beneche

Each morning, Annette Beneche stands inside the gates of *Felician Mission: Haiti* and sorts through the stories of the people who have come there seeking help. This task had belonged to the sisters, but they have entrusted Annette with the keys. “People are so hungry they are desperate,” Sr. Inga says. “Annette must be extra cautious.”

Some people at the gate are visibly starving — asking for rice and oil. Mothers need formula or clothing for their infants. Some are injured or ill. Beneche triages each person individually and responds compassionately and methodically. She does what she can — what the Felician Sisters taught and empowered her to do. Mixing infant formula from scratch or giving money for a ride to the hospital for injuries beyond the capabilities of the clinic staff.

With the heavy keys Beneche carries for the mission, she also carries the weight of responsibility for these human stories of poverty, injury or deprivation. In a time when many American missions in Haiti have been attacked and looted, Beneche has been entrusted with keeping the Felician mission running.

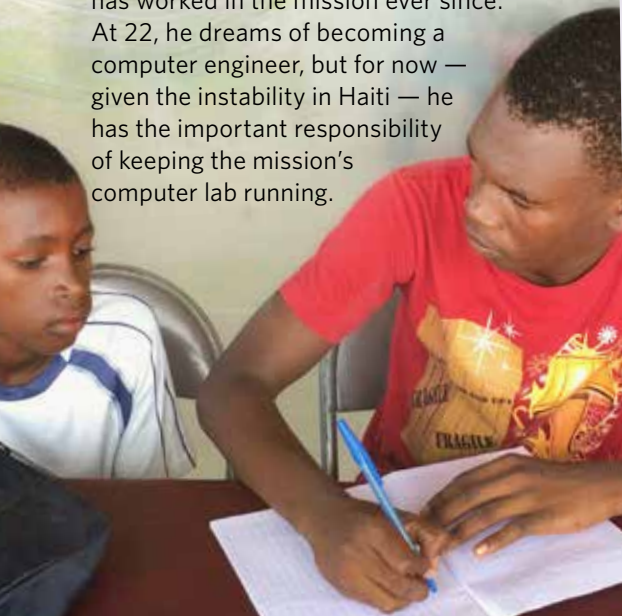
Beyond her accountability, Beneche also has a deep love for Blessed Mary Angela, whose story she read in her native Creole, and whose life she wants to imitate. Like Blessed Mary Angela, Beneche takes care of many children. Before the violence escalated, her primary responsibility was overseeing the nearly 100 children enrolled in more than 20 different schools. She monitored report cards, progress, tuition and all extra needs, including measuring and ordering uniforms and school supplies.

Like Blessed Angela, Annette is not deterred by the ongoing violence and condition of her country. She takes it day by day — moving forward and making a difference in the lives of the children and families she serves.



Future Engineer Peterson Momplaisir

Thanks to *Felician Mission: Haiti*, Peterson completed his secondary education, and he has worked in the mission ever since. At 22, he dreams of becoming a computer engineer, but for now — given the instability in Haiti — he has the important responsibility of keeping the mission’s computer lab running.



My Name Is Peterson Momplaisir. My family lives outside the city. My father is a farmer. My mother helps him. It is a good family, with love and dignity. But economic conditions did not allow us even the most basic things, such as food, clothing, electricity, or school.

In the areas outside of cities, there are no good quality schools. My family sent me to Jacmel to live with my aunt. I met the Felician Sisters and they helped us, especially in economic and spiritual realms. Thanks to their help, I finished my education. My high school was one of the best in Jacmel. I was one of the best students. The sisters supported me. For me, that time was like fresh water in a time of heat.

After I finished high school, the sisters allowed me to continue to work in their mission and gave me responsibility for their computer lab. Here, I help students to learn Microsoft Word so they can do their homework. I assist those who come to learn English online, teaching them how to use Zoom and sometimes translating for them in the beginning. I started a computer course for beginners.

I dreamed of becoming a computer engineer or physician. Unfortunately, there are too many political instabilities, economic crises, and insecurities in my country. Although it has become difficult for me to achieve these goals, I still hope to become a more useful person in society.

Since 2022, acts of violence against schools have increased nine-fold. Most schools in Haiti remain closed.



Feet and Hands of Christ Fritz Debrosse

Once a truck driver, then a chauffeur in the Diocese of Jacmel, Fritz has great experience navigating roads in Haiti. He has faithfully served *Felician Mission: Haiti* for 11 years — driving, delivering and providing security to the sisters and mobile clinic staff. In what was once a relatively safe position, Fritz now puts his life on the line every day helping to keep the mission running. He always needs to be aware of road conditions like flooding, roadblocks, protests and gang violence — using channels and contacts to get up-to-date conditions to get the Mother Angela Mobile Clinic where it needs to go. It is Fritz who decides if the clinic can go out or not.



5 a.m. Fritz wakes up to the neighbors' roosters crowing. He has spaghetti for breakfast, along with hot chocolate and a piece of bread. (Every three months, he travels to the Dominican Republic border to pick up medicine for the mobile clinic. Leaving at **3:30 a.m.** to begin the treacherous journey, he returns at **10:30 p.m.**).

7 a.m. Fritz cleans and maintains the 10-year-old Toyota mobile clinic — caked with mud and dust from driving unpaved roads. He listens to the radio to get the latest updates about demonstrations or weather that could lead to blocked roads. A downpour could make dirt roads impassable. He has connections in every place the clinic travels. Fritz seems to have the uncanny ability to know when it will be safe to go, and which roads are okay to travel.

7:30 a.m. Fritz loads medical supplies onto the top of the mobile clinic. Multiple heavy boxes include glass bottles of liquid medicine, medical supplies, iPads, used for medical record-keeping and the clinic "furniture," consisting of five folding tables.

8 a.m. The mobile clinic staff: two doctors, a nurse, and a pharmacist, depart. With gasoline shortages, the clinic must stay closer to Jacmel.

9 a.m. Arriving in the village, Fritz sets up the clinic. He provides a security presence and when things get busy, he follows instructions to fill bottles with medication.

2 p.m. After a full day of clinic, Fritz loads up the mobile clinic to return to the mission.

3 p.m. Back at the mission, Fritz unloads the vehicle. On Fridays, he washes and inspects the vehicle and equipment, including the horn — a crucial component on narrow, mountainous roads. The tropical climate and rough roads mean the vehicle needs new tires annually and to be serviced every few months.

3:30 p.m. Dinner! The mission provides a hot meal of rice and beans, boiled plantain or spaghetti with fish each day.

4 p.m. Fritz helps to do the "big shopping" at the mission, buying 20-lb bags of rice, five-gallon water jugs and cylinders of propane gas.

7 p.m. Fritz has an evening meal, often consisting of soup and bread with peanut butter or eggs if they are available. After showering, he checks the internet for the latest news and checks in with his family via WhatsApp.

9 p.m. Without electricity, bedtime comes early. Fritz has a home in Jacmel, but during the week he stays at the mission to help protect it.

June 2023 floods have affected 37,375 people and 5 health centers.



Gangs have blocked access to 10 million gallons of diesel and gasoline, and 800,000+ gallons of kerosene.



My name is Edwina Dieudonné. I am the youngest of five. I live in Jacmel, Haiti with my mother. My father left us when I was 2 years old. My mother doesn't have a job.

There are many things I like to do, to see, and to experience. I like to read. I like to dream. I like to smell the wind coming from the ocean. I like good books and romantic movies. I like the land and nature. I like people.

I am a person who is positive about every aspect of life. I always wanted to go to university in the U.S.A. and become a successful businesswoman, but I never found the opportunity. However, a meeting with the Felician Sisters changed my life.

It all started after the earthquake in 2010. There were two Felician Sisters: Sr. Marilyn and Sr. Inga. Children in the area always went to their house to ask them for food. One day, I decided to ask them to help me, too. I was in primary school. Since then, I have been working with the sisters. They have helped me with my studies, learning English and using the internet. I always talk about my dreams with the sisters. They encourage me to pray and always keep hope.

I was studying management science at UNDH (Université Notre Dame d'Haiti) when the sisters gave me an opportunity. The sisters told me about an online degree program in the U.S.A. They also gave me an experienced English teacher to help me pass the admission test. It wasn't easy, but I wanted to achieve my dream, so I worked hard. Now I am studying business administration at Madonna University.

Thank you to the Felician Sisters. I will work even harder because this is the beginning. I still have a lot of things to do. I believe in God and in myself. My parents believe in me, and the sisters do, too. I must not disappoint them. Believe in God, believe in your skills, and never give up on your dreams.



Determined Dreamer Edwina Dieudonné

In a nation where fewer than a fifth of children complete secondary school, Edwina demonstrates the power of education. One of the first students in *Felician Mission: Haiti's Pay It Forward* program, Edwina continued all the way to the Haitian Education Leadership Program at Madonna University. Her story illustrates the transformative possibilities of the Felician Sisters' ongoing work in Haiti.

Throughout these challenging times, we witness the hope of the Haitian people. Their example of resilience, strength and hope inspires our solidarity.

GiveToHaiti.org



Advocata Nostra

Possibly the oldest known image of Mary the mother of God is said to have been painted by St. Luke himself, in the upper room during the Pentecost, using hot wax and resin. In 1221, during a period of iconoclasm in Constantinople that destroyed the church where it was formerly located, a barefoot St. Dominic carried this icon in his arms and entrusted it to a community of cloistered nuns. They have safeguarded it ever since — in San Sisto until 1575, and then in the Church of Santa Maria del Rosario, on the highest hill in Rome. To this day, visitors ask the Blessed Mother to intercede for them, as only Mary can. In her radical role as Mother of the Church, she is Maria Advocata, Advocata Nostra — one who defends or champions another's cause.



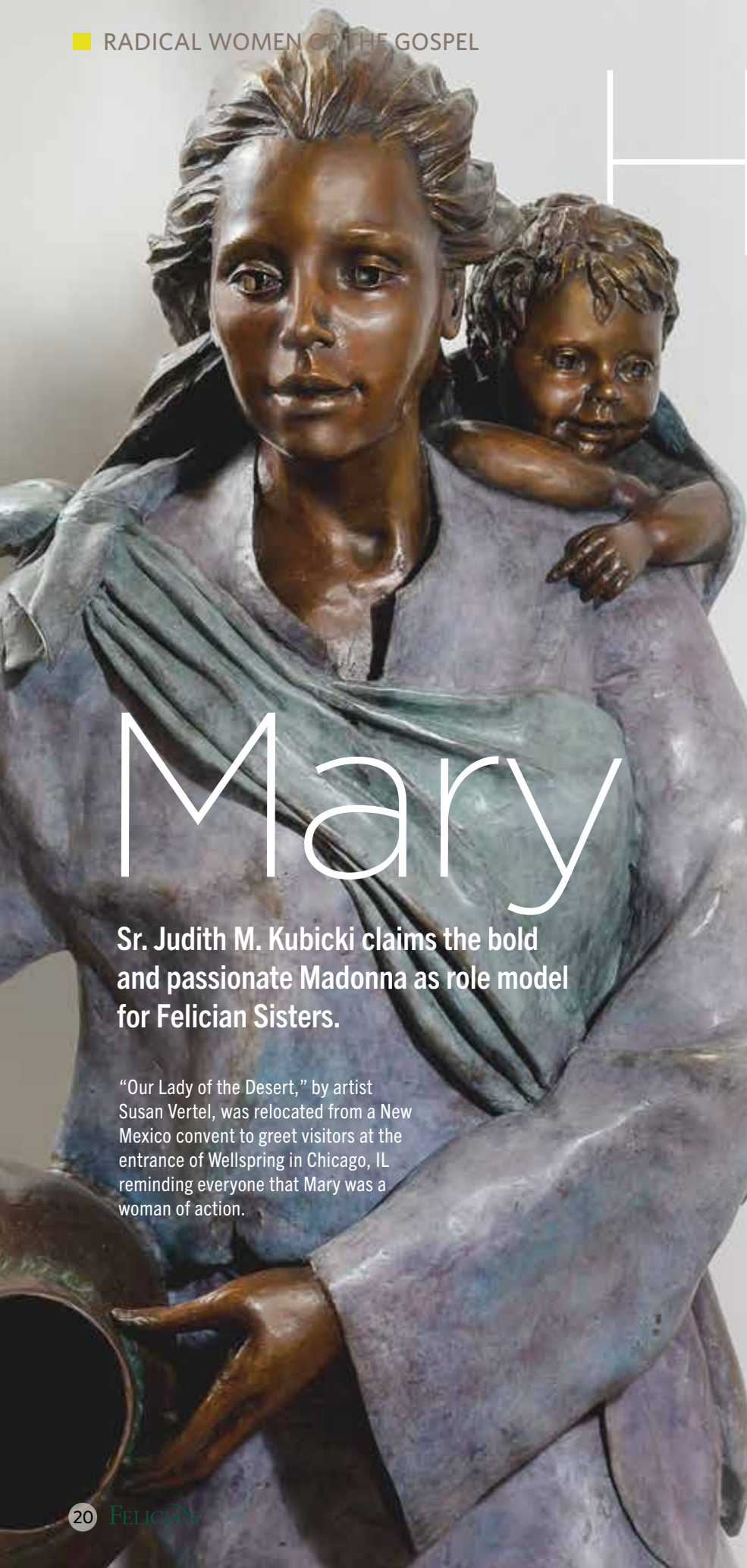
RADICAL WOMEN OF THE GOSPEL

As Felician Sisters of North America, we recently resolved to “identify the prophets among us who, in sharing their stories, challenge us to live the gospel more radically.”

Our first and best example is of course, Mary, the premiere New Testament prophet who proclaims the Lord’s coming.

Mary exemplifies what it means to be a radical woman.

Felician Sisters and their ministries follow Mary’s radical lead. May we inspire you to live radically as you read the following stories.



Mary

Sr. Judith M. Kubicki claims the bold and passionate Madonna as role model for Felician Sisters.

“Our Lady of the Desert,” by artist Susan Vertel, was relocated from a New Mexico convent to greet visitors at the entrance of Wellspring in Chicago, IL reminding everyone that Mary was a woman of action.

How can we call Mary radical? In our present political climate, the word usually refers to an extremist. However, the first and original meaning understands radical as going to the root or focusing on what is fundamental. At the root of her being, Mary was turned toward God. In response to the Archangel Gabriel’s invitation that she become mother to a son who would be called holy, the Son of God, Mary said “yes” because she had a radical relationship with God. Because of her “yes,” we have a Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, to proclaim to the world.

After the visit from Gabriel, Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist. As the scene of their initial encounter unfolds, Luke places on Mary’s lips her canticle, in Latin called the Magnificat. In that song, Mary proclaims the Good News to Elizabeth: God’s mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation (Lk 1:50). Mary names that mercy by pointing to a series of reversals — God has brought down the powerful and lifted up the lowly (1:52); God has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty (1:53). Clearly, Mary’s words are prophetic. She names what God is doing in the lives of God’s people. **That God to whom she will give birth is about to turn the world upside down.** Out of her radical relationship with God, Mary proclaims that our God is a God of surprises and reversals.

It is easy to forget the radical nature of Mary’s relationship with God and the prophetic stance which she took after the life-changing visit from Gabriel and the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. Some religious art portrays Mary not as a radical prophet, but as a sweet and gentle young woman wistfully gazing upon her son. Yet the true nature of Mary’s discipleship might be better served by portraying her as a gutsy woman, bold and passionate about her son’s message for the life of the world.

We Felician Sisters claim Mary, radical Gospel woman, as our role model. Like her, we have committed ourselves to living the Gospel radically by our commitment to go wherever there is a need and trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit when the path forward is not always clear. All who support our efforts and walk the path with us can do the same. Alone the challenge is daunting. Together, empowered by trust and hope, we can say with Mary: “Be it done to me according to your will.”

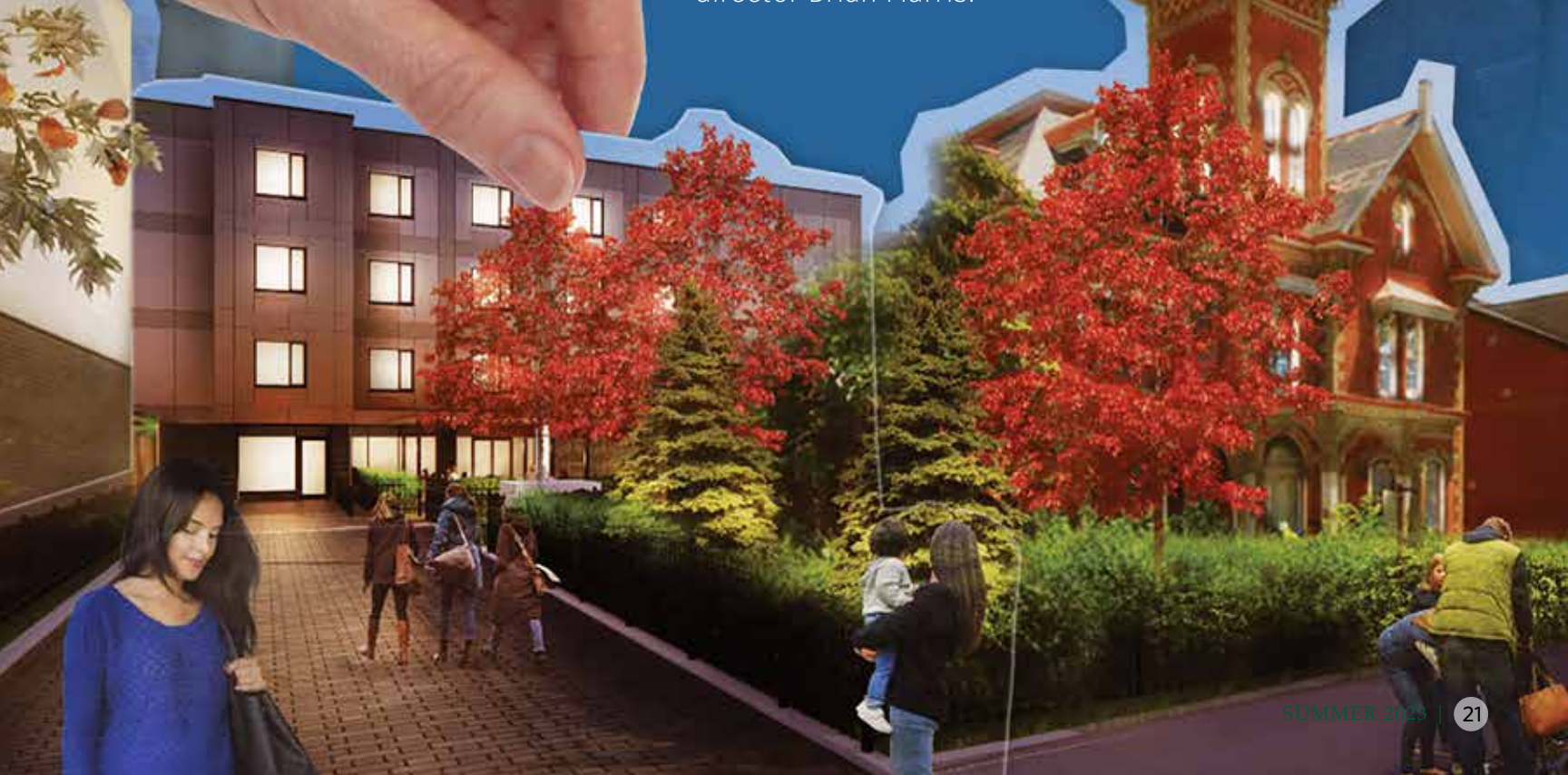
Rebels with a Cause

Transforming the System  with a Human Approach

Sometimes, to truly reach people who are struggling, you have to push the boundaries of what's allowed. Sometimes, *what's always been done* isn't good enough.

So, if you work at St. Felix Centre in Toronto, you come up with solutions, and you do what you believe is right. If this unorthodox path forward raises a few eyebrows or offends some sensibilities along the way, those are downsides you can live with.

Such is the approach of the team at St. Felix Centre, led by board chairperson Sr. Mary Francesca Buczkowski and executive director Brian Harris.





St. Felix Centre's Augusta Avenue drop-in service is a safe space to find connections and community.

housing. While living in our new building, the women and their children will also have access to a variety of supportive services to ensure they are equipped with what they need to remain housed and create a wonderful home for their families."

Think radically, act locally

As important and necessary as St. Felix Centre's work is, sometimes it meets resistance. That's no surprise, really. Revenue-generating tourism is going on all around the Centre. The bustling lakefront and world-famous CN Tower are an easy 20-minute walk away. Supportive housing and a homeless shelter aren't always a great "fit" in that sort of a neighborhood. That's just the reality.

"The need is here, and that's why we're here," says Sr. Francesca. "Sometimes we have to think differently to help the people we need to help." As evidence, consider two radical initiatives that were a hard sell to the local community, but a priority for the Centre: a pet program and a harm-reduction program.

Pushing boundaries

Very few supportive housing or homeless shelters in the U.S. and Canada allow residents to bring their cats and dogs into the shelter with them. You can probably count the total number on one paw.

St. Felix Centre became Toronto's first when it started the Pets Accessing Wellness Supports program, or P.A.W.S.

City health regulations forbid it initially —pets had never been allowed in shelters. But St. Felix Centre negotiated a trial period with the city. Let us try this for a year, they said, and if there are problems, we'll shelve the idea.

Turns out things went just fine, and P.A.W.S. was born in 2015. There's been exuberant purring and tail-wagging ever since.

"St. Felix Centre had to push to get our P.A.W.S. program started, but it is literally

life-saving for our guests," says Sr. Francesca. "We know that most people will not seek shelter if their pets can't go with them, even during the freezing winter. For many of our guests, their relationship with their pet is the most important one they have. It may be the support they need to get back on their feet." And yes, P.A.W.S. will be in place in the new building, says Sr. Francesca.

Fighting to keep people alive

Another St. Felix Centre initiative that wasn't met with open arms — still isn't, in fact — is the Centre's harm-reduction program. Harm reduction is a strategy aimed at improving the health and lowering the death risk of drug and alcohol users. It includes clean needle exchanges, fentanyl test strips that lower overdose risk, naloxone (Narcan) dispensing for overdose prevention, addiction education, drug treatment referrals and other services. Harm reduction is not about abstinence, and it's not rehab. Rather, **it's about meeting people where they are with their addiction, helping them stay safe and alive — buying them time so they can get better.**

St. Felix Centre is one of very few harm reduction centers in Toronto, according to Sr. Francesca. People know they can get help there, and they know they will be safer. "Before we offered harm-reduction services here, we would have 20 to 25 fatalities in our buildings and neighboring areas every year," she says. "Last year, after starting our harm-reduction program, we only had one."

Doing what it takes

Some offerings at St. Felix Centre — and there will surely be others — push the envelope in terms of established practices, regulations and public sensibilities. For the leadership team and their staff and volunteers, that's just part of their fight on behalf of the marginalized. It's a fight they're determined to win.

"What we say is we want to work ourselves out of a job," says Sr. Francesca. "The staff here is amazing. Sometimes I think every single one of them can quote the Felician core values — I hear them do it. They're so committed to the work, to our guests and to the pets! It's all a continuation of Blessed Mary Angela's work." 🌸

A dream coming true

A Felician mission established in downtown Toronto in 1993, St. Felix Centre offers supportive housing and short-term respite shelter to its guests, three meals a day for the hungry, a free vet clinic for guests with pets, harm reduction services for guests living with addiction, job training, housing referrals and more.

The Centre's mission: to provide a compassionate, faith-inspired community for the most marginalized people in downtown Toronto, and to offer a safe, quiet space where all are welcome and are served with dignity in the Felician-Franciscan tradition.

Demand for these services is high, but St. Felix Centre will soon be better equipped to meet it. On the grounds of its main location on Augusta Avenue (there's also a respite center at 69 Fraser Avenue), **the Centre is dramatically expanding its housing capacity with a new 31-unit building to be completed in late 2023.**

The project is being underwritten by a generous \$17 million federal grant.

"This is a dream come true for us," says Sr. Francesca.

A recent press release tells the story: "Thanks to the [Canadian] federal government's Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI), we have the amazing opportunity to provide deeply affordable, supportive housing for women and women with children experiencing homelessness and/or intimate partner violence.

"We are so thankful we can provide our community with what we believe is the true solution to homelessness: affordable

Sr. Mary Genevieve Ryskiewicz and Sr. Mary Angela Parkins

A Tale of Two Sisters and the amazing food pantry they built

ST. FELIX PANTRY
Felician Sisters Sponsored Ministry



The only food pantry in Sandoval County that offers weekly access to the hungry, St. Felix Pantry serves more than a thousand people each week, providing food, compassionate support and free referral services to shelters, clinics and churches.

Two key figures are responsible for providing the oasis in a food desert that St. Felix Pantry has become in Rio Rancho, NM: **Sr. Mary Genevieve Ryskiewicz** (*right*) who founded and ran the pantry for 16 years, and **Sr. Mary Angela Parkins** who has led it for the last six.

Each a radical doer and thinker, these two leaders brought their particular talents to the task. When Sr. Genevieve started the pantry in 1992, she was nearly 70. Sr. Angela took over in 2017, when she was nearly 74. At an age most people retire, these sisters rolled up their sleeves and began something big.

Sr. Genevieve to the (food) rescue

Born Julia Ryskiewicz in Mosinee, WI in 1923, Sr. Genevieve was the second eldest of nine children. When Julia was a girl, her mother would give her a loaf of home-baked bread to take to neighbors going through hard times.

Sr. Genevieve, who died in 2016 at age 92, never forgot that experience. "Sharing that bread did something to my heart," she once said. "And the desire to help the less fortunate grew stronger as the years went by."

After becoming a Felician Sister and attending culinary school, Sr. Genevieve eventually made her way to the Rio Rancho convent in 1976. An excellent cook, she did the meal preparation for her fellow sisters. On her grocery shopping trips for the convent, she began





Mauro (right), St. Felix Pantry's operations manager works with volunteer Maria to communicate pick-up and delivery of food to the community.

noticing how much food was getting thrown out by local merchants.

It was her light-bulb moment. First, she would pick up the unused food from proprietors and feed the hungry out of the back of her car. Then she moved her makeshift food pantry to a garage in the convent. St. Felix Pantry would find its current home at 4020 Barbara Loop in Rio Rancho in 1995.

And the rest, as they say, is her-story. St. Felix Pantry became renowned as the Albuquerque area's first food rescue program. After running it for 16 years, Sr. Genevieve stepped down from her full-time oversight role in 2008, and pulled back further from her pantry duties in the years before her death.

Sr. Angela takes the torch

When Sr. Angela became president and CEO of St. Felix Pantry in 2017, things were tough at first.

"Morale was pretty low at the pantry," she remembers. "So that's where we started. We needed to bring morale up, then we tackled the building and facilities upkeep. Only then did I feel like our guests could have full confidence in us again. It took a lot of work by our staff, volunteers and our

board, but that difficult process made me very proud as a Felician Sister. We can accomplish anything with God's help and guidance."

As it turned out, Sr. Angela's career training before she became a sister helped her immensely with the pantry. She'd once been a high-level management executive for a McDonald's affiliate before joining the ministry at age 45 — a radical career change. "People couldn't believe I would give up my Lincoln luxury car to enter the convent, but that's what I did," she says.

Thanks to that management experience, plus the skills, patience, and wisdom she gained as a Felician Sister, St. Felix Pantry would soon prosper under her leadership.

"Sr. Angela sets the tone at the pantry," says Rachael Miletkov, the pantry's director of development. "St. Felix Pantry is not just a place to get groceries, it's a family. It's a family that cares about our guests, volunteers, donor partners, everyone we touch. That all comes from Sr. Angela."

"She leads by example, which sounds like a cliché, but with her it isn't," says Miletkov. "Until recently, when a truck pulled in loaded with pallets of food, sister would jump on the back to help unload. We'd have to stop her and say 'let us do that!'"

More than food

"Sometimes, people come through the door, and food is not the main priority at that moment," says Sr. Angela. "Some will say, 'Can you just listen to me?' So we sit, and we listen. In these ways and so many others, we try to meet the needs of our guests. That's the best we can do, and that's what God has asked us to do."

With Sr. Genevieve ever-present as its guiding light, St. Felix Pantry has reached new heights under Sr. Angela's leadership. It now serves more guests than ever each week. As long as the need is there — and sadly it likely always will be — St. Felix Pantry will do its part for New Mexico's hungry. 🌱



Building Trust with the Navajo

In April, a St. Felix Pantry truck arrived in Counselor, NM at the chapter house of the Diné First Nations People with five huge pallets of supplies. This second delivery arrived with hopeful anticipation.

The Diné people live on a reservation that lacks running water and utilities — or even transportation to get supplies.

St. Felix Pantry learned about the great need of these Navajo people and secured a four-year grant from United Way to help. But in the process of fulfilling the grant, Diné leadership changed.

The new president had shared the view of many First Nations People: distrust for white people after generations of being mistreated.

"Sr. Angela knew that it was essential to establish trust before anything could progress," said mission leader, Peggy Barr. After prayer and contemplation, and with respect and by listening, Sr. Angela fostered this new relationship. Her compassion was conveyed to the new Diné president, and in December 2022, a first delivery was successfully made.

On the reservation, once word of the arrival of this second delivery was announced, a line of cars and pickup trucks formed that ran all the way out to the highway. Boxes of food, cleaning supplies, bottled water, wood for stoves and special candy bags for the children were handed out to each family.

The success of this delivery means the relationship will continue and St. Felix will fulfill the four-year grant on behalf of the families on the reservation. Humbled by the trust they gained, Sr. Angela explained what mattered most, **"More than anything, we listened. In our meetings with the chapter president and elders, we learned about the people's daily lives and struggles, and what would be most helpful to them. We responded to that."**

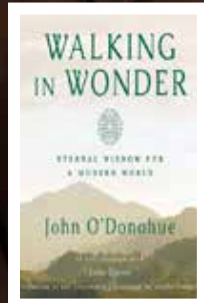
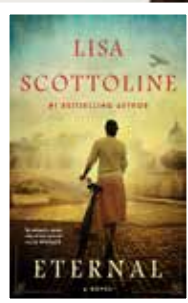
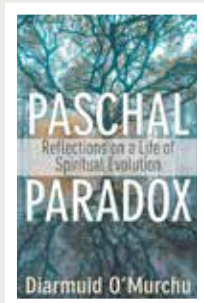
Books With Friends

When a book affects you deeply, you want to give a copy to a friend and say, “Here. Read this!” **Sr. Constance Marie Tomyl** has already given away a few copies of *Paschal Paradox: Reflections on a Life of Spiritual Evolution*, by Diarmuid O’Murchu. One friend responded, “His story is not unlike my story. This is reaching out to something in me,” affirming Sr. Connie’s own response to this spiritual autobiography. An Irish priest, missionary and social psychologist, Diarmuid O’Murchu has ministered to refugees, people without houses, and AIDS patients around the world. He has written several books, and *Paschal Paradox*, published in 2022, is his most recent. It’s about how the movement through death and resurrection, the “paschal paradox,” gives meaning to both individual and collective experience. “I read it and re-read it,” says Sr. Connie.

During Lent, Sr. Connie decided to do something positive: devoting an hour each evening to reading. After sitting at her desk all day, writing and researching, sometimes sitting down to read took extreme determination, but she knows it was a “very, very good thing.”

Her evening reading is always thoughtful — though not necessarily spiritual. She recently enjoyed the historical novel *Eternal*, by Lisa Scottoline, which takes place in Italy during the time of Mussolini. “This novel opened a whole new historical period for me,” Sr. Connie says.

During a recent sabbatical, Sr. Connie had time to read some “particularly good things,” including *Walking in Wonder*, by Irish poet John O’Donohue, *I Will not Die an Unlived Life*, by Dawna Markova, *A Few Days Full of Trouble: Revelations on the Journey to Justice for My Cousin and Best Friend, Emmett Till*, by Reverend Wheeler Parker, Jr., and *Two Little Girls in Blue: A Novel*, by Mary Higgins Clark.

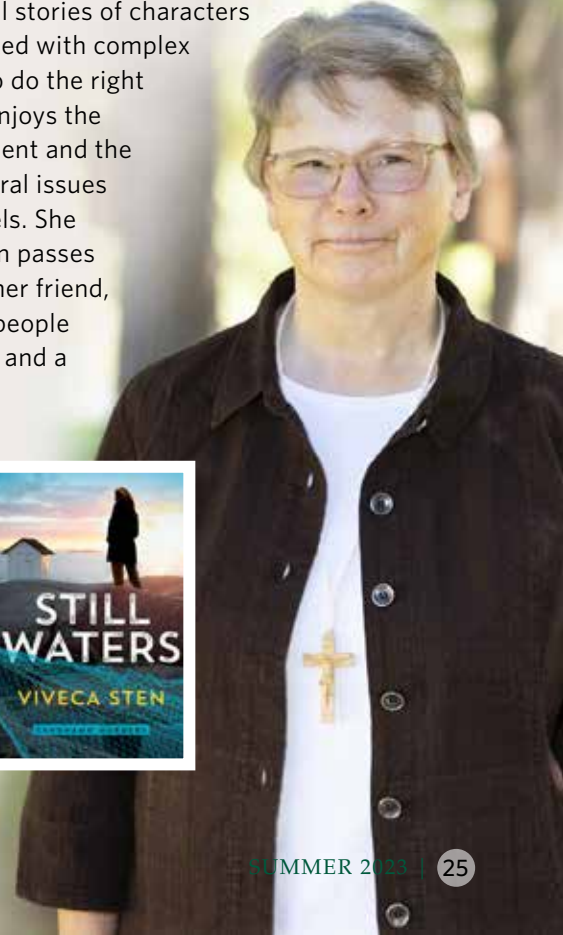


When she was Director of the Franciscan Center for Social Concern at St. Bonaventure University, **Sr. Suzanne Marie Kush** had a friend who recommended reading for relaxation. Since 2006, this same friend has supplied Sr. Suzanne with a steady diet of mystery novels.

A childhood fan of Nancy Drew novels, Sr. Suzanne has always enjoyed mysteries that explore questions of character by delving into guilt and innocence. These days, her favorite authors include Viveca Sten, a Swedish lawyer-turned-writer who has enjoyed international success with novels like *Still Waters*, set in the Stockholm Archipelago; Donna Leon, an American writer who makes Venice her backdrop; and Arnaldur Indridason, an Icelandic crime fiction author. These novelists give her a chance for “armchair travel” to places she might otherwise not have a chance to visit.

Sr. Suzanne also has a fondness for some well-known Canadian and British authors, including the best-selling Louise Penny, a Canadian mystery novelist whose books take place in Québec; and British author Jacqueline Winspear, whose historical mystery *Maisie Dobbs* is set during World War I.

While she enjoys the settings and the intricacies of plot in these books, they have something more important in common: they tell stories of characters who, when confronted with complex ethical issues, try to do the right thing. Sr. Suzanne enjoys the character development and the relevance of the moral issues raised in these novels. She reads them and then passes them along to another friend, creating a circle of people who share books — and a way of relaxing.



Planting Seeds

Maryann Lajoie understood that she would plant but not sow. She would put seeds in the ground in the spring in a vacant-lot-turned-community-garden across the street from the former St. Jude School in the Regent Park neighborhood in northeast Detroit. She would weed the garden, water the soil and tend the plants — but she would leave the harvesting to others.



Originally from Michigan, Maryann was one of the 2022-23 Felician Volunteers in Mission (VIM). She began this 10-month commitment in early October, and finished in mid-June. Along with her site partner, Beatriz Muñoz, Maryann committed to a year of volunteer work with the Felician Sisters, in collaboration with Deo Gratias Ministries Detroit and Capuchin Soup Kitchen. The two young women lived in community according to Felician core values for ministry.

Like Maryann, Beatriz has a background that uniquely prepared her for the challenges of living as a Felician Volunteer in Mission. Originally from Mexico, Beatriz immigrated to the U.S. with her family when she was 11, received a certificate in phlebotomy and then worked in a hospital. Drawing blood for a patient was part of a larger care picture, she realized as she often encountered people dealing with serious illnesses and stress. Beatriz understood that her kindness could make a difference to that person, so she sought to treat her patients with compassion. Similarly, at Deo Gratias, Beatriz knew guests come from a neighborhood plagued with economic and social trouble, poverty and violence.

“We just have to be respectful and kind,”

Beatriz reflects, about her work with this vulnerable population.

Maryann and Beatriz, two young women from different geographic regions and family backgrounds, with different skill sets but similar appreciation for Felician core values, became true partners in working together with Felician Sisters to shape a ministry and a program. Both women enjoyed living in VIM housing, near the Basilica of Ste. Anne de Detroit — just across the Detroit River from Canada. Four days each week, they commuted together to Deo Gratias, spending time cleaning and organizing, serving guests in the café, and helping in the food pantry. On Wednesdays, they worked at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, which has for decades offered a meal program in another economically disadvantaged neighborhood in urban Detroit.

Established in 2018 by Sr. Felicity Marie Madigan, Sr. Shelley Marie Jeffrey and Sr. Mary Francis Lewandowski, Deo Gratias provides a ministry of presence through unconditional hospitality to its neighbors. By providing a safe place where guests can gather for refreshments, social interaction, support and help, the sisters strive to make the community safer and happier. They had barely begun the evangelization café when the pandemic struck. At that time, administrators of the nearby St. Jude food pantry decided to close, since many of their volunteers were elderly and at high-risk for Covid. Sr. Felicity and Sr. Shelley jumped in to help by serving the neighborhood curbside. “Within seven weeks we gave out nearly 1,500 bags of food, and cars were wrapped around the building — there was definitely a need for groceries,” Sr. Felicity remembers.

Open for in-person shopping since June 2022, the choice-based food pantry has been serving steadily increasing numbers of households each month — now well over 200 — as the cost of groceries has increased and many families struggle with food insecurity.

Sr. Felicity points out, “People feel very comfortable coming in here and getting their groceries. They don’t feel like a number. We try to remember their names as best as possible, and it makes a difference.”

Maryann loved days spent helping in the food pantry, which is open each Tuesday and Friday. She spent time one-on-one with the guests, helping them get groceries and making small talk with them. She says, “My days went by really quickly, because it was one guest after another.” Part of her role was finding groceries, and part was simply being present. “If the guests wanted to talk about anything, I just listened,” she explains. “They usually wanted someone to listen more than anything.”

Volunteers appreciate the openness of the café, which is open Monday through Friday — that it is welcoming to everyone, offering snacks, drinks and conversation

— all free of charge. Deo Gratias takes care of the needs of those on the margins of society. “If Blessed Mary Angela were living in our times, I’m sure this is what she would be doing,” says Sr. Felicity.

Between shifts in the café and pantry, Maryann and Beatriz busily set things up as Deo Gratias transitioned into “business as usual.” Beatriz liked the variety of work: “Every day was different, so one day we might be cleaning, and the next day we might be in the café,” she notes. These youthful volunteers had a tangible opportunity to build something new in this ministry so recently established.



Maryann Lajoie and Beatriz Muñoz got to explore up-and-coming Detroit neighborhood shops and restaurants.

Along with the garden, the café, and the food pantry, literacy and art programs are beginning to enrich the space, and a caseworker helps guests with social services. Luckily, both young women liked organizing and set up the donation room, linen closet, library and classrooms. In true Felician style, these spaces are spotless and welcoming.

Through October and November, Maryann and Beatriz worked tirelessly to create tutoring rooms in the former convent. In this neighborhood, where the adult literacy rate is only about 50%, the need

continued



Year 1 of the Community Garden: Beatriz Muñoz working in the spinach beds; Sr. Shelley Marie Jeffrey harvesting radishes.

for learning help is palpable. Each freshly-painted tutoring room is set up with a desk, computer, bookshelf and supplies, and one room even has a smartboard. In September, Deo Gratias partnered with Epiphany Education Center in Detroit to help students with reading and math.



Once the rooms were in shape, tutoring began in earnest — and Maryann and Beatriz helped. Sr. Felicity says, “It’s just promoting our services and letting people know what we have here and how we can help.”

Having worked last summer on an urban farm, Maryann was excited to expand the offerings at the Deo Gratias community garden, according to the needs of the community. For the past few years, gardeners have relied on two



small raised beds to produce fresh food for the neighborhood. But through a recent grant, Deo Gratias was able to purchase an empty lot across the street that allowed for a dozen raised vegetable beds. Sr. Shelley reports, “Many of the guests who came to the food pantry gave us ideas of what they would like to see in that garden.” With community input, they planted collard greens, spinach, cucumbers, tomatoes, lettuce and herbs. Sr. Felicity adds, “We’d love to eventually teach nutrition classes with the produce and items we have in our food pantry to give people basic cooking skills to make nutritious meals.”

This vision for the future at Deo Gratias is gradually coming to fruition with the help of VIM — and its new

Coordinator, Julie Darocha. Julie got to know Maryann and Beatriz by spending time with them, sharing meals and her love of hiking. She comments on their maturity and applauds their growth in the last months of the experience.

Though the commitment of these two young women finished before harvest time, they trust that — as the program and the ministry continue — others will reap what they have sown. ✨

To learn if you or someone you know is a good fit for the Felician Volunteers in Mission opportunity, visit FelicianSistersNA.org/VIM.

LOOKing GOOD!

Earth Friendly Felician Fashion

The recent youthful embrace of “slow fashion” reflects what Catholic Sisters have always done — shopping less often and more intentionally than most. Felician Sisters know how to “look good,” projecting their compassion and joy in all times and places. Just as importantly, they know how to “dress well,” approaching the simple task of **getting dressed each day in solidarity with those on the margins, and considering issues of economics, human rights and climate policy.**

For Gen Z, thrifting “hauls” documented on TikTok or Instagram signify not just a youthful obsession with shaping identity through clothing, but a rebellion against “fast fashion” and a culture of unrestrained consumption. According to a recent news story, “Environmental sustainability has become a significant priority influencing the shopping choices of young consumers,” leading to the popularity of apps like Depop and thredUP for buying and selling clothes, and a host of DIY upcycling channels on YouTube, as young people search for budget-friendly and sustainable fashion.

At Madonna University, in Livonia, MI students enrolled in Michelle Proctor’s Introduction to Community Leadership course organized a clothing swap on campus. Proctor asked her students to read about the impact of the clothing industry on the environment. Then, they worked with members of Madonna’s *Laudato Si’* team to organize the event, discovering in the process that a clothing swap met a need close to home. Various campus constituents — students, staff and faculty — were among those who donated clothing and who benefited from the donations, clearly demonstrating a need that crosses demographic categories. “It was definitely reciprocal,” says Proctor.

Elizabeth Prough, a political science professor at Madonna and member of the *Laudato Si’* committee, explains that the benefits went beyond the original conceptions for the event, serving “a multiplicity of needs” — from a single mom who got a dress for the holiday to a student who found clothing for his family. Donors also benefited by cleaning their closets. Giving away garments, students gained a deeper awareness of patterns of consumption as well as community organization, and people from all walks of campus life came together for a fun event.

Some eco-friendly fashion tips:

1. Choose natural fabrics and ethical brands.

Sr. Judith understands the array of justice issues related to what we wear, from the dyes used in the textile industry that contaminate our water, to the safety conditions of workers in garment factories.

She points out that synthetic fabrics use petroleum — and the need to get away from fossil fuels in general. While she used to think that buying the cheapest garments was the best way to live in solidarity with those on the margins, she now takes time to shop for brands that use natural fabrics and dyes. She realizes that in a more thoughtful pattern of consumption, **“You may not buy the cheapest piece of clothing, but what you’re doing is honoring the environment, honoring the welfare of the people who produced it, honoring the earth.”** Like Sr. Judith, we can all read labels to find out where clothing is produced, and we can choose sustainable fabrics rather than synthetic ones.

[continued](#)



Sr. Judith Kubicki puts her best foot forward, wearing brands that are known for simplicity and made to last.

2. Repair rather than replace.

Sr. Rosemarie Goins, in San Antonio, TX uses her sewing skills to show kindness to the planet. "I have some stuff I'm still wearing from the 70s and 80s," she reports. In convents around North America, Felician

Sisters take a sensible approach to wardrobe issues. "If we get too fat or too skinny or the elastic gives out, we just put a new band on our skirt,"

Sr. Rosemarie says. "If a hem comes out, we fix it." Rather than throwing away something that is stained or missing a button, repurpose or repair it.



Sr. Mary Roseann Godel mends on a vintage sewing machine.

3. Wear what you already own.

Sr. Judith Kubicki says that **our clothing is one way that we identify with creation. "It's a matter of being in touch with one's surroundings, and one's most immediate surrounding is what one is wearing,"** she says. It might seem obvious, but rather than buying something new, familiarize yourself with the contents of your closet. Next time you are tempted to shop for new clothes, you might discover you already have what you need.

Sr. Mary Doloria Birr arranges her closet.



4. Buy second-hand.

Sr. Mary Jean Sliwinski chooses to dress in solidarity with those on the margins, so she buys her clothes at Goodwill. Buying second-hand clothing stops it from going into a landfill and saves the energy and water that would go into making new clothing. These days, there are many different types of vintage stores, including online ones like Oxfam that use profits to fight poverty worldwide and benefit Fair Trade producers.



Srs. Mary Izajasza Rojek and Marilyn Marie Minter sew their hospital garb and masks.

Whether shopping for ethical brands, thrifting, or sewing, many sisters and Gen Zers share similar techniques for dressing sustainably.

5. Buy less.

Through the 1970s or later, each convent had a vestry, with seamstresses who sewed all of the habits. Sr. Mary Rosita Brennan recalls that in Lodi, NJ, three sisters worked in the vestry to outfit 800 sisters in the convent. With bolts of wool fabric purchased wholesale, the sisters would sew "cruciform" dresses — long, cross-shaped garments worn with cinctures (rope belts) around the waist. These durable dresses suited any occasion, from work to church, lasted for years, and

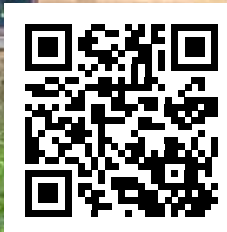
could be mended, altered and recycled. Each sister owned two or three, rotating a "Sunday" habit, a "school" habit and a "cleaning" habit. "Everything we owned could fit into a carry-on size suitcase," Sr. Rosita remembers. While most people these days own more than two or three outfits, we all can imitate the sisters' old-fashioned habits of simplicity by considering that we truly don't "need" as much as we might think we do.

When Sr. Mary Jessica Terek entered the convent, just before Vatican II, she remembers, "For me, the habit was a sign of my consecration, a life that I wanted to live." Over the years, she has grown to realize, "Our habit shouldn't speak for us. We should speak with our actions." And one action taken by the sisters is focusing on justice issues in all they do, which leaves more time, money and energy for the things in life that really matter.

"Ultimately, it's not what you wear. It's what you do," Sr. Jean echoes. "We are all trying to follow Mother Angela and serve God as best we can." 🌿

More Ways Felician Sisters Actively Care For Earth...

Whether shopping, investing, turning off the lights or even going outdoors — there are many ways to **ACTIVELY** follow the *Laudato Si'* platform to lessen our impact on the environment. Find more tips and join our efforts!



Sr. Maria Bakhita Waweru

Called to Do More

“**I am a student because I am a sister,**” says Felician Sister Maria Bakhita Waweru. Seeing her own hands as an extension of Christ’s hands, Sr. Bakhita wants to “give God to everybody” through her work as a nurse, ministering both physically and spiritually to those who are sick and need a healing touch. It doesn’t matter whether a patient is Christian or not. Sr. Bakhita knows that she carries God with her into each patient’s room. She trusts that her faith will be evident. She expects that each person she encounters will see in her somebody who reminds them of God.

Born and raised in Kenya, Sr. Bakhita speaks Swahili, Kikuyu (her native language), Spanish, Tzotzil (a Mexican dialect) and English, with a softly lilting voice. From a young age, she wanted to be a sister, and she became one of Saint Teresa of Calcutta’s Missionaries of Charity in 1999. In 2015, she became a Felician Sister because she “wanted to do more.”

In her previous role, she traveled from her native Kenya to do missionary work in Mexico for five years. She loved pastoral care, and by observation learned some basic nursing skills — but she yearned for a chance to do more. She knew that becoming a Felician Sister would give her a chance to return to school, so she talked to her superiors, prayed a lot and eventually transferred to the Felician

community. Now she is both a Felician Sister and a full-time nursing student at Madonna University in Livonia, MI.

Her work is academically challenging, but her sisters support and cheer for her through her classes and her clinicals. She believes that the prayers of her sisters have helped her to succeed academically —and she looks forward to finishing her degree.

Just as dry grass is sensitive to fire, Sr. Bakhita knows that a person who is in the hospital is sensitive to the presence of God. As a nurse and a sister, when she goes into a patient’s room, she can care for that person’s physical and spiritual needs. She carries God with her always, so she doesn’t need to evangelize with words. Her presence and faith provide the kind of holistic care that heal and comfort those most in need, as she approaches her work with true devotion. 🌿



Sr. Mary Honorata Grzeszczuk

Reconciling Science & Faith

In the Poland of her youth, under a Soviet regime, Sr. Mary Honorata Grzeszczuk did not have a Catholic education. The communist government promoted atheism in schools, and even CCD classes were illegal.

“In my high school, I was once told to take off my little cross that I was wearing, with the threat that I would never pass my final exams if they spotted it on me.”

Perhaps as a result of growing up in an officially secular culture, Sr. Honorata has made a career of reconciling science and faith, what is empirically true with what she knows in her heart.

While her passion for science was born in middle school, Sr. Honorata has also heard a calling from God more than once in her life. More than 30 years ago, in Warsaw, she first became a Felician Sister. Then, in 2009, she heard God calling her to move to the United States to join the Felician Sisters of North America, as part of the newly-forming Our Lady of Hope Province.

At the time, Sr. Honorata knew little about U.S. geography, and — though she had degrees in both physics and theology — she had not gone further than high school classes in English language. With fluency in both Polish and Russian, she never thought she would need additional language competency. Though the call surprised and puzzled her, she talked to her superiors about the voice she was hearing, telling her to leave her home country. With the approval of the North American Felicians and the General Administration in Rome, Sr. Honorata came to the United States.

Now fluent in English — and an acting dean in the School of Arts & Sciences at Felician University — Sr. Honorata leads others to find harmony between science and faith. In

Students observe as Sr. Mary Honorata Grzeszczuk demonstrates how to measure velocity, using an air track and an electronic stop clock, in her lab at Felician University.



A Good Place to Do Physics

Sr. Honorata's Physics Lab blog provides sections on kinematics, dynamics, energy, astronomy, phases of matter, harmonic motion, magnetism, optics, and electricity. Her tags for rock balancing, rainbows, lightning, and lunar eclipse take followers to photos that document the wonder of creation.

Since 2015, thousands of visitors have been helped to see the world through the dual lenses of science and belief. In one post, "The Green Ray," Sr. Honorata describes traveling on an overseas flight and following the tail camera view on the TV screen at her seat.



She writes, "When watching the sunrise, I witnessed a rare occurrence of a green ray of the Sun. I had heard about that phenomenon, but had never seen it. It was astonishing. As a human, I just remained overwhelmed by the beauty of nature. As a physicist, I admired the refraction of light from a new perspective."

Find Sr. Honorata's blog at physicsfel.blogspot.com.

teaching undergraduates, Sr. Honorata uses mindfulness and reflection to help young people reach their potential as scientists — and as human beings. Ever mindful of the importance of guiding students beyond facts to "the truth of being," Sr. Honorata recognizes the challenges of an age of information, when the rate of quickly-expanding scientific knowledge and the weight of constantly-proliferating data can overwhelm. "Teaching and learning in the Franciscan tradition might be the answer," she says. "Because religion helps to give direction to human knowledge. Structure and purpose help a person to be a person, to rise to the truth of being human."

Sr. Honorata's encounters with science bring her closer to God: the admiration of the universe, how everything so perfectly fits together, how it works with no mistakes for millions of years. These ideas lead her to prayer.

"Usually our sisters use the prayer book for prayers. I sometimes use *Physics Today* articles. They were not written for prayers, but for me they have very good material for a starting point for prayer."

As a young woman in communist-occupied Poland, Sr. Honorata used to hide a cross under her turtleneck, keeping her faith private. Now, she keeps a blog that celebrates both serious academics and the wonders of God's creation. For her, the two are so closely entwined that each strengthens the other. An instructor memoir that includes funny physics mug quips, notes of appreciation from students and humorous reminders about the importance of attending lab sessions, her blog also includes serious sections on topics like kinematics, dynamics and optics. A celebration of both science and faith, the blog integrates both as seamlessly as Sr. Honorata herself does. 🌿

And glory

Pregnant eclipse

Of bark

And branch

Fruitful activity

Captivating moments

Freedom and style

Birth and movement

Flowing branches

Galaxy of color

Extending, unfolding

Its leafy foliage



Poem by †Sr. Mary Valenta Akalski, who loved writing religious poetry and served 58 years as a Felician Sister, including at the generalate in Rome, where she met Saint Pope John Paul II. She was an awardee of the World Poetry Association in 1990.

Photo by Sr. Mary Samuel Holowacz.

Setting the Tone

For Unconventional Success



Katie Kacprzyk

The Felician Sisters opened McGuire to meet a need, focusing on caring for the children of mothers without resources, regardless of race, creed, cultural background or ability to pay. Today, McGuire provides comprehensive and compassionate care to individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities, including complex medical conditions. A residential program, a licensed school, two adult day programs and satellite community homes educate, care and advocate for those who need it most.

Rather than “merely” giving care, though, McGuire creates a family spirit, where staff and caregivers support each person to overcome challenges and live fully. Hallways and program rooms are filled with colorful art. A bright and spacious greenhouse has a round activity table at wheelchair height, a stunning array of plants and lively turtles in a tank. The nature trail, named St. Francis Way, is wide enough for wheelchairs and has platforms where clients and caregivers can take in a panoramic view of rural Beaver County, including bird feeders and water features.

The chapel at McGuire easily accommodates 15 wheelchairs for Mass. With the help of Fr. William Gillum, a Capuchin friar and priest with a master’s in special education, Sr. Thaddeus cared for the spiritual and sacramental needs of the individuals at McGuire, initiating a sensory-based program of teaching and worship that allows individuals with severe intellectual and physical disabilities to experience the sacred. “She believed in fullness and wholeness of life for the person with the most severe disabilities,” says Zaborowska.

Sr. Mary Cabrini Procopio, who enjoys attending Mass at McGuire, observes that though some of the individuals might be noisy or inattentive during Mass, “When it comes time for reception of the sacrament, you know that they know something is happening.”

“Society looks at our individuals as a burden,” says Daniel Stadnik, director of community homes for

Katie is in her early 30s. Because of her developmental disabilities, she is nonverbal. She wears a diaper, and requires supervision when she eats. She cannot bathe herself and is prone to aggression when she gets frustrated. She can walk independently, but it’s a good idea to bring a wheelchair for outings — at any time she might decide not to walk any further.

When Katie aged out of the school system, her parents — Beverly Beisgen and Henry Kacprzyk — were faced with the challenge of finding a way to care for her. A teacher suggested McGuire Memorial in New Brighton, PA — a Felician ministry grounded in compassion. For the last ten years, Katie has been thriving in one of McGuire’s community homes. She has her own room in a four-person house overseen by McGuire staff, and she takes part in an enriching day program with regular outings.

Katie’s mother appreciates the upbeat approach to care at McGuire. “From the beginning, they would tell us, ‘Katie has a great sense of humor,’ or ‘Katie is so smart.’ They always had something positive to say.”

Beisgen recognizes that the sisters, with their commitment to treating every person with dignity, set the tone at McGuire.

From 1990-2019, **Sr. Mary Thaddeus Markelewicz, who retired as president and CEO, was responsible for creating the climate of loving inclusion that distinguishes McGuire.**

A radical woman of the gospel, Sr. Thaddeus was a visionary leader who served people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by recognizing the fullness of their human dignity. “The train is leaving the station,” she used to tell her staff, encouraging them to get on board as she worked to increase programming and opportunities for those served. Her approach had a ripple effect on everyone in the organization. “She could only have been led by something bigger and greater than her,” says Dr. Rita Zaborowska, who served in many roles, including chief operating officer, in her 25-year career at McGuire.





1. Howard Pyburn with McGuire staff Georgette Butcher and Brooke Graff; 2. Kayla Jewell; 3. Kayla McGinnis runs the field with McGuire staff Johnetta Armstrong; 4. Dan Deane hugs McGuire staff Amy Prisuta; 5. Jackie Drakos, Logan McGinnis and Chrissie Drakos; 6. Melvin Steadman with Sr. Shannon Fox.

McGuire. “But that is such a wrong notion. They are here to raise us all up.” Stadnik understands that working at McGuire means overturning conventional notions of “success,” living by the Felician core value of solidarity with those in need and realizing that those with the least power are the ones who can lead the way to holiness. No one in society has more need than those vulnerable individuals who must rely on others to help them breathe, eat, communicate or use the toilet. Solidarity with these individuals means resisting the lure of independence and strength in a culture that tends to overlook or marginalize the least powerful.

Stadnik oversees the private residential living program that was part of Sr. Thaddeus’s radical vision. Situated throughout Beaver and Lawrence Counties in western Pennsylvania, the community homes offer the gift of independence for individuals with mild to severe disabilities. Most importantly, with a maximum of four individuals per home, residents enjoy living in a supportive family setting, where they experience independence and also receive the support they need.

“The best parts of me come out working with the people we serve,” says Stadnik. Whether solving a complex issue or simply feeding someone a meal, Stadnik knows that his work directly impacts the people he serves — and helps him to find the best aspects of himself. He reflects on the Felician influence at McGuire, noting that the sisters set the tone. “The presence of the Felician Sisters, whether they are in the building or not, makes everyone want to be their best,” he says. “No one gives more of themselves than they do. And because they hold themselves to the highest standard, they raise all of us up.” He says, “They are like an angel on your shoulder all the time.”

Sr. Grace Marie Spera, mission leader at McGuire, has a slightly different view. “The individuals we serve are angels,” she says. “And our staff cares for them with respect, dignity and compassion.”

Either way, McGuire’s radical overturning of societal expectations about those with special needs creates a space where staff, clients and families thrive. 🌸





As a second-year novice, Sr. Catherine spends time living in different Felician communities around North America.

Putting Felician Spirituality into Action

Sr. Catherine Marie-Elizabeth Rotterman's Novice Experience

When she was a high school student in Lancaster, NY, Catherine Rotterman interviewed Sr. Mary Johnice Rzadkiewicz, executive director of Response to Love Center in Buffalo, NY for a journalism project. The interview took place over the phone, and they never met in person until Sr. Catherine, now a novice Felician Sister, spent six weeks immersed in community and ministry with Sr. Johnice, living and working beside someone she has long admired.

Before professing her vows, a young woman who wants to become a Felician Sister spends one year as a postulant and two years as a novice. During the two-year novitiate, the first year is focused on spirituality, deepening the candidate's prayer life and understanding of Felician charism. The second year is devoted to community ministry experience, giving her a chance to put that Felician spirituality into action.

Sr. Catherine, a second-year novice who will profess her vows in October, has an interest in serving people in need. She listens to God's voice in her life and talks to Director of Novices Sr. Christina Marie Conroy, about how to answer God's call.

Under Sr. Christina's guidance, Sr. Catherine had a chance to work at various social ministries, including Kolbe House Jail Ministry in Chicago, before coming "home" to Buffalo. Her diverse ministry and community experiences have

helped her to grow, giving her spiritual gifts and deepening her commitment to the vows she will take. At Response to Love Center, for example, she witnessed acts of generosity from clients in the clothing distribution room. "It's a model of generosity that I hope to imitate," she says. "That was a gift to me." She also spent time with recent immigrants and refugees taking English classes at Response to Love. She recalls, "Their strength and courage to start something new was a gift to me as well." Preparing to profess vows to live poor, chaste and obedient, these gifts of courage and generosity strengthen Sr. Catherine's commitment to the life of a Felician Sister. She reflects, **"The things that I think are my own — my time and my energy, my life story, my knowledge, the insights and reflections I get in my time with prayer — they are not given to me just for my own sake. They are given to me for building up the body of Christ."**

In each ministry she has visited, Sr. Catherine has had a chance to live in community with Felician Sisters. She appreciates the diversity of community life she has experienced this year. Living with other Felician Sisters gave her some new insights about community life. "I've been impressed by the care and love I've witnessed," she says. "It's not just sharing an address and everyone wearing brown clothes. It's building relationships based on spirituality. These are the kinds of relationships I hope everybody has in their life." 🌸



◀ **Future Felicians:** Sr. Catherine with postulants Monica and Veronica at a visit in Milwaukee, WI.

Have you thought about becoming a sister? We would ♥ to chat!
Call, text or email Sr. Judy Blizzard at 734-718-0632 / Sr. Jane Gawlik at 210-845-7940
Vocation@FelicianSisters.org.

OUR LADY OF HOPE PROVINCE

2023 *Jubilarians*

God bless our sisters for transforming the world through their lives dedicated to service.

80 YEARS

S Agnes Marie Lewandowski
SM Modesta Piwowar

75 YEARS

SM Angelis Midura
SM Cecilia Maczko
SM DeSales Herman
SM Philip Kwolek

70 YEARS

SM Angelette Helak
SM Clementia Zigmond
SM DeLourdes Zdunowski
S Dolores Anne Mary Ungerer
S Jane Marie Lebieczinski
SM Lorette Tokasz
S Marilyn Mason
S Rose Marie Smiglewski
S Rosemarie Kutsko
SM Sandra Jakubowski
SM Stella Motyl
SM Virginita Tarnacki

65 YEARS

SM Josella Cushion

60 YEARS

SM Albertine Stachowski
SM Andréa Chudzik
SM Bridget Becker
SM Charlene Ozanick
SM Christopher Moore
S Cynthia Marie Babyak
S Dorothy Ann Mary Moczygamba
SM Francianne Zielezinski
SM Giovanni Monge
SM Jacqueline Benbenek
S Joanne Marian Kaminski
S Joyce Marie Van de Vyver
SM Lenore Omernik
SM Nicolette Wichrowski
SM Rebecca Piatek
SM Thaddeus Markelewicz
SM Virginia Tomasiak

50 YEARS

S Francine Mary Sousa
SM Lorraine Vukovich
S Marilyn Ann Dudek

Read about each of the 2023 Jubilarians
at FelicianSistersNA.org/Jubilarians



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What to Watch

Sesquicentennial Celebrations

In 1874, Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska sent five Felician Sisters across the Atlantic to North America. On November 21, the 28-day journey brought them to the small farming village of Polonia, WI where the pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Fr. Joseph Dabrowski had requested their help educating the children of Polish immigrants.

Their hard work, joyfulness and charism had a profound effect on the people who witnessed their presence. Soon, many women joined them, following Blessed Mary Angela's directive to "serve where you are needed." By the early 20th century, Felician Sisters had established ministries across much of the U.S. and Canada. Today, women continue to join the sisters, ministries continue to grow and lay people continue to partner with the Felician Sisters to do God's will.

To commemorate their historic anniversary, a year-long celebration is planned including a pilgrimage and opening Mass and celebration in Polonia, WI on November 21, 2024. **Learn more at FelicianSistersNA.org/150.**



**Felician Sisters
of North America**



Felician Mission: *Haiti*

Mark your calendar
for the following Masses and receptions.

- Sunday, October 8 - Chicago, IL
- Sunday, October 15 - Buffalo, NY
- Sunday, October 22 - Livonia, MI
- Sunday, November 5 - Lodi, NJ

Learn more at FelicianSistersNA.org/Haiti.



Volunteer!



**Explore a city, impact a community
and discover a deeper spirituality.**

Felician Volunteers in Mission (VIM)
10-Month Live-in Volunteer Program
Sept 2023 - June 2024
Deo Gratias Ministries Detroit

Read about VIM on page 26.