

WINTER 2022

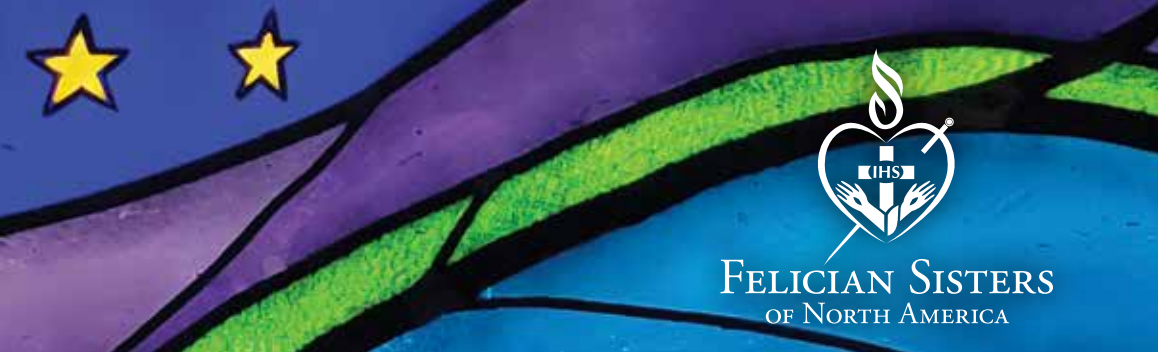
FELICIAN



The MAGAZINE of the FELICIAN SISTERS of NORTH AMERICA



2001



FELICIAN

The MAGAZINE of the FELICIAN SISTERS of NORTH AMERICA

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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.

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OUR LADY OF HOPE PROVINCE

The Felician Sisters, formally known as the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Felix of Cantalice, is 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. Founded in Poland in 1855, the first Felician Sisters arrived in North America in 1874 to minister to the immigrant and indigenous families of Polonia, WI. They established eight provinces across the United States and Canada. In 2009, they united the eight provinces into Our Lady of Hope Province, allowing for a more strategic use of resources.

Pioneers of social services, the Felician Sisters founded and continue to sponsor hospices, schools, childcare centers, hospitals, after-school programs, homeless shelters, food pantries, nursing homes, affordable housing communities, and missions in Haiti and Canada. 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."

Share YOUR Thoughts!

Do you think St. Francis would have used social media?

What would you like to see more of in *Felician* magazine?

Which is your favorite article in this issue of *Felician* magazine?

Visit [Linktr.ee/FSNA](https://linktr.ee/FSNA) to take our poll. Find out where you rank. The community's votes will be published in the next issue.



SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Send letters to the editor, correspondence, or change of address to:
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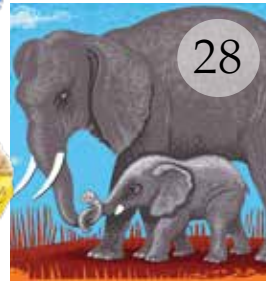
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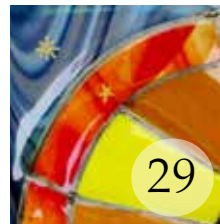
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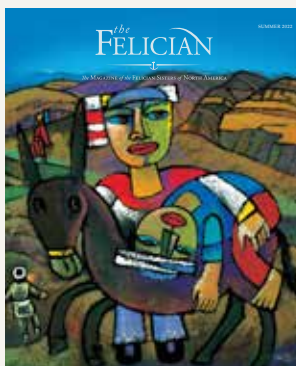
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Cover

Dr. James He Qi was the first person from mainland China to earn a Ph.D. in Religious Art after the Cultural Revolution. After winning an art competition, he was relieved of hard field labor to paint Chairman Mao. Dr. Qi shared that his art focuses on bible scenes because "There are two ways one may become a Christian in China. One is through parents and grandparents and their teaching. The other is a journey to find peace and truth. I found both in the Gospel message."

Learn more about Dr. James He Qi's work at heqiart.com.



Dear Friends,

This issue of Felician Magazine focuses on the topic of “encounter.” Pope Francis himself challenges us to reflect on this topic in his 2020 encyclical (letter), *Fratelli Tutti*. The posture of encounter is integral to our Felician ministries and to all of our efforts to be present and available to each person we meet.

Chinese artist, James He Qi expresses the compelling beauty of genuine encounter in his portrayal of the Good Samaritan featured on the cover of this issue. The vivid colors and stark landscape offer a non-Western depiction of this familiar Gospel parable. In a letter to Agnes of Prague, Clare of Assisi counsels her to follow four steps to Franciscan prayer: gaze, consider, contemplate, (in order to) imitate. I encourage you to spend some prayerful moments with the painting. Gaze upon the two figures, both the victim of the robbers and the one who takes pity on him. Look into their eyes. **Consider the generosity and courage of the Good Samaritan. Contemplate the message the Lord is directing, not just to the original hearers of the Gospel story, but also to us.** Finally, reflect on how we can imitate the Good Samaritan today in our unique situation.

The Good Samaritan truly encountered the victim lying in the road. And the victim in turn, accepted the help of the Good Samaritan — which makes this a true encounter. In his native Spanish tongue, Pope Francis speaks of “encuentro” as the interaction between human beings who recognize the full dignity of one another. Such interaction requires attention to the other person as person and a profound decision to acknowledge her or his humanity in imitation of the boundless love of God for each of us.

Examples of such sacred encounter sing throughout the stories in this issue. It is evident in the lives of those who encounter Christ in those who suffer every day. It is also evident in the commitment of our sisters and ministries to respect and foster human dignity, especially among those persons who find themselves on the margins of society.

At the same time, I believe that it is an experience of genuine encounter that inspires our partners in ministry, that is, our generous donors, to open their hearts “to the cry of the poor” (Psalm 34). In this way, we journey together. Sometimes we find ourselves lying wounded on the side of the road. Other times, we are challenged to lend the helping hand. In today’s world, it requires both courage and humility to do both.

On behalf of Our Lady of Hope Province, I express my deep gratitude that so many of you have chosen to travel the road that leads to encounter. May you experience the joy that comes from encountering God when you gaze into the eyes of those you meet on your own “road to Jericho.”

Peace and all good things!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Judith Marie Kubicki".

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

Dear Felician Sisters...

Inspired by Sr. Mary Alice

I am personally grateful for my elementary school sisters at Our Lady of Consolation in Williamsburg, NY, from first to eighth grade. My career choice was due to Sr. Mary Alice in first and second grade. She inspired me by her wide smile, kindness, and visible joy in teaching 40+ students with positive and happy nurturing. I was hooked! School was going to be my life, and I taught first grade for 37 years, always remembering Sr. Mary Alice. May God bless you for your work. You are an inspiration.

Victoria Murphy

Heart of Gold

One of my closest friends was also a classmate of my deceased mother. Her name is Sr. Paul Marie Pietroczyński. Last I knew she was in the retirement community at the Felician Sisters Convent on Peterson Avenue in Chicago. We would visit with her when she was able to have visitors, and she would come over to our home when able to do so. She is a lot of fun and has a fantastic sense of humor. She would love to play cards and board games with us. Because of her dedication and devotion to her ministry, she influenced me to consider being a priest and encouraged me to join the seminary and remain in the seminary in Chicago for 7 years. She was an outstanding individual with a heart of gold and an excellent educator.

Paul Lepek

FROM THE EDITOR:

We are happy to report that Sr. Paul Marie is still in the convent in Chicago. As a retired Felician Sister, her current ministry is prayer. We are sure that she includes you in her prayers!



Found My Career Path

I attended St. Joseph Elementary School and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Academy in Coraopolis, PA. It was a very positive experience. My interactions with Sr. Mary Pulcheria Saukaitis at OLSH were instrumental in my choice of a career in science. Sr. Pulcheria taught us well but also made sure that we took part in the local science fairs. This involvement led me to meet and interact with many students and faculty from other schools. I have remained close to several of the sisters, especially Sr. Sharon Iacobucci, who was one of my classmates, and Sr. Mary Alexander Klawinski, one of my teachers.

Andrea M. Mastro



Sister from Villa Maria

My aunt, Sr. Mary Pontia Grajko, was like a second mother to my siblings and me. She spent 78 of her 94 years of life as a Felician Sister. So many of my childhood memories include her, many of the other wonderful sisters, and so many convents and churches.

Patricia Molina

Three Ciocias

Having had three "Ciocias" as we nieces called them, Sisters Loretine, Colomana, and Casimir, has been a blessing to all of us who were so much a part of their lives in Erie, PA and the Buffalo region. My Dad (their brother) was the oldest of 11 and the 10 who followed were females. We always loved the rides to Buffalo for visits with them at their assigned parishes which continued until their passing. We (33 first cousins) attended Holy Trinity in Erie and have lots of fond memories of the sisters who taught us.

Elizabeth (Betty) Gutowski Bialomizy

Taught by Sr. Clarence

I am a 1964 graduate of Immaculate Conception High School in Lodi, NJ. I have vivid memories of the sisters who taught us. In particular, Sr. Clarence, who taught typing, stenography and other business education-related subjects, was tough but fair. I am the person I am today because of my high school education under the auspices of the Felician Sisters.

Jane M. Wojlawowicz



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

ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHER

Felician core values are all about the encounter with the other. Respect for human dignity can only occur when we encounter one another and recognize each person's essential human dignity. Compassion means empathy for others, and we develop compassion when we encounter one another's stories. Keeping an open mind and heart when we encounter one another leads us to continued transformation, the improvement of person and ministry. Solidarity with those on the margins can only occur through encounters with those on the margins. And when we encounter one another, we work toward the common good, in pursuit of justice and peace. In this issue of Felician magazine, our "Around the Province" section highlights our sisters' and ministries' encounters. May their adherence to the core values, sustained by holy encounter, continue to inspire and bless all who encounter them!

Truth and Reconciliation

For more than 150 years, and until 1997, residential schools funded by the Canadian government and intended to promote assimilation were run by churches — primarily Roman Catholic and Anglican. Over the years, these schools were guilty of gross negligence and horrifying abuse of children, who were stolen from their families and forced into schools far from their homes, where even speaking in native languages was forbidden. Psychological, physical, and sexual abuse was rampant.

When Pope Francis visited Canada in July, the first papal visit to Canada in 20 years, he listened deeply and with great compassion to the devastating stories of those who were in the schools. At a traditional powwow in Alberta, he offered an apology on behalf of the Catholic Church: "I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil committed by so many Christians against the Indigenous Peoples." Though his visit does not provide a solution to the intergenerational trauma, it is a step towards community reconciliation.

Sr. Judy Blizzard, Vocation Outreach Minister for the Felician Sisters and a woman of Cherokee descent, shares her response to the papal apology: **"I was happy to see Pope Francis apologizing for the behaviors of past Catholics, which took away lives, broke up families, and took away the dignity of people. When we become aware of these behaviors by people of our own faith, we have to challenge the behavior, the mindset."**

The Canadian government officially made National Day for Truth and Reconciliation a federal holiday in 2021 after the discovery of over 1,000 unmarked graves near former residential school sites in the spring of 2021. Celebrated each year on September 30, the day honors the children who never returned home and survivors of residential schools, as well as their families and communities. In an official statement, the Canadian government says, "Public commemoration of the



Pope Francis met with Indigenous leaders at Muskwa Park in Maskwacis, western Canada, in July to personally apologize to survivors of abuse.

tragic and painful history and ongoing impacts of residential schools is a vital component of the reconciliation process."

Sr. Judy offers further thoughts about a way for Christians to move forward after the apology by Pope Francis: "Pope Francis has a love for people — especially those living on the margins and being treated unjustly — and challenges every time he speaks, to love and reach out to those on the margins. Yet today we still have people who treat others with that same anger and hatred and exclusivity." Instead, she suggests, we need to work to encounter those on the margins with a message of love, respect, and inclusion.

To find more information about National Truth and Reconciliation Day, visit rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca.

Honoring #NDTR

This fall, students from **Holy Name of Mary College School in Mississauga, ON** wore orange t-shirts to commemorate the tragic and painful history and ongoing impacts of residential schools. National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is September 30. It is a day to honor the children who never returned home and the survivors of residential schools, as well as their families and communities.

*HolyNameofMary
CollegeSchool.com.*



Survivor and Mom Create Book Club to Educate About Racism

Villa Maria College in Buffalo, NY, was featured in nearly 10 local news stories in July, when volunteers from the Buffalo Peacemakers helped transport nearly 10,000 books, donated from all over the country, to **Zeneta and Zaire's Book Club**.

Zeneta Everhart's son, Zaire Goodman, was the first person shot in the May 14 attack at the Tops supermarket in Buffalo, NY. Mr. Goodman survived, but after the shooting, Ms. Everhart felt a need to act in order to make the world a better place. She and her son created an Amazon wish list of books in hopes of educating kids on racism, diversity, and inclusion.

"Put a book in a kid's hand and you are not only giving them a mirror into themselves, but also a window." she said. She feels that Villa is the right place for this initiative, explaining, "We learned a lot about our history growing up, but there were a lot of things we didn't learn, that I learned at Villa Maria College."

Ms. Everhart and Mr. Goodman are both valued members of the Villa community. Mr. Goodman studied there, and his mother is a 2008 graduate and member of the college's Board of Trustees.



Villa Maria College President Matthew Giordano is thrilled to support Zeneta and Zaire's Book Club. "We are proud to support this initiative because of what it stands for — informing and enlightening our youth about racism and Black history," he said. "We want to be at the forefront of dialogue that counters disinformation with real education."

Many of Villa Maria College's faculty and staff have contributed to Zeneta and Zaire's book wish list. The books will be stored and sorted in a classroom — then distributed to schools, libraries, and community centers across Western New York.

You can hear Zeneta's story and find a link to their Book Wish List at FelicianSistersNA.org/Zeneta-and-Zaire



A Winner (Again), Hands Down!

Residents and guests had a “Minute to Win It” searching through a plate of shaving cream to find bear turds (Cocoa Puffs) and a gummy bear! The Gardens Fall BBQ Festival in September is just another reason **Felician Village in Manitowoc, WI** was voted “Best of the Lakeshore” for 13 years in a row by The Herald Times Reporter.



Find God in the Silence

Maryville Retreat Center in Holly, MI offers many opportunities for visitors to step away and experience God, including the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, which supports participants through a full academic year of spiritual growth.

From September through May, those who enroll in this program take part in meditations, prayers and contemplative practices developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola. Spiritual Director, Sr. Mary Bernadette Kapfer oversees this wonderful opportunity, in which participants encounter one another in dynamic small group discussions, find ample opportunity for growth with ongoing prayer, learn meditation practices to help them find God in the silence, and do scripture reading with a spiritual director. Maryville’s beautiful and peaceful campus is the perfect place to find God — in community, in silence, and in nature.

If you are interested in being part of next year’s Ignatian cohort — or in spring programming at Maryville — bookmark our website and check back frequently for new opportunities: **MaryvilleRetreatCenter.org**.



Camp Monarch: Strength for Those Grieving

Two Felician-sponsored ministries, the **Montessori Center of Our Lady** and **Angela Hospice in Livonia, MI**, had a special event together this October. Camp Monarch is a grief camp for children and teens who have lost a loved one. The Angela Hospice Grief Care team led the day’s activities, including music therapy, arts and crafts, and helping everyone find the superhero within themselves. The children were thrilled to meet superheroes in person. The camp modeled the teachings of the Catholic Montessori school — lending a hand where you can to support people in need.

You don’t have to grieve alone. Learn more at **AngelaHospice.org**.

St. Anne's New Food Pantry Tracks Need

After nearly a year of preparation, **St. Anne's Family Services in Los Angeles, CA** launched their Help & Hope Pantry in October. This innovative pantry tracks food items most desired by families, to ensure that items stocked are the most useful to them.

Dana Valenzuela Marez, Chief Development Officer of St. Anne's Family Services explained that a goal of the Help & Hope Pantry is to be a resource that will serve families into the future. To achieve this level of efficiency, they will gather data about what their client families needs are and use software that keeps track of it. A grant from Pantrysoft afforded them the software which will inform St. Anne's of the frequency items are requested — and of the average age and number of children in a family — data kept confidential by St. Anne's. Ms. Marez says, "The goal is to be able to secure funding for long periods of time, and provide our families with this additional service so that they can focus on stabilizing themselves for their children."

St. Anne's continues to provide supportive housing, early childhood education, and community-based wrap-around programs with a goal of keeping families safely together and letting them know they are never alone.

Learn more at StAnnes.org



Vaccinating Pets for Their People

St. Felix Centre in Toronto, ON has always been pet-friendly! Compassionate care for guests *and* their furry companions demonstrates a commitment to Felician Franciscan heritage. A person's pet can be their most effective form of support, particularly for someone experiencing homelessness. Pets play a powerful role in their owners' mental health and increase their chances of improving their lives and overcoming challenges.

St. Felix Centre in collaboration with VCA Animal Hospitals, recently hosted a free cat and dog rabies vaccination clinic at its 69 Fraser Respite site for anyone in the community who needed help keeping their pets purring and wagging their tails. The initiative included a pet food pantry, nail trimming, flea treatment, and other care. More than 70 pets were seen.

Learn more about the P.A.W.S. program at: StFelixCentre.org/programs-services/paws-program.

The POWER in Practicing Franciscan Values

Over several years, the solar panel arrays installed at Felician convents across the province have produced more than 12 gigawatts of electricity.

By producing their own renewable energy, the sisters have eliminated over 7,300 tons of carbon dioxide from being emitted into the Earth's atmosphere.

For reference, 1 metric ton of carbon dioxide is the equivalent of an average car driving from San Francisco to Atlanta and 10 metric tons are produced by gassing up an SUV 46 times!



After a Flood, the Community Responds with Love

On the morning of August 8, sisters and staff at the **Response to Love Center in Buffalo, NY**, awoke to find their basement flooded with water and sewage. The basement of the center contains both the industrial kitchen and dining room where hot meals and fresh produce are provided to the community. Unable to serve people in such unsanitary conditions, the team immediately jumped into action. Just as Noah started building his ark and looking forward to a rainbow, the team stayed faithful as they determined what to do.

Mops were brought out to soak up the water and prevent further damage to walls and floors; the staff and sisters worked hard to clean the area, but they could not clean it well enough in time for lunch. Thankfully, a smaller kitchen on the top floor was functional. Cooking continued there, and just as in times of harsher Covid restrictions, meals were served outside to the community. After lunch was served, and the smell in the basement did not go away, they knew they needed outside help. Sr. Mary Johnice

Rzadkiewicz, Director of Response to Love, reached out to a disaster restoration company to properly sterilize the entire basement, which would cost more than \$10,000. They knew this expense would put a large dent in their food budget.

The sisters discern the needs of the people, and strive to be part of the community they serve. And in the same way, the community reciprocated. Members of the community contacted the media and the flooding was reported on the news. Within a day, thousands of dollars were raised and the center was operational again.

The Response to Love Center serves the community in more ways than just a food kitchen and food pantry. Certified teachers educate people in ESL and help them attain their GED, volunteers host cooking workshops featuring items from the food pantry, social workers guide people to immigration and mental health supports needed, and a new modern yoga studio/workout room provides a dignified space for the community to access everything they need.

Felician Sister Campaigns to Educate Migrants on Dangers of Crossing the Border

Águilas del Desierto (Eagles of the Desert) with Sr. Maria Louise Edwards as vice president, traveled to Mexico from June 3-28 to warn migrants of the dangers that await them if they attempt to cross the border.

Co-founded by Ely Ortiz, the main mission of Águilas del Desierto is to search for and rescue migrants crossing into the United States along its southern border. In the past two years, Águilas volunteers have successfully rescued more than 250 children, women, and men and recovered the remains of 35 bodies. Having been promised safe passage, many wander through the desert with no food or water, inadequate clothing and shoes, and debilitating blisters. Hundreds have died as they try to escape extreme poverty and horrific violence at home. Families are left without answers or closure, waiting to hear from a loved one who has disappeared.

According to the Missing Migrants Project, nearly 3,000 people have died or been reported missing crossing the border since 2014, including 290 from January to June of this year.

It occurred to Vicente Rodriguez, a cofounder of Águilas, that launching an education and awareness campaign would be the best way to save lives, by letting crossers know the realities of what they would face. Migrants are often misinformed about the perilous terrain they will endure and risk drowning in the Rio Grande or walking 8-10 days through the scorching hot Arizona desert.

This June was the second Education and Awareness Campaign. A team of six visited 30 migrant shelters in Mexico to present to nearly 5,000 people. Sr. Maria Louise hopes it will continue annually, but Águilas has limited funding. Additionally, volunteers themselves face real danger, as “coyotes” and others who make a living from exploiting desperate people prefer that their targeted victims remain uninformed.

Many migrants encountered by the team in Mexico had already been traveling for over a year, having been detained at various locations along the way. Many have already experienced the traumas of rape or robbery on their journeys.

Migrants appreciated information about the road ahead, though they were dismayed to hear how treacherous it would be. Some decided not to continue, but most had nowhere else to go. Sr. Maria Louise prayed with migrants and shared rosaries, a reminder of God’s protection. She says, **“I’m so grateful to God that he lets me be a part of this ministry. I never understood until I encountered Águilas that sisters are like first responders, because we look for the suffering, and that’s where we go.”**

Learn more at AguilasDelDesierto.org.



Encountering a Miracle

Lay women and men who support and promote the mission of the Felician Sisters, Felician Associates typically gather monthly for prayer, education, or service. At a recent program led by Sr. Mary DeSales Herman, a Michigan group of Felician Associates heard Nolan Ostrowski speak about his miraculous encounter with Blessed Solanus Casey.

Mr. Ostrowski was featured in the Detroit Free Press after he experienced a cure that went beyond a simple medical explanation. Last summer, hospitalized in Lansing, MI, with COVID-19, Mr. Ostrowski, a carpenter, a husband, and a father of three, thought about his family as he prayed for strength. It was July 30, the Feast Day of Blessed Father Solanus Casey.

Mr. Ostrowski had no idea that on that same day, both his mother and his father-in-law separately lit candles and prayed to Blessed Solanus for healing.

In his hospital room, unaware of his family's prayers and never even having heard of Solanus Casey, Mr. Ostrowski saw a brown-robed figure beside his hospital bed. The next day, he told his wife about the presence of the figure in his room.

The following night, Blessed Solanus returned to Mr. Ostrowski's room

and Mr. Ostrowski made a bargain. He told him, I will never use God's name in vain again if you can help me.



The friar joyfully leaped up, ran to Mr. Ostrowski, and touched his ribs. Despite his still-critical condition, Mr. Ostrowski felt certain that everything would be okay. Though his medical battle was not over, he encountered nurses and doctors during the ensuing weeks who confirmed his conviction that divine intervention enabled his eventual full recovery.

Blessed Solanus Casey, who died in 1957, was a Capuchin Friar. In his role as doorkeeper at the monastery in Detroit, he met thousands of people from all walks of life, listening to and praying with them. His faithful imitation of St. Francis inspired many, as he demonstrated that ordinary people are capable of great holiness. He has had one miracle officially recognized by the Vatican, and was beatified in 2017. Thousands more have prayed to him and have attributed many miraculous healings to his intercession.

Appropriately, Mr. Ostrowski presented on the Feast of Pentecost. Prayer cards were distributed with the image of the holy friar, painted by Mr. Ostrowski's daughter, Janelle. Mr. Ostrowski told them, "I'm healthier than I have been in a long, long time. And that was all because of God's grace. Solanus came to visit and touch me. I believe that prayer works. I firmly believe that."

Janelle Ostrowski

Join Us — Become a Felician Associate

Felician Associates are lay women and men who strive to incorporate Felician spirituality into their own way of life. Alongside Felician Sisters, they pray to bring about the spiritual renewal of the world.

Felician Associates commit to Franciscan ideals and embrace life with simplicity, compassion, and mercy in their shared journey with Felician Sisters. Alongside the sisters, they act as the "hands and feet" of Christ. Through the sisters, the associates have

companionship, prayer partners, and growth in their spiritual life. They might join the sisters for special occasions, and they help serve in their ministries. An associate is a compassionate person who wants to learn community or understand it in a more meaningful way.

We invite you to join us from wherever you are in North America, by contacting Associates@FelicianSistersNA.org. Find more details at FelicianSistersNA.org/Associates.

Some Happenings for Mission and Heritage Week

Every autumn, from the Feast of St. Francis on October 4 to the feast day of Blessed Mary Angela — foundress of the congregation — on October 10, Felician Sisters celebrate Mission and Heritage Week. All Felician-sponsored ministries take part in activities that honor their Franciscan roots and connect to core values.

Immaculate Conception High School, Lodi, NJ hosted a school-wide service day, celebrated a Mass, and hosted a “kindness and mindfulness” assembly to walk together in the footsteps of Blessed Mary Angela. Partnering with various charitable organizations, they read books, made crafts, organized food donations, and gardened — coming together to make a difference in their community.

St. Joseph Academy, Milwaukee, WI hosted a walk that brought families, students, and faculty together in the community. Families reflected on how they have been impacted by the academy, and on how they can contribute to St. Joseph Academy’s mission. The event was live-streamed, for parents who could not attend in person.

Mooncrest Neighborhood Program, Coraopolis, PA had a ceremony to bless a newly established peace pole. Students and staff, as well as friends and neighbors, listened to the Peace Prayer and shared their ideas about peace. The children placed flowers at the foot of the pole, purchased through a grant.



Felician Volunteers in Mission (VIM) Pilot Program in Detroit

Deo Gratias Ministries Detroit, founded by Felician Sisters in urban Detroit in 2018, lives by its mission to provide unconditional hospitality to people facing significant economic and social challenges. By providing a ministry of presence, Deo Gratias recognizes the fundamental human dignity of each person, welcoming guests to a safe place where they can gather for refreshments, social interaction, support, and help. The ministry offers a food pantry, literacy program, community garden, art program, access to social workers, and — beginning this year — a 10-month live-in volunteer program for young adults.

Felician Volunteers in Mission follow the tenets of servant leadership and Felician core values. By living among the people they are helping, volunteers can discern the best ways to take meaningful action.

Curious about this program? Contact us at Volunteer@FelicianSisters.org.



Marking Milestones



85 Years | Madonna University

Established in 1937 by the Felician Sisters as a Catholic, independent college dedicated to liberal arts, career preparation, and public service, **Madonna University in Livonia, MI** celebrated its 85th birthday at this year's homecoming with the blue and gold Crusaders. The school is known for its intimate student-faculty ratio, excellent nursing education, sign language studies, scholar-athletes, and affordable tuition.

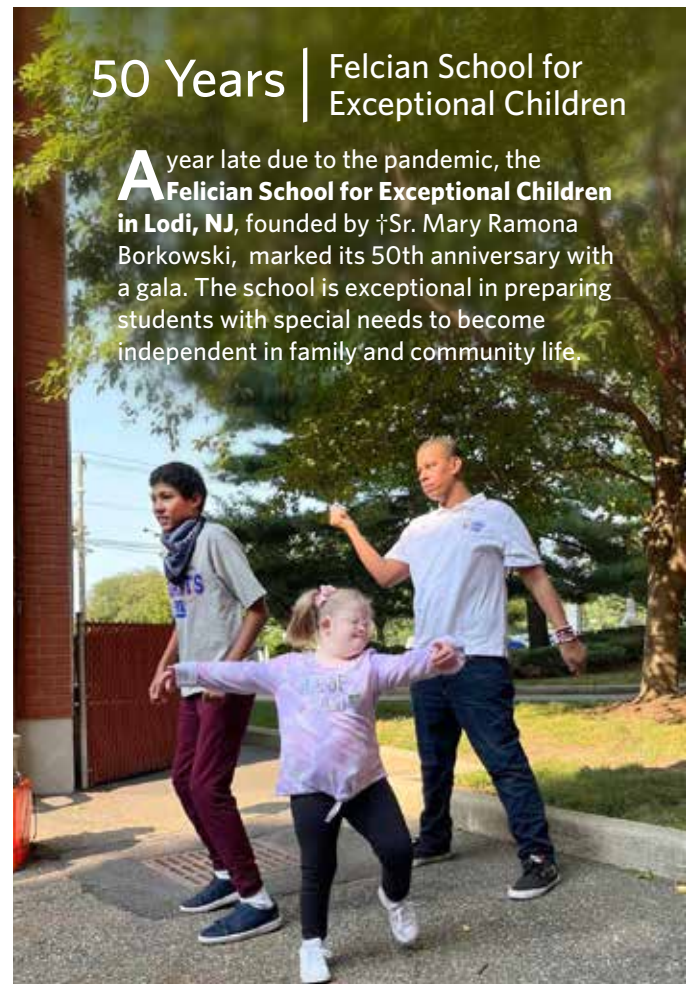


30 Years | The Felician Center

Exactly 30 years to the day, **The Felician Center in Kingstree, SC** kicked off its anniversary with a historical trolley tour. Guests were delivered to St. Ann Church and the sounds of a bongo drummer. Fr. Michael Okere, Vicar for Black Catholics, delivered the homily and Felician Provincial Minister, Sr. Judith Marie Kubicki concluded with remarks. At the Williamsburg Historical Society reception, the ministry's founders Sr. Mary Johnna Ciezobka and Sr. Mary Susanne Dziedzic, with Sr. Mary Carol Piskor, thanked all who helped in the evolution of The Felician Center.

50 Years | Felcian School for Exceptional Children

A year late due to the pandemic, the **Felcian School for Exceptional Children in Lodi, NJ**, founded by †Sr. Mary Ramona Borkowski, marked its 50th anniversary with a gala. The school is exceptional in preparing students with special needs to become independent in family and community life.



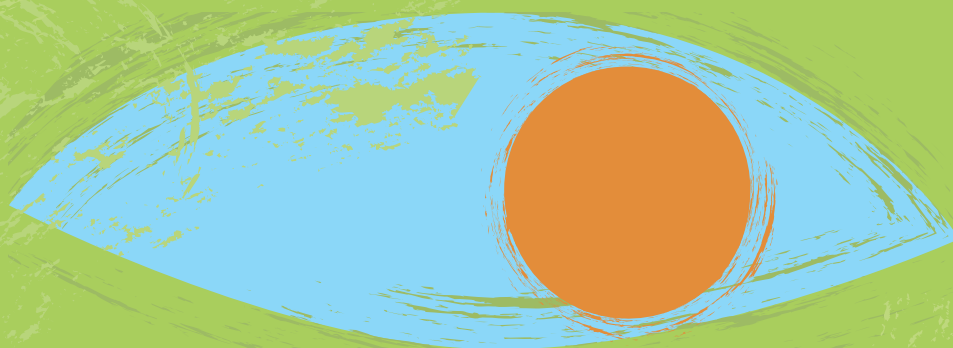


ENCUENTRO

Pope Francis used the idea of encounter, or “encuentro” in his native Spanish, in his first Pentecost homily as pontiff, and he has been using it regularly in his sermons and writings ever since, including in *Fratelli Tutti*, his 2020 encyclical. When he talks about a culture of encounter,

Pope Francis urges us to go out to the peripheries of society — to those on the margins — to encounter one another.

Felician Sisters, in their ministries of presence, live intentionally in a culture of encuentro.



Fratelli Tutti

we must choose how to encounter
one another on life's journey

Beginning nearly 40 years ago, and until the pandemic, the archdiocese of Santa Fe, NM, held a yearly pilgrimage for vocation each June.

Starting from five different locations, groups of pilgrims would walk 20 miles a day over the course of five days. This 100-mile journey leads to the Franciscan Santuario de Chimayo, the mountain shrine to Our Lord of Esquipulas, a site known in both Native and Hispanic cultures for miraculous healings. Along the way, they stayed in school gyms or parish halls, where the surrounding communities provided their meals and places to sleep. The pilgrims would arrive at each waystation at the end of a day on the road: dusty, sore, tired, and uncertain. After hours of walking, they had immediate physical needs for nourishment and rest as they arrived in each unfamiliar place. They would meet their hosts for the evening from this position of vulnerability, obligated to receive the hospitality of the community.

For their part, the community would begin the relationship with a generous welcome to the strangers in their midst, by giving the pilgrims nourishing food and a place to stay. Only after accepting the hospitality could the pilgrims give something in return. They would “repay” their hosts by spending time with the members of the community, listening to their stories, and

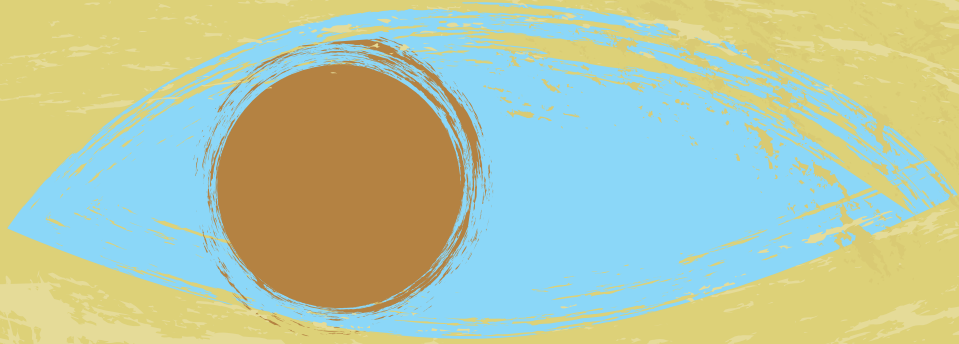
promising to pray for their intentions as the pilgrimage continues.

On a pilgrimage, the meeting of travelers with those along the way is called an *encuentro*: a profoundly human and deeply holy encounter between strangers. While the English word “encounter” suggests an ordinary or accidental meeting, the more nuanced Spanish word **“encuentro” means the give and take of human beings who recognize the full human dignity of one another.**

No money changes hands, but each meets the needs of the other by offering what she has, freely and humbly.

Pope Francis’s third encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship* discusses this right relationship of human beings to one another.

A native Spanish speaker who has from the beginning of his papacy aligned himself with St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis published his third encyclical in October 2020, seven months into the global pandemic that still profoundly disrupts human relationships. Once again, he draws on Franciscan spirituality to explain the encounter with the other, the *encuentro*, as the foundation of human interaction and the cornerstone of Christian spirituality.



Who are you in the parable?

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis uses the parable of the Good Samaritan, calling us to find ourselves in the story as we encounter one another on life's journey. Francis writes, "The parable is clear and straightforward, yet it also evokes the interior struggle that each of us experiences as we gradually come to know ourselves through our relationships with our brothers and sisters." With the model of the Good Samaritan, who reaches out to someone from another culture, someone lying wounded along the roadside, we must choose how to encounter one another on life's journey.

As Pope Francis explains, "Each day we have to decide whether to be Good Samaritans or indifferent bystanders. And if we extend our gaze to the history of our own lives and that of the entire world, all of us are, or have been, like each of the characters in the parable.

All of us have in ourselves something of the wounded man, something of the robber, something of the passers-by, and something of the Good Samaritan."

Our interactions with one another, then, reflect our understanding of ourselves as pilgrims on a

journey, both vulnerable in our needs and blessed with gifts to share. Like the pilgrims in Santa Fe, we must empty ourselves of worldly concerns to be fully present to one another.

Empathy before judgement

When we begin with the realization that we are being encountered by a Creator who loves us infinitely, we recognize that we are invited to relationship with one another. And when we open the door to a dynamic back-and-forth relationship with Christ, we go forth to find Christ in others, recognizing each human being we encounter as sister or brother.

Sr. Mary Edna Pearl Esquibel, a Felician Sister and Director of Faith Formation for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, tells the story of a woman who used to roll up weekly to the St. Felix Pantry in Rio Rancho, NM, in a conspicuously expensive gold Cadillac. The unfriendly woman who emerged from this car acted unabashed about its extravagance. She took the "free" groceries from the food pantry, and her lack of interaction with the staff seemed prideful and aloof. Week after week, she showed up at the pantry, similarly distant and seemingly privileged compared to the other clients. Some of the volunteers righteously complained about this woman. "Why doesn't she sell that

car?" they asked. "If she can afford to drive such a nice car, why is she coming here for food?" Resentfully, they handed over the food each week, but their encounters lacked any real empathy.

One week, the woman stopped to talk to Sr. Edna in the parking lot. Tearfully, she described the hardship of her situation — illness, alienation, and crushing poverty. If it hadn't been for her neighbor's insistence that she borrow his car each week to drive to the food pantry, she said she didn't know how she would have survived. Her story changed everything, overturning the assumptions that had prevented a real encounter.

Like the volunteers at the food pantry, we too often struggle to see or encounter one another authentically. Whether with family members and friends — or with colleagues and strangers, we make mistakes and rush to judgments, rather than listening to the stories that would help us to understand one another more deeply. In a hyper-connected world, many fast-paced but superficial connections can give us a false sense of encounter, but we are called to deeper relationship. In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis calls us to heal our relationships by having real dialogues with one another.

continued

Fratelli Tutti continued

Seeing Christ all around us.

To understand one another, we must reach out to the “other” in our midst, those whose stories we have not yet grasped. When we open ourselves to a culture of *encuentro*, we open ourselves to reaching out to those on the margins: the young person who feels alienated by church hierarchy, the LGBTQ+ person in our family, the person who needs affordable housing in our neighborhood, or the immigrants in our community. The spiritual renewal of the world can only happen when we break bread together and take time to understand one another’s stories.

Pope Francis emphasizes the urgency of this task in this moment: “The pain, uncertainty and fear, and the realization of our own limitations, brought on by the pandemic have only made it all the more urgent that we rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organization of our societies and, above all, the meaning of our existence.” The culture of encounter, *encuentro*, born of our encounter with Christ, enables us to encounter Christ.

Blessed Mary Angela wrote in instruction to her sisters, **“To love is to give. And what? Everything that love demands. Give it quickly, without regret, joyfully, desiring only that more should be demanded of us.”**

The mission of St. Felix Pantry comes out of this Felician idea of joyful giving. Not simply a place where “help is given,” which would imply a relationship in which one party “has” and the other does not, St. Felix Pantry is a place where those who come for food develop trust and relationship — where all who come have the opportunity to encounter one another. Meeting the physical needs of people is a way of lifting them up, of recognizing their human dignity. As Sr. Edna says, “The only way that we’re going to be able to continue to live the mission of Christ, the mission of Blessed Mother Angela, is to go out to find those who are on the margins.” The recognition of the dignity of the other, the right relationships can transform difficult situations into futures of opportunity and growth.

In his writings, St. Francis talks about an encounter with a leper on the road. Though he was afraid of and disgusted by the sight of this afflicted man, he got off his horse, kissed the leper, and offered him some money. At this transformative moment, the leper disappeared from Francis’s sight, and the saint realized that he had kissed the face of Christ. This experience led to a ministry to the colony of lepers near Assisi, where Francis and his Friars cared for the lepers and were transformed by their ongoing encounters with the outcasts of society. If we are to follow the example of St. Francis and the call of Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*, we must also work to connect with those on the margins. We must overcome our fear of the other, reach out to those in need, and prepare to encounter the living God. ✨



REUTERS/Tony Gentile

ENCOUNTERING ONE ANOTHER AT THE BORDERS

In *Fratelli Tutti* and other writings, Pope Francis uses the image of a polyhedron, a multi-sided geometric figure, to represent the way that we can encounter a multicultural world. This metaphor, in which the world is shaped more like a soccer ball than a basketball, helps us to see that we inevitably encounter one another at the borders between individuals and cultures. Francis says, “The path to peace does not mean making society blandly uniform, but getting people to work together, side-by-side, in pursuing goals that benefit everyone. A wide variety of practical proposals and diverse experiences can help achieve shared objectives and serve the common good.”

Have you had an encounter you’d like to share? Were you the good samaritan, the victim, a passerby or even the robber? Send us your story via mail or online at [FelicianSistersNA/Share-Your-Story](mailto:Share-Your-Story@FelicianSistersNA.org).

AFFORDABLE HOMES — FOR ALL



David A. Brown, Sr., has a round face, a silver goatee, a ready smile for everyone he encounters, and a generous spirit. “If my neighbors need anything and I got it, I’ll give it to them,” he says. He hasn’t lived in Delaware long, and he moved there just before the pandemic, but already he feels deeply connected to his community. In early 2020, after the death of his wife, he came to Delaware from Youngstown, OH, to live closer to his brother. Moving to a higher-priced region of the country, he needed a place with affordable rent and handicap accessibility. Mr. Brown says, “When I heard of the name of Our Lady of Grace Village...something lit up in

my spirit.” This enkindling of the human spirit is precisely the goal of Felician affordable housing communities, where people who might be otherwise excluded from the American dream have an opportunity to live with dignity.

If the American dream promises home ownership, then the American nightmare might entail facing the impossibility of finding a shelter from the storms of life. Unfortunately, and often through no fault of their own, many Americans are excluded from the kind of security and stability afforded by a safe and clean place to live, and a community to which they can belong.

In the Community: Sr. Mary Barbara Ann Kemmerer, Barbara Abdullah-Jihad, and Debra and Ray Usher.

Among homeowners, despite a growing realization that more diverse schools, workplaces, and communities provide both short-term and long-term benefits for all participants, Americans on both sides of the political divide seem to dig in their heels about diversifying their own neighborhoods. In the name of “public safety,” “preserving history,” or “protecting property values,” homeowners fiercely and even irrationally work to prevent the kinds of affordable housing communities that would offer real, stable, and sustainable diversity, acting out of fear or suspicion

■ ENCOUNTERS

rather than out of a desire for encounter. Once high-quality and well-maintained affordable housing goes into a community however, people want to live there, and everyone benefits from the increased economic diversity.

Our Lady of Grace Village in Newark, DE, was built on the site of a former orphanage that served the most vulnerable children in the area from the 1930s until 2009. When the Felician Sisters considered what to do with this property, they renewed their commitment to help the most vulnerable.

The community, built with easy access to public transportation, includes twelve residential buildings, with a mix of one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments or townhouses, each with its own washer and dryer. The spacious units have finishes

to live. He appreciates the freedom he has found at Our Lady of Grace Village, where he says, “You can actually go write a story or read a book or watch a movie, whatever it is that you like to do... knowing that even in the turbulent times we live in... that place is consistently yours.” Mr. Danette already wants to give back to the community that has welcomed him and his daughter. A skilled hip hop dancer, he has begun teaching dance lessons at a neighboring church. About his new home, he says, “I wish that there were more places like this.”

Like Mr. Danette, **Elizabeth Rider** appreciates the multi-generational aspect of Our Lady of Grace Village. A gracious woman with a chin-length silver bob and a direct gaze, she describes the way she has

crime, they felt desperate to find a safer place to live — but they could not sell their house for as much as they had paid for it. Debra credits the Felician Sisters with a vision for a diverse, safe, and welcoming community. “I appreciate the fact that this vision that they had came to fruition... I’m so grateful for the sisters who built this house.” Ray echoes his wife’s sentiment: “Now we’ve got a nice place. Everything’s gorgeous. We thank the sisters for everything!”

Single parents, the elderly, essential workers, young people, caregivers, those with disabilities. As the cost of rent has outpaced inflation in the U.S., many factors have contributed to a lack of available rental units, and many Americans simply cannot afford the soaring cost of housing.

Who owns a home in America?

74% of White Americans
48% of Hispanic Americans
43% of Black Americans



Who receives federal rental assistance?

A family with two school-aged children and a working parent whose job does not pay enough to cover the market rent for a modest apartment.



comparable to market-rate rental units in the area, and the community offers a central gathering place, a fitness room, maintenance offices, and supportive services for residents — as well as green and sustainable design features. Several of the residents have commented about how desirable their buildings are. Frequently, passers-by stop in the office to inquire about purchasing a unit, not realizing that they are exclusively subsidized rental housing. Shannon Baxter, property manager, comments, “The Felician Sisters are very supportive. They’re very involved.” As a result of the Felician touch, the units blend into the neighborhood beautifully.

Resident **Lloyd Danette** has a slim, athletic build. He moved to Our Lady of Grace Village in 2020 with his young daughter, opening what feels like a new chapter in his life. A single dad since he was just 20, he had sometimes had to depend on relatives for a stable place

connected with younger families: “I have a neighbor that has two children, and when she moved in, I gave her my phone number and she gave me hers so that we could help each other if needed... I’m really grateful that I’m here and I’m grateful that they built it the way they did.” Ms. Rider describes Our Lady of Grace Village as “the perfect place.” She says, “It’s a small community... but that makes it more family-oriented. It’s low income; it’s not senior income, which is fine... When you’re living in a low income with families, it just makes you feel alive much more because you see the kids and different families and it just makes you feel better.”

Francis House in Philadelphia, another Felician ministry, has six “neighborhoods” of ten units each. **Debra and Ray Usher**, who have been married for 23 years, are grateful to be part of this community. They previously owned a home in a neighborhood that depreciated in value. Having endured gunshots and increasing

The Felician Sisters, faced with a surplus of housing as the number of sisters has decreased, have prayerfully considered how best to follow Blessed Mary Angela’s imperative to “always seek the glory of God and the good of your neighbor.” Former orphanages, schools, and convents can provide safe shelters for those who need them, with Felician spirituality guiding construction and infusing communities with joyful opportunities for encounter. As Sisters Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz and Anita Marie Taddonio wrote in a recent op-ed piece about a new affordable housing community in Enfield, CT: **“The redevelopment isn’t solely about creating much-needed housing for our neighbors. It’s about lovingly and responsibly investing into our community, our home and future.”** David Brown, who lives in Our Lady of Grace Village, echoes this sentiment when he says, “The thing is, I’m a firm believer that you love your neighbor as yourself.” 🌿



Nearly Half of Americans

say available affordable housing in their community is a major problem.

Up 10 percent from early 2018.

Source: Pew Research Center
10/2021 Survey



Residences and Residents: (clockwise from top) Angela Court in Philadelphia, David A. Brown, Sr., Barbara Abdullah-Jihad, Sr. Barbara Ann Kemmerer's home, Our Lady of Grace Village in Delaware, Elizabeth Rider, and the OLOG playground.

"RESIDENTS FEARED
LOW-INCOME HOUSING WOULD
RUIN THEIR SUBURB. IT DIDN'T."

This 2020 New York Times article profiled a Wisconsin community that fought affordable housing and cites research showing that

tax-credit properties
neither increase
crime nor affect
property values
in wealthy
neighborhoods.



St. Clare: Radical Encounter

In an age of self-care, when contemporary culture urges us to “me time” or “spa days,” the radical simplicity of St. Clare can seem almost fantastically deviant. Famous for her extreme fasting — even abstaining from all nourishment save bread and water during Lent — St. Clare renounced earthly comforts to sleep on the floor, to forgo shoes, and even to wear a rough goat-hair garment that would have chafed her skin and caused sores. According to the reports of her sisters at the monastery in Assisi, this “generative self-sacrifice” gave St. Clare not the wretchedness of deprivation, but a joy-filled holiness — a peace surpassing understanding. Still, most of us do not go to great lengths to imitate Clare’s physical sacrifices, nor do contemporary spiritual directors recommend this approach to piety.



However, a part of St. Clare’s story that might be less understood and even more fundamentally counter-cultural would be her embrace of a life of poverty, which establishes a habit of encounter in the feminine Franciscan tradition and calls all of us to reckon with a profoundly compelling path toward imitation of saintly practice. St. Clare’s renunciation of home and title was not a simple sacrifice of worldly goods for the austerity of spiritual life. Rather, it was a radical attempt to challenge the caste system of her time period.

A processional cross is mounted on a long staff, in order to be carried at the head of a procession. On the wooden tavola depicting the life of St. Clare, she is carrying a processional cross, indicating that she carried Christ always before her. She would always have encountered others through the lens of Christian love!



Her noble birth and her education would have distinguished her among the sisters in her monastery — and determined the way that they would have addressed or treated her. Cardinal Ugolino wanted her to be called “Prioress,” even though she protested against using any title. Despite her objections, he bestowed the title “Abbess” on her, but she rarely used it. By refusing the language of a hierarchical institution, **she challenged the very system that would prevent authentic encounter.**

Even in 13th century Assisi, it was difficult to live a life of true poverty, renouncing ownership of all worldly goods and trusting only in the providence of God, as St. Francis did. St. Clare resisted papal pressure for financial independence for her monastery, insisting instead on the “privilege of poverty” that eliminated differences among people and enabled her to become “sister to” the humblest in her community.

At the beginning, all of the sisters came from high-status families, but Clare welcomed everyone, including women on the economic margins, to join her. In her convent at San Damiano, whether the sisters came from high or low status in the outside world, all became equal in their sisterhood in Christ. She famously took turns with the most menial tasks, whether cleaning floors or serving at table. When her sisters came back from begging for sustenance, she would wash and kiss their feet.

By subverting the caste system of her time, St. Clare and her followers not only proposed a radical re-imagining of human relationships, but also demonstrated to the neighboring friars — followers of Francis — that women, too, are capable of heroic strength.

In *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Isabel Wilkerson defines caste as: “granting or withholding of respect, status, honor, attention, privileges, resources, benefit of the doubt, and human kindness to someone on the basis of their perceived rank or standing in the hierarchy.” She writes powerfully and convincingly, with extensive research and documentation, about the ways that Black Americans have suffered the indignity and violence of a legally-reinforced and largely unacknowledged system of oppression. A response to such a broken system can only be a radical re-imagining of human relationships that brings dignity to all people.

Today, when Felician Sisters talk about their mission statement, “cooperating with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world,” they describe a vision as radical as St. Clare’s. Understanding that **the spiritual renewal of the world can only happen through the encounter with the stranger and in solidarity with those on the margins**, Felician sisters work to restore the dignity of all people through ministries of presence, dismantling the barriers that circumscribe our relationships and prevent authentic encounter.

In ministries such as Mooncrest Neighborhood Programs in Pittsburgh or the St. Felix Centre in Toronto, each person is given respect, resources, and human kindness — because **when we empty ourselves in order to be present for another, we bring dignity to others and subvert the systems that constrain us.**

This radical understanding of the command to love one another has shaped the Felician charism since

the founding of the order. During the January 1863 uprising in Poland, Mother Hedwig wrote to Mother Angela with concern about tending to wounded Russian soldiers in the field hospitals entrusted to her care. Blessed Mary Angela responded, **“Give aid to all without exception; your vocation obliges you not to exclude anyone, for everybody is our neighbor.”** For Blessed Mary Angela, the command to love God and love one’s neighbor was actually a single command. When we truly see the other person, we recognize our living God.

The story of the life of St. Clare, painted on wood shortly after her death, was created to inspire non-literate audiences with highlights from her biography as told by her sisters at the proto-monastery in Assisi. In the middle section of the tavola, intended to convey what is most essential about the saint, she is carrying a processional cross, indicating that she carried Christ always before her. In imitation of St. Clare, we might consider how carrying that processional cross might influence the way we encounter one another. If a caste system depends on the dehumanization of the other, then overturning a caste system means to recognize Christ in the other, embracing a culture of inclusion and diversity as a way to repair a broken world, just as St. Clare did. 🌸



Encountering the Other [Franciscan] Sister

In a short hallway just outside the dining room of the Felician convent in Buffalo hang two large tablets dedicated to the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, inscribed “In Memory of Our Departed Sisters, United States Province.” Carved into the cool white marble are the names and dates of birth of 44 sisters, almost half of whom were born at the end of the nineteenth century.

Forty-three of the names also include dates of death. The last name belongs to Sr. Mary Bernard Keane, OSF, who was born in 1939.

So what happens to the last living member of a religious community?

With her black jumper and soft brogue, Sr. Bernard looks and sounds a little bit foreign among these Felicians, who mostly wear brown and sound like New Yorkers. But she has lived at the Felician convent in Buffalo for 14 years, an adopted member of a “sister” Franciscan community.

Born in Ireland, in County Clare, and one of nine siblings, Sr. Bernard immigrated to the United States in 1958. Knowing that she wanted to join a religious community, she combed the ads in the Sacred Heart Messenger and wrote to the motherhouse of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception near Stuttgart, Germany, an order founded in 1854 — a year before Blessed Mary Angela founded the Felicians in Warsaw. Margaret Jane, known as Peggy to her family, entered the convent in New York in April 1959, at the age of 19.

After eight years in East Aurora, NY, she was transferred to a nursing home in Buffalo and where she worked for 44 years. In addition to her role in finance, she gave end-of-life spiritual care to patients and their families. This deathbed ministry became instrumental to her religious life as well. She has been present at the deaths of all 40 of the sisters from her province who were living when she entered.

As the sisters grew older and their numbers diminished, no one else entered the community.

Sr. Bernard finally closed the convent in East Aurora and moved all of the remaining sisters to a small convent in Buffalo, attached to the nursing home where they all

worked. By 2007, when Catholic Health System took over the nursing home, they told the two remaining sisters that they could no longer stay in the convent. Sr. Marie was 89, and Sr. Bernard was 69.

Having visited the Felician Sister’s convent in Buffalo, Sr. Bernard called Sr. Charlene, the Vicar for Religious, and asked about joining this community. They visited in November 2007, and moved in February 2008. Sr. Marie told Sr. Bernard, “Now that you have a place to live, I can die.” That May, Sr. Marie went to eternal life. And as she had done so many times previously, Sr. Bernard sat at the bedside, holding Sr. Marie’s hand and reciting all of the German prayers that were integral to her community.

There is a particular and profound vulnerability in joining a community of religious sisters, leaving family behind, and taking solemn vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. There is a strength and comfort in practicing these vows as a member of a community, caring for one another in this life and accompanying one another at the end. For Sr. Bernard, who has been a Franciscan sister for 63 years, **there is great comfort in encountering another Franciscan community and living among those who share and honor her Franciscan history**, even engraving it in marble in their halls. Sr. Mary Therese Chmura, local minister at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent in Buffalo, says that taking in another sister is simply living their gospel values. “We have embraced her, and she has become one of us,” she says. “If any of us were left alone, we would also need to be embraced.” For her part, Sr. Bernard says, **“I will forever be grateful to the Felician Sisters for welcoming me into their home.”** 🌿





59.3% of the world now uses social media

Enjoy, Like, Share — Change the World!

It is no longer a question of **WHETHER** social media changes lives; rather, it is a question of **how**. The Felician Sisters strive to be a source of positivity and good news in the world. YOU can help by joining us on social media. Share Franciscan values and spread the word about Felician ministries. Read news from around the province, and get updates about events and opportunities. Join the conversation, and spread our joy!

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Inspired by a story in the magazine?
Tag Felician Sisters of North America
or use the hashtag **#FelicianMagazine**



What does it mean to other?

Many of us tend to live and socialize with people who are like us. In many neighborhoods, the same political signs pop up all over the yards like dandelions, confirming the demographic makeup of an area. Many of us have friends who share our same racial, gender, and age group, who affirm our ideas about important issues. If we are so comfortable with our own people, how do we avoid “othering” those who don’t seem to belong to us?

When used as a verb, to “other” someone means to treat that person as intrinsically different from yourself, or to classify a whole group of people as

“not like us.” When we “other” someone, we dehumanize them and withhold our empathy. Othering a person or a group can give us a (conscious or unconscious) justification for treating them badly, because if we don’t recognize their humanity, we don’t feel guilty about our shabby treatment of them.

In the divisive climate in the United States today, we might be inclined to “other” people who don’t belong to our same religion, culture, or political affiliation. It’s important for us to get to know individuals who are not like us, so that we can understand and respect different points of view. Black, LatinX, white, Asian, LGBTQ+, Muslim, urban, rural, Democrat, or Republican: we are all created in the image and likeness of God. In our own lives, where can we reach out to the margins

and embrace someone who is different from ourselves?

Could we have a meaningful conversation with a relative, a neighbor, a stranger, or a co-worker who challenges us to see another point of view? Can we go outside of our comfort zones, to a place where people like us are not the “dominant culture”?

One of the Felician core values is respect for human dignity, the very opposite of “othering.” Blessed Mary Angela recognized that respect for human dignity meant respect for the dignity of *all* human persons. She said, “Preserve among yourselves a unity, peace, love, and kindness. Practice toward one another gentleness, understanding, and cooperation.”

“It doesn’t take a declaration, or an invasion, to start a war. All it takes is an ‘us’ and a ‘them.’ And a spark.”

~ Ada Palmer



Stretching Our Hearts

Sr. Maryann Agnes Mueller | Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Coordinator

In a video called “Don’t Put People in Boxes,” created by NewHope Church and viewed over 4 million times on YouTube, a diverse and seemingly random group of about 40 people walks into a gym and arranges themselves into 7 “boxes” indicated by tape on the floor. As the camera records them, a narrative voiceover says, “There’s us. And there’s them. Those we feel comfortable around, and those we don’t. The well-to-do, and those doing what they can. There are those we share something with, and those we don’t seem to share anything with.”



Check out this video to see what we have in common. Share it to spread the news that we are all children of God!

The people stand somewhat awkwardly at first, looking uncertain about what to expect, until a man in a blue denim shirt welcomes them, saying, “Today I’m going to be conducting an experiment where I’ll ask you a series of questions. These questions will be very personal questions, and for us to get a true result, I need you to be completely honest with how you respond.” He first asks, “Who in here was the class clown?” Then, “Who is never on time?” The questions go on, and the participants start forming groups with common qualities. As they do, viewers can see the way that ideas about “us” and “them” begin to disintegrate. It’s well worth investing 4 minutes to see the results of this experiment and to picture ourselves in this scene. Which “boxes” do we fit in? When do we put other people into boxes? How do these boxes prevent us from truly encountering one another?

Become Aware of Unconscious Biases

Learning to recognize othering is an important step toward overcoming it. Implicit biases are unconscious associations or beliefs about different social groups. Becoming more aware of our hidden biases can make us less likely to engage in othering.

In *The Holy Longing*, Ronald Rolheiser assures us that heaven “will be enjoyed within the communal embrace of billions of persons of every temperament, race, background, and ideology imaginable. A universal heart will be required to live there. Thus, in this life, it is good to get some practice at this, good to be constantly in situations that painfully stretch the heart. Few things — and we certainly all admit this — stretch the heart as painfully as does church community. Conversely, when we avoid the pain and mess of ecclesial encounter to walk a less painful private road or to gather with only persons of our own kind, the heart need not and generally does not stretch. Going to church is one of the better cardiovascular spiritual exercises available.”

How to Avoid Putting People in Boxes

Focus on people as individuals. Try to remember that each person has their own unique history and experiences as well as complex emotions, thoughts, and motivations. ✨

Sr. Mary Francine Horos has a very short commute to work, unaffected by weather no matter the season. She simply follows a series of winding corridors and stairwells, using her keys to move through several locked doorways as she travels from the third-floor cloistered motherhouse to the adjoining Our Lady of the Sacred Heart school building in Coraopolis, PA. Likely no one knows these passages better than Sr. Francine, who first came to OLSH in the 1960s as a boarding school student. Originally from Oil City, PA, about a hundred miles north of Pittsburgh, Sr. Francine was taught in elementary school by Felician Sisters, who encouraged her to pursue both mathematics and a vocation to religious life.

weekly mass. For the last 12 years, she has been back in the classroom, where she finds joy in her daily encounters with students. “My first love is teaching,” she says. “This is my joy, being in school.”

The school community at OLSH provides opportunities for encounter with those in need through Our Lady’s Pantry, a ministry begun over 40 years ago by former principal Sr. Christopher Moore. Sr. Francine appreciates that this emergency food pantry, sustained by the OLSH community in partnership with the Felician Sisters, has the ability to help local families in a meaningful way. “When there is a hardship we come to the rescue,” she says.

During the last few years, Sr. Francine has faced the challenges of teaching through a pandemic. Trying to teach math over

Zoom was “impossible,” she says. In her classroom, she relies on students’ body language to see where they are with foundational math concepts, so in-person education is essential to her instruction. She worries about the pandemic’s impact on teenagers’ social lives and their ability to encounter one another, but she believes in the positive impact of the OLSH community. “We’ve got to keep on plugging,” she says. “You can’t lose hope. That’s why I’m still in this business. I don’t want to give up on any kid.”

When she reflects on her time as a Felician Sister, Sr. Francine recalls, “All the sisters that I had in grade school were happy and joyful.” During her years at OLSH, Sr. Francine has encountered thousands of students, colleagues, parents, and alumni. She realizes the tremendous responsibility of being the only Felician Sister that some of them might meet, so she tries to make sure that her presence in the school always gives each person an opportunity to encounter that same joy-filled Felician charisma that she found here many decades ago. 🌸

Sr. Mary Francine Horos Finding Joy in Teaching

As a member of one of the last classes of aspirants — young women who intended to become sisters — Sr. Francine has now been a Felician Sister for 54 years. For the last 40 years, she has been at OLSH, in various roles — a math teacher, an assistant principal, a principal — and counts herself among nine alumni on the staff who share their own gift of a Felician education with the next generation. She cheers for the athletic teams, tutors students who need extra help, and shares her musical gifts with the community at





Sr. Mary Therese Ann Parobek and Sr. Carol Marie Wiatrek

Seeing Christ on the Streets of Pomona

Sr. Therese Ann Parobek has a “calling card” that she leaves when she encounters a sleeping homeless person. “I enjoy this red and black blanket so much,” the Polish-born sister says, in her softly accented English. “I like to sneak in and cover the person, then I wish I had a camera to see how they react to this when they wake up!”

When Sr. Therese Ann encounters someone this way, she always begins by asking herself, “Is it a homeless person, or is it Jesus?” She and her ministry partner, Sr. Carol Marie Wiatrek, have been in the business of encountering Christ in the

people of Pomona since 2007, through the Angela Spirituality Center street ministry. Sr. Therese Ann describes one such encounter when she saw a body lying on the ground between some bushes: “I could not recognize at first whether it was a man or a woman. Usually what we do is we bring food and clothes and sleeping bags. We cover them. I got everything ready and went to the person. She was

still sleeping, so we covered her, like we always do and left the things. We saw her a few days after, and I told her that I recognized the blanket. The woman replied, ‘Oh, it was you!’ After that we became best friends,” recalls Sr. Therese Ann.

Sr. Carol explains that when they started the ministry, they used to walk on the streets, each carrying a backpack. Now that they are a bit older, they pack a car instead.

Sr. Carol says, “I drive the car, and Sr. Therese Ann gets out of the car and opens up the hatchback and the side doors. And we serve them from the car. It’s better because we can really go to more places. We have divided the city of Los Angeles into sections. One day we go to the northeast, then the next day the northwest. The next day the southeast, then the southwest. Then we take the downtown area. We can cover five areas in five days. We can meet a lot more

people. And it just seems to be working a lot better.”

Sr. Therese Ann says that the people of Pomona know and recognize the sisters now. When they see the sisters’ blue car, they come running, because they know there is something good there for them. Likewise, this street ministry has given the sisters countless opportunities to recognize Christ’s presence in the people of Pomona. Sr. Carol says that **their mission is to cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world, through a radical presence to the people of Pomona.** “It’s very rewarding. Not maybe for them, but for us,” Sr. Therese Ann modestly insists.

In the last 15 years, the sisters have touched the lives of thousands of people in Pomona. In addition to their commitment to go into the streets every day, they take part in other service within their community. Once a month, for example, they go to an evangelical church, where they help to pack backpacks with weekend supplies — pajamas, socks, toiletries, etc. — for women who have been arrested. They are often victims of human trafficking, and are on their way to a program that restores dignity by helping them transition out of prostitution.

Sr. Carol explains that their radical presence to the people of Pomona, means more than just a distribution of food or clothing, shoes or socks. The sisters pray with the people, bless them, talk with them — and mostly listen to them. The sisters recognize that each of the



people they serve has a story to tell. They emphasize that **this work is something anybody could do.** “**It does not take a Felician Sister to do it,**” they insist. They set an example that others have been inspired to imitate.

Sr. Carol illustrates this point: “God gave me a wonderful gift the other day, and Sr. Therese Ann too. When I was driving, I noticed that every time we stopped there was a white car that stopped behind us. We kept going, and all of a sudden that car came right up behind us. And a woman got out of the car and said, ‘I’ve been watching you. What is in that bag?’ Based on the car she was driving and how she was dressed, you knew she was a woman of means. She wanted to know everything that was in the bag, what we were giving. And she said, ‘I can do this too.’ To me, that was like a gift from God — because anybody could do it. And I have this deep feeling inside me that she is doing it.”

This faith in the essential goodness of the world has sustained the Angela Spirituality Center street ministry for the last fifteen years, with an active ministry of presence that allows for encounters with the divine. 🌿

To find out how you can help and what items are needed for donation, visit HopeBoundMinistries.org.



Contemplating the Changing Seasons

A Guided Meditation

By Sr. Mary Jean Sliwinski

In his encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si')*, Pope Francis states, “Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life.”

Most of us struggle to keep our lives balanced and to achieve inner peace. Our lives can be complex, full of activity and responsibility that we can simplify if but for a moment. We are gifted with the change of seasons that present themselves with recognizable signs that can easily lead us into contemplation and wonder, the new life of spring, the lushness of summer, the beauty of fall, the stillness of winter. Stopping to notice and take in the beauty of nature that surrounds us can help us slow down, breathe deeper, and come to a place of rest.

Here is an exercise that you can try:

- + **Go to a quiet spot outdoors:** it could be in your yard, neighborhood, park, or wherever you can go to step away from the fray and into nature. Leave your earbuds at home. Quiet yourself, breathe slowly, and rest.
- + **Use your senses,** become aware of what is around you. What do you see, hear, or smell? Spend time just taking it in while you breathe deeply.
- + **Rest in all that is around you for a bit of time;** let it speak to your heart and your mind.
- + **Say a prayer of gratitude for the natural world,** for the changing of the seasons, for the beauty of life around you. Be aware of the fabulousness of creation. Be aware of the fabulousness of the Creator. Add a prayer of thanksgiving for your blessings.
- + **Take that experience home with you.** What were you drawn to contemplate? It could have been a squirrel, leaf, butterfly, flower, or the sound of waves crashing. Take time to learn about that species or natural wonder. Doing that will help make a deeper connection of care between you and the created world.
- + **Consider the intricacy of all things** and that each aspect of nature has a place to play within its ecosystem. St. Francis believed in the relationship of all things. Our relationship extends towards nature to all humanity, as must our care for our common home.
- + **Share your experience.** Talk about what you saw, heard, felt, and learned. Share that love of creation with those around you, especially with your children or grandchildren. Encourage them to take the time to notice. Open their minds and hearts to care.

“The universe unfolds in God...there is mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop in a poor person’s face.”

Can reading a good book lead to encounter?

In an episode of the podcast *Hidden Brain*, called “The Story of Your Life,” host Shankar Vedantam spoke to Raymond Mar, a psychologist at York University in Toronto, who studies the power of stories. Mar conducted a study that found a correlation between people who were exposed to more narrative fiction and better performance on a test that asked them to understand what other people are thinking and feeling. This study seems to confirm the idea that reading can, by exposing us to diverse points of view and perspectives, help us to develop more empathy for one another. In other words, perhaps stories can help us with encounter.

Sr. Nancy Marie Piecewicz, Provincial Councilor, currently has *Pachinko*, by Min Jin Lee, queued up on her Kindle. Set during a time of Japanese occupation of Korea, this Korean family saga gives her insight about other cultures and widens her vision of the world.



“I have loved to read ever since I was a little girl,” she recalls. “My mother used to take my brother and sister and me to the library. By the time I was in seventh grade, I had read all of the books in the children’s section.”

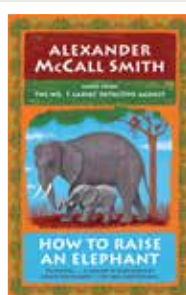
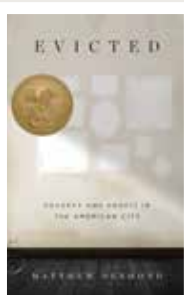
Sr. Nancy loves memoirs, biographies, and history, as well as fiction. She says, “I love to read about people’s life stories. Books help us to understand other points of view.”

Reading can give us a way to travel without leaving home, but traveling can also bring a new perspective to our reading. Sr. Nancy recalls going to the General Chapter for the Felician Sisters in Rome in 2000.

It was her first experience of meeting and working to find common ground with Felician Sisters from Poland, from Brazil, and from Kenya. From this experience, she realized that we all see the world from our own limited cultural perspective. Sometimes we arrogantly assume that our own point of view is the only one or the “right” one. Sr. Nancy says that reading helps her to consider the world from other people’s point of view.

Reading *The Kite Runner*, by Khaled Hosseini, for example, helped her to understand the plight of women in Afghanistan and to imagine their experiences. Reading *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, by Matthew Desmond, helped her to see privilege in a new way.

Whether fiction or nonfiction, reading can lead to encounter. And when you encounter another culture, Sr. Nancy says, “You realize that people have so much in common. We all have the same wants and needs. We are all human.”



Sr. Mary Sharon Iacobucci, Provincial Councilor, responsible for community life, recognizes the importance of reading in her own life, as a way to encounter and enjoy other cultures while being inspired by the various characters. Recently, she has been reading *How to Raise an Elephant*, by Alexander McCall Smith, a British author born in Africa. Published in 2020, this latest installment in the beloved No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency series, invites readers to enter into a mystery that involves caring for both people and animals.

Sr. Sharon appreciates the ways that McCall Smith’s book not only helps her to encounter the culture of Botswana, the setting for the novel, but also the way that the heroine, Precious Ramotswe models humility and grace with her ability to see goodness in others and willingness to see multiple perspectives. Sr. Sharon likes that Precious “isn’t afraid to challenge but she does it in a gentle way.” Sr. Sharon says, “We really don’t know people until we encounter them and the mystery of the culture they share.” As soon as we open our minds and hearts to a willingness to encounter another, we discover that we have more in common than we might have thought — and so encounter can lead us to empathy and grace.





DECEMBER 17

O Sapientia
(O Wisdom)

O come, O Wisdom from on high.



DECEMBER 18

O Adonai
(O Lord, or O Ruler)

O come, O come, great Lord of might.



DECEMBER 19

O Radix
(O Root of Jesse)

O come, O Branch of Jesse's stem.



DECEMBER 20

O Clavis
(O Key of David)

O come, O Key of David, come.

How can we prepare to encounter Christ at Christmas?

O Antiphons

Christians know the familiar song, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," but they might not know that the verses of this beloved Advent hymn actually come from the "O" antiphons — a set of sung prayers dating from the 8th century that accompany the Magnificat canticle of evening prayer. With their repeated imperative "Come!" the "O" antiphons proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes and the answer to our present longings.

Watch our social media during the Advent season for the O Antiphons to inspire and guide you to a blessed Christmas.

DECEMBER 21

O Oriens
(O Radiant Dawn)

O come, O Bright and Morning Star.

DECEMBER 22

O Rex Gentium
(O King of Nations)

O come, O King of nations, bind.

DECEMBER 23

O Emmanuel
(O God with Us)

O come, O come, Emmanuel!





Pray for Haiti

A Decade of Accompaniment

Ten years ago, when an earthquake devastated Haiti, Felician Sisters responded with compassion, solidarity, and commitment to human dignity for all. Since then, our mission has worked to empower the resilient Haitian people with initiatives to provide clean water, access to health care, education, and the job skills needed to strengthen their country. Together, we have accomplished much, but there is more to be done.



We See No Way Out, but We Never Despair

By Sr. Mary Inga Borko and Sr. Marilyn Marie Minter

With broken hearts and overwhelmed by mourning, we write our story, a miracle of God's providence and the power of prayer of so many people.

As we approached our 10th Anniversary of *Felician Mission: Haiti* we are grateful for all God has provided, but we must share our current situation. Life has always been difficult in Haiti, but the last two years has been the worst we have seen. After the assassination of the president in July 2021, we witnessed gang violence, kidnappings, rape, and the senseless killing of innocent people — including children. Gangs took over many parts of the capital of Haiti — Port au Prince. Violence forced many families from their homes, and they fled to the mountains to live in tents and shelters made from scraps of wood and cardboard.



Felician Srs. Marilyn and Inga talk about conditions in Haiti at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Wallingford, NJ.

“We are subjected to every kind of hardship, but never distressed; we see no way out but we never despair.”

2 Corinthians 4:8

Until now, our mission in Jacmel was not impacted by the violence in Port au Prince. Then the situation changed and violent demonstrations erupted in Jacmel.

Beginning in August, we have not been able to have our group activities. No movie night, no tutoring, no faith formation. We continued feeding our families but many more were coming to our doors — they were hungry. We gave them water and peanut butter sandwiches. It was getting more difficult to buy gas, food (even bread), and drinking water; prices were rising to levels that the people could not afford. Gas rose to \$50 a gallon and a bag of rice now costs \$250. Up to now, nothing has happened to our mission. We like to think that we were helped by the prayers of †Sr. Victoria Indyk, who buried medals of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in every corner of our buildings when the Mission was built.

On October 7, the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary began like most days. Students were in the sewing school; teenagers came to work at the mission despite the demonstrations — to find peace and to eat. At noon we gathered under the tree to say the rosary for peace in Haiti, Ukraine, and the world. We received a phone call from our friends telling us that the local Caritas — a global nonprofit nearby and one of our partners — was taken over by gangs. Caritas and the nearby Catholic school were looted and ransacked; items were stolen or destroyed; cars and storage containers were burned.

That afternoon, we received many urgent messages from the U.S. embassy that all U.S. citizens

needed to leave Haiti immediately. After prayer and discerning with our sisters, we made the difficult decision to leave our home and return to the U.S. This was not an easy decision. We knew our mission would not be safe if we stayed. First, we made plans for the mission to continue feeding and helping the people in our programs and then made plans to leave. We knew it would not be easy.

For weeks, our internet was not working making communication more difficult. To leave, we needed to take a plane from Jacmel to Port au Prince. We don't make reservations like most do, they tell you when you can leave. Praise Jesus! They assigned us October 10, the Feast of Blessed Mary Angela.

When we arrived at the airport in Jacmel, we were checked in and people started shouting at us to run to the plane. Demonstrators were approaching the airport. The pilots were afraid the plane would be shot at or burned. We ran to the plane and the pilot left as soon as we were seated. Once we arrived in Port au Prince, our pilot friend helped us get a plane to the Dominican Republic. We have friends in Santo Domingo, who met us at the airport and welcomed us to stay overnight in a retreat house. We had standby flights to JFK and arrived safely on October 11.

We thank God and so many people who helped us on this journey. We stay in touch with the people you may know through our stories who live at the mission. They continue to feed hungry or starving people. Our mobile clinic team works when they can — for the poor, it is the only place where they can get help or medications. We made a difficult decision, but know it was to keep our mission safe and operational. We do not know when we will return to Haiti but pray it is soon. Please pray for the people of Haiti and for a solution to this political crisis. ✨

We will continue to update our blog: feliciansistershaiti.com.

What is Tertianship?



“ Formation never ends, because our entire lives we continue to grow and change. We are continually being formed by all of the experiences, all of our encounters with people, all of our relationships. As Felicians, we make sure that formation continues in all of our ministries. ”

Sr. Jeremy Marie Midura
Director of Ongoing Formation

Professionals in many fields must undergo initial training followed by continuing education. Lawyers, doctors, teachers, and accountants all have obligations to keep up with changes in their fields and to refresh their credentials on a regular basis.

Professed religious sisters must “professionalize” themselves too, as they go through stages of spiritual renewal that strengthen their commitment to serving God. One of these formal stages is called “tertianship,” which is part of a sister’s ongoing formation.

From initial vows, through postulancy and novitiate, the women who join a community learn how to live as sisters. They learn the prayers, the history, and the charism of their order. Perhaps even more importantly, they learn how to live in community, how to see Christ when they encounter one another, and how to engage the wisdom of those who came before them.

Tertianship, a six-week period of renewal for a professed sister, gives her a chance to take time away from the busyness of life and grow into a deeper relationship with God.

The period of tertianship takes place usually between 12 and 17 years after first vows, and prior to a sister’s silver jubilee.

During the summer of 2022, six Felician Sisters experienced tertianship at Maryville Retreat

Center in Holly, MI, led by Sr. Suzanne Marie Kush, Director of Formation.


The days of the tertianship followed a prayer-filled rhythm, with mass in the morning, adoration in the late afternoon, and lectio divina each evening. The sisters took classes in the mornings and afternoons, but they also had free time for reading, journaling, enjoying the grounds at Maryville, and just having fun together, building a supportive community.

In her assigned ministry, Sr. Rita Marie Vondra is the chef at Maryville, so she didn’t travel far for tertianship. Instead, she had a chance to be on retreat at the place where she usually works. She recognizes the power of Maryville to inspire a person’s prayer life. “It’s an absolutely peaceful place,” she says. “It’s where you really truly can separate and encounter God in it all, because God is everywhere.”

Sr. Felicity Marie Madigan, a co-director of Deo Gratias Ministries in Detroit, also experienced tertianship last summer and describes it as a “mountaintop experience” that renewed and invigorated her. She explains that she learned more about being centered and rooted in the Felician way of life, balancing the active and contemplative sides, and “choosing the better part.” When the sisters practice being Jesus

for one another, Sr. Felicity says, **they become stronger in who they are as sisters and emboldened to enflame others with the love and mercy of Christ.**

In her ministry counseling children and families in Chicago, Sr. Kathryn Marie Augustyniak has made a conscious effort to bring what she learned during last summer’s tertianship to her daily work. She says, “When I’m with the students that I minister to, I think about whether I am really seeing this person within a totality. Not just strengths and areas where they need help — but also, this is a wonderful and beloved child of God. How does that fact influence my interaction? That’s where I like to have my head space and my heart space.” For Sr. Kathryn, the tertianship period gave her a chance to renew herself for that work.

We all encounter one another in different ways at different times of our lives. We all encounter God in different ways at different times of our lives. Tertianship is simply a way for consecrated religious women to continue, to recognize, and to formalize their ongoing formation, learning from the wisdom of the women on whose shoulders they stand, becoming ever closer to God in order to share God’s love with the world. 

Have you thought of life as a sister? We’d ♥ to chat!
Text or email Sr. Judy Blizzard at 734-718-0632
or Vocation@FelicianSisters.org.

We're empowering young women to be leaders

Seeds of Hope is a servant leadership experience that teaches young women to change the world for the better.

seeds of HOPE



High school students from across the United States, Canada, and Mexico come together for a week-long summer immersion at Maryville Retreat Center in Holly, MI where they listen to inspiring speakers, discuss the tough issues facing their world, network with professional women, experience prayer, learn from peer mentors about techniques to polish their leadership skills, and build lifelong friendships.

Seeds of Hope is accepting applications for young women interested in this transformative experience. Apply by April 15, 2023.

July 6 - 13, 2023

[Seeds-of-Hope.org](https://seeds-of-hope.org)

Scholarships are available. Visit our website for more information.



Seeds of Hope 2022 alumna Sofia Gallegos (pictured above) reflects on her experience:

Greetings from the Land of Enchantment!

My name is Sofia Gallegos, and I am currently a sophomore at Saint Pius X High School in Albuquerque, NM. My lovely theology teachers, Mrs. Bruzzone and Sister Rena, introduced me to Seeds of Hope. Almost immediately, I knew I wanted to go!

I was struggling with school and depression, and I thought that a change of scenery and people would help my mental well-being. Almost the same day I heard about the program, I submitted the application and booked my flight.

When I finally arrived in Holly, MI, I had the opportunity to explore the grounds filled with absolute beauty. The rolling green hills and a lake on the property just added to the excitement.

I met some of the sweetest sisters and their floofy dog, Takari. Girls from all over North America, even Mexico and Canada, began to wander in. I felt that I was being welcomed into something I had never experienced before: being with people like me.

After the first day, I found my people. They all live outside of my home state and so I would never have met them without Seeds of Hope. I was able to let loose and let my goofy shine through. To this day, we have a group chat where we all keep in touch. Building that kind of friendship has helped me to overcome challenges such as loneliness.

Seeds of Hope made me realize that I am not alone in this life. Making friends there has made me more self-reliant, and keeping in touch with those friends is honestly one of the greatest things that I was able to bring home with me. I hope to return this year, to continue to meet new people and to broaden my own intellectual horizon. Maybe I'll see you there! God bless!



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What to Watch

The Felician Sisters
will be at

seek²³

focus

January 2 - 6, 2023 | St Louis, MO

Villa Maria Academy has become Angela's House. This 67-unit affordable housing complex uses former school space in Buffalo, NY to house people 55+, who will be neighbors to the sisters and share their chapel. A third of these pet-friendly units are reserved for people who experienced homelessness. **Learn more in Spring 2023.**

Come See and Experience Weekends

Discern with us!
April 13-16, 2023
Chicago, Illinois
Summer 2023
Toronto, Canada

Contact Sr. Judy Blizzard at
Vocation@FelicianSisters.org
For details visit FelicianSistersNA.org/Discern

Felician Sisters not only avoid plastic bags — they have an action plan to exercise even more care for earth in their daily lives! Learn how in Spring 2023.



Mark your calendar for
March 8-14, 2023

CATHOLIC SISTERS WEEK

Join us for prayers and activities to celebrate the many contributions of Catholic Sisters!
For details, watch: FelicianSistersNA.org.

HELP FELICIAN SISTERS SUPPORT UKRAINIAN FAMILIES FORCED TO FLEE THEIR HOMES.

FelicianSistersNA.org/Ukraine

100% of the funds we collect are sent to our Polish Provincial houses to be used for the needs of Ukrainian refugees.