

the FELICIAN



The MAGAZINE of the FELICIAN SISTERS of NORTH AMERICA



Our Lady of Hope Province

Solidarity with the Poor

TRANSFORMATION

JUSTICE and PEACE

Compassion

Respect for HUMAN DIGNITY



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 and service to others.

Pioneers of social services, the Felician Sisters sponsor hospices, schools, child care 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."

PUBLISHER

Sr. Mary Christopher Moore, CSSF
Provincial Minister
Our Lady of Hope Province

OFFICE OF MISSION ADVANCEMENT

Marcia M. Wallander
Chief Mission Advancement Officer

Deena E. Swank
Director of Communications

Caroline Martien
Manager of Donor Relations

Susan McConnell
Creative Design Manager

Robin Monza
Development Associate

CONTRIBUTORS

Sr. Maria Louise Edwards
Sr. Desiré Anne-Marie Findlay
Sr. Nancy Marie Jamroz
Theresa Long
Cyla Dans Alcantara Marx
Sr. Marilyn Marie Minter
Maureen Schiavo
Abby E. Swank
Sr. Constance Marie Tomyl
Sr. Dong Hong Marie Zhang

PHOTOGRAPHY

Rick Armstrong
Valerie Baeriswyl
Steven Bourelle
Elliott Cramer
Ed Rieker

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Send letters to the editor, correspondence, or change of address to:
FelicianMagazine@FelicianSisters.org
or via mail to:

The Felician

Felician Sisters of North America
Office of Mission Advancement
871 Mercer Road
Beaver Falls, PA 15010-6815
724-384-5300

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 **LIKE & SHARE** An excerpt from our blog

**In the midst of struggle and pain,
Felician Mission: Haiti provides Peace and Hope**



SM Julitta Kurek, the newest missionary at *Felician Mission: Haiti*, with a Haitian family.

Even though Haiti is struggling through so much pain and sorrow, our mission is like a gateway for peace. The problems of the country are affecting our children and their education. Like never before, so many of the children whom we serve are not passing their school exams.

Follow the *Felician Mission: Haiti* blog at FelicianSistersHaiti.com.

Read about our mission in Haiti on page 30.

Follow Us!



Sign up for our monthly electronic newsletter at FelicianSistersNA.org.



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"The Heavens are telling
The Glory of God."
Psalm 19:1

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Cover

"Our Lady of Hope" illustration, which represents our core values for ministry, was created for its bright and hopeful appeal that evokes innocence and the natural world with childlike charm.

Cover art by Janet Carlisle, Illustrator and Art Therapist





Dear Friends,

Nothing is impossible with God. He has shown us this time and again — and we have come to rely on it.

Twelve years ago, we set out on what some saw as an impossible task — transforming eight provinces across North America into one united province. It was no accident that we chose Our Lady of Hope as our patron, for we relied on our own hope and faith to get us through the challenges that lay in our path — and there were many.

Through that process God has taught us humility. He has turned our attention toward what connects us rather than what divides us, and he has rewarded us with the resources to evolve and expand our ministries, to reimagine the way we care for our sisters, and to continue to inspire young women to answer the call to life as a Felician Sister.

In this past year, COVID-19 has caused us all to have to turn on our heels and reimagine so many aspects of our lives. We have done so, not without feelings of loss and struggle, but we have learned our own strength and capacity for change.

**If we are unwilling to let go of what we are,
we will never know what we could be, and
we are eager to see what we will become.**

We are gearing up for a new phase of life, as a community that is equipped to continue our Foundress Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska's call to seek out the needs of the time and "serve where you are needed."

We pray that God will continue to allow us to be instruments of his divine providence. May he continue to show us what needs to be done, and may we continue to have the faith and resources to answer his call.

Yours in Mary, Our Lady of Hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sister Mary Christopher Moore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sister Mary Christopher Moore, CSSF
Provincial Minister
Felician Sisters of North America
Our Lady of Hope Province

Dear Felician Sisters...

Holocaust Survivor and '56 OLSH Grad

My mother, Helen Berecky, is a Holocaust survivor who you helped when she was a young girl. You transformed her life by giving her "hope" for the future.

Helen is Polish and left Germany to come to America in 1951 with only her parents. She attended Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School in Coraopolis, PA, and graduated in 1956. My mother says she did not speak any English when she arrived in America and compassionate Felician Sisters helped her during a very difficult time. The principal of



the high school — Sr. Aloysius lovingly taught my mother English and my mother has never forgotten the kindness the Felician Sisters showed her.

Mary Berecky

Forever Grateful

I and the nine Malina siblings are forever grateful for the work and example of the Felician Sisters during our days at Our Lady of Consolation parish and parochial school in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. I am forever grateful to the good nuns!!

Drs. Robert and Eva Malina

Blessed by Felician Sisters in Rio Rancho

Several years ago, my employment relocated me to Rio Rancho, NM. It's a wonderful blessing of God to come to know the Felician Sisters. I was blessed with a wife and we have a beautiful daughter.

I was relocated by my employer to California and my health deteriorated. I was unable to work. When I recovered my employer of 30 years terminated my employment. I truly believe the prayers of the Felician Sisters were answered as I was able to find employment. I was truly blessed. Thank you and God bless.

Mark Fry

Felicians Fostered Love of Learning

I have to tell you how grateful I am to you. I started first grade at St. Margaret Mary's in San Antonio in 1956. I was only five — many months younger than my classmates. I loved my teacher, Sr. Luella, and I loved school. I was safe there and I felt loved and wanted. I am 70 years old now and I still love learning. The beginning I got at St. Margaret Mary's served me well all my life. I graduated from the University of Texas, went to law school, and became a partner at a huge multinational law firm. More importantly, I married a wonderful man and have beautiful children and grandchildren. They all love learning. Thank you. Thank you for my life. I am not sure I would have survived if I had not been allowed to start early.



Mary Lou Matthews Strange

Remembering Sr. Kathleen

I used to go to St. Hubert's School in Hoffman Estates, IL, and I am still a parishioner at the church. Sr. Kathleen was a teacher and music minister at St. Hubert's when I was a student. Sr. Kathleen was so sweet and so uplifting — I have a lot of fond memories of her. My mom did a lot of sewing for the church projects that Sr. Kathleen spear-headed and my dad helped with construction in the school library. My mom made a soft sculpture of St. Francis and Sr. K loved it — put it on display at the school. Every time I look at it, I think of Sr. Kathleen.



Natasha Ruiz

Yes, Sisters Eat Ice Cream

Sister Alice Ann Gradowski was our favorite teacher. She taught each of us in second grade at St. Christine's in Detroit. Corrine was in her first class as a new teacher and was fortunate to have her for seventh grade as well. Often when walking past the convent in the summer, we'd hear our names being called in loud whispers and see Sr. Alice Ann and Sr. Mariella, the school principal, poking their heads out from the front door. They'd hand us some money to get them ice cream from the Dairy Queen down the street, asking that we keep it between us since they always told everyone they were dieting. There was always enough to treat us too. Sr. Alice Ann has always held a special place in the hearts of our entire family.



Corrine and Michelle Biggs

Buffalo Sisters at St. John Kanty School from 1945 - 1953

I was saddened to read, in *USA Today* and the *National Catholic Reporter*, of the death of the 13 Michigan Felician Sisters. I was educated by the Felician Sisters at St. John Kanty School on Broadway in Buffalo from 1945 until 1953. You may be surprised to learn that I still remember some of their names. We had Sr. Blanch in first grade; Sr. Cunegunda in second or third grade; Sr. Ambilia in sixth or seventh grade; and Sr. Justine in eighth grade. The Felician Sisters will be especially remembered in my prayers.

James Macie



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Felician Sisters and Ministries

PURPOSEFULLY REPURPOSING

“To paraphrase St. Basil the Great,” said Provincial Minister Sr. Mary Christopher Moore, **“the extra coat in your closet belongs to the poor. As we ask, ‘What more can we do,’ we are looking at what we have and discerning how to share it with those in need.”**

As the Felician Sisters of North America continue to assess their resources, they are always looking for the “extra coats.” In some cases, this has involved opening their doors and repurposing space within their own convents or selling property to developers committed to building affordable housing units. Maryville Retreat Center has also opened its doors to offer spiritual direction, retreats, and opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration.

Adaptation has always been at the heart of the Felician mission, and the sisters are dedicated to evolving to meet the changing needs of the times. They will continue to search through their “closets” for resources they can share and continue to ask what more they can do.

Old Properties, New Uses

For some time now, the Felician Sisters of North America have sought to repurpose space in their former **Villa Maria Academy in Buffalo, NY**, as affordable housing. With the senior population growing 26% in the past ten years, and as rents rise in the area, it is important to enable long-time residents to stay in their communities. Thanks to a collaboration of Queens-based CB Emmanuel Realty, Buffalo-based Delta Development of Western New York, and Catholic Charities, that dream will soon become a reality as construction begins on **Angela House**, 67 units of affordable housing for seniors.

Plans are also in the works to transform part of the **Felician Sisters’ campus in Enfield, CT**, into affordable housing units.



Rendering by Trautman Associates



Buffalo Sisters Vaccinated, with Help from News Media

When the COVID-19 vaccine was opened to group 1A, the Felician Sisters of **Blessed Mary Angela and Immaculate Heart of Mary Convents in Buffalo, NY**, were eager to get their shots, but doses were scarce and they struggled to get the vaccines to the sisters who could not leave the care center.

The sisters called providers and legislators and even appealed to the media to draw attention to their need for vaccines. In early March, thanks in large part to the hard work of Administrator of Health Care Services Beth Ann Haseley and John Beyer, president and CEO of the Life Pace Program, ten nurses from Catholic Health arrived at the care center to vaccinate the sisters living there.

The sisters want to extend their thanks to all those who helped make this possible through prayer, calls, and emails. Special thanks go to Jay Tokasz of *The Buffalo News* and George Richert of WIVB Channel 4 who used their voices in the media to help shine a light on the sisters’ needs.

Our prayers go out to all those who are still waiting for their vaccines. May God watch over you and keep you safe.

“Coldest Night” Surpasses Goal

Neither cold nor COVID shut down shelters operated by **St. Felix Centre in Toronto, ON**, nor were sisters there hindered from participating in the annual Coldest Night of the Year fundraising event. Held virtually this year, the initiative, hosted in 140 locations across Canada each

February, raises funds for programs that support thousands of people experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges, extreme poverty, food insecurity and addictions. Sr. Mary Francesca Buczkowski, board president for St. Felix Centre, said, **“This year’s event was successful even beyond an ambitious goal and raised more than \$60,000.”**

In addition to maintaining a 24/7 operation at their two main shelters, St. Felix Centre opened a third to accommodate social distancing.

8,700+ people in Toronto are homeless. **The city of Toronto has 2,900 shelter beds, and severe winters.**



Diverse All-Female Team at the Helm Meet St. Anne’s New Executive Leadership



L-R: Dana Valenzuela Marez, CDO; Amber Rivas, COO; Lorna Little, President and CEO; Carmen Andreasen, CHRO; and Alexandra Zanduetta, CFO

St. Anne’s Family Services in Los Angeles, CA, the newest ministry to join the Felician family, has evolved from a place where young women went away to quietly have their babies to a full-service organization that focuses on empowering women and families toward brighter futures — and it is led by a powerhouse of trailblazing women leaders.

Lorna Little, MSW, the first Black woman president and CEO of St. Anne’s, is proud to head this diverse all-women executive leadership team, the first in the organization’s 113-year history. Little did not set a goal of hiring all women. She simply sought out the best candidates – that resulted in the hiring of Chief Human Resources Officer Carmen Andreasen and Chief Financial Officer Alexandra Zanduetta, who joined Chief Operating Officer Amber Rivas and Chief Development Officer Dana Valenzuela Marez who were already in place when Little arrived.

The executive leadership team of this 29-million-dollar operation now reflects diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, ensuring that different perspectives have a voice at the decision-making table. “As an organization we take our responsibility to reflect the community we serve seriously,” remarked Debbie Pattillo, long-time member of St. Anne’s board of directors.

Little is proud of the work that the organization is doing to assess and improve diversity, equity, and inclusion. “There is always a way to improve social justice, especially seeing what we do when we remove barriers to education, housing, economic, and emotional stability,” she said. “The teamwork, the strategic plans, the commitment to quality and culturally responsive services is reflected in our values and the commitment to continue working towards walking the talk . . . we believe this is a movement, not a moment.”



Felician Sisters held their own mini-walk. L-R: S Anne Marie Jablonicky; SM Nicolette Wichrowski; S Bernard Keane, OSF; S Jeremy Marie Midura; SM Francesca Buczkowski with dog, Charlie (not pictured SM Amelia Pieczynski and SM Janita Krawczyk).

Find out how you can help the homeless at this Felician ministry by visiting StFelixCentre.org.

Lenten Cross Project Strengthens Family Faith

Felician Sr. Jeanne Marie Akalski tasked students at **St. Joseph School in Webster, MA**, to work with their parents on a unique Lenten assignment. Students were challenged daily with meaningful tasks such as forgiving or asking forgiveness, hugging, or smiling. For each deed completed, they artfully filled in a section of a large paper cross. **“Some projects will have made families richer in our Catholic faith, others will have strengthened the family’s spirit of service. All the posters were A+,”** said Sr. Jeanne.



Speaker Series Lifts Spirits

Sr. Nancy Marie presented “Hope Alight” at the Maryville Retreat Center.



The Voices of Hope speaker series at **Maryville Retreat Center in Holly, MI**, is garnering attention for its programs hosted by the Felician Sisters. Here, Sr. Nancy Marie Jamroz reflects on her presentation:

*The birds were singing, and the sun was shining. It was a glorious spring morning as we arrived at Maryville for a Day of Reflection on Hope. Warmly welcomed by Sr. Mary Bernadette Kapfer and Sr. Mary Thaddea Meyers, we looked forward to welcoming others who paused to take time for a dose of spiritual renewal during this STILL-COVID time. Background meditative music was punctuated by the happy greetings of the attendees as they entered the St. Clare Center. **Sharing prayers, songs and thoughts on the topic “Hope Alight” seemed to be a welcome reminder of God’s abiding presence through all the ups and downs of life.***

Knowing that this day was one in a series of reflection days at the Center, and that there is this place for respite, is comforting. The quiet, spacious outdoors to walk and soak in the peace and quiet, along with the lake and squirrels, birds, sand cranes, and perhaps a deer or two, are an inviting “prayer-scape” for a day away in any season.

Visit MaryvilleRetreatCenter.org to learn more or to register for a program.

Multidenominational Good Friday Cross Walk

Felician Sisters in Coraopolis, PA, participated in the 18th Annual Cross Walk on Good Friday sponsored by the West Hills Ministerium Association. This association of Christian clergy and lay ministers meets monthly to encourage one another in their ministries and sponsor community ecumenical services and the West Hills Food Pantry. They are a unique blend of denominations that, by its very diversity, strengthens them in their ability to impact the community.



Pope Recognizes Sr. Rose Marie Kujawa with *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*

Photo by Elliott Cramer



On March 21, 2021, the Archbishop of Detroit conferred the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* medal, a papal honor awarded to individuals for exceptional service to the Church, to an accomplished woman whose Felician life began at age 13 and flourished through decades of achievements.

When Sr. Rose Marie Kujawa finished grade school her plan was to attend a co-educational high school, but something led her to the Felician Academy. "When I graduated and was ready to go into the convent, I had no doubt that's where I belonged," she recalled.

After teaching for eight years, Sr. Rose Marie's aptitude for leadership was clear. In 1979, she was appointed academic dean at Madonna College. "One of the first issues was that we needed master's programs," she explained, and within three years, a master's program was in place. By 1991, the college became Madonna University and she was appointed academic vice president, providing leadership to the deans and faculty of the five new colleges that were formed.

The program was unique in that the Master of Science and Administration was for both business and nursing students, a combination no other university offered. "Our philosophy was that nurses needed to be more business-oriented and business people needed to be more compassionate."

The master's program was an enormous success, and a high school administrator

from Taiwan asked that the program be expanded to include educational leadership. Sr. Rose Marie worked with the business and education faculty to make the program a reality and brought the new Educational Leadership Program all the way to Taiwan, educating over 700 principals. In time, the program grew to include Korean, Chinese, and European students.

In 2001, Sr. Rose Marie became president of Madonna and continued to expand the school's programs to diverse countries and cultures, opening programs abroad to nearly 200 students per year in the United Arab Emirates. While growing the university's programming and reach was important in the organization's fiscal and commercial success, Sr. Rose Marie saw a more profound benefit to the strategy. "When we asked our own American students at graduation what was their favorite part of attending Madonna University, they enjoyed meeting students from other countries who would share their history, culture, and practices. They found it very enriching."

In 2010, Sr. Rose Marie was asked by Provincial Minister Sr. Mary Christopher Moore to explore the

“It was never that I was going to capture the world. It was, I’m going to do the very best I can until I’m asked to go and do the very best I can someplace else.”

possibility of a satellite program in Haiti. Although anxious about the challenge, she recalled taking a deep breath and saying, "Of course, Sister."

That year, Madonna began a bachelor's degree program in Haiti. Sr. Rose Marie's hopes for the program reached beyond its students. "We made it clear that this education was not just for them, that besides learning the subject matter they would think in terms of trying to improve the lives of their fellow citizens."

In addition to her efforts in advancing international and post-graduate academic programming during her four decades at

Madonna, Sr. Rose Marie led efforts to offer an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter to every deaf student and implement an ASL curriculum for non-deaf students. She also oversaw the building of the \$22 million Gold LEED Certified Franciscan Center for Science and Media.

In 2015, Sr. Rose Marie stepped away from her

role at Madonna and transitioned to the Archdiocese of Detroit as a delegate for consecrated life, serving the needs of religious communities in the diocese. "I truly love it," she said. "It's the ideal position for someone moving toward retirement as I am."

A courageous, intelligent, innovative leader, Sr. Rose Marie still serves with the spirit of the 13-year-old Felician Academy student, steeped in admiration for the sisters who taught her, and obedient to the call to serve where needed.

S Rose Marie Kujawa, left, and SM Christopher Moore with Madonna University graduates.



Moving to the New Normal After COVID-19



Following a year of strict COVID prevention rules and closed communal areas at **St. Francis Residence in Enfield, CT**, the Community Room was re-opened for the use of the residents.

According to Residence Manager Sr. Joan Marie Swierzb, all of the residents had received their COVID vaccinations and **they were ready to get back to enjoying one another's company.**

Students from Bay Path University in nearby Longmeadow, MA, were welcomed to St. Francis Residence the next day. They meet with the residents three times a week and lead two exercise sessions each day.

Sr. Joan Marie thanked the students for their respect and concern for the residents as well as the joy they bring. She presented them with St. Francis Residence bags because, she said, "They are truly a gift to the residents."

U.S. Citizenship Accomplished

On Friday, April 16, Sr. Mary Eliana Remiszewska from **St. Turibius Convent in Chicago, IL**, became a United States citizen at a special ceremony held at the Dirksen Federal Building in downtown Chicago.

Originally from Poland, Sr. Eliana came to the U.S. in October 2012. She shared with the sisters that although it was a moving experience, it only completed what she had already felt in her heart when she first came to the United States. She said she felt accepted in this country as she began her ministry.



Enfield Science Students Excel

Middle school students from **Enfield Montessori School in Enfield, CT**, earned 16 awards at the CT Science & Engineering Fair, including first place in both Biotechnology and Physical Sciences.



One project: a toilet that harnesses flush energy to power a cell phone!



Thanks and Congratulations

Judith Wetenkamp (pictured right), volunteer at **Felician Village, Manitowoc, WI**, received the 2021 *Felician Village Award for Excellence in Volunteer Service* from Director of Enrichment Services Connie Thimmig.



Felician Sparks Social Justice Dialogue Among Students

Staff and volunteers at the **Mooncrest Neighborhood Programs (MNP) in Moon Township, PA**, used the fall 2020 *Felician* magazine to engage middle school students in active reading and discussions of social justice issues. Discussing the work of Felician Sisters in New Mexico and California prompted several students to share their own immigration stories. "It was the first time some children told their stories. It's difficult to imagine all they have seen at such a young age," commented Program Director Theresa Long.

While the children were impressed by what they read, the staff was impressed by their interest. One student used Google Translate to read the article about Haiti. She was surprised to see how many people in Haiti don't have access to clean drinking water and to learn how a simple filtration bucket can make such a big difference.

Long observed, "It was a great 'challenge' activity for the students and a simple way to connect them with the good works of the Felician Sisters. We are looking forward to the next issue."



Read children's immigration stories on pages 11 and 13.



OLSH Chargers are State Champs

The **Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School (OLSH) in Coraopolis, PA**, boys' basketball team made history in March. The Chargers brought home the school's first basketball state championship with a win over the Constitution Generals in the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) Championship game for class 2A. **OLSH finished the season undefeated, becoming just the 14th school in western PA sports history to accomplish such a feat.** The entire season served as a rallying point for the community. Games were live broadcast online since in-person attendance was limited. Watch parties were held in the school for students to gather safely and cheer on classmates, and an outdoor pep rally and parade welcomed the team home. With so many challenges this year, the win was a distinct high point for the school community.

Loving Our Neighbors

The choice to cross the U.S./ Mexico border is not made lightly. In Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, gangs and drug cartels often hold more authority than police. Women in particular are subjected to rape and abuse. Children are at risk of being recruited into gangs or exploited by traffickers. Those who resist or report crimes are often killed.

Our nation is in the midst of a humanitarian crisis as the growing influx of migrants attempting to cross the border overwhelms the systems in place and incites people from across the political spectrum to call for reform.

Mothers who cannot afford to feed their children, who see them being forced into gangs or prostitution, who witness murders in the streets and fear they will be next, are desperate enough to leave their homes and entrust themselves and their children to “coyotes” who promise to take them to the U.S.

They do not make the decision to come lightly. They know the dangers posed by human traffickers, gangs, drug cartels, and even the police and government officials — and still they come.

The following stories and reflections are examples of how the Felician Sisters are experiencing and responding to this crisis. You will also read a few personal stories from neighbors of the Mooncrest Neighborhood Programs (MNP) in Moon Township, PA. They generously shared their immigration stories, reliving traumatic memories, in the hope of shedding light on why they came here.

Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela Truskowska tells us, **“Give aid to all, without exception... for everyone is our neighbor.”** Love and compassion should have no borders.

Sr. Mary Christopher Moore, provincial minister, said, “Our first mission in the U.S. was to minister to immigrant families, and we will continue to do what we can to serve the vulnerable, the persecuted, and all of our ‘neighbors’ in need.”





Repurposing with Compassion

By the time they cross the northern Mexican border, **migrants have travelled more than 1,200 miles.** Doctors Without Borders reported that **31% of women surveyed were sexually assaulted** along the journey to the U.S. and **68% of all patients surveyed were victims of violence** while in transit through Mexico.

The names of those referenced in this article have been changed for their privacy and protection.

8-Year-Old Delia

Four years ago, at the age of eight, Delia and her family witnessed an execution near her home in El Salvador. Knowing the fate of others in her community who had “seen too much,” they fled to stay with relatives in a rural area. Her father then made the journey to the United States, hoping to find asylum. After months of travel, he arrived in the U.S. and found work so he could send funds for the rest of his family to make the journey.

A year later, Delia, her mother, and her baby brother were ready to make the trip. Despite spending days at the consulate, her mother was unable to secure travel paperwork, so they could not fly as they had intended. Instead, they spent the next three months riding buses, hitching rides, and walking toward the border. They walked at night to avoid detection, barely sleeping or eating, and terrified of their fate if they were found.

Sadly, Delia’s family is not alone. Data shows that the majority of migrants, especially those coming from countries in the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador), are fleeing for their lives. In these countries, gangs and drug cartels often hold more authority than police. Women are especially vulnerable to repeated rape and abuse. Those who report these crimes are often killed. Children are at risk of being recruited into gangs or exploited.

When the choice is to comply or die, many choose to run.

Since unaccompanied minors are currently accepted into the country, some mothers make the heart-wrenching choice to send their children across the border alone, hoping they will be reunited with family in the U.S. According to the U.S.

Department of Customs and Border Protection, **18,890 unaccompanied children crossed the southwest border in March 2021.**

If they are fortunate, these children are quickly placed into facilities where they are cared for, educated, and assisted with the legal aspects of their status in the U.S. The Sisters of Nazareth of Holy Family Institute (HFI) operate one such program in the Pittsburgh area called *Journey of Hope*. In 2014, they were funded by the federal government to house unaccompanied minors seeking asylum. When the border crisis escalated, they were asked to expand their services and began to search for space to accommodate more children. They found it with the Felician Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Convent.

Sharing Resources with Neighbors in Need

“As we were discerning the best use of the unused space in our convent in Coraopolis, PA, God’s providence sent us Holy Family Institute’s *Journey of Hope*,” said Sr. Mary Christopher Moore, provincial minister for the Felician Sisters of North America. To accommodate the children and staff of HFI, the sisters consolidated their offices and living space to free up the first two floors of the convent.

“We are honored to have been able to help as many children as we have,” said Sr. Linda Yankoski, CSFN, President and CEO of HFI. “Leasing this new space from the Felician Sisters allows us to help even more children on their

journeys to be reunited with their loved ones.”

In March, HFI received an urgent call informing them that more than 80 children could be headed their way within 48 hours — they had been expecting 12. While they had the space to accommodate the children, they were in great need of volunteers to help. The Felician Sisters were eager to help again. After her experience as a volunteer, Sr. Mary Faith Balawejder, who resides at the Coraopolis convent, said, “I was able to see the beautiful image of God in all of the children I met and to serve them. I was blessed in many ways.”

In 2018, Delia’s family was reunited in the U.S. She is now in the 7th grade and a participant in the after-school program at the Mooncrest Neighborhood Programs (MNP), a Felician-sponsored ministry in Moon Township, PA. She is a promising student, having been named Student of the Month twice in her three years at the school.

Delia’s family has begun the process of securing asylum. Despite their situation and efforts, their initial request was denied. They have filed an appeal, but the pandemic put hearings on hold. She and her family live with the pervasive fear of being sent back to El Salvador to a situation that would almost certainly be a death sentence.

“Our foundress called us to meet the needs of the times and to seek out God’s most vulnerable children — the lost, the forgotten, the persecuted — and to serve our neighbors without exception or bias,” said

Sr. Christopher. “We are grateful to be in a position to have resources to share and the opportunity to use them in service of God’s will.” ✨





SAVING LIVES AT THE BORDER

By Sr. Maria Louise Edwards
Vice President, *Águilas del Desierto*

Photos courtesy of *Águilas del Desierto*



EVERY BONE HAS A STORY. IN THESE HOSTILE AND TREACHEROUS LANDS, OUR MIGRANT BROTHERS DIE TRYING TO GIVE THEIR FAMILIES A BETTER FUTURE.

~ Ely Ortiz, Co-founder, *Águilas del Desierto*

For three years, I've been ministering with the grassroots nonprofit organization *Águilas del Desierto*, Eagles of the Desert. Our mission is to save lives at the border — as many lives as possible.

Since 1996, more than 5,000 people have lost their lives in deserts along the border between the United States and Mexico. I first learned about the humanitarian crisis at the border from a *New York Times* photo essay about *Águilas*. When I looked for more information, I read stories about criminals, gang members, and drug dealers crossing into our country — I was confused. This was so unlike the story in the *NY Times* about men, women, and children losing their lives in a desperate attempt to cross the border.

I contacted *Águilas* and asked if I could participate in a search. I think I was hoping to learn which stories were true. I couldn't accept that thousands of people were dying and it wasn't all over the nightly news.

My first search was in Southern California, in the Ocotillo desert. *Águilas* received a call about a 19-year-old boy who had been missing for several weeks. The team leader pointed in the direction we were to walk and cautioned us to stay on that route or we would end up in Mexico. We were so close to the border that we set off the motion sensors buried beneath the sand.

The reality that we were searching for the remains of a 19-year-old boy hit home two hours later when a volunteer discovered a human skull lying in a gully. The scene became surreal as team leaders recorded the coordinates, took pictures for documentation purposes, and cordoned off the area.

I had never seen an actual human skull. I couldn't take my eyes off it. This was proof that people are dying in our deserts. I think I was in shock.

The remains were not the young man we were looking for. They belonged to a young woman, whose family and friends were probably still wondering where she was,

hoping she was alive, praying for her safety, and hoping for some word of her whereabouts. This is a reality for so many families whose loved ones are missing — years and years of never knowing.

We reported the location of the remains to Border Patrol and continued the search. As the terrain became rockier, we had to climb up and down hills and boulders, searching niches, crags, and caves that crossers often use to escape the heat or conceal themselves from detection. Even on this overcast day, temperatures were in the 90s, and the rocks made it feel like an oven.

As I was wondering how anyone could survive these conditions, I looked ahead to the edge of a boulder and saw a child's shoe. I thought it was just one more discarded item — we had seen so many abandoned belongings on our search — **but as I looked closer at the shoe of a little girl, I realized there was still some of her foot inside.** I recoiled in shock and disbelief. *How could this be real? What had happened to end her little life?*

The two bodies we discovered on my first search belonged to a woman and a child. This was how I witnessed first-hand the humanitarian crisis at the border.

As I wondered if the child's mother or father had to watch their daughter die and then make the unbearable decision to stay with her body and die as well or leave her behind, my shock gave way to a deep anger. In my heart, there isn't any scenario that could justify this loss of life. It is not okay that thousands are dying and almost no one knows about it.

In 2021, *Águilas* and their team of volunteers have rescued more than 30 people alive. Recently we rescued a family of eight, abandoned without food or water in the desert near the Texas border. **This fall, we will embark on our yearly prevention campaign encouraging migrants not to cross the border.** We will stop at every migrant shelter from Honduras to Mexico, speaking to migrants, warning them of the dangers, sharing the truth about the harsh deserts along the border, **and asking them to "piensalo mucho" (think hard) about risking their lives.**

Saving lives at the border is the mission of *Águilas del Desierto*. Each soul is precious and loved by God. Every search and rescue I participate in is a way of saying that every life matters — and this is not okay. 🌱

Learn about *Águilas del Desierto* at aguilasdeldesierto.org. While there watch "*Águilas*," an Oscar-nominated, award-winning documentary short, depicting the role of *Águilas* in the humanitarian crisis.

Who Crosses the Border and Why? (Why they risk their lives)

Many border crossers are not single men but *families*. High rates of violence, corruption, and murder are a reality in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala which reportedly have the highest homicide rates in the world. **When a gang wants to recruit your son or daughter, there is nowhere to turn for help.** The only recourse is to leave.

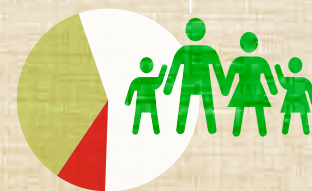
Gang violence, years of drought, and smugglers force starving and desperate families to risk everything for survival and in hopes of a better life.

Gia and Her Toddler

In Guatemala, Gia's family lived in poverty without running water. After he was run over by a motorcycle, her son nearly died — no medical services were available. Leaving home to go to work or buy food had become too dangerous. Children were being abducted from Gia's neighborhood, and she feared hers would be next.

To save her three children, Gia gathered her family and fled to the United States. She traveled with her toddler while her husband went separately with their 8- and 10-year-old children. In Mexico, Gia was assaulted and robbed. Penniless, tearful, and afraid they would drown, she and her toddler crossed the river on a small boat. They were cold when they reached the U.S.; their clothing was inadequate for the climate. Gia and her family have applied for asylum but live in fear that they will be deported and face certain death back in Guatemala.

WHO'S CROSSING:
(BASED ON 2019 BORDER ARRESTS)



301,806 individuals
473,682 family travelers
76,020 unaccompanied children

source: cbp.gov

Belongings found on the desert floor illustrate how little border crossers understand of the true danger in the journey. The heeled shoes of a young child, not appropriate for the rocky desert terrain, were found with a purse filled with makeup and lip gloss.



Asian Americans Journeying Together in Solidarity

By Sr. Dong Hong Marie Zhang
Liaison to the Chinese Community,
Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

Asian Americans have endured increasing racial discrimination and violence which have caused great media attention since the COVID-19 pandemic broke out.

Actually, racial discrimination is not new. It has existed since the time of the Old Testament. Even the Prophet Jonah couldn't escape from his narrow and nationalistic prejudice against other races of people. God sent Jonah to go to Nineveh to deliver his message that the city would be destroyed due to the sins of people there, but Jonah disobeyed God. He didn't want to preach to Ninevites, not only because those people were wicked and violent, he was also afraid they might actually repent, be forgiven and eventually conquer Israel. Jonah preferred that God destroy Nineveh rather than save them. However, God's plan was not Jonah's plan. The people in Nineveh repented despite Jonah's half-hearted preaching.

Racial discrimination is the manifestation of hidden pride, prejudice, judgment, jealousy, and hatred. It is sin in each of us, at personal, community, structural, and social levels, consciously or unconsciously. According to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), racism is the sin that says some human beings are inherently superior and others are

essentially inferior because of race. It is the sin that makes racial characteristics the determining factor for the exercise of human rights.

At a recent weekly prayer meeting, I invited a group of Chinese faithful to share

their personal experiences or opinions regarding racial discrimination. The common feeling was fear — the fear of being discriminated against and assaulted. A few persons had experiences of feeling isolated and treated as "others" due to their Asian colors and languages. Some people didn't have direct experiences of discrimination but were concerned about the increase in reported incidents of verbal and physical attacks against Asian people.

God speaks to us through Leviticus: **"When an alien resides with you in your land, do not mistreat such a one. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself"** (Leviticus 19:33-34). Racial discrimination is against God's law of love, human dignity, and equity.

After the Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyrians, the remaining Israelites and Assyrians inter-married in the Samaria area. At Jesus's time the Jews despised Samaritans, the people of mixed ancestry who worshiped various false gods, and considered them unclean. While orthodox Jews tried to avoid Samaritans, Jesus reached out to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in a Samaritan town and brought the Good News to her by talking about the living water. The woman brought other Samaritans to Jesus through her witness and they believed in him.



Sr. Dong Hong with her father — her family has struggled in an anti-Christian culture.

Photo courtesy of Sr. Dong Hong Zhang

In God's eyes, each of us deserves being loved, cared for, respected, and redeemed, no matter what race we belong to, because we are all created in the image of God.

For the healing of the country, USCCB launched "Journeying Together," which calls for intracultural and intercultural dialogue. These virtual gatherings have been held monthly since September 2020. Six cultural "families" (Asian Pacific Islander, Black and African American, European American, Hispanic American, Native American and Alaska Native, and Pastoral Care for Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers) come together to share faith, hope, concerns, cultural narratives, and common struggles, and to learn to understand each other across various cultural communities.

"Journeying Together" aims to build bridges, promote appreciation, welcome strangers, value diversity and inclusion, and provide support. Through these sessions and prayers, we all hope to come together, united as one in the love of God. The healing road due to racial discrimination seems still long, but in God, everything is possible. 🌸

Sisters Serving PROVINCIAL MINISTRIES

All Felician Sisters have a ministry — a specific way in which they serve. Some work in external ministry — at a parish, food pantry, detention center, or hospital. Many others work in internal ministries, in some way contributing to the inner workings of the community.

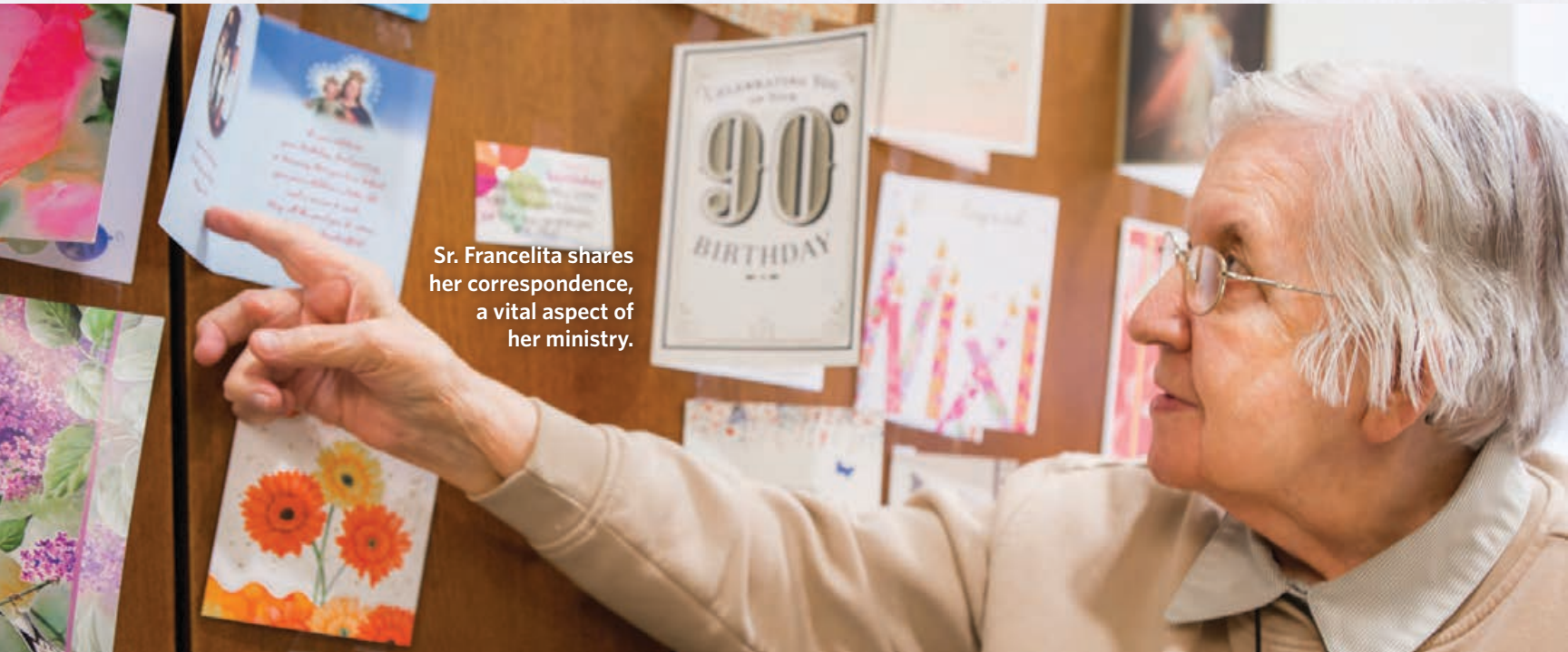
From supervising the health care of sisters across the province to the truly sacred ministry of prayer, each sister in internal ministry plays an integral role in the well-being of the community.

When Felician Sisters take their vows, they become part of a spiritual family. Just as in any family, each person plays a role in the lives of the others. **On the following pages, read about Felician Sisters who serve in internal ministries in:**

- PRAYER
- HEALTH SERVICES
- CONVENT LEADERSHIP
- SUSTAINABILITY
- HOPEBOUND MINISTRIES
- PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP

Delivering the Spiritual Energy of Prayer

Photography by Rick Armstrong



Sr. Francelita shares her correspondence, a vital aspect of her ministry.

The ministry of prayer is the backbone of all we accomplish.

~ Sr. Mary Christopher Moore

Perhaps one of the most powerful ministries of the Felician Sisters happens in quiet moments of contemplation — the ministry of prayer. While prayer is an integral part of the lives of all Felician Sisters, many who are physically unable to participate in external ministries focus their energy and dedicate their days to active prayer for their sisters and for the intentions of the world.

Sr. Noel Marie Gabriel, director of clinical services for the Felician Sisters of North America, describes the ministry of prayer as “a ministry of spiritual power and energy. **We call our sisters who have the ministry of prayer and redemptive suffering our ‘powerhouses of prayer,’ because they’ve turned their physical energy into a spiritual energy of prayer.**”

The Felician Sisters are a contemplative-active community, which means that their prayer life nourishes and directs their life in ministry. “Without the prayerful support of the sisters,” said Sr. Mary Christopher Moore, provincial minister of the Felician Sisters of North America, “there would be no ministries in which to serve. The ministry of prayer is the backbone of all we accomplish as Felician Sisters.”

One must not think that a person who is suffering is not praying. **He is offering up his sufferings to God, and many a time he is praying much more truly than one who goes away by himself and meditates his head off, and, if he has squeezed out a few tears, thinks that is prayer.**

~ St. Teresa of Avila

For some, the idea of leaving an external or “active” ministry can be humbling. Women who once spent their days ministering in schools, parishes, dioceses, food pantries, homeless shelters, and other social services find themselves having to step back and focus on the contemplative nature of their vocation.

“We always talk about active ministry — active sisters and retired sisters — and that never sat well with me,” said Sr. Mary Andrew Budinski, local minister of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Convent in Livonia, MI, “because **we’re all active until we take our last breath — and prayer is the most active ministry.**”

In the isolation of care centers and convents, many sisters themselves don’t realize how important their role in the ministry of prayer truly is. Sr. Andrew said, “I keep telling the sisters, when they say, ‘Oh, I can just pray for you.’ I say, ‘Do you know what a grace that is for the world?’ These sisters who are praying are really involved and they are suffering. I say to them, ‘Sisters, you’re touching the whole world with your pain, with your prayers.’ There is a lot of ministry going on within these walls.”

Sr. Mary Raymond Kasprzak, who currently resides at Blessed Mary Angela (BMA) Convent in Buffalo, NY, has found joy in her ministry by caring for those who are caring for her. “I did a lot of listening at the rehab centers,” she said, “because sometimes people, when they were taking care of you, they just needed to talk about things.”

Sr. Mary Francelita Machnica, also a resident of BMA Convent, describes her ministry as a reciprocal relationship, saying, “It is part of my life to serve others and to pray for others, because I can’t get along without them, and they can’t get along without me. We complement each other by praying for each other, even if I can’t help them in any other way. Prayer is the highlight of my life.”

“Our ministry of prayer is important to all of us, but especially to our elder sisters who physically cannot contribute to active ministry,” said Sr. Noel. “That’s their giving back, their continuing to care for others.”

Unfortunately, sisters in a ministry of prayer rarely get to see the impact they have. They must persist largely without relying



Sisters at communal prayer in the Chapel at Blessed Mary Angela Convent in Buffalo, NY



Without Prayer nothing good is done. God’s works are done with our hands joined, and on our knees. Even when we run, we must remain spiritually kneeling before Him.

~ Blessed Luigi Orione

on external reassurances. “Perhaps the greatest joy for a sister in the ministry of prayer is to learn that her prayer has been answered,” said Sr. Noel. “When we hear that a person is grateful to the sisters, we’ll go to them and say, ‘You prayed for this person, and she had an answer to her prayer. She sent a thank you note for being prayed for,’ because that spiritual energy goes far.”

The Felician Sisters receive prayer requests every day, and they do not take on these intentions lightly. “Our sisters pray much more than we even realize — when you ask for prayer, you’ll get prayer,” said Sr. Noel. **“We have daily prayer intentions for the needs of the world, for peace and justice needs. We have special intentions every day that we pray out loud. We pray for our sick by name. We pray for people who ask us for prayers. We say their names out loud in our common prayer in the morning and evening, so they’re consciously, audibly remembered.”**

The Felician Sisters in a ministry of prayer continue to persevere in praying for the needs of our world, but they also remember to give thanks. “Because sometimes God gets tired of listening to my woes,” said Sr. Mary Ursuline Hilinski, resident of BMA Convent, “and so I stop telling him my woes and I just tell him what makes me happy — and he likes that.” 🌸



Sr. Noel, pictured right, visiting with centenarian Sr. Ursuline.

Sr. Noel Marie Gabriel

Director of Clinical Health Services, Our Lady of Hope Province

Helping Each Sister Live her Best Life

Photography by Rick Armstrong

The journey through COVID-19 has not been an easy one. In the past year, the Felician Sisters have lost 23 of their beloved sisters to the virus and watched many more become infected, including those “long-haulers” who continue to experience symptoms even after recovery. Through it all, Sr. Noel Marie Gabriel, director of clinical health services for Our Lady of Hope Province, has been on the front lines, implementing CDC protocols, caring for sisters, educating sisters and staff, and advocating for vaccines. **She has looked her sisters in the eyes, held their hands, and shared their pain, and she has done it all out of a deep-rooted devotion to her role in the care of her community.**

As a registered nurse and health care administrator, Sr. Noel is committed to the well-being of her sisters —

more than 400 of them across the U.S. and Canada. “I am passionate about the sisters’ health,” she said. That passion is evident in her hefty travel schedule that involves visiting care centers and convents throughout North America to provide, coordinate, and consult on health care options: “In their vows they take us as their family, we take them as our family. We are committed to making sure that our sisters are taken care of.”

During the pandemic, the needs of the sisters grew exponentially and Sr. Noel and Christine Lynd, director of health services operations for Our Lady of Hope Province, found themselves managing the dissemination of the ever-changing deluge of information from the CDC and implementing protocols to keep sisters informed and safe.

Sr. Noel was in her home convent in Chicago, IL, when the sisters there went into lockdown on March 14, 2020. Largely

**You enrich us,
we enrich you,
and we take
care of each
other.**

~ Sr. Noel Marie Gabriel

confined to their bedrooms, they quickly ceased all communal gatherings, including Mass and meals.

By March 28, Sr. Noel was on her way to Lodi, NJ, where 12 sisters had contracted COVID-19 and one had died. Much of the staff was also infected, causing critical shortages in personnel in the care center. “I was working around the clock,” said Sr. Noel. “It was quite intense.”

On Good Friday, the sisters at the convent in Livonia, MI, lost their first sister to COVID-19; two more followed on Easter Sunday. In all, 12 would die in

Michigan inside of a month and another would pass away in June from complications related to the virus. “I felt so helpless because I couldn’t leave Lodi to help them,” she said.

Among those who fell ill in Livonia was Sr. Noel’s close friend, Sr. Victoria Marie Indyk.

A professor of nursing at Madonna University, Sr. Vicki had been teaching online when she was rushed to the hospital with trouble breathing. “After a few days she was getting better,” said Sr. Noel. “They were going to release her. She called to check in with me and she said, ‘I’m coming home, I’m coming home.’ We had such a lovely conversation. We talked about 45 minutes and then she sent me a text. She said, ‘Noel, I have two beautiful pictures I’m sending to you — a beautiful sunset, and the wonderful view from my room.’”

Two days later Sr. Noel was in the food storage room picking up supplies for the sisters’

rooms. "I remember receiving the call from Sr. Nancy Marie Jamroz that Sr. Vicki had died. It was devastating — I just wanted to go to a corner and sob."

That moment was interrupted, however, by a nursing assistant who came in and asked, "Sister, do you have any ginger ale?" Through her tears, Sr. Noel forced a smile, retrieved the ginger ale and handed it to the young nursing assistant. "So, you know, you have to put everything in a compartment and just put it on the side. And that's what I had to do, because I needed to focus on the living," said Sr. Noel.

Sr. Noel stayed to care for the sisters in Lodi for eight weeks, during which time COVID-19 swept through the Livonia, MI, convent. "Thankfully, Chris traveled to Livonia to assess the sisters' needs. There were 60 in the convent; 30 had COVID. If the sisters weren't dying, they were sick themselves. They couldn't mourn or grieve because they were so sick. We couldn't have the wakes. We couldn't have the funerals. We couldn't have any of our rituals or sharing of memories, saying the rosary vigil at bedside. We couldn't even have a Mass."

"I'm so grateful to Chris for her dedication and willingness to relocate to Livonia," Sr. Noel shared. "Chris quickly assessed and understood the gravity of the situation. She gathered her staff and other volunteer staff from throughout the province and managed a team of workers to help where needed — cleaning, nursing, delivering food trays, and doing what they could to help and lift spirits." Chris and various employees from throughout the province were present in Livonia for eight weeks during that time of intense suffering when 13 sisters passed from COVID. "They were most instrumental in the

support of the sisters in Livonia while I was the stable presence of support in Lodi," Sr. Noel said.

The physical isolation was also taking a toll. "Nobody was lucky in this — nobody. And our sisters in our larger convents who were more independent, the level of sacrifice, the level of denial, the level of restriction for so long really took its toll," said Sr. Noel. "We all have COVID stories. If we didn't have the active disease, we had the psychological, the emotional effects."

When vaccines were finally becoming available, Sr. Noel, Chris and their team worked diligently to get them for the sisters. In some places, however, religious sisters in convents were not included in phase 1A of the rollout. They were especially having trouble in New York and Connecticut getting vaccines to infirm sisters who could not leave the care centers. Eventually, after many calls and some much-appreciated help from local media, all sisters in the U.S. had the opportunity to get vaccinated. At the time of the writing of this article, however, many of the sisters in Canada have only received one dose of the vaccine.

Though the threat of COVID-19 is certainly not yet passed, Sr. Noel continues staying aware of CDC guidelines and providing the best care possible for the sisters. "We will continue praying, masking, social distancing, washing hands, and vaccinating."

Sr. Noel and her team will continue to care for the sisters with the goal of creating an environment and culture of care that will allow them to "live spiritually, communally, ministerially — fully fledged as Felician Sisters, as vowed women in the church." ✨

Sr. Noel, left, checking in on and praying with Sr. Raymond while making her rounds at Villa Maria Convent in Buffalo, NY



The Eden Alternative

In an effort to give sisters the best quality of care, the Felician Sisters of North America will be implementing the **Eden Alternative** in its care centers throughout the province. This holistic, patient-centered model of care promotes a positive mindset and healthier being. Its vision is to eliminate loneliness, helplessness, and boredom by addressing a person's well being.

A path to a life worth living is achieved by addressing the "Seven Domains of Well-Being"

well-being
the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.

identified as: **Identity, Growth, Autonomy, Security, Connectedness, Meaning, and Joy.** Elders are empowered with choices — from the type of treatments they receive, to where they live or what kind of food they eat, and they continue to be participating members of their communities which keeps them busy, involved, and feeling valued.

Sr. Noel and Christine Lynd, The Felician Sisters' director of health services operations, worked to bring the program to convents beginning in 2019. Staff and sisters have continued monthly training via Zoom during COVID-19 to keep the process moving forward and hope to have it fully functional this year.

Learn more about the Eden Alternative at edenalt.org.

Making Convents Home

Felician Sisters minister where they are needed — and sometimes that need comes from within their own community. In each convent, a local minister is assigned to watch over the sisters, to attend to their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, and to support them in their ministries. Local ministers do everything from grieving alongside a sister as she mourns the loss of a loved one to sitting vigil at the bedside of a sister who is dying. They plan community celebrations of birthdays, holidays, and feast days, and advocate for their sisters to receive the best possible care. They are caretakers, administrators, companions, and sometimes, almost mothers. It is a role that requires compassion, dedication, and diligence, and it is a role, like so many others, that was complicated by COVID-19.

For **Sr. Paul Marie Baczkowski**, being assigned as the local minister at Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent in Buffalo, NY, was a little intimidating. She questioned whether or not she was up to this important task, saying, “My first year as a local minister, I guess I was nervous about things. You always in the back of your mind say, wow, are these sisters going to be okay with me? You know, how am I going to be?”

It was the sisters, however, who had always seen her potential. “They would push you,” she said. “They would see something in you that said, you can do this, and I always felt supported by the sisters I lived with who would always be there.”

With the encouragement and support of her sisters, it was no wonder that Sr. Paul Marie took this job so personally. **“When we say our vows, we take the community as our family, and that truly became very sincere for me. I’ve always tried to live community in such a way that these sisters are my family.”**



**Sr. Mary Ursula
Myszka**

Local Minister
Our Lady of the Angels Convent
Chicago, IL



**Sr. Mary Andrew
Budinski**

Local Minister
Presentation of the
Blessed Virgin Mary Convent
Livonia, MI

Photo by Elliott Cramer

When **Sr. Mary Ursula Myszka** arrived at Our Lady of the Angels Convent in Chicago, IL, to begin her assignment as the local minister, before she could even unpack, she was called to the bedside of a dying sister. That night, she and Sr. Noel Marie Gabriel, director of clinical health services, sat vigil until 1:00 am, fulfilling their commitment that no sister should die alone.

After that first night, Sr. Ursula did her best to learn on the job. “I had to make my own way... set my own path,” she said, and Sr. Noel became an invaluable resource for her as she began to clarify her role as local minister. “She was right there. She directed me, she guided me, she made me feel comfortable and at home,” said Sr. Ursula, who still relies on Sr. Noel for support.

Today, Sr. Ursula is a lifeline to 38 sisters, most of whom receive 24-hour care. She shops for them, reads mail for them, writes letters and cards for them, and spends time visiting with them. She makes sure they have everything they need, provides updates to their families, and does what she can to brighten their days.

Photo by Steven Bourelle

When COVID-19 forced the convents into lockdown, local ministers across the continent were faced with even more challenges. "It was so hard," said Sr. Ursula. "I could've cried every day. I would go to the chapel early in the morning and I had to plead with the Lord to bring us healing. When I would find out that a sister was quarantined or tested positive or was isolated, I would just shiver."

At Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Convent in Livonia, MI, local minister Sr. Mary Andrew Budinski contracted COVID-19 herself and had to step back from her role at a time when the convent was experiencing extreme hardship. The sisters suffered the loss of 13 of their members from April to June 2021, and many more were ill. "You just don't realize how important that interaction is — the ministry that you do for others — how important that is," said Sr. Andrew. "Even the ministry in the house had to stop because we were all in our rooms."

Sr. Paul Marie's convent experienced a surge of COVID-19 cases in December 2020 when six sisters passed away in the span of six weeks. She said, "As the days turned into weeks and the weeks turned into months, it got to be really hard. I think the hardest was Thanksgiving. We ate our Thanksgiving dinners in our bedrooms, by ourselves — it was difficult. We're not cloistered religious, so being so long away from each other was really beginning to wear and tear on the sisters."

When vaccinations did become available, Sr. Paul Marie became an advocate for her sisters, working alongside Administrator of Health Care Services Beth Ann Haseley to arrange for shots to be brought to the sisters. She even reached out to local government officials and worked with media outlets to bring attention to her sisters' needs. About two weeks after appearing on the news, she received word that her sisters would be receiving their vaccinations.

For each of these women, and all local ministers, community comes first. "I truly do find for myself that community is the most important part," said Sr. Paul Marie. "Prayer is essential to get you there, but **community is what I think makes for a good local minister. If you don't care about the sisters — good, bad, and indifferent — weaknesses and strengths — and can't really, truly say in your heart, I love each of these sisters for who they are, then I think you have to think twice about whether that would be a position that would be good for you.**"

The job of the local ministers is not easy, but it is essential, especially in these times when the very nature and meaning of communal life has been called into question. Through it all, these women continue to forge their own path and discover their own capacity for resilience, because they know their sisters are relying on them.

"The world needs love now," said Sr. Andrew. "We need love, and not the syrupy kind of love, but the sacrificial kind of love where we are able to listen to others." 🌸



Sr. Paul Marie
Baczkowski

Local Minister
Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent
Buffalo, NY

Photo by Rick Armstrong

When we say our vows, we take the community as our family, and that truly became very sincere for me. I've always tried to live community in such a way that these sisters are my family.

~ Sr. Paul Marie Baczkowski

Sr. Mary Jean Sliwinski

Provincial Sustainability Coordinator

As Franciscan women, Felician Sisters are called to care for the environment. **We have made a deliberate, moral choice to increase our use of renewable energy.**

~ Sr. Mary Jean Sliwinski

Nurturing Mother Earth

As provincial sustainability coordinator for the Felician Sisters of North America, Sr. Mary Jean Sliwinski spends much of her time translating the Franciscan love of creation into active stewardship of the environment at the Felician convents and ministries.

In 1987, the United Nations Brundtland Commission Report defined sustainability as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. "We need to think

of our impact on our earth and on the environment and on our fellow human beings — not just right now, but in the future," said Sr. Jean.

It was Sr. Jean's love of nature that brought her to this position after a litany of ministries that included facilities management, human resources, food services, and music education. "I always loved the outdoors," said Sr. Jean, who at one time contemplated becoming a forest ranger, "and I was looking at our Franciscan values and environmental

stewardship and I said wouldn't it be great if I could have a job doing something like that. The provincial team told me to go for it."

The shift in ministry would require Sr. Jean, who holds a degree in optics and two in management, to go back to school in pursuit of a master's degree in environmental policy and management from American Public University, which she completed in 2013. After finishing her degree, she approached Provincial Minister Sr. Mary Christopher Moore about seeking opportunities for



Sr. Jean pictured with one of the trees she planted from twigs on the Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent property in Buffalo, NY



Photo by Ed Rieker



Photos provided by Solar CIR

experience in the field, to which Sr. Christopher replied, "We have a job for you." With that, Sr. Jean was appointed the first provincial sustainability coordinator.

"My real job was to make us more environmentally friendly," said Sr. Jean, "to educate beyond that, and to get us more involved in the ICCR (Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility), a faith-based organization that uses stockholdings to advocate with corporations on human rights and the environment." She now sits on the board of the ICCR and is the chair of the Socially Responsible Investment Committee for the province.

As Sr. Jean tried to figure out where to start, she leaned on her experience in facilities management. "Fortunately, I served as facility manager at our central convent in Buffalo," she said, "so I had a good idea of how our properties work, and I always wanted to put solar panels on our property in Buffalo. I attended New York State Energy Symposium that year and they were talking about expanding solar energy and I said to the administration, 'Wouldn't it be great if we could get involved in the use of solar power?' And they told me to run with it."

The result was a two mega-watt project that involved the construction of arrays on six sites in five states across the province. The release of the encyclical *Laudato Si: Care for Our Common Home* by Pope Francis in 2015 reinforced the importance of the project. "It set care for the earth into Catholic Social Teaching," she said.

Perhaps the biggest component of Sr. Jean's job is educating the Felician Sisters, ministries, and "anyone who will listen," about our moral obligation



to care for the earth. **"Education is the key part in trying to move us forward," she said. "What I would like to inspire is a definite awareness of the beauty of the natural world around us and our responsibility toward it."**

Sr. Jean encourages people to spend time experiencing nature with the senses. "We care for things we really love," she said. "We need to move toward loving the earth, the creatures on it, the people within it, and the only way you can really love someone is to develop a bond, develop a relationship. When you have a relationship that you really care about, you're less apt to hurt it and maybe more apt to pay attention to your own actions." 🌸

Investing in Solar Energy – A Winning Idea

Solar arrays grace the properties of six Felician buildings, including the Beaver Falls convent and Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent and Villa Maria College (above, left to right). To date, the panels have generated 9.16 gigawatt hours (enough power to charge more than a billion cell phones) and avoided 5,493 tons of CO₂ emissions.

This May, the Felician Sisters were recognized for leadership in solar energy stewardship and received Pennsylvania Solar Center's Lodestar Award.



Fill it Forward

To bring awareness to the human right to water, the Felician Sisters of North America are participating in the *Fill it Forward* program that provides reusable water bottles with a tag to track consumption and the impact of their reduction of single-use plastic on the environment. With each scan of the tag, a donation is made to organizations providing communities in need with access to clean water, hygiene, and education.

Learn more about Fill it Forward at fillitforward.com.

Lifting Up Hopebound Ministries

Sr. Mary Clarette
Stryzewski

President, Hopebound Ministries



Photo by Elliott Cramer

The Felician Sisters have always sought out the frontiers of need. They meet people where they are, discern needs through accompaniment, and work to meet those needs. So began many of our ministries in North America and it was the impetus for the creation of Felician Services and Hopebound Ministries, two organizations that offer resources and support for programs aligning with the Felician mission and values.

Sr. Mary Clarette Stryzewski is abundantly familiar with both organizations, having served as CEO of Felician Services for 20 years and as president of Hopebound for the past seven. Her passion for ministry and talent for leadership are evident in the way she speaks of her role and the programs under the Hopebound umbrella.

The Felician Sisters of North America, sponsor, co-sponsor, or otherwise support more than 42 ministries, many of which fall under the corporate guidance and protection of Felician Services. Within Felician Services lies Hopebound, an organization designed to nurture and support smaller programs with less access to resources.

“We deal with programs that are in various stages of development,” said Sr. Clarette, “most of them quite small, that are in need of governance, legal, financial, programmatic, corporate compliance, human resources, and Catholic mission support. These resources are very difficult for a stand-alone program to access.”

The hope is that these programs will grow under the guidance of Hopebound and become stand-alone ministries, which was the case with the Felician Center in Kingstree, SC. That program began with two sisters who recognized the needs of this rural southern community and set out to meet them. It began with children showing up on their back porch asking for help with homework. Today, with the help of Hopebound, the Felician Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a board of directors that provides after-school programs, a food and clothing pantry, summer programming for

children, and other community outreach.

Hopebound is growing as the Felician Sisters continue to establish new ministries and actively seek existing programs. “We see significant potential in more and more programs that are springing up,” said Sr. Clarette, “and we can help them.”

Dr. Todd Beadle, vice president of special projects and senior ministry advisor for Felician Services, who works closely with Sr. Clarette, said, “Hopebound Ministries is the perfect vehicle to help our program ministries that need assistance and support to help the most underserved, vulnerable, and economically challenged clients and communities.”

The Felician Sisters have a heart for service. Where they recognize a need, they seek to address it, but Hopebound works to ensure that the work of the program continues beyond the physical presence of the sisters.

“They’re great programs,” said Sr. Clarette, “We want to support them. We help those ministries address the needs of their local communities where they find themselves and have identified groups of people who are on the marginal end of having resources available to them.”

Dr. Beadle added, “To be able to provide hope, support, and resources to those in need is the very mission of Hopebound. I am honored to be able to be part of the dedicated team in helping our fellow men, women, children, and families move toward self-sufficiency and hope for a better tomorrow.”


Dr. Beadle credits much of the success of Hopebound to Sr. Clarette’s leadership: “Sr. Clarette has been inspirational in her leadership of Hopebound Ministries Inc. Her amazing insight and guidance have helped Hopebound expand and built a foundation that will ensure program success and above all follow the mission of the Felician Sisters. Sr. Clarette’s leadership and vision give Hopebound wings and we will continue to soar because of her dedication to the mission and communities we serve.” 



Photo by Elliott Cramer



Photo by Rick Armstrong

Felician programs overseen by Hopebound Ministries:

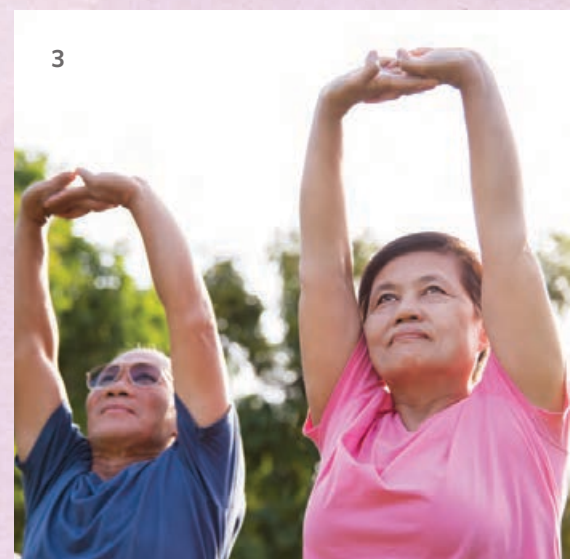
1. Mooncrest Neighborhood Programs
Moon Township, PA
mooncrest.org
This program focuses on actively revitalizing a 395-unit complex, home to nearly 700 people in Moon Township, near Pittsburgh, PA. Services include an after-school program, summer programs, community garden, and social and educational activities for children and adults.

2. Villa Maria Youth Program
Buffalo, NY
This after-school program provides support in math and reading to children in grades 2, 3 and 4.

3. Felician Wellness Center
Centralia, IL
facebook.com/felicianwellnesscenter
This quality, cost-effective, community-based wellness program serves children and adults in southern Illinois.

4. Sr. Mary Josette Food Pantry
Buffalo, NY
Located on the campus of Villa Maria College, students and their families are among the clients receiving food assistance from the pantry.

5. Angela Spirituality Center
Pomona, CA
angelaspiritualitycenter.com
This multifaceted program serves the people of Pomona, CA, particularly those experiencing homelessness.



Look for Hopebound Ministries' new website this fall.



Photo by Elliott Cramer



Photo by Rick Armstrong



Setting the Tone and Leading the Way

Photography by Ed Rieker

A person in provincial leadership needs to be compassionate, a deep listener, and a risk-taker — one who can read the signs of the times and respond to them.

~ Sr. Suzanne Marie Kush

Picture, if you will, an orchestra — an array of talented musicians, each with a specialized gift to contribute to the whole. They sit in their chairs, instruments at the ready, but there is no music — until the maestro taps her baton and begins to lead them. Without leadership, the beauty of the music will never be realized.

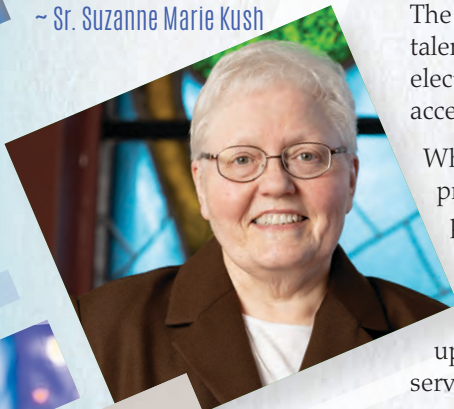
The provincial minister is the maestro of Our Lady of Hope Province. She looks upon her sisters, each with unique talents to offer, and envisions the beautiful song they could create together — a symphony of service.

The sisters seek out leaders among themselves — women of talent and vision who have a heart for service. From these, they elect provincial councilors to advise the provincial minister and accept responsibility for growth in their areas of expertise.

When the Felician Sisters united the eight North American provinces into Our Lady of Hope Province in 2009, they placed Sr. Mary Christopher Moore at the helm as provincial minister. She served two terms in that role, the last of which will be completed in June of this year when new leadership is elected. During those 12 years, Sr. Christopher relied upon her provincial councilors, some of whom have also served two six-year terms under her leadership.

In June, the sisters will elect a new provincial minister and provincial councilors, who will follow the example of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska and send their sisters to serve where they are needed. May God guide them as they continue to create a song of hope for the world. ✿

PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP (clockwise from top)
SM Christopher Moore, provincial minister,
SM Rosita Brennan, S Michelle Marie Stachowiak,
S Constance Marie Tomyl,
S Janet Marie Adamczyk, SM Jolene Jasinski,
SM Geralyn Mroczkowski, and
S Suzanne Marie Kush



Felicians Reach Far at Virtual SEEK21 Event

Over 27,000 attended, exceeding the previous year's in-person event by thousands.

The Felician Sisters Vocation Team has made a conscious effort to be a presence at young adult conferences across the country, serving as keynote speakers and sponsors, staffing booths, and interacting with participants. When COVID-19 made it necessary to go virtual, they were ready.

The Vocation Team created its first "virtual booth" experience for the SEEK21 Conference in February that included videos, photos, publications, and most importantly, a Zoom meeting space staffed by Srs. Desiré Anne-Marie Findlay and Judith Marie Blizzard. Seek21 is hosted by FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students).

Photo by Carlos Trujillo, Slide Away Photography



Virtual Availability

By Sr. Desiré Anne-Marie Findlay | Vocation Outreach Minister

As it is for many of us around the world, COVID-19 has created some very interesting environments for work, home and school. Religious life has been no exception. Sisters have had to learn how to incorporate healthcare policies to ensure safety as we continue to serve the marginalized and live communally.

While vocation ministry does not typically include spending time with vulnerable populations, it does include a lot of travel and group settings. As vocation outreach minister, I often travel by plane several times a month. I visit a variety of schools, parishes and youth groups — sometimes all in one trip. Then there are the one-on-one visits or small group gatherings with the individuals who have invited me to speak, or with whom I have connected before and am taking time out to visit again.

On the other side of vocation ministry, we also welcome women who are interested in joining us for things like prayer, meals, Mass, and recreation. These are often day-visits, but we are also happy to invite women to stay with us for a weekend if they express interest. In addition, we recently established a house of discernment at St. Felix Convent in Moon Township, PA. This is where we typically hold our discernment retreats, but it is also where we welcome women to stay for longer periods of time should they feel it would be helpful to them as they discern.

As you can imagine, almost none of this has been possible. I couldn't visit schools, parishes, or youth groups; I couldn't invite women to visit our convents; and we couldn't host groups for discernment retreats. However, it provided a unique opportunity for some creative ways of connecting.

Several women reached out to me asking for some sort of regular discernment "gathering" since they were no longer able to connect with us through visits and retreats. As a result, we have created two different Zoom groups for women who are interested in discerning religious life. One group is for discerners and sisters under the age of 50. This group meets monthly and is led by a different sister each time. The sisters who participate are from different congregations from across the United States. This gives the women who participate a chance to become familiar with different types of congregations.

The other Zoom group is specifically for women who want to discern with and learn more about the Felician Sisters. It also

(continued)



Not even distance can limit availability in meeting the needs of conversation, accompaniment, and communal prayer.

~ Sr. Desiré Anne-Marie Findlay

■ VOCATION MINISTRY

takes place on a monthly basis. I lead it each time, but always invite two different Felician Sisters to participate. We cover a variety of topics and the women get to meet a number of our sisters in North America.

One pair of sisters was Sr. Mary Rosalind Rosolowski and Sr. Grace Marie Del Priore. Sr. Rosalind ministers at the Attica Correctional Facility in New York State while Sr. Grace Marie is the archivist for Our Lady of Hope Province. As a result, the women were able to learn about the unique ministries our sisters can be involved in as well as the difference between what we call an “external” ministry and “internal” ministry.

Slowly and cautiously we have been accepting candidates and allowing for a few convent visits, but we are grateful that technology has given us another way to journey with one another.

An Emerging Felician Future

27 women are currently in the discernment or formation process.



The Felician Charism inspires us to imitate Blessed Mary Angela’s total availability. I used to think that availability referred to our physical presence with one another, but now I see that not even distance can limit availability in meeting the needs of conversation, accompaniment and communal prayer. 🌸

Would you like to join us? Reach out to Sr. Desiré at desimarie@feliciansisters.org to find out more about our Zoom groups and to get to know about life as a Felician Sister.


“To Love is to Give”

Our Foundress, Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska

Learn about Life as a **Felician Sister**

We are a joyful community of consecrated women religious who serve on the frontiers of need across North America.

Our contemplative life in prayer nurtures and sustains our active life in ministry to others.

 **FELICIAN SISTERS** OF NORTH AMERICA
Supporting more than 40 ministries across the continent
FelicianSistersNA.org/vocation

Contact Sr. Desiré Anne-Marie Findlay: desimarie@feliciansisters.org | 909-706-2238

Our Lady of
Hope Province

2021

Jubilarians

*Celebrating our sisters
on the anniversary of their vows*

80 Years

SM Alodia Stozek, IL
SM Annelle Krych, MI
† SM Placidia Kuligot, IL
SM Presentine Ugorowski, MI
† SM Seraphine Liskiewicz, CT

75 Years

SM Alexandrette Smith, CAN
† SM Bernice Pikul, CT/RI
SM Carolita Turzinski, IL
SM Charitine Spitalniak, NJ
SM Lucia Skalka, IL
SM Pontia Zdzichowska, NJ
SM Ruth Koralewski, MI

70 Years

SM Adrian Jumbelic, PA/NJ
SM Alfonsa Kunicka, CAN
SM Alfonsa Van Overberghe, MI
SM Andrew Wiercinski, NY
SM Beatrice Knipple, IL/WI
SM Benedette Laspata, NJ
SM Francine Lagocki, IL
SM Francis Hopcus, NM/IL
S Helen Marie Strawa, MI
SM Janita Krawczyk, NY
SM Lawrence Lojko, CT
SM Lucy Korzekwa, NM/IL
SM Theophilia Tworzydlo, IL

65 Years

SM Barbara Burzynski, MI
SM Margaret Kijek, MI

60 Years

SM Denise Bernas, PA
SM Francesca Buczkowski, NY
SM Gloria Lewandowski, NY
SM Inez Moch, IL
SM Jeanette Skornia, IL
SM Jeanine Heath, IL
SM John Fryc, CT
SM Lea Malak, IL
SM Lucette Kinecki, NY
S Marcella Marie Garus, NY
S Maryann Kasica, NJ
SM Michaeleen Pardowsky, IL
S Patricia Marie Iagrosso, CT
SM Rachel Mikolajczak, NY
SM Richardine Baranski, NY
SM Rosalie Disterhaft, IL
S Marie Victoria Bartkowski, NJ
SM Virgilyn Grabowski, NY

50 Years

S Barbara Marie Juskiewicz, NY
S Bernadette Marie Zandonatti, IL/WI
S Christina Marie Conroy, NM/TX
S Jane Mary Gawlik, NM
SM Teresa Mielech, CAN

25 Years

S Josephine Maria Kaczor, PA/NY

† DECEASED

To send congratulations to a sister on her Jubilee,
email your message to FelicianSisters@FelicianSisters.org
or mail to Felician Sisters of North America, 871 Mercer Rd,
Beaver Falls, PA 15010.



Hope in Haiti

By Srs. Marilyn Marie Minter, Mary Izajaska Rojek, Mary Inga Borko,
and Mary Julitta Kurek | Missionaries, Felician Mission: Haiti

In the ongoing struggle between Haiti's president and growing opposition, violent demonstrations have made travel dangerous, if not impossible. Most schools and hospitals remain closed. Businesses are closed too, causing job losses. Soaring prices have made food even more scarce. People in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, are struggling more than ever. Desperation has led to kidnappings, even the recent abduction of ten Catholic clergy, all of whom were released only after paying ransoms. Please keep Haiti and our dear people in your prayers as we continue to help them through these times.

We send you greetings of peace and healing. You are in our prayers and we are grateful for your prayers and support. It is because of you that we can continue with our ministry of presence in our *Felician Mission: Haiti*. It is because of you that our children and families have hope. We ask that you send prayers for Haiti, because they are desperately needed.

We know that so many in the United States, Canada, Brazil, and Europe continue to suffer through the pandemic. God seems to be sparing Haiti from the pandemic but the country suffers from many other evils.

The political situation for many months has been very difficult. Haiti experiences violence, demonstrations, kidnappings, and hunger that is worse than ever because of closed borders with the Dominican Republic. You may have recently heard that the latest kidnappings have been focused on clergy and religious sisters and brothers. The last group consisted of five priests, two sisters, and three lay people.

Recently, Catholic Churches in the country gathered for Mass in their areas to pray for the end of violence and kidnappings, and the release of the priests, sisters and lay people, as well as all those who have been kidnapped. During a Mass that took place in Port-au-Prince, police came with tear gas to disperse the people.

All of this is affecting the people of Haiti.

For many, it is necessary to travel to Port-au-Prince, the main port of entrance and the capitol. We only travel to Port-au-Prince when it is absolutely necessary, yet it affects us as well. Each time we go, we are aware of the kidnappings and car jackings, as well as the demonstrations and blocked roads, which make it extremely difficult to return to Jacmel.

For more than a year, purchasing medications in Haiti has been impossible. Even going to the Dominican Republic has come to a standstill due to closed borders. Now, the only way to purchase medications for the Mother Angela Clinic — which provides the only medical care for those in our diocese living in the mountains — is to come to the United States.



Photo by Valerie Baeriswyl



Where there is water, there is life.
 After hours of praying and watching and waiting, and digging down 290 feet, well water for the bakery was found!

Our children are once again hungry because of lack of food. We are doing our best to have them come to the mission daily to do homework and to feed them. Everything here has doubled in price! Many of our mothers are not able to provide a hot meal for their children. Every day, we meet more and more people who share with us their fears and anxieties, and we see real depression growing.

We notice that when we gather for prayer experiences more and more people are coming looking for hope, comfort, and God's help.

Our greatest gift to the people of Haiti is our ministry of presence. We are here. Because of you, we can continue to provide basic necessities and hope.

Thanks be to God there are four of us now! We will not be dissuaded by the ever-changing challenges placed before us, nor will we abandon those in need. We will continue to serve where we are needed and trust in God's providence. Please keep us in your prayers, as we keep you in ours. 🌱

Needed supplies are sent in barrels, which as you can imagine are very expensive to ship and to retrieve from the ports. Now it is even more challenging because the ports are charging even more to release the containers that have the barrels.

This political unrest is also affecting our children and their education. We have never seen so many children not passing their school exams. When they go to school, the teacher does not show up or just gives homework because they have not been paid.



Live from Lodi

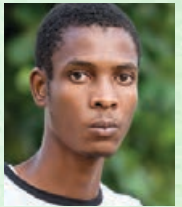
On Sunday, March 21 in their first webinar, Srs. Mary Inga Borko and Marilyn Marie Minter of *Felician Mission: Haiti* reported on progress made and the continuing needs and challenges in Jacmel, Haiti.

With the help of Felician University in Lodi, NJ, and the vision of the Haiti committee members, the sisters connected with more than 130 people from across the globe, including **Sr. Mary Julitta Kurek**, our newest Felician missionary in Haiti, who Zoomed in from Poland with **Sr. Mary Izajasza Rojek**.



Dr. Jean-Paul Bonnet gave an update on the bakery, a project to provide jobs to people in Jacmel. Med student

Tcheri Louis, who came to the mission as a child and now volunteers with Mother Angela Mobile Clinic, called in from Haiti. "They changed my life," he said in thanks.



The gathering included members of the Haiti committees, sisters, donors, friends of the mission, and many new people. The sisters credit their success to God's providence, the support of Provincial Minister Sr. Mary Christopher Moore, the provincial council, and devoted supporters. "It is because of you we are able to continue to grow and adapt to meet the needs of the people," said Sr. Marilyn.

Watch the "Hope in Haiti 2021" video of this event on the Felician Sisters of North America YouTube channel.

Sewing School Offers Hope and Job Skills, Especially for Women

Many Haitian women have no education to seek employment, but sewing is a skill they can learn that will provide clothing for their families and earn income. We have been blessed with Sr. Izzy's sewing skills — and a donor who made it possible to purchase everything needed to open a sewing school.

Solar panels and batteries were necessary to supply additional electricity and pedal-operated treadle machines were needed for women who do not have electricity — **less than half of Haiti has access to electricity.**

After months developing a curriculum, Sr. Izzy taught students to sew school uniforms, special clothing for the Sacrament of Communion, and items they are perfecting and hope to sell from an online marketplace in the near future.



LACKING POWER Third-world homes with access to electricity:	45% Haiti	85% Cuba	96% Dominican Republic

Millions of Renters Owe Billions of Dollars Sisters are Doing What They Can to Help

by Soli Salgado | Excerpt reprinted with permission from *Global Sisters Report*, April 8, 2021

As the pandemic provoked shutdowns across the U.S. in March 2020, Jason's stress level began to climb. He had to handle cash as an essential employee selling car parts at an AutoZone in McKinney, Texas, a state with no mask mandate. His precarious health — asthma, sarcoidosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, allergies — put him at a higher risk of serious illness should he contract COVID-19.

BEFORE COVID-19...

Nearly half of renter households in the U.S. were already spending **more than 30% of their income on rent**, according to 2018 numbers, with a quarter of all U.S. renter households spending more than half of their income on rent.

Source: Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University

As his hours dwindled at work, Jason's ability to pay his bills began to depend on the opportunity to mow someone's grass for quick cash or sell whatever he could find that was sitting in his garage: the tools he still needed, or the motorcycle, which was worth twice what he sold it for. On June 8, 2020, he lost his job.

Because he was hired two days too late to qualify for unemployment assistance, Jason spent the past year improvising to pay the bills, including asking his 19-year-old daughter to contribute her wages from waitressing.

"It got me so beat down," said Jason, who asked not to use his last name because "it's embarrassing enough having to ask for assistance."

"As hard as everything is, it gets worse, like I'm not a good provider, a good father," he said. "If you can't provide for your family and you have to ask your daughter to help you out, it makes you feel pretty worthless as a man."

Jason had an understanding landlord who was patient with his past-due rent, and he eventually received direct rent relief from Catholic Charities. However, he said he still feels like he lucked out by not having to depend on the U.S. government's temporary moratorium on residential eviction, imposed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in September 2020. A mounting rent bill would have only exacerbated his stress, he said.

With millions of Americans like Jason either out of work or experiencing loss of income as a result of the pandemic, the intent of the moratorium was to prevent homelessness and the spread of COVID-19 in overcrowded shelters. (The CDC's moratorium also served as an extension of the April 2020 CARES Act, which had a narrower set of qualifications for the moratorium.)

And the ball keeps getting kicked down the road: A December expiration date turned into January, and President Biden's administration

initially pushed it to March 31 only to change it two days before that deadline. Now, if the expiration date doesn't change again, June 30 could mean an expensive due date for millions of renters who have accumulated up to a year of back rent.

Women religious have long ministered to people experiencing homelessness or inadequate housing, running shelters and programs geared toward helping people stay off the streets. But rather than wait for a tsunami of evictions to occur on the other side of the moratorium, some sisters have started organizing fundraisers for rent and utility relief, hoping to help renters chip away at their growing bills.

The Felician Sisters got the idea for a grant at a fall council meeting in which the sisters and their lay partners brainstormed ways to be more helpful to those struggling financially because of the pandemic. They teamed up with Catholic Charities USA in December for a challenge grant, with each group contributing \$1 million to what would become the Francis Fund for Eviction Prevention.

Considering the impending "tsunami of evictions around

the corner," Adrian Dominican Sr. Donna Markham, president of Catholic Charities USA, suggested they focus on eviction mitigation, an issue.

Because Catholic Charities has 167 agencies in 3,000 sites across the U.S., "we know where people are hurting," Markham said, and they are "able to get a lot of immediate help to people in a very short time."

Named after St. Francis of Assisi, the Felicians' founding spirit, the \$2 million Francis Fund continues to garner donations and has since raised an additional \$250,000.

"The Felicians reaching out to us jump-started an incredible project to help people," Markham said. "That was so absolutely astounding."

The Francis Fund is just one piece of a larger, ongoing initiative that Catholic Charities agencies oversee in providing housing assistance, but Markham said it is an "added force to helping people." ❀

Read the entire article at globalsistersreport.org/news/coronavirus/millions-renters-owe-billions-dollars-sisters-are-doing-what-they.



FELICIAN MINISTRIES IN NORTH AMERICA

Since the Felician Sisters arrived in North America in 1874, they have continued to evolve to meet the needs of the time, by following God's will and Blessed Mary Angela's directive to "serve where you are needed." Our sisters continue to shape the social service landscape in North America through their work in our ministries and in pastoral service in schools, parishes, prisons, hospitals, dioceses, and other organizations. The ministries below are sponsored or co-sponsored or were founded by the Felician Sisters of North America.

EDUCATION & CHILD CARE

Early Childhood

- Enfield Montessori School
Enfield, CT
- Felician Children's Center
Jackson, MI
- Montessori Center of Our Lady
Livonia, MI
- Sister Celeste
Child Development Centre
Tulita, NT, Canada
- St. Joseph Academy
Milwaukee, WI
- St. Mary Child Care Center
Livonia, MI

High Schools

- Holy Name of Mary
College School
Mississauga, ON, Canada
- Immaculate Conception
High School
Lodi, NJ
- Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
High School
Coraopolis, PA

Colleges and Universities

- Felician University
Lodi, NJ
- Madonna University
Livonia, MI
- Villa Maria College
Buffalo, NY

AT-RISK YOUTH PROGRAMS

- Mooncrest
Neighborhood Programs
Moon Township, PA
- United Stand
Chicago, IL
- Villa Maria Youth Program
Buffalo, NY



ENRICHMENT AND OUTREACH PROGRAMMING

- Jericho House
Port Colborne, ON, Canada
- Maryville Retreat Center
Holly, MI
- Seeds of Hope
Youth Leadership Conference
Holly, MI

MINISTRY TO THE MARGINALIZED AND THOSE LIVING IN POVERTY

- Angela Spirituality Center
Pomona, CA
- Deo Gratias Ministries
Detroit, MI
- Felician Center
Kingstree, SC
- Felician Wellness Center
Centralia, IL
- Response to Love Center
Buffalo, NY
- Sr. Mary Josette Food Pantry
Buffalo, NY
- St. Anne's Family Services
Los Angeles, CA
- St. Felix Centre
Toronto, ON, Canada
- St. Felix Pantry
Rio Rancho, NM

SENIOR LIVING & HEALTH CARE

- Angela Hospice Home Care
Livonia, MI
- Felician Adult Day Center
Enfield, CT
- Felician Village
Manitowoc, WI
- SSM Good Samaritan Hospital
Mount Vernon, IL
- Marywood
Nursing Care Center
Livonia, MI
- Senior Clergy Village
Livonia, MI
- St. Anne Home
Greensburg, PA
- St. Francis Residence
Enfield, CT
- St. Ignatius
Nursing & Rehab Facility
Philadelphia, PA
- SSM St. Mary's Hospital
Centralia, IL
- Villa St. Francis
Milwaukee, WI

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Angela Court Senior Residence
Philadelphia, PA
- Francis House
Philadelphia, PA
- Our Lady of Grace Village
Newark, DE

MINISTRY TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

- McGuire Memorial
New Brighton, PA

MISSION MINISTRY

- Felician Mission: Haiti
Jacmel, Haiti
- Felician Mission: Tulita
Tulita, NT, Canada

If you are interested in learning more, volunteering, or supporting our ministries — or are in need of our services, please visit feliciansistersna.org/ministries.



Felician Sisters of North America
 871 Mercer Road
 Beaver Falls, PA 15010-6815
www.FelicianSistersNA.org

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What to Watch in 2021

New Felician leadership coming this June.
 Read about the current provincial council on page 26.



The Enfield Montessori School in Enfield, CT, is anxiously awaiting the arrival of chickens on campus. Their new home includes roosting boxes and places for the children to watch the chickens and collect eggs.

Steven Spielberg has cast Immaculate Conception High School graduate in his West Side Story remake. Rachel Zegler plays the lead "Maria" in the reimagined 1957 musical of starcrossed lovers and rival street gangs, the Sharks and the Jets. Filmed in Summer 2019, the movie will hit theaters on December 10, 2021. In her next project, Rachel will play a mysterious key role in *Shazam: Fury of the Gods*, to be released in June 2023.



Look for an updated Felician Sisters of North America website this fall! We are also creating new websites for *Hopebound Ministries* (featured on page 24), which manages a growing number of Felician programs that provide social services and charitable assistance to those in need; and for *Felician Mission: Haiti* to house its dynamic blog, an online marketplace, and more information about its mission and how to get involved. Sign up for email at FelicianSistersNA.org to receive our most up to date information!

Work is in progress on Pause & Reflect, an app designed to share Felician resources such as reflections, prayers, history, and more. This initiative of the Vocation Team is meant to extend an invitation to the public to share in the Felician mission and spirituality.



Plan Forward for Brighter Futures

Honor the sisters that brightened your own. From IRA giving to gifts of stocks and securities, to charitable gift annuities, to making an estate gift, your gift can create a legacy that will continue the journey for those who need it most.



Learn about giving opportunities at FelicianSistersNA.org/Giving or contact our Office of Mission Advancement at 724-944-9814 or giving@feliciansisters.org.

