

Letter from Our Provincial Minister



2022 was a year of both achievements and challenges! Certainly, much good was accomplished because of the abundant grace of God and the committed efforts of our Felician Sisters, Associates, staff, sponsored ministries, and generous supporters.

My visits across the province this year took me to one of our newest ministries, St. Anne's Family Services in Los Angeles. They are doing amazing work, and we are proud to be part of it. In August, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of our presence in Kingstree, SC. The collaboration and mutual respect that has been achieved over three decades is a sign of the Spirit at work among God's people.

Through the collaboration of our Provincial Justice and Peace Coordinator, Sr. Maryann Agnes Mueller, and the sisters and ministries on our Enfield campus, we are assisting a Ukrainian family in Connecticut. A mother, father, and their three children are living in the former chaplaincy behind Our Lady of the Angels Convent. In addition to this family, we continue to support the efforts of our Felician Sisters in Poland, who provide vital services to Ukrainian refugees.

Headlines regarding the political and social upheaval in Haiti describe a situation that continues to deteriorate. Our four sisters left Haiti at the urging of the U.S. Embassy in October. Because they have empowered the Haitians to carry out many of the tasks of the mission, work continues, and our sisters are in regular contact with the trained Haitian staff.

No matter where we turn our gaze, we witness the charism of Blessed Mary Angela pulsing throughout North America and other areas of outreach. We continue to minister to the most vulnerable through the dedication of Felician Sisters, Associates, staff, sponsored ministries, and the remarkable generosity of supporters like you.

I know that this good work will continue to flourish and expand as we live into 2023. God bless us, every one!

Peace and all good things!

Sr. Judith Marie Kubicki, CSSF
Provincial Minister

Responding to Violence with Love

The mass shooting at a busy grocery store, reportedly motivated by hate and racism, happened just two miles from *Response to Love Center* on the east side of Buffalo, NY. This senseless violence directly impacted Felician communities.

To provide a ministry of compassionate presence, to share the healing presence of God, and to support the families of the victims, founder and director of *Response to Love*, Sr. Mary Johnice Rzadkiewicz, who was born and raised on Buffalo's east side, attended a neighborhood rally.

"We can be part of the journey, grieving with people. We want to be Jesus for them. We want to end any kind of racism, any kind of violence, any kind of hurt that has come into this community and anywhere we live," Sr. Johnice explained.

Felician Provincial Minister Sr. Judith Marie Kubicki also responded to the horrific incident by asking people to "recommit to love, respect, and compassion for all people in their rich, God-given diversity." She said, "May we be instruments of peace, love, and compassion in a world that faces the trauma of violence and hate every single day."

One way that the local community recommitted to seeking truth and embracing diversity was through the creation of a book club.

Villa Maria College board member and alumna Zeneta Everhart's son, Zaire Goodman, who also attended Villa, was the first person shot in the May 14 attack. Mr. Goodman survived, but after the shooting, Ms. Everhart felt a need to act. She and her son created an Amazon wish list of books in hopes of educating kids on racism, diversity, and



Zeneta Everhart and Zaire Goodman.

inclusion. Local news covered the event when volunteers from the Buffalo Peacemakers helped transport nearly 10,000 books, donated from all over the country, to Zeneta and Zaire's Book Club.

The books, including titles such as *The Undeclared*, a 2020 Caldecott-winning picture book by Kwame Alexander and Kadir Nelson, and inaugural poet Amanda Gorman's *The Hill We Climb*, will be distributed to schools, libraries, and community centers across Western New York, as a way of promoting peace through education. ✱

UPDATE: In honor of Black History Month, the Buffalo Bills donated \$5,000 to the book club and helped to kick off a month of story times and book giveaways with an event at the stadium for children from local Boys and Girls clubs.



Felicians Inspire at Youth Conference

Caring for the future means investing in those who will share it, and at the **2022 National Catholic Youth Conference in Long Beach, CA**, Felician Sisters and ministry partners created an oasis of joy in a sea of concrete, with exhibit tables representing different ministries, and "rooms" for conversation, meditation, learning, service, and fun.

The seven Felician Sisters in attendance provided a visible and valuable presence

during eucharistic adoration and at daily masses, where celebrants included 10 bishops. Teens attended talks by prominent Catholic speakers, went to confession, and enjoyed live music performances by some of their favorite Christian performers.

The exhibit hall provided a chance for teens to "choose their own adventure," and they gravitated to the large and inviting Felician area. Sisters from Haiti set up an interactive space where visitors could carry a five-gallon bucket filled with water balloons, to gain a better understanding of how Haitians struggle for basic needs in their daily lives. Along the "path" marked on the floor, teens learned facts about water conservation and considered how they could decrease their own "water footprint." Tables with boxes of beads provided space for forging cross-cultural friendships, where participants could make prayer bracelets for the youth of the Haiti mission — and receive a

bracelet created by a teen from Haiti. With guitar and voice, the sisters led Midday prayer, from the Liturgy of the Hours. Sr. Marilyn Marie Minter expressed feeling, "Total JOY in the Lord as we gave testimony to our shared life with each other and with our Felician sponsored ministries."




Representatives from *McGuire Memorial* in New Brighton, PA and *St. Anne's Family Services* in Los Angeles, CA curated a space where young people could create Christmas cards for the people served in these ministries, educating teens about how the work of a nonprofit can promote human dignity.

The sisters and ministry partners who attended loved interacting with the young people at NCYC. Sr. Mary Therese Ann Parobek summarized the collective response when she said, "The devotion and enthusiasm of the young people of the convention center tells me the Church's future is ALIVE!" ✱

2022 HIGHLIGHTS

Our Lady of Hope Province

We are pleased to sponsor, co-sponsor or support through the presence of our sisters more than 40 ministries throughout North America. To learn more, visit FelicianSistersNA.org/Ministries.

-  = Felician Ministry
-  = Felician Convents
-  = Felician Ministry Highlighted in 2022

 **Tulita, NT, Canada**
90 miles south
of the Arctic Circle.

National Teen Leadership Experience Reemerges

Seeds of Hope, the annual week-long young women's leadership experience, took place once again at the **Maryville Retreat Center in Holly, MI**. Teens arrived from as far away as California, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Ontario to learn servant leadership and transform their communities for good.

Seeds of Hope 2023 is set for July 7-13. Apply by March 30 at Seeds-Of-Hope.org.

Sr. Christina Marie Conroy and a young leader.



Felician Sister on Franciscan Podcast

Sr. Mary Bernadette Kapfer, program director at **Maryville Retreat Center in Holly, MI**, reached people where they are — on a podcast — to discuss the value of making a retreat and to inform them of the programming and peaceful environment Maryville can offer them.

Listen to Sr. Bernadette's discussion *Finding God Through Music and Retreat* at FranciscanDave.buzzsprout.com.



"Cry of the Earth" Retreat

Participants from many sectors of ministry came together for a *Laudato Si'* retreat at the multi-faith educational center **Jericho House in Wainfleet, ON, Canada**. In this "oasis of peace," they explored ways to take collective action through public policy advocacy to create more sustainable communities.



Affordable Homes for All

Felician Sisters have always followed Mother Angela's imperative to "seek the glory of God and the good of your neighbor." Transforming unused buildings into affordable housing, they give people an opportunity to live with dignity. In early 2023, residents will move into **Angela's House, in Buffalo, NY**. The former Villa Maria Academy houses people 55+ who will be neighbors to the sisters and share their chapel. A third of these pet-friendly units are reserved for people who experienced homelessness.

Sr. Mary Francesa Buczkowski and Sr. Mary Therese Chmura



Tips Keep NEXters in Good Shape

Health and Wellness Coordinator Jacy Keef runs the NEXT (Nutrition Exercise Training) program at the **Felician Wellness Center in Centralia, IL**. In December, she invited past NEXters to a tour of Aldi's, where she offered tips for purchasing healthy groceries, helping keep people on track with nutrition goals through the holiday season.



Fresh-Faced Felicians

The Felician Sisters of North America welcomed two new postulants: Veronica Kowlaski, from Mississauga, ON, Canada and Monica Edaburn from Pomona, CA. The two currently live at **St. Francis Convent in Milwaukee, WI** as they learn about community life and discern their callings.



Are you thinking about life as a sister? We would ♥ to talk. Chat with Sr. Judy at Vocations@FelicianSisters.org or 734-718-0632.

Honoring Sacred Water

On International Day of Action for Rivers, **Felician Sisters in Pittsburgh, PA** joined Catholic sisters from several religious communities near the confluence of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio rivers to publicly commit to care for the life-giving resource of our rivers. With Friends of the Riverfront, the group worked to clean the river trail.



Chronicling Front Line People in the Pandemic

St. Ignatius Nursing & Rehab Center in Philadelphia, PA captured the impact of the pandemic on film. The 15-minute documentary *Our COVID Journey* covers staff and leadership's passage from confusion, shock, and grief, to acceptance, adaptation, and perseverance.



Watch *Our COVID Journey* at FelicianSistersNA.org/Our-Covid-Journey

Neighborhood Beautification Project Completed!

The Neighborhood Forum project created by sisters from **Felician Center, in Kingstree, SC**, to dignify the neighborhood, offered residents tree trimming, planting, new mailboxes, and a welcome mat for each household. The four-phase project wrapped up in 2022.

Learn about the entire project at FelicianCenterSC.org.



Empowering Students

Felician Mission: Haiti currently sponsors 110 teenagers and children, who would not otherwise be able to attend school, providing varying levels of support that include tuition, school supplies, uniforms, and exam fees. "Schooling demands a lot of work," says Sr. Mary Inga Borko, "but it is the best way to empower people."



Exuberant New Felician

Sr. Shannon Fox began the process of transferring from her former order to the Felician Sisters. She finds joy in the active-contemplative life of the Felicians.

At **McGuire Memorial in New Brighton, PA**, Sr. Shannon is already a beloved instructor in the day program, ministering to adults and children with profound disabilities.



St. Felix Reaches First Nation People

While celebrating its 30th anniversary, **St. Felix Pantry in Rio Rancho, NM**, continues to respond to need. A grant-funded project will provide essential nutrition to a Navajo Nation Community of 900 members, including 300 children, in Counselor, NM.

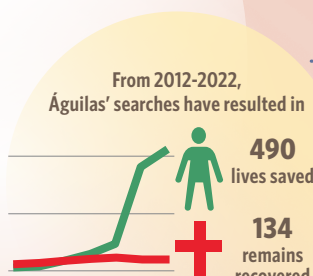
In 2022 St. Felix Pantry worked to:
procure **675,000** pounds of food donations
serve **105,000+** people




United States Congress
House of Representatives
Certificate of Special Recognition
Presented to
Aguilas del Desierto Inc.

U.S. Congressman J. Luis Correa recognized **Aguilas del Desierto** with a certificate for altruistic service. Sr. Maria Louise Edwards is vice president of this volunteer organization that searches for those lost or deceased crossing the desert on the southwest border.

Learn how you can help at AguilasDelDesierto.org



Our ministries uphold the **FIVE CORE VALUES** that are hallmarks of Felician culture and identity:

Respect for Human Dignity: exhibited by a reverence for and commitment to promoting and protecting the dignity of all persons;

Compassion: characterized by an empathetic consciousness toward others, expressed in caring service;

Transformation: characterized by an open heart and mind, leading to continuous improvement of all involved in our ministry;

Solidarity with People in Need: ensuring that people's needs are met through advocacy and action;

Justice and Peace: forging right relationships, recreating a sustainable environment, and promoting the common good — all in the pursuit of peace.

Caring for Our Neighbors

As the war continues to rage in Ukraine, many families fleeing from active warfare have landed in Kosów, Poland, about 500 miles from the Ukraine border. Felician Sisters there have been running a humanitarian aid center at the parish of Our Lady of the Rosary, serving both internally displaced persons and the armed forces of Ukraine. As of mid-January, nearly a year into the war, they had helped about 4,400 families, or about 20,000 individuals who passed through this center.

Additionally, the sisters have helped 215 different institutions that care for both children and adults — including hospitals for premature infants, schools, military hospitals, and orphanages — with donations of food, medicine, and supplies. Generous response to the Felician Sisters of North America's Ukraine Crisis Fund has raised nearly \$350,000 to support the Polish sisters assisting Ukrainian families and soldiers.

During the last couple of months, the weather has been a particular challenge, with severe frosts followed by sudden thaws. Along with daily power outages, the sisters have heard many tragic stories of seriously wounded soldiers enduring frostbite, amputation of limbs, and death. The sisters have redoubled their efforts to help, by collecting warm clothing and footwear to support the

Felician Sisters in Poland work to collect and distribute supplies to soldiers on the front and families fleeing active conflict.

military units, many of whom come from their own city and region.

The Polish sisters are grateful for the friendship of the Felician Sisters of North America. Sr. Maria Michalina Dobry writes, "On behalf of Ukrainian people, I ask for prayers: for those who died during the war, for those seriously wounded, and especially for those who were taken prisoner, as well as for the families directly affected by suffering."

About 400 miles away, in Zablotów, Ukraine, the sisters have endured multiple bombings and frequent air raids in addition to regular power outages. Srs. Maria Marlena Mierzwa and Maria Malvina Neustrojeva write to their American sisters, "Thank you for the priceless gift of prayer, because thanks to it, bombs do not explode." They describe a New Year's attack nearby, when a rocket fell into a residential



building and did not explode. They credit prayers for this miracle.

The Felician Sisters help the refugees, the sick, and the elderly, with gifts of prayer, food, clothing, and medicines. Recently, 28 elderly and sick people from Zaporizhzhia, in southeast Ukraine, were brought to Zablotów. Bedridden and needing round-the-clock care, they do not have any loved ones nearby, so the sisters visit them. The sisters bring love and joy into the lives of these

people who are otherwise forgotten, making sure that they know that God loves them and has not abandoned them.

Despite the war, the kindergarten and catechesis programs continue to operate, with prayers for peace at the start of each day. At Christmas, the sisters prepared the churches with nativity scenes and decorations, to bring hope during a difficult time. They even managed to prepare a nativity play for children and parents. "God was born on ruins in Ukraine this year," they said. "But we know that he is with us and will never leave us."

Srs. Maria Marlena and Maria Malvina share this message with the Felician Sisters of North America: **"We pray for peace and ask the sisters to pray for this intention without ceasing. We join you every day with our hearts, and your presence gives us the courage and strength to serve the people of Ukraine."**

You can support the sisters at FelicianSistersNA.org/Ukraine. *

Millions of Ukrainians Displaced by War Felicians Welcome Ukrainian Refugee Family

Through **Welcome Connect**, Sr. Maryann Agnes Mueller and Enfield Montessori School have sponsored a Ukrainian refugee family, creating a home for a mother and her three children in the once-empty chaplain's house behind Our Lady of the Angels Convent in Enfield, CT. The children are enrolled in school, their mother is enrolled in ESL, and the family is quickly on their way to financial independence. Welcome Connect is part of the Welcome Corps consortium of organizations with expertise in refugee resettlement, protection, and welcome for the U.S. Department of State. *Update: the family's father joined them in Enfield in early February.* For information about how to sponsor a family, go to welcome.us/connect.

Despite Political Unrest, Felician Mission: Haiti Continues

When violent demonstrations spread through Haiti and reached Jacmel, *Felician Mission: Haiti* received calls about a ransacking at Caritas International, a nearby partner organization. The U.S. Embassy urged the Felician Sisters to leave the country, not only for their own safety but for the safety of their brothers and sisters at the mission. Instead of packing immediately, Sisters Marilyn Marie Minter, Mary Inga Borko, Mary Julitta Kurek, and Mary Izajasza Rojek decided to focus first on securing the continued operation of the mission. Through empowering staff and working with local partners, *Felician Mission: Haiti* continues to provide medications, food, and fuel, even after the sisters' temporary departure.

Felician Mission: Haiti has, from its beginning, worked to empower the Haitians it serves, and this approach has helped to keep the mission running during the current political crisis. The Mother Angela kitchen has never stopped feeding people and continues to provide for all those who work in the mission. Additionally, those who come to the gate to beg for sustenance always receive something to eat — oil, rice, or beans.

In contact with clinic workers at least three times per week, Sr. Marilyn



Haitian staff member Junior Dessin helps to keep the sewing school running.

continues to manage the Mother Angela mobile clinic from the U.S. The clinic continues to serve 12,000 Haitian people.

In the meantime, Sr. Inga continues to oversee school sponsorship with help from Haitian staff member, Annette Beneche. Together, they make sure school tuition and exam fees are paid. *Felician Mission: Haiti* currently sponsors 110 teenagers and children, who would not otherwise be able to attend school providing tuition, school

supplies, uniforms, and exam fees. "We work with people who could not go to school if we did not help them. So we never stopped even for a moment," says Sr. Inga. "Schooling demands a lot of work, but it is the best way to empower people."

The sewing school had to stop temporarily, but Srs. Julitta and Izajasza hired former student Junior Dessin to finish the last few classes, helping the current cohort of students to complete their education.

Even the computer lab, which couldn't be used for 2 months because violent demonstrations interrupted internet service, recently has reopened. The sisters look forward to re-starting their online English tutoring program.

For now, Sr. Izzy has returned to her home province in Poland and is working to support Ukrainian families who have fled their country for safety. Sr. Julitta is studying English in New Jersey. Sr. Inga and Sr. Marilyn have relocated temporarily to Little Miami, to minister to the marginalized Haitian immigrant population.

Visit the *Felician Mission: Haiti* blog at FelicianSistersHaiti.com to follow the progress Haitians are making to keep hope and faith alive. *



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Health Aides, and
other employment
opportunities.



Felician Sisters
of North America
2022 Year in Review

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MISSION: As Felician Sisters, called by God, we cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world.