



*History of the  
Sisters of  
Divine  
Providence  
and  
Associates*



*History of the Sisters of Divine Providence and Associates*

# History of the Sisters of Divine Providence

## Opening Prayer (Option One)

**Leader:** We exalt your providence, O God

**All:** And we commit ourselves to making your Providence more visible in our world.

**Leader:** You have searched us and known us, O God. You know when we sit or stand. Whether we walk or lie down, You, Provident God are with us, gracing us to become living signs of your Providence.

*(In a moment in silence, recall God's presence with you in this moment.)*

## ***After a moment of silence.....***

**Leader:** Our Provident God has been with us before we were born.

**All:** God, you are with us, and in us, and all around us as we gather for this Associate Session.

**Leader:** In 1851, our God of Providence had a dream which God shared with Bishop William Emmanuel von Ketteler and Mother Marie de la Roche.

**All:** God guided them through the power of the Spirit and the Charism of Providence. Over one hundred–fifty years ago, God brought to birth the Sisters of Divine Providence, a dream come to life in time. God looked at what came to birth and said, "It is very good."

**Leader:** We are invited to be living signs of God's Providence as Associates and Members of the Community of the Sisters of Divine Providence.

**All:** And we give thanks for the gift to be called to be living signs of God's Providence.

**Reader:** A letter taken from the last words of Bishop Ketteler to the sisters. (*Geist und Auftrag unserer Gemeinschaft*) (Page 63) Collated by Sister Anne Winschel.

Dear Sisters,

"Stay close to our Lord. This is my wish and prayer for you, that you be truly interior souls, living through Him, thinking with Him, and working for Him. Everything else will take care of itself. Yes, our God of Providence is infinitely rich and good and can do more than we would ever hope or ask for.

Only be simple, interior and united with God. Seek only to please God and to work for God. God will care for all your concerns. To God do I entrust you. May your life and activities be for God's honor and glory and from eternity to eternity."

## ***Pause for a moment of prayerful silence.....***

**Leader:** Let us pray...

**All:** Glory to you Source of all being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

## **Closing Prayer – Prayer from the Legacy of Mother Marie:**

**All:** You, O God, are my patience and my strength,  
You are my light and my counselor.  
O my God, give me the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The Spirit of counsel and fortitude. The spirit of knowledge and of piety,  
And, the spirit of wholesome fear of God.  
O my God, give me un-wearying zeal,  
Gentleness and kindness of heart, and tireless Patience.  
Make me an instrument of your love. Amen.



## Opening Prayer (Option Two)

### Intercessions:

**Response:** We thank you, Provident God for linking our lives in so many ways, making a chain of hope and compassion!

On this day, we remember Bishop Ketteler and Mother Marie and the hundreds of Sisters of Divine Providence who have gone before us as we proclaim....

We give thanks for the untold blessings that have been ours as an international Congregation as we proclaim....

We remember the many losses and diminishments that we have experienced as a Congregation and individually through sickness, aging, death and a decrease in membership as we proclaim....

We remember the many times we have been asked to change, to renew, to restructure through all of these transitions, we proclaim....

We give thanks for the growth we have experienced and for the hope in the renewed future as we proclaim....

We give thanks for the call to risk, to share our resources, to stretch our circles of relationship as we proclaim....

### Closing Prayer:

We thank you Provident God for linking our lives in so many ways, making a chain of hope and compassion long enough and strong enough to circle the globe.



## Part I: History of the Co-founders and the Sisters of Divine Providence

"I found great consolation in my belief in the truth of those sublime ideas that stirred the world to its depth in my day. I believed then, and I believe today, that not one of them is too high for humankind. I believe it is your duty to realize them, and to love the age in which you live for its mighty wrestling for them, however far you are from attaining them."

*Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler*



### **Bishop Ketteler**

The history of the Sisters of Divine Providence starts with the life and times of its founder, Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, Bishop of Mainz, Germany.

On December 25, 1811, the Bishop of Mainz was born in Munster, Westphalia; one of nine children: six boys and three girls.

Ketteler is known to have been hot-headed and headstrong as a boy, once having thrown himself on the ground in a fit of rage when he missed shooting a rabbit while on a hunting trip with his father. During his days at the University, he lost the tip of his nose in a duel.

He started out studying to be a lawyer, loving the challenge of the law, but under the iron hand of Bismarck, then the Chancellor of Germany, he resigned in protest when the archbishop was imprisoned. It was then that he began to seriously think about the priesthood. He was ordained on June 1, 1844.

As priest and bishop, Ketteler spent his time working on behalf of the poor. At the time of his priestly life, Europe was experiencing the Industrial Revolution, and there were many factory workers in need of just wages. Because the men were working in the factories during this time, many of the elderly were simply abandoned. Ketteler tried to help them.

Ketteler was installed as bishop on July 25, 1850. As bishop, he took the motto For the Church, for the people. This was a most appropriate motto for a church leader of his time, since the liberty of the Church, while not always threatened directly, was often in a tenuous state; and because the poor found themselves in a state of powerlessness in face of the economic and social conditions of the time.

Germany seemed to change overnight from a peaceful agrarian state to a restless industrial center. Steam and electricity, those newly-discovered magical forces, brought about, almost instantly, profound economic changes in the city.

With the changes came some not so good things: factories. Soon, the people became slaves of the machines. A new class of people was formed (the working class), which soon grew into the Proletariat, devoid of rights, power, and protection. Slums began to appear.

When visiting the parishes and factories in his diocese, Ketteler learned of the many problems facing not only the Catholic industrial workers, but also the poor man: the laborer. Ketteler contacted the common people through the study clubs and lay associations that he established. The bishop recognized the values and ideas of the poor laborer. He saw the children of the poor being abandoned and orphaned and in need of an education.



He founded the Brothers of St. Joseph and in 1859 founded the St. Joseph's Boys Home to educate orphaned boys. This community of Brothers no longer exists, but he would spend every opportunity he could with these abandoned boys.

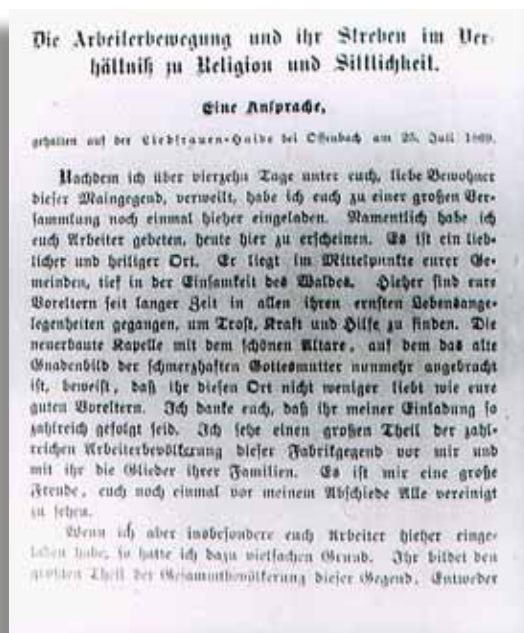
His love for his people found expression in other institutions, such as hospitals and organizations for the benefit of craftsmen. He founded the Mainzer Journeymen's Association to provide a home away from home for young traveling craftsmen.

Ketteler soon realized that, while a



change of heart was essential to any improvement in the socioeconomic plight of the poor, appropriate legislation was necessary. Ketteler began to speak out against the horrors of his times, the changes that had come because of the Industrial Revolution, and how to help protect the working man. He said, "No class stands in need of what unions should give to man in the natural order; namely, help and protection. Look at the evils that have arisen from the isolated condition of the workmen."

Ketteler began to write on behalf of these workmen, and in 1864 he wrote and published his greatest work: *The Labor Question and Christianity*. This work influenced the political platform of the Center Party.



This work, on behalf of the ideals of Christianity and the practical solutions to the problems of the have-nots, was the result of much research into the social questions of the day. Ketteler wrote that every dockhand, every day-laborer, and every peasant should be treated equal to any prince or king and that human dignity should be placed far above class distinction.

Pope Leo XIII was a great follower of Ketteler, and after Ketteler's death, Pope Leo called him his great predecessor. In 1891, he wrote the first social encyclical, called *Rerum Novarum*. It is from this encyclical that all the social teachings of the Church flow. It is our legacy from our founder, Bishop Ketteler.

Much of Ketteler's struggle in his position as bishop involved securing the freedom of the Church from the interference of the Prussian government.

In his early days, he had to establish the role of the Church with the government. There was much concern at this time that the Church would become too powerful politically. There was a lot of fear that the pope would somehow try to dictate the politics of the land.

The government had a great influence in the appointment of theology professors at the universities, which led Ketteler to establish the Mainz Seminary. He met with the other bishops of the Upper Rhine Conference to press the state to grant the Church greater freedom. They wanted to be able to appoint their own educational professors and leaders.

Pope Pius IX called for a General Council. Among the items on the agenda was the question of papal infallibility. Ketteler published a brochure about this, called "The General Council and What It Means for Our Time." In this document, he clearly stated what the doctrine of papal infallibility meant. However, in his own thinking, he believed that an official proclamation was untimely, given the circumstances of the government.

He and the other bishops met at the Church of Fulda in September 1869 and sent a message to the Holy Father expressing their views. Their message stated that this dogma would create confusion and much misunderstanding. Ketteler wrote a pastoral letter to his people before leaving for the First Vatican Council.

The bishops gathered at St. Peter's, where, on December 8, 1869, Pius IX opened the Vatican Council. The bishops discussed the dogma of infallibility; and although Ketteler argued against promulgating it at that time, he was defeated.

Ketteler could not, in good conscience, vote for the dogma, so he departed the council the day prior to the voting. He wrote a letter to the Holy Father, telling him that he didn't want to vote against it, because he believed in it, but not at that particular time. His letter was dated July 17, 1870. Ketteler left the council and began his return trip home to his beloved Germany.

In a brochure published in 1871, Ketteler explained his position to the German people. He told them why he considered the doctrine inopportune; that he was hoping to



have some additions so as to avoid misunderstanding, and that it should be announced to the world in its entirety and not only in part by the Council. The doctrine of papal infallibility caused great concern among the leaders of the Prussian government.

In 1870, Ketteler wrote to Otto von Bismarck, the chancellor, regarding the necessity of incorporating into his constitutions decrees assuring freedom of religion. Von Bismarck, however, feared the intrusion of the Pope in German affairs.

Ketteler met with von Bismarck in November 1871, and of that meeting wrote, "I found the chancellor completely dominated by the thought that danger threatened his work from the side of Rome ... all attempts to convince him of his error proved fruitless."

In May 1872, von Bismarck began to launch his attack upon the Church in Germany, known as the Kulturkampf. In vain, Ketteler raised his voice as a representative of the Reichstag to protest the oppressive force of the Kulturkampf. With great sadness, he saw his seminary close, the Jesuits expelled from his diocese, and other infringements upon the liberty of the Church.

On July 25, 1875, Ketteler celebrated the 25th anniversary of his consecration and installation as Bishop of Mainz. The tremendous support that he felt from his people at the time truly lifted his spirits. Among their gifts to him were the redecoration of the Marian altar in the cathedral, and the cross that was placed on the cathedral's newly erected east tower.

On May 8, 1877, Ketteler departed for Rome, his last journey in life. He went to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Pius IX as bishop. It was at this time that the pope requested an audience with Ketteler and was heard to commend him.

In June 1877, he stopped to visit a priest friend at the Capuchin monastery in Burghausen, but the cold he had caught prior to his visit to Rome had worsened and became so severe that he was immediately confined to bed upon his arrival. On Friday, July 13, he died in the presence



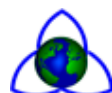
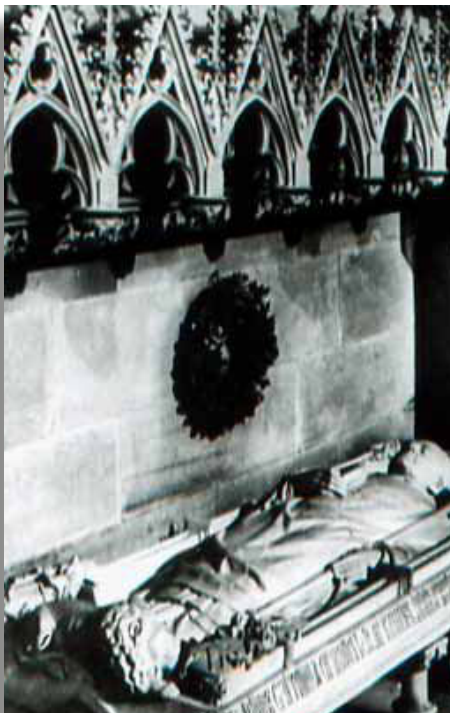
of relatives and friends. His body was then taken to Mainz and waked in the bishop's residence, where thousands paid their last respects. The funeral procession wound its way through the streets, lined with thousands, some even on the rooftops, to pay their last respects.

In his Last Will, Ketteler wrote that his burial should be as simple as possible, keeping his Episcopal dignity. He wanted to be buried in the Blessed Mother Chapel of the cathedral because of his devotion to the Blessed Mother.

In January 1882, the monument to Ketteler, in the Marian chapel of the cathedral, was completed. It reads: The Most Reverend Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, for 27 years, Bishop of the Church of Mainz, a man mighty in word and deed, who, just returning from the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles, piously fell asleep in the Lord on July 13, 1877, in the Capuchin monastery, here awaits the resurrection.

The name Wilhelm Emmanuel Baron von Ketteler, Bishop of Mainz, now belongs to the history of the Church and will stand for all times in its annals alongside the names of the greatest bishops who ever ruled in the Church of God.

Each year, on July 13, the Working Class Organization in Germany holds a service there and keeps an eternal flame lit at Ketteler's grave.



## Marie de la Roche

Mother Marie, our co-foundress, was born in a castle near Heidelberg on October 28, 1812. She was christened Stephanie Fredericka Amelia de la Roche-Starkenfels.

In 1851, she completed her training, was given the name Mother Marie, and the small community of Divine Providence began.

Because of the troubles facing the Church in Germany at the time, the government deprived the Sisters of Divine Providence of their teaching positions, so Ketteler sent six members to the United States of America.

Meanwhile, in Germany, there was a priest who disliked Mother Marie, mainly because she was not German, and so he made life

miserable for her, until he got her ousted from her position. In 1856, Mother Marie was requested to go to the newly opened orphanage in Neustadt.

Mother Marie worked tirelessly during an epidemic of typhoid at the orphanage. She died there on August 1, 1857. It was naturally assumed that she died of typhus, but when they prepared her body for burial, they discovered that she had breast cancer, but had never complained of it.

Mother Marie was buried in Neustadt in the back of a house in a small garden area. Her body was moved from the parish cemetery in 1860 to a convent cemetery. In 1960, the body was exhumed once again, and the remains of Mother Marie were placed in a beautifully carved wooden chest and laid to rest in Neustadt for the last time. There is a monument standing near the grave with medallions of all the provinces in the congregation.

“Be hopeful signs of God’s Providence. Witness joyfully that a living, compassionate God of Providence is with you. Indeed, God is with you as truly as God was with me and the early members of the Community back in 1851.” -- Marie de la Roche



*The Community of Divine Providence began in this house in 1851.*

## The Sisters of Divine Providence in America

To meet the needs of the time, six Sisters from Germany set out for the United States in 1876 to teach the German immigrants who had settled in the Pittsburgh area. Upon their arrival, the Sisters lived in the East Liberty area, first at the St. Joseph Motherhouse on Larimer Avenue, and then at the Mount Immaculate Motherhouse on Lincoln Avenue, adjacent to St. Walburga Church. The St. Joseph Motherhouse has been razed and in its place, on the busy corner of Penn Circle and Larimer Avenue in East Liberty, stands the Pentecostal Temple Church of God in Christ. Mount Immaculate, or "the Mount," as it is fondly remembered by some of the older sisters, was also razed a number of years ago.



In the mid 1920s, the Community outgrew the Mount, and the Sisters began to look for a site on which to build a new Motherhouse. They settled on a piece of farm land in



Allison Park, and construction began. In 1927, the present Motherhouse, Providence Heights, was dedicated. At last, their Motherhouse was large enough to accommodate the more than 500 Sisters who gathered for Community meetings and retreats.

The Jackson farm sprawled out on the north side of Providence Heights where UPMC Passavant Hospital is now located. Cows grazed on the farmland, and from Ketteler Hall down to the creek in back, there were rows of sweet and field corn. Along the Station Walk in back of the property grew black walnut trees, currant bushes, and trees filled with plump, sweet white cherries. There were also yellow and red plum trees. The barn, which is now a garage for the lawn equipment, was filled with chickens and pigs. On the present site of the La Roche College, from Wright Library to the Kerr Fitness and Sports Center and on to the ball field in back, there were apple orchards. Many Sisters remember their days as novices when they picked the fruit, filling their aprons until they overflowed. The Sisters did much of the farm work and canned their food, storing it in the basement canning room.



The landmark building with its tall spire can be seen for miles around. The beautiful grounds at Providence Heights continue to offer an oasis in the midst of the busy North Hills suburbs of Pittsburgh. The property is fronted by a lake and dotted with trees, many of which have been donated in honor or in memory of others. Wedding parties often request permission to use the property for their wedding photographs.

The bell tower at Providence Heights holds three bells. The bells were blessed on May 30, 1926 and lifted to the bell tower to proclaim the Angelus three times each day. The bells were automated in 1999 as part of the building restoration. They ring at 6 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m. daily. The bells also ring for Sisters' funerals, jubilees and other Community celebrations.

In order of size, largest to smallest, the bells were christened: Providentia, with the inscription, We exalt Thy Providence, O Lord, and we submit to all its decrees. Laudate, inscribed, Praise the Lord all ye nations, praise Him all ye peoples. Ave Maria, proclaiming, Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

At one time, the cross atop the building was painted in gold leaf. During World War II, the Sisters were asked to paint over the shiny gold leaf to prevent it from serving as a landmark to enemy aircraft. Due to increases in the cost of gold leaf, the paint was not restored. However, as part of the repairs undertaken after a devastating microburst in 1999, and because gold leaf became affordable once more, the cross was restored to its former brilliance.

In the late 1960s, La Roche College purchased a parcel of the original property to expand its campus. Today, the Sisters maintain several buildings and 16 acres of property that is meticulously groomed and nurtured in accordance with the natural beauty and regeneration of the environment. The Sisters welcome visitors and neighbors to visit, walk, rest and enjoy the beauty of their grounds whenever they need a place of respite.

Providence Heights is home to the approximately 70 retired and semi-retired Sisters. It also houses the Providence Heights Alpha School as well as administrative offices. The Provincial Leadership Team has offices in the Marie de la Roche Center at Providence Heights.

The Sisters are present to those in need through a variety of ministries. They began their active ministry as teachers and nurses. From the earliest days, the Sisters operated hospitals and schools with all of their energy. Beginning with St. Joseph's School in East Liberty, the Sisters took on one school after another, educating thousands of children.

Today, the Sisters maintain an active teaching ministry, which includes the Providence Heights Alpha School and La Roche College, which was founded by the Congregation





in 1963 as well as the Sacred Heart Schools in Kingston, MA. In addition, many Sisters teach in elementary schools, high schools, and colleges in Pittsburgh, across the country, and in Puerto Rico.

The Sisters were a major force in the ministry of health care in the area. In 1915, they took over administration of St. John's Hospital on the North Side of Pittsburgh, and opened a nursing school. The Sisters also administered Braddock General Hospital. The Sisters became administrators of Divine Providence Hospital on the North Side in 1955 and continued to be involved in the administration of the hospital until its sale in 1993 to the Mercy Health System.

In recent years, the Community has expanded its ministries to include pastoral care, social work, campus ministry, educational administration, foster parenting, work among those who are poor, and work on behalf of peace and justice. The Community has re-committed itself to the ideals espoused by the founders, Bishop Emmanuel von Ketteler and Mother Marie de la Roche "to advance the cause of the oppressed." Their 1985 Provincial Chapter Documents state that they are committed "as Providence women to share in the task of co-creating a just world for the 21st Century." Today, the diverse ministries in which the Sisters are involved reflect the needs of a diverse population.

From Pittsburgh, the Sisters went forth to St. Louis, MO; Puerto Rico and Kingston, MA, to carry out the mission of Providence.

### ***St. Louis, Missouri***

The Sisters of Divine Providence first came to St. Louis, Missouri in 1879, just three years after the community's arrival in the United States. They moved west in order to

teach, specifically the children of German immigrants in St. Louis. They staffed St. Francis de Sales School from 1879-1903.

For the next several decades, the community staffed and operated primary schools in the Dioceses of Belleville, Illinois; Springfield, Illinois; Shreveport,

Louisiana; Springfield/Cape Girardeau, Missouri; Jefferson City, Missouri and the Archdiocese of St. Louis, and in parts of Kansas as well.

In 1920, the congregation paid \$50,000 to purchase St. Elizabeth Hospital in Granite City, Illinois. The Sisters of Divine Providence owned, operated and staffed the hospital until 2001, when it was sold and renamed Gateway Regional Medical Center.

In 1930, the St. Louis Province of the Sisters of Divine Providence was established, with Mother M. Rosalia Weaver as Provincial. The congregation was formally welcomed into the Archdiocese of St. Louis by Archbishop John J. Glennon, who shared the Sisters' objective of establishing a boarding school for boys. In 1932, the community purchased an estate in Normandy, Missouri that would become Mount Providence, and serve as both the provincial Motherhouse and the board-



ing school for boys in kindergarten through grade 8. Mount Providence School for Boys



opened in January, 1933. It would quickly grow to a complex of three dormitories, nine-8classrooms, three cafeterias, a library, recreation area, craft room, band room, music room, guest rooms and reception rooms. More importantly, it would educate young boys-and beginning in 1988, girls as well-with a maximum enrollment of more than 300 students. At different points in its history Mount Providence would also be the home of an eldercare facility, a day care, and Catholic Charities' Villa Maria, a shelter for pregnant women and their children.

As a religious community, the Sisters of Divine Providence are committed to aiding the homeless. In 1989, the Sisters of Divine Providence opened La Posada Providencia, a shelter in San Benito, Texas for people seeking legal refuge in the United States. In 1993, they began full sponsorship of Room at the Inn, a shelter for homeless women and families in St. Louis County. The congregation continues to sponsor both of these ministries today.

It was determined in the early 1990s that the St. Louis Province could no longer afford to maintain Mount Providence. The property was sold to the University of Missouri-St. Louis in 1995, and Mount Providence School closed the following year. The Sisters moved out of the Motherhouse in 1997. In February 2001, the buildings were imploded to make way for the redirection of a dangerous stretch of Interstate 70.



Also in 2001, the St. Louis Province united with the Provinces in Pittsburgh and New England, the region of Puerto Rico and their mission in the Dominican Republic to become the Marie de la Roche Province.

With offices at Providence Center in Bridgeton, MO, the Sisters of Divine Providence continue to be a vital presence in the St. Louis metropolitan area and southeastern Illinois. Today, there are 39 Sisters of Divine Providence in the St. Louis area. Twelve of the Sisters live together in prayer ministry and semi-retirement at St. Clare's Villa in Alton, IL. There are also Sisters from the St. Louis area working in other parts of the country, including Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas and Tennessee. Sisters of Divine Providence work in ministries both traditional (teaching, nursing, pastoral ministry) and non-traditional (as canon lawyers, spiritual directors, pilgrimage guides). They continue to be an important part of our church and our community, always striving to make God's Providence more visible in our world.

Today, the Divine Providence community is the corporate sponsor of two homeless shelters instituted by the former St. Louis Province. Room at the Inn is a shelter for homeless women and families and is located in St. Louis County. La Posada Providencia is a shelter for people in crisis from around the world who are seeking legal refuge in the United States. Located in San Benito, Texas, La Posada helps immigrants and asylum seekers representing more than 65 countries.

### ***Puerto Rico***

The 20th century expanded the vision of the Catholic Church, which called upon North American religious communities to become bearers of the Gospel to the peoples of Latin America. Though America in the early 1930s was in the midst of one of the greatest economic depressions the country has ever known, communities of men and women religious gave heroically of their personnel and finances in answering the appeal for missionaries on the Island of Puerto Rico.

It was the fall of 1931 when Mother Josephine (Schmitt) and her council answered the Gospel summons to begin a mission in Puerto Rico. She asked for volunteers, and



much to everyone's surprise, more than 100 Sisters volunteered. It was a happy day for those chosen for the missionary work.

The five Sisters selected must have felt a bit like the pioneer Sisters from Germany as they set out for Puerto Rico on August 7, 1932. Sisters Callista (Strauss), DeChantal (Huber), Innocent (Miller), Macaria (Gaertner), Bertranda (Leininger), and Theodoret (Bretzel) embarked on a week-long journey by train and ship, docking in beautiful San Juan.



The Sisters settled in the coastal town of Arecibo in August 1932.

From an account written later by Sister Francis Gabriel Beyerl, getting there was immensely interesting to the Sisters, as they had never seen such delightful tropical flowers or swaying palm trees. Their first convent was actually a house that the Sisters shared with a local family. It was tiny, but spotlessly clean. The Sisters unpacked, and immediately -- dictionary in hand -- set upon their mission to open a school.

For the school Sisters, the days were long, filled with class work, their own Spanish lessons, and home visits. The classrooms were small and crowded. They often taught 35 or more students in a classroom that was above a pen where chickens were cackling and cows mooing! Three days a week after school and on Saturdays, the Sisters traveled to the campos (outskirts of town) to teach religion.

The first two years they suffered the deprivations that missionaries often are called upon to bear; inadequate housing space, no good drinking water, different food, and the difficulty of learning a new culture and language. But great was the spirit of community, and their hard work was rewarded with success as school enrollment tripled by 1934. Everything grew – school enrollment, catechism classes, and high school programs – and with the growth, more Sisters came to the missions. The Community also was blessed to welcome Puerto Rican women into vowed membership. By 1935, there were two native vocations with more expected. No doubt that in the beginning there were difficult times, but the people of Puerto Rico were warm and welcoming and Providence took root in Puerto Rico.

In the midst of the day to day, the Sisters also were actively involved in the administration of several school systems: Colegio San Miguel in Utuado, Colegio San Felipe in Arecibo, and San Juan Bautista elementary in Orocovis (closed 1978), and in the later



years, teaching at the Catholic University of Puerto Rico School of Nursing. Their leadership and vision, coupled with their dedication and hard work, contributed to building a strong foundation and the assurance that these institutions would survive to serve the people of Puerto Rico for the future.

The ensuing years were marked with growth as the Sisters continued in the ministry of education, pastoral ministry and nursing. Their mission -- to serve the needs of the times -- has guided ministry throughout the years. The Sisters have moved from traditional education and healthcare ministries to offering support through social services. A number of Sisters minister through the Office of Human Promotion and Development in the Diocese of Arecibo, Puerto.

Motivated by the urgency to respond to the poorest of God's people and the Chapter Documents of 1990 which urged the Community to "take a corporate stand to identify with the poor," the Sisters of Divine Providence began to minister in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, in February of 1993.

In Las Cañitas, one of the most deprived barrios in Santo Domingo, the pastor re-



requested that the Sisters be a "presence" to the people. Immediately, they were involved with the youth, the sick and elderly, and the little children in a Center located near a contaminated river.

The program Infantil Emmanuel began about five years ago in response to the crisis created by the barrio of Las Canitas in the Dominican Republic. About 125 children ages 5 to 12 participate in the program. Thirty-five counselors work with these children. Twelve of these counselors were once participants in the program. Also, a group of young women from various parishes are participating in vocational discernment.

The many Sisters of Divine Providence who accepted the call to missionary work in the early days shared common character traits. They were adventurous, welcoming challenge and opportunity. They were willing to step into the unknown and place their trust in our Provident God. They were hard working and selfless. Their hearts were filled with their love of God and their dedication to the mission of the Congregation. Their example and the legacy they have left has inspired those who have followed them into ministry in Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo. The pioneering spirit is alive and well in the women to whom they have passed the torch.

### ***Kingston, MA***

The Sisters of Divine Providence were welcomed to the New England shores in 1946. The wooded parcel of the Kingston land, once a dairy farm and only accessible by a dirt road, was purchased by the Congregation. In the beginning, the existing barns and buildings were remodeled for use as a summer camp for girls. During the winter, the Camp became Mishannock Alpha School, later named Sacred Heart Pre-Primary School, for nursery to second grade students (22 children). In 1949, two large homes were purchased on Court Street in Plymouth. After renovations, Sacred Heart Elementary School opened to grades K-7 with 148 students. Grades 8 and 9 were added in 1950-51.



***Sacred Heart High School***

In 1952, construction began for Sacred Heart High School on a clearing once used to raise food for prize cattle, and the road now known as Route 80 (Bishops Highway) was built. In January 1954, grades 1-6 were continued at Court Street in Plymouth while the kindergarten moved to the Camp Mishannock property in Kingston (1957-62). With the increasing enrollment, ground was broken in 1961 for the new Sacred Heart Elementary School.



***Sacred Heart Elementary School***

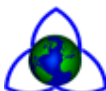
Sacred Heart Pre-Primary School moved from Camp Mishannock to the Court Street property. The kindergarten, along with an Adult Education Center, remained in Plymouth until the 1974 when the property was sold to the town of Plymouth with the specific purpose of housing the elderly. The Pre-Primary was relocated in 1974 to its location

in Kingston. In 2007, a new Early Childhood Center was built is home to Kindergarten, Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten Programs.

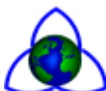


# Timeline of the History of the Sisters of Divine Providence

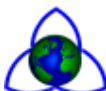
- 1851 Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler and Marie de la Roche found the Sisters of Divine Providence in Finthen, Germany
- 1857 Mother Marie dies in Neustadt
- 1858 Congregation is approved as a Corporation by the German government
- 1861–71 Motherhouse is erected in Mainz, Germany
- 1869–77 Eighteenth president of the United States: Ulysses S. Grant
- 1876 Six Sisters are sent to the United States to begin a new Foundation The little group of Sisters settles in Pittsburgh, PA
- 1877 Bishop Ketteler dies in Burghausen, Germany, enroute home from Vatican Council I  
First American postulant, Mary Barth, enters
- 1879 Sister Cecilia Schroeck becomes the first Sister to die in the Province.  
staff St. Francis de Sales School in St. Louis
- 1880 The Novitiate moves to Heythuizen, Holland to escape the Kulturkampf
- 1881 Sister Michael is appointed first Novice Mistress
- 1891 Sisters begin ministry at orphanage in Wheeling, WV
- 1892 Sister Josepha Barth becomes first American to make final vows
- 1905 Divine Providence Academy is instituted in East Liberty, PA
- 1909 First United States representatives attend General Chapter in Germany
- 1917 Sisters become involved in Toner Institute
- 1920 Sisters make down payment on purchase of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Granite City, IL
- 1921 Four Sisters of Divine Providence take over management of St. Elizabeth's Hospital
- 1922 First Provincial Chapter held in the United States
- 1924 Ground broken for third motherhouse, Providence Heights, in Allison Park, PA
- 1925 The Sacred Congregation for Religious approves the Rule of the Sisters of Divine Providence for seven years, and the Community becomes a Pontifical Community  
The German Community is divided into three Provinces—St. Martin in Mainz, St. Paul in Aschaffenburg, St. Bonifatius in Oberursel  
Mt. Immaculate Alpha School opens
- 1929 Alpha School relocates to Providence Heights
- 1930 The United States Community is divided into two Provinces: St. Peter in Pittsburgh, PA, and St. Louis in St. Louis, MO. Mother M. Rosalia is the first Provincial Superior for the St. Louis Province. Temporary headquarters are at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Granite City, IL
- 1931 Villa Mater Dei is bought in Rome, Italy
- 1932 St. Louis Province acquires property in Normandy, MO, for Mount Providence Motherhouse, and they plan the 1933 opening of Mount Providence Boarding School for Boys  
St. Peter Province opens a mission in Puerto Rico
- 1933 First students arrive at Mount Providence School for Boys
- 1935 The Rule receives final approval from the Vatican
- 1937 Sisters build and dedicate new building at Mount Providence
- 1941 St. Joseph's Department, living quarters for retired Sisters,  
opens at Providence Heights
- 1942 Sisters' salaries are raised from \$28 to \$33 a month
- 1945 Beymer property (67 acres) purchased in Allison Park, PA, Providence Villa opens
- 1946 Sisters establish a mission in Kingston, MA, Property is purchased for Camp Mishannock
- 1947 Ketteler Hall classrooms open; Camp Mishannock opens
- 1948 La Roche Hall completed  
Mishannock Alpha (kindergarten) opens in Kingston



- 1949 Construction begins on Motherhouse for St. Louis Province  
Sacred Heart Elementary School opens in Plymouth
- 1951 Sisters withdraw from St. John's Hospital  
Sisters in Kingston begin providing food service and secretarial support to  
Cardinal O'Connell Seminary
- 1953 Sacred Heart School is erected in Kingston, MA  
Old Presbyterian Hospital purchased to become Divine Providence Hospital
- 1955 Divine Providence Hospital dedicated
- 1956 Property next to Mount Providence is purchased and becomes Villa Maria,  
a home for unwed mothers
- 1957 The Community in Kingston becomes Our Lady Province, Mother Mary Florence  
is named provincial
- 1958 Groundbreaking for Marycrest Preparatory School  
Novitiate in Kingston is dedicated
- 1959 St. Louis Province demolishes original house on Mount Providence property
- 1960 Property is purchased for new Generalate in Rome
- 1961 Six Sisters are sent from Germany to Abancay, Peru  
Property purchased on Guys Run Road for Divine Providence Academy  
Convent Choirs recording made  
The Sisters in St. Louis complete expansion of Mount Providence, with Christ the  
King Chapel wing uniting the 1937 school wing & 1951 new Motherhouse wing
- 1962 John XXIII announces Vatican II  
Sisters erect a new building for Sacred Heart Elementary School
- 1963 La Roche College founded
- 1964 Young Korean women come to Rome to enter the Community and stay in the  
Novitiate in the Generalate  
Christmas Mosaic recorded
- 1965 Mother Pierre Gehenio is elected as first American General Superior  
Mother Rosalia Weaver, foundress of the St. Louis Province, dies
- 1967 Young Korean women are accepted as Postulants in Korea
- 1968 Interim Directives published
- 1969 New General Directives are received
- 1970 First issue of Intracom published
- 1971 Transfiguration House of Prayer opens  
Alpha Boarding School closes  
Toner Institute closes
- 1972 Social Security Program made possible
- 1973 Mortgage for Providence Heights burned
- 1974 Sacred Heart Pre-Primary moves to former Novitiate building in Kingston
- 1975 Sisters of Divine Providence celebrate their Centennial in the United States
- 1976 Marycrest mortgage burned  
House of Prayer moves to 22 acres of land in Butler County, PA
- 1977 Visitation Convent opens in Kingston as a formation house and center for  
spiritual renewal programs
- 1978 Death of Popes Paul VI and John Paul I; election of Pope Paul II
- 1981 Sisters of Divine Providence in the United States receive first Associates  
in Kingston; 10 women and men were welcomed  
St. Joseph Annex in Pittsburgh opened for care of infirm Sisters  
St. Louis Province completes multi-purpose building for Mount Providence School  
and Motherhouse  
Sisters celebrate 50th anniversary at mission in Puerto Rico  
San Rosario sold



- 1984 Associate Program initiated in Pittsburgh, four individuals welcomed  
Divine Providence Academy closes  
Providence Child Care Center South begins at St. Anne Convent
- 1985 Providence Fund initiated  
St. Louis Development Office opens  
UMSL Eldercare Center opens on the first floor of Mount Providence  
St. Louis Province launches Associate program; 10 Associates welcomed in 1986
- 1988 Pittsburgh Development Office inaugurated  
Mount Providence School goes co-ed
- 1989 Providence Summer Ministry Outreach initiated  
St. Louis Province founds La Posada Providencia in the Rio Grand Valley of Texas  
Babcock Boulevard property sold to Lincoln Club  
Conference Center addition to Kearns Spirituality Center
- 1992 Room at the Inn opens in the Motherhouse in St. Louis  
Foster care ministry begins in Pittsburgh
- 1993 The International Convent is established in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic  
Divine Providence Hospital sold to Pittsburgh Mercy Health System  
Divine Providence Foundation established  
St. Louis Province assumes corporate sponsorship of Room at the Inn
- 1995 The region in Korea becomes a Province  
Providence Child Care Center North and Providence Family Support Center begin  
Amelia House established  
Property on west side of Babcock Boulevard sold to La Roche College  
St. Louis Province purchases property for La Posada Providencia in Texas
- 1996 Mount Providence School closes  
Mount Providence Motherhouse and adjoining buildings sold to the University of Missouri, St. Louis
- 1997 St. Louis Sisters move to St. Bartholomew's  
Kingston Development Office inaugurated
- 1999 Providence Center opens in St. Louis for ministry, office, and gathering space
- 2001 Provinces in Kingston, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis, and the region of Puerto Rico and the mission of Santo Domingo unite to form the Marie de la Roche Province  
Sisters of Divine Providence celebrate 125-year anniversary  
Mount Providence is imploded, allowing Interstate 70 to be rerouted to eliminate dangerous curves  
St. Elizabeth Medical Center in Granite City, IL, is sold to Gateway Community Health Systems  
Sister Robin Nordyke professes final vows as the first permanent member of the Marie de la Roche Province
- 2002 Novitiate established in Kingston
- 2005 Building dedication: Providence Connections, Brighton Rd., Pittsburgh's North Side  
President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush visit Providence Family Support Center as part of the Administration's Faith-Based Initiative program
- 2006 Provincial Chapter held in Pittsburgh
- 2007 Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center opens a new building on the grounds of Sacred Heart Elementary School  
Novitiate established in Santo Domingo
- 2008 Providence Child Care Center South closes  
Novitiate established in Granite City (Diocese of Springfield, IL)  
*Ellen Lavender selected as first lay Director of the Associate relationship*  
Pope John Paul II dies on April 2, age of 85; Pope Benedict XVI elected on April 19



## Part II: History of the Associate Relationship by Area

### Kingston, MA

In 1980, the Provincial Chapter of what was then the Province of Our Lady of Divine Providence agreed to form a group called the Divine Providence Associates. The Chapter said that "The goal of association is the mutual support of the Associates and the Sisters in their search to find God working in their lives and in their efforts to make him more evident to the world through their life and ministry."



Initially, there were three levels of involvement from which the Associates could choose. Prayer Associates would unite themselves in prayer for ministry and needs of Associates and Sisters. Supportive Associates offered support for Associates and Sisters through presence, involvement, sharing and prayer. The Collaborative Associates committed themselves to collaboration with

the Sisters and Associates through ministry, presence, active involvement, sharing and prayer.

Sister Florita Rodman was appointed the first Associate Coordinator and a group of 10 women and men were welcomed as Associates on December 8, 1981. The Associates were welcomed into the province Assembly days to share their faith journey with the Sisters and to benefit from the educational and spiritual enrichment of those days. They shared in discussions and evaluations through which the group grew and its structures were changed as needs were mutually recognized by the Sisters and Associates.

In June 1991, Sister Mary Francis Fletcher was appointed the new Associate Coordinator and joined 57 Associates in celebrating the 10th anniversary of the relationship. Sixteen of the original 41 Associates participated. At the celebratory Mass, four new Associates were received. They were Ann Moberg, Eileen Scheck, Ann Weaver and Rita Wilson. A buffet supper followed the Mass. The supper was prepared by Sisters Patty Ann Moffett, Mary Pires and Miriam Therese Rubeo.

Sister Mary Francis turned the Associate leadership over to Sister Patrice in June 2000. Sister Emma Jean Middendorf became the Associate Coordinator in 2004. Ann Moberg was a local coordinator in 2007 through 2009 when Cynthia Anne Merry became the local coordinator along with Sister Emma Jean.



*First Associate, Elaine Lafayette, and Sister Maria Fest (right) at the 25th Anniversary Mass and Brunch.*

### Pittsburgh, PA

Sister Mary Glenn planted the seed for alternative membership forms at the Provincial Chapter of 1975. At the 1980 Chapter, the delegates formally recognized the existence of Divine Providence associates and former members and mandated the research and development of a non-vowed membership.

Sisters Carol Stenger and Judy Meinert researched and developed co-membership, as it was called at the time, with Elaine Lafayette and Carol Balchus. On June 16, 1984, Elaine and Carol were received as the first two co-members. Sister Carol Stenger became the first Director and Sharon Balchus was the Assistant Director.

The second group of co-members was received in December 1984. Sister Jean Rene Seiler became the Director in December 1984. The group expanded into Ohio when Nora Hennessy was received in February, 1985. In October six co-members were received from Michigan with Sister Marilyn Bergt as the area co-





ordinator. Also in October, there were seven new co-members received from Pittsburgh. The Pittsburgh Associates have welcomed additional Associates each year since.

Sister Jean Rene and Bonnie Coluccio formed an advisory board consisting of representatives from Pittsburgh, Detroit and Ohio.

June 1989 saw the appointment of Sister Janet Schaffran as Co-Director. Sister Janet is the third vowed member to lead the group and the first co-director since two Associates were to share in the leadership as co-directors. Dawn Goulait and Diann Westrick were elected the first Co-Directors in April 1990.

Beginning in September, 1989, a regular pattern of monthly meetings were held at various locations with topics related to Providence spirituality and theology, and social justice issues. Each meeting included a covered dish supper or a picnic cookout. In August 2000, small groups of sisters and associates were formed for monthly meetings. The groups were to gather in various locations and at various times for study and fellowship. By 2009, there were ten groups meeting.

The first Gathering of Associates from all areas was held in St. Louis, October 21-23, 2005. Pittsburgh sent 27 Associates to the Gathering which had the theme of "Fan into Flames the Gifts of the Spirit Within You." The Pittsburgh Associates hosted the second Gathering, October 26-28, 2007. The theme was "Weaving the Fabric of Our Lives."

Throughout the years, the Pittsburgh Associates have enjoyed many retreats and enrichment days that have added to their spiritual journey of Providence. Many Associates look forward to the Spring Fling and St. Nick's Day when they are able to entertain the Sisters at Providence Heights with games, crafts and snacks.

On, October 12, 2008, the Associates started the celebration of their 25th anniversary with an Enrichment Day. The theme, developed by Sister Michele Bisbey, was "The Spirituality of Jubilee." Sr. Michele's presentation was followed by an elaborate high tea prepared by Associates Jeanne Kohser and Paula Gilchrist.

During the anniversary year, each faith sharing group selected a ministry sponsored by the Sisters of Divine Providence to provide additional help and needed items. The groups will continue this as an on-going service project.



An anniversary Mass and brunch was celebrated on March 29, 2009 for all Associates and Sisters. It celebrated Associate leaders, contact Sisters, inquiry session presenters, the achievements and history over the past 25 years as Associates of the Sisters of Divine Providence. Associate Elaine Lafayette,

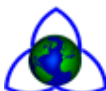
the first Associate and an early director, was recognized for her continued participation. Also, six Associates were received at the Mass.

The anniversary concluded with a river cruise on June 27, 2009 that was suggested by Sister Cathy Frost and organized by Associate Marge Weber. All of the 40 Associates and Sisters on board the Pittsburgh Water Limousine thoroughly enjoyed the day cruising the three rivers of Pittsburgh!

### **St. Louis, MO**

In 1983 Sr. Lucy Schmidt, Provincial, and Sisters Barbara McMullen and Kathleen Hagen, Vocation Directors, attended a workshop in Chicago, Illinois entitled "Alternative Models of Membership." This workshop discussed various ways lay men and women could belong to religious communities. There were at that time a few religious communities that were experimenting with this type of program. Most of them called these men and women "Associates."

The Sisters were very excited to learn of this new way of membership and discussed it the whole ride back to St. Louis! About a month later, Sr. Barbara discussed with Sr. Lucy the possibility of beginning this program in St. Louis. Sr. Lucy asked her to begin



working on this idea and to have a proposal ready for the Provincial Chapter of 1985.

Sisters Barbara and Kathleen spent the next two years researched various models of membership, collated the information gathered, made reports to the Provincial and her Council and formed a committee to write up what a program would consist of for the province.

In 1984 Sisters Barbara and Kathleen visited with every local community in the province to present their findings and get input on a possible program for Associates. After all the visitations and discussions, they wrote the first draft of a program (handbook) to present to the Sisters. They again visited the local communities to discuss the draft and make revisions. At the Chapter of 1985 a proposal was put forward to accept an alternative form of membership in the province and it was determined that these lay men and women would be called "Associates."

Following the Chapter in June of 1985 Sr. Lucy Schmidt appointed Sr. Barbara McMullen as the first Associate Director of the St. Louis Associate program. It was then her task, in addition to her full time teaching position, to get candidates for the program, develop and do orientation sessions with them, and help them to prepare the ceremony of their acceptance as CDP Associates. Sister Barbara remained the Director of Associates from 1985-2007 when she was elected to the Provincial Council.

The people who were Associate co-directors, secretaries, and treasurers over the years and assisted Sr. Barbara were: Maggie Jost, Mary Hassler, Beverly Camper, Jan Foster, Rosemary Davison, Diane Bailey, Linda Hoefflin, Cathy Cullen, Pat Alsop, Gil Weyhaupt, Colleen Price, and Cathy Cassy.

The first group of ten Associates was received in November, 1986. The ceremony was a simple prayer service with a theme, chosen readings and songs, a covenant statement signed by the Associate and a remembrance symbol that coordinated with their theme was given to each, along with a candle with their name, year of reception and corporate commitment of the community on it.

Those first ten Associates received in the Mount Providence Chapel in 1986 were: Diane Bailey, Virginia Becker, Sharon Dougherty, John Friedel, Maggie Jost, Frank Koebler, Mary Mayo, Norma Saller, Terry Southerland and Eileen Wischmeier. The theme of their ceremony was: "Called to be a Healing Presence of Hope and Love for the Transformation of the World." Each year since, the St. Louis Associates have received an average of four Associates per year.

From 1986 and each year after, Associates were received in November until the year 2000, when the program was shifted to have the reception and renewal ceremony in late August. It remains on the last Sunday of August.

Over these years there have been several revisions to the handbook, changes to the orientation sessions, and the involvement and participation of the Associates continued to evolve.

In the beginning years, between 1986-1990 Associates usually participated with the Sisters in community functions such as Jubilees, professions, retreat/reflection days and parties. In addition to community events they also began to have their own business meetings and sponsored two parties annually for the Sisters.

From 1990 on, as the Associates grew in number, they also grew in participation and involvement with the community. During these years they often served on community committees, participated in local assemblies, and by 1995 even served as chair of some Chapter committees. While they had no elected voice in the chapter, and were not present for the financial parts of meetings, they were able to participate in the discussions and be part of the consensus gathering of opinions at the open Chapter meetings.

During the years between 1990 and 2001 the Associates were integral in the life of the community in St. Louis and helped the Sisters in many ways. During this same time it became possible for some Sisters and Associates to also live in community together, a practice that still continues today. Sister Barbara McMullen began sharing a residence with Associate Beverly Camper and Sr. Cecilia Jansen began sharing residence with Associate Nancy Bookout. (Sr. Cecilia Jansen is now deceased.)

During these years the Associates began to sponsor two functions for the St. Louis



province: the Pink Pajama Party in February and the BBQ in May. These were parties where the Sisters and Associates often shared fun activities, stories, games and refreshments. Later these annual functions have come to be known as the Fall Turning Leaf party, and the Spring Fling.

Each year the Associates had an annual retreat day which was prepared and given by Sr. Barbara McMullen, CDP, Director. These topics varied and usually included opening prayer, input sessions, reflection/prayer time, sharing in small and large groups, a creative activity, and closing prayer. Sr. Barbara's last retreat with the Associates was in 2008. Mary Lou Bennett, a Catholic lay woman, presented the 2009 retreat day.

Another activity sponsored by the Associates is the Ongoing Education Day. This day usually has a topic of interest selected by the Associates and a speaker is engaged. The topics enjoyed by Associates and Sisters included: The Myers Briggs Personality Indicator, Understanding Your Type, The Enneagram, The Enneagram and Prayer Types, Understanding the Four Gospels, Spirituality and Me, Types of Prayer, Spirituality in Everyday Life, Justice in My Life as an Associate, and Liturgy and Liturgical Forms.



*Associate Pat Rampolla (right) led the 2008 education day on "Justice in My Life as an Associate."*

The Associates also participated in the community's local assemblies, sharing in ideas, input, discussion and ways to help the sponsored ministries. When the St. Louis province began sponsoring a homeless shelter and a refugee house in Texas, the Associates found ways to help. Many of them volunteered at the shelter, did mailings with and for the sponsored ministries and sent money and goods to the refugee house in Texas. In 1998 a small group of Associates and Sr. Barbara visited the refugee house, La Posada Providencia, in Texas, where they listened to the stories of people who had escaped the horrors of war and oppression in their countries.

In 1999 Sr. Barbara, two other Sisters, and nine Associates visited the Sisters in Germany, toured the historical and holy places of the foundation of the community, and met and shared with other "Associates" (Partners in Providence) in Germany. This pilgrimage was a wonderful experience for all those attending.

The three provinces in the United States had begun celebrations together in 1976, 1977 and 1978. In 1986 a Gathering was held in Pittsburgh and some of the St. Louis Associates attended. In 1997 a Convocation was held in Pittsburgh for the Sisters and Associates of the three provinces, specifically to discuss the possibility of coming together. After the Convocation, the Leadership Teams of each province began to meet about the possibility of a merger. It seemed the journey to come together for the sake of mission had begun.

In 2001 the St. Louis province, along with the Kingston and Pittsburgh provinces and the region of Puerto Rico decided to merge and become one US/Caribbean

province, the Marie de la Roche province. This, of course, was to have a great impact on the St. Louis Associates and the way they participated in community meetings and events with the Sisters. Over all the time, since the beginning in 1986, many close relationships were formed with the Sisters and participation with local community was a great value to the Associates.

In October, 2005, the St. Louis area Associates hosted the first gathering of Associates from across the province in order to try and become a more unified group. It was held at the Pallotine Retreat Center in Florissant, MO. It was a wonderful weekend of input, reflection, sharing, prayer, fun and sightseeing. Associates from Kingston, Puerto Rico, Pittsburgh, Michigan, and Ohio traveled to join in this momentous event. It was decided by those in attendance that it was a good way for the Associates from across the province to get to know one another better and so it was decided that in two years it would be hosted by the Pittsburgh Associates.



Another new development in the Associate relationship was the instituting of the Associate Providence Award in 2005. This award would be given annually at assembly to an Associate who in her or his life and ministry, makes Providence visible in our world. The criteria are: Manifests trust in Providence/Providence spirituality; Lives with a spirit of joy, hospitality and hopefulness and; Demonstrates justice by word and service to those in need. The award was not given in 2006 and 2007 due to Chapter and Leadership changes.



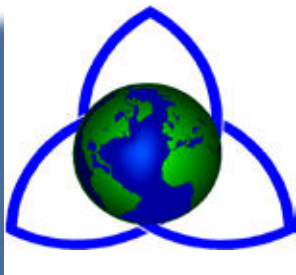
*The St. Louis Associates renewal, 2009.*

At the province's annual assembly in August, 2008, the second Associate Providence award was presented to Gil Weyhaupt from the St. Louis area. At the 2010 assembly, St. Louis Associate Linda Hoefflin received the Providence Award.

In November of 2006, the community held their Chapter of Elections and Sr. Barbara McMullen, Associate director of the St. Louis area, was elected Assistant Provincial of the Marie de la Roche province for a term of five years. This would necessitate a change of leadership within the St. Louis Associates. A new director would need to be appointed. Sr. Stephanie Turck was appointed the new Sister local coordinator to replace Sr. Barbara McMullen.

In October of 2007 there was another Associate Gathering held at Kearns Spirituality Center in Pittsburgh, PA, October 26-28, 2007. Again, Associates from the other geographic areas traveled to Pittsburgh to participate. It was again a wonderful time of sharing. One of the activities of the weekend was to do some futurizing for the Associate relationship. It was exciting to think of what could be in the future for Associates in the community.

The group of local coordinators, led by Linda Hoefflin, from the St. Louis group, talked about a new associate symbol for the united province. Linda worked on several designs, submitted them to the Associates, and by consensus, a choice for symbol was selected. Linda then worked with a jeweler to design and craft the associate symbol. It is a triquetra, a perfect representation of the "three-in-one" concept of the Trinity. Within the feminine version of the triangle is the planet Earth which we entrust to the care of Providence. For Associates then, the trefoil, like the triangle, is a traditional symbol for the Triune God we call Providence. God's Providence is made visible through acts of justice and compassion and through an inclusive, hospitable presence. Associates wear this symbol as a sign of their commitment to be God's Providence in the world.



The acceptance of the associate relationship in 1985 at the provincial Chapter and the first reception of Associates in 1986 will bring the St. Louis Associates to their 25th anniversary years in 2010 and 2011. It has been a wonderful relationship over these years between the Sisters and Associates in this area of the province. Hopefully that relationship will continue to grow and deepen in the years to come.

### ***Puerto Rico***

In 1992, the Sisters of Divine Providence in Puerto Rico invited some friends and benefactors to come to the Convent in Arecibo for shared prayer. This group continued to gather monthly for about three years under the direction of Sister Robert Grzelak. It seemed that interest in the group was waning and the Sisters decided to discontinue the monthly sessions in 1995. Some of the group were disappointed and requested the renewal of the gatherings.

After much discussion and discernment, the Sisters made a new commitment in 1996 to invite friends and benefactors to a newly organized Family of Providence. Plans were made in March, 1996, to organize the group under the direction of Hermana Maria



Torres. Invitations were sent out September 29, 1996 for the first meeting for the new group. On September 6, 1998, the first group was initiated with 12 Associates.

The members of the Family of Providence are from different parts of the island. Some come a three hour distance, other less, but all are happy to be able to meet each month to accompany one another on this journey. They are people of different ages, marital status and educational backgrounds. The differences fade into insignificance. Each one has something to contribute and something to learn.



The Associates celebrate an annual Christmas Party in Arecibo, retreat weekends, and participate in an annual Peace Event organized by the Sisters. In 2009, the Christmas Party was held in the Arecibo Convent and hosted some members of the

Provincial Leadership team. The photo at left shows some of the fun!

On Sunday, September 28, 2003, the 22 Associates and the Sisters of Divine Providence gathered to participate in a beautiful Eucharistic Liturgy of Thanksgiving in Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Arecibo celebrated by Father Cesar Ramirez. The Associates and Sisters prepared the activity under the direction of Hermana Maria Torres. Following the Liturgy, all gathered in the convent for the initiation of two new Associates, Mirna Velez and Iris Reyes. A delicious Puerto Rican meal was prepared by the Festive Meal Committee to conclude the festivities. Herman Carmen Gonzalez, a member of the Provincial Council at the time, congratulated the Associates on their anniversary and praised them for sharing the charism of the sisters of Divine Providence.

The Associates have participated in both Gatherings. Five Associates and three Sisters traveled to St. Louis in 2005 and four Associates and three Sisters participated in the Pittsburgh Gathering in 2007. Hermana Maria and Associate Mirna Velez attended the North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR) convention in 2006.

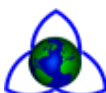
In 2010, there are 20 active Associates. While the Associates are not actively involved in the ministries of the Sisters in Puerto Rico, they are supportive of the Sisters and participate when they are able. The annual Peace Event organized by the Sisters is an example of their participation.

### ***Associate Unification***

In February, 2000, the three province's Associate Directors met in Puerto Rico to determine how to bring the various former Associate programs together into one unified Associate program. Much work was done at the meeting and afterwards to look at the various handbooks, reception and renewal ceremonies, rituals, orientation sessions, and ways of involvement. That was presented to a Chapter Committee in 2001 but somehow nothing ever happened with that information at the time.

In 2006, at the next Provincial Chapter of the new province, the Associate directors were asked to re-examine the work done in 2000 and write some guidelines for a unified Associate program. Over the next year the area directors and co-directors met, studied the various elements of association, and together wrote what was titled, Guidelines for Associate Relationship. One of the changes made along the way was the realization that it is much more than a "program" or a "process." It is really a "relationship" and so now when we talk about Associates we speak of the "associate relationship."

It was during this year also that the directors and co-directors renamed the local directors "coordinators" and recommended to the Provincial Leadership Team that there be one associate director for the whole province. Upon recommendations by the local coordinators, Ellen Lavender was named the first lay Director of Associates of the Marie de la Roche province in January of 2008. She was hired part-time, 10 hours per week, and receives a stipend.



## Closing Prayer (Option One)

**Leader:** History belongs to the intercessors who believe a new world into being.

**Reader 1:** “To pray is to learn to believe in a transformation of self and world which seems empirically impossible.

**Reader 2:** What is unbelief but the despair, dictated by the dominant powers, that nothing can really change, a despair that renders revolutionary vision and practice impotent.

**Reader 3:** Faith entails political imagination, that ability to envision a world that is not dominated by the powers”  
C. Meyers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 1988

## Closing Prayer (Option Two)

### A prayer from the legacy of Mother Marie,

**All:** You, O God, are my patience and my strength,  
You are my light and my counselor.  
O my God, give me the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and fortitude,  
the Spirit of knowledge and of piety,  
and, the Spirit of a wholesome fear of God.

O my God, give me unwearying zeal,  
Gentleness and kindness of heart, and tireless patience.  
make me an instrument of your love.

Amen

