

Women of Providence in

Collaboration

Sisters of Divine Providence, Marie de La Roche Province

Sisters, Associate Receive Ketteler Award for Social Justice

At a special awards ceremony and reception on August 2, Sisters Hilary Hooks, CDP; Margaret Mertens, CDP; Zita Telkamp, CDP; Therese Cunningham, SHSp; and Associate Marlene McClain were presented the 2019 Ketteler Award for Social Justice for their faithful dedication to the clients of La Posada Providencia. Located in San Benito, Texas, La Posada is a CDP-sponsored ministry for people in crisis from around the world who are seeking legal refuge in this country. The shelter staff provides a safe and welcoming home, mentors to promote self-sufficiency and cultural integration, and imparts values which witness God's Providence in our world.

With other members of the St. Louis CDP community, Sister Hilary opened La Posada Providencia in 1989. She served as its first Program Director from 1989 until 1995.

In 1995, Sister Margaret became the Director of La Posada Providencia and remained in this position until 2008. To prepare for this ministry, Sister Margaret learned the Spanish language and Mexican-American culture by studying at the local community college and entering a language immersion

experience in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Beginning in 2001 through 2007, Sister Zita ministered at Room at the Inn, a shelter for homeless women and families and a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Divine Providence. Sister Zita became Program Director of La Posada Providencia in 2008 and continued in this position until 2017. Under her direction, the emergency shelter greatly expanded its capacity, operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and welcoming its 8,000th client in 2014.



Left to right: Sr. Hilary Hooks, Sr. Margaret Mertens, Sr. Zita Telkamp, Sr. Therese Cunningham, SHSp, Associate Marlene McClain

Upon her return to the U.S. from ministry in Mexico,, Sister Therese was drawn to serve her immigrant brothers and sisters, and set out for La Posada Providencia in 2005, in search of a job. When meeting with Sister Margaret, Sister Therese began her ministry as a Client mentor and Coordinator of English as a second language.

In 2015, Marlene visited La Posada for the first time. Since then, she has spent six months of each year, from October through April, volunteering as an English

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*From the
director*

Sister Barbara McMullen, CDP
WPC executive director

As this newsletter comes to you, we are in the season of Fall, where the colors of the leaves are beautiful, striking, refreshing, and even exhilarating! The squirrels are scampering about, and creation becomes a treasure box for us to enjoy its gifts. Every Fall God replenishes the leaves on the trees and gifts us with bright yellows, reds, and oranges. And then they fall to the ground and decompose in order to nourish the earth's floor for a future time. It seems that Providence is always taking care of this world in quiet ways that we might miss or simply take for granted. Autumn allows us to enjoy all that nature has to offer us, and perhaps to learn some valuable lessons from creation.

Take squirrels for instance. I was sitting on the patio watching them one Saturday. They are good stewards of the earth. They eat bark, plants, insects, roots and seeds which help out the environment. They teach us how to adapt and adjust. Did you know that squirrels are found almost all over the world and in different kinds of climates as well? They teach us to pace ourselves, to live in God's rhythm. I learned that they normally get up at sunrise, get their

food, build their nest, raise their young mostly in daylight times. They take a siesta in the afternoon. Just watching them they seem to be lifelong learners. They can handle life upside down, be flexible in running from limb to limb, have more than one escape route, and build more than

one nest as a backup plan! They teach us to enjoy life to its fullest! It was fun watching them play--running up and down trees and jumping from branch to branch; they were enjoying life! Those are just five lessons our squirrel friends might teach us as we once again enter the season of autumn. Find your rhythm—enjoy the beauty of luscious leaves in fall colors—and listen for the whispers of God in creation all around you.

The stories in this issue convey some of the squirrels' lifelong lessons too. They speak of climate change, saving seeds, planning in chapters, elections and resolutions. Whether we are celebrating 146 years of service, 331 years of jubilarians' ministries, recalling the 100th anniversary of the right of women to vote, Sisters teaching in Ghana, the legacy of a community to the homeless, or five dedicated women serving at the southern border in San Benito, TX, the Women of Providence are present and active, co-creating a world of justice and peace. There are so many wonderful stories in this issue! Be sure and find some time to "feel the spirit" in the stories as you celebrate the colors of Fall!

Finally, watch for news of our Providence Event, celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Women of Providence in Collaboration, June 12-14, 2020 in Pittsburgh, PA. There will be online registration. This time you will be able to complete your registration online, print it out and mail it with your check to the WPC office. Also, new Advent Prayer Services will be on our website, www.wpcweb.org, for your use again this year. Happy Autumn!

Barbara



Room at the Inn Establishes Legacy Award in Honor of Sisters of Divine Providence

Room at the Inn was created to provide homeless women and families temporary shelter in unused church space. This concept was originated by the Interfaith Hospitality Network that spread around the country in the 1980s. In 1988, a similar program began in St. Louis through the county shelter program, Community in Partnership, which began housing overflow from The Salvation Army's shelter on weekends and in the winter months. McKnight Road Church of Christ introduced "Room at the Inn," and used church space to temporarily shelter the homeless. More congregations in St. Louis County began providing overflow housing to The Salvation Army.

In 1992, Room at the Inn received a grant from the St. Louis County Department of Human Services and Housing Resource Commission. The grant enabled the Salvation Army to recruit more congregations as overnight sites and to expand Room at the Inn to a year-round shelter. The Sisters of Divine Providence were asked to house the expanded day site and they responded by donating space in their provincial house, Mount Providence, located in Normandy. The Sisters then made a corporate commitment to families without homes and became the sponsors of Room at the Inn.

In 1998, they incorporated two separate agencies under Providence Ministry Corporation: Room at the Inn and La Posada Providencia, a shelter located in San Benito, Texas. In 1999, the Sisters moved their provincial offices

to Providence Center in Bridgeton with one third of the facility designated to accommodate the daytime shelter program. By 2000, the number of night sites had grown to 55.

On July 1, 2011, the legal name of Providence Ministry Corporation was officially changed to Room at the Inn, with the mission, services, staff and goals all remaining the same. At the same time, La Posada Providencia was spun off as its own corporation in Texas.

In 2018, the Sisters made the decision to move out of the building in Bridgeton. Rather than selling the property, the Sisters made the incredible decision to donate the property to Room at the Inn!

The Sisters' selfless acts of compassion and generosity not only established a firm foundation and decades of support for Room at the Inn, but have given the gift of a future to this program. Their legacy and spirit will forever live in this organization; and women and families will continue to be served because of them.

In their honor, the Room at the Inn Board of Directors has established the Sisters of Divine Providence Legacy Award, whose inscription reads: "Igniting the Spirit of Service and Compassion in us all!" Each year, someone outstanding, who exemplifies their spirit of compassion and service, will be honored in the Sisters' name -- and with God's Providence -- we will continue to serve well into the future!



Ketteler Award

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tutor, chauffeur for clients, and member of the Fundraising committee. Affectionately referred to as the "Jill of all trades" by La Posada Providencia staff and volunteers, Marlene is honored to be a recipient of the 2019 Ketteler award.

In 1998, the Sisters of Divine Providence instituted the Ketteler Award to honor individuals who demonstrate a strong commitment to social justice. The award is named for Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, Bishop of Mainz, Germany, co-founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, and tireless fighter for the rights of the working class. He was bishop from 1850 until his death in 1877, at the age of 66.

Province Joins LCWR in Calling for End to Divisive Rhetoric

On August 15, 2019, Sister Michele Bisbey, CDP, Provincial Leader, sent the following letter to President Donald J. Trump.

Mr. President,
As Sisters of Divine Providence, we commit ourselves to creating a world of compassion, justice and peace, and to making God's providence more visible in our world. We join with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in calling for an end to all divisive rhetoric.

We live in a world increasingly marked by hatred, brutality, and violent conflict. We see our own country threatened by increasing disparities in economic, political, and social power. We are caught in a political culture paralyzed by ideological extremism and hyper-partisanship. These are times that require exceptional insight and courageous leadership.

In the face of these unprecedented challenges, we are outraged and heart-broken when our political leaders appeal to our basest instincts and stoke the fires of fear that threaten to tear the fabric of our nation apart. We cannot, we will not, let the voices of hatred and fear carry the day.

Mr. President, we beseech you to end all divisive and polarizing rhetoric. We implore you to never use language that disrespects, dehumanizes, or demonizes others. We expect our president, and all who serve this nation as leaders, to be always mindful of the common good and the dignity of each and every person. You hold a position that has the potential to inspire the best of every one of us and we ask you to use this unique status to bring about healing and never seek to create division.

The people of this pluralistic nation form a diverse polity characterized by a wide variety of beliefs, experiences, and interests. Disagreements and differences have the potential to challenge all of us to abandon easy certainty and seek a fuller truth. The problem is not our many differences or passionate disagreements. Those differences are our greatest strength; those disagreements are opportunities for growth. It is how we handle those inevitable conflicts that spells the difference between building the common good and destroying the bonds that bind this nation.

In his address to the US Congress in 2015, Pope Francis invited our political leaders to promote respect for the dignity of every human person and to renew their commitment to a spirit of cooperation. He also addressed each of us and all who seek to lead this nation when he said, "Each son or daughter of a given country has a mission, a personal and social responsibility ... You are called to defend and preserve the dignity of your fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good, for this is the chief aim of all politics. A political society endures when it seeks, as a vocation, to

satisfy common needs by stimulating the growth of all its members, especially those in situations of greater vulnerability or risk ... Building a future of freedom requires love of the common good and cooperation in a spirit of subsidiarity and solidarity."

As Catholic sisters, our ministries frequently require us to be in the heart of situations of discord and division, and thus we understand the great complexities and challenges that are inherent in the work of reconciliation. We too have to reach deep within ourselves to bring forth the grace and strength that are needed to not give in to the temptation of labeling or judging those who are different from us. We share with you, Mr. President, that maintaining this fundamental stance in life requires discipline and fortitude and a constant examination of our daily thoughts and deeds in light of our beliefs. We sometimes come up short, but pledge to do better each day because we are aware of the moral authority we, as sisters, bear. We ask you, Mr. President, if you would consider a similar examination of the practice of your own moral authority.

We send this letter to you as more than 300 Sisters and Associates who minister in the United States and the Caribbean. We promise to never cease raising our voices on behalf of the common good and praying for the healing of this country.

Sincerely,
Sister Michele Bisbey, CDP
Provincial Leader



Novice from Bernarda Morin Province Experiences Religious Life in Mother Joseph Province

Sister Maria Fernanda Apablaza, a novice from Bernarda Morin Province in Chile, recently spent three months with sisters in the Mother Joseph Province. The international formation experience gave her a valuable opportunity to get to know the sisters, ministries and culture of the American West.

From December 18, 2018, through March 16, 2019, Sister Maria Fernanda lived with Sisters Josie Ramac, Huong Nguyen, and Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo in their West Seattle home. Sister Maria Fernanda expressed gratitude for her hospitable multicultural, multigenerational living companions. Sister Josie Ramac, who speaks Spanish (in addition to English, Tagalog, French and Vietnamese) helped her navigate through daily life and language challenges. Sister Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo, also a novice, and Sister Huong Thi Nguyen, who has made temporary vows, offered helpful advice and camaraderie.



Sister Maria Fernanda Apablaza (left) and Sister Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo flank the statue of Blessed Emilie Gamelin on the Providence campus in Renton.

Between English classes, traveling to other sisters' communities and participating in various ministries, Sister Maria Fernanda packed a lot into her three months of formation in the Mother Joseph Province. "I was able to meet a majority of the sisters, learn what they're doing, how they live and how they dedicate their time. I studied English with Sister Paula Cosko who teaches ESL, continued my formation with Sister Celia Chappell the novitiate director, and participated in activities and Masses with the sisters at St. Joseph Residence," said Sister Maria Fernanda.

One of Sister Maria Fernanda's most memorable experiences was a trip to visit the Providence sisters and associates in Yakima, WA. Here she learned about Sister Marisol Avila's ministry with Hispanic youth and the legacy of Sister Silvia Troncoso, a Chilean missionary from Bernarda Morin Province who spent 26 years ministering to the Hispanic community in Yakima before returning to Chile in 2018.

"Sister Marisol's ministry is a beautiful one," said Sister Maria Fernanda. "I enjoyed being with those who were able to share their spirituality and also their rich dish of posole. How happy I was and with such emotion to see places where the Providence of God was

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Sisters Margarita Hernandez (left) and Ana Orellana (center) taught Sister Maria Fernanda about the vocations ministry when she visited Spokane, WA.

Save the date... Providence event June 12-14, 2020 Speaker: Nancy Sylvester, IHM!



Novice from Bernarda Morin Province



Sister Maria Fernanda joined Sister Marisol Avila (right) in Yakima, WA, to learn about her ministry with Hispanic youth.

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felt strongly, especially among undocumented people.”

Sister Paula Cosko’s English classes were another highlight. As a former physical education teacher, Sister Maria Fernanda was impressed with Sister Paula’s patience as a teacher. “There are many adults still learning the language, and she has a delicate and sweet way of teaching them. It left a big impact on me — the challenge not only to learn the language but how to be a good teacher.”

Sister Maria Fernanda wrapped up her trip with visits to the sisters in Portland and Spokane, before departing Mother Joseph Province for Edmonton, Alberta, on March 16. There she continued her formation for six months, then returned to Chile August 8, 2019. She will return to Holy Angels Province this fall for her canonical year.

Chapter, a Special Time of Faith, Sharing and Attentiveness to the Spirit

The Sisters of Providence, Holyoke, held its 2019 Chapter of Affairs and Elections July 20-21 at Genesis Spiritual Life and Conference Center, Westfield. Referring to the Chapter's theme, "Celebrating 146 years in Mission: Let us rejoice and be glad," SP President Kathleen Popko said: "We have much to celebrate as we look back to 1873 with the arrival of the Sisters from Kingston and the 146 years of dedicated and compassionate service that followed, service that so clearly has been demonstrated in the individual lives of the over 760 Sisters through the years as well as through the Congregation as a whole."

The Chapter setting in the Genesis Carriage House was replete with an historical display that included writings and artifacts of Foundress Mother Mary of Providence (Catherine Horan), and other founding members, and photos and statues on the founding inspirations for the Community's beginnings starting with St. Vincent de Paul—whose Rule of Life this Community follows—to Blessed Émilie Gamelin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence in Montreal, and Mother Mary of Providence. Following the Community's maxim, "Rooted in the Past and Open to the Future," the Chapter opened with a prayer service that interspersed key references to historic events throughout the Community's 146 years, from 1873 to the present.

Chapter delegates heard the Council's Accountability



The Chapter concluded with Sisters moving to a Genesis garden to plant daisies representative of "the lilies of the field" found in Scripture. Pictured are Sister Elizabeth Oleksak (left) and Julie Crane.



Reelected to the executive council for a six-year term: Sister Senga Fulton (left) Secretary/Treasurer; Sister Mary Caritas Geary (center), Vice President; and Sister Kathleen Popko, President.

Report that reviewed all aspects of Community life and ministry. This presentation prompted questions and discussion with SP President Sister Kathleen Popko, Vice President Sister Mary Caritas Geary, and Secretary/Treasurer Sister Senga Fulton. Report materials were processed during small and large group reflections and sharing on the Community's life in mission and how to foster Community life, deepen and share Providence spirituality, and respond to the multiple challenges confronting the Community and the world in these tumultuous times.

Chapter delegates approved the 2019 Chapter Consensus Statement: *We reaffirm the 2013 Consensus Statement, particularly our commitment to make decisions in light of their impact on women, Earth and those who are poor.*

We reveal the Mystery of God's Providence through our focus on:

- equity and justice for women and girls;
- the urgency of a common, local and global response to the reality of climate change; and
- the pressing needs of the marginalized, particularly refugees, and all those who suffer from the unprecedented upheavals in the world.

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Sisters Recognized Early the Importance of Voting

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment giving women the right to vote. Recently, archivists for women religious around the nation exchanged information on the impact of the vote as indicated by documentation in their archives. In some Congregations, there was no documentation about Sisters voting or interest in national or local elections.

One Community found a reference in 1922 annals which directed Sisters to seek the counsel of pastors "in order that Sisters may know how to perform the new and important task exacted of them." A Mother Superior from another

Community wrote, "Bishop does not think it best for us to go out voting at every election, unless there is some particular thing we want to carry through... do not misinterpret this: you are not being robbed of your right to vote, and if there is a necessity we shall know that ahead of time... "

For the Sisters of Providence, 1928 seems the first year there is mention of voting. In annals for the Novitiate, the annalist writes:

The year 1928 marked the initial appearance of the Sisters of Providence at both registration and voting places of the city. Much comment for and against it was very evident in the press and in

statements made by various people interested in the Sisters... Many of the younger Sisters had voted before they entered and therefore they felt at their ease in going in, while those of us, who had entered before the 19th Amendment came into existence, were rather timid...

In 1928, as is still the case now, 90 years later, it was worth mentioning that: "Holyoke numbers a woman among her candidates for mayor this year, a rather new feature around here in politics."

The entry regarding national elections in 1928 reflects an intense interest by the Sisters, due to the Catholic candidate, former Governor of New York, Al Smith. The Ku Klux Klan vendetta against Blacks and immigrants included Catholics in the 1920s as described here:

The first crowd of voters left for the polls at 7:30. A novel sensation for the Sisters of Providence. Today, being the day that the battle raging now for some months will be won by either warrior, we have realized the issues at stake and made them the burden of our many and fervent prayers... Reverend Mother returned from Worcester this afternoon, went in to vote and then... told us of the disturbance in Worcester... over a political parade; 17 were injured and are in the various hospitals. The trouble was attributed to the K.K.K.

Today, in addition to voting, the Sisters of Providence, along with many Congregations of women and men religious, lend their voices collectively and individually to causes of social justice and human rights around the world.

~by SP Archivist Phyllis Ladd



Registering to vote in 1960 are (from left): Sisters Mary Carol, Mary Catherine Labouré, Marie Vincent, Mary Catherine, Jean Marie and Mary Magdalena. Hugh Carroll, Holyoke Registrar, is at right.

Chapter

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In all we do, we continue to share our legacy, mission and values. We remain grateful for the past, resilient in the present, and open to the future.

During the Chapter of Elections delegates reelected the following for a six-year term, 2019-2025: Sister Kathleen Popko President, and Councilors Sisters Mary Caritas Geary and Senga Fulton.

The Chapter concluded with a ritual prepared by Sisters Elizabeth and Ruth McGoldrick with Sisters moving to a Genesis garden to plant daisies representative of "the lilies of the field" found in Scripture. Each Sister's pot of daisies served as a reminder of God's Providential care for the Sisters and for all creation.

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Sister Recalls West Africa Teaching Ministry

Blessed John Martin Moye, the founder of the Sisters of Divine Providence, saw needs being neglected, especially in the exclusion of the poor girls from the educational system of his time and place. From the beginning, this story has inspired the Sisters of the Congregation of Divine Providence to be involved with many different ministries throughout the United States and Mexico. Wherever Providence took the Sisters is where they'd begin new ministry projects remembering the advice and encouragement of Father Moye: "Great things have small beginnings; begin with little. If it is of God's holy will, He who is all powerful has a thousand means, a thousand ways, to accomplish it."

In April 1988, at the invitation of the bishop, the Sisters of Divine Providence in Kentucky went to Ghana, West Africa to assess the needs of the people. The Sisters traveled to Kwasibuokrom which is a small town in the Brong Ahafo (West) Region of Ghana. They decided to establish a young girl's boarding school under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of the Diocese of Sunyani, Bishop James Kwadwo Owusu. Our Lady of Providence Senior Secondary School for Girls would be dedicated to raising the dignity of women to their full potential and improving the quality of life for women and for their families. Several years later, the Sisters of Divine Providence from Kentucky invited the Congregation of Divine Providence in San Antonio, Texas, to join them in Kwasibuokrom to support the school's mission.

In 1996, shortly after agreeing



Sister Frances Lorene teaching in Ghana

to join the Sisters on this journey, Sister Frances Lorene Lange and Sister Mary Catherine Griffin joined Sister Bernadette Claire Kramer, Sister Janet Schneider and Sister Mary Joyce Moeller in Kwasibuokrom. For the first time, they had heard a language called Twi which is the native dialect to the Akan peoples or the people of South and Central Ghana.

The Sisters' first week teaching brought some unanticipated challenges. Their new students knew little to no English despite the English language being the official language of Ghana. Additionally, the Sisters quickly learned that many of the Ghanaian teachers were ill prepared. As explained by Sister Frances Lorene Lange, many of the teachers on the primary level had only primary or junior secondary education and had no formal teacher training. As a result of insufficient exposure to English,

the students had difficulties with their studies in English. Because of the presence of Our Lady of Providence Senior Secondary School and the Sisters' influence, it became clear to the Ghana Education Services that in order to assure the students' success, they needed to begin the teaching of English as a secondary language beginning in the primary grades.

Over the six years that the San Antonio CDPs were in Kwasibuokrom, they wrote numerous letters to the Sisters back in the United States. These letters capture the story of their experience in Ghana and what they were doing to make a difference for women whose educational needs had been neglected, but with the help of the Sisters, were now being met.

Sister Frances Lorene left Our Lady of Providence Senior Secondary

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Sister Recalls West Africa Teaching Ministry

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School in 2002 and returned to San Antonio. Even this many years later, the Sisters have not been forgotten by the people of Kwasi-buokrom. In May 2018, Stephen Abougye wrote, "Very much thanks to you and your Congregation for bringing us such a school we are most proud of." In April 2019, Joseph Febiri wrote, "Thank you for the wonderful work you did during those six wonderful years you spent in Ghana and at the school. This shows that you planted a good seed which by the grace of God has made it possible. Thank you and our God." Also, in March 2019, Mrs. Bonua Mary wrote, "The good work that you did in Ghana is going on and on. The school has now grown into a big tree where all kinds of people come."

The influence of the Sisters has a lasting and profound impact. Our Lady of Providence Senior Secondary School for Girls in Kwasi-buokrom had grown to 65 girls when the Sisters first arrived in 1996. Today, with the help of the Sisters and faculty, there are around 800 girls enrolled. In 2018, OLP was voted fourth best secondary boarding school in the region due to the number of students that passed their exit examinations for college acceptance. Despite the challenges that the Sisters experienced, their initiative is continuing to help



Sisters interact with local families in Ghana.

empower generations of students through education and the Power of Providence.

Through her experience in Ghana, Sister Frances Lorene is grateful to have been a part of a project that impacted so many people. As she reflects back on her time there, she recalls, "This experience has become an integral part of who I am, what I think, what I do, how I do it, and the decisions I make. Living with a people in a culture so different from our American

culture was an invitation to open myself to a world I had not known before – to become more aware of and to learn to love others that are different. That experience of missionary work among the people of West Africa remains a source of energy for me."

Celebrating Over 331 Years of Religious Service!

Jubilees are joyous occasions to acknowledge and celebrate the many years of dedication in answering God's call to religious life. Celebrating 70 years are Sisters Anna Marie Willer, Rita Hanson, and Charlotte Kramps. Celebrating 61 years is Sister Reinalda Kloosterman, and 60 years is Sister Pauline Lally. Although not all Jubilarians could celebrate their milestone at the same time, they have celebrated together. In the words of Sister Pauline Lally, a Jubilee celebrant this year, "where one of us is, there each of us is." Included below are excerpts from speeches made by Sister Sandra Shannon, General Superior, and Sister Pauline Lally, representing the Jubilarian celebrants this year.

In her speech, Sister Sandra touched on highlights from each of the three Jubilarians present at the Friday, June 14th celebration – Sisters Anna Marie, Reinalda and Pauline.



Jubilee celebrants during the June 15th Mass for profession of faith and renewal of vows.

Our wish and hope for all the Jubilarians is that the God of Providence who has sustained them for 70, 61 and 60 years will continue to walk before them leading them to peace-filled, joy-filled, hope-filled lives.

Anna Marie has served the congregation well through her health care ministry. She has tended the sick and infirm both in Eastern and Western Canada. She has held various positions in health care institutions. We thank her for blessing us as well with her creative gift of art.

Reinalda also served God and God's people in the health care field. Reinalda nursed in Brockville and Kingston, Ontario, and in Daysland and Camrose, Alberta. We most appreciate her years at the Motherhouse where she was Motherhouse Coordinator and in charge of nursing for Marian II. She accompanied many of our Sisters as they transitioned from this life to the next. We always knew our Sisters were in compassionate caring hands. She has and does gift us with her delightful gift of music and song.

What does one say about Pauline Lally. Her life has been as diverse as the shapes of multiple snowflakes. She began early religious life in the education of children but graduated to the education of teachers as the first Religious Education Consultant in our congregation for the Roman Catholic Separate School Board. Pauline has lived in group homes for girls, done campus ministry, taught religious education at McArthur, was the first coordinator of our Providence Associates, was a moving force in the development

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Sister Sandra Shannon, General Superior, directs her comments to the Jubilarians.

Celebrating Over 331 Years of Religious Service!

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of our JPIC ministry as director and as a member, and has been General Superior. When I go to almost any kind of meeting and say I am a Sister of Providence the reply is, 'Oh, Sister Pauline Lally's community.' Pauline's influence has gone far and wide.

Now you know as well as I do that working in the market place requires strength and courage. As women religious where do we find the energy to keep on, keeping on? I say our life shared, maybe not under the same roof but shared, in communion, is our strength and hope. I believe the future before us will be marked and built upon how we love and support one another in community.

Where you are is a good space. We as religious women and especially the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul are on the verge of another evolution. We are becoming what God wants us to be in the year 2019 and beyond.

After Sister Sandra concluded her speech, Sister Pauline was invited up and spoke on behalf of the Jubilarians.

Meeting monthly with an interfaith group for almost three years now, I have become sensitized through our aboriginal sisters and brothers upon whose land we stand and share. Thus, in the spirit of reconciliation with them I acknowledge this. Often, too, they call upon their ancestors to be present as I do today.

For I would like to call upon our ancestors, our parents, our families, our patrons and our founders, as well as all our Sisters who have gone before us – especially those with whom we would celebrate today – and I would like to dedicate this brief Jubilee response to them.

For myself, my mother did not want me to enter the convent. My father had died suddenly in his 50's when I was in Grade 13. Three years later when I brought up the subject of following my persisting call, my mother, who was still in mourning, was not pleased.

"God took your father from me; he does not want to

take you as well," was her response.

In many ways, I think, our entering was harder on our folks whom we left behind, than it was for us. We were following our call – living the dream, as folks would say today. And what a call it turned out to be. This great adventure with God took us beyond our dreams.

Regarding the loss of us to our families, they really didn't lose us. Our families were enhanced, whether they knew it or not, by our vocations.

I know I shared much of these new perspectives with them. We had great discussions in those days. My mother was so ripe for a fresh position.

Returning to my mother, who was the one free enough to be present to Mom in her last days? The one who had left her so many years ago to answer the invitation of Jesus in the dream of the Father. My presence was not only gift to her, but her gentle dying was a great gift to me.

Before she died, I remember two things Mom said: that I had been a great joy to her and that she was not afraid to die. It took the fear of death from me. And it made me very grateful for my community. Who was present to me and with me at my mother's passing, but one of you? One of my sisters. One of my community of the Sisters of Providence which I had entered 25 years before – Sister Inez Donovan.

That's what we do for each other. That's what we have always done for each other. We share one another's joys and sorrows. Later Inez said to me, "Pauline, I want you with me when I die."

I wasn't; but some of you were. But you know, where one of us is, there each of us is. And thus, it has always been. Providence has been there. For, where one of us has been, each of us has been.

So yes, let us celebrate and continue to celebrate with gratitude and joy the faithful Providence of God whom we are still and always called to proclaim with our lives.

Statement by Canada's Catholic Sisters Regarding the Climate Emergency

At the beginning of September, on the occasion of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, the Sisters of Providence and other women religious congregations in Canada signed a joint statement on the world-wide climate crisis. The principal communication media of Canada carried this important group decision. Here is the text of the declaration on September 1, 2019.

On this World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, leaders of Canada's 65 Congregations of Catholic Sisters are calling on the country's politicians to respond to the climate emergency declared by Parliament by taking concrete steps to avert it.

As Women Religious, caring for all of God's Creation is an essential part of our faith. The drastic changes to our climate brought on by the release of greenhouse gases pose the greatest threat to all living beings. Yet, not enough is being done to address it. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis points out that "reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most." (169)

For our part, we have taken robust action to combat the destruction of our planet and to care for our common home. Many of our Congregations have taken steps to:

- »Divest from fossil fuel portfolios to clean and renewable energy projects.
- »Eliminate single-use plastics.
- »Retrofit residential buildings, including solar, bio-thermal and renewable natural gas installations.
- »Commit to the Blue Community project which entails treating water as a sacred resource and shared commons.
- »Plant trees in Canada and in the countries where our Missions exist.
- »Compost, reduce and recycle.
- »Partner and provide support to community groups and movements committed to address the climate emergency.

We urge all politicians running in the upcoming federal election to acknowledge the climate emergency and to implement an immediate multilevel policy strategy for

a just transition to ecologically sustainable living.

The actions to address the climate emergency should be concrete, justice-based and stripped of partisan politics. We invite political leaders to join us in caring for our common home by:

- »Keeping fossil fuels in the ground and ending subsidies to fossil fuel and plastic producers.
- »Redirecting investments and rapidly expanding the renewable energy economy, including investment in retraining for workers affected by job loss in fossil fuel production.
- »Continuing to hold companies to account by putting a cost against the greenhouse gas pollution they produce.
- »Coordinating an intensive and sustained public awareness effort to change attitudes and behaviors.
- »Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and developing climate emergency policies in line with the Indigenous knowledge and teachings.

We are facing an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to Earth. With so many others on the planet, we hope that politicians will show commitment, leadership and collective wisdom in the movement to protect our planet from destruction. This is the only way forward together.

*UISG encourages dialogue and collaboration among Religious Congregations within the Church and larger society. This statement is a collaboration of all 65 Canadian members of the UISG.

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To have access to the name of all participants: <https://providenceintl.org/en/2019/09/04/statement-by-candas-catholic-sisters-regarding-the-climate-emergency/>

Ceremony Marks End of 20 Years of Saving Seeds

A rematriation ceremony was the culmination of 20 years of the Sisters' commitment to saving heirloom seed varieties. This is not the end of the story of the seeds, only a new beginning in new homes as it once had been when the seeds moved in with the Sisters.

Planting the First Seeds

The Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul saw the needs of the time in the early 1990's and through discernment during a Chapter decided to include a focus on ecology, eco-feminism and eco-spirituality in ensuing years. This eventually led to a partnership with Carol and Robert Mouck who had been operating Fox-fire Farm in Napanee, growing and saving open pollinated heirloom seed varieties.

Sister Jeannette Filthaut, a member of the Leadership Team at the time, brought forth the ideas of an Ecology committee, a greenhouse and a home for the seeds the Sisters were beginning to save. Sister Jeannette expressed that the "Ecology committee was a great committee to work with and it was truly an enriching experience to see our Sisters gathered in prayer around the first garden we initiated near the gazebo with seeds from the Moucks."

The Moucks brought many varieties of seeds to the grounds of Providence Motherhouse and in 1999 the Sisters established the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary as a new home for the seeds grown on the property. The partnership allowed the Sisters to share the lives of the seeds with the local and wider community by hosting

annual heirloom tomato tasting events, seed saving workshops, and seasonal celebrations.

Sister Shirley Morris believes, "it is all about connecting food with health, joy, justice and nature, and this also connects with our Mission which calls us to preserve the rich heritage of seeds and species." Sister Shirley has been a key figure in the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary and has helped in many aspects of the ministry since the turn of the century.

A New Caretaker

In 2008, Cate Henderson was hired by the Sisters to be mentored by Robert and Carol, and to take over care of the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary upon the Moucks' retirement. Cate learned the seed saving techniques of the Moucks but also experienced the spiritual connection the Sisters shared with the seeds through this ministry. Working with various organizations, the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary ministry was brought to many people of different generations; children in local schools through seed saving projects and school gardens; young adults through displays, presentations and internships; and to adults of varying ages through workshops, garden tours, and volunteer opportunities. Inspired by the work of the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary, numerous volunteers from the local community donated countless hours of time to this hope-filled ministry.

The Heirloom Seed Sanctuary received the Canadian Environmental Silver Award in the Sustainable Living Category in 2008, and was nominated for other sustainability awards over the years.

Changing of the Times

As urban gardening and local food movements increased, the needs of the times changed. The Sisters were discerning walking a new path in hope. In 2015 the Sisters announced plans to transform their land into a hub of compassionate services that will fulfill needs in the community. They named this hub 'Providence Village'.

Trusting in Providence to guide them, plans were set in motion. These new plans for the property meant that the heirloom seeds also needed to start a new journey. Through the many connections of the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary ministry, new homes were found with Rati-nenhayen:thos of the Tyendinaga Mohawk community, and the Kingston Area Seed System Initiative (KASSI) of which Cate Henderson is a founding member.



Sisters Shirley Morris, Avita Kilar, Theresa Moher and Joey Doiron cleaning and sorting seeds.

Continued on page 15

Ceremony Marks End of 20 Years of Saving Seeds

Continued from page 14

“Visioning possibilities is always a journey that takes its own life when the seeds we nurture are provided with room to grow. I am most grateful that I had an opportunity to be a part of this journey,” said Sister Jeannette Filthaut.

Preparations were made and a ceremony to officially transfer care of the seeds to their new homes was planned.

Heirloom Seed Rematriation Ceremony

Members of Ratinenhayen:thos and KASSI joined Sisters, staff, volunteers, and friends of the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary at the Heirloom Seed Rematriation Ceremony held at Providence Motherhouse on Earth day, April 22, 2019.

Sister Sandra Shannon opened the ceremony with her memory from 20 years ago of the meeting with Robert and Carol Mouck where they introduced the seeds and trusted the Sisters would give them a good home. She continued, “we have confidence that the seeds have found, once again, good homes in which they will be treasured for the future. And it is with pleasure that we pledge to pass these seeds on to these two organizations.”

Cate Henderson and Sister Shirley Morris gave a history of the seeds in the care of the Sisters of Providence and acknowledged the many facets of the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary ministry and the many people who were

involved with and influenced by this ministry.

Each group had also prepared different ways of honoring the Sisters who were passing on care of the seeds, the partners in the continuing journey of the seeds, and most importantly the seeds themselves. Baskets of token seeds, seed documents and other items were presented to each of the partner groups taking over care of the seeds. Members of each of the three communities in attendance gathered for a photo at the conclusion of the ceremony before enjoying the organic and traditional food prepared by the Motherhouse kitchen.

Over the years many Sisters contributed to the ministry in many different ways. Normal gardening processes of planting seeds and caring for them in the greenhouse and the gardens until harvesting; seed saving processes of cleaning, sorting, cataloguing and storing for future seasons; educational processes of participating in environmental events, hosting workshops and tours, and sponsoring like-minded seed saving organizations; functional processes of guiding the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary through committees and developing partnerships; and spiritual processes by focusing on our connections to the Earth and all living beings in all of the ministry work and especially the seasonal celebrations. The Sisters who have been involved with this ministry are too numerous to name individually but you know your contributions, as do the seeds who will carry on their memory to future generations.

~ by Michael Hammond, Communications



**Sisters of Providence and members of Ratinenhayen:thos and KASSI
in attendance at the rematriation ceremony.**

New Leadership Team Elected

On April 26th, the Sisters of the American Province gathered in Chapter and elected a new Provincial Superior, Sr. Barbara Rohe, CDP. Sr. Barbara had served as Vicar, Councilor and Provincial Secretary during the previous term, and succeeds Sr. Alice Gerdeman, CDP in that position.

Two months later, Chapter delegates came together again to discuss and determine how the province could best implement the mission statement promulgated by the Congregation's General Chapter, which was held in France the previous year. They also chose the rest of the leadership team during that June 25-29 gathering. Sr. Lucy Zientek, CDP was elected Vicar and Councilor; Sr. Kay Kramer, CDP and Sr. Margaret Stallmeyer, CDP were elected Councilors. Later, Sr. Lucy was also appointed Provincial Secretary, and Sr. Margaret was appointed Provincial Treasurer.

The five-day summer proceedings began with a Mass to call upon the Holy Spirit for wisdom and guidance. Sr. Barbara offered a reflection to the community about imagining a future full of hope. "I pray," said Sr. Barbara, "that we may always be the community who sees beyond the political, environmental, clerical and cultural reality....that we will always be the Sisters who continue to watch the news, be involved in the mess and because of what we see and experience will pray more fervently and entrust it all to God's care.... that we can hold sacred what is around us despite what it seems to be and continue to be the vessels of hope that others look to, for guidance, for inspiration, for refuge, for reconciliation."



New Leadership Team (L to R): Sr. Kay Kramer, CDP, Councilor; Sr. Margaret Stallmeyer, CDP, Councilor and Provincial Treasurer; Sr. Barbara Rohe, CDP, Provincial; and Sr. Lucy Zientek, CDP, Vicar, Councilor and Provincial Secretary

Following the liturgy, the delegates processed while singing "Come, Holy Spirit!" to Providence Hall where deliberations commenced. Sr. Susan Schorsten, HM, acted as facilitator during the Chapter's preparatory meetings and throughout the spring and summer sessions.

Pledged to focus on the most vulnerable in humanity and creation, the Provincial Chapter mandated that the province work toward becoming a *Laudato Si* community, examining its property and making the changes necessary to safeguard the Earth and its resources for future generations. The Province will also explore and implement ways to collaborate with other Providence congregations, local and national groups, and mission partners. As the Chapter year of discernment and decision-making drew to a joyful close, it was clear that a new and exciting chapter was now unfolding in the life of the American Province!

Madagascar Province Builds Retirement Center

The Sisters of the American Province have always felt a kind of special connection with their Sisters from the Province of Madagascar—and the slow but sure penetration of the internet throughout that country has created new opportunities for the two groups to deepen their bonds of relationship with each other. Sisters are now connecting more and more often on social media apps like Facebook, through e-mail, and via the Congregational website.

Founded in 1950, Madagascar is the youngest of the three provinces that constitute the Congregation of Divine Providence of St. Jean de Bassel. When the province was but twenty-five years old, Sister Emerita McGann, CDP arrived on its shores to join the Sisters in their ministry among the poor. She remained for three years helping students, offering English lessons, and being a “providence presence” wherever her assistance was needed. She returned first in 1996, and since then, every three years. In some ways, Madagascar became her “home away from home.”

With the passage of time, the number of Sisters of Divine Providence on the island bloomed, and there continues to be many vocations today. Yet life is difficult in Madagascar; the average life expectancy there is just 65 years, and now time is catching up with the cadre of Sisters who entered in their youth. As many are in their sixties and even seventies, the province realized it must soon address the need to care for their aged and infirm Sisters. In 2017, it started to formulate some plans to build a place where that could someday happen. Blueprints followed shortly thereafter. And now, with help from the Congregation and private benefactors, the dream has become a reality!



Sr. Emerita McGann and Sr. Marie Theresa Betombozafy, one of the oldest members of the Province of Madagascar.

The new retirement center is simple in design. Located on land not far from the provincial house in Antsohihy and close to the Catholic University just up the road, the new structure has twenty bedrooms, a dining room, a chapel, and an interior courtyard. It has a well, indoor plumbing, and electricity. A new water tower has been constructed on the property, along with a kitchen (next door to the center in a separate building, since cooking is not done in the same structure where there are living quarters). There is also a large, abandoned industrial building on the property that is already wired with electricity and which the Sisters hope to someday rehab and repurpose.

On October 19, 2019, the new center will be dedicated. Sister Susan Baumann, CDP, our Superior General, and Bishop Rosario of the Ambanja Diocese will be present for the ceremony, along with many of the Malagasy Sisters. An old friend and special invitee from the American Province—Sr. Emerita McGann—will also be present. But back in the United States, there will also be many more Sisters, Associates, and new friends who will be anxiously awaiting the photos and stories of the event to show up on the web, in the emails, and via Facebook posts—all deepening our growing sense of union with each other, and the one life we all share together in the tender love of our Provident God!



Gazebo inside courtyard of Retirement Center

Providence Food Pantry Celebrates 25 Years

On September 22, Providence Food Pantry, a ministry of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, celebrated 25 years of loving service to residents in the West Terre Haute area.

Persons of all faith traditions visited the pantry during an open house, enjoying treats, soda and chances to enter several raffles. During the celebration, Pantry Director Sister Joseph Fillenwarth accepted a check for \$8,562.26 from the committee that planned the recent Hunger Bust Run/Walk sponsored by St. Mary's Village Church. Sister Joseph has served as director since 2006.

Sister Joseph said the pantry served more than 4,000 families and 16,000 individuals in 2018. They usually serve about 300 clients per month, but this month they are teetering on 400 families, to meet the ever-growing need. Sister Joseph said the pantry is special in the amount of food they offer and its quality. Those who come to the pantry, whose income must be at or below the federal government's poverty guidelines, receive fresh produce, three kinds of meat, milk and eggs in addition to breads and canned goods.

"God wants us here! This is accomplished by all volunteers and donations from a loving and generous community – especially the Helping Hands, nine local churches and local organizations who support our pantry," said Sister Joseph.

For example, Sister Joseph said the Young's Men's Club



of West Terre Haute has supported the pantry since its inception and offered \$3,000 for the walk-in freezer and cooler used at the facility.

"It shows what can be done if we put our trust in the Providence of our providing God and minister together as a loving and caring community," Sister Joseph added.

Providence Food Pantry has served West Terre Haute families since 1994, first from the basement of former St. Leonard's Catholic school building and, presently, at its larger handicapped accessible building at 701 West National Street. In 2013, thanks to a generous West Terre Haute business couple, Accurate Insulation owners Keith and Jamie Richey, the food pantry doubled the size of their space, allowing space for carts for clients to use as they do their shopping.



Sister Joseph Fillenwarth, SP, (second from right) exclaims joyfully when she's presented with the check from the Hunger Bust Run/Walk, sponsored by St. Mary's Village Church.

Sister Joan Slobig, SP, the presenter of the check from the church, is shown, center.

Havlik Center Opens with Public Programs

A providential moment opened the flood gates for the latest ministry of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana. General Councilor Sister Mary Beth Klingel said that the cold winter two years ago froze some pipes in Providence Hall and one broke, damaging an area used frequently by the sisters for various activities.

“That’s when the whole project came to be,” Sister Mary Beth said. The “project” became the Havlik Center, which was officially dedicated on July 7. Named in memory of Sister Terese Marie Havlik, who passed away in July 2018, the center was created through a generous gift from Sister Terese Marie’s family, who wanted to honor Sister Terese Marie and her dedication to the service of others as well as provide a place for those who are living with cognitive brain changes.

The center is intended as a place where the well-being of sisters and others, particularly those with physical and cognitive challenges, can be promoted and enhanced. It includes a large multi-purpose area with tables and chairs for educational activities, games and celebrations, adjacent to a kitchen on one side and a quiet room or den on the other.

Currently, the Havlik Center includes an interactive computer system, the iN2L (It’s Never Too Late) as a main feature of the room. “It’s a multifaceted system designed for seniors,” said Katie Harich, MA, CPC, who serves as the Congregation’s Well-Being coordinator. “With its thousands of applications and programs on every topic imaginable, the computer system has something for everyone. It’s easy-to-operate, touch-screen feature is especially attractive to caregivers of adults living with dementia.

A variety of engagement opportunities open to the public are now being offered, including a Memory Café.

A Memory Café is a welcoming place where people living with early to moderate dementia, together with their care partners or others can gather together to laugh, learn and remain socially connected with others walking the same journey. September welcomed eight participants, one registered nurse guest, four staff and three Sisters of Providence.

The Memory Café is open to the public on the third Thursday of each month from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., through August 2020. The Memory Café idea stemmed from the Congregation’s HOME (Helping Ourselves Meaningfully Engage) team, which Harich said has

“broadened its focus” in recent months to include not just Sisters of Providence and those residing at Providence Health Care, but also the general public.

“As a direct result of the Sisters’ ongoing investment in dementia training and staff obtaining national certifications, the SPs want to share this knowledge and the positive approaches to care, with the greater community so more can benefit. Every 65 seconds in our nation, a person is

diagnosed with dementia. There is no better time, nor greater need, for this resource than now.”

By hosting the Memory Cafés, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods becomes the sixth city in Indiana to offer the programming, joining Schererville, Bloomington, Evansville, Fishers and New Albany. It is also the only city in the Wabash Valley to offer the programming.

Through a partnership with Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, students majoring in music therapy, art therapy and equine therapy can receive credit for service at the center. The Congregation benefits from their presence and work with our elders.

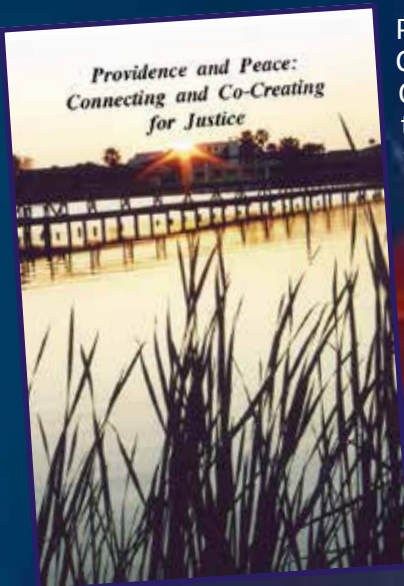


The Havlik Center dedication on July 7 welcomes sisters, associates, staff and community members to the newly renovated space now open for programs related to cognitive brain changes, aging and well-being.

See page 22 about Dementia Programs offered at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods!

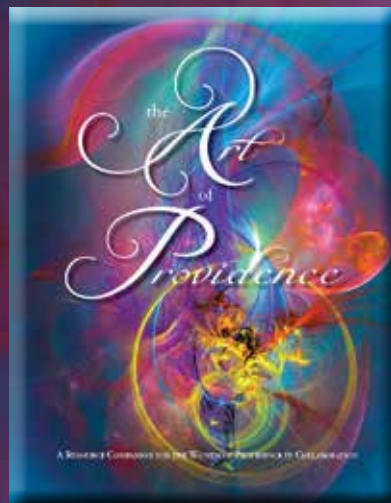
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Providence and Peace: Connecting and Co-Creating for Justice is the second in a series featuring authors who look at specific topics through the lens of Providence and their lived experience in ministry and community life. \$13.65

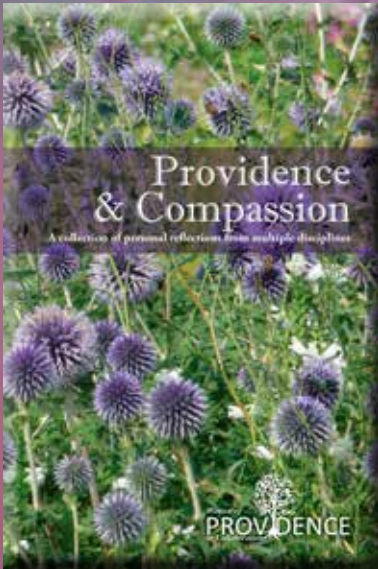
The Art of Providence



The Art of Providence is a beautiful resource book of prayers, poetry, prayer rituals, music, photos, reflections and artwork by various Sisters and Associates in our Providence congregations. The authors have shared their talents with us in a variety of ways. Each of them seeks to express their understandings of Providence through

particular art forms. \$18.90

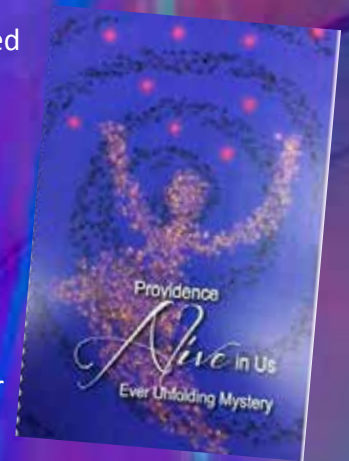
Providence & Compassion



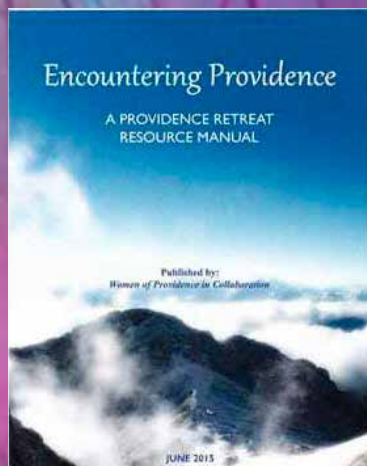
Nine Women of Providence share their understanding of Providence and Compassion through the lens of their lived experience in ministry and community life. These shared personal reflections will expand awareness and appreciation of the intimate link between Providence and Compassion in the lives of not only the author but also within the life of the reader. \$13.65

Providence Alive in Us: Ever Unfolding Mystery

“Providence Alive in Us: Ever Unfolding Mystery” is designed to promote and broaden the understanding of Providence theology and spirituality and how, over the years, it has affected our lives. The authors, some of whom are previous contributors to other Providence published books, will lead us in this search for still deeper engagement with Ever Unfolding Mystery. \$15.75



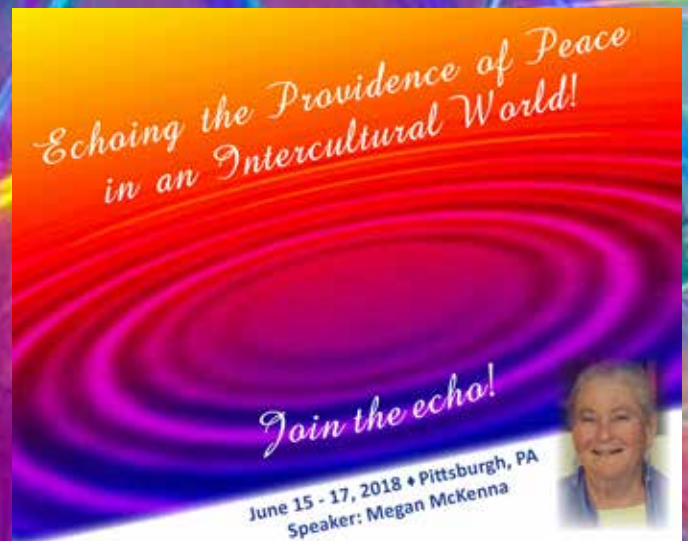
Encountering Providence



Created for WPC's 35th Anniversary. This compiled retreat resource manual features a flash drive with presentations, videos, prayers, reflection and leader templates. \$52.50

Echoing the Providence of Peace in an Intercultural World!

If you were unable to attend the 2018 Providence Event, the Friday and Saturday presentations by Megan McKenna and Bishop Thomas Gumbleton are available on a set of five DVDs or on a USB flash drive. \$31.50 for either media



Dementia Programs Enhance Public Offerings

The Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, are also hosting a three-part series on Dementia, beginning in September, for persons of all faith traditions, at the Havlik Center.

The three sessions are Dementia Basics and Helpful Tips (September), Dementia: Approach is Everything (November) and Dementia-related Caregiver Support (January). The series will be facilitated by Elizabeth Collins, RN, and Katie Harich, MA, CPC, who serve the Congregation as clinical care coordinator and the well-being coordinator, respectively.

The first session provided information on dementia, which is caused by a variety of brain illnesses that affect memory, thinking behavior and the ability to perform everyday activities.

“Nearly anyone will benefit from this series,” Collins said. “Recent statistics show that people older than 85 could have a form of dementia or will be caring for someone living with dementia. Those desiring proactive learning to learn about how to identify early signs and ways to support or offset the effects of the disease and those wanting to learn more about effective, honest and caring ways to communicate with those living with any stage of dementia will also benefit.”

“The three sessions intend to provide a well-rounded, holistic approach to the disease from knowledge about, to navigation through, to support of those living with or caring for someone with dementia,” Collins said.

Calendar

2019

September 17-20 WPC Associate Leadership Gathering, Melbourne, KY

October 7 Providence Event Planning Committee Conference Call 7:00 pm EST

November 4-5 WPC Executive Committee, Allison Park, PA

2020

February 21-23 Providence Event Planning Meeting, Allison Park, PA

April 1-2 WPC Governing Meeting, Terre Haute, IN

June 12-14 WPC Event, Kearns Spirituality Center, Allison Park, PA



Check out the new WPC website...www.wpcweb.org

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