

# Collaboration

*Sisters of Providence, Holyoke*

## 85th Anniversary Highlighted During Heritage Week

A highlight of Heritage Week 2017 occurred July 19 when Providence Place staff surprised the Sisters of Providence with a 22" x 16" bronze plaque memorializing the 1932 opening of the Providence Mother House. The engraved plaque depicts raised images of Sisters and novices and different views of the dome capped building. The inscription under its "In Gratitude" banner reads:

*"This plaque commemorates the 85th Anniversary of the opening of this building and is displayed here as an expression of appreciation to the Sisters of Providence. The Sisters initially opened the building in 1932 as Providence Mother House, their beloved home and seat of their administration, and in 1999 transitioned their home into Providence Place, a retirement community for their Sisters and the laity. Presented to the Sisters of Providence on July 19, 2017."*



**Sister Kathleen Popko and Richard Pelland admire the plaque following its unveiling**

In presenting the plaque to Sisters of Providence President Kathleen Popko, Richard Pelland, who serves as Providence Place executive director, noted, "Gratitude to the Sisters of Providence and for this home for the Providence Place Community, is what today is all about. Looking back," he continued, "I was trying to imagine what the Sisters' move-in day of so long ago was like and how the Sisters felt."

Sister Kathleen then reflected on the Sisters' nearly 60-year desire for a suitable home and the joy they experienced when construction was complete. Describing the Sisters' need for a Mother House as "extreme," she added, "The Sisters tried to set aside funds for this purpose, but the needs of their ministry took priority. For example, Mother Mary of Providence found it necessary to use money set aside for a Mother House to build an orphanage for infants."

"Time and again," Sister Kathleen continued, "the Sisters tolerated the inconvenience of inadequate housing for other priorities, choosing instead to establish new

*Continued on page 3*

<b>contents</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7 and 9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>
	Letter from Sister Barbara	Providence During a Hurricane	Gift Honors Sisters in Education	La Roche College Honors CDP Sister	White Violet Farm Store



**Sister Barbara McMullen, CDP**  
WPC executive director

foundational impulse.

The stories in this newsletter showcase that love is indeed the foundational impulse among our WPC congregations. Just read the stories about how Sisters transitioned their motherhouse to become a home for a retirement community for them and laity; or Sisters digging a well so that a community of poor people could have clean water in Cameroon. Don't miss the story about a group of congregations, Sisters of Providence among them, who are breaking ground for 24 cottages for homeless individuals in Spokane. Love is what spurs Sisters to advocate for justice issues, whether it be over immigration or helping the working poor, or endowing a fund for education which will allow a new school to be built—a first of its kind in Canada.

Not so very long ago we were witnessing violent storms, hurricanes, flooding, loss of power, and devastation across some parts of our country. Houston became part and parcel of our lives as scenes came into our living room of people stranded, standing in long lines to get into shelters, people waiting to be rescued from homes under water. Our hearts ached for them and relief efforts started immediately.

Then there are the celebrations of Associates who continue to live and carry out the charism of providence from their respective congregations, who share the mission and seek to help the poor and continue in our spirit imbued within them. There is so much to be thankful for, so much "heart" in the stories within this newsletter! The women and men of providence show love to their little corners of the world by becoming centers of generosity.

Not too long after we heard about the powerful "Hurricane Irma" forming out in the Atlantic Ocean. It was a "monster hurricane" that according to all predictions was to wreak havoc on island nations, creating a path of destruction in its wake. Some of us were watching it on the television news while others were living it in real life. Irma certainly made people stand up and take notice! Our hearts were with the peoples of Puerto Rico, Haiti, the islands, Key West, and then up both sides of the Florida coasts and even inward as wind and water surges caused devastation for millions in the southeast. As if there wasn't enough devastation then came Hurricane Maria wreaking so much devastation upon the people of Puerto Rico.

Fall is often times thought of as the season of fullness, of harvest, of seeing the seeds of hope we planted in the springtime come to fruition. It is the season to celebrate the richness of all that has been and look forward in hope to what is yet to come.

What happened? People endured. People cared. People helped. People pitched in from near and far to help restore power, clean debris, send trucks filled with non-perishable food items, provide cots and blankets and clothes, and take up collections. The heart of the people was embodied in daily small kindnesses. Together we were stronger and perhaps more fortified in spirit. There is goodness in the world and love is the

As prophetic women and men of the Gospel we hear the call to engage in the world by sharing what we have heard in our hearts and in our lives. Let us find ways to help undo and limit global warming to prevent further damage to our world and its climate so that monster storms don't continue to ravage our lands. Let us heed the call to raise awareness of the many issues facing our planet and its people. Let love be our foundational impulse.



## 85th Anniversary Highlighted During Heritage Week

*Continued from page 1*

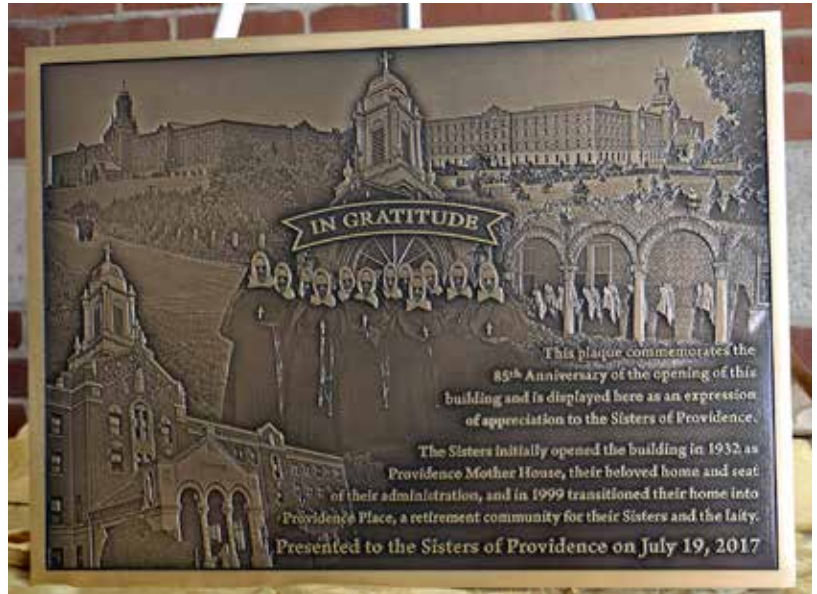
ministries and maintain and expand their ministries already in place.”

Finally, in the spring of 1928, the Sisters learned the Mother House would become a reality. Ground-breaking ceremonies took place in the fall.

The Mother House was dedicated, along with its Our Mother of Sorrows Chapel, in February 1933. The Sisters’ history book, *Seeds of Hope*, captures the moment saying: “A watchful Providence had indeed brought victory by giving the ‘shelter of a true home’ to the Sisters of Providence.”

Sister Kathleen noted that, despite the significant renovations that transitioned the building into Providence Place, “the heart of the building remains the same—its extraordinary chapel, beautiful cloisters, gold dome visible for miles, and a sense of community that permeates and pervades the space ... Perhaps that is a gift of all who lived here before us.”

Now Providence Place is a home, not only to the Sisters, but to many lay residents who enjoy the wonders of the building and the sense of community that permeates and pervades its space.



***The commemorative bronze plaque was symbolically presented on July 19, the anniversary birth date of Community Foundress Mother Mary of Providence.***



***SPs at the event (from left): Sisters Ruth McGoldrick, Mary Martin de Porres, Mary Adrianella, Mary Caritas, Kathleen Popko and (second row, from left) Madeleine Joy, Senga Fulton, Mary Cecilia, Constance O'Brien and Joan Manning.***

## Founder's Day Marks 35th Anniversary of Association

Sisters of Providence and Associates gathered at Providence Place on Sunday, July 16, for the annual Founder's Day celebration.

The event is held traditionally on a Sunday close to July 19, the anniversary birthdate of the Congregation's Foundress Mother Mary of Providence (Catherine Horan). This year's observance opened with welcoming remarks by SP President Kathleen Popko who explained that this year the event also would celebrate the Associates' 35th Anniversary.

The program opened with Associate Gail Furman coordinating the Associates' reading of the afternoon's Gathering Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving written for the occasion by Associate Frances Popko.

The prayer honored Mother Mary of Providence, "the blessings of her life, her works, her vision, her resilience and her counsel." Referencing the Associates' 35th Anniversary, the prayer acknowledged, too, the Sisters' "foresight and initiative in establishing the Associate relationship and for encouraging Associates to live the charism of Providence in their own lives, families, and works."

Key components on the day's agenda included a PowerPoint presentation on "The History of Sisters of Providence Association" narrated by Associate Director Pat St. Amand, followed by a video titled

"35 Years of Association with the Sisters of Providence," by film producer Associate Elizabeth "Betty" Wilda.

The slideshow traced the establishment and growth of the Associate Program from the Sisters' late 1970s decision to welcome Associates and the program's growth to the present day.

Included were partial results of a 2015 Associate Survey that asked Associates, "How do you live out the Sisters' charism and mission?" One comment seemed to sum up the responses—"...by striving to be examples of the Sisters' mission by ministering to family and friends in a 'Providence Way.'"

Associate Betty Wilda's film began with her interview of Sister Elizabeth Oleksak, who served as Associate Director during the program's first ten years. In it, Sister Elizabeth describes Associates as "people that are rich in their own lives who are thirsting to know more about God, who want to be able to speak of God more freely, and to know that God is in the midst of their lives."

Since the program's inception, 91 women and men have made Associate commitments.

Anne-marie Ferraro, one of the first Associates, shared, "I feel that there are areas of the church where laypersons and women are not able to be involved and this is another way to fulfill that need in me. When

*Continued on page 5*



**Associates who served as Prayer Leaders for the Gathering Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving on Founder's Day were (from left) Aida Gaouette, Marie Amato, Carole Mimeault, Sandi Gelinas and Al Blanchard.**

## **Need for Caring Child Daycare Bridges Centuries**

When reading documents from the charitable programs with which the Sisters of Providence have been connected, one may wonder what decade or even what century we are in. There is a familiar echo of today in the report that Sister Prudentia presented at the Charities Convention in Buffalo, New York, in 1926 about the Holyoke Day Nursery.

The nursery, which opened in 1916 under the auspices of the St. Agnes Guild, Catholic Charities, and the Diocese of Springfield, was run by the Sisters of Providence.

It is a constructive work and aims to keep the home together; many times solving the problem for the poor mother who has to work, who wishes to have her children with her at night, but has no one to care for them during the day... The father who is left to act as mother is also glad to have the Day Nursery to care for the children.

*Continued on page 6*



***Looks like someone may have taken a fall and was then scooped up into the arms of this unnamed caregiver and Sister of Providence.***

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## **35th Anniversary of Association**

*Continued from page 4*

there were challenges...the Sisters were right there walking that journey with us.”

Following the film, other Associates had the opportunity to offer the Sisters their reflections on Association and Sister Kathleen facilitated the Sisters’ responses to the Associates’ sharing.

The program closed with Sister Kathleen addressing

the Associates: “Thank you for sharing your lives with us as we share ours with you. We are grateful for the many tangible ways you support us, but especially for your treasuring our mission, charism and values of being Providence every day.” She then presented each Sister and Associate with the publication *Providence & Compassion*, a collection of personal reflections on Providence recently release by Women of Providence in Collaboration.



***Associate Betty's Wilda's film had an attentive audience of Sisters and Associates.***

## ***Need for Caring Child Daycare Bridges Centuries***

*Continued from page 5*

At noon the school children have dinner. We have to do this for the school children in our City, as no provision is made elsewhere... and we feel that children who get a scanty breakfast need at least one substantial meal.

After describing the physical exam, dental, and nutritional services provided at the Nursery, Sister Prudentia continues: "Giving the child the start or foundation in health tends to prevent serious conditions in later years."

Today, judging by the difficulty of sustaining funding for Head Start, Full Day Kindergarten, and school breakfasts and/or lunches, society still needs to be convinced about what Sister Prudentia believed.

And most day care programs in the 21st century do not provide the following: Our Bus, the use of which is free for our children, goes to the various homes in the morning, and brings the children back at night; thus enabling the mothers to give a little more time to the children...and it enables the mother to go directly to her work in the morning, and in the evening to go home instead of having to come to the nursery after a hard day's work.

*by Phyllis Ladd, Archivist*



***Perhaps these two young Holyoke Day Nursery graduates wanted their photo taken with "Sister" before they boarded the bus for the ride home.***

## The Presence of Providence – Compassion, Care, and Hope During a Hurricane

In the days leading up to the arrival of Hurricane Harvey, like everyone else, we prepared hurriedly for the worst and hoped for the best for our eastern coast line. On August 23rd, warnings were issued for 30 Texas counties, and mandatory evacuations got underway for the southern coastal areas. We did not know then how God would call our community to be the presence of His Providence in the midst of so much devastation from the impending storm.

It began when the city of Victoria issued a mandatory evacuation notice. The Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary from Victoria arrived at our motherhouse in San Antonio on August 25. They had been our guests before in September of 2008 during Hurricane Ike. In the years since, their community and ours had undergone significant changes in losses and increase of retired members.

Although our coming together originated from an emergency situation, we believe it to have been a providential blessing. It gave us the opportunity to experience what other religious communities are exploring as new possibilities of living in communion with other religious.

Our daily routines changed as both communities made an effort to be one for the other. Our prayer traditions during communal prayer time intertwined harmoniously without effort as we focused our intentions on the suffering of so many people.

The age differences did not encumber us from being present to one another. Recreation was spontaneous and the meals were prepared by a Sister from each community.



Nine days later, the roads became accessible for the Sisters to return home. We accompanied them with a car-load of groceries and supplies they were going to share with their neighbors. The sites we saw along the way were every bit like we had seen on TV all week.

When the flood waters inundated Houston, our MCDP Sisters who live there braved the weather to render immediate assistance. The MCDPs at St. Ambrose parish helped distribute warm meals, clothing, and cleaning supplies. Another two helped keep St. Martha's soup kitchen open, even when many of the volunteers were unable to get through the flooded streets.

In the neighboring town of Conroe, our two Sisters who do volunteer ministry at Sacred Heart parish, helped collect and sort donations for the people seeking assistance. They did the same for the evacuees at the downtown convention center which was used to shelter 300 families.

Many of the families were especially grateful for the  
*Continued on page 8*



## The Presence of Providence

*Continued from page 7*

presence of our Sisters who listened with compassion to their heartbreaking stories of having endured the same calamity of another flood just fifteen months prior. They lost the little they had managed to replace with much sacrifice. However, in their conversation with our Sisters, they spoke of their hope and trust in God's merciful love to see them through the hardships ahead.

Throughout the storm and after, LCWR Region 12, kept us linked daily through email as a means for us to check on each other. Those who had extra space offered housing to communities before the storm, and to those whose homes had suffered water damage. The national LCWR office also kept the membership informed of the damage done by the flood waters to different convents and retreat houses owned by religious.

While Harvey's wrath left a trail of destruction that will take years for people and businesses to recover from, we were also left with lasting images of heroic acts of strangers helping strangers and saving lives. We see this happen over and over; the best in



humanity breaks through in the worst of times. The same can be said of people who lose the little they have; their faith and hope in God shines through even stronger.

*They that have hope in the Lord  
Will renew their strength, they will  
Soar as with eagles wings; they will  
Run and not grow weary, walk and  
Not grow faint. Isaiah 40:31*

## *Sisters of Divine Providence, San Antonio*

### **The Metropolitan Organization Aids In Harvey Recovery**

Prior to my accepting the position as Superior General, I was an organizer with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) in the Southwest region for 36 years. IAF has had many religious working as leaders and organizers over the years. Through our IAF organizing experience, going back to Hurricane Katrina, through Ike, Rita, and last year in Baton Rouge, we have learned a great deal about long term and short term emergency response. IAF organizations have been on the front lines of recovery during those disasters. And so it is with Hurricane Harvey.

The IAF organization in Houston is The Metropolitan Organization (TMO). TMO organizers moved immediately into the shelters doing small group conversations with the evacuees to have them share stories and find those willing and able to make the shelters more habitable. Shelters can seem like prisons

unless the evacuees themselves are listened to and organized to make their situation better. The TMO leaders held a press conference calling for landlords not to evict renters for not paying their September rent. That is just the immediate response.

There will be strategies to fight for living wage temporary public and private sector jobs for those out of work doing clean up. There will be strategies to rebuild the neighborhoods of the most vulnerable. The strategies will come out of what IAF leaders and organizers are trained to do: listen, find leaders, organize and act.

There is a world of hurt, and we encourage you to join the organizing effort of TMO. Contact TMO at (832) 651-7505 or [tmo@tmohouston.net](mailto:tmo@tmohouston.net) for more details.

*by Sister Pearl Ceaser, CDP*



## ***In Providence We Trust***

As we watched the early September 2017 “Hurricane Harvey” events unfold, we were amazed by the awesome power of nature but even more so by the human spirit that prevailed. We saw Providence bringing good in the midst of the destruction. Many used their own boats for rescue missions, others donated items and thousands volunteered at the shelters set up around the city.

Sister Megan said “I was privileged to be able to go along with another annual professed Dominican Sister to volunteer at the George R. Brown Convention Center. It was a sobering experience. This one shelter housed about 9000 evacuees. I was amazed to see the volunteer line wrapping around the building with individuals wanting to donate their time and skills.

Once inside the shelter I found things calm and organized and before long I was put to work. I did everything from cleaning restrooms to leading a group of volunteers tasked with setting up ‘grab and go’ tables stocked with food to keep the volunteers energized. I was overwhelmed by the attitude of the guests at the shelter. They maintained an attitude of gratitude and had hope for their futures, even though a great many had lost everything. Providence was certainly at work in the shelters. I was also most impressed by the shelter seekers turned volunteers! A few told me that they felt fortunate to be in a safe place and they wanted to contribute.”

In this experience of watching devastation caused by wind and rain, we prayed and asked, “What can a senior Sister training an annual professed Sister do?” Providence provided! A phone call came with a prayer request. A community discussion followed and the decision was made. We invited a couple from Venezuela whose house flooded and who only asked for prayers to come and stay in our guest house. We are fortunate to live in an area of the city that is on a high elevation with good drainage. We knew the answer. Sister Rosalie believes that Providence brought the Houston CDP community to this house a few years ago when they were searching for a new home. They were blessed with excellent neighbors who have been Providence to the community.



*Photos courtesy of Trish Badger.*

Therefore, “How can we have empty rooms when people all around us are desperate for shelter?” The CDP Constitution tells us that “Simplicity characterizes our relationships with others.” Does this not speak clearly the message of God’s providence in the lives of this couple?

As the cameras leave and the spotlight dims on Houston we know that our Provident God will continue to be in the midst of the slow, patient work that will allow our city to recuperate from the devastation brought on by hurricane Harvey. We continue to pray that Providence will govern us in all our undertakings and difficulties, knowing that Providence is a never-failing source of help.

*by Houston, TX, residents:  
Sisters Rosalie Karstedt, CDP  
and Megan Grewing (Annual Professed)*

## **12 Sisters Celebrate their Jubilee**

The Community Jubilee Mass this year was held at Holy Cross Church, Latonia, celebrating the varied lives of dedicated service of the Sister Jubilarians.

Each summer the community gathers to acknowledge the Sisters' special anniversaries. This year twelve Jubilarians were honored for their combined 675 years as Sisters of Divine Providence and in gratitude for the many people their lives have touched. A huge banner with the words "How Can I Keep From Singing" the theme chosen by the Jubilarians, hung in the front of the church, which was beautifully decorated with flowers, candles and the Congregation's banner.

"My life flows on in endless song," words taken from the hymn, seemed to express the individual sentiment of each Sister of Divine Providence celebrating this special event, with unique ministries and various "verses, melodies, harmonies." Librarians, elementary, high school and college teachers, missionaries to other cultures, parish and province ministry reflect the varied melodies these Jubilarians have been engaged in over the 75, 70, 60 and 50 years as vowed members of the Congregation.

Sisters renewed their vows holding specially decorated candles which were placed on display in the front

of the altar. The singing, lead by the parish choir, was beautiful as a full church of Sisters, guests, and parishioners raised their voices in song during the joyous celebration.

Provincial Superior, Sister Alice Gerdeman thanked Rev. Thomas Barnes, pastor of Holy Cross and the many parishioners and choir, who were host to the Sisters and their guests for the beautiful liturgy.

A reception in the parish hall was held immediately following so all could visit and share stories. The Sister Jubilarians have much to be grateful for and can each proclaim "How Can I Keep From Singing"!

### **Jubliarians are:**

**75 Years:** Sister Josephine Tipane

**70 Years:** Sisters Edith Austing, Theodore Nolan and Rose Mary Rizzo

**60 Years:** Sisters M. Theres Bowman, Dorothy Ann Dzurissin, Marilyn Hoffman, Marlene Rust, Helen Charles Wilke and Virginia Ann Wolfzorn

**50 Years:** Sisters Theresa Falkenstein and Augusta Marie Seibert



## Providence Activities Adds to Health Care

An innovative approach to the care of our elder sisters began recently in the Health Care Center of Holy Family Home, Melbourne, KY. Providence Activities, based on a Montessori approach to learning stimulates mental, physical, emotional, artistic and social skills. Volunteers use various activities emphasizing the whole person.

The Providence Activities Room has a prepared environment and sisters can be assisted individually or as a small group with activities in categories to include religious, daily living, sensorial, math, language and cultural. Food preparation, themed parties, an outside activity in the Mary Garden or a field trip to a local farm have been very successful in engaging the sisters.

Providence Activities is staffed by Sisters Mary Bezold and Theresa Falkenstein, both certified Montessori instructors with many years experience, and associate members, Dr. Marilyn Schleyer and Debbie Bartlett.

Montessori has a rich history with the Province. Maria Montessori once visited and assisted the program at St. Vincent's Home in Providence. She donated materials and was very complimentary of the manner in which the children were instructed by the Sisters.

Sisters Cletus Hehman and Marcia Jehn helped to open Providence Montessori School in Lexington, KY. Sister Mary Bezold opened St. Anne Montessori School at the convent in Melbourne and St. Camillus Academy Montessori in Corbin. Many fledging Montessori teachers were instructed by those sisters.



## **Standing for Justice**



***Whether it has been engaging with the LGBTQ community during a protest of their presence on the campus of the University of Cincinnati; or standing in silence with others enraged about recent proclamations of government officials on immigrants, racism, health care or trafficking, Sisters of Divine Providence have been busy standing with others and against injustice.***

***They have been there in a visible way with signs proclaiming the congregation's long history of support for all of God's children or by writing letters to their government representatives.***

## Worship Spaces at Providence Care Hospital

The wide-open glass doors of the Worship Centre in the new Providence Care Hospital beckon all to come in. As people enter the space for the first time and take in the view of Lake Ontario, the outdoor labyrinth and the gardens, many are heard saying, "Oh wow, this is so peaceful!"

At the heart of the hospital is a sanctuary where any person can feel welcomed to pray, meditate or just simply "be". Water, reminding us of the origins of life and our baptism flows down one of the walls, offering a cleansing and renewing presence. The inspiration for the curved wall and the flowing water came to the architects when they visited the Chapel of Mary Mother of Compassion at Providence Motherhouse. We can always feel affinity to our Founders through the architectural design in the Worship Centre.

The Adoration Chapel is set apart at the front of the Worship Centre so those who wish to pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament can experience the healing and peace for which they long. The weekly Rosary group uses this space as they pray together.

The design of the feature wall at the front of the sanctuary was inspired by the South Wall in the Roman Catholic Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Haut de Ronchamp, France, which is one of the finest examples of the architecture of Franco-Swiss architect Le Corbusier. The labyrinth in the Worship Centre replicates the world famous labyrinth in the Cathedral in Notre Dame de Chartres.

The door to the outside deck enables those who wish to have prayers and then draw their last breath to do so out in God's creation.

Public hospitals in Canada serve an increasingly diverse population. Down the hall from the Worship Centre is the Meditation Room, designed for more intimate prayers and meditation. Daily prayers by people of the Muslim faith can be oriented by the Qibla on the wall. The cardinal directions marked on the floor and the walls enable Indigenous persons to honor the four directions as they pray in their traditional ways. Staff and physicians use the space for meditation and other forms of prayer, enabling them to be centered in their service to those persons seeking healing at Providence Care Hospital.

Providence Care Hospital provides sacred spaces and respectful relationships so that all persons, regardless of their beliefs, can honor and draw upon their spiritual practices to provide them with the spiritual resilience and strength they require for their healing journey.



*by Rev. Dr. Neil Elford  
Director for Spiritual Health,  
Mission & Ethics*



*Labyrinth replicates the Cathedral in Notre Dame de Chartres.*

## Legacy Gift Honours Sisters in Education

In the words of Sister Sandra Shannon, the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul have strong connections to teaching.

“We have all been involved in education of one sort or another,” Sister Sandra explained at a congregational meeting and announcement earlier this year. She shared examples, such as leading wellness activities, working with Associates or on Mission initiatives, participating in liturgy, and teaching at the Spirituality Centre or in a classroom in schools, etc.

“As a Leadership Team, we have been reflecting on how to honour the many contributions Sisters of Providence have made over the years in the field of education,” Sister Sandra said. “You never know what you’re going to hear when the phone rings... and Providence provided again!”

Last summer, a call came to the Motherhouse from Brother Lenny Rego, who had worked with the Sisters of Providence in Peru. Brother Rego is now the Resident Oblate at St. Paul’s University in Ottawa, and he was telephoning to ask if the Sisters would consider making a gift to the University’s capital (building) campaign.

“Brother Lenny explained his experience of the Sisters of Providence was that we were living transformative spirituality in Peru, and that is why he reached out to us,” said Sister Gayle Desarmia. After careful consideration the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul

responded favourably to the request, and endowed \$2.5 million to St. Paul’s to support education.

At a ceremony in Ottawa in April, the University took time to thank and honour the Sisters of Providence for this legacy gift.

“I wish to offer my sincerest thanks for your friendship, faith and hope for the world as we work together to prepare the next generation of leaders for our world,” said Chantal Beauvais, Rector of St. Paul’s University.

The money will be used to fund a new school within St. Paul’s, called the ‘Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality.’ The school will be the first of its kind in Canada.

“When we are at our best... we are attentive toward where we are being called, to what is emerging. We are community and we come from a shared wisdom. . . We are partners. We do what we’re meant to do for the life of the world,” said Dr. Miriam Martin, Director of the Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality.

Transformative Leadership focuses on personal and social transformation, characterized by relationships that are ethical, inspirational, intellectually stimulating and personal. It respects individual and organizational goals, welcomes change for the good of people and communities, and encourages a continuous learning process.

*by Jenn Goodwin*



***From left to right: Manal Guirguis-Younger, Dean, Faculties of Human Sciences and Philosophy; Sister Fatima r.s.m.; Sister Miriam K. Martin r.s.m., Associate Professor, Director of the School of Transformative Leadership; Sister Sandra Shannon, SP, General Superior, Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul; Chantal Beauvais, Rector; The Honourable Catherine McKenna, MP and Minister of Environment and Climate Change; and Soeur Rachelle Watier, SCO, General Animator, Sisters of Charity of Ottawa.***

## **La Roche College Names Sister Maura Anne Dunn the 2017 Woman of Providence**

In 1963, the Sisters of Divine Providence founded La Roche College and named it for the co-founder of the community, Mother Marie de la Roche. Since then, the Sisters have taken a vital interest in the ongoing mission and development of the College, and continue to animate the values and inspire the College community.

The Woman of Providence Award is given annually at Commencement to a member of the Congregation of Divine Providence whose life of service is a compelling example of God's Providence made visible.

Celebrating her 50th Jubilee this year, Sister Maura Anne Dunn—born Shirley Victoria—entered religious life in 1967 at age 38 from St. Anselm parish—now Word of God parish—in Swissvale, PA. She credits life-saving, emergency surgery and a three-month period of recuperation as what most influenced her decision to enter religious life. She says “an overwhelming call to religious life manifested itself.”

Sister Maura Anne chose the Sisters of Divine Providence because she remembered her experience with the Sisters as a patient at Braddock Hospital in Pittsburgh, which the Sisters administered.

In 1971, Sister Maura Anne received her bachelor's degree in sociology from La Roche College and, after taking her first vows, began working at Divine Providence Hospital, Pittsburgh, in the Social Services department where she received on-the-job training.



She went on to work as a social worker for 19 years, leaving in 1990 to care for her ailing mother.

In 1994, Sister Maura Anne began her ministry with La Roche's Welcome Center and continued there until 2012. She says, “The world came through that lobby.

I was energized by everyone, particularly the students!” Since 2012, Sister Maura Anne has ministered in La Roche's freshman admissions office. She is also a member of the Sisters' bell choir, a Eucharistic minister and a prayer leader.

Before pursuing a religious vocation, Sister Maura Anne attended the University of Pittsburgh; trained to be a stenographer and paralegal; worked at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh for three years; and was employed at the Pentagon as a civilian with the Air Force Judge Advocate General for 13 years. She credits this time of living and working independently for helping her relate to the students at La Roche.

Sister Maura Anne is the oldest living graduate of La Roche College. When she was told she would receive the Woman of Providence Award, Sister Maura Anne experienced shock, tears and then smiles to know she is part of such an honored group of women. She says, “I am so grateful for being able to devote the past 50 years of my life to the Congregation of Divine Providence and serve in many ministries. I love doing whatever I can for the community, for I have received so much more in return.”

## **Community Service Day**

During the 2017 Assembly, Sisters and Associates volunteered for community service opportunities which included filling backpacks with back-to-school supplies for children from low-income families, assembling first aid kits for villagers in Hoima, Uganda, volunteering at Providence Connections, planting flowers in raised garden beds at Providence Heights, gardening at the La Roche College garden, and baking pies for the Ketteler awards reception. These volunteer opportunities provided camaraderie and a community-building experience for all who attended the annual Assembly.



## New Associates Received at 2017 Assembly

On August 5, seven people were received as Associates of the Marie de la Roche Province: Denise Champe, Colleen Higbee, Peggy Huwe, Terri Liberto, Peggy Schramm, Mary Seljak, and Betty Sypien. An eighth member of this Inquirer group, Ann Vinski, will be received on November 1.

Local Coordinator Sandy Stevenson delivered a Welcome and Reflection to open the Reception ceremony, which took place in the Mother of Divine Providence Chapel at Providence Heights. Sr. Janet Schaffran, also a Local Coordinator, called the candidates to the altar and presented them to Sr. Michele Bisbey, Provincial Director.

Each candidate read aloud her individual covenant statement expressing her commitment, then signed the covenant and placed it on the altar.

Local Coordinator Maryann D'Alessandro offered an explanation of the Associate Symbol, the planet Earth enclosed by a trefoil. The trefoil represents the Triune God we call Providence, and God's Providence is made visible through acts of justice and compassion, and through an inclusive, hospitable presence.

Then each new Associate's companion—a Sister or Associate who had supported them during the Inquiry process—presented them with the symbol. Colleen Higbee's service dog, Piers, who had accompanied her throughout Inquiry and was an attentive and well-mannered presence with her at the ceremony, also received a symbol pinned to his service vest.

Associates who were in attendance then renewed their covenants, promising to continue to further the mission and goals of the Community by sharing in a corporate commitment to spread the Gospel.

Wisdom Awards were also presented at the ceremony to the following Associates: Ellie Field, Jane Kerr, Elaine Lafayette, Mary Anne McCarthy, Ruth Rittler, and Sally Shamalla. Award recipients unable to attend were Millie Howard, Winnie Kerwin, David Lavender, Ellen Lavender, Joseph Lempicki, Ann Moberg, Eleanor Pearson, and Dorothy Webb. Associates who have reached the age of 70 and have been an Associate for five years or more are eligible to receive the award.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, all in attendance were invited to attend a celebratory dinner.

*by Associate Sally Shamalla*



***Sr. Janet Schaffran, Local Coordinator (far left), addresses the new Pittsburgh Associates. (Standing left to right) Betty Sypien; Mary Seljak; Director of Associates Erin Middleton (holding mic); Peggy Schramm; Terri Liberto; Peggy Huwe; Denise Champe; and Colleen Higbee with Piers, her service dog.***



## **Sisters Honor Physician, Associate with 2017 Ketteler Award for Social Justice**

Dr. Zane H. Gates and Associate Jane Kerr were presented with the 2017 Ketteler Award for Social Justice at a special awards ceremony and reception on August 5.

Dr. Gates, the Executive Director and co-founder of Empower3 Center for Health in Altoona, PA, has worked tirelessly throughout his medical career to provide affordable health care to the working poor.

Jane, an Associate of the Sisters of Divine Providence for 20 years, has worked to improve the health, educational, economic and spiritual needs of those less fortunate through her mission trips to the villages of Hoima, Uganda.

In 1998, the Sisters of Divine Providence instituted the Ketteler Award—named for Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, Bishop of Mainz, Germany, and co-founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, to honor individuals who demonstrate a strong commitment to social justice.



## **Community Letter to President Trump Strongly Urges More Dialogue with North Korea**

We are members of the Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence who promote justice and peace in our world through our many service and advocacy ministries.

We are very concerned about the growing tensions between our U.S. government and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We are strongly urging our President, Donald Trump, to take part in more dialogue and negotiation rather than exchanging intimidations with the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un.

Out of our faith tradition, the Gospel words of Jesus, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." (John

14:27) encourages us to continually seek peace for the world. We believe that being open to diplomacy is more powerful than threatening "war."



We call on President Trump to engage in constructive dialogue and negotiation to resolve the current crisis between the governments of the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in a manner that guarantees the peace and security that all people seek.

We commit ourselves to promote nonviolence and a compassionate response to the rhetoric now on going between the U.S. and North Korea.

## **Candidate from Cameroon Inspired by Blessed Emilie Gamelin**

Blessed Emilie Gamelin brought Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo back to the United States from Rome and Cameroon to enter the Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province, as a candidate. Since she was introduced to the life and legacy of the foundress of the religious community during a Come & See experience in 2008-2010, Marie-Thérèse has felt drawn to her example and her passion for the poor. "I welcomed the Come & See as a time to pray, retreat, and to ask God to tell me what he wants me to do to help my people," she explained. "I fell in love with the charism, to serve the poor."

She became a Providence Associate before she went back to Cameroon, taking the spirit of Blessed Emilie with her as she began projects to help the poor and the orphaned. "It was a challenge because I had a lot of projects in mind, but no resources," Marie-Thérèse recalled. "I asked our Provident God to take care of that. I did not know where to find the money to do it, but I thought of Mother Gamelin and her basket. I asked her to put something in this basket every time we had a need, and I can tell you that our basket was never empty. We received a lot and it was, for me, very significant: Providence of God – Mother Gamelin's presence."

While in Seattle, she founded an organization called African Solidarity in Action. Once in Cameroon, step by step she began helping students and asking for help from others. When she returned to the home where she grew up, she became a blessing to her community by providing

one of life's most precious gifts: clean water. It was a big job to build a well 70 to 80 meters deep, but the result was well worth the effort to the 2,000 people who use it.

"Water is important, especially for the children who become sick from unclean water," she explained. Support for the wells, now three of them, led to tuition support for students in nearby schools (at least 33 students now) and to construction of a small clinic. Donations came from Sisters of Providence, Providence Associates and from friends in Europe, including Rome, where she had worked as a secretary. Providence General Superior Karin Dufault, surrounded by singing and dancing children, tried her hand at pumping the well when she visited Cameroon in 2013. The mayor of her village of Lomié sent his thanks and appreciation to the sisters.

Marie-Thérèse said her ministry was a very good and satisfying one, and she was living with the charism of the sisters as a Providence Associate in Italy and Cameroon. "But God was asking me to do more, to give my life as a consecrated religious with the sisters." After prayer and discernment, she wrote a letter to the Sisters of Providence, letting them know she was ready to come back. "The answer was positive," she said with a smile.

After obtaining an R-1 visa, Marie-Thérèse moved to Seattle and was received as a candidate for the religious community in a simple ceremony at St. Joseph Residence on May 19. "This time of closer relationship with the sisters allows a woman to be free to hear at a deeper level how God is calling her," said Provincial Superior Judith Desmarais.



**Marie-Thérèse helps children at the well  
in the village of Lomié in Cameroon.**



**Provincial Superior Judith Desmarais welcomes Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo as a candidate.**

## **Intercommunity Ministry Breaks Ground on 24 Cottages for the Homeless**

Transitions, an intercommunity ministry sponsored by four communities of women religious, including the Sisters of Providence, broke ground on August 8 for The Home Yard Cottages. The development will provide 24 homes for formerly homeless individuals and families living below the poverty line and coping with physical and mental disabilities. Transitions focuses on ending poverty and homelessness for women and children. Access to affordable housing is key.

“At the end of the day, we all get to go home. Home. It’s a place of relief, recovery, recalibration and respite, safety and comfort and it is deserved by all,” Edie Rice-Sauer, Transitions executive director, said at the groundbreaking ceremony. “But in Spokane, each day 1,300 people have no place to call home. Transitions is working to change that.”

The project is unique, she explained. “It’s an infill project, reducing sprawl. Fifteen of the units are energy efficient, net zero units meaning they produce as much energy as they use. We’ve used the city’s cottage housing ordinance, which allows for greater density. They’re not tiny homes, but are not bigger than 1,000 square feet. Many of the decisions we have made about the design were impacted directly from our participants. They informed us what works and what doesn’t and we listened! And lastly, we hope to address the severe shortage of trained workers in the construc-

tion field by partnering with YouthBuild, a program of Educational Service District 101 that provides job training in the construction trades to low-income youth who also are working on their GED.”

The VIPs who attended the groundbreaking were a testament to the complexity of the project and its significance. Spokane City Councilwoman Karen Stratton and State Rep. Marcus Riccelli, D-Spokane, were among those who wielded the shovels. Sisters representing the sponsoring communities also took a turn at symbolically breaking ground in the Audubon Downriver neighborhood. Refreshments for the gathering were provided by New Leaf Bakery Café, a Transitions job training program that offers women education, hands-on work experience and supportive services.

The \$6.2 million Home Yards Cottages project is expected to be completed by late summer or early fall of 2018. Participants from a focus group suggested unique services that will be incorporated, including continuation of the existing community garden, a service animal run and two playgrounds.

The groundbreaking ceremony ended with an impassioned plea for compassion for all by David Browneagle, a member of the Spokane Tribe who gave a blessing. His prayer included the words: “Allow us to stand tall amongst the people, and if we see somebody down, extend our hand and help them up.”



***Sisters of Providence are one of four communities of women religious who sponsor Transitions in Spokane. Providence Sisters participating in the groundbreaking ceremony included (from left) Liz Gress, Dorothy Byrne, Ida Mae Marceau, and Annette Seubert, along with (third from right) Judy George.***

## The Fruits of the 2017 General Chapter

From July 9 to 30, nearly a hundred sisters working in Canada, United States, El Salvador, Philippines, Chile, Haiti and Egypt gathered in Montreal, Quebec.

They were to reflect about a host of important issues ranging from a new model of governance, to changes to the *Constitutions and Rules* of the Congregation and not to forget the election of the new General Leadership Team that will serve until 2022.

The new team consists of Sister Karin Dufault, General Superior for a second term; Sisters Josie Lerios and Rollande Malo, re-elected as General Councillors; and Sisters Nancy Arévalo and Hortense Demia-Mbailaou, newly elected as General Councillors.

Under the theme “Joyfully Welcome and Proclaim God’s Dream”, the participants repeatedly pointed out that they worked intensely, but in good spirits.

Facilitators Mary Harrington, S USC, and Gabrielle Stuart, RSM, formed different groups for work and for faith sharing. This helped the Chapter members to get to know sisters from other countries, other cultures.

As a result of this mingling, the participants expressed they feel better how they understand the

Congregation’s reality and challenges. Several Chapter members noted that at the end of the Chapter, they had developed a stronger sense of belonging to the Congregation as a whole; other Chapter members spoke of an invitation to be more generous in their response to differences. All sought to connect in a common quest to make possible God’s dream for the Congregation and the world.



**The new General Leadership Team: Left to Right: Sisters Karin Dufault, Rollande Malo, Hortense Demia-Mbailaou; Nancy Arévalo and Josephina Lerios.**

## **Initial Work Begun on “HOME” Memory Care Project to Create a Dementia Friendly Campus**

The Sisters of Providence have created a “HOME (Helping Ourselves Meaningfully Engage) Team” to further what has been known as the Memory Care Project. The team is seeking to identify spaces and activities that give persons living with memory challenges safe and comfortable environments in which to engage in purposeful activities. One of the first projects undertaken is to beautify a common courtyard area and make it mobile friendly for wheelchairs and scooters.

Several people have received training by the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners including Beth Collins, Clinic Care coordinator for the Sisters of Providence, a Providence Associate and two Providence Health Care staff members. The HOME Team gave a presentation to sisters and associates at the annual meeting in June and recently provided an in-service for directors of various management areas of the Sisters of Providence. Education and/or training of all Sisters of Providence and Providence Health Care staff is planned next.

Several initiatives that are being researched are a computerized learning center that will help to improve cognitive function and at least one or more memory café(s) which will act as activities centers where people can safely engage with others on a daily basis.



## **Programs Ramp Up for 2017-2018**

There is something for everyone in the 2017-2018 Sisters of Providence schedule of retreats, programs and events. Details are available in an easy-to-use booklet, available on request at 812-535-2952, and online at [Events.SistersofProvidence.org](http://Events.SistersofProvidence.org).

People will find programs related to arts and crafts, eco-spirituality, food and gardening. There are also options to encourage folks spiritually and help them learn more about Saint Mother Theodore Guerin.

Several family events are planned, from the Harvest Hootenanny and Christmas Fun at the Woods to the annual spring-time Earth Day Celebration. Programs are offered by Providence Spirituality & Conference Center and White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, both ministries of the Sisters of Providence.

Information is also included about the Shrine of Saint Mother Theodore, daily and Sunday Mass and Sunday Brunch, sabbaticals and spiritual direction, as well as tours and pilgrimages.



## Exciting New Land Initiatives

The Sisters of Providence at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods have two new initiatives involving their land.

Several years ago, a representative from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources approached the leadership team on behalf of the Healthy Rivers Initiative. The Healthy Rivers Initiative (HRI), established in June 2010 by former Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels, works with willing landowners to acquire farmland along 43,000 acres of the floodplain of the Wabash River and Sugar Creek in west-central Indiana in order to place it in a land conservancy where it can be permanently protected. Over the years, use of nitrates in farming has endangered the waters as well as the lands along the waters.

The Sisters of Providence do not own such land, but a neighbor to the north did. We were informed that he would sell his land along the river to HRI if he could find replacement land to farm. The SPs did own other farmland, providentially adjacent to other land the neighbor already farms.

The leadership team and committee members applied the SP Land Ethic Systemic Decision Process to the project and decided to sell the land to the

neighbor-farmer, concluding that our land is also part of our mission. The revenue received through these dealings will extend that mission. And the HRI acquired land will also help bring health to the Wabash River and will provide a renewable source of energy for the future.

The second initiative developed when we negotiated with the USDA to put 90.14 acres of land into a Conservation Reserve Program. For the next 10 years, the Congregation agrees to use these acres as a pollinator habitat, primarily for bees, birds and butterflies. Currently a large parcel of land outside our Sister of Providence Administration Building is being prepared for such a habitat as well as acreage near the White Violet Center for Eco-Justice. The first step is to plant crops that will substantially choke out weeds and restore nutrients to the soil. The current crop of buckwheat is ready to be baled. Winter rye will then be planted. Next spring a mix of wild flowers will be planted to attract bees, flies, beetles and other pollinating insects, as well as butterflies. We will receive \$200 or so per acre per year, plus a signing bonus which will pay for the spring planting.

*by Sister Ann Casper, SP*



## **Opening and Success of the Farm Store at WVC**

White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, a ministry of the Sisters of Providence, successfully opened a farm store this past spring, which offers fresh, organic vegetables grown at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. "It's really gratifying to be able to tell folks that all the products in the store come from White Violet Center and from producers right here in the Wabash Valley," said Lorrie Heber, director of White Violet Center. She said the best part yet has been "meeting the folks who live in our neighborhood. People come in and tell us great stories about their connections to the Woods and the sisters."

The farm store at White Violet Center stocks products made locally, such as goat's milk soap and lotion, honey, maple syrup, chocolates, pet treats, tote bags made from plastic sacks, pork, lamb, beef, coffee, and more. "It's been wonderful to build relationships with our local vendors," Lorrie said. "When I give them a call to order more products, I feel like we're fulfilling our mission of developing the local food economy."

Wednesdays have become "fresh bread Wednesday" and the most popular shopping day at the farm store. An assortment of homemade savory and sweet loaves of bread, flat bread, muffins, English muffins, and



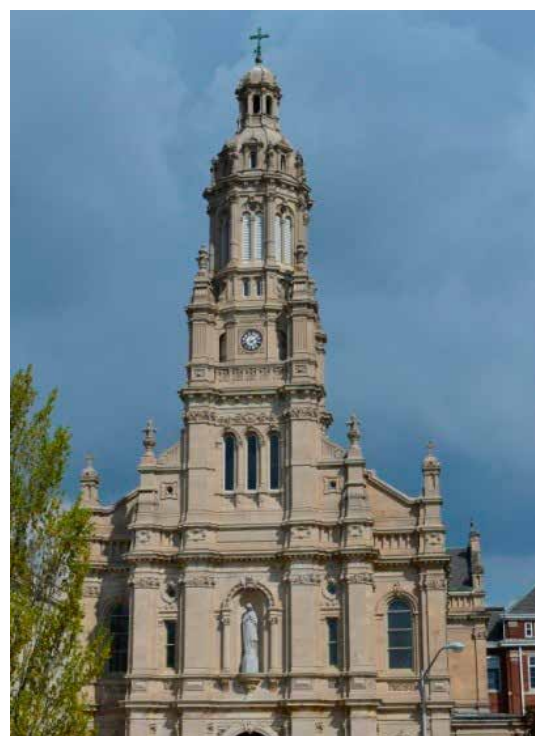
cinnamon rolls are made and delivered by Harvest Bakery of Terre Haute every Wednesday morning.

"Being a farm store, we'll have new produce and fruit offerings as the season progresses," Lorrie said. "We'll be adding new products from vendors as we identify them. We've added pet treats recently and soon we'll be adding items for canning. This fall, we hope to have fermented items such as pickled peppers and, perhaps, some sauerkraut and pickles. Things will change all the time!"

## **Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College Apply for National Historic Registry**

The Saint Mary-of-the-Woods Historic District (SMWHD), home to the Sisters of Providence and Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, has been nominated for entry into the National Register of Historic Places. The SMWHD nomination has been approved by the Indiana State Review Board, due to size and historical, architectural or archeological significance. The nomination has been sent to Washington, D.C., for the National Park Service review and final approval is expected in early October.

There are many benefits to this designation, including becoming part of the public, searchable database, encouraging preservation by documenting a property's historic significance, providing opportunities for specific preservation incentives such as grants and tax credits, networking with other historic property owners for increased tourism and designation by a bronze plaque that distinguishes the property as listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



## **Meet the New General Council**

On June 17th, 2017, the Sisters of Divine Providence installed Sister Pearl Ceasar, CDP, to the office of Superior General. Sister Pearl has served most recently in the capacity of Executive Director for Project Quest, a workforce development organization. Her former ministries include community organizer with the Southwest Industrial Areas Foundation. Sister Pearl is a native of Alexandria, LA. She earned a Bachelor of Art degree in Sociology and a Masters of Social Work from Our Lady of the Lake University, a sponsored institution of the Congregation. She entered the congregation in 1961, making her First Profession of Vows in 1963.

Sister Anita Brenek, CDP, will serve as the First Assistant to the General Council. She served as the Director of Formation for the Congregation. Sister Anita, a native of Rosebud, TX, holds a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics from Our Lady of the Lake College, a Masters in Religious Studies from Incarnate Word College and a Masters in Spirituality from Loyola University in Chicago. She professed first vows in 1970.

Sister Mary Bordelon, CD, has served most recently as the congregation's Director of Mobile Ministry. Prior to this, she served as the Pastoral Coordinator of Holy Family Church in Metter, GA. Sister Mary is a native of Bunkie, LA. She holds a Bachelor of Art degree in Religious Studies from Our Lady of the Lake University, a Master in Religious Education from the University of Loyola in New Orleans. She professed first vows in 1985.

Sister Lourdes Leal, CDP, current First Assistant to the General Council was re-elected to the congregation's leadership team. She previously served as the Northwest Deanery Coordinator of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. A native of San Antonio, she professed first vows in 1961. She holds a Doctoral degree in Communication Disorders from the University of Oklahoma and a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Speech Pathology from Our Lady of the Lake College.



***The new CDP General Council pictured: Sister Pearl Ceasar, Superior General; Sister Anita Brenek, First Assistant; Sister Lourdes Leal, General Councilor and Sister Mary Bordelon, General Councilor.***



## ***A Divine Providence Sister Remembers: In Guatemala with Father Stanley Rother***

Sister Rose Marie Gallatin, CDP, remembers listening to the evening news in 1981 and hearing that Father Stanley Rother had been murdered in Guatemala. Three men had broken into the rectory at Santiago Atitlán and shot the gentle priest when he refused to go with them.

The announcer went on to report that hundreds of the indigenous people, whom he had sought to protect from a brutal military regime, had gathered around the mission, stunned and in abject grief.

Memories flashed through Sister Rose Marie's mind. A few years before, in 1978, she and Sister Sharon Garcia, CDP, had set out by bus to visit Father Rother's Guatemalan mission for three weeks. The idea had been hers but, not speaking Spanish, she had enlisted Sister Sharon, who did, as her traveling companion. "I knew that the



**Father Stanley Rother**

Diocese of Oklahoma had founded this mission down there and I was curious about it," recalls Sister Rose Marie, an Oklahoma native.

The pair embarked on the memorable journey from Laredo by bus, stopping for a short visit with their congregation in Querétaro, Mexico, then on to Mexico City, Oaxaca and the southern border town of Tapachula. Along the way, they were halted by "the Feds," who had been tipped off smugglers with contraband were on board and wanted their "cut." This, the Sisters learned, was normal procedure.

A taxi ferried them across the Guatemalan border to Talisman, where the pair purchased bus tickets on the ironically named Transportes Rapido Del Sur. That long and arduous ride (shared with live goats and chickens) was notable for boards placed across the aisle to seat more passengers, who rode bent over so the police would not see their heads. Eventually deposited at a muddy little crossroads called Cocalee, they waited under a coconut tree for the rickety, filled-beyond-capacity bus to Santiago Atitlán and MICATOKLA (Misión Católica de Oklahoma). Here, they were graciously welcomed by the pastor, Father Stanley Rother, a farm boy from Okarche, OK, who had been serving the indigenous Tz'utujil people, descendants of the Mayans, for ten years and was affectionately known as Padre Francisco.

"He is willing to stay as long as they need him," Sister Rose Marie noted



**Sister Rose Marie Gallatin**

in an account of the trip written for her congregation back home. "He is priest, mechanic, farmer, welder, medical assistant, builder, linguist, etc.," she wrote, and was fluent in Spanish and Tz'utujil, a native dialect used only in that village. This was especially remarkable as his inability to learn Latin had initially kept him from becoming a priest as a seminarian at St. John's-Assumption Seminary in San Antonio years before. He later succeeded in his studies at Mt. St. Mary's Seminary in Maryland.

The first memory of Father Rother that comes to Sister Rose Marie's mind today is of him standing over a huge pot of boiling water on the rectory stove, sterilizing baby bottles. "The Nestlé Company had sold Latin American mothers on

*Continued on page 26*

## **A Divine Providence Sister Remembers**

*Continued from page 25*

the importance of bottle feeding,” she relates, which included using their product. However, the people in Santiago Atitlán had no knowledge or means of sterilizing the bottles, which soon reeked of stagnant filth.

The infant mortality rate was high, she recalls, and if a child survived past the age of five or six, they could expect to live to be 45, 50 at most. She was a robust 50 years old at the time and remembers Nicolás, a wizened, indigenous who had managed to make it past 50. His skin felt and looked like leather. Every day, for six years, he had been coming to the mission for lunch. “Father Rother always cut his meat,” she relates, “and the whole time, he spoke to him in Tz’utujil, the old man’s dialect.”

The land’s natural beauty was impressive, she recalls. The village perched on the shores of gigantic Lake Atitlán, surrounded by three volcanoes. Its ancient mission church was built in 1541 by the Franciscans. Existence was harsh, though, for the impoverished Tz’utujil people. In a village to the north, the men had come together to ask the government for enough land to sustain their families and were massacred. “Officials said the Indians came armed with machetes,” Sister Rose Marie relates. “The Indians have one tool by which they live and harvest, and that’s the machete. They weren’t out to kill anybody.”

A recurring terror was the periodic military sweeps through the villages, in which indigenous teenage boys were abducted by soldiers to fight in the ongoing civil war, with no opportunity to tell loved ones what had happened. “If word leaks out,” she wrote to her fellow Sisters, “some head for the mountains. Some have sought asylum at the mission.” Sister Rose Marie thinks of that today when she hears of children trying to escape from Guatemala and countries where similar situations exist.

She also remembers Father Rother telling her it was believed a Maryknoll priest there, a relative of Sister Charlene Wedelich, CDP, in San Antonio, had been killed for trying to better conditions. A bomb had been put in his plane. Rumor also had it, he told her, Guatemala would not permit any more U.S. missionary foundations. The

situation continued to worsen after the Sisters left. “He would go and get people who had been murdered catechists,” relates Sister Rose Marie, “and he would bring them to the mission and bury them.”

Still, Father Rother stayed at his post. He continued to do so even after his name was placed on a death list. “The shepherd cannot run at the first sign of danger,” he wrote in a letter home. It became the title of a book of his collected letters, published after his death, *The Shepherd Cannot Run: Letters of Stanley Rother, Missionary and Martyr*, and used in the title of his biography by María Ruiz Scaperlanda, *The Shepherd Who Didn’t Run: Fr. Stanley Rother, Martyr from Oklahoma*.

When the two Divine Providence Sisters left for home, he was in the process of having native wood-carvers carve scenes to be inserted around the main altar in the church, depicting the Last Supper as if it had taken place in their village. He was also planning to print a New Testament with side-by-side pages in Spanish and Tz’utujil, a language first put into writing by Father Ramon Carlin, Oklahoma founder of the mission. Concerned for the Sisters’ safety, Father Rother arranged to personally drive them to the airport at Tapachula. When he took ill that day, Father Adán García (a native priest who assists Father Rother) drove them instead. They left with fond memories of the mission and its people, but many sobering thoughts on the vast differences between our well-developed nation and the destitute state of persons in a country so close by.

In her account of their Guatemalan experiences, Sister Rose Marie noted that country’s “tremendous natural resources and beauty given by God,” but added that “wealth is in the hands of a few.” Her concluding words were prophetic. “Needless to say,” she wrote, “I am very impressed with the people serving there at the mission. They are giving their lives to help the poor.”

*by Carol Baass Sowa, Today’s Catholic  
Adapted and Used with Permission*

## Weaving Global Solidarity

As an international congregation, we participate in UISG, the International Union of Superiors General. Religious communities around the world belong to groups called constellations. The US Constellation, Constellation 3, generally meets the Saturday following the close of the annual LCWR Assembly. We were privileged to have the president of UISG, Sr. Carmen Samut, msola, as the keynote speaker at that meeting. She chose the topic of “Weavers of Global Solidarity,” as a good follow-up to the 2016 UISG Assembly in Rome. UISG mission statement follows:

As an international body rooted in Christ and representing Congregations of Women Religious throughout the world, UISG seeks to witness to and proclaim the identity of apostolic religious life in all its diversity. Through **weaving global solidarity** and opening new frontiers we animate, support and stimulate leadership of religious to be a prophetic voice and witness in the Church and the world. The mission of UISG is to build bridges that span distances in order to create ways for members to be in communication, in community and in communion. The purpose of UISG is promote an understanding of religious life.

“Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or distress at the misfortune of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.” (Pope John Paul II, On social Concerns). “The culture of solidarity means seeing others not as rivals or statistics, but brothers and sisters. And we are all brothers and Sisters.”

--Pope Francis 25 July 2013, Varginha, Brazil

Sister Carmen explained what she learned about weaving when she lived in the southern part of Algeria, in the desert, in a small town. In spite of the heat in the summer months, it was cold in winter. She explained that they needed blankets and the women prepared the wool from their own sheep. They sat and wove carpets which was a collective work where neighbors came together to work on the same piece. Each knew what she had to do for the whole work to be complete.

Weaving global solidarity involves acting from a conviction that we are interrelated, that we are of one human race, acknowledging that we are one family. It implies building bridges together.



**Sister Rosario Alvarez Frisancho, in July, travelled to Piura in southern Peru, with a group of Sisters on behalf of CONFER, the religious conference in Peru. The people were very much affected by the flooding in April. People are still suffering and the process of rebuilding their houses is very slow.**

One example of global solidarity in which the Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence were involved was our quick and generous response to the situation in Peru when much of the country was plagued with massive mud slides and flooding. Donations from **all parts** of the Congregation, Sisters, Associates and friends of the Congregation, poured in. The money was distributed through CONFER (Conference of Religious). We sent almost \$12,000 to Peru to be added to the worldwide collection of money. This money was used by Religious working among the peoples of Peru for their needs.

Another recent collaboration to help the people of Peru came through *Water with Blessings*, a non-profit in Middletown, Kentucky. Sr. Monika Mrosek learned about this organization through CONFER. *Water with Blessings* exists to empower mothers as family and community leaders, so that they might provide clean and safe water for their families and neighbors, and teach them clean water habits.

In 2011 *Water with Blessings*, began to empower, equip and entrust short and long-term missionaries to carry state of the art water filters around the world. Putting these state-of-the art water filters into the hands of mothers and training them to provide clean water for their own families and for the communities in which they live bring clean water to marginal neighborhoods around the world. We are participating in transporting the filters to Peru.

--by Sister Maria Fest

**Women of Providence in Collaboration  
Providence Event  
June 15-17, 2018, Kearns Spirituality Center  
Allison Park, Pennsylvania**

*Echoing the Providence of Peace  
in an Intercultural World!*

**Speaker will be  
Megan McKenna**  
An internationally known  
author, theologian,  
storyteller and lecturer,  
she teaches at several  
colleges and  
universities and leads  
retreats, workshops and  
parish missions.  
Megan was appointed an  
Ambassador of Peace for  
Pax Christi in 2002.



*Join the echo!*

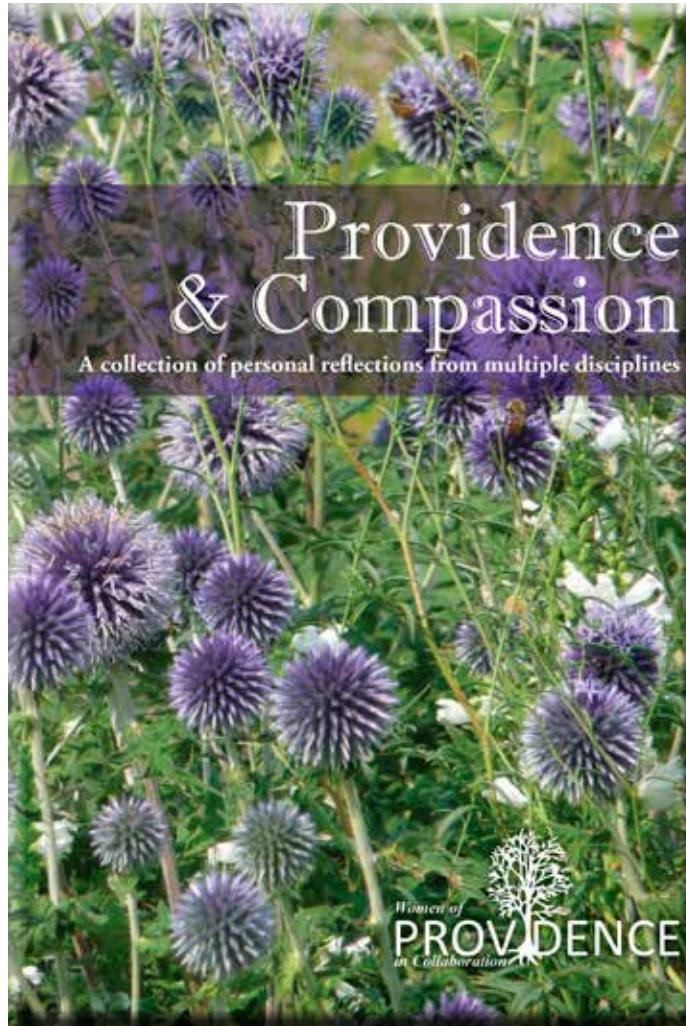
Plus, a special Saturday  
evening program honoring  
Bishop Thomas Gumbleton!



# Providence & Compassion

Within this new and inspiring publication, 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.

Compassion has been personified in Jesus and his ministries, and is central to the charism of Providence women wherever they minister.



You will see how Providence and Compassion are expressed in diverse ministries. You also can discover similarities with your own living and ministry experiences as well as gain new insights from each author. Questions for personal and communal reflection are included with each essay.

This 58-page collection on providence theology and spirituality is a good resource to use with people in formation, in local houses, our providence retreat centers, bookstores in our sponsored colleges and universities, mission departments in our healthcare facilities, and for personal growth and reflection.

## Providence and Compassion

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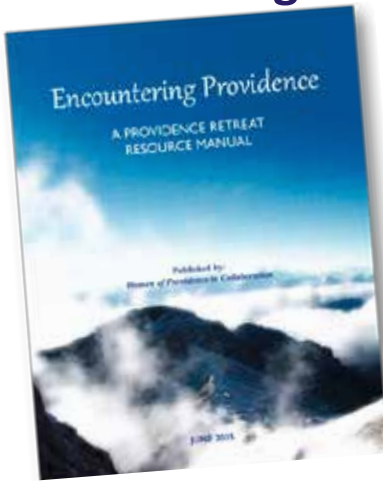
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# Encountering Providence: A Providence Retreat Resource Manual



Women of Providence in Collaboration (WPC) is celebrating its 35th Anniversary year with the recently compiled retreat resource manual. Its 12 retreats, submitted by Sisters of Providence and Providence Associates, can be used in retreat centers, private retreatants, local convent retreats, motherhouses, healthcare mission departments, and colleges, just to name a few. The retreats vary in length. Topics range from Images of Advent and Living Contemplatively in a Technological Age, to Spirit Gifts Found in Jesus and Walking as Provident Guests on Earth. (A complete list of topics is available on the WPC website: <http://www.wpcweb.org/>) The black and white manual includes a leader's guide, handouts, prayers, and resources for music, poetry, readings, etc. The manual is printed on three-hole paper for easy placement in a binder of your choice. Each manual has an accompanying flash drive storing various color graphics, PowerPoint and video presentations, and ready-to-print prayer, reflection and leader templates.

## Providence Alive In Us: Ever Unfolding Mystery

The Women of Providence in Collaboration are excited to present their new book, *Providence Alive in Us: Ever Unfolding Mystery*. This book 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 will lead us in this search for still deeper engagement with Ever Unfolding Mystery. Authors include Marie McCarthy, SP and Anji Fan, SP from the St. Mary-of-the-Woods in Terre Haute, IN; Ruth McGoldrick, SP from the Sisters of Providence in Holyoke, MA; Michele Bisbey and Myra Rodgers are CDPs from the Allison Park, PA, Sisters of Divine Providence; Alba Letelier, SP, Hong Nga Nguyen, SP and Annette Suebert, SP are from the Sisters of Providence who began in Montreal, Quebec, and spread throughout the United States. New contributors, as well as four reflections devoted to intercultural voices and experiences, also take us inside ourselves to probe deeper meanings of abundance, expansion of partnership with God in the very action of transforming our world, and the challenges of being the face of Providence within a different culture and in different settings. Truly this work will provide much food for thought as to how each of us lives the charism of Providence in the world today.



## Encountering Providence: A Providence Retreat Resource Manual

US \$50/book, plus US \$5 shipping/handling; add US \$1 shipping for each additional book up to 5 copies

## Providence Alive In Us: Ever Unfolding Mystery

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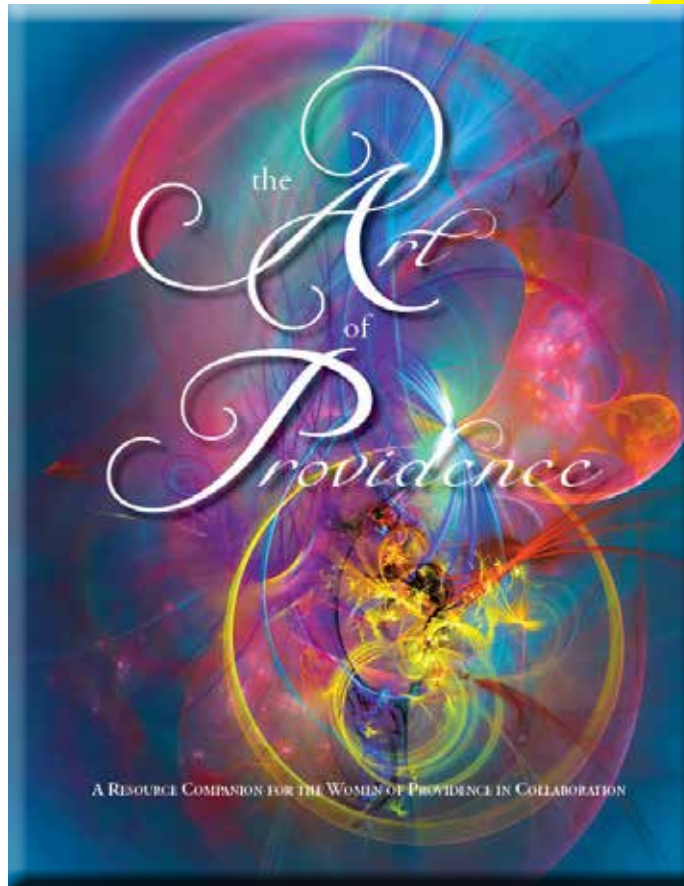
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# The Art of Providence



Women of Providence in Collaboration is excited to announce its new publication, *The Art of Providence*. This 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.



The contributions witness to the movement of Providence among and within us and we are pleased to share them with a wider audience. Whether you use the book as a resource in your ministry or for your own personal spiritual reading and prayer, you will encounter the God we name Providence.

This 165-page beautiful resource book could be a valuable book for local convents, retreat centers, formation houses as well as it would make a wonderful gift for someone.

## The Art of Providence

**US \$18 single book, plus US \$5 shipping/handling; add US \$1 shipping for each additional book up to 10 copies  
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*The registration form for the  
2018 Providence Event was  
sent to congregational leaders on  
October 19 for distribution.  
Register today to Join the echo!*

## **Future Dates/Coming Events**

### **2017**

October 31-November 2 WPC Executive Committee Meeting in Seattle, WA

### **2018**

February 23-25 WPC Providence Event Committee Meeting in Allison Park, PA

April 4-5 WPC Governing Board Meeting in Kingston, Ontario, Canada

April 12-14 WPC Vocation/Formation/Leadership Conference in Melbourne, KY

June 15-17 WPC Providence Event in Allison Park, PA

### **2019**

TBD WPC Governing Board Meeting in Westfield, MA

**Collaboration** is published by the Women of Providence in Collaboration ♦ [www.wpcweb.org](http://www.wpcweb.org)

*Executive Director:* Sister Barbara McMullen, CDP

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