



Collaboration

Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods

Sisters of Providence Continue Death Row Ministry As Executions Resume in Terre Haute, Indiana

On July 14, for the first time in 17 years, a Sister of Providence tolled the bells at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods following a federal execution at the Federal Correctional Complex in Terre Haute, Indiana. The bells announced the death of Daniel Lewis Lee. In December 2019, Sister Barbara Battista, who had recently begun ministering as the Congregation's Justice Promoter, organized a prayer vigil with others only days before the federal government was scheduled to resume executions after a 17-year hiatus, with the execution of Lee.

Court rulings blocked the executions at the time, but Sister Barbara and the group marched forward, knowing the federal government would continue to appeal the rulings. And eventually, more executions were scheduled.

Then, COVID-19 reared its ugly head, but the executions were not postponed. Therefore, Sister Barbara and others continued to speak out.

Only days before Lee's scheduled execution, the abolitionists conducted a press conference deploring the executions which would take place only 19 minutes away from the Sisters of Providence motherhouse.

More litigation stalled Lee's execution until the Supreme Court stepped in during the dead of night saying the

federal government could proceed. And only a handful of hours later, Lee was executed. And the bells tolled at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods as they do after every execution nationwide.



Sister Barbara Battista speaks to media during a press conference on July 6, just days before the execution of Daniel Lewis Lee.

Near the prison, Sister Barbara and other sisters, along with several others from Terre Haute and the surrounding community, protested the killing and have continued to do so with all of the federal executions that have taken place in Terre Haute since July, the most since the 1950s.

The Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods have visited with, and ministered to, federal death row inmates at the Terre Haute Federal Penitentiary for many years and continue to do so today.

From Sister Rita Clare Gerardot's ministry with David Paul Hammer to Sister Betty Donoghue's ministry with Dustin Lee Honken, and Sister's Dorothy Hucksoll (RIP) and Joan Frame's (RIP) ministries with Daniel Lewis Lee and Wesley Ira Purkey respectively, the sisters have companioned those death row inmates, while other sisters conduct prayer services or Bible study for other offenders. The sisters have continued to make this ministry vital to their mission. Sister Joann Quinkert has ministered to inmate Ronald Mikos for 14 years.

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From the director



Sister Barbara McMullen, CDP
WPC executive director



About the WPC 40th Anniversary and Virtual Provident Event

In this memorable year of 2020 the Women of Providence celebrate their 40th anniversary as an organization! The two founding members began their dreaming in the late 1970s. Sisters of Providence Michelle Holland, from Spokane, WA., and Ruth McGoldrick, from Holyoke, MA., met one another at a board meeting of the National Sisters Vocation Conference. They each remembered how thrilled they were to meet another Sister of Providence who shared their charisma. As they continued to meet their dream came to a reality when, in 1980, the first Providence Event was held at the College of Great Falls in Montana.

Coming together to explore the subject of Providence theology and spirituality has carried this group through forty years of various expressions of the Providence relationship. From its humble beginnings came many events, symposiums, retreats, and many publications over the years. Through the work of a Steering Committee for ten years, and then from its Executive Directors from 1992 until the present time, along with a Board of directors, the WPC became a providential global fiber to effect change. For forty years we have plumbd the depths of Providence theology and spirituality that is our gift, our charisma. We have formed partnerships with others and been enriched by the new cosmology as it interfaces with our understanding of all the providential possibilities in our times.

We were preparing to celebrate this 40th anniversary at a Providence Event this past June. But with Covid-19 it was not to be. By the spring the Core Planning Team had everything done except our cen-

terpieces for the tables! Regrettably the decision to cancel had to be made. As Providence would have it, a new plan emerged! The Board decided to try a virtual Providence Event, which will take place on February 20, 2021. Registrations materials will be going out in October. The Core Planning team and I have been working hard now on all the virtual details!



The theme, ***Providence~Where Justice and Radical Hope Meet***, will certainly speak to us in these turbulent times. We look forward to hearing our speaker, Nancy Sylvester, IHM. We hope that many of you will plan to join us! You don't even have to travel—you can join us from the comfort of your own home!!

In this Fall issue are stories that speak of the sanctity of life amid the federal executions beginning again in our nation, as well as statements on racism, awards

for justice work on a myriad of issues, and involvement with children in poorer areas of our country. There are joyful stories as professions of vows were made in several communities, new leadership happening among associates in one community and all the ways our WPC members are dealing with this pandemic and the challenges it proposes. Programming and attendance at workshops are now being held virtually but it has not dampened the spirit. People have found ways to show kindness and compassion to others and reach out as only Providence people can do! Enjoy the many "faces" of Providence in this issue and witness how "radical hope" is lived out in action!

Barbara

Sisters of Providence Continue Death Row Ministry

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Sister Barbara Battista recently joined this growing list when she accepted an invitation from Keith Dwayne Nelson to serve as his minister of record prior to his execution on August 28 for his execution. She was also the minister of record for William Emmett LeCroy who was executed by the federal government on September 22.

The Congregation supports life and respects the dignity of all persons. The sisters continue to pray for death row inmates and their families, for all victims and their families, and for legislators who weigh the decision of life or death for these inmates.

"I'm just here helping to coordinate our efforts," Sister Barbara said. "I think this is vital. It is essential. Everyone is of value. Our community here in the Wabash



Sister Barbara Battista meets with Keith Nelson (in background) as his spiritual advisor, prior to his execution on August 28.

Valley is at risk of much deeper harm and long-lasting effects from this violence. We have an opportunity to lessen that harm by how we go about our work."



Sister Paula Damiano (left) alongside Terre Haute resident Arthur Feinsod and Sister Jeanne Hagelskamp, during a July 13 press conference hours before the execution of Daniel Lewis Lee.

Two Sisters Profess Vows



We are so blessed! Sunday, July 26, was a beautiful day as Sister Corbin Hannah (left) professed perpetual vows as a Sister of Providence and Sister Teresa Kang professed her first vows. Covid-19 with its masks and physical distancing and loved ones watching from

afar via livestream could not dampen the joy and the beauty of this celebration. We are so thankful to Sisters Corbin and Teresa for joining their lives to our Congregation and giving themselves to bring God's loving care to a world in need.

Sisters of Providence 2020 Annual Meeting via Zoom



The Sisters of Providence hosted their first virtual Annual Meeting this summer, with more than 286 sisters and 81 Providence Associates tuning in via the Zoom platform nationwide and in Asia. The energy and love of being together on the same screen transcended great distance. We're also offering our first virtual Come and See and have a record number of single Catholic women registered for the event.

No Matter Your Locale, You Can Participate In Uplifting Spiritual Programming

The Sisters of Providence have offered a variety of spiritual programs, retreats and other types of opportunities for many years but you had to journey to beautiful Saint Mary-of-the-Woods to participate. Perhaps the silver lining in the Covid-19 pandemic is that you can now live almost anywhere and attend most of the inspirational offerings in the comfort of your own home. You do need a reliable internet or wireless connection.

The Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods are offering “food for the spirit” during these trying times. Please refer to our website at Events.SistersofProvidence.org for our most recent offerings. In these uncertain times, you can experience renewal and encouragement in a variety of ways virtually. You can also download our current program booklet which includes events offered through December. Follow the icons/keys inside the booklet and on the website, to determine how best to attend.

You may still attend some events in person and, at this time, you are always welcome to visit Saint Mary-of-the-Woods and enjoy the beautiful outdoor shrines, organic gardens, alpacas and chickens and other sacred spaces. Any in-person attendance at our programs will be done with an abundance of caution, requiring masks and physical distancing. Guests will be subject to a contactless temperature check.

We will gladly refund all program fees should you become ill or are unable to attend for any reason. Your continued prayers for, and support of, the Sisters of Providence are what inspire us to continue to offer spiritual programming. We hope in turn, these offerings will lift you up, sustain you and offer comfort and hope. We are truly all in this together.

“So true is it that misfortune binds hearts together.”

– Saint Mother Theodore Guerin

The Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods know that now more than ever our community needs to come together for reflection and renewal. This is why we are working diligently to offer “food for the spirit” during these trying times.

But to do so responsibly, we have had to make changes. You'll notice that some past favorite events are postponed and many programs will be offered virtually. Please refer to the key inside this booklet which will help you navigate the new way of doing things. Any in-person attendance at our programs will only be done with an abundance of caution. Masks are required indoors. The number of participants will be limited to no more than 10 to accommodate proper physical distancing. In addition, when physical distancing is not possible outdoors, masks will be required. Guests will be subject to a contactless temperature check. We will gladly refund all program fees should you become ill or are unable to attend for any reason.

Because circumstances continue to rapidly change, we would like to ask you to please check our website often for updates at Events.SistersofProvidence.org or call 812-535-2952.

Your continued prayers for, and support of, the Sisters of Providence are what help us to press on each day. We hope in turn, these offerings will lift you up, sustain you and offer comfort and hope. We are truly all in this together.



Sisters of Providence
OF SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS
Breaking boundaries, creating hope.



Cover of the Sisters of Providence Program/Event/Retreat Booklet, September – December 2020

Adaptability, Flexibility and Creativity Ease the Way

In this strange new world we're navigating, we have no choice but to break out of our established patterns and look at what we do – how we connect, how we work, how we live – in different ways. It seems like forever since we gathered for a celebration or gave someone a hug. But we're learning how to cope by adapting to the needs of the day, remaining flexible for the future, and thinking creatively along the way.

Six months into the pandemic, the sisters of Mother Joseph Province and staff have fallen into routines to meet the required health and safety regulations, including masks, social distancing, online meetings, limited travel, even regular COVID testing. While it is common to think wistfully of the pre-pandemic days, life has changed course, creating new challenges, new opportunities and nudging us along different paths.

The whole community is adapting in one way or another. Many ministries have paused during this unprecedented period, affording more time for personal, professional and spiritual development. Other ministries have been reinvented, requiring new approaches, such as learning how to journey with people remotely. Many sisters are taking advantage of online resources to build skills, complete training programs, participate in conferences or nurture spirit.

Adaptability is also evident in the new ministries that have been born out of necessity. Sister Margarita Hernandez and Sister Hong Nga Nguyen started making masks early on for the sisters, employees at nursing homes, family, friends, and community groups. Over 15 weeks, they made more than 1000 masks! Recently, they provided 600 masks for returning students at All Saints School in Spokane, WA.

We are seeing ongoing flexibility as well. In August, Sister Phuong Ha Nguyen moved to southern California to complete the chaplaincy program that was cancelled in Spokane due to the pandemic. Sisters Lucille Dean and Mary Hawkins, members of various boards who used to travel to participate in meetings, are now attending online sessions from their apartments. The 2020 jubilarians, who have been planning via teleconference for months, rescheduled their August celebration to July 2021. And Provincial Administration staff continue their work, from home and office, some balancing the needs of school-aged children or the care of aging parents from their makeshift offices.

Creativity is key in efforts to create community in the time of coronavirus. At St. Joseph Residence in Seattle, Program Coordinator Lisa Kumar has been a model of creativity hosting regular activities to keep

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Sisters Hong Nga Nguyen and Margarita Hernandez have been making masks since April, including those for the Catholic school students in Spokane.

Adaptability, Flexibility and Creativity Ease the Way

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the sisters in the retirement home safely connected and engaged. They celebrate every holiday, stay active with “sports” like indoor bowling, and continue to promote social justice issues – including a virtual protest. In addition, the now bi-weekly Messages of Hope & Healing publication has become a connecting point for sisters throughout the province, with stories, quotes, prayers, reflections and photos to inspire them through these times of increased isolation.

As we practice adaptability, flexibility and creativity within the congregation and staff, we are also joyfully recognizing it in the greater community. When the sisters in El Salvador requested financial support to help families impacted by COVID and tropical storms, we turned to our donors. We were overwhelmed by their generous response, vastly exceeding our fundraising goal to rebuild damaged homes, provide computers for students, and furnish food and medication for families devastated by hardship and loss.

It is tough living in a time when we need each other more than ever, yet we must stay apart. But we will carry on, striving for adaptability, flexibility and creativity, and trusting in Providence.



Sister Fe Sumalde in full protective gear for her ministry as a chaplain in Yakima, WA.



Sister Mary Wilson holds her prayer basket with requests written on paper hearts – overflowing in these challenging times.



Sister Vilma Franco, in green, helps rebuild damaged homes in Arcatao, El Salvador, with funds from generous donors.

CDP Celebrates Sisters' Profession of Vows

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic spiking in the San Antonio area, the Congregation of Divine Providence (CDP) celebrated life. Five women in formation professed vows as Sisters of Divine Providence. The celebrations were unique in the Congregation's history since Sisters social distanced with masks and limited number of family members were in attendance. Yet, the joy and gratitude were obvious.

Sister Kate Clare Fitzgerald and Hermana María Cruz De La Cruz Botello celebrated their perpetual profession of vows on July 25, 2020 and August 2, 2020, respectively. Though miles apart, these Sisters have been bound to one another and with the Congregation of Divine Providence in their vocation and commitment to sharing the mission of Jesus in our world.

On July 25, 2020, Sisters of Divine Providence gathered in Sacred Heart Chapel at Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU) in San Antonio, Texas to celebrate Sister Kate's perpetual profession of vows. Sister Kate's decision to join the Congregation was solidified by her desire to do God's will. Sister Kate said, "To be obedient to God's will is why we are created, and I believe I can best hear and follow this call to love as a Sister in the Congregation of Divine Providence. God's love has led me here, and through God's grace I will continue to follow the call."

Sister Kate lives in community in Midland, Texas, and will continue teaching Kindergarten students at St.



Ann's Catholic School. Though there are new challenges this year with kindergarteners' use of face masks and appropriate distancing, Sr. Kate enjoys her work.

On August 2, 2020, Hermana Maricruz celebrated her perpetual profession of vows in Querétaro, Méxi and was joined by Hermanas De La Divina Providencia and a small family group. Sisters of Divine Providence in San Antonio at Our Lady of the Lake Convent Center (OLLCC) gathered to witness her

profess her final vows via Facebook Live and to pray with her.

Sister Pearl Ceasar, CDP Superior General, was unable to visit Querétaro, México due to Coronavirus but shared a video with Hermana Maricruz congratulating her on her final profession while also wishing the Sisters a productive and collaborative meeting during their Regional Meeting.



While preparing to profess her final vows, Hermana Maricruz stated, "I chose to enter the Congregation of Divine Providence because I saw the Sisters' dedication to simplicity, abandonment to Divine Providence and ministering to those in need. By professing my final vows, I am returning the immense love that our Father has for us. It is also a way to extend the signs of God's provident love in the world while also seeking the Kingdom of God and God's righteousness." Hermana Maricruz, a member of the Congregation's Región de México, lives with the CDP Sisters in Querétaro, Mexico, and serves as a resource teacher in the Instituto Queretano Marista.

In continuation of this celebratory weekend, Sister Megan Grewing and Sister Christina Cñe Chávez renewed their temporary vows in Annunciation Chapel at OLLCC on Sunday, July 26, 2020. It was a special day for Sister Megan and Sister Christina as they were supported by Sisters of Divine Providence to continue their commitment.

Sister Megan's renewal of vows is important to her because it furthers her relationship with God. She said, "I want to continue to grow in my relationship with Jesus and my CDP Sisters. I believe my vows are allowing me to become my best self." To Sister Christina, her renewal of vows means learning about Women Religious and their accomplishments throughout the centuries. "I choose to be a part of this life because I truly feel called to live out the 'prophetic' call

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CDP Celebrates Sisters' Profession of Vows

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as a Religious and to be a radical witness in the world of how to entrust one's life to Divine Providence. I've found a place of belonging among the Sisters of the Congregation of Divine Providence where I can live out that call," she commented.

Since their first profession of vows in 2017 and 2018, Sister Megan and Sister Christina began working full-time in ministry. Sister Megan is now a counselor at Gratia Plena Counseling Agency in Houston, Texas, and Sister Christina works in University Ministry at OLLU. "In my ministry at OLLU, I've been able to share and teach about the CDP life, charism, mission, and vocation which is so energizing! I'm passionate about spreading the news about what Women Religious have been and are up to in their life and ministry," said Sister Christina. She now focuses on the call to be "Provident in our world" in response to our society's recent struggles. She said, "I've found myself holding on to the phrase that 'God brings all things to good' as my guiding principle in both personal prayer and as a minister. I'm grateful for community life which also provides a space of wisdom when navigating new challenges in both life and ministry. I feel honored to live out my life as a Sister of Divine Providence."

On July 24, 2020, Sister Melissa Renee Cessac made her first profession of vows in Sacred Heart Chapel at OLLU. Prior to profession, Sister Melissa completed

her two-year novitiate with a three-month mission in Querétaro with CDP Sisters. Along with learning Spanish, she was able to be a part of the Escuela Móvil ministry. The mobile school program ministers to streetworkers and children who lack an education. Sister Melissa stated, "I saw our charism of Providence living and breathing through this ministry. The poor have so much to teach us, and God speaks to us so clearly through them."

When asked about her decision to become a Sister, Sister Melissa said, "The vows are a public witness to my relationship with Christ. By living the vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience, I am able to freely and intimately dedicate my whole self to God and to loving service to God's people."

Before entering the community, Sister Melissa worked in recruitment at Lamar University, her alma mater, and served as a youth minister for eight years in her home parish of St. Charles Borromeo in Nederland, Texas. After moving to OLLCC to further discern her call as a Sister, she worked first at Project QUEST as a career advisor and then with COPS/Metro before becoming a novice in the Congregation in 2018.

These Sisters are dedicating themselves to live the vowed life in community and ministry. They are committed to come closer to God as Sisters of Divine Providence.



(left to right) Sr. Melissa Cessac, Sr. Maricruz de la Cruz Botello, Sr. Megan Grewing, Sr. Kate Fitzgerald and Sr. Christina Chavez celebrated vows this summer. (Photo taken prior to COVID-19)

New Leadership for SP Associates

Prior to the annual Missioning Day ceremony on September 27, 2020, there was a special ritual to recognize the change in leadership for the Sisters of Providence Associate Program.

Outgoing leader Patricia St. Amand was thanked for her 11 years as Co-Director and 7 years as the

tireless Director of the Associates, for a total of 18 years in the role. Pat has led the Associate Core Group in planning a variety of new initiatives from Associates retreats at Genesis Spiritual Life Center to development of the Associate Guide Book. She also was instrumental in creating the Women of

Providence in Collaboration Associate Directors group and in hosting their gatherings at Genesis.

“Pat has been the intrepid leader for the SP Associates for so many years,” said Sr. Kathleen Popko, SP President. “Her commitment to the Program and her dedication to living the SP charism are beautiful to behold.” In January 2020, Pat retired as the Director of the SP Communications Office after 35 years of publishing the SP newsletter, *Tracings*.

The in-coming Associate Co-directors, whom Pat has mentored, are Aida Gaouette and James Clifford. Aida has been an Associate since 2006 and has been a member of the Core Committee for the past two years. Commenting, Aida said, “In my Association with the Sisters of Providence, I have gained great

spiritual growth and at the same time gained many treasured friendships among both the Sisters as well as the Associates. I feel that for every minute of service I give, it is returned 100-fold in the many blessings I receive.”

Jim Clifford became an Associate in 2009 and served on the Core Committee since 2017. Jim believes in the saying “Providence works in extraordinary ways.’ My Association with the Sisters of Providence has deepened and solidified my continuing journey into the spirit and faith that are at the core of this saying.”



Pat St. Amand



Aida Gaouette



James Clifford

Reflecting on this transition in leadership, Pat noted that Jim and Aida are stepping into their new roles in the midst of the continuing challenges posed by Covid-19. She said, “Due to the restrictions posed by the pandemic, Associates have not been able to gather for Congregational or Associate events or programs for the last six months. Our new Co-Directors have been part of the Core Committee’s efforts to keep the Associate Program vibrant through, for example, ZOOM Associate prayer services and committee meetings. I know Aida and Jim’s collaborative approach to their new positions is sure to support and enhance our Associate Program’s continued growth throughout these trying times. I pray they will find this new phase in their own personal Associate journeys as rewarding as I have.”

Special Grant Awarded for Opioid Grief Support

Have you experienced the loss of a loved one from addiction? Here is an example of a program offering a source of support. Sr. Madeleine Joy, SP, an experienced grief counselor, is part of a special grant awarded to provide grief support for families and friends “who lost loved ones to substance abuse disorder.” With funds from the City of Westfield’ Drug Addiction and Recovery Team (DART), Sr. Madeleine with her co-facilitator Cindy Hadge began meetings via teleconference on July 7, 2020 which are free for the residents of Westfield and 8 surrounding towns. Every Tuesday the support groups, consisting of those who have lost a loved one more than 6 months ago to addiction, gather remotely. Although there are many grief groups, those that focus on loss to due to overdose are rare.

Sr. Madeleine also is concerned about stigma, saying, “Due to the stigma that so isolates those who have lost loved ones to opioid addiction, I see it as so important to offer non-judgmental and compassionate care during this incredibly painful time in people’s lives.”



Sr. Madeleine Joy

The former Chaplain at Farren Care Center in Turners Falls and Mercy Medical Center in Springfield, MA, Sr. Madeleine specializes in Recovery Spirituality, Cancer Care, Grief and Loss and Long Term Mental Health and Addiction Care and Treatment. She is a facilitator of the 12-step Recovery Programs at Genesis Spiritual Life Center. A graduate of Boston College with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree, she also has been certified as a Chaplain in Pastoral Care.



**Registration for the
VIRTUAL Providence Event,
February 20, 2021 with
Nancy Sylvester, IHM
is FREE for all Sisters!**

**Registration forms are due
November 30, 2020!**

**Registration packets will be sent to
all Congregations and Communities
on October 7th. Additional forms
are available at www.wpcweb.org!**



**WOMEN OF
PROVIDENCE
IN COLLABORATION**

Sisters Present Rev. James Martin, S.J. With Social Justice Award

On August 3, 2020, the Sisters of Divine Providence presented the Ketteler Award for Social Justice to the Rev. James Martin, S.J.—Jesuit priest, author, editor at large at America, the national Catholic review, and a Consultor to the Vatican's Dicastery for Communication. Father Martin was recognized for his extensive and ongoing commitment to social justice and his advocacy for and ministry with LGBTQ persons.

This 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 and the marginalized. He was bishop from 1850 until 1877.

To read more about Rev. James Martin, visit: <https://cdpsisters.org/article/2020-ketteler-award-social-justice>



Saddened, Alarmed by Manifestations of Racism, Sisters Release Statement

Witnessing the dying moments of George Floyd on TV while he was in the custody of Minneapolis Police, the very people who are supposed to protect all its citizens, we saw that Mr. Floyd was gasping for breath and saying, "Please, I can't breathe." A sense of anger and helplessness came upon us as we couldn't believe this was really happening. When we heard the report that he was pronounced dead at the hospital, our hearts broke for the family of George Floyd and to all our Black brothers and sisters who suffer incidences like this way too often. We are a Roman Catholic community of Women Religious, beneficiaries of white privilege. We are saddened and alarmed by the many manifestations of racism that is demonstrated by incidents such as this in our country.

We are Sisters of Divine Providence of the Marie de la Roche Province. We and our Associates and Partners in ministry, work for Justice in Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Illinois, North Carolina, Florida, Tennessee, Missouri and Massachusetts. We were founded in 1851 by Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler of Germany who confronted civil and ecclesiastical authority when needed, risking

his authority and reputation in the pursuit of justice. In his spirit we can do no less.

We respect and support the rights of all those who are trying to conduct peaceful demonstrations in honor of George Floyd and calling for reform in the way our police systems throughout the U.S. handle arrest cases. We are dismayed by the violence and destruction that some demonstrators are displaying.

We call on our civil authorities - the state governments, the mayors of our cities, police departments - throughout our country to scrutinize and reform the way police officers are trained and to ban all use of excessive force to nonviolent, compliant suspects in custody - applied equally to Blacks and Whites.

We invite you all to pray with us for the reform needed to make our make our country a more just society for all peoples who live here.

Sincerely,
Sisters of Divine Providence Leadership Team



Sisters Bid Farewell to La Posada Providencia

By Alana Hernandez, Valley Morning Star

For a little more than three decades, Sister Margaret Mertens and Sister Zita Telkamp have called the Valley their home as they helped thousands of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers through their work at La Posada Providencia.

At the end of August, they bid farewell to the Valley and La Posada Providencia as they entered a new chapter in their journey of service.

“Since Sister Margaret and I are both octogenarians, the leadership of our community, the Sisters of Divine Providence, Marie de la Roche Province, asked us recently to consider transitioning to our central location in Allison Park, PA,” Telkamp said.

For Telkamp and Mertens, COVID-19 has allowed them time for prayerful reflection and discernment as they complete their plans to transition.

However, they said the pandemic has not provided them ample time and opportunity to express their gratitude and say their goodbyes in person.

“Upon leaving La Posada, we naturally feel sadness. We are leaving what has been our home,” Telkamp said. “Yet, we have a strong feeling of gratitude to God that La Posada has not only been our home, but also our ministry and mission for a combined 33 years.”

In 1995, Mertens became director of La Posada Providencia and remained in that position until 2008. To prepare for this ministry, Mertens learned Spanish and Mexican American culture by studying at a local community college and entering a language immersion experience in Guadalajara, Mexico for the next 13 years.

After a sabbatical to serve the needs of the community in St. Louis, Mertens returned to La Posada Providencia in 2012 as site coordinator.

In June 2008, Telkamp succeeded Mertens as La Posada’s third program director since its founding in 1989.

Prior to Telkamp’s arrival, she was an elementary teacher and principal for 35 years of the 49 years she served in Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of St. Louis and the Diocese of Springfield, Illinois.

From 1995 through 2001, Telkamp was a member of the provincial council for the St. Louis Province of the Sisters on Divine Providence. In 2001 through 2007, she ministered at Room at the Inn, which is a Sisters of Divine Providence sponsored shelter for homeless women and families.



Sister Zita Telkamp



Sister Margaret Mertens

In 2013, Bishop Daniel E. Flores of the Diocese of Brownsville nominated Telkamp for the Catholic Extension Lumen Christi award, which honors an individual or group working in a U.S. mission diocese who demonstrates how the power of faith can transform lives and communities.

Telkamp was a finalist for the award and received a \$10,000 donation from the Catholic Extension to support and further the ministry of La Posada Providencia.

Both Telkamp and Mertens received the Ketteler Award for Social Justice in 2019 from the Sisters of Divine Providence. The award was instituted in 1988 to honor individuals who demonstrate a strong commitment to social justice.

“We have had the privilege of living with and helping those we love — immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers,” Telkamp said. “To our civic and faith communities, our volunteers, especially in South Texas, you are among the countless people sharing so generously your time, talents and treasure that have made our ministry possible.”

Telkamp said it has been their blessing to make God’s providence visible to the world by welcoming those in need and giving them hope.

“As we bid farewell to our friends, supporters of La Posada and to La Posada, please know we hold you in our prayers and in our hearts,” Telkamp said.

Sister Joins Edmundite Rural Poverty Program

When the Edmundites' invitation arrived last January asking Sisters to join them for a couple of weeks in ministry to the rural poor population in the Selma, Alabama area, it didn't take Sr. Mary Agnes Cashman, CDP, more than a heartbeat to respond. A master elementary school teacher for thirty years, she felt a strong call to use her gifts in direct service to the poor and this seemed a perfect opportunity. By the beginning of March, she was on her way to Alabama to participate in the Edmundite Rural Poverty Program.

The chance to become familiar with the people, the area, and the various ministries in which the Edmundites engaged only whetted Sr. Mary Agnes' appetite for more of the same. She quickly made plans to return in mid-June and to stay for six weeks this time, serving in a summer school position.

Providence, however, had something else in mind: plans for summer school had to be revised because of the pandemic. It just wasn't wise to hold it this year. But the Edmundites wanted to know if Sr. Mary Agnes would be willing to come to Selma for two weeks and serve as a consultant for curriculum development of the Edmundite educational programs? And, might she be interested in interviewing for the position of Coordinator of Education Programs for their three sites around Selma? Yes...and yes!

The Holy Spirit was working quickly. Shortly after the interview Sr. Mary Agnes received word that her new position would begin August 3. Packing the sum total of her belongings into the back of a Corolla and putting her trust in Divine Providence to bring her safely to her new home, she left Northern Kentucky at the end of July.

The frustration of an initial obligatory period of quarantine faded swiftly as she began her new ministry based out of the Edmundite's new Bullock Center in Selma. The Center is fitted with computers and internet access and is now open to a limited number of

children who are able to use the facility for remote learning. It provides them with a safe environment and nourishment during the day, and an opportunity to be helped with their lessons by onsite tutors.

By the end of its first week, sixteen children were coming each day and an additional fifteen applica-



Sr. Mary Agnes Cashman, CDP working with a student at Bullock Center.



Sister Mary Agnes Cashman takes a temperature check on one of her students

tions had been handed out. An Edmundite-operated thrift shop is located just down the block, and children are given the chance to "shop" there for shoes, clothing, and a toy.

The joy this new ministry brings Sr. Mary Agnes is obvious, and so is her great love for the children Providence has placed in her care. She writes: "I am working now with a little girl who is to be in the first grade, but she doesn't yet know her alphabet or numbers. I also have a second grader who cannot write her numbers from 1 to 20, so when they get off their computers with their teachers, we work hard on words, numbers, and the alphabet. The kids are missing so much!"

They won't be for long, Sr. Mary Agnes Cashman. YOU GO, GIRL!

Sister Returns to Her Beginnings

In a way, when Sr. Marie Rose Messingschlager, CDP, moved last year to the Gallup, New Mexico diocese, it was a return to her beginnings. Sent almost forty years earlier to Tekakwitha Mission in Houck, Arizona after earning a licentiate in Pastoral Missiology from Rome's Gregorian University, Sr. Marie Rose began a lifetime of ministry among Native American peoples.

Now, after twenty-six years of service in her most recent position as the director of Native American Ministry for the Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota, she finds herself back where she started—and loving it.

As a pastoral minister serving among the Pueblo Indians of the Acoma and Laguna communities, there has been plenty of work to do on the reservation. Teaching RCIA, visiting the sick in their homes and in nursing facilities and participating in the “Meals for the Elders” at the Seniors’ Center are but a few of the activities that have filled her days.

Although she has been busy responding to whatever needs present themselves at the moment, Sr. Marie Rose’s focus has really been on a ministry of presence: observing, listening, and empowering the others with whom she is walking on the sacred journey of life.



Laguna Pueblo “Eagle Dancers” dancing a prayer outside St. Joseph Church in Laguna, NM

The pandemic, of course, has had its effect. Twelve members of her RCIA class this year still await Confirmation. Roads leading to the reservation have been blocked to all but enrolled members of the tribe in order to control the spread of the virus, and right now it looks like the lockdown will continue at least until next January.

The telephone is playing a key role these days as Sr. Marie Rose continues to listen to and empower as she can her sisters and brothers on the reservation.

The lockdown also means she has some time to work on the house where she lives, a place last inhabited by Sisters some twelve years ago. And while her attempts at planting and growing a vegetable garden have only succeeded to date in providing a feast for local elk, squirrels and rabbits, this isn't really a problem for Sr. Marie Rose. Immersed in Native American spirituality, she revels in the interconnectedness of all creation and every opportunity her new ministry offers to practice that togetherness in every way!



Sr. Marie Rose Messingschlager, CDP, outside St. Anne Mission in Gallup, NM

Creating a Better Life and a Better World

By Sister Maria Fest, Congregational Leader

On September 11, Sr. Barbara McMullen posted on Facebook the account of the Delta 15 flight that occurred on September 11, 2001 told by a flight attendant on that flight. It's the flight that had to land in Gander, Newfoundland after all planes had to be grounded. The communities responded quickly to the needs of the stranded "visitors." During their stay they were treated with such hospitality and compassion by the natives that all agreed to set up a trust fund to provide scholarships for the high school students who were at their disposal during the passengers' sojourn in their city. To date, that trust fund has 1.5 million dollars and has assisted 134 students in college education. The former flight attendant said "I just wanted to share this story because we need good stories right now because it gives me a little bit of hope...It reminds me of how much good there is in the world."

And, so that account takes us to the present world situation—a pandemic. Perhaps this is the "biggest" event to affect the US since the 9/11 event—even though 9/11 involved a much smaller number of lives lost. As we know, in the US, Covid-19 has claimed over 200,000 lives. While we are overwhelmed by the tragedy of the Covid-19 event with which we continue to cope, we continue to hear stories of how men, women, adolescents, and children have responded to the needs of this time, to this unprecedented event in our lifetimes. Hospitality and compassion have again been shone in these days.

I was attracted to a special Edition of Time Magazine that came out in September, 2020. It is called: *The Power of Kindness: Creating a Better Life and a Better World*. The publication is divided in three parts: The Science of Kindness, the Culture of Kindness and How to Be Kind. The article I enjoyed most is the one called "The (Real!) Secret to Happiness" (by Camille Noe Pagan) in the last section of the magazine. She says "It's not money—or even less stress or more time. Research show that a little compassion can go a long way toward making you feel better about yourself and the world around you."

Interesting enough, Lynn Levo, CSJ, also focused on "Leading with Compassion" when she led a workshop for LCWR Leaders which was sponsored by an LCWR and RCRI vendor, Hoffman, Planning, Design and Construction. She said that leading with compassion helps others to uncover or discover their

own ideas, feeling, hopes, desires and is more supportive in their efforts to adapt and change; this requires vulnerable truth telling, suspending judgment and affirming efforts as well as genuine expressions of gratitude. **REACH** is a mnemonic which helps us to remember the steps for leading with compassion:

Resonance: the goal to create supportive, trusting positive relations, focusing on others not oneself; Reach out, connect with others 'thoughts feelings and experience; do not assume you know, rather make room for their story.

Empathy: shift from wanting to be understood to wanting to understand; put yourself in the shoes of the other—hear what they are asking.

Awareness: have self-awareness; be in touch with your own mindset, your own emotions and their impact on others. Remember that your feelings are contagious. Know how to soothe and relax so that you are able to respond rather than react.

Compassion: to be compassionate is to feel with by focusing on the other, responding to their needs in meaningful ways. The emphasis is on caring, warmth and tenderness.

Hope: hope is reality-based, envisioning a better desired future. Hope can only happen with connection to others; a realization that I have choices, knowing how to care for self and reduce stress and anxiety, Hope also happens when one relies on a benevolent, caring, faithful God. (Adapted by Sr. Lynn Levo in part from Oosten, Smith & Boyatzis, *Helping People Change*, Harvard Business Review Press, 2019)

Here in Wakefield we also have experienced hospitality and compassion. We received 10,000 masks from Korea and were able to share them with our own international congregation but also two shelters here in Rhode Island in need of them. I think our Sr. Veronica Kim shared them with students at La Roche University as well. Another surprise was when our pastor here, Fr. Henry Bodah, invited Sr. Marilyn Bergt and myself to renew our vows for our 60th jubilee at a parish Mass. He thought it would

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Creating a Better Life

Continued from page 16

be good for parishioners to witness this renewal of vows and so on October 4th we did this with those gathered for Mass, with masks and physical distancing of course!

I am saying that we keep the required physical distance from one another. I have heard that it is better to use that expression. While we observe physical distancing, we want to remain socially connected to each other and especially to those in need.

Though these are challenging times for all of us, they have also given us opportunities to express kindness and to receive it. We here at Wakefield are happy for the connections we can make with others across the miles and right here in our little corner of the world. It reminds me of a quote from Maya Angelou who said: "I've learned that people will forget what you said. People will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. (Luke 6:36)

If we draw on God's mercy, forgiveness and tenderness from the Heart of Jesus, then our heart too will gradually become more patient, more generous, and more compassionate. (Pope Francis)

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others. (Mahatma Gandhi)

"I've learned that people will forget what you said. People will forget what you did, but people never forget how you made them feel. (Maya Angelou)

Human kindness has never weakened the stamina or softened the fiber of a free people. A nation does not have to be cruel to be tough. Franklin D. Roosevelt.



Providence ~ Where Justice and Radical Hope Meet!

Join the Call!



**WOMEN OF
PROVIDENCE**
IN COLLABORATION

**Registration for the
VIRTUAL Providence Event,
February 20, 2021 with
Nancy Sylvester, IHM
is FREE for all Sisters!**

**Registration forms are due
November 30, 2020!**

**Registration packets will be sent to
all Congregations and Communities
on October 7th. Additional forms
are available at www.wpcweb.org!**

The Four I's

"Have faith and trust in Divine Providence; whatever happens, happens, we have God and with God we have everything". *Mother Bernarda Morin, 1921.*

On Friday, June 19, at 11:00 am, we were invited to participate in a Zoom meeting (online videoconference) across the entire Congregation. The objective of this meeting was to have an opportunity for the Sisters to connect with each other in an attitude of communion and interdependence and to dialogue about the reality that currently afflicts all of us.

For me it was a moment of recollection and empathy for the suffering we are experiencing. After seeing and hearing how Sisters of Providence from all over the world are helping people who are afflicted with COVID-19 to carry this cross, I realized how this fundamental value is being fulfilled from their isolation. The Sisters have been invited to give the best of themselves through prayer, perhaps with the pain of not being able to go out into the streets, just as our foundress would have done, because the very act of going out would be putting the other Sisters in her community at risk. The need for personal care became even more important, to respond faithfully with respect and care for the others.

Through the testimonies, it became evident that as a Congregation we are not exempt from pain. On the contrary, we have had to shoulder the sufferings of our families and of hundreds of people who have accompanied us throughout the year with their apostolate and

who have suffered the loss of a loved one. Learning how to reveal that it is God who saves us in suffering and not from suffering, is a challenge in these times.

I discovered that the call to serve is strengthened in situations like these. Embracing these moments with love and offering them for the people we love, makes everything more bearable. The Sisters, from their communities, are fulfilling a fundamental role in our society; they are with their prayers, giving oxygen to the heart of many people who are dying from this same lack of oxygen. I am sure that with our prayers we travel to each heart, to help people die in peace, with a last breath of gratitude for life.

Now, I am invited to live in harmony with the people I love. Many times, in life's ups and downs, we tend to go so fast that we do not stop to see how we make others feel with our own attitudes. It is important to forgive ourselves from the heart, to find ourselves and realize that the only way to reach God is through love.

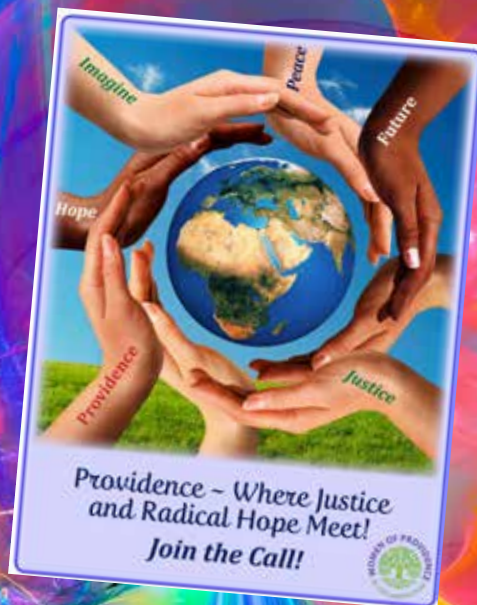
This meeting invited me to continue to commit myself to my vocation. Vocation that arose from the knowledge of being loved by this God, who respects every step we take. Even though this pandemic has seemed to turn the world upside down, it has made us reflect our own vulnerability and on the fact that we are not immortal and that we need to make changes in our lives. It is of utmost importance that we inhabit our loneliness and occupy the spaces of isolation in order to strengthen our relationship with the one who called us first, God Providence.

Prenovice Fabiola Reyes, SP



**Registration information
for the February 20, 2021,
Providence Event with
Sister Nancy Sylvester, IHM,
is available on the
WPC web site!**

www.wpcweb.org



Calendar

2020

November 2-3: WPC Executive Committee Meeting, Montreal, QC

2021

February 20: Providence Event~Where Justice and Radical Hope Meet
will be a virtual event via Zoom!

March 19-22: WPC Governing Board Meeting, San Antonio, TX

September 13-16: WPC Associate Leadership Conference,
Kearns Spirituality Center, Allison Park, PA



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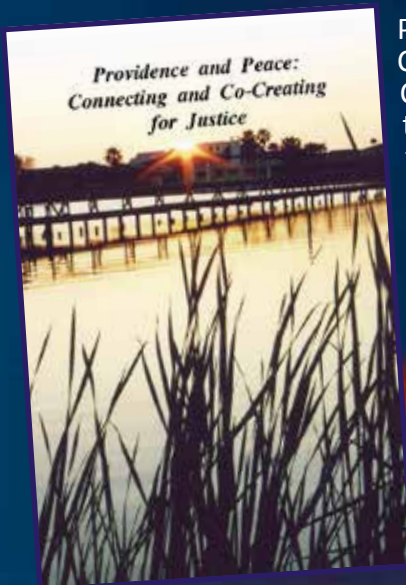
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Member Congregations: Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, Allison Park, PA; Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, Melbourne, KY; Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, San Antonio, TX; Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, Wakefield, RI; Oblate Sisters of Providence, Baltimore, MD; Sisters of Providence, Holyoke, MA; Sisters of Providence, Montreal, QC, Canada; Sisters of Providence, Seattle/Spokane, WA; Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Terre Haute, IN; Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, Kingston, ON, Canada; Sisters of Providence, Edmonton, AL, Canada

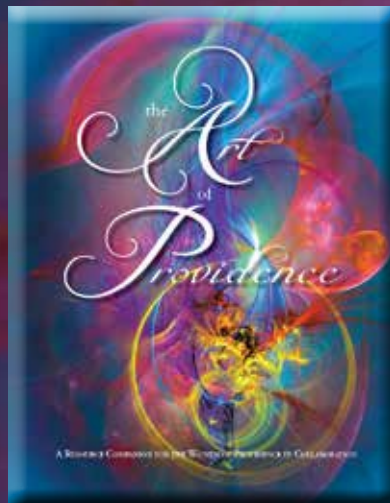
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Providence and Peace: Connecting and Co-Creating for Justice



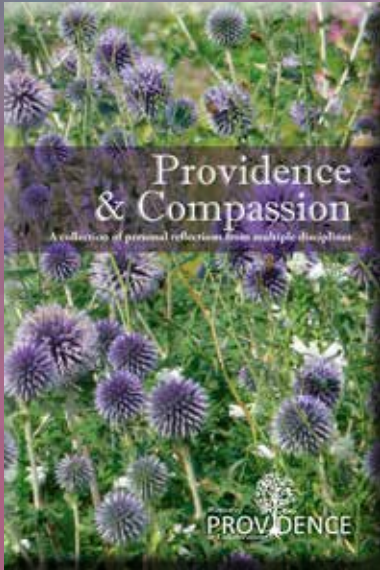
Providence and Peace: Connecting and Co-Creating for Justice is the second in a series featuring authors who look at specific topics through the lens of Providence and their lived experience in ministry and community life. \$13.65

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

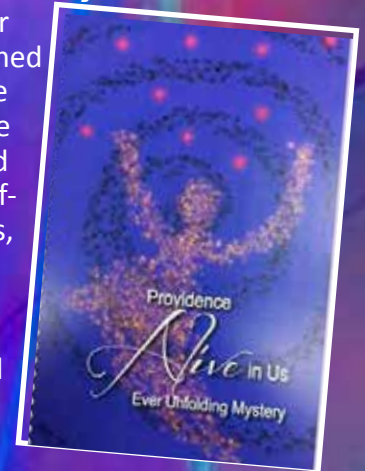
Providence & Compassion



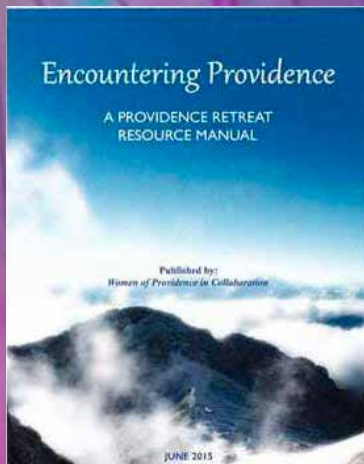
Nine Women of Providence share their understanding of Providence and Compassion through the lens of their lived experience in ministry and community life. These shared personal reflections will expand awareness and appreciation of the intimate link between Providence and Compassion in the lives of not 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

