

FSM

MAGAZINE

Franciscan Sisters of Mary



*145 Years of
Compassion, Courage, Grace*

SPRING 2017

Founded in 1872, the Franciscan Sisters of Mary is a religious congregation of women within the Roman Catholic Church. Committed to their mission to be the presence of the loving, serving, compassionate, healing Jesus, the Franciscan Sisters of Mary focus the power of their intention on compassionate care of Creation in collaboration with others.

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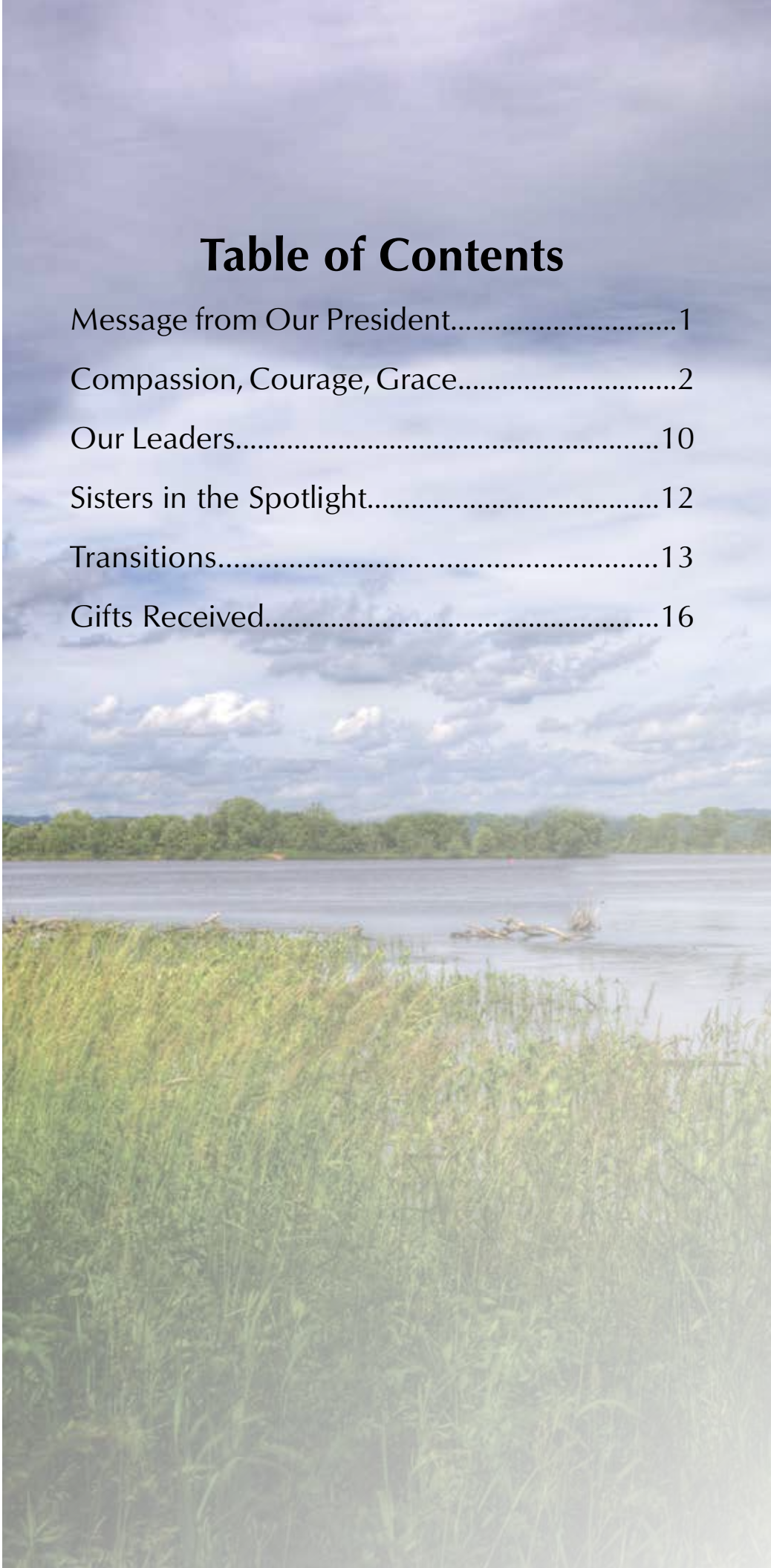
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Message from Susan Scholl, FSM President Franciscan Sisters of Mary

Studying genealogy has become a very popular pastime, as attested to by the multiple ads for Ancestry.com! Get on the Internet and you will find no lack of sites willing to assist you in delving into your history and ancestry. Somewhere in each of us is the desire to find out from where we come, what has made us who we are, who were these people we call our ancestors, what traits have been passed down to us. We owe so much to those who have come before us.

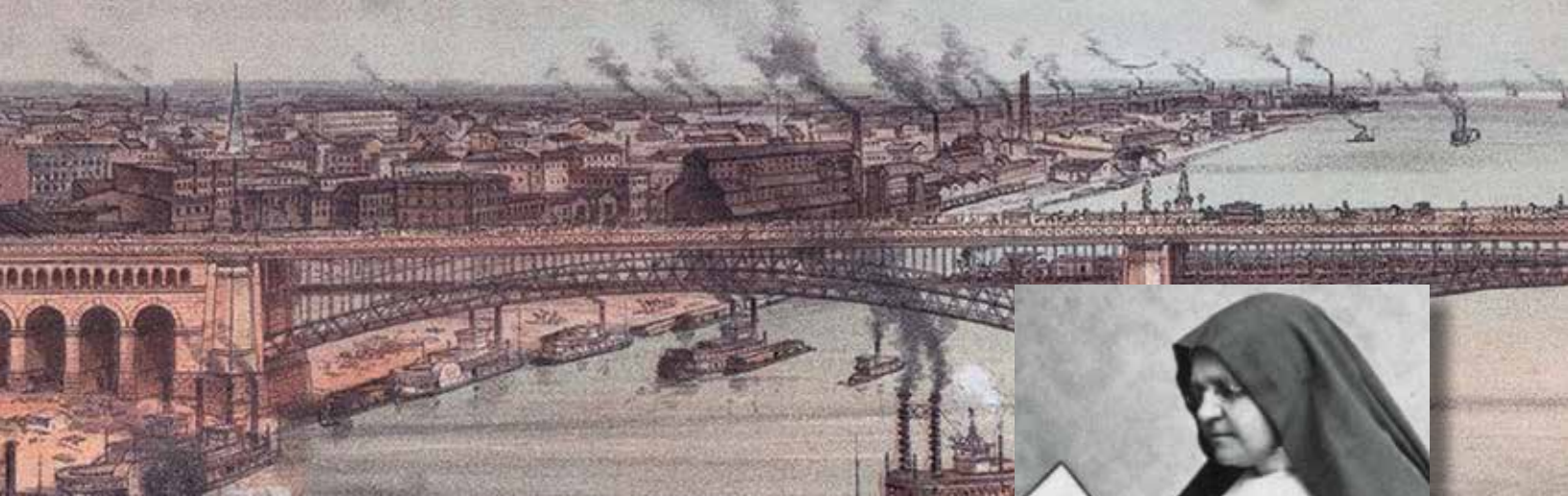
In this issue of *FSM Magazine* we travel back to 1872—and then forward. As we move through the years, we see the sisters who, day in and day out, did not think they were doing anything noteworthy or significant, other than meeting the needs of the people around them. It may have been teaching medical and nursing students, caring for those desperately ill, trying to find new ways of treating illnesses, attending to social justice issues—or as simple yet complete as adding their prayers to those of a world in much need! Each generation—and situation—brought new challenges and new ways of responding.

We trace these stories just as each of you may trace your family history—who did what and why, what were their lives like, what would they want to tell us today, what is important for us to know. We can learn much from looking back and reflecting on those who came before us.

But the story doesn't just stop here! It is up to each of us to pick up the threads and continue to build on what has been given us by those who came before; to carry the story forward; to live out the values passed down to us. Each in our own way, we continue to make a difference in our world, even through seemingly insignificant actions. And so we ask, what is it that each of us wants to make sure WE pass on to those who will come after us?

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Scholl, FSM". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid.

The Franciscan Sisters of Mary: Celebrating 145 Years of Compassion, Courage, Grace



It all started with one woman's overwhelming compassion.

In the stories we see her striding through the streets of St. Louis, her basket on her arm as she carries supplies to her sisters in the homes of the poor, sick people where they minister. We see her humbly and gratefully accepting whatever others offer to help with their ministry. In her deep love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, no sacrifice is too great if it brings God's love to those who need it most.

The journey of faith and caring that began November 16, 1872, with Mother Odilia Berger and her five companions as they stepped onto the St. Louis riverfront has continued now for 145 years.

Throughout those years the Franciscan Sisters of Mary have been leaders, courageously blazing new trails in ministry, bringing innovation and the latest thinking and technology to their work in healthcare and education, and opening themselves to new directions—in commitment to quality, in new approaches to investment and philanthropy, in leadership, and even to a new vision for their future.

Today, sixty-nine sisters continue courageously in the footsteps of Mother Odilia. While the way in which they live out that foundational compassion has changed, the deep love for God and for all creatures that underlies the congregation's mission and focus remains rock-solid.

“Continue Courageously!”

The courage that brought Mother Odilia and her companions to St. Louis has been a hallmark of the congregation throughout these 145 years.

Imagine the courage it took for these young women to enter the houses of families dying of smallpox and other diseases—and to nurse them there. Imagine carrying around a little bell to warn others to approach you at their own risk, as you might be contagious with a deadly disease.



A few years later, in 1877, the sisters decided that bringing sick people to a centralized, hygienic location would be more effective than sending sisters out to nurse people in their homes. But they needed to buy a hospital. Again, imagine the courage it took for Mother Odilia to ask for a loan of \$16,000 to finance their first hospital, St. Mary's Infirmary on 15th and Papin Streets—with only the support of St. Joseph to offer as security that the loan would be repaid.

When the people of Memphis, Tennessee, and Canton, Mississippi, pleaded with Mother Odilia for sisters to help nurse the sick during the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1878, in her compassion she could not refuse. She asked for volunteers. Filled with the courage of their foundress, thirteen brave young women volunteered to go. Five never returned.

Over the years, many FSM have faced overwhelming challenges with great courage.



Blank No. 1.

THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.

No. 22

Date Memphis Tenn Recd at N. E. cor. Third and Olive Streets, St. Louis, Mo. 301 PM

To Rev Mother Odilia Sept 10 1878.

603 3d + mulberry st

Sister wilhelmina died today at
eleven oclock sisters Gertrude vincentia
& staislaus very low send no more
sisters 18 Paid Father Aloysius

READ THE NOTICE AT THE TOP.

Sr. Mary Antona Ebo, one of the first African American Franciscan Sisters of Mary, became a legendary figure in the Civil Rights Movement because of her brave response in the face of danger. A few days following the brutal Bloody Sunday attack on peaceful protesters intending to march from Selma to Montgomery in support of voting rights for African Americans, Sr. Antona and Sr. Eugene Marie Smith, with a group of St. Louis clergy and religious, flew to Selma, Alabama, on March 10, 1965. The only African American sister there, Sr. Antona was pushed to the front of the crowd; in the face of the hatred and looming violence she said simply, "I am here because I am a Negro, a nun, a Catholic, and because I want to bear witness."

Heeding the call of the Spirit, in 1972 Srs. Victoria Ewers and Jovita Stenger, later joined by Sr. Mary Antoinette Stenger, left behind all they knew to establish medical clinics in the Amazon, where they served for 32 years. In 1983 several other sisters founded a mission in Wema, Kenya; in 1989 Sr. Agnes Reinkemeyer was murdered there by bandits.



In January 1894, Mother Mary Augustine Giesen and six companions left the Sisters of St. Mary, journeying across Missouri to begin a new community, the Sisters of St. Francis of Maryville. This congregation's development paralleled that of the St. Louis-based SSM. In 1987, after much soul-searching and discernment following Vatican II, the two congregations, both of which traced their roots to Mother Odilia, courageously reunited as the Franciscan Sisters of Mary.



At the Forefront of Innovation

Radically changing the way they provided health care by opening their first hospital was just the beginning. Throughout their long history the Franciscan Sisters of Mary have dedicated themselves to forward-thinking innovation.

Long before desegregation came to St. Louis, Mother Mary Concordia Puppendahl approached Pope Pius XI with her intention to make St. Mary's Infirmary a hospital for African Americans—the first in the United States. In 1933 the sisters opened the hospital as a place not only where African Americans could receive treatment but also where African American doctors and nurses could learn and practice their professions.



In an era when most women were confined to roles as mothers and homemakers, the sisters blazed trails as nurses, pharmacists, laboratory experts, dietitians, therapists, doctors, leaders. They devoted themselves to exploring new and ever more effective ways to provide healthcare, diagnose illness, and streamline lab techniques to provide faster, more efficient, and more accurate information. They strove to implement the latest and best knowledge, practices, and technology in caring for their patients.



Sr. Leo Rita Volk, for instance, was known by her colleagues as “Sr. Mary Chromosome” because of her groundbreaking work in cytogenetics, the study of genetic variations at the chromosomal level. The techniques she developed for mapping and analyzing chromosomes set the standard for the Human Genome Project (1990–2003) and other cytogenetic research.

The sisters were known for innovative thinking in nursing and healthcare education. Sr. Mary Charitas Iffrig helped revolutionize obstetrics by promoting natural childbirth attitudes and techniques long before such methods became popular.

Srs. Angela Murdaugh and Jeanne Meurer pioneered nurse midwifery as a respected profession and a viable option for women seeking simpler, less medicated birthing methods.

Sr. Dorine Wittenbrink's care of premature babies made her a legend in her time; Wisconsin's pediatricians invited her to set up a preemie nursery at St. Mary's Hospital in Madison and to give institutes statewide on the care of premature babies.



The sisters joined with Saint Louis University to develop one of the finest schools of nursing and allied health professions in the nation. Sr. Mary

Teresa Noth, dean of the School of Nursing and Allied Health Professions from 1966 to 1982, exemplified the

spirit of innovation and creative thinking the sisters brought to the table. She began the first continuing education program for nurses in St. Louis. In 1971 she inaugurated an accelerated program to allow students who already had a bachelor's degree to complete all the requirements for a BSN in just eleven months. She—and the leaders before her—created a comprehensive program that educated thoughtful, competent, professional nurses, developing the entire person.



The sisters brought their commitment to excellence to everything they set out to do. They earned MBAs, building and directing hospitals with all the vision, insight, and financial wisdom of their competitors—and with the heart of their foundress.



In 1986 they founded SSM Health Care, creating a single entity to govern all the congregation's hospitals. Under the visionary leadership of Sr. Mary Jean Ryan, who served as president and CEO of the system for 25 years, in 2002 SSM Health became the first healthcare entity to receive the coveted Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for its commitment to excellence and improving quality.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, many sisters have explored and founded ministries that extend beyond the traditional healthcare model. Several include:

- Holy Family Birthing Services in Weslaco, Texas—a safe, welcoming center for women to bring their children into the world regardless of their ability to pay.
- Almost Home—a place where teenage mothers and their children can find shelter and education, gaining parenting skills, responsibility, and the potential to break the cycle of poverty by learning marketable skills and completing their education.
- Woman's Place—a safe drop-in center for women struggling with domestic violence and abuse.



Sisters have expanded the depth and breadth of ministry. Besides serving as a spiritual director, Sr. Rose Dowling teaches leadership skills and facilitates teams of leaders in discernment and decision-making. Sisters, like Sr. Mary Jo Kahl in Milwaukee, have helped refugees in the inner city find shelter, food, and employment. Sr. Ramona Meurer has been present at ground-zero, providing substantial care in some of the most horrific disasters our times have seen—9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, among many others. Several have brought the presence of Christ to prisoners and their families.

Throughout these 145 years, the FSM have responded faithfully to the call of the Spirit to care compassionately for those in need. They have followed the urging of their founders—"Continue courageously for the love of God" (Mother Odilia Berger) and "Turn no one away" (Mother Augustine Giesen).



A New Call

In 2011, the sisters committed themselves to a congregational Focus of compassionate care of creation in collaboration with others.

For many years the FSM have heard the cry of the Earth and devoted themselves to environmental concerns. They have worked to reduce their carbon footprint, to live simply as Franciscans, and to use what influence they have, through socially responsible investment and advocacy, to mitigate the deadly effects of global warming and climate change.

A few years back, however, the Franciscan Sisters of Mary discovered a new approach to investing that allows their investments to achieve not only a market-rate return but also a measurable social and environmental benefit.

Through impact investing the Franciscan Sisters of Mary are using the resources gained through many years of ministry and careful stewardship to live out their congregational Focus of compassionate care of Creation in collaboration with others, to make a substantial impact in the lives of real people who are threatened by the effects of climate change.

Through the efforts of FSM CEO/CFO John O'Shaughnessy and with the enthusiastic support of all the sisters, the FSM have taken a leading role among Catholic institutions both in impact investing and in divestment from fossil fuel-producing companies (the FSM completely divested from such companies by the end of 2014).

In January 2017, John traveled to Rome for the *Laudato Si'* and *Catholic Investing: Clean Energy for Our Common Home* conference at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome. As a panelist for the session "Divest-Invest Case Studies from Christian Institutions," he shared FSM's journey to integrate into its portfolio investments that produce positive environmental and social impact, and he explained the process FSM used to divest from fossil fuel-producing companies. He was recruited to serve on the board of the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM), an organization working to put Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* into action.



At a general audience just after the conference, Pope Francis commented on the group's efforts: "I welcome the delegation from the GCCM and I thank you for your efforts to care for our common home in these times of severe socio-environmental crisis. I encourage you to continue building networks so that local churches respond with determination to the cry of the poor."

How fitting that once again, the followers of Mother Odilia have found a creative and compassionate way to care for the desperate needs of their world!

Celebrating All That Has Gone Before

Mother Odilia would not recognize St. Louis today as the same city of disease and squalor she knew.



The church adjacent to the sisters' convent on Third and Gratiot now stands in the shadow of the I-55/I-44 overpass. The convent the sisters built there in 1873 and vacated in 1888 disappeared long ago.

The sisters' first hospital, St. Mary's Infirmary, which opened in 1877, just five years after they arrived in St. Louis, faced the wrecking ball in 2016.



But in its stead has arisen an entire system of hospitals and healthcare facilities that extends across four states and employs some 8,500 physicians and 33,000 employees who care for more than a million patients annually.

Even more, SSM Health is known for carrying on the compassionate legacy and the commitment to excellence of the sisters: "Through our exceptional health care services, we reveal the healing presence of God."

Though the sisters are no longer actively immersed in the ministries they founded and nurtured, their legacy lives on—a legacy of compassion, of courage, of grace.

Mother Odilia lived less than eight short years after her arrival in St. Louis. But the congregation of women religious she founded did in fact "continue courageously," and what they have been able to accomplish, in determination and compassion, during those 145 years stands as a beautiful tribute to the woman whose heart was big enough to hold—and to change—the world.



OUR LEADERS

Sisters of St. Mary (SSM)



Mary Odilia Berger
1872–1880



Mary Seraphia Schloctermeyer
1880–1910



Mary Aloysia Schrufer
1910–1921



Mary Concordia Puppenthal
1921–1958



Mary Josetta Witte
1958–1969



Mary Francine Burkert
1969–1977



Mary Ellen Sloan
1977–1985

Franciscan Sisters of Mary



Mary Ellen Lewis
1985–1991



Irma Kennebeck
1991–1995

Sisters of St. Francis of Maryville, Missouri (OSF)



Jacqueline Motzel
1995-2007



Rose Mary Dowling
2007-2015



Susan Scholl
2015-present



Agnes Stottmann
1970



Rosanna Marie Carter
1970-1976



Mary Cecilia Pribil
1976-1979



Mary Cornelia Immegart
1979-1985



Mary Augustine Giesen
1894-1943



Mary Lucia Kelly
1943-1955



Mary Vincentia Steffens
1955-1967



Mary Rosina Higgs
1967-1970

Sisters in the Spotlight



Connie Fahey, FSM, was invited to write a reflection for the column “Soul Food” in the *Janesville [Wisconsin] Gazette*. Sr. Connie shared her insights on gratitude.

The 11th Hour Program, a volunteer program at SSMHealth’s St. Mary’s Hospital—Janesville that was founded by Sr. Connie, was featured in an article by Austin Montgomery in the March 18, 2017, issue of the *Beloit Daily News*. The program trains volunteers to offer a comforting presence to those who are dying, especially those who are terminally ill, those waiting for family members from out of town to arrive, or those who have no family visitors.



Antona Ebo, FSM, was featured in a video by the Jewish Community Relations Council of St. Louis in which she shared her reasons for voting against Missouri Amendment 6, which would require photo identification for voting. The video aired on YouTube.



Sandra J. Schwartz, FSM, spoke with the Dominican novices in March, sharing the FSM story of formation and completion. She was also part of a team providing Train-the-Trainer classes for the two-day End of Life Nursing Consortium in Madison, Wisconsin, March 9–10.



Rose Mary Dowling, FSM, collaborated with SSM Health Ministries President Ron Hamel on an article describing the process the FSM followed to establish a public juridic personality (PJP) for SSMHealth. The article, “‘Continue Courageously, for the Love of God’: One Congregation’s Journey to a PJP,” will be published in the May/June 2017 issue of *Catholic Health World*, the journal of the Catholic Health Association.



Mary Joan Meyer, FSM, displayed three photographs, and **Jeanne Derer, FSM**, displayed three paintings in the *Beauty Will Save the World* invitational art exhibition at the Good Shepherd Gallery in Ferguson, Missouri, May 7 through 25, 2017. Fifteen St. Louis artists (thirteen sisters and two priests) were featured in the exhibit; artwork included paintings, textile art, sculpture, buon fresco, and photography. A special reception Sunday, May 7, allowed visitors to meet the artists.

Transitions



***“Remember Me
as Loving You—
All of You”***

Mary Anne Murphy, FSM

September 9, 1931 – November 22, 2016

As a nurse she was especially known for remembering the “tender loving care” part of health care. But she was also known for the bright twinkle in her eye, her ready smile, and her quick Irish wit.

Mary Anne (Molly) Murphy was born September 9, 1931, in St. Louis, Missouri, to Oliver F. and Josephine (Regan) Murphy. She studied nursing at St. John’s School of Nursing, St. Louis (affiliated with Saint Louis University), becoming a registered nurse in 1952; in 1969 she was certified in Operating Room Administration through Queens University and Hotel, also affiliated with Saint Louis University.

She entered the Sisters of St. Mary on March 3, 1957. She received the name Sr. Marie Lourdes, and she professed final vows September 8, 1964.

Sr. Mary Anne served in the operating room at St. Mary’s Hospital in St. Louis until April 1969, when she began as operating room supervisor at St. Mary’s Hospital in Jefferson City, Missouri. In October 1973 she left for St. Clare’s Hospital in Baraboo, Wisconsin, serving there as operating room supervisor, nursing supervisor, patient care coordinator, emergency room nurse, mobile unit nurse, and staff nurse. She and her good friend and companion Sr. Bridgid McNamara served together in Baraboo for more than thirty years, retiring in February 2007.

Even after retiring, Sr. Mary Anne continued her ministry, volunteering at St. Clare’s Hospital and at her parish, St. Joseph’s, and at the local food pantry. She was involved in everything from parish fish fries to liturgy. She and Sr. Bridgid—and their beloved Jack Russell terrier, Maggie—left Baraboo in August 2010, joining other Franciscan Sisters of Mary at The Sarah Community in Bridgeton, Missouri.

Very early in the morning Tuesday, November 22, 2016, Sr. Molly heard and answered her Lord’s call to everlasting joy.

Transitions continued



***“Praise God
from Whom All
Blessings Flow”***

Mary Dorine Wittenbrink, FSM

October 5, 1916 – January 2, 2017

They called her the “preemie Sister.” Her work with the tiniest of babies was legendary. The premature nursery she established at St. Mary’s in Madison and the instructional programs she gave physicians and nurses on caring for these infants often involved 16-hour days, but she loved her work. Her years in Madison were a “tremendous experience.”

Catherine Magdalen Wittenbrink was born October 5, 1916, in Evansville, Illinois, youngest of nine children born to Max and Catherine (Pautler) Wittenbrink. She entered the Sisters of St. Mary July 27, 1934. She received the name Sr. Mary Dorine, and she professed final vows January 29, 1940.

She completed her B.S. in Nursing from Saint Louis University in 1945. After serving in the operating room at St. Mary’s Ringling Hospital in Baraboo, Wisconsin (1945–1947), she returned to St. Louis as head nurse at St. Mary’s Infirmary and taught pediatric nursing (1947–1949). From 1949 to 1951 she supervised Obstetrics at St. Mary’s Health Center. After special training at Charity Hospital in New Orleans on the care of the premature infant, Sr. Dorine headed to St. Mary’s Hospital in Madison, where she established a premature nursery and, with a team of pediatricians, gave institutes statewide on caring for premature babies (1951–1958). As supervisor of Obstetrics at St. Mary’s Hospital, St. Louis (1958–1966), she set up a family-centered care program. In 1966, Sr. Dorine returned to Madison to help set up a neonatal nursery for sick premature babies, remaining until 1974.

In 1974 she attended a course in pastoral ministry in Denver, then began a department of Pastoral Ministry at St. Joseph’s Hospital in St. Charles, Missouri. Her eighteen years as director of Pastoral Care at St. Joseph’s (1974–1992) proved “a fulfilling, gratifying experience.” On August 31, 1992, she retired from full-time ministry.

Sr. Dorine continued as a willing volunteer, helping with FSM archives and the FSM intercessory prayer ministry. She considered herself a grateful person; she believed that God was with her. She moved to The Sarah Community in February 2011.

Early in the morning of Monday, January 2, 2017, she left this earthly life for her heavenly reward.



***“I Know
My Redeemer
Lives”***

Marie Christine Berner, FSM

December 26, 1938 – February 8, 2017

Marjorie Ann Berner was born December 26, 1938, in St. Louis, sixth of seven children (four boys, three girls) born to John H. and Edna (Gassel) Berner. She came to know the Sisters of St. Mary through her aunt, Sr. Mary Alene Berner, and entered the congregation August 10, 1955. She received the name Sr. Marie Christine, and she professed final vows February 11, 1963.

Sr. Christine earned her BSN through Saint Louis University in 1964. She was immediately sent to St. Clare Hospital in Baraboo, Wisconsin, where she served as nursing supervisor from 1964 to 1973. After two years as staff nurse at Cardinal Glennon Children’s Medical Center, she left for St. Mary’s Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, where she served as staff nurse, head nurse, nursing supervisor, and supervisor of the critical care unit (1975–1987).

Ready for a change, she became charge nurse at St. Mary’s Manor Nursing Home in Blue Springs, Missouri (1987–1989). When St. Mary’s Hospital in Blue Springs opened a Rehab Unit in September 1989, Sr. Christine went to work there as a staff nurse. She worked in the rehab unit from 1989 to 1994, then served as a staff nurse from 1994 to 2007.

In 2008 she moved back to St. Louis. She served as convent sacristan and Eucharistic Minister; she volunteered in the FSM prayer program; she served as companion on sisters’ doctor appointments; and she willingly chauffeured sisters to appointments and shopping trips, etc. She moved to The Sarah Community in December 2011 and continued to volunteer there, living and sharing the FSM charism.

On Wednesday, February 8, 2017, Sr. Christine left this world for heaven.

JULY 1, 2016 - DECEMBER 31, 2016 Gifts Received

Gifts given in memory of:

In memory of Marietta Bida, FSM
Our Aunt Jenny
Gary and Joyce Pahoski

In memory of Rita Clara Blau, FSM
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In memory of M. Helen Louise Deeken, FSM
My great aunt
Steven C. Schulte

In memory of Louise Hirner, FSM
Our aunt
Charles and Joyce Stone

In memory of M. Johnetta Hoffmann, FSM
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Ms. Toni Steinhoff

In memory of Mary Geraldine (Clara) Kulleck, FSM
My great aunt
William E. Lyons

In memory of Mary Leonette (Agnes) Kulleck, FSM
My great aunt
William E. Lyons

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Jack and Donna Manthey

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Ms. Janet C. Huenke

In memory of Mary Cloud Poetz, FSM
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In memory of Constantia Schmitz, FSM
J. Kelly and Irene Tobin

In memory of Mary Elaine Schornak, FSM
My Aunt Agnes
Mrs. Marilyn A. Barone

In memory of Angela Speidel
Mrs. Anna Lee Cleary

In memory of Mary Olivet Zielinski, FSM
Our dear aunt
John and Janet Downey

Thank you to all our generous donors!

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In honor of Alex and Margaret Reinkemeyer
Our grandparents
James, Claudia, and Charlie Alford

In honor of Jane L. Rombach, FSM
Rev. Dr. Alvin and Marilyn Horst

In honor of Agnes Stottmann, FSM
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In honor of Priscilla Weber, FSM
James and Kim Malone

In honor of Mary Dorine Wittenbrink, FSM
Ed and Sally Froelich

In honor of Mary Dorine Wittenbrink, FSM,
on the occasion of her 100th birthday
Matt and Rita Huels

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You can e-mail requests for prayer by clicking on the tab "Submit a prayer request" on our website (www.fsmonline.org) and filling out and submitting the form.

You can call us with your prayer requests: St. Louisans can reach us at (314) 768-1748; people outside the metropolitan area can call us toll-free at 1-877-768-1299.

Or mail us:

FSM Prayer Program
3221 McKelvey Road, Suite 107
Bridgeton, MO 63044

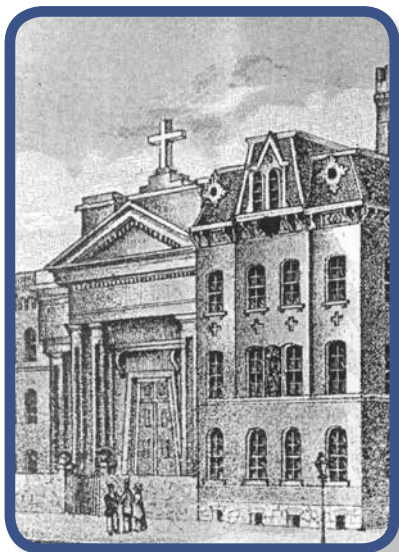


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Mission and Focus of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary



The Mission of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary is to be the presence of the loving, serving, compassionate, healing Jesus.

Flowing from our Mission, we focus the power of our intention on compassionate care of Creation in collaboration with others.

The 2015 Chapter affirms our Focus and calls us to widen, deepen and emphasize its collaborative aspects.