

Alive

WITH THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL

Volume 9, Issue 2 | Spring 2019



Create a
LEGACY
with your
PLANNED GIFT

Community responds
TO BORDER CRISIS

**Assisi Special
School**
expands service

Guatemalan Children
learn new skills

Lives of Humility, Prayer and Service

BY JIM AND MARY ELLEN MEYER

St. Alexius was born into wealth in the fifth century, the only son of Euphemianus, a prominent Christian Roman of the senator class, and his wife, Aglae. From the charitable example of his parents, Alexius developed a compassionate attitude at an early age. He left his wealthy life, somewhat like St. Francis, to live a life of prayer and extreme poverty. He moved to Syria and lived there for 17 years, caring for the sick and dying.

Eventually, he began to attract attention for his holiness and charity. Not wishing public esteem, he returned to his parents' home. He looked like a beggar, and they did not recognize him! Being good Christians, they took him in, and gave him a small room under a staircase. He lived in humility, prayer and service to others for another 17 years. It was only upon his death that they recognized Alexius as their son.

True to her namesake, Mother Alexia's life was one of care for all in need. Already as a young religious (Sister Alexia then) she, with other sisters, operated an orphanage for small children in Schwarzach, Germany. There were never enough resources, and often not enough food. During a typhoid epidemic, the sisters went through the streets, tending to the sick and dying. She was affected by the disease, too, which led to poor health the rest of her life. Mother Alexia's illness helped her to develop compassion for the sick, orphans and everyone in need.

Choosing a life of Franciscan simplicity and poverty, Sister Alexia left Germany to come to America and respond to needs wherever she felt called. With no funds but much faith, she began her first convent in New Cassel (now Campbellsport), Wisconsin. Other women were soon called to follow her inspiration and holiness. Later, Mother Alexia's experience with hydrotherapy treatments



in Germany inspired her to establish Sacred Heart Sanitarium to bring these new water therapy treatments to Milwaukee.

The St. Alexius window is one of 115 in St. Joseph Chapel. Sadly, Mother Alexia never saw it, for she was in declining health and living in Germany before the chapel's construction began. By the time it was completed, she was too weak to travel and died one year after its dedication.

Each window in St. Joseph Chapel is a reflection. The St. Alexius window reminds chapel visitors of both St. Alexius and Mother Alexia, each of whom had a lifelong mission to care for the sick, the poor and all in need.

JIM AND MARY ELLEN MEYER have been associates since 1976.

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FRONT COVER

Sister Kripa Maria Jerass takes part in a
therapy session with Golla Venkata Thejus, a
five-year-old student at Assisi Special School,
Bangalore, India. Golla is one of hundreds
of children and teens with special needs who
have benefited from the sisters' loving care
at the school in the past decade.

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From Our Leadership

As treasured partners, we celebrate your faithful support of our missions and hope to communicate the impact your prayers and financial support have on the lives of the people we serve. Recently, our team had an opportunity to witness your support in action as we traveled to Guatemala. We experienced Guatemala's rugged topography—mountain range after mountain range that simulates a roller coaster as you travel the highways from the center to the northwest, north, and east. Once arrived at a spot, we looked at layers of mountains creating a dramatic backdrop of shapes and colors. We spent 15 days in this beautiful country, measuring our travel in kilometers, hours, and potato trucks passed.

Our Sisters here are addressing the needs of the people. The country is poor, and many children are malnourished. In Los Amates, Sister Bersabe runs a grant-funded program, helping mothers learn about good nutrition and providing them and their children with supplies of healthy food. Benefits are showing up over time in school performance. In Santa Apolonia, Sister Flory describes cases of children who arrive at Guadalupe Homes so malnourished that their growth has been stunted. The healthy food and loving care of the Sisters set them on the path to health and growth.

The Sisters' care addresses the whole family in Yalpemech, a community of farm workers. Sister Elena teaches in the school and is involved with religious education of adults. Sister Susana cares for preschool children, meets with parish youth, works in the clinic and pharmacy, and spends time with the elderly. In Rieti, a natural medicine center in San Marcos, Sisters Inés and Josefa serve patients from all walks of life with natural approaches to health and medicines prepared from plants in the Sisters' greenhouse.

We are proud of the work of our Sisters and thank you for the support you give, so that they are able to make a difference for those they serve!

Gratefully yours in Christ,

Sisters Mary, Tresa Abraham, Barbara, and Lucy

International Leadership Team
School Sisters of St. Francis



Celebrating a Decade of Care

Assisi Special School continues remarkable growth and service

SSSF PHOTO

A child's first day of school is a milestone usually accompanied by a mix of excitement and nerves. For Riyana and her parents, her first day had special significance and a heightened sense of anticipation. That's because when Riyana arrived at the doors of Assisi Special School near Bangalore, India, she was unable to walk or speak.

Riyana is one of hundreds of children with intellectual, cognitive, and physical challenges who have been able to attend school and achieve greater independence, thanks to Assisi Special School. With two years of difficult but rewarding work with the sisters, she has shown great improvement in her ability to walk and to express herself.

Immediate Need

In 2009, our sisters conducted a needs assessment of families in the Bangalore area, many of whom were subsistence agricultural workers. The following year, the sisters responded to their needs by welcoming a dozen children with special needs into their provincial house. They were committed to providing daily support for the children's safety, education, and enrichment to help them reach their potential. The sisters and the families they served were so encouraged by the early results of their work that the sisters built a new school to serve students with and without special needs.

Attendance at Assisi Integrated School continued to increase to the point that student enrollment had once again outgrown the facility. A new school was built close to the existing school and the sisters' provincial house, and on October 8, Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore led the blessing celebration for the new school, which opened its doors to 147 special needs students.

In addition to language, mathematics and general knowledge classes, students at Assisi Special School



Sisters assist younger students who have not yet learned to feed themselves.

SSSF PHOTO



Older students receive vocational training from the sisters.

receive personalized care and therapy targeted to their specific needs.

Physiotherapy: Sisters work with children to strengthen their muscle tone and physical functions. It is through this therapeutic work that Riyana was able to make improvements in her ability to walk.

Mealtime assistance: Sisters work with children based on their ability to swallow food and train them to eat, clean up after themselves, and arrange their lunch bags. Sisters also work with parents on how to continue this training at home.

Artistic and musical expression: The sisters encourage students' talents and creative spirit through drawing, singing, dancing, drama, and indoor and outdoor games. Arts and crafts improve eye-hand coordination and help the children prepare for writing activities.

Family counseling: The sisters work with parents, empowering them with knowledge that will make them more empathetic with their children.

Vocational training: The sisters offer students vocational training in making candles, mats, and *diyas* (decorative lamps).

Five-year-old Golla Venkata Thejus—the child pictured on the cover of *Alive* magazine—was diagnosed with hydrocephalus when he was two months old and was born with a hole in his heart. As a result of these conditions, he is unable to speak, and often gets colds and chest infections.

Since Golla arrived at Assisi Special School, daily therapy sessions have taught him to express his needs and gain greater self-control. His parents are delighted with the improvements, and know that he is in good hands each day at school. This has enabled them both to work outside the home, something that wasn't possible before.

Golla's family story is just one example of the life-changing difference that the sisters at Assisi Special School are making. Thanks to your generosity, the school's remarkable first decade is just the beginning.



Your financial support enables our sisters to help the children attending Assisi Special School to reach their God-given potential. So many more children could benefit from this life-changing experience.

We invite you to make a gift today using the enclosed envelope, or make a secure gift online at www.sssf.org.

Last October's opening of the new Assisi Special School was a festive celebration for students, sisters and families.

SSSF PHOTO



Stepping Up on the Southern Border

Sisters and associates volunteer to help immigrants seeking new life in America

Last November, a message went out from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious to hundreds of religious communities across the country: Volunteers were needed immediately at the southern border to help care for refugees coming from Central America into El Paso, Texas, and other ports of entry to the United States. The U.S. Province Leadership Team offered volunteer opportunities and financial support in response to this request.

Hungry and exhausted as they enter the United States, most of the refugees are fleeing gang violence and extreme poverty in their home countries, primarily Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. Upon arriving at a port of entry, they ask for asylum through a United States Customs and Border Protection officer. They end up in the custody of immigration officials, where they are interviewed, screened through security databases, fingerprinted, and photographed. After that, they are either released or detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials.

In El Paso, those who are released by ICE board a shuttle bus that drops them off at one of the area's hospitality centers. It is here that the sisters were needed to care for the refugees' immediate needs—a shower, a change of clothes, food, and a place to sleep—and to help them contact family or friends in the United States who sponsor them and purchase their bus or plane tickets.

Since that call for help went out, Sisters Elmerine Acker, Carol Ann Jaeger, Barbara Jean Potthast, Donna Preston, Nancy Sell, and Margery Theiss have traveled to El Paso to volunteer at the hospitality centers, along with associates Jan Cosmos, Pat Day, and Catherine Werts. They served for a week or two between November and February.

“On any given day, a hospitality center may receive 30 to 100 refugees,” said Sister Donna, who arrived in El Paso in late November. “The sites operate much like Dorothy Day’s Catholic Worker Houses—not too well organized, but hands on with the people. It’s like the miracle of the loaves and fishes.”

Released refugees at the Greyhound Bus station in El Paso, Texas.

PAUL RATJE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES





Sister Nancy Sell (left) and Sister Elmerine Acker (right) with Veronica Rayas, the site coordinator with whom they volunteered in El Paso.

Sister Margery began her service on Christmas Eve. “We met many sisters from various communities,” she said. “Most were over 80 years old, but they never flinched when needed.”

Sister Elmerine was part of the first group of sisters who traveled from Milwaukee. “Sister Nancy Sell and I worked in the kitchen each day from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., helping with meal preparation, serving food to the people, and cleaning up,” she said. “We also made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the people to take with them when traveling to their destinations in the United States.”

Sister Barbara Jean, who volunteered at the Diocese of El Paso’s Pastoral Center, had previously ministered in three Texas dioceses for 16 years, including six in El Paso. “My visit to the border in January was like ‘going home,’ but to a totally different situation,” she said.

“Every day a new group of immigrants would arrive by bus from their detention at the border to their temporary stay at the center,” she said. “While I was there, many people came from Guatemala; others from Honduras, El Salvador, Cuba, and Brazil. One of my jobs was to help take them to where they would bathe, pick out sets of clothes for

each member of a family, and have a cot to sleep on. I could see they were relieved, happy, and grateful that America could grant them asylum if they did this legally, which was the objective of this well-run assistance program.”

Their volunteer experiences have left lasting impressions on them, the sisters said. “I noticed how willing the refugees were to help us,” Sister Margery said. “When they saw us sweeping the floor, they offered to do it for us. I came away from this experience thinking how fortunate we are to have these people as future U.S. citizens.”


“I was so touched by a Honduran man who had his little boy with him,” Sister Elmerine recalled. “He was crying because he had to leave his wife and another small child in Honduras. It is hard to imagine the hardships suffered by these people just to make a better life for themselves – a life we take for granted.”

Sister Donna said her time in El Paso also gave her great admiration for the work of our sisters serving full time at Casa Alexia, our mission on both the El Paso and Juárez sides of the border. “When I accompanied Sisters Arlene Woelfel and Carol Jean Ory distributing food packages to poor families in Juárez, I was astounded by the stark poverty of the people.

“The fact that we could ‘welcome the stranger’ with proper lodging, food and clothing during their stay at our center helped me to understand better what Mary and Joseph endured in their travel to Bethlehem,” Sister Donna said. “This was truly an Advent experience like no other.”



Prayerfully consider making a tax-deductible donation today to help our sisters care for those living on the margins through Casa Alexia, our fulltime mission on the El Paso-Juárez border. Use the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.sssf.org.

A photograph of Sister Kate Brenner, an elderly woman with short white hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a blue and green plaid short-sleeved button-down shirt. She is standing in a church, with her right hand resting on the back of a wooden pew. In the background, other pews and the church's interior architecture are visible, slightly out of focus.

"I never dreamed that in working with kids I'd laugh, learn, and love so much. I gave more than I had, and received so much more than I gave."

Sister Kate Brenner in St. Joseph Chapel in Milwaukee.

Pastoral Ministry Pioneer

Sister Kate Brenner has made a career out of saying "Yes!"

Every two years, the School Sisters of St. Francis' Pastoral Ministry Network awards the JoAnn Brdecka Award to sisters who are "pioneers" in pastoral ministry. One of the 2018 award recipients was Sister Kate Brenner, who was honored for her work in a variety of pastoral settings. From the moment Sister Kate Brenner responded to the call to become a School Sister of St. Francis, she has continually said "yes" to the joys and challenges of leadership in our religious community.

Her love for the community has always been Sister Kate's motivation to service. "The call to be present to needs within the School Sisters of St. Francis community has always been a strong motive in my response to ministry," she said. She was teacher and principal for nearly two decades at St. Beatrice School in Schiller Park, Illinois. She served as provincial of the Chicago Province for three terms when enormous changes in the Church and in our community were taking place. She also served as President of the congregation and later as its development director.

"Her leadership style is very collaborative and participative, but firm when a decision needs to be made," said Sister Charlita Foxhoven, whose work in the finance office goes as far back as Sister Kate's two terms as president, and beyond. "Because of Sister Kate, I learned to thank those I work with for the gifts and talents they bring to the organization."

As she nears her seventh decade as a member of the community, Sister Kate continues to volunteer for the International Office of Mission Advancement and is an advocate for immigrants who are being detained and may be deported. Always there for the needs of the time, Sister Kate has lived her vocation ministering to others with compassion and devotion.

We invite you to make a gift of gratitude for the ministry of Sister Kate, or another member of our community, using the envelope provided. You can also make a secure donation on our website, www.sssf.org.



New Direction, New Hope

Generous grant funds warming center, shelter and outreach to women in crisis

The Catholic Community Foundation, a Milwaukee-based, not-for-profit corporation that, for nearly two decades, has supported effective philanthropy in Southeastern Wisconsin, has awarded a \$10,000 grant to the School Sisters of St. Francis in support of our Sisters Program South initiative.

Sisters Program South, administered by the Benedict Center, directs women victimized by prostitution and human trafficking to resources for housing and supportive services, such as spirituality and health advocacy. The initiative became a reality two years ago through an interfaith collaboration that includes our sisters' United States Province.

The grant, and donations from other generous supporters, is funding street outreach activities to women victimized by prostitution; the south side Drop-In Center for crisis stabilization, case management, and safety planning; and a 24-hour warming center for winter months. Funding also supports a leadership development program that nurtures the women's interests in social justice and policy change.

The warming center was an especially critical need this winter, when Milwaukee experienced several days and nights of record-setting low temperatures. Jeanne Geraci, executive director of the Benedict Center, estimates that half the women engaged in prostitution are homeless—either living on the street or without secure housing. She told Ana Martinez-Ortiz of Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service that during the dangerously cold weather, no one was turned away from the shelter, although not everyone was able to sleep in a bed.

"It's always hard to say, 'We've reached our capacity' or 'It's Saturday morning and we don't have enough funding to stay open,'" Geraci said. "The reality is that those shelters fill up fast in times like this."



IRENE PEREZ PHOTO

Sister Durstynne Farnan, Liz Hanus-Kroll and Patty Schickert were among the U.S. Province staff who prepared a meal for shelter guests.

Sister Fran Cunningham, who serves on the Sisters Program South advisory board, reached out to sisters, associates and staff in early January. She invited them to prepare a hot lunch or supper for women sheltering at the Drop-In Center during winter months.

In response, Sister Durstynne Farnan, OP, and staffers Patty Schickert, Liz Hanus-Kroll, and Irene Perez made enough soup, bread, salad, and dessert to feed 20 guests and delivered it to the south side center. The delicious meal was received with great appreciation.

"We see women being able to take steps towards safety, towards health, towards recovery," Geraci told Emily Petti of *Shepherd Express*. "That, to us, is the greatest measure of success."



To help our sisters aid women through Sisters Program South, use the enclosed envelope or make a secure donation online at www.sssf.org

A Heart for Connection

Volunteering is a priority for Mary Ruzinski Smith

Volunteering for the School Sisters of St. Francis has been an exciting and enjoyable experience for associate Mary Ruzinski Smith. In the words of Harriet Naylor, a nationally acclaimed advocate for volunteerism, it has helped her to “serve a cause, practice one’s ideals, solve problems, and know one had a hand in them.”

Mary first discovered the School Sisters of St. Francis in 1965 when she attended Alverno College. During those early years, she was especially influenced by Sisters Noel LeClaire, Armella Weibel, and Martine Hundelt. Sister Noel especially left a lasting impact on Mary’s life.

“Sister was a constant lifeline to the community for me,” Mary said. “We played our guitars together for liturgies at St. Therese Parish and after my involvement with Sister’s ministry in Kentucky, we grew even closer.

“I kept in contact with other sisters—especially Sisters Kevin Robertson and Irene Zimmerman—through the ‘Greenleaf Writers’ Group,” Mary said. “I am particularly proud of the fact that

my poem ‘Tapestry’ was chosen for a Provincial Assembly theme.”

By the time Mary attended the Chapter of Mats—the 1974 centennial celebration of the community’s founding—she was sure she wanted to develop an ongoing relationship with the School Sisters of St. Francis. “Associate Relationship seemed a perfect opportunity for me to do that,” Mary said. “All Sister Noel had to say was, ‘I think you would like to do this.’ I needed no further encouragement after that! In 1984, while volunteering at Mary Hill, I submitted my application to become an associate.”

Though she’s the mother of two married sons and grandmother of five grandchildren, Mary has found time to expand her contact with the sisters. She taught at St. Rita School in West Allis, Wisconsin; joined a prayer group of sisters and associates; sang as a member of the Chapel Singers for almost a decade; and joined the Mutuality Area Community of sisters and associates.

“I also became a voice participant for the Provincial Assembly, and regularly attend the Spirituality Conferences and the associate annual retreats.”

Over the decades, Mary has helped with many volunteer activities. “I became one of the ‘Brat Babes’ at the annual associates and sisters picnic, served as a volunteer coordinator for the 2018 Pancake Breakfast, and, along with Associate Sandra Nowak, I co-chaired the Easter Basket project for children at neighboring schools,” she said. Recently, Mary and her friend Mary D’Amico devoted many hours of service to assist with the closing of the campus Last Stop Shop resale store.

“On May 19, I will be celebrating my 35th Jubilee as an associate,” Mary said. “I believe in all that the sisters do and stand for, and I will do anything I can to help them continue their legacy.”

Mary (right) and Mary D’Amico’s grilling skills at the Associate picnic have earned them the nickname “The Brat Babes.”



Connecting to the Franciscan Charism

Sisters inspire Associates Jean and Rob Hoffmann

Some lay associates of our community have had lifelong links to our sisters; others form a connection later in life. In the case of Rob and Jean Hoffmann, the journey to Associate Relationship was a matter of “both/and.”

Jean, a public elementary school principal, and Rob, sales manager for a local BMW dealership, have two adult children and make their spiritual home at St. Jude Parish in the Milwaukee suburb of Wauwatosa. Rob’s connection to the community came early in life.

“I was taught by the sisters at St. Anthony School in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin,” Rob said. “In adult life, I enjoyed periodically visiting St. Joseph Chapel, but I never made the connection with grade school. While researching the history of the community in my preparation to become an associate, I was able to thread together how the sisters have impacted my life over the decades.”

Jean discovered the community about six years ago, when a friend from work introduced her to Sister Arlene Einwalter.

“After a dinner together, I began meeting with Sister Arlene on a regular basis, and she became a spiritual mentor to me,” Jean said. “After a few years of visits, she invited Rob and me to consider discernment.”

The couple found Associate Relationship intriguing for different reasons. “The connection to a spiritual community appealed to me,” Jean said. “Everyone I have met through this process, and when I am involved in activities with the sisters, lifts my soul.” For Rob, “the idea of being an associate appealed to me on a spiritual level as my love of Franciscan spirituality grew within me.”



Jean and Rob love to travel and recently visited the Vatican.

The Hoffmanns are attracted to the Franciscan charism. “To me it is a pure form of spirituality, emphasizing personal relationships and our natural environment,” Rob said. A strong belief in God’s intervention and miracles also appeals to him, as does the example that the sisters have set. “I aspire to affect the world in the tradition of the community.”

Jean responds strongly to the Franciscan emphasis on “the care for the Earth and its creatures, and a love for all humans, especially those who are most vulnerable in our society. There’s a clear focus on education in the spirit of love, justice and equality.”

"Everyone I have met through this process, and when I am involved in activities with the sisters, lifts my soul."

Jean Hoffmann

Both Rob and Jean live out their faith as mentors in their parish's Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) program. "The most meaningful part of RCIA for me is sharing with the participants the answers to the questions that they don't have yet," Rob said. "Most of all, I enjoy witnessing their joy at becoming a full Catholic at the end of their RCIA journey."

"I was raised in the United Church of Christ and went through the RCIA process before Rob and I married," Jean said. "As part of giving back to my faith community, I agreed to help Rob with the program at St. Jude. I find the new knowledge I gain each year as we go through the process deepens my own understanding and relationship with Christ. It gives me a vehicle to examine my faith on a regular basis."

They both enjoy spending time with the sisters at events and activities. They were enriched by an associates' retreat, attend Masses in St. Joseph Chapel, have volunteered at Pancake Breakfast, and took part with other associates and sisters in the Capuchins' Run/Walk for the Hungry at Polish Fest. They also have attended the monthly Beatitudes Taizé prayer and concert sponsored by Music Ministry.

"I love attending the Beatitudes services," Jean said. "A recent one, with the theme 'Blessed are the peacemakers,' was especially powerful for me because I was experiencing some unrest through some life changes and problems at work. The theme of peace continues to hover in my mind."

"For me, there is an infectious peace and calm that comes over me as I spend time with the sisters," Rob said. "I carry that peace with me, and I now include Franciscan spirituality and ministry in my faith life."

Jean also feels that connection to the sisters supporting her personal faith. "Being connected in faith renews my spirit," she said. "Participating in last year's Lenten Retreat helped me more deeply understand Franciscan spirituality and affirmed me and my relationship to the Trinity. Spending time with Sister Arlene allows me to reflect on how I am keeping Christ at the center of all that I do: my work life, school life, home life, intellectual life, service life."

Rob said he would encourage anyone considering Associate Relationship to "seek out those aspects of the community that stir spiritual awakening. Once you recognize that, step through the door into Associate Relationship."



Jean and Rob with their children, Philipp and Kazmira, and Rob's mother, Maria.



Would you like to learn more about Associate Relationship and how you might become involved with the community as a lay associate? Please contact

Sister Rosemary Reier at 414-385-5270 or email rreier@sssf.org.

Skills to Last a Lifetime

Sisters enhance vocational training at our Guatemalan children's home

Thanks to the generous financial support of our donors, the tailoring workshop at our children's home in Santa Apolonia, Guatemala, was reopened last year. An experienced instructor teaches girls and boys in our onsite workshop three days each week.

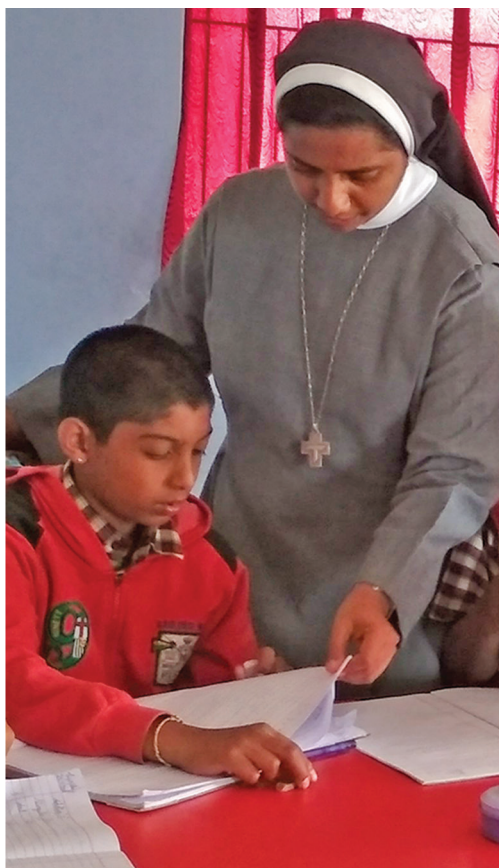
Through their initial classes, the children learned how to work with the sewing machine and how to sew simple garments such as sheets and covers. They then moved on to creating blouses and repairing their own clothes.

The training the children receive is more than just a fun and creative way for them to spend their free time. Just as importantly, the instructor is helping the children understand that the skills they are learning can become much more than a hobby. Tailoring is an in-demand trade in Guatemala and by applying their new knowledge and artistic skills, these children can gain experience that translates into full-time job opportunities.

The children at Guadalupe Homes also have opportunities to learn shoe making and carpentry as part of the home's vocational training. For children whose early years have been filled with challenges, your financial support gives hope and opens up a lifetime of opportunity.

1. A student in the tailoring class learns to cut fabric. 2. Students at the children's home also can receive carpentry training. 3. Children are taught to use the sewing machine to create simple garments. 4. Children participating in the tailoring class learn from an experienced instructor.





Inspired to Create a Legacy

“I chose the legacy gift of an annuity because I value the education that the School Sisters of St. Francis provide for so many people. The annuity does provide some dividends, but the main focus was to help others through this gift.” Rita Baden, Covenant Society Member

The Covenant Society sustains our mission for decades to come

Planned giving can be a prayerful, intentional way of sharing your God-given resources to support a mission far into the future. And planned gifts often allow donors to make a more generous charitable gift than they ever dreamed possible.

A planned gift is an excellent form of stewardship because it can provide substantial tax benefits for you and your family while helping those who are in need, especially the poor and vulnerable. With planned gifting, you touch the lives of many people today, and for future generations.

Carrying forward our sisters' ministries into the future requires the long-term support of generous individuals, which is why we created the School Sisters of St. Francis' Covenant Society. The Covenant Society is composed of benefactors who have purposefully chosen to share a portion of their assets to ensure that the mission of the School Sisters of St. Francis will continue into the future.

“So many of our treasured donors share with me that giving a legacy gift means so much to them,” said Pam Mueller, Director of Mission Advancement. “It’s a way of giving back to the sisters who walked with them in their life journey.”

The only requirement to become a Covenant Society member is to designate the School Sisters of St. Francis as a beneficiary of a gift from your estate or your financial or tax planning. Contact our office to learn more and to set up your Covenant Society membership today!

"We have known the School Sisters of St. Francis and supported their ministries for many years. We consider ourselves partners in their ministries. By placing them in our will, they can continue their important ministries to care for God's people." Pat and Bill Wilde, Covenant Society Members

Types of Gifts

Will, Bequest, or Irrevocable Trust

Whether you have a large estate or modest means, these are the simplest ways to remember the work of our community.



Life Income Gift

Charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts first pay you and, upon your death, benefit our congregation.



A charitable gift annuity is a contract between a donor and a charity in which the donor makes a gift of cash, stock or property valued at a minimum of \$5,000. In return, the charity agrees to make fixed payments for the lifetime of the donor(s).

"We have great love and respect for the ministry of the School Sisters. Life insurance was a good strategy for folks to make a significant gift for not a great amount of money."

Bob and Lynn Connolly, Covenant Society Members

Life Insurance Policy

You can receive a tax deduction when you transfer the policy and, upon your death, the death benefit will be given to the sisters.



IRA Donations: One Popular Option

If you are 70-1/2 or older, you can make a gift up to \$100,000 per year from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) to support our ministries. Your gift counts against your required minimum distribution and is excluded from taxable income.



It's easy to make an IRA gift. Just contact your IRA custodian and request that a donation be given from your IRA to the School Sisters of St. Francis.

To learn more, contact Pam Mueller at 414-385-5338 or pmueller@sssf.org.



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through updates



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Be Our Summer Mission Partner!



Each year, sisters and associates volunteer to travel near and far for our Mission Cooperative Program (MCP). We receive invitations from dioceses across the United States to visit their parishes, explain our missions, and solicit mission funding. The School Sisters of St. Francis are delighted to participate in this program.

Make a big impact

Our sisters and associates are warmly welcomed in parishes all over the country. These trips are crucial to our mission: Each weekend visit typically generates \$3,000 in support for our ministries around the world.

Join us in mission

We are seeking speakers, travel companions and/or drivers for one or more weekend trips. We have a variety of dates and locations available to fit your summer schedule. These travels are a wonderful way to spread the good word about our ministry and help our missions.

Get the details

For more information, please contact Catherine Alexander, Special Appeals Administrator, at 414-385-5343 or calexander@sssf.org.

We look forward to hearing from you!