

# *Alive*

WITH THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL

School  
Sisters  
of  St. Francis



- **Vocations Growing in Tanzania**
- **Associate Relationship Celebrates 50 Years**
- **Caring for Women in Times of Crisis**



# *A Prayer for Our Donors*

By Sister Nancy A. Sell, OSF

*Gracious, loving, generous, and nurturing God:  
We are grateful for your presence in our lives. We experience your presence through the  
graciousness and care of one another.*

*We are grateful for those who journey with us to BE your presence in our lives and in  
the lives of so many. Our partners in mission open their hearts, share their time, and are  
generous with their resources – all for the good of others – providing basic needs and  
helping others to realize quality of life.*

*We ask you to bless our partners in mission for their generosity of time, talent, and  
resources. We ask you to bless them for their spirit of hospitality.*

*To God, whose love, power, gentleness, strength, generosity, kindness within us can do more  
than we can ever ask for or imagine.*

*Amen.*





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#### FRONT COVER

Postulant Regine Patrice Theodory helps  
prepare boys and girls to receive their first  
Holy Communion. Regine Patrice is one  
of several young women who have responded  
to the call to religious life thanks to  
our congregation's presence in Tanzania.  
Read more on pages 4-5 of this issue.

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## *From Our Leadership*

As we move into the final months of our four-year term, the International Leadership Team remains focused on the many needs that call our sisters to service around the world. We are working to alleviate suffering, provide support for people's integral development, and safeguard our fragile planet.

Our greatest joy over these four years has been to spend time with our sisters and to experience their lives in community and mission. (For more about what the experience has been like for us, please see pages 6-8 in this issue.) We had hoped to join our sisters in North India in December as they celebrated 25 years as St. Francis Province, but that plan was thwarted by the surging COVID-19 omicron variant. We had to rely on watching a video of the celebration, including a festive Mass.

Another story in this issue offers insights into the ministry of our Casa Alexia mission on the border in El Paso, Texas and Juárez, Mexico. This pioneering partnership of our U.S. Province and Latin American Region provides food for the poor, education, pastoral care, healing and hospice ministries, and accompaniment and advocacy for survivors of violence. In the time of COVID-19, the sisters and associates serving on the border, like our team, have been creative about staying connected and offering support to those they serve.

These experiences have made us think about how most of you, our partners in mission, experience the work of our sisters around the world through pictures and stories. You are touched by the needs you see represented on the page. You overcome distances through the openness of your hearts, and the generosity you show in response to the needs that others face. We are so grateful to you, and to all our donors, who have responded with such generous support, especially in these extraordinary times.

*Sisters Mary, Tresa Abraham, Barbara, and Lucy*

International Leadership Team  
School Sisters of St. Francis

# Lion-Hearted Tanzanian Missionaries

## Sisters persevere despite wildlife and other ever-present challenges

Sister Rose Paul Chakkiath huddled on the broken-down bus, listening for danger. A low growl, the whine of a mosquito, even a simple rustling could be life-threatening.

Lions, hyenas, and malaria-carrying mosquitoes menace the Tanzanian countryside. And travel by bus – the main public mode of transportation in Tanzania – is unreliable. “The whole night we were sitting in the bus with no food, no water, no families nearby. I was hungry, thirsty, and I could not sleep. Most of the time, our journeys are like this.”

Why would anyone put themselves in such a situation? The sisters of our Assisi Province were determined to go where others would not, to spread the gospel and serve those most in need, no matter the risk. In that spirit, they opened our mission in Songea, Tanzania, in 2014, to educate impoverished and malnourished children who wouldn’t stand a chance without assistance.

The mission has been relentlessly challenging. The people are achingly poor, practicing sustenance farming that often fails to feed their families. Children are put to work early, tending crops and hauling clean water, and girls

are often married off at a young age. In these circumstances, education is not a high priority. And the sisters themselves have caught malaria, typhoid fever, and COVID-19.

Yet they have remained undeterred in their commitment to alleviate this poverty, and education is the tool of choice. They continue to teach in primary and secondary schools, and are making plans to launch a kindergarten and a vocational training center for young women this year.

“We will offer tailoring, beautician courses, computer courses, spoken English, and artisan craft making to help them generate income to meet their basic needs,” Sister Rose Paul said. “Our presence and care for the poorest of the poor is in response to urgent needs. Our service in pastoral ministry, education, and health care is being constantly requested. We long to begin more ministries for them.”

The sisters’ ministries have grown considerably since they arrived, and now include parish work and religious education. It’s almost more than the seven of them can manage, but a robust vocation initiative has already added seven postulants and

*Sisters greet residents in the Kiswahili language on a visit to Kisota, an 11-hour drive from our community’s mission in Songea, Tanzania.*







*Sister Rose Paul Chakkiath (left) shares some cooking tips with Postulant Regine Patrice Theodory.*

aspirants to their ranks, with even more young women expressing interest. These blessings have brought with them the need for more living and formation space.

The sisters have rented a house for postulants in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's capital, which is a 17-hour drive from Songea on a good day. They hope to add another house in Dodoma – an 11-hour journey – this year. Each house will also provide safe overnight accommodations for the sisters, women in formation, and inquirers when traveling around the country for their work. The need for safe housing for travelers is urgent.

“Two young women from the north contacted us to visit,” Sister Rose Paul said. “They never arrived, and from the information we received from the police, these women were tricked into being taken to other places. This is common.”

Such incidents also point to the urgent need to empower Tanzanian children and youth through education and pastoral ministries. The new postulants are already ministering at their new parish in the Madale district of Dar es Salaam.

“They are teaching the Catechism, preparing children for first Holy Communion and Confirmation, and visiting families and many secondary schools for vocation promotion,” Sister Rose Paul said. “Thousands of people are touched by the presence of these women.”

“I am so impressed with the Franciscan way of living,” said postulant Regine Patrice Theodory. She, like postulant Suzana Robert Shimba, is fulfilling a childhood dream of becoming a sister. “I’ve lived with the sisters for three years now,” Suzanna Robert said. “I’m very much influenced by the Franciscan way of living, especially its simplicity, hospitality, love of God, and the life of St. Francis.”

“These are very poor people, and they need help,” Sister Rose Paul said. “We are very grateful to our donors for making our ministry possible, and we pray for you every day. We send special thanks to you for the furniture in our two houses and the borewell that gives us safe drinking water. Your generous hearts help us to help here.”



**Your gift to our sisters can increase vocations and enable our community to offer life-changing education, pastoral care, and much more at our Tanzanian mission. Support them today using the enclosed envelope or make a gift online at [www.sssf.org](http://www.sssf.org).**



# Loving Service: A Lasting Legacy

## International Leadership Team reflects on accomplishments and hopes

As the International Leadership team approaches the end of their term of office, they shared their reflections on their experiences over the past four to eight years. (Sister Mary Diez, our president, served two four-year terms. Vice presidents Sisters Tresa Abraham Kizhakeparambil, Barbara Kraemer, and Lucy Kalapurackal served for four years.)

The importance of praying together before each meeting stood out as a most rewarding experience for the team members. “It helped us develop trust as a team, our own authenticity as persons, and an appreciation for the sacredness of each person,” Sister Tresa Abraham said.

Sister Lucy valued the religious atmosphere that permeated the team’s planning time together. “I especially appreciated the flexibility of our team members, and our mutual respect for differences,” she said.

Some of the biggest challenges faced by the team stemmed from the COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged halfway through the most recent four-year term. When safety protocols and travel

restrictions made in-person visits impossible, the team turned to videoconference technology to stay connected with sisters around the world.

“Our goal was to strengthen intercultural unity, and our Zoom meetings enabled us to support the leadership in the various provinces and region,” Sister Barbara said. “But Zoom meetings lose the in-between relating that goes on during face-to-face gatherings.” Sister Lucy agreed, saying language differences were often exacerbated during videoconferences.

Sister Mary chalked up another challenge to, simply, the “human condition.” “Dealing with hurt feelings and forgiveness isn’t easy,” she said. And Sister Tresa Abraham said that she found it difficult to always be a good example for everyone. “It’s quite a challenge to be positive when we don’t feel up to par,” she said.

The team members feel their experience serving in leadership is bound to shape their service for many years to come. Sister Lucy learned to conduct meetings more systematically and she hopes to carry this skill into her future







*(From left) Sister Barbara is greeted by Sister Lissy Payyappilly at St. Francis Convent, Madurai, India; Sister Mary visits with Josefa Sandres in the garden at Rieti Mission, San Marcos, Guatemala; Sister Lucy is welcomed by children at a rural parish in Chengena, Tanzania.*

ministry. Sister Mary hopes to continue to learn more profoundly by pondering over differences, especially intercultural differences. “I don’t want to lose the ability to do deep listening,” she said. “You learn more by listening to people.”

Sister Barbara was especially influenced by our Indian sisters. “Having entered the community after Vatican II, they are mission-focused and social justice-focused with a concern for the environment,” she observed. “Their Eastern spirituality is more contemplative and very Incarnational.”

Through her service, Sister Tresa Abraham developed an even greater love for the congregation and has acquired more meaningful ways to live the charism of our community. “I was impressed with the emphasis placed on our charism in our orientation of new employees,” she said. “I hope to continue that practice as a way to spread our charism more widely.”

The sisters found some distinct differences when comparing their first days in leadership to their current experience. “When I began my leadership role as president eight years ago, everything was new, especially things like finances and provincial-international team relations,” Sister Mary said.

“I found that your leadership is as good as those you entrust with responsibility. We have been very blessed with dedicated, competent staff members.”

Sisters Lucy and Tresa Abraham got a late start when coming to the United States to join the international team. “We were delayed two months due to visa problems,” Sister Lucy recalled. “During that time, we had to communicate through Skype without any preparation as to cultural and language differences. We had the challenge of working in different time zones (eleven and a half hours time difference) and using email instead of face-to-face encounters.

“Everything was strange for me,” she continued. “I learned to cope through prayer and trust in God. Eventually, as I grew to trust in the team members, I got to see the ‘bigger picture,’ which expanded my horizons.”

Sister Tresa, too, recalled the anxiety she felt at first, dealing with a different culture, different country, and age differences. “Thank God I had served on the provincial team from 2012 to 2016 so I knew Sister Mary,” she said. “Now we have a familiarity with one another and with the concerns of the congregation.”

*continued on page 8*

*On a trip to Germany, Sisters Tresa Abraham, Lucy, and Mary of the International Leadership Team visit with European Provincial Sister Rita Eble (second from right).*





*(Above) The Team holds a planning meeting in their office at St. Joseph Center in Milwaukee. (Right) Sisters Tresa Abraham and Barbara join the fun by thanking supporters who attended the Sister Water Beer Garden in a Box last summer.*

Sister Barbara hopes to see continued collaboration between the international office and the provincial and regional leadership teams, especially in promoting the community's Congregational Direction. "The benefits of collaboration have been especially evident in our recent forums on water and climate change."

As they look to the future of the congregation, the sisters have a very positive sense of hope and encouragement for the congregation. Sister Barbara is encouraged by the sisters' desire to know one another and to collaborate interculturally, citing as an example Sisters Jincy Viliyappilly and Grace Palatty, who are studying at the Institute of Catholic Formation at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

Sister Tresa Abraham and Sister Mary pointed to recent interest in membership: three inquirers in our Latin America region, a couple in Europe and the United States, and growing numbers in India.

"A sense of oneness between provincial and regional leadership teams and the international leadership team, and a good working relationship among the provinces, also holds promise for the future," Sister Mary said. Sister Tresa Abraham



is encouraged by the sisters in the United States. "Many of them continue to work past retirement age," she observed. "They love the community. They respect one another and they are very committed to the intercultural life of the congregation."

As they conclude their leadership roles, the team members expressed gratitude for the sisters they served, lauding their example of faith, support, and wisdom. While there were challenges, they pale in comparison to the treasures received.

"We need to focus on this moment, not the past and not the future," Sister Lucy concluded. "If we are anxious about our future, we miss the blessing of the present, which offers opportunities and new challenges. The power of the Resurrection is our greatest source of hope."



# A Full Calendar of Fun for 2022

After two years of cancellations and pivoting, the Office of Mission Advancement is excited to offer fun, in-person events that can bring our sisters together with friends and supporters.

## We're Movin' 4 Missions in May



We're hoping we can count on you to count your steps from **May 1-31** with the return of the **Movin' 4 Missions step challenge fundraiser!** Last year's inaugural event was an overwhelming success as more than 120 sisters, associates, staff, and donors took an active role in funding our sisters' ministries in education, social justice, care of our retired sisters, and other ministries. Our steppers walked more than 11,000 miles and raised over \$68,000 for the missions and we're hoping for even greater results this year!

Choose your own pace and count your steps wherever you go, whether you're running, jogging, walking, or simply stepping around the house. When you **register starting April 1**, you can choose which mission you want to fund, then invite your family, friends, and coworkers to sponsor you as you move toward your goal. Register as an individual, join a team, start your own team, or step up in spirit as a sponsor or donor.

## Beer Garden is Back!

After a two-year hiatus, the **Sister Water Beer Garden** returns to the St. Joseph Center garden on **Saturday, June 18, from 4-8 p.m.** Funds raised will support clean water and renewable energy initiatives at our sisters' missions around the world.

All the things you love about the beer garden will be back including our famous "Ale Mary" and "Our Lager" craft beers, wine, refreshing root beer and tasty snacks. We'll have live music, outdoor games, and plenty of space to socialize in our tents and on the garden lawn.

### Make Oktoberfest Your New Fall Tradition

Mark your calendar for **Sunday, September 11**, for our first **Oktoberfest** on the St. Joseph Center grounds. We'll be featuring craft beer, wine, and a German-style pig roast, plus many of the favorites you remember from our annual fall festival including live polka music, crafts and imports for sale, and our famous bakery!



**Watch our community's website for updates on all these activities and events: [www.sssf.org](http://www.sssf.org).  
The sisters look forward to seeing you again in spring, summer, and fall!**





# The Face of Mercy on the Border

## Sisters at Casa Alexia accompany families in desperate need

Since 2004, sisters and associates of our congregation's United States Province and Latin American Region have joined in common ministry at Casa Alexia, our mission on the border of El Paso, Texas and Juárez, Mexico.

“Our mission, in accord with our Franciscan tradition, is to be a hopeful presence in solidarity with people on the border, especially immigrants and victims of violence,” said Sister Arlene Woelfel, a volunteer and spokesperson for the border project.

The focus of our sisters' work on the border has changed according to the needs of the times. In recent years, ministries at Casa Alexia have included distributing food to the poor; engaging in education and pastoral projects; working in hospice care; coordinating healing ministry for detainees; and accompanying and advocating for

people fleeing extreme poverty and violence in their home countries.

“Our purpose in this ministry is to walk with those who are migrants as they build, heal, and move forward with their lives,” said Sister Deborah Fumagalli, the Justice and Peace Coordinator for the U.S. Province. “It allows us to engage in new, uncharted experiences through a theology of accompaniment.”

This accompaniment has included the ministries of Sister Joannes Klas and Maria Torres, an associate for 11 years, who are attending to the physical, mental, and emotional health needs of migrants and refugees held in detention centers. They share self-care techniques like breathing exercises, acupressure, and meditation to help people manage post-traumatic stress, Sister Arlene said.



## Facing Uncertain Futures

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the situation of migrants changed drastically. The U.S. government closed its international borders to nonessential traffic while simultaneously introducing the Migrant Protection Protocol (MPP) program. Under MPP, asylum seekers must wait in Mexico while their petition is pending. This caused an increased presence of migrants in several border cities, especially in Juárez.

“Juárez is a destination for internal displacement,” says Sister Josefina López of the Latin American Region, “It is here that different immigration profiles converge.”

In Juárez, there are 2,500 people living in the city’s 23 shelters. Hundreds of other migrants are scattered throughout the city, many living in sub-standard conditions as they anxiously await their day in court.

On the U.S. side, all large shelters in El Paso were closed when the pandemic struck. Annunciation House – called “the Ellis Island of the Southwest border” – continued to minister to migrants in smaller shelters while health restrictions kept short-term volunteers and the public from assisting, creating even greater hardship on immigrants.

Last June, Annunciation House acquired the use of a large warehouse to shelter immigrants who are permitted to enter the United States while their cases are being processed. It can house as many as 500 migrants for a few days while they make plans to travel to their families or other sponsors while their cases are pending.

Sister Joannes volunteers at this shelter and said she tries to be a compassionate presence by

visiting each family, listening to their stories, and giving encouragement.

“Many migrants tell me that it is so good to be treated with respect and dignity,” Sister Joannes said. “They haven’t been treated with dignity, had a warm meal, a cot or bed to sleep in, or a shower for some time.”

“Our mission on the border is an inspiring example of accompaniment, and a blessing to the province,” said Sister Kathy Braun of the U.S. Provincial Leadership Team. “Where we stand is the lens through which we see. The Casa Alexia border presence, and our education on the issues the people face, reveals the presence of Christ and helps us recognize migrants as bearers of deep cultural values and rich faith traditions.”

Sister Arlene observed that “our School Sisters of St. Francis foundresses were immigrants and received assistance from many different groups. Our presence with immigrants today is a way of carrying on a mission that has been part of our congregation’s heritage.”

“Our service is in the spirit of St. Francis, St. Clare, and our foundresses by seeing the important and urgent human need of accompanying the migrants in their time of need,” Sister Joannes said. “This is not a political service but a service of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.”

**You can support our sisters’ essential work at the Casa Alexia mission through a tax-deductible donation. Please use the enclosed envelope or make a secure gift online at [www.sssf.org](http://www.sssf.org).**





# 25 Years of Hope and Refuge

## Asha Bhavan provides loving care to women who are abandoned

Asha Bhavan, “the abode of hope,” was founded in 1997 to provide refuge to a growing number of impoverished, mostly elderly women in Bangalore, India, who have been abandoned and mistreated by their families.

The mission’s 26 residents depend upon the sisters of our St. Francis Province for food, shelter, love, and spiritual support. In addition to being wounded psychologically and emotionally, many of the women suffer from illnesses that leave some of them bedridden and in need of skilled nursing care. Others are challenged by memory loss, mental instability, and fragility.

The mission is currently led by Sisters Reena Kannanickal, Silvia Poruthur, Susheela Maravi, and Reshma Kindo, assisted by three support staff. Sister Susheela, a nurse, is a relative newcomer, having served at Asha Bhavan for less than four months. Along with her nursing duties, she spends a great deal of each day listening to the residents and offering them her emotional support. Her prayers have brought a great deal of peace to the women, and she believes her service at the center has strengthened her own faith and religious vocation.

“Some of the women have been very badly abused by family members, so they, in turn, can become violent and act out aggressively towards others, including staff members,” Sister Susheela said. “Sometimes they even run away from the mission, which causes a great deal of stress and anxiety for the staff!”

The care these women receive has made a significant difference in their lives. One resident, Mrs. Goury, came to Asha Bhavan in 2007 at age 41. After her husband died only a few months

into their marriage, her mother-in-law began to harass her, even to the point of violence.

“Her mother-in-law locked her inside her house and refused to give her food,” Sister Susheela explained. “Eventually she was able to run away, but then she was attacked and left on the street, half naked and unconscious. A priest, Father Sebastian, found her lying by the road and arranged with the sisters to have her brought to Asha Bhavan.”

After a few months of care and spiritual counseling, Mrs. Goury’s good health was restored. Now, she helps the sisters with house cleaning and assists with the care of those who are bedridden.



*Sisters ministering at Asha Bhavan meet the needs of women who have been left with nothing, and with nowhere else to turn.*





*Thanks to our sisters, residents at Asha Bhavan have an opportunity to heal and thrive in a peaceful, friendly environment.*

## COVID-19 Challenges

When the pandemic began in 2020, the sisters had to provide extra care for the women because of their vulnerable health condition.

“By the grace of God, so far no one has been infected with the virus,” Sister Reena said. “But some of the staff refused to come to work because they feared COVID-19, so the sisters had to take on extra duties like cooking the meals.”

Because of strict rules banning visitors, the residents became disheartened due to a lack of social contact. To lift their spirits and keep them engaged, the sisters introduced meditation, yoga, and new craft activities.

Visitors to Asha Bhavan would never guess how difficult it can be for the sisters to maintain the center’s atmosphere of joy, peace, and hope. The sisters rely on their Franciscan spirituality to sustain them. Because of the residents’ conditions and experiences, “the women do not often express appreciation for what is done for them,” Sister Susheela said. “At times like this, we look to St. Francis. Whenever he underwent trying circumstances, he would respond with a kind heart and peaceful words. He has been a significant role model for us.”

The sisters are fortunate to receive assistance from doctors at nearby St. John’s Medical College, a hospital managed by the Catholic Bishops Conference of India. The doctors help the residents with medical checkups and prescription medication, but the cost of medicine and hospitalizations can be very expensive.

“It is because of the financial support of our generous donors that we can provide food, proper medical care, and a prayerful atmosphere here at Asha Bhavan,” Sister Reena said. “We are very grateful to our donors for their continuous support, and to the staff of the Mission Advancement Office and our International Leadership Team in Milwaukee. They play a vital role in bringing our needs to the attention of good people who care enough to lend a helping hand.

“God is good, and so are all those who support our need. We pray that God may richly bless all of you.”

To support the ministry of our sisters at Asha Bhavan, please use the enclosed envelope or make a secure donation on our website at [www.sssf.org](http://www.sssf.org).





# Celebrating 50 Years of the Associate Vocation

## Associates are enthusiastic partners in ministry

The celebration of the 50th anniversary year of Associate Relationship opened with a January 6 virtual prayer service. The theme for this jubilee year is “A partnership of ministry rooted in spirituality.”

“It is very important to the U.S. Provincial Leadership Team to have a partnership between associates and sisters in everything we do,” said Rosaura Solano, who serves as associate relationship coordinator with Catherine Alexander and Sister Therese Thoenen. “It’s a partnership in ministry—not always working together physically, but working toward the same goal. And it’s rooted in spirituality because associates are sharing in the spirituality that the sisters have lived for so many years.”

Sister Kathy Braun, a member of the U.S. Provincial Leadership Team, noted, “As our team has connected with associates at area communities across the province, we are impressed by their energy, good ideas, willingness to get involved, and their generosity in sharing their talents and resources. Associates are enthusiastic partners drawn by the charism of our community, sharing in our spirituality and ministry.”

That spirituality is what has attracted some 500 women and men to embrace Associate Relationship since 1972. “One of the reasons I was interested in Associate Relationship was to have a closer relationship with God and a deeper spirituality,” said Sandra Siira, who joined in 2019. Bess Andersen, an associate since 2006, said, “I love learning about the sisters—their

lives and experiences, the way they have seen God work daily.”

For Owen Priepeke, Associate Relationship “has taught me more and more that we are all brothers and sisters in this world, and you have to be a living example of the gospel. You have to live your faith and go boldly forward even when you’re not sure.”

“Working with the School Sisters of St. Francis and other associates has been my greatest joy,” said Barbara Caldwell, who joined in 2013. “This relationship has deepened my faith and spirituality through interacting with the sisters, associates and those I’ve met along the way.”

### Carrying on the Tradition

“Associates bring to the world the spirituality and charism that the sisters planted so many years ago, carrying on those values,” Rosaura noted. Catherine added, “We are discovering more and more that it is about the daily things that associates are doing, mostly behind the scenes.”

An example of that quiet ministry was shared by Bess, who called a mission trip to Mississippi a highlight of her 15 years as an associate. “I was introduced to many other associates, and I sewed tablecloths and cooked for the mission group.”

For Owen, “being an associate formalized the relationship I have with the community. I was an employee for almost 20 years, and my grandmother and mother taught in Campbellsport, so I’ve known the sisters my entire life.





*Owen Priepke on a medical mission trip to Nicaragua.  
"Together we walk to those who live on the periphery."*

"What has brought me joy is the sisters capturing me with the Franciscan charism," Owen continued. "The spirit that the sisters have had throughout their existence is freely given to others, and together we walk to those who live on the periphery, to those who have no one else, and those who do not have a voice."

"Through discussions with sisters and other associates, we realize that there are common needs all over the world," Barbara said. "Our responsibility is to help others through prayer, service and sacrifice. My hope is that we can recruit other associates – by invitation and by our example – to live and follow the gospel and the Franciscan way of life."

Sandra said that the Franciscan spirit was shared with her during her discernment process, when she was accompanied by Sister Celestine Schall. "We spent precious hours together in prayer and sharing information," Sandra said. "I learned about Franciscan spirituality, and the history, mission, and ministry of the community."



*Sandra Siira "spent precious hours together in prayer and sharing information" with Sister Celestine Schall.*

Sister even invited other sisters to join us in our meetings, which allowed me to hear other perspectives and experiences."

Plans to celebrate the anniversary year include a July gathering at Alverno College in conjunction with the U.S. Provincial Assembly. Sister Therese called it an opportunity to consider how sisters and associates can work and plan together. "That conversation should be very fruitful and energizing – a community-wide celebration of sisters and associates."

"The charism is manifested distinctly in each sister and associate," Owen noted, "but in community it moves us forward together, with a common cause and energy."

**To learn more about Associate Relationship, visit our website ([www.sssf.org](http://www.sssf.org)) or email [associates@sssf.org](mailto:associates@sssf.org).**







## A Soft Spot for the Sisters

Maureen Szymanski first encountered the School Sisters of St. Francis when, as a Registered Nurse, she worked alongside the sisters in our congregation's home health agency. "All the sisters were great ladies giving their lives to helping others," she recalls with fondness.

Now retired, Maureen has found a way to support those "great ladies" while doing what she loves. She creates fleece pillows, sells them at craft shows, and sends the proceeds to support our ministries!

"I do sports teams, comic book characters like Spider Man, Paw Patrol for the little kids, and of course holiday pillows," Maureen says. "I enjoy making them and seeing the people who come back year after year to the craft shows."

Maureen loves knowing she is supporting our elderly sisters in retirement and other ministries close to her heart. "Helping low-income people, providing food for those in need – there are too many people without, and the sisters do whatever they can to help them."

**Our heartfelt thanks to Maureen, and all those who generously support our congregation!**