

# Alive

WITH THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL



**Shaping Young Lives  
as Loving Teachers**

**Growing and Adapting  
at our Indian Missions**

**Franciscan Center for Peace  
in Milwaukee**

# THIS HOLY PLACE

Here in this holy place,  
this beautiful House we built for You,  
we raise our voices, praising You,  
God, Artist-Builder of the universe.  
You are at home with us here,  
You whose holy presence the world cannot contain.  
We are Your people, a mosaic formed  
like many colored stones into community.  
You nourish us with Word and Food at this table,  
as You send us forth to share the daily Bread  
You offer to a world hungry for Your love.  
Young and old, we sing our joyful praise to You  
for centuries of days  
in this holy place where You are at home.

- Sister Irene Zimmerman  
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Image: St. Joseph Adoration Chapel



## From Our Leadership

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### FRONT COVER

Sister Marta Gaspar Bartolo works with a young student at Colegio Santa Clara in Paíta, Peru, where education and Franciscan values are woven into daily life for nearly 300 primary, elementary, and middle school students.

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# “PEACE BE WITH YOU.”

(John 20:19)

We are in the midst of the “Great 50 Days,” the Easter season that reminds us that darkness does not have the last word. Easter does not ignore the pain we carry; it enters into it and transforms it.

The Risen Christ meets us precisely where our hearts are wounded, overwhelmed or discouraged. He speaks to each of us in the same words he addressed to his disciples: “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). This peace is not fragile or passive; it is courageous and life-giving. It restores dignity, strengthens hope, and calls us to be builders of reconciliation and unity.

Jesus does not rise far from us, but in the midst of our frailties, where our hope has weakened or where we feel that the roads are closed. We experience resurrection each day as a silent work of God in what is small: a gesture of reconciliation, a word of encouragement, a humble service, and daily patience. Easter becomes real when we accept God’s strength to raise up what seemed dead within us, and when we open our lives for God to make all things new.

This year, we are commemorating the 800th anniversary of the Transitus of St. Francis of Assisi. In Francis, we have a brother who lived Easter in his own flesh. Configured to Christ on the cross, Francis was also configured to the Risen Christ in serene joy, in absolute trust, and universal fraternity.

Francis’ life reminds us that the resurrection is not celebrated only with words, but with a transformed heart; a heart that sings even in trial, gives thanks even in poverty, and blesses even in the face of death, recognizing that everything – absolutely everything – is a gift from God who gives life.

In this Franciscan Jubilee Year, may each of us rediscover the paschal dimension that marked Francis’ life: the joy born of knowing that we are deeply loved by God; the interior freedom that springs from evangelical poverty; and fraternity built on forgiveness and peace.



# Offering a “Franciscclarian” Education

## In Peru, sisters embody the spirit of our Franciscan founders

Each day, before lessons, workshops, and recess fill the school grounds at Santa Clara School in Paita, Peru, the academic community pauses and roots the day in faith, gratitude, and purpose.

“Our students arrive at school at 7:20 a.m., and classes begin with prayer,” shared Sister Maribel Salcedo Chavez, who ministers at the school. “We seek to create a school culture where the Catholic faith is experiential, meaningful, and transformative.”

For nearly four decades, Colegio Santa Clara has woven education and Franciscan values into daily life. Through the dedicated efforts of 35 faculty and staff members, the school serves 296 students across three educational levels: primary, elementary, and middle school.

Paita is a port city of about 180,000 people in northwestern Peru, on the Pacific coast. Many families in Paita rely on fishing, agriculture, or informal labor to make a living. These sectors have been deeply affected by economic instability, which shapes students’ lives. In the face of these challenges, our sisters strive to offer stability, faith formation, and hope.

“Many of our families are affected by labor informality, water shortages, and a serious fishing crisis due to the scarcity of giant squid,” Sister Maribel explained. “Families struggle to pay tuition on time and to acquire school supplies like books, notebooks, and musical instruments.”

Families continue to choose Santa Clara School for their children, though, drawn by its strong academic standards, faith-based education, and sense of community.

“Being part of the Santa Clara School family gives students a very clear identity,” said Sister Monica Olguin, a member of our sisters’ Latin American regional leadership team who previously directed the school. “Children are formed in human and religious values, and, in turn, they transmit those values to their parents. In this way, the impact goes beyond the students and reaches entire families.”

Sister Maribel said that the school seeks to be “Franciscclarian,” embodying the values of both Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi. “We do this through daily prayer, our care for the environment through responsible use of water and other resources, and love and respect for others without distinction,” she said. “We want our students to grow in peace, justice, solidarity, and joy.”

Beyond the classroom, creative and cultural activities help students discover their gifts. Music workshops, sports competitions, and a long-standing reading program encourage expression and curiosity.

*Teachers model faith that is experiential, meaningful, and transformative.*



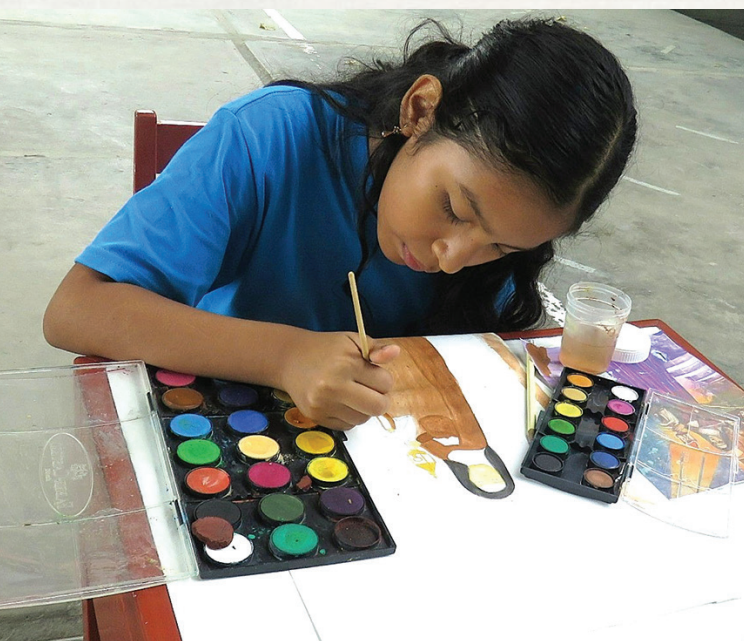
School traditions also play an important role in strengthening community life. Each May, students participate in a song contest to honor the Virgin Mary through original lyrics set to familiar melodies, along with choreography that incorporates dance, movement, and expressive gestures. On Achievement Day, held in November, students celebrate their effort and growth with creative presentations of their academic and artistic progress. Weeks later, a Christmas carol contest involves students from all grade levels, along with parents, as the school celebrates the season through music and shared joy.

### Gifts in Action

In the past year, generous donors have helped to fund two initiatives that directly support student well-being and the school's daily operations. One is the installation of an additional water supply, an essential improvement in a city where reliable access to clean, fresh water remains a constant challenge.

"Since the installation, we have more water for student hygiene, cleaning our facilities, and caring for green areas on campus," Sister Maribel shared. "Students and staff can use the bathrooms properly and wash when needed. This generous gift has greatly improved daily life and healthy habits."

*A student paints in celebration of St. Clare's Feast Day.*



Donor gifts also made it possible for Santa Clara to fund the salary of a school psychologist, which is an essential resource for students navigating emotional, social, and family difficulties. Through listening and guidance, the psychologist supports a healthy and respectful school climate and offers timely accompaniment to students and families during difficult moments, strengthening the overall community.

"Our school psychologist helps students manage anxiety, sadness, fear, and stress, as well as conflicts between peers and family challenges," Sister Maribel explained. "This role contributes to the comprehensive formation of the student: academically, and also humanly and emotionally."

"I am deeply grateful to the readers of this magazine who, through their altruism, have helped improve the quality of life of our students and staff, physically and emotionally," Sister Maribel said.

It is easy to see the long-term impact of Santa Clara School's "Franciscarian" approach to education. Sister Monica reports that nearly 95 percent of former students are now professionals, many of whom return to enroll their own children at the school. "This shows the work that has been done over the years, the love, commitment, and values that were planted," she said. "Our former students now serve society with responsibility and gratitude."

"My hope is that Santa Clara continues to be a beacon of comprehensive education and evangelization," said Sister Matilde Maraví, a former teacher at Santa Clara who now serves as vice president of our international congregation. "The dream is to have the financial stability needed to continue offering scholarships to children and young people from low-income families, so they can transform their lives and become agents of change."



Milwaukee civic leaders joined sisters in celebrating VIA's 30th anniversary at September's Silver City Fest.

# Connecting People, Strengthening Places

## VIA celebrates 30 years of partnership in Milwaukee

For three decades, VIA Community Development Corporation (VIA CDC) has worked block by block, neighbor by neighbor, to help build strong, healthy neighborhoods on Milwaukee's near South Side. This sponsored ministry of our congregation's U.S. Province celebrated 30 years of service last year – a fitting time to reflect on its many accomplishments and how the organization will continue to serve a community rich in culture, history, and possibility.

VIA was founded in 1995 by the School Sisters of St. Francis as a way to remain connected to the motherhouse neighborhood that was experiencing rapid demographic change. Instead of reacting with barriers or walls, the sisters reached out to their St. Joseph Center neighbors with curiosity and a desire to learn from them.

That bold choice – to meet the community where it was – established VIA's foundation of ensuring that neighbors stayed connected to each other and to the resources around them. This commitment to connection and collaboration continues to define the organization today.

Originally named Vision Ministries, the organization became Layton Boulevard West

Neighbors in 2002. In 2020, the new VIA CDC name was chosen to reflect the organization's commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

"We heard from our neighbors that VIA is a name that is easier to say across languages, whether English, Spanish, Hmong, or Mandarin," said JoAnna Bautch, VIA's executive director. "We want people to feel comfortable naming the place they call home."

Listening remains central to VIA's identity. JoAnna points to the organization's six leading values, which include being strength-based, community-led, rooted in listening, committed to justice, grounded in teamwork, and focused on results. "We're always listening to our neighbors to develop the solutions that they want to see reflected in their blocks, their community, and their city," she said.

Since JoAnna stepped into her leadership role in 2022, VIA has been in what she describes as a constant state of growth. Historically serving the Burnham Park, Layton Park, and Silver City neighborhoods, VIA expanded its service area in 2025 to the east to include the Clarke Square neighborhood.

VIA has grown from rehabilitating a handful of homes each year to constructing up to ten new homes annually, including housing specifically for early childhood educators and other first-time homebuyers.

“One of the reasons VIA has had the opportunity to grow and serve more neighbors is because we deliver on our strengths and own up to our weaknesses,” JoAnna said. “We lean on our partners for their strengths and their expertise.”

Those partners include organizations such as the United Community Center, Milwaukee Community Crossroads, local schools, churches, and the City of Milwaukee. Together, they support VIA’s work in housing and economic development, and community engagement.

JoAnna said VIA’s work is shaped by the uniqueness of Milwaukee’s near South Side, which is home to the largest Latine population in the state, and one of the youngest populations as well. The area also has some of the state’s lowest voter turnout rates, something VIA is actively working to change.

“Civic engagement looks like voting, but it also looks like calling in a broken streetlight or checking in on your neighbor,” JoAnna said. “When people know each other, they are more likely to speak up and show up.”

VIA has organized voter education sessions at local schools such as Cristo Rey Jesuit High

*VIA’s programs have helped make home ownership affordable and accessible in Milwaukee neighborhoods.*

School, where students learn how to read real ballot language and understand referendums. JoAnna believes this early exposure is key because “voting systems were not designed to be easy. When people do not understand them, that is not a personal failure. It is by design. Our job is to help remove that barrier.”

This work is deeply personal for JoAnna, who grew up and continues to live on the South Side. “These are the neighborhoods that raised me,” she said.

Sister Carol Rigali, director of sponsorship services for the U.S. Province, said, “VIA is a community development corporation that does exactly as its name suggests. They unfailingly reach out to the marginalized, to homeowners, and to all our neighbors. We can see their effective community outreach happening door to door, at monthly community meetings that keep everyone informed, and at community festivities that draw neighbors together.”

VIA celebrated its 30th anniversary with many in-person events, concluding with their annual gathering, an open-house-style breakfast where neighbors shared feedback, connected with staff, and celebrated the organization’s impact over three decades. On social media, VIA highlighted milestones like the first neighborhood ice cream social in 1995 and the opening of its National Avenue office in 2023.

“We are proud of what we have accomplished over the last three decades,” JoAnna said. “None of it would be possible without our neighbors, partners, and supporters. This work has always been about partnership, and it will continue to be.”

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[Read more about JoAnna Bautch’s personal journey to leadership, and highlights of VIA’s three decades of service, on our community website’s Media Room: \[www.sssf.org\]\(http://www.sssf.org\).](#)





*Assisi Province Leadership Team: (from left) Provincial Counselors Sisters Mercitta Arimpour, Sherlit Vallachirakkaran, Francitta Pazhukkathara, and Provincial Coordinator Sister Rosebell Ponthakkan.*

## Growing and Learning in Assisi Province

### Province's leadership team reflects on the joys and challenges of their first year

The sisters serving on the leadership of our congregation's Assisi Province recently completed their first year in office. They kindly shared these reflections about their servant leadership in the South Indian province.

***Alive: What moments stand out as especially meaningful or memorable from your first year of service as a leadership team?***

As we look back, we are grateful to God, to our sisters, and to many good people who have walked with us. We have learned that our leadership is a team effort, complementing each other.

At the onset of our leadership ministry, we attended a five-day workshop that helped us get to know each other. It instilled in us a style of leadership that will be effective in religious

communities today: a combination of animation and participation.

***Can you point to some ministry highlights that inspire you?***

We are proud of our missions and ministries in Tanzania. Eight Indian sisters are serving in Tanzania as missionaries, and they've overcome adversity like diseases and differences in language and culture. Three Tanzanian women made their first professions two months ago, and there are six Novices and some more Aspirants and Postulants in formation. A new mission in Segu, Dodoma could be opened to start an education ministry, which would be very beneficial for the people and the community.

Also, after much prayer, reflection, and study, we accepted the challenge to look for new vocations

in the northeast of India. Our province started a mission in Tezpur, Assam, five years ago and there are now 40 women from seven different ethnic groups who are interested in religious life and going through the formation process.

***What are the most significant challenges the province is facing?***

Since we run different missions and ministries in India and Tanzania, we need to have enough sisters to serve at the missions. Our focus is on vocation promotion and formation. A significant challenge for Assisi Province is having enough sisters to continue the missions and ministries we have already started in different parts of India and Tanzania.

Teaching English as a common language is a big challenge that our sisters are facing as they work with young women in formation. Though these women are gifted and intelligent, some have not had a formal education, so they must complete their high school examination.

Geography in India is a big challenge, too. Women in formation are assigned in three different locations: Assam, Bangalore, and Mysore. It takes three days to travel 1,800 miles by train from Tezpur to Bangalore!

Finally, formation for religious life is a long and expensive process. When a woman joins us after completing tenth grade, it takes about 12 years for her to complete her religious and professional studies. During this formation time, the congregation meets all her expenses. We need to find new ways to meet this expense in the coming years. We need to support formation because it is our future.

***What are ways you have responded to these challenges?***

To give one example, seven sisters from Assisi Province are living and working in Germany. All their earnings are directed to the province's needs in Tanzania, and we truly appreciate and thank

our sisters who are making this sacrifice. We are also very grateful for our donors in the United States who support the Tanzanian mission so generously.

***Can you share lessons you have learned about leadership during your first year?***

We have learned that each individual is created with an intention of fulfilling an important plan that God has in mind (Jeremiah 29:11). Whatever we discern, decide, and implement, it should be life-giving. When we stand for the core values of Gospel, we receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit.



*Sisters ministering with hearing-impaired students at Assisi Snehalaya Hostel in Mysore.*

***How has the support of our readers made a difference in accomplishing your prayers for Assisi Province?***

We are greatly indebted to our partners and benefactors who put their trust in us and help us move forward in spreading the good news to the poor. In times of need, you have been there with helping hands. We pray for you daily!

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[Learn more about missions and ministry needs in Assisi Province on our community website's Media Room: www.sssf.org.](http://www.sssf.org)



*Participants in conversation at the recent “Bridges to Understanding” Forum.*



*Sister Rita Mary Phalen leads sisters, associates, staff, and guests in the bi-monthly prayer for peace at the Pieta.*

## A Center for Nonviolence

### Chapel programs reflect our sisters’ Franciscan commitment to peace

Last year, on average, the City of Milwaukee mourned a new murder victim every 60 hours – a trend that has continued early this year. Residents seem to be crying out for safety from violence, hostility, and hatred. The School Sisters of St. Francis felt called to respond and offer that place of refuge and consolation.

“We invited sisters and associates to brainstorm and consider how we, as Franciscan peacemakers, can respond to victims of violence,” recalled Sister Barbara Kraemer, Director of Chapel Ministry. “We decided to establish St. Joseph Chapel as a Franciscan center of peace and nonviolence based on the Beatitudes and our Franciscan tradition of peacemaking.”

Sister Barbara said that given our sisters’ longstanding presence in Milwaukee and the global vision of our foundresses, opening our facilities was a logical and faith-filled response to the needs of our time.

“By designating St. Joseph Chapel as a Franciscan center for peace and nonviolence, we are striving

to respond to violence and polarization by teaching ourselves, and others, to live and act nonviolently,” Sister Barbara said. “We want to be a source of support for victims of violence, and promote ways of reducing divisiveness in our community. We aim to offer these teachings and principles through in-person events and online.”

To accomplish this, the School Sisters of St. Francis Committee for Nonviolence offers education programs about nonviolent living, and shares resources on peace and nonviolence at in-person events and through social media.

### Marking a Jubilee Year

In February, Milwaukee Archbishop Jeffrey Grob announced that St. Joseph Chapel has been designated as a site for pilgrimages during this Franciscan Jubilee Year. The Committee for Nonviolence plans to host presentations on Gospel nonviolence, reflections on the chapel’s Franciscan images, gatherings for Franciscan Morning and Evening Prayer, and will also welcome programs sponsored by the Franciscan Federation and other organizations.

The Committee for Nonviolence also has partnered with Oregon-based Peace e Bene Nonviolence Service in a global mobilization for a culture of nonviolence. The committee's first action as part of "Campaign Nonviolence" was a celebration of the International Day of Peace last September, when our sisters joined with children from nearby Notre Dame School of Milwaukee for prayer in St. Joseph Chapel, continuing with a brief service at the Peace Pole in St. Joseph Center garden, and a walk for peace around the perimeter of the campus.

Two months ago, the committee hosted a forum on nonviolent communication for sisters, neighborhood residents, and representatives from colleges, parishes, and community groups who are concerned about how divisive language leads to violence. A program about nonviolent communication, geared to children, is planned for the coming months.

Other programs and presentations have included a safety meeting that brought together neighbors and representatives from Milwaukee's Common Council, police department and neighborhood organizations; an art exhibit and presentation featuring images of the Blessed Mother; a nativity scene exhibit celebrating the Prince

*Students from Notre Dame School of Milwaukee joined the sisters for a September observance of International Peace Day.*



of Peace; and bimonthly prayers for peace and healing at the chapel's Pieta statue.

The Pieta prayer service got its start when a group of women who attended a chapel mini-pilgrimage in 2022 talked with a sister about their stories of grief and loss. "One woman spoke of her daughter being murdered," Sister Barbara recalled. "She came to the chapel to pray and receive comfort. Now we come together regularly to pray at the Pieta statue, asking Mary, Mother of Nonviolence, to bring inner peace to victims of violence."

The committee offered a December presentation to students from Nativity Jesuit Academy about St. Francis of Assisi and the first nativity scene. Principal Andrea Bergmann wrote, "Our fourth and fifth graders truly enjoyed the nativity scenes from around the world. The visit was a wonderful way to help them enter more deeply into the Advent and Christmas season."

Sister Barbara said the congregation hopes to continue to expand the partnerships it has already established with the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, VIA CDC, local schools and churches, and community groups.

"One of the ways our Franciscan spirituality is expressed in action is by welcoming one another as sisters and brothers, creating the 'beloved community' envisioned by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.," she said. "Our hope is that our Franciscan center for peace and nonviolence will help counteract violence by opening avenues for building inclusive and peaceful communities."

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*Learn more about how the Franciscan tradition is shaping our center for peace and nonviolence, and learn about program offerings, in an article in our community website's Media Room: [www.sssf.org](http://www.sssf.org).*

# Unto Earth's Remotest Ends

## Sisters bring prayerful presence in India's mountainous northwest

St. Francis Convent in Kharkutta is located in Meghalaya state in far northwestern India, nearly a mile high on a plateau facing south toward the plains of Bangladesh. The name "Meghalaya" comes from Sanskrit words meaning "abode of the clouds."

It is here that Sisters Naveena Kulathingal and Rajni Majhi minister with people in far-flung villages and small community groups. Sister Naveena has been based in Kharkutta for two years, and Sister Rajni joined her last summer.

Sister Naveena (below) is in charge of the local school and emphasizes values education, guiding students morally, spiritually, and academically.

Our congregation takes special care of poor children by assisting with their expenses for food, clothing, tuition, and school supplies fees. Girls who cannot travel to and from school each day due to the long distance are accommodated at a hostel and cared for so that they can continue their studies.

"Many villages in the Diocese of Tura are remote," Sister Naveena said. "Long walking distances, poor transportation, and scattered settlements make access to education, healthcare, and regular pastoral care difficult. This can lead to irregular schooling and faith formation.

"Children, especially girls, struggle to continue their studies due to distance, poverty, and lack



of study support at home,” Sister Naveena continued. “Some are first-generation learners. We prayerfully try to identify the most vulnerable and accompany them personally with hostel facilities, tuition help, and sponsorship. By supporting girls, we protect their education and dignity, which has a long-term positive impact on families and the wider community.”

Sister Rajni is actively involved in pastoral visits to villages and families. She visits family groups that are far from village centers, often walking for hours to reach them. She usually remains in a village for five to six days at a time.

“During these village stays, Sister Rajni conducts catechism classes and faith formation programs for children and young adults,” Sister Naveena said. “She offers spiritual guidance, listens to people’s struggles, and provides personal and family counseling. She also reaches out to the sick, elderly, and marginalized families.”

Sister Naveena said that some of their most inspiring moments happen during these extended village stays. Staying in simple homes and praying with families creates deep bonds.

“Seeing people gather eagerly for catechism and night prayers after a full day of hard work is very moving,” Sister Naveena said. “Their hunger for God and openness to the Word gives new energy to our vocation. Our simple visits to the sick and elderly often become sacred encounters, like when an elderly person says, ‘Now I feel God has visited me,’ after a prayer and blessing.”

The sisters’ days begin early with community prayer and Mass. This spiritual foundation guides the rest of the day’s service. After breakfast, Sister Naveena serves at the school and Sister Rajni begins her field ministry. Evenings usually include rosary or prayer services with the hostel

girls or prayer gatherings in the villages. Time is also dedicated to supervising the studies of hostel children. The day concludes with community prayer, a review of the day, and planning for the next day.

“Life and ministry here are simple but deeply meaningful – rooted in prayer and attentive to people’s spiritual and social needs.” Sister Naveena said. “We connect families in remote areas with parish life and sacramental programs. We actively collaborate with the local parish in all its major activities.”

### **Overcoming Challenges**

Life throughout the Tura Diocese is harsh. “The villages are far from urban facilities, and people have limited access to education, health care, clean water, and employment opportunities,” Sister Naveena said. “The land is very steep, so it is difficult to grow most crops or construct houses and roads. There is great poverty, limited access to healthcare facilities, high unemployment, and low wages.”

Under these difficult circumstances, Sister Naveena said that the sisters know that their varied ministries make a big difference. “Our presence brings healing to many families who carry silent struggles including poverty, family tensions, educational challenges, and illness,” she said. “We provide compassionate listening, prayerful support, and gentle counseling, which people may not find elsewhere.”

Above all, the sisters’ simple lifestyle, prayer life, and dedication become a living witness for the people they serve. “Even when programs are small, the testimony of committed presence speaks powerfully,” Sister Naveena asserted. “Our sisters’ faithful presence itself becomes ministry.”

# A Legacy of Gratitude

Charitable bequests support a donor's values for generations to come

Barbara (Splitt) Kummerer was in fifth grade when her family moved to Chicago's Hermosa neighborhood and she began attending St. Philomena School. That's where she first met the School Sisters of St. Francis. She went on to Alvernia High School (Class of 1951) and earned her sociology degree from Alverno College.

"Alvernia High School was way ahead of its time in the late 1940s and early '50s," Barbara said. "I feel that was particularly true in literature when we were reading authors like François Mauriac and Graham Greene. I got to take Latin, which I loved. One of my teachers, Sister Rebecca – who I later had again at Alverno – was very much into social justice and was a mentor of mine."

Barbara put her education to work for Catholic Charities in Chicago for more than two decades, then got a counseling degree and worked as a support counselor in a veterinary practice. "I worked with families who had seriously ill pets, and with people who were grieving the loss of their pet," Barbara explained. "It was a little unusual at the time, but very much appreciated by the clients."

Looking back, Barbara said she owes so much to the sisters who taught her. "I feel like the sisters made me who I am. They were so foundational, and exposed me to literature, art, music – the whole world! I took in everything that they had to give me, and they gave me so much. I feel so grateful to them for that."

To make that gratitude tangible, Barbara has decided to make a legacy gift to the School Sisters of St. Francis. She connected with Kim Peterson, the community's director of planned giving.



Barbara (standing, far left) with other members of Alverno's VISION publication staff.

"A charitable bequest, sometimes called a legacy gift, usually comes after a person passes," Kim explained. "These gifts are most often distributed through a person's will, trust, or an IRA beneficiary designation."

"Some types of gifts reduce taxation, but legacy gifts are much more about carrying on the donor's values and the hope that the organizations they support will carry on those values for future generations," Kim continued. "Many people choose to establish legacy gifts because it won't impact their finances during their lifetime. Legacy gifts can also allow the donor to make a larger gift than they ever thought possible."

Kim emphasized that when creating or changing your estate plans, it's important to work with trusted financial advisors.

“Your attorney or other financial advisors will help you choose what best fits your goals,” she said. “A specific dollar bequest is simple and predictable, but does not adjust for inflation. A percentage bequest automatically rises or falls with the value of your estate. A residual bequest is made from what remains after other gifts are distributed. This option offers the greatest flexibility and is usually the easiest to administer.”

“My late husband Tom and I married when we were older, so we don’t have any children, but I do have a lot of nieces and nephews,” Barbara explained. “I’ve set up my plan so half of my estate will go to charities and half will go to my nieces and nephews. The School Sisters are one of several charities who will benefit.”

It’s also possible to choose a specific asset bequest, like a home, stocks, or bonds. Kim said most people underestimate the final value of their estate by as much as 25 to 50 percent because they forget about assets like retirement accounts and that the value of their investment accounts and property may grow more than expected.

### Common Questions

Many people wonder whether they need to rewrite their entire will to make a legacy gift. Kim explained that it usually isn’t necessary.

*Barbara is grateful that “the sisters made me who I am.”*



“For a small change, like adding a nonprofit, a codicil is usually used. That allows you to make minor changes without the time and expense of creating an entirely new will.”

Kim said that some people want their gift to support a particular ministry or area of support, while others prefer to make their bequest unrestricted. “In most cases, unrestricted gifts are the most helpful, providing the sisters with maximum flexibility to carry out their mission,” she said.

Another common question is if a donor should inform an organization that they are making a planned gift. “It’s not necessary, but we would love to have the opportunity to thank you in your lifetime and welcome you into the Covenant Circle, a group of donors who have established estate gifts to benefit the sisters’ mission,” Kim said. “We also appreciate the opportunity to better understand your gift in advance of receiving it. This allows us to best honor your vision for how you intend the gift to be used.”

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*If you have questions or would like more information about making a legacy gift, please contact Kim at 414-944-6019 or [kpeterson@sssf.org](mailto:kpeterson@sssf.org).*

*Barbara and her husband Tom were close friends of Sister Helena Steffensmeier, and collectors of Sister’s artwork.*





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## Your Gift to our Guatemalan Ministries Can Go Twice as Far!

An anonymous donor has offered a generous dollar-for-dollar match – up to \$20,000 – for all gifts supporting our sisters’ mission work in Guatemala. This means every contribution you make today will have double the impact for the children, families, and communities we serve.

In response to this extraordinary blessing, we don’t want to leave any funds “on the table.” With your help, we can unlock the full match and strengthen the ministries that bring hope, education, and compassionate care to those who need it most.

*At left, top: Medical scholarship recipients like Vilma will bring critical health care to people in underserved areas. At left, bottom: The Center for Alternative Programs in Santa Apolonia offers nutrition and early childhood skills training to help families thrive.*

Please consider making a gift today so we can receive the full \$20,000 match and continue this life-changing work. Call or email our Office of Mission Advancement today to learn more: 414-384-3334 or [missionadvancement@sssf.org](mailto:missionadvancement@sssf.org).