

"The needs of the time are the will of God."

—Mother Alexia Hoell

## FRANCISCAN WORLD

By Pat McCloskey, OFM

### School Sisters of St. Francis

The School Sisters of St. Francis were founded in 1874 by three German sisters to teach at St. Matthew Parish School in New Cassel (now Campbellsport), Wisconsin. After many similar requests from German pastors in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota, the sisters moved their headquarters to Milwaukee. A teachers' college for sisters (the precursor of Alverno College) opened there in 1887.

The sisters entered health-care ministry with the 1893 opening of Milwaukee's Sacred Heart Sanitarium. Other hospitals and health-care institutions soon followed.

After 1917, the convent's elegant new chapel quickly became one of the city's architectural gems. Seven years later, its conservatory of music opened.

In 1895, sisters went to Erlenbad, Germany. Soon they served in the Caroline Islands, India, China, England, and Latin America. In the 1960s, they expanded into Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, and Mexico. More recently, new provinces have been established in Bhopal and Kanjilode (India) and in Tanzania.

Roughly 640 sisters and 170 lay associates worldwide now collaborate to promote a world where peace is nurtured and justice is advocated for all, where creation is revered and cared for, and where new ministries are fostered in response to needs. Congregations that branched off from this one will be featured in future issues.

This congregation can be contacted at [sssf.org](http://sssf.org).

—Thanks to Eva Stefanski and Michael O'Loughline for assisting with this profile.

Sister Carol Jean Ory works at the Casa Alexia mission in Juarez, Mexico. She is distributing cooking oil as part of the congregation's food distribution program, which helps 110 impoverished families each month with basic necessities. The Casa Alexia mission is right on the US-Mexico border and is a very active area for her community's work.



## ST. ANTHONY STORIES

### A Parking Lot Intercession

While recently shopping at the local Walmart, I tripped and fell in the parking lot. I was very grateful to the number of folks who seemed to materialize out of nowhere to help get me to my feet. Being appreciative of their help, glad that nothing was broken, and obviously somewhat embarrassed, it did not even occur to me to check to see if anything had fallen out of my pocket. Returning to the car after shopping, I then realized that I did not have my keys. I looked around the immediate area to see if they had fallen on the ground but could find nothing. At that point, I asked St. Anthony for help.

My wife noticed that there was a gentleman parked right next to my car who was getting into his, and she asked if he had seen any keys. He said he did not, but he would move his car forward to see if they were under it. I could not believe my eyes when I saw them on the ground. I really believe St. Anthony was looking out for me that day!

—Roy Carroll Gary, Baltimore, Maryland



MOTHER  
ALEXIA  
HOELL

God called her from a religious congregation in Germany to establish a new one in the United States.

### WHEN THE KULTURKAMPF

forced her community in Germany to disband in 1872, Alexia Hoell and two other sisters eventually established the School Sisters of St. Francis (Milwaukee).

They began in New Cassel, Wisconsin, and soon expanded into nearby states, usually teaching in parish schools. They accepted new members from the United States and from Germany.

The sisters resisted Archbishop John Ireland's desire for them to become a diocesan congregation in St. Paul, Minnesota, and to downplay their German heritage. They moved their headquarters to Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Mother Alexia died in 1918.

—Pat McCloskey, OFM

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