NEW LEADERSHIP FOR HOLY NAME PROVINCE

The Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity announced the leadership election results of the 23rd Provincial Chapter of the Sisters of St. Francis Holy Name Province, held at Stella Niagara.

Pictured, left to right, are Provincial Councilors Sisters Teresa Miklitsch and Alberta Wilkes, First Assistant Sister Nancy Zelma, and Provincial Minister Sister Jo-Anne Grabowski.

During the August installation ceremony for the new provincial leadership, they declared, “Standing on the rich and sacred history of our past and the communion among us, we commit ourselves to seeking God who beckons to us from a future abundant in grace, full of challenge and possibility. We remain inspired by a radical call of the Gospel, filled with hope and committed to discerning, with the sisters and associates of Holy Name Province, the leading of God’s Spirit in responding to the needs of our world.”

The Stella Niagara Franciscan sisters continue to minister in various capacities in Ohio, New Jersey, Florida, West Virginia, Nebraska, New York, Mexico and Tanzania, as well as to care for the infirm and elderly sisters of Holy Name Province. The province also sponsors the Center of Renewal Retreat and Conference Center, Stella Niagara Education Park, Buffalo Academy of the Sacred Heart, and Francis Center (Children’s Program and Women’s Respite Program).

Teach us to make use of the time we have. Teach us to be patient even as we wait. Teach us to embrace our ev’ry joy and pain. To sleep peacefully, and to rise up strong.

From In Every Age by Janet Sullivan Whitaker
In the early morning of October 16, 2019, a setting Hunter's full moon escorted the representative body of our sisters throughout the world—Brazil, Tanzania, Poland, Germany, Indonesia, Netherlands, and the United States—to a bus that was waiting to take them to a visit with their brother, pastor and prophet, Pope Francis.

After Pope Francis made his way around St. Peter's Square in the "Pope Mobile," welcoming the crowd with much affection, he ascended the staging area where our sisters were seated.

The Papal Audience format followed a ritual of exchange of greetings and blessings. Pope Francis specially acknowledged the Sisters of Saint Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, with a little wave and smile in their direction. Our sisters cheered and were able to greet him personally!

He told the sisters to be witnesses of joy. This is easily accomplished as evident in the smiles in the above photo!

This time was truly graced with excitement, beauty and warmth.
The results of the elections of the XXXII General Chapter, held at Casa di Esercizi Spirituali Nostra Signora Madre della Misericordia, in Rome, on October 25 and 26, 2019 with Sister Deborah Lockwood presiding are as follows:

From left, Sister Dirce Limberger, First General Councilor-Immaculate Heart of Mary Province, Santa Maria, Brazil. Sister Vera Konzen, Councilor-Sacred Heart of Jesus Province, Sao Leopoldo, Brazil. Sister Pacyfika Leman, Councilor-Mary, Help of Christians Province, Orlik, Poland. Sister Rita Cammack, General Minister-Sacred Heart Province, Denver, CO. USA. The Indonesian flag in their center represents Sister Isabella Uran, Councilor-Province of Most Holy Trinity, Semarang, Indonesia. Sister Isabella was not a Chapter Delegate and was contacted to ask if she would accept her election to the General Council. At right is a photo of Sister Isabella taken at the tomb of Mother Magdalen in Heythuysen.

In unity with all of creation... We move toward the fullness of God.
Sister Joan Nelson spent more than 30 years teaching 5th grade in diocesan schools located in Buffalo, New Jersey, and West Virginia. Over another period of 13 plus years, she served as an assistant in the Advancement Office of Sacred Heart Academy, while providing care for her aged mother. Despite having more than 75 years “on the job,” Sister Joan, now a resident of the health center at Stella Niagara, continues to volunteer as a greeter to visitors at the mother house.

Sister Carmen Paris, another 75-year jubilarian, worked in various places, including a number of years at St. Vincent’s Orphanage in Columbus, Ohio. After living for many years at St. Leo Convent in Columbus, Sister Carmen moved to the health center at Stella Niagara after celebrating her 97th birthday with friends and family.

A 1942 graduate of Sacred Heart Academy, Sister Catherine Tronolone entered the convent at Stella Niagara the following September, which makes her our third 75-year jubilarian! Enjoying her time in the health center, Sister Catherine says it has pleased her to pray, study and teach.

Undoubtedly an Ohio State super fan, Columbus native, Sister Mary Owen Doody, retired in 2006 and moved to Stella Niagara in 2011. She spent her summer celebrating 70 years of religious life by enjoying the many activities provided in the health center such as the “90s birthday club,” “zoo-mobile,” and “build-a-bear” crafts.

Now celebrating her 65-year jubilee is another Columbus, Ohio native, Sister Mary Diehl (Sister Jeanine). Sister Mary wore many hats over the years. In addition to enjoying a long teaching career, she also served as house mother at St. Vincent’s Orphanage, as a nurse’s aide and pastoral associate at St. Ann’s Hospital,
and associate at Holy Rosary and St. Augustine Parishes and the Central College Presbyterian Church. Sister Mary came to live at the Stella Niagara health center in November 2013.

Our 60-year jubilarians continue their active support of various ministries. In her hometown of Charleston, West Virginia, Sister Joan Marie Coleman, who loved her students and thoroughly enjoyed her years of teaching, now gives her time to RCIA and visiting the ill and elderly of St. Agnes Parish where she is a parishioner.

Sister Nancy Illig shares that her life as a Franciscan sister has been a beautiful journey of love: teaching in grade schools; serving as a principal; tending to the sick as a medical rehabilitation counselor; and currently as a volunteer at McAuley Rehabilitation Center in Kenmore, N.Y.

Beginning her teaching ministry at St. Peter’s School in Lewiston, New York, Sister Barbara Pfohl (Sister Mary Antonia) continued to teach in various locations in Columbus, Ohio, and St. Francis International School, Rome, Italy. Her community ministries included novice directress, director of the health center and community treasurer. Prior to her “retirement,” Sister Barbara served at Heart, Love and Soul Food Pantry and Dining Room in Niagara Falls. She now devotes much of her time to ministry at Francis Center After School Program in Niagara Falls and Little Portion Friary Homeless Center in Buffalo.

Sister Geraldine Nowak taught grades K through 3 for 10 years when an opportunity arose for her to complete her degree at the State University College at Fredonia, N.Y. She discovered that working with college students was very fulfilling and pursued that ministry for 11 years before deciding to return to teaching religion in Grades 2 through 6. She found that sharing God’s Word daily, celebrating church events, praying in different modes, preparing children to receive the sacraments, and reading the Bible took on a life of its own. For 30 years Sister Geraldine thoroughly enjoyed this work, finding special delight in teaching the children of parents she had taught, and teaching along-side former students who then became teachers. Retired from teaching, she now volunteers for various committees at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Cheektowaga, N.Y., and the Tribute Dinner, which is dedicated to supporting Stella Niagara’s health center.
SISTER MARIETTA MILLER, July 17, 1935 - June 9, 2019

Born in Buffalo to Charles and Mary (Kreppel) Miller, young Irma entered the convent at Stella Niagara on August 2, 1953 and was professed July 2, 1956. After serving many years as teacher, administrator, secretary, spiritual director and social worker, Sister Marietta returned to Stella Niagara in 2011, continuing volunteer ministries until she became a resident of the health center in 2015. Marietta’s focus was on the reality, grace and gift of “The Divine Milieu” (Teihard DeChardin). This quote felt personal to her, filling her with joy and peace:

“You are the irresistible and vivifying force, O Lord, and because ... of the two of us, you are infinitely the stronger, it is on you that falls the part of consuming me in the union that would weld us together ... Vouchsafe, therefore, something more precious still than the grace for which all the faithful pray. It is not enough that I should die while communicating. Teach me to treat my death as an act of communion.”

SISTER CHRISTINA KRAUS, May 25, 1928 - July 30, 2019

A native of Columbus, Ohio, Barbara travelled to Stella Niagara to join the order in August 1950, and professed her final vows in August of 1957. She served as a teacher in various locations from 1952 until 1970 when she began her rural pastoral ministry in Junction City and McArthur, Ohio. She considered “tending to her people” in this region of Ohio a precious ministry, and went on to establish St. Francis Center in McArthur as a pastoral evangelization and outreach center. In her retirement she volunteered for many years in Perry, Fairfield, Jackson and Vinton Counties, Ohio. In 1995, Sister Christina was honored by the Catholic Extension Society with the Lumen Christi award for bringing hope and care to the poor in Appalachia. Declining health brought her back to the health center at Stella Niagara in the autumn of 2018.

SISTER MARINA MATRACIA, December 12, 1920 - August 28, 2019

Born Anna Matracia, she entered the Sisters of St. Francis on September 7, 1939 and made her final profession in 1944. Sister Marina earned a bachelor's degree in education from Mount St. Joseph Teacher's College, Buffalo, in 1948. She began her 60-year teaching career at St. Ann School, Buffalo, and continued teaching at various schools in the dioceses of Buffalo, N.Y., Columbus, Ohio, Trenton, N.J., and Wheeling/Charleston, W.V. She served as a cook at St. Benedict Convent, Eggertsville; as librarian/classroom aide at Our Lady of Pompeii School, Lancaster, and in the dining hall of Daemen College, Amherst. After her retirement in 2005, Sister Marina volunteered in Niagara Falls at Heart, Love and Soul Dining Room and Francis Center Children's Program.

SISTER M. PAUL MERKL, August 2, 1925 - October 22, 2019

Sister Paul was born Mildred Merkl in Buffalo, New York. After professing final vows in August 1945 Sister Paul began her teaching career, which spanned more than 30 years, at schools in Buffalo, N.Y., Ohio and West Virginia. She earned her bachelor’s degree at Rosary Hill College and her master’s degree at the University of Buffalo. She enjoyed many years of service in the Outreach Program of St. Amelia’s Parish, Buffalo, N.Y., even after she retired to Sacred Heart Academy (SHA) Convent where she did volunteer work as needed. During the 2012 renovation at SHA, she chose to move to Stella Niagara and became a resident of the health center in 2013.
The focus of our summer ministry appeal was Sister Nancy Miller’s ministry as a member of the Central Ohio Rescue and Restore Coalition, which helps victims of human trafficking through a continuum of care. Their mission is to provide a collaborative community response to human trafficking in Central Ohio through education, services, advocacy, and prosecution.

Americans are trafficked by Americans. In fact, the 2018 Global Slavery Index estimates that 403,000 people living in the United States are victims. Shocking as this number may seem, it is likely only a tiny fraction of the actual problem that is notoriously underreported. Statistically, the average age of entry into street prostitution in the U.S. is 12-14 years of age. This is a multi-billion dollar criminal industry that affects nearly 25 million people across the globe.

Sister Nancy’s effort to spread awareness by speaking to church groups, high school and college students is fundamental to the mission of the Sisters of St. Francis. Her commitment to human rights led her to this ministry where she also collects and prepares care packages for women on the streets. Her efforts contribute toward alleviating this situation and restoring the dignity that has been violated.

In response to the generosity of our donors, Sr. Nancy wrote, “I am overwhelmed with gratitude at your generosity in giving to a cause so dear to my heart and so much in need. Working to restore dignity to women and girls and even some men and boys, who have been so mistreated that they sometimes see themselves as the garbage cans of the world is truly a Christ-like mission. I wish you could see how profound is their gratitude for any and every small act of kindness shown to them. Your kindness will go far in the hands of the marvelous staff at the Central Ohio Rescue and Restore Coalition that provides such services to so many victims of Human Trafficking. Thank you and may God reward you.”

Sr. Nancy’s work follows the vision of Magdalen Damen and St. Francis of Assisi, whose gospel rule she espoused. This motivation is clearly expressed in these excerpts from the general constitution of the Sisters of St. Francis:

“Whether we minister among people who are materially poor; those who are impoverished by false values, or those who are made strangers and outcasts by society, it must be in the spirit of reverence. Convinced that our call to be sisters minor is a call to solidarity with those who are powerless, we work with them to change situations in which the dignity of the person is violated. Recognizing that we too are in need, we open ourselves to be evangelized by them. We do not hesitate to call...(for)...a sense of responsibility for hungry, illiterate, and crushed people.”
Jazz up your Christmas with the Ladies First Combo

Enjoy a cabaret-style evening of refreshments and jazz – all for a great cause!
Support our Women's Respite Program!

DECEMBER 7, 2019, 6-9 pm at Stella Niagara
4421 Lower River Rd, Lewiston

For tickets or sponsor information, please call 716-893-0931
Tickets: $20 advance or $25 at the door