

Staying Connected

Volume 21 - Issue 10

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Sisters of St. Francis
of Mary Immaculate

*We Congratulate Our
2025 Jubilarians!*

75 Year Jubilarian
Sister Margaret McGuckin

60 Year Jubilarians
Sister Marianne Saieg
Sister Martha Eckstein
Sister Elaine Kerscher

40 Year Jubilarian
Sister Mary Ann Hamer

25 Year Associate
Dolores Gross



Jubilarians 2025



*Sr. Margaret McGuckin
75 Year Jubilarian*

My life as a Joliet Franciscan has been a very exciting journey and I have loved every minute of it. It's been a gift, a mystery and a grace.

Joliet has been my home from the day I was born until the present. I attended St. Joseph grade school, St. Francis Academy, and the College of St. Francis, earning a BA in a split Math/Science major. I moved on to DePaul University where I received a master's degree in elementary school administration/supervision. Post graduate work was done at Mankato State College, Notre Dame and St. Mary of the Woods.

My desire to enter the convent started at an early age but was truly influenced during my high school years by the dedication, joy and spirit I witnessed by the Sisters who staffed St. Francis Academy.

Elementary and junior high school teacher/principal were my first assigned ministries. I moved on to be appointed to a three-person

team, training beginning teachers in the 72 Catholic Schools in the Joliet Diocese. After five years in this role, seeing the need for an Early Childhood Program, Sister Carol Jander and I eagerly developed and taught in the first independent, private, Catholic Early Childhood Center in Will County.

My latest ministry was developing/teaching an educational program for resident seniors at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home.

I presently work on a Sisters' Support team for our resident sisters at Heritage Woods.

There is so much to celebrate in my life as I give thanks to God.



*Sr. Marianne Saieg
60 Year Jubilarian*

**"Jubilee is a celebration of God's love,
presence and fidelity."**

Sister Marianne Saieg is a native of Joliet, Illinois. She is one of two daughters born to Rosemary and Joseph Saieg (deceased). Sister

Marianne's sister, Maggie Gurka (deceased), had three sons, Frank, Michel and Dennis Gurka.

Sister Marianne was a member of St. Raymond's Cathedral Parish when she entered the Franciscans. She attended St. Patrick's Grade School in Joliet and graduated high school from St. Francis Academy in Joliet. It was in high school that she received the Call to be Franciscan. The Sisters were a great influence in her young life. It was their dedication to the students, and their peaceful and often humorous ways that drew her into the charism of St. Francis. God seemed to be nudging her and she paid attention to the invitation.

After entrance into the Community, Sister's education included a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology and Education from the College of St. Francis. Several years later she received a master's in religious education from the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas. She also received a master's in pastoral studies and spirituality from Loyola University in Chicago; a Certificate in the Art of Spiritual Direction from Mercy Center in Burlingame, California; along with studies in educational media and photography from Northern Illinois University. It was the love of nature and photography together with spirituality, that began her lifelong journey into ministry with the people of God and continues today.

Her present ministry includes Spiritual Direction and creating Visual Meditations for prayer and reflection. Teaching in the Diaconate Formation, and in the Called and Gifted Program in the Archdiocese of Chicago was the joy of her life.

Sister Marianne is currently working remotely with Casa De Misericordia in San Diego, California. She works as a co-dreamer on the 5-year initiative, as a photographer using

PowerPoints and photo books to describe the ministry to migrants and to make known both the good works and the needs for ongoing financial support for the Casa.

Sister Marianne's overreaching concern is for people searching for a deeper relationship with God. Her prayer, as a Franciscan, is rooted in the charism of St. Francis. Her heart's desire is that we all be instruments of peace in our corner of the world and channel love and acceptance to all people.



*Sr. Martha Eckstein
60 Year Jubilarian*

On October 9, 1944, I was born into a cherished family in Columbus, Ohio, the third oldest of Dorothy and Herbert Eckstein's eight children. From little on my parents taught us to share what God had given us with others. Perhaps it was this strong, Christian attitude that influenced me during my high school years to respond to religious life. After checking out several congregations, I followed my father's urgings to join the Joliet Franciscans where two of my aunts, Sisters Lucille and Bertille lived religious life.

The many challenges and joys, surprises and opportunities of these sixty years prompts my gratitude. Teaching young children, preparing them to receive the Sacraments, identifying their unique joys, recognizing their hurts, sharing their accomplishments and loving them were my

Jubilarians 2025

ministry's highlights. Today living in a religious retirement home in Dayton, I help address the needs of older sisters. Taking them for medical attention, for shopping, or for personal errands keeps me hopping. Beyond this I am able to move into a broader world by volunteering for a variety of Catholic Social Services outreach programs that touch the lives of the poor. I have found these activities enriching and life-giving.

I find the time in my twilight years to enjoy the beauty of nature, relish time for prayer, read a book, watch a movie, visit my family and just sit back and share life's stories, realizing how blessed I have been through all 80 years!

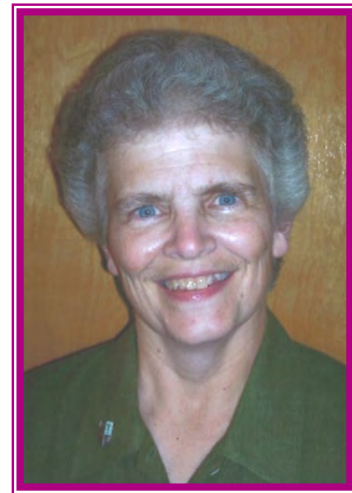


*Sr. Elaine Herscher
60 Year Jubilarian*

Born in Columbus, Ohio, I grew up with two older sisters, a twin sister, and a younger brother. My parents' commitment to their faith was the foundation of my own faith journey. I was taught by two communities of Franciscan Sisters, one from Stella Niagara, NY, and the other from Joliet, IL. After high school, I discerned that the Spirit was calling me to join the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate in Joliet. Through the years, I came to a deeper understanding of the Franciscan charism

that shaped my spirituality and my openness to responding to others' needs.

As I reflect on my 60 years of vowed religious life, I recognize with deep gratitude that I have been greatly blessed with opportunities for ongoing education that have led me to use my gifts in a variety of ministries, including teaching, parish pastoral ministry, office management, and canon law. I also served in Congregation leadership positions as Director of Initial Formation, General Secretary, Councilor, and Vice President. Each call to a new ministry was both challenging and rewarding and offered me the opportunity to meet and work with God's people in many areas of the Church. Having retired from active ministry in November 2022, I now volunteer to assist our Sisters and our Congregation as new needs arise. Among the things I enjoy the most are being with my family and friends, gardening, surrounding myself with the beauty of nature, and rooting for the Ohio State Buckeye football team. O-H-I-O!



*Sr. Mary Ann Hamer
40 Year Jubilarian*

Sr. Mary Ann Hamer was born in 1946 to Anna Marie and Berlen Hamer in Freeport, Illinois. The second of seven children, she studied at St. Joseph Parish School followed by Aquin Catholic High

School. She was quite active in sports besides playing the trumpet in the school band.

Upon entering our Congregation in 1964, Mary Ann began her BA at the College of St. Francis (USF). When sister began her teaching ministry, she discovered that it was not her forté. Mary Ann continued to discern her vocation for 12 years after which she left the Congregation. During those 15 years of being gone, Mary Ann continued to discern her call to religious life. She kept in contact with some of the sisters and joined others as part of the first group of associates.

Mary Ann also continued her studies by receiving a master's in business administration after which she was administrative assistant with the National Catholic Vocation Council (NCVC) in Chicago. During this time, she came in contact with many different congregations. She also had the additional blessing of seeing much of the United States as part of the team as they met at various sites across the U.S.

Towards the end of the 15 years of being gone from us, Mary Ann went to our Motherhouse to drop off something. She ended up going to chapel after which she stood for a while at its entrance. Vivian Whitehead, our president at that time, came out of her office so the two of them could talk about her vocation. Mary Ann then decided to return!

Sr. Mary Ann's ministry at NCVC continued for 20 years. She loved being able to be a part of a group having so much interaction with other congregations. She became a familiar face to many people. At one meeting of administrative assistants, she was introduced to the Augustinian administrative assistant. Mary Ann was offered the same position for the Augustinians. Thus began her 19 years of being immersed with many men of that Congregation as administrative assistant. She loved being with them. As she says, "They're just a bunch of great guys!" She was thrilled when she was able to become one of their affiliates.

Now, Sr. Mary Ann lives a quiet life at StoryPoint facility in Romeoville with two of our sisters besides

other residents. She loves to do puzzles, read, take short walks and visit other sisters or associates. Most of all, she loves seeing her family at times, as she said: "I pray for our country, the world with all its troubles besides for our sisters and families. I feel very loved and blessed as a Sister of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.

25 Year Associate Commitment



*Associate Dolores Gross
25 Year Associate*

Dolores and her husband, Matthew, made their first commitment to the Associate Relationship on May 21, 2000. They were very active members St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Joliet where they met many of our sisters. Their eleven adult children attended the St. Francis Academy or Joliet Catholic High School. Dolores has been on the Steering Committee for the Cana Conference in Chicago and has been a representative at Cana in Washington, D.C. Dolores served as vice president of the Joliet Diocesan Council of Catholic Women and also its publicity chairwoman. She has been very involved in the Diocesan Renew program as well as a variety of church and community functions. Dolores also was on our Congregation's Fall Feast Committee.

In 2016 they moved to Scottsdale, Arizona, to be near their son and his family. In 2020, after 68 years of marriage, Matthew died. Dolores continues to pray for her family and our congregation's needs.

BRAZIL 2025



Regional Councils of Allegany Franciscans and Joliet Franciscans with Sisters Margaret and Melissa from Allegany general council. Sr. Marlene, CSJ, translator, and Sr. Jeanne met on April 15, 2025.



After Easter Sunday sunrise liturgy at San Damiano School—Débora, Maria Das Mercês, Neli, Sebastiana, Jeanne, Izabel, Teresinha, Cida, Jeronima and Dina.



**New exterior of Sta. Helena Church—
Jeronima, Cida, Maria das Mercês**



**New interior of Sta. Helena Church,
following three years of renovation**



**Garden in front of Sta.
Helena Convent**



**Community in Hidrolândia —
Rosa, Rita, Beatriz**



**Ruth enjoying a beautiful day
with Jeanne**



**Part of Dina's plant project at San
Damiano**



Children gathered for blessing at Cristo Rey Church in Goiania after Holy Saturday service



Alverne community with Jeanne—Débora, Maria, Cida



Four sisters who were among our first students at San Damiano 50 years ago with Teresinha



Celebrating the life of Pope Francis at Mass in Cathedral of Archdiocese of Goiânia Easter Monday



Easter in San Damiano School's Gymnasium



Even Brazilians love a good fried chicken — Sao Paulo Airport

Summer Gathering

**Reminder:
Registration for**

**"Wherever You Go,
I Will Go"
*Forward Together***

is due May 9!

Thank you!



Message from LSAP Goals 1, 4

**Message from LSAP
Goals 1,4 Subcommittee**



If your parish or organization wishes to receive weekly bulletins, google Catholic Climate Covenant/Creation Care Corner Bulletin.

Creation Care Corner



"...the related 'greenhouse effect' has now reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs."

— Pope John Paul II

Calculate your carbon footprint.

Popes Francis, Benedict XVI and John Paul II have all spoken of the need to address climate change. It's influenced by the amount of heat trapping CO2 and other greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere. Small atmospheric GHG % increases can have a significant impact on Earth's temperature rise. Every day, across everything we do and buy, we contribute to GHG emissions. Calculators can help us better understand how much carbon is produced by different activities. Then, if you decide to reduce your emissions, you'll know where you can generate the biggest impact. Start with this easy to use calculator: <https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/> (This EPA calculator does not include air travel, which often is a major contributor to household emissions, but can still help you ID great savings opportunities).

May

The air hangs sweet, a gentle, vibrant hue,
With blossoms bursting, painted skies anew.
A whispered promise in the leafy breeze,
Of sun-drenched days and rustling, golden trees.
The world awakes, a canvas bright and bold,
A story of rebirth, beautifully told.
May, a month of dreams and hopeful sighs,
Reflected in the warmth of sunlit skies.



Associates 50th Anniversary

On Saturday, April 26, 2025, the celebration in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the Associate Program took place at USF's San Damiano Hall and Motherhouse Chapel. There were approximately 65 sisters, associates and friends gathered to take part in the day's events.

The celebration began at 11:00a.m. with time to socialize and enjoy a mimosa, followed by a welcome by Associate Director, Darcy Mason, and a prayer before lunch. A beautiful, plated, filet medallion dinner with salad, garlic mashed potatoes, whole baby carrots, tiramisu or red velvet cake was served. Lemonade, water, and coffee were provided.

Darcy Mason introduced the past Associate Directors and co-directors, presenting a lovely corsage to those who were present. She then shared a brief history of the associate relationship. Sue Rockett led the group in prayer before lunch was served. Following lunch, Sr. Jeanne Bessette, President of the Sisters of St. Francis, addressed the group. Then a slide show of many events that the associates participated in throughout the past years was shown. Associates Marilyn McGowan, Pam Leddy and Janine Hicks told stories about the events they were instrumental in initiating. All present were then given the opportunity to share their memories as well. The day ended with a beautiful mass in the chapel.

(The mass was livestreamed and can be accessed from our website:www.jolietfranciscans.org)



Associate Director, Darcy Mason



Associate Susan Rockett



Sr. Jeanne Bessette, President



Associate Marilyn McGowan



Associate Pam Leddy
Pictured on slide: Associates
Connie Blackwell and Rita Travis



Associates Michele Phelps and
Janine Hicks



Sister Meg Guider, the first associate, shared
how it all began!



Sr. Rose Marie Surwilo and
Associate Carol Baranski



Associates 50th Anniversary Mass
Father Michael Jenrich, Presider



SHARING CULTURES

Presented by JPIC and ARC

TWO MORE OPPORTUNITIES

Wednesday, May 28th and Wednesday, June 25th

Over 100 people are registered for these events. If you haven't signed up and want to participate, email Deacon Tom Marciani (tpmarciani@gmail.com) and he will help you get a Zoom link for the two remaining gatherings.

In March and April, we heard from people who are African American, Jewish, Latinx, Ukrainian, Filipino, Indian, Native American and Youth!

Join us during May and June as we hear from people who are LGBTQ+, Muslim, Senior, Vietnamese, Chinese, Nigerian, Punjabi/Sikh and Sudanese.

Stand Up for Your Beliefs!

By Lois Prebil, OSF and Jane Nienaber, OSF

Are you concerned about what is going on throughout the U.S. and in the world today?

Issues include migration, climate change, racism, wars, tariffs, federal forests, funding cuts, rights of people with disabilities, trafficking, deportation, protecting DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) initiatives, eliminating Medicare, dismantling of USAID and so many more. We can let our voices be heard through:

- A phone call
- A letter
- A demonstration
- A prayer

Two excellent ways to contact government officials directly are through:

- (1) the website, govtrack.us
- (2) the app, 5 Calls

Tips to easily contact a government official:

- (1) give your name, city and zip code
- (2) state the issue and your position. "I am in favor of . . ." or "I am opposed to . . ."
- (3) be simple and direct



YOU, TOO, CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Hands Off! This demonstration to protest many issues was held in April 2025 in all 50 states and in major cities of several other countries including London, Paris and Berlin. Associate Mary Therese Lewis and Sr. Mary Rose Lieb are pictured at the protest in Joliet.



Franciscan Human Trafficking Joint Committee



Submitted by: Associate Therese Griffin



**ALLIANCE TO END
HUMAN TRAFFICKING**
Founded and Supported by U.S. Catholic Sisters

Breaking the Link between Human Trafficking and Forced Migration Alliance to End Human Trafficking Article

**National Human Trafficking Hotline, call
888-373-7888
or text HELP or INFO to BeFree (233733)**

Confronting the Root Causes of Human Trafficking

According to Polaris Project, 77% of persons trafficked in the United States each year are immigrants." People on the move or recently arrived are at particular risk of exploitation by human traffickers. Alliance to End Human Trafficking (AEHT) and the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd (NAC), faith-based networks that work to end human trafficking, deplore the increase in human trafficking in the United States and around the world, some of which results from unprecedented, forced migration.

Human Trafficking is a Crime against Humanity

Human Trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery that involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to exploit another; to obtain some type of labor or a commercial sex act. It is a crime under both U.S. and international law. It is a crime against humanity.

Human trafficking dehumanizes and commodifies human beings, depriving those who are victimized of their dignity, as persons made in the image of God. It denies the person's basic human rights: the right to life, security, freedom of movement, and the freedom from torture and degrading treatment. It is antithetical to the tenets of our faith and the values of this nation.



Dear Lord, just as You guided Moses and Aaron as they spoke boldly to Pharaoh on behalf of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, help us advocate for the modern-day slaves around the world. Inspire us to act decisively and compassionately. We pray that through our collective actions and prayers, You will bring change and an end to human trafficking.

By World Vision - Federal Way, WA

May 4 National Bird Day

We honor our feathered friends on several holidays called Bird Day in the United States. The day celebrates birds of all kinds across North America.

With over 2,000 species of birds in North America, birdwatchers and nature lovers alike will appreciate the beauty and variety of these winged friends offer. From songbirds to waterfowl and domesticated birds, they come in every color of plumage and wingspan.

During the spring, migrating birds move to their summer nesting grounds. It's an excellent time for those new to birdwatching to learn to identify birds by species. Enthusiasts also know that birds will migrate through backyards and stop for a rest, a bite to eat, and a drink if the right habitat is provided. They stand prepared by their windows with binoculars and watch as new visitors arrive daily. Whether it's an oriole, a tree swallow, the ruby-throated hummingbird, or an

American Finch, you'll want to make sure you've prepared food, natural habitat and water sources for your guests.

However, it's not just the passersby that get birdists

excited. It's the long term residents and those of the greater outdoors. Year after year they watch robins collect their nesting material or chickadees caring for their brood. They wander through nature preserves seeking a glimpse of a varied thrush or a prairie warbler. When they do, they are often graced with a privileged view of a bald eagle soaring above them.

HOW TO OBSERVE BIRD DAY

Enjoy the pleasure of viewing and listening to the birds in your neighborhood. Share your favorite birdwatching experiences. While you're out and about, take photos. As you do, promote habitat conservation and preservation using #BirdDay to post on social media.

BIRD DAY HISTORY

Charles Almanzo Babcock, Oil City, Pennsylvania, Superintendent of Schools, established the first Bird Day in 1894. It was

also the first holiday in the United States dedicated to the celebration of birds. Babcock founded the day, observed annually on May 4th, to advance bird conservation as a moral value.



Recipe Corner: Fruit Pizza

Description:

Colorful fruit pizza features a vibrant bounty of fruit atop a soft sugar cookie crust and thick, tangy cream cheese frosting. Choose your favorite fruits to customize this classic summertime dessert!

Sugar Cookie Crust

1 and 1/2 cups (188g) **all-purpose flour** (spooned & leveled)
1 and 1/2 teaspoons **cornstarch**
1 teaspoon **baking powder**
1/4 teaspoon **salt**
1/2 cup (8 Tbsp; 113g) **unsalted butter**, softened to room temperature
3/4 cup (150g) **granulated sugar**
1 large **egg**, at room temperature
1 **teaspoon pure vanilla extract**

Topping

8 ounces (226g) full-fat brick **cream cheese**, softened to room temperature
3 Tablespoons (43g) **unsalted butter**, softened to room temperature
1 and 1/4 cups (150g) **confectioners' sugar**
1 teaspoon **pure vanilla extract**
3 cups (about 400g) **assorted sliced fresh fruit**

Instructions

Make the crust:

- Whisk the flour, cornstarch, baking powder, and salt together in a medium bowl.
- In a large bowl using a handheld mixer or stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat the butter and sugar together on medium-high speed until combined and creamy, about 2 minutes.
- Beat in the egg and vanilla. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl as needed.
- Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and beat on low speed until combined.
- Once completely combined, cover the dough tightly and chill in the refrigerator for 20 minutes and up to 1 day. (Let dough sit out at room temperature for 20-30 minutes if chilling longer than a couple hours because the dough will be quite stiff and flattening onto pan will be difficult.)



Preheat oven to 350°F (177°C). Grease a 12-inch pizza pan with nonstick spray (even if it's a nonstick pan). Remove chilled cookie dough from the refrigerator and press onto the pizza pan in a 9–10-inch circle, about 1/3-inch thick. Bake for 17–19 minutes or until the edges are very lightly browned. Avoid over-baking. Cool crust completely before decorating.

Make the frosting: In a medium bowl using a handheld or stand mixer fitted with a paddle or whisk attachment, beat the cream cheese and butter together on medium speed until smooth, about 2 minutes. Add the confectioners' sugar and vanilla. Beat for 1 minute or until creamy and combined. Yields 1 and 1/2 cups (about 390g) frosting. Spread a thick layer over the cooled sugar cookie crust. Decorate with fruit.

1. Cut into slices and serve. Leftovers keep well in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

Facebook Prayer Authors

May
June

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Sister Clarita Schumacher

Staying Connected

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If you would like to submit an item for *Staying Connected*, or if something you have requested to be published is inadvertently omitted, please e-mail Sister René Simonelic at rsimonelic@jolietfranciscans.org or Renée Cipriani at rcipriani@jolietfranciscans.org