

Word Gathering

Fall/Winter 2021

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Provincial Leadership Team

New Team Installed in September 13

Laudato Si'



SMALL STEPS TO A
BIG CHANGE

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A silhouette of a person with their hair in a ponytail, seen from the side, with their hands clasped in prayer. The background is a warm, golden sunset sky. The title 'A Beatitude Prayer' is written in large, white, bold letters on a blue rectangular background that overlaps the sunset image.

A Beatitude Prayer

By **Sister Germaine Hustedde, PHJC**

Gracious God, we are reminded of your many gracious blessings. Jesus reminded us that the poor in spirit and the materially poor are blest when they look to God's providence, and the generosity of **all believers**.

While we sometimes suffer at the hands of the powerful, teach us humility and meekness and the courage to stand in solidarity with the oppressed.

Fill our hearts with love and mercy. Give us a hunger and thirst for righteousness - for prisoners, immigrants, the homeless and the oppressed.

In a society divided by race, gender, class and ideology, remind us gracious God that **all** are created in **Your image!** Help us to be peacemakers and agents of reconciliation.

Help us to embrace the mystery of death. Though we mourn the loss of loved ones help us to embrace this mystery and be instruments of comfort to those who mourn.

Gracious God! You have abundantly blessed us and we are **grateful**.

Amen.

Laudato Si'

SMALL STEPS TO A BIG CHANGE

By **Sister Linda Volk** | PHJC

LAUDATO SI' ACTION PLATFORM
Seven Years, Seven Goals, Seven Groups

"Praised be to You" (translated in Latin as *Laudato Si'*), these opening words of the encyclical of Pope Francis on integral ecology are taken from the Canticle of St. Francis of Assisi in which he addresses the Creator of All. This phrase is repeated eight times in the canticle encompassing all of creation, the whole community of life.

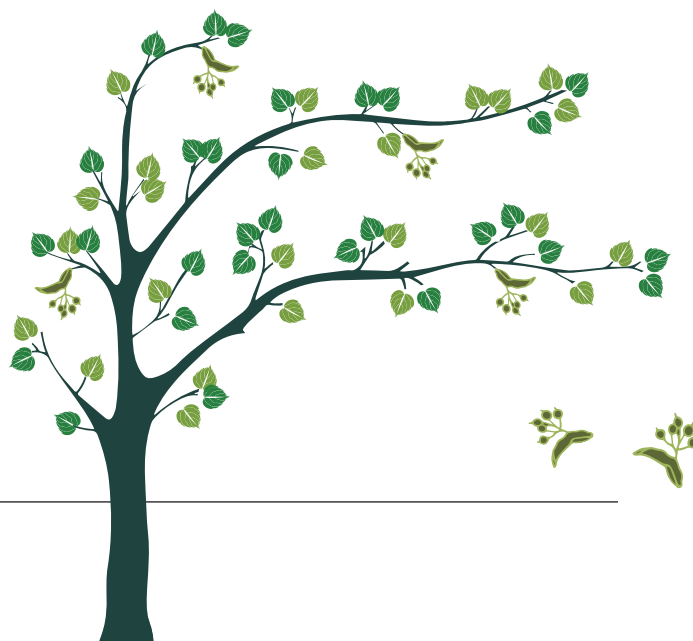
Though environmental ecology looms large in his writing Pope Francis' pivotal message is the interconnection of all aspects of life. This is referred to as integral ecology – the integration of the cultural, economic, environmental, spiritual, political and social aspects of life. What impacts one facet of life impacts all facets of life. Francis especially focuses on the cry of the poor and the cry of Earth. These two vulnerable entities are intersected by all the ecologies that interrelate in integral ecology.

Though this wonderful encyclical was well received around the globe, its intended impact for systemic change has been slow on many fronts. On the fifth anniversary of the encyclical a catalyst for activating the principles and goals of integral ecology was introduced. This is referred to as the *Laudato Si Action Platform* (LSAP) which is a comprehensive seven-year plan with

seven goals to bring about a sustainable world through systemic change via the principles of integral ecology.

Religious congregations are one of the seven groups called to embrace integral ecology within the framework of LSAP. This initiative is an impetus for action for religious congregations and the six other groups being called to pursue sustainability via the Platform: families, parishes, educational institutions, healthcare entities, businesses and farms, and organizations.

We Poor Handmaids see this call as a strong parallel to our recently created Vision Statement and the newly minted Belief Statements and Calls that accompany the four PHJC core values.



Three concepts of the PHJC Vision in particular align with the LSAP:

communities in communion

catalyst for just transformation

addressing the needs and circumstances of those who are poor and marginalized

The LSAP is not intended to be a one-size-fits-all approach. Its process builds on what religious communities are already doing. The journey throughout the seven years pursuing the seven goals should be simple and gradual enough to be manageable, inspiring enough to motivate, and flexible enough to suit different situations and contexts.

As we turn the kaleidoscope of the seven goals, we can readily see the coherence between integral ecology and the PHJC Vision.

The Laudato Si' Action Platform goals are:

Response to the cry of the poor

Ecological economics

Adoption of simple lifestyles

Ecological education

Ecological spirituality

Community engagement and participatory action

Response to the cry of Earth



Sister Cathy Schwemer prays during the Province Wide Gathering this year.

The Platform is meant to be directed and activated through a grassroots engagement with the goals. What is readily evident is that the PHJCs and their partners, co-workers, Associates and many others have been engaged in these goals for quite some time. As the LSAP confirms, each congregation along with its partners makes its social impact through the lens of its charism, spirituality and resources.

Though religious congregations are called to make a public commitment to the LSAP and to be accountable for this commitment on an annual basis, Poor Handmaids and their ministries are not starting from ground zero but already bring a lot to the table. Connection, integration and relationship are three of the principles of integral ecology which are modeled by collaboration and synergy among all the PHJC connections who are focused on healing and bringing about a sustainable world.

As we go forward as a community of partners in the work of the Spirit the LSAP embedded in the PHJC Vision will guide us toward being catalysts for just transformation. Every step of the way, every action we pursue, every commitment we undertake, we are saying once again, *Laudato Si'* - praised be to you, Creator God.



CANTICLE OF *SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI*

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
All praise is Yours, all glory, all honor and all blessings.

To you alone, Most High, do they belong,
And no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.

Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
By which You cherish all that You have made.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
So useful, humble, precious and pure.

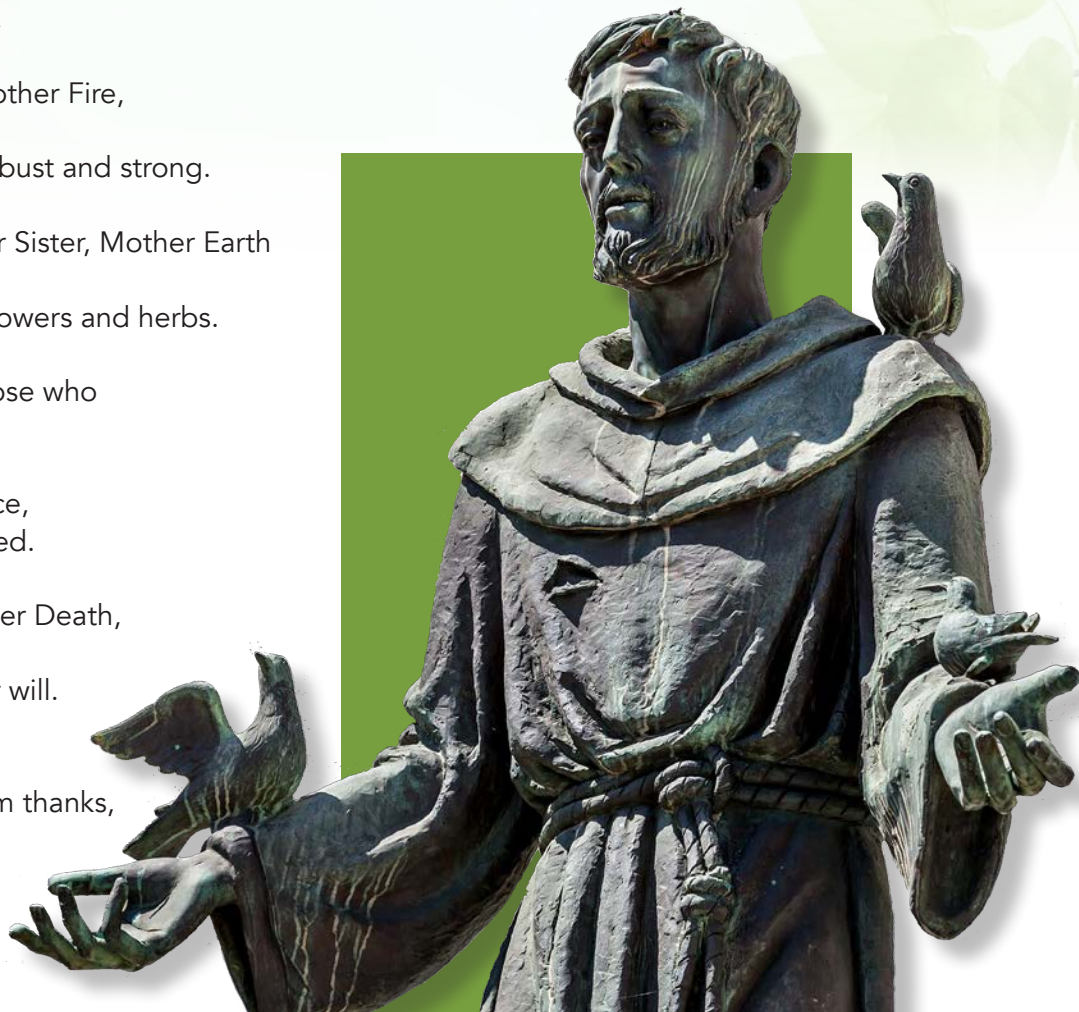
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night
And he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth
Who sustains and governs us,
Producing varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord, through those who
grant pardon for love of You
And bear sickness and trial.
Blessed are those who endure in peace,
By You Most High, they will be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord through Sister Death,
from whom no-one living can escape.
Blessed are they She finds doing Your will.

No second death can do them harm.
Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks,
And serve Him with great humility.





Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ Volunteer Food Ministry Serves Up Hope

By **Sister Connie Bach** | PHJC and **Barbara Allison** | Communications

"Happy Thursday! Groceries! Sister Connie!" Accompanied by a loud knock on each door, it's a welcoming greeting to Plymouth's most vulnerable, repeated numerous times two days a week by PHJC Volunteers delivering food and supplies. PHJC Volunteers provide food and essentials to two transient hotels twice weekly.

With consistency and bereft of fanfare, the PHJC Volunteer program has made a community impact for Plymouth's most vulnerable residents living in transient hotels.

It's not just a bus full of food, hygiene products, coats, and other necessities. It's more than things! It's about wellness checks, getting to know the people and helping them with self-esteem.

With the new Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ Vision Statement, we are called to be catalysts. We are called to collaboration for the common good. We serve the "houseless" (rather than homeless). Sure, we deliver food to doors. But just like Meals on Wheels and other such programs, it's more than just this.

PHJC Volunteers offer a smile, a kind word, a caring gesture, a bit of listening, and a positive response when times are tough and people feel lost and broken.

Our volunteers keep a watchful eye on those we serve and offer supportive links to information and resources in the community. We offer compassion and hope

when the poor and marginalized feel abandoned and forgotten. We bring laughter and the deep assurance that others are remembering and praying with and for them.

Beyond all this, we offer the children of those we serve life lessons in caring for others as they help deliver items to fellow residents. They in-turn, share their toys with one another. Who knows where this lesson will take them as they become adults in society?

Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ Volunteers develop trust and keep our word whereas the residents have too often experienced broken promises and dreams. We become a bridge to social services and programs provided to lift them up. We offer a way to hold on through a tough time along with tips to get their voices heard.

And in return, we receive the best gift of all – hearing words like: "You don't know how much this helps us get through" or "I would not have made it this far without all of you." Better yet, "I am moving out of here and am moving into a place of my own! I can't believe I made it this far!" How about, "I found a job! I am working and getting a paycheck!"

We are a hand up, not a handout. We are collaborators whose aim is to partner in assisting residents in becoming self-reliant, able to make their own decisions and address their own needs for a better life.



Rose Avenue Education Farm hosts a farmers market every Sunday at the Fort Wayne League for the Blind and Disabled.

Saint Joseph Foundation Supports Local Refugee Farmers

Excerpts from an article written by **Kara Hackett**, with reporting by **Desaray Bradley**, for **Input Fort Wayne**. *Originally published online on October 6, 2021*

Fort Wayne, Indiana is home to more than 10,000 Burmese residents – the largest population outside of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma). Most arrived after living in dire conditions in refugee camps, where the only occupation they knew was farming.

To help the refugees build on their agricultural knowledge, the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation, sponsored by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, is partnering with the Rose Avenue Education Farm to connect Burmese farmers with a half-acre or single-acre plot of farmland to tend. The Rose Farm also provides them with access to translators and instructors, like Master Gardeners, who can help them earn certifications, learn local weather patterns, and acquire other tools needed to succeed at farming in Indiana.

The Farm's work is funded in part by a three-year, \$300,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Refugee Agricultural Partnership Project

(RAPP), as well as support from the St. Joe Foundation. Along with helping refugee farmers build sustainable careers, Rose Avenue Education Farm also keeps their farm market produce prices highly affordable for consumers thanks to a partnership with the St. Joe Foundation's Double Up Indiana program.

The Double Up program helps level the health and economic playing fields for low-income families by doubling their buying power on fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets and grocery stores. Every time a consumer uses their SNAP/EBT card at a participating retailer, the program matches their fruit and vegetable purchases dollar-for-dollar, up to \$20 per day, helping them access up to \$40 worth of produce for half the price.

"Our partnership with Double Up is wonderful because folks are getting a great deal on their produce, and they can find culturally specific veggies that are hard to find



other places,” says Jain Young of Rose Avenue Farm. “The farmers markets have been wildly successful; the last three to four weeks, we’ve doubled our EBT sales. I’ve swiped EBT cards from Georgia, Pennsylvania, Montana, and Colorado. People from all over the country are buying food grown in Northeast Indiana and taking it home with them.”

As Executive Director of the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation, Meg Distler says the Foundation is proud to support Plowshares—not only in the work to offer Double Up benefits on their produce, but also in their operational expenses for Rose Avenue Education Farm.

“It’s exciting to partner with Plowshares and see the opportunities they are helping to create for immigrant and refugee farmers,” Distler says. “By providing Plowshares a grant to assist with operations, as well as purchase needed equipment, we hope to help build the infrastructure that will make this work sustainable. The addition of Double Up Indiana has also allowed many local residents to access affordable and nutritious produce.”

The Double Up Indiana program is managed by the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation and supported by the United Way of Allen County, Parkview Health, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

“The farmers markets have been wildly successful; the last three to four weeks, we’ve doubled our EBT sales.”

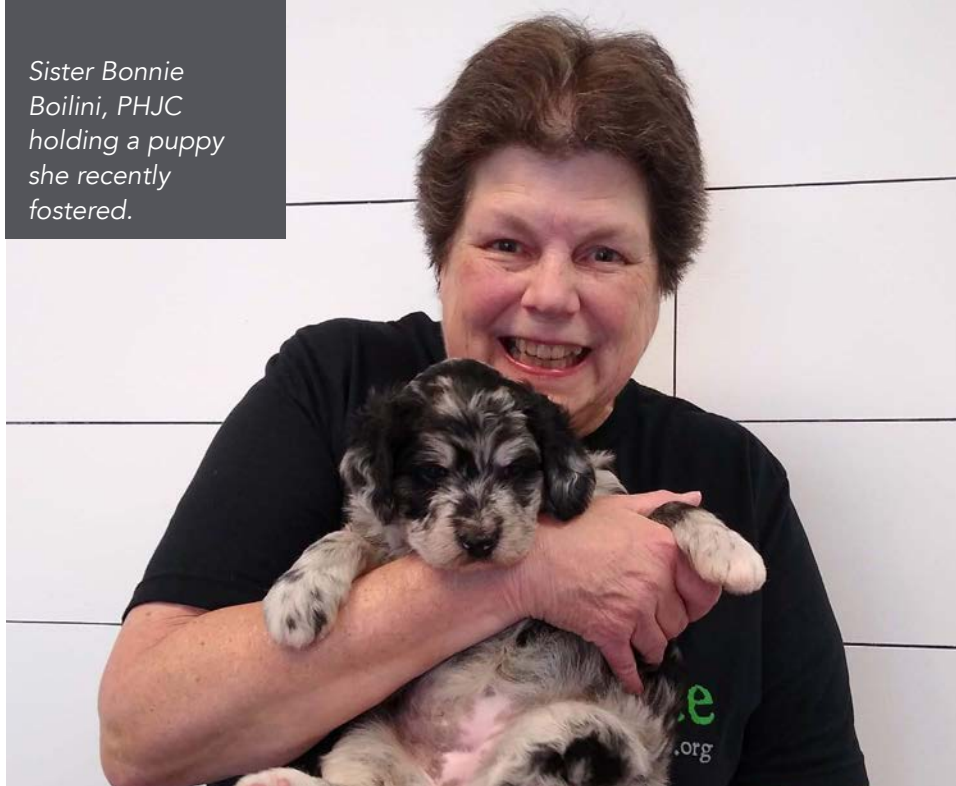
Top Left: Young child at the local farmers market in Fort Wayne, IN.

Bottom Left: Farmers tend the land at the Rose Avenue Education Farm in New Haven.

Bottom Right: Mary Tyndall, right, is Double Up Program Manager & Chief Storyteller at the St. Joe Community Health Foundation. She poses with a Rose Avenue Education Farmer.



Sister Bonnie Boilini, PHJC holding a puppy she recently fostered.



dedicated to the care of dogs that would otherwise be euthanized. “The Gospel is about all creation,” Sister Bonnie said. “Dogs give you 100%, expecting nothing in return. I’ve learned so much about what it means to be totally forgiving from dogs.”

In her many years of advocacy, Sister Bonnie has seen some tough, heartbreaking cases. She recalled one, Sammy, a soulful, caramel-colored Chow Chow mix. “He was so abused. His turn-around time (for surrender) was not long,” she said through tears. Sammy was older, and aged pets are often less adoptable.

FOSTERING HOPE


A RESCUE TALE

By **Barbara Allison** | *Communications*

While some may not see the care of animals as a part of *Laudato Si'*, there's serendipity in the fact that the title of the Pope Francis's encyclical on the care of the Earth, our common home is a reference to *Praised Be To You*, from the 13th century *Canticle of the Creatures* poem by Saint Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals.

While earning her law degree from Loyola University in Chicago in the early aughts, Sister Bonnie Boilini also began her ministry serving animals with ALIVE Rescue, a no-kill shelter dedicated to helping old, sick, and unwanted pets live with dignity. She fostered, delivered pet medicines, and assisted in cross-country transportation of rescue pets. It's befitting since Sister Bonnie's law specialty is as a Guardian ad Litem, someone who represents those unable to speak for themselves in court such as seniors, the differently abled, those dealing with mental illness, or any number of circumstances.

Currently, Sister Bonnie fosters dogs with both ALIVE and New Leash on Life Chicago, a volunteer-run nonprofit

 Through stability and positive encounters with fellow Sisters, their families, and Linden House Chicago residents, Sammy began to trust and to accept love and affection. “The past doesn't define them,” she said of Sammy's transformation.

Sammy and Sister Bonnie often visited the Chicago nursing home where Don Jung, brother of Sister Rosemary Jung, lived. “He looked so forward to her visits,” Sister Rosemary said. “We always had dogs. When a dog visited, he was peaceful.” Don even kept treats in his room for Sammy, and for the dog walkers who passed by on the sidewalk. “That was his favorite amusement when he shared treats. We're not isolated when we have animals,” Sister Rosemary added. Sadly, Don passed away in 2019.

While the pandemic was a boon for pet adoptions in the beginning, Sister Bonnie knew what lay ahead: some of the animals would be returned in the aftermath. “They wanted the dog for themselves and now that they're back to work, the animal gets surrendered,” she said, noting that the shelters are full once again.

Hope is another dog Sister Bonnie fostered. She was found running down Belmont Avenue in Chicago when a young man retrieved her from traffic and



posted her photo on a rescue site. "She was so afraid of everything, so matted. When I looked into her eyes, she emitted Hope." Her friend Ann visited with her own dogs, and Hope jumped into Ann's lap. "I'm in love with this little dog," Ann declared. Ann ended up adopting hope.



Once, when Sister Bonnie was walking Hope, the small, inquisitive pup led her to a homeless woman walking toward them. "I stepped back and let her interact with Hope," Sister Bonnie said. "Afterward, she said that I was the first person that treated her like a human being. If only people could be that intuitive," Sister Bonnie observed.

Still, it's not easy to foster, fall in love with, and then relinquish a dog. "I cry every time but knowing they're going to a loving family is like a parent sending their child out into the world," Sister Bonnie said. "It shows what love can do if we're not afraid." For Sister Bonnie, fostering dogs has also given her the opportunity to nurture, something she wanted as a woman religious without children of her own. "I've learned so much. It's taught me the power of being able to take care of and transform God's creation. We love them into being as we foster— helping their best selves to evolve. I really believe that this is our mission, with those whose lives we are entrusted with."

For more information about fostering, adopting, or helping a shelter pet, please email Sister Bonnie at bboilini@sbcglobal.net.





BOUNDLESS COMPASSION

By **Erin Clark-Lupo** | *Director of Mission Affirmation*

On Friday, October 8th, Father Greg Boyle, SJ brought his message of boundless compassion to Fort Wayne, IN. The Saint Joseph Community Health Foundation and the University of Saint Francis cosponsored this wonderful event. Fr. Boyle is best known for his work with gang members in Los Angeles through his ministry, Homeboy Industries. Originally designed to help with tattoo removal and job placement, Homeboy Industries now also offers access to mental health counseling, serving more than 15,000 people each year. Fr. Boyle has learned many things through his ministry, but the most important is how important it is to treat individuals with compassion. Many, he realized, had never been shown love or compassion throughout their lives, and this became his way to connect with gang members. While he has found this to be essential to helping former gang members heal from their past, this is something we can all learn from.

In expanding on how boundless compassion can make our communities better, Fr. Boyle draws on Mother Theresa's diagnosis of our world's problem, that we have simply forgotten that we belong to each other. Fr. Boyle suggests that the way to combat our having forgotten that we belong to one another is to create

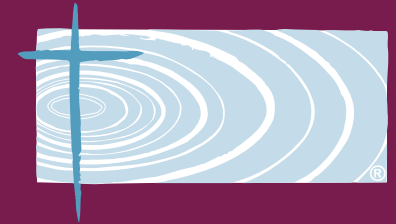
an ever-expanding circle of compassion that moves out to encompass those at the margins of our society. Because, he says "the measure of our compassion lies not in our service to those on the margins but in our willingness to see ourselves in kinship and mutuality with those on the margins."

Fr. Boyle, and the foundress of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, Saint Katharina Kasper, have so much in common despite their different contexts. Saint Katharina ministered in her own community to people who had different beliefs than she did, but she always treated them with love and compassion. The people she served would remark that she made them feel as though they were doing her a favor by allowing her to serve them. From their examples, we can see the kind of impact that is possible simply by treating each person we encounter with dignity and compassion.

Back row left to right:
Mary Glowaski, Dr. Dave Johnson, Nancy O'Brien, Steve Corona, Janet Stephenson

Front row left to right:
Gervaise Bastian, Meg Distler, Fr. Greg Boyle, Rev. Dr. Eric Albert Zimmer, Dr. Lora Overton, Sr. Connie Bach

Meet Our New **PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP TEAM**



By **Barbara Allison** | *Communications*



From left to right: Sister Nkechi Iwuoha, Sister Marybeth Martin, Sister Deborah Davis, and Sister Shirley Bell in front of statue of Saint Katharina Kasper.

In early June, the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ elected a new Provincial leadership team.

They are Sister Shirley Bell, Provincial; Sister Deborah Davis, Vicaress; and Sister Marybeth Martin, Provincial Counselor. Sister Nkechi Iwuoha was retained as a Provincial Counselor, a position she's served in since 2019. They succeed Sisters Joetta Huelsmann, Margaret Anne Henss, and Michele Dvorak. In August, the new team was installed for a four-year term.

As change is the only constant in life, this team is focusing on the core values of Openness to the Spirit, Dignity and Respect for All, Simplicity, and Community, and how they're viewed through the lens of Integral Ecology. They began rolling out the new PHJC Vision to ministry leaders, co-workers, residents, Associates, and board members in a series of in-person and virtual sessions last month.

Sister Shirley recently served on the Generalate in Dernbach, Germany and previously served as a Provincial Councilor from 1982-1988.



She noted of her new endeavor, "Life has taught me that there is generally more than one way to do something. And so, I like to imagine possibilities and options to discover another way when needed. Previous terms on the Provincial and General leadership teams and years of serving as novice director and director of Maria Center have provided an array of experiences and plenty of life-lessons long the way. Mostly, my life continues to show me the richness of relationships, listening and learning, being awed by all that is and the many ways we can truly engage new life to bring about transformation!"

Sister Deborah Davis ministered in Mexico for several decades following her teaching career in the United States. She also recently returned to the United States. Of her newest endeavor, Sister Deb said, "Our PHJC Charism, very simply put, is listening with an attentive ear and acting courageously. My vision for living out that Charism is that we embrace the PHJC Vision, established at our April chapter meeting. We are called to be a catalyst for just transformation. Those words from our vision statement challenge us to live our Charism of listening attentively and acting courageously. God gives us each gifts that we are to further develop and use for the good of all. I'm grateful for the gifts of Simplicity, a heart for those without resources and critical thinking. These, coupled with a light-hearted sense of humor, help us wade through some of the more challenging aspects of provincial leadership."

Born in Nigeria, Sister Nkechi Iwuoha served as a councilor at Sojourner Truth House in Gary before joining the leadership team in Donaldson. She states, "My vision in the next four years is to further the PHJC Charism by engaging all stakeholders, partners in our mission, to address the cries of the poor/marginalized and the Earth in a way that impacts and influence systems transformation. Additionally, Sister Nkechi "brings the gift of passionate pursuit of justice, critical thinking, compassion, diversity, ability to hold courageous conversation and listening skill to the leadership team."

Sister Marybeth Martin has served in education, vocation ministry, pastoral ministry, and most recently in campus ministry at Ancilla College. She's "excited about the ways our PHJC Charism of listening attentively and responding courageously connect with the most recent articulation of our PHJC Vision, our core values, and the *Laudato Si'* challenge of Pope Francis to respond to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor and marginalized. She looks forward to serving with the gifts of "humility, encouragement, honesty, openness to the Sacred in the ordinary, and authenticity and energy for new possibilities."

God bless our Provincial Team as they undertake this new endeavor.



In Loving *Memory*



Sister Mary Kevin Ryan, PHJC (Sarah)

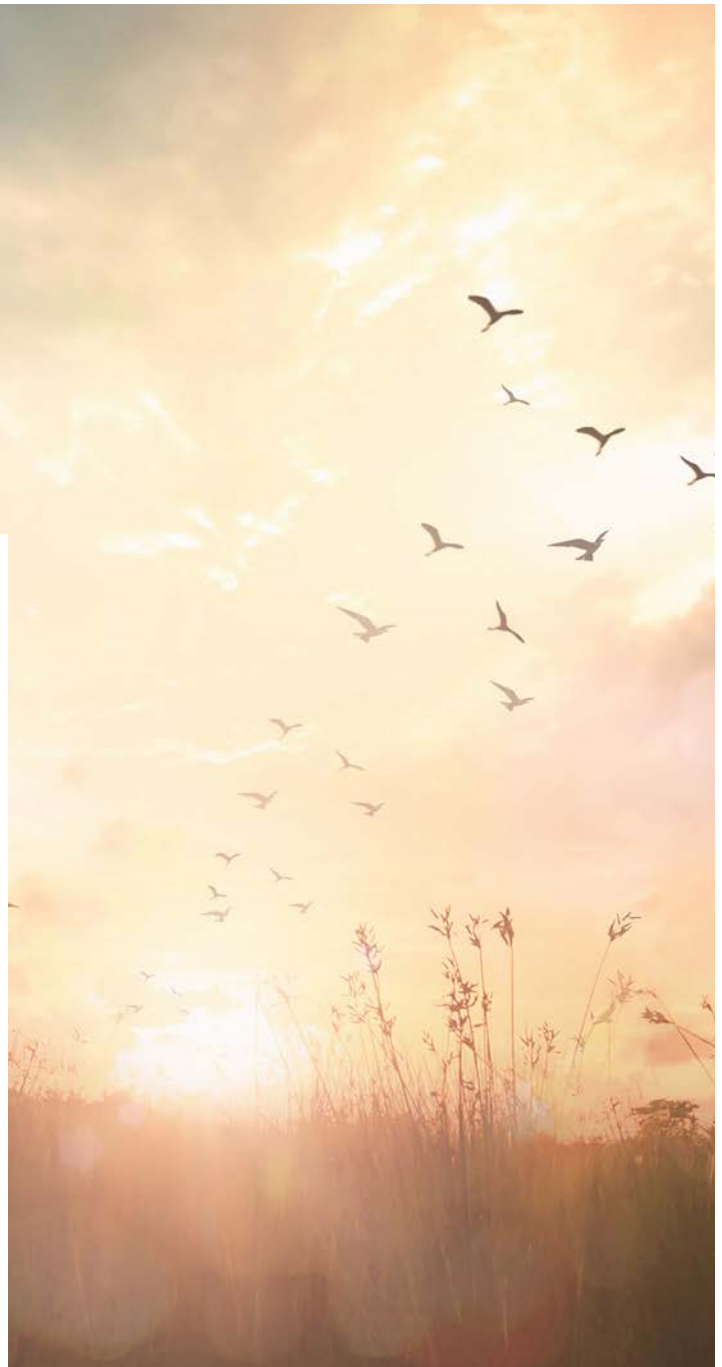
Sister Mary Kevin died on Friday November 19 at the Catherine Kasper Home, Donaldson, Indiana. She was 90 years of age.

She was born in Gary, IN to William Thomas and Sarah Ann (Cross) who preceded her in death along with her siblings Bernard Ryan, Mary Margaret Smith and Betty Honkoski. Sister is survived by many nieces and nephews.

Sister Mary Kevin entered the Poor Handmaid Congregation on December 7, 1949 and professed her vows on June 25, 1952.

Sister Mary Kevin graduated from Alverno College in Milwaukee WI. She was an educator from 1952-1966 and served at St. Augustine Chicago IL; St. Monica Mishawaka IN; St. Henry Chicago IL; and Angel Guardian Orphanage Chicago IL. She then moved into the clerical ministry at St. John Belleville IL; St. Mary Mercy Hospital Gary IN and at several hospitals in the Chicago IL archdiocese. She loved music. She was a member of the choir at St. Bartholomew Parish and taught guitar at Our Lady of Victory, St. Bartholomew and St. Mathias Parishes in Chicago from 1979 until 2018.

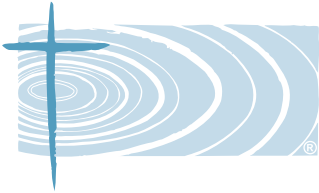
She officially retired to the Catherine Kasper Home in 2018 at The Center at Donaldson, IN.



We remember the Associates that died in late 2021

- Samuel Jackson**
- Clara Coppinger**
- Diana Glissman**
- Julianna Elfrink**
- Ann Powen**
- Dolores Guerrero**
- Rosemary Chlebowski**
- Georgia Klingler**

Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ



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