

SPRING 2026

# FELICIAN



*The MAGAZINE of the FELICIAN SISTERS of NORTH AMERICA*

Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me.  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

"The New Colossus"  
Emma Lazarus



# FELICIAN

The MAGAZINE of the FELICIAN SISTERS of NORTH AMERICA

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yearly for our friends, benefactors, staff,  
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## OUR MISSION

As Felician Sisters we are called by God to cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world.

## 2021-2027 PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

Elected by the sisters to oversee the lives of the sisters, ministries and governance of Our Lady of Hope Province:

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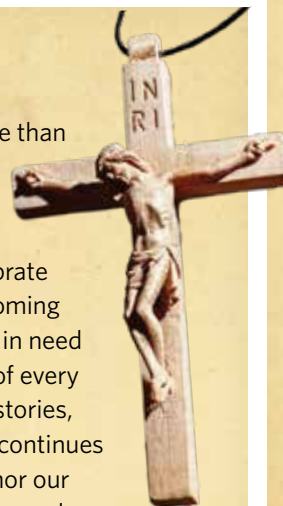
## OUR LADY OF HOPE PROVINCE

Founded in Poland in 1855, the Felician Sisters are a congregation of women religious inspired by the spiritual ideals of their foundress, Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska and Saints Francis of Assisi, Clare of Assisi and Felix of Cantalice. The first Felician Sisters arrived in North America in 1874. They established eight provinces across the United States and Canada and in 2009 united into one: Our Lady of Hope Province.

Pioneers of social services, the Felician Sisters of North America founded and continue to sponsor or minister in more than 50 ministries throughout North America and Haiti. Constantly evolving their ministries to meet the needs of the time, the sisters continue to follow God's will and Blessed Mary Angela's directive to "serve where you are needed."



The Felician Sisters and their partners are more than a presence—**they are a force for good in today's world.** In this issue of *Felician* magazine, we celebrate their commitment to welcoming the stranger, serving those in need and upholding the dignity of every person. Through inspiring stories, we see how faith in action continues to shape communities, honor our shared history and carry forward **the promise of hope for all.**



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## Cover

Gracing this issue is the enduring image of the Statue of Liberty, a symbol of hope, freedom and welcome. Paired with words from Emma Lazarus' "The New Colossus," it invites reflection on hospitality, compassion and dignity for all. For the Felician community, these words echo Blessed Mary Angela's directive to "serve where needed," renewing our commitment to welcome others and extend God's mercy and love.





## Dear Friends,

Anniversaries inspire reflection on the past even as we dream about a new future. We recently engaged in such visioning with our celebration of 150 years of presence in North America. Today we have yet another opportunity to dream as we approach the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America. I believe that the picture on the cover of this issue offers a key to interpreting our past and dreaming our future into reality.

The Statue of Liberty, a gift to the United States from the people of France, was dedicated in 1886. An icon of freedom, the statue has become a symbol of welcome to immigrants arriving by sea to the New York City port of entry. The text on the statue expresses what has traditionally been the stance of our country to those seeking refuge on our shores:

**"Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me.  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"**

The compassion and welcome that Lady Liberty expresses in these words is perfectly in tune with our own Felician values of compassion, solidarity with those in need, justice and peace, transformation and respect for the dignity of each person. It also expresses the Gospel values that we embrace as followers of Jesus Christ. Many have bemoaned the fact that these values are under attack. The current climate of violence has thrown our world into chaos on so many levels.

Yet the stories in this issue illustrate that these values are alive and thriving in our ministries today. Indeed, they embody the charism of Blessed Mary Angela, a charism that pulses throughout North America wherever Felician Sisters, associates, lay partners, or benefactors are present. Do we have the courage and vision to continue to dream? The stories in this magazine answer with a resounding "Yes!" Each of you is part of this story of welcome and resilience and we are grateful! As we celebrate our country's anniversary may we discover new ways to promote the transformation of our world into a place where every human person can flourish as a child of God.

*Sr. Judith Marie Kubicki*

Sr. Judith Marie Kubicki, CSSF  
Provincial Minister, Felician Sisters of North America  
Our Lady of Hope Province

*Ellis Island, New York, NY*



## Dear Felician Sisters...

### Fond Memories

In the 1940s, my brother and I attended St. Mary Catholic Church and school in Lafferty, OH. The Felician Sisters were our teachers and we have fond memories of them.

†Sr. Mary Theophane Zakrzewski, †Sr. Mary Amata Wachowski, †Sr. Mary Beatrice Bajek, †Sr. Mary Clarisse Zawacki and †Sr. Mary Dorothea Woronka were our favorites!

We lived down the hill from the convent, and when the sisters had out-of-town visitors, they would send my brother or me with an egg for our mother to bake a cake for them. (Mom was a great baker!) My late husband and I always contributed to annual donation requests for those in religious life. Thank you for your many years of service to God.



- Madelyn

### A Picture of Faith



My aunt, †Sr. Mary Teresina Lechanski, was born in Poland and came with her mom, dad and sister Rose through Ellis Island in 1905. Raised in Buffalo, NY she joined

the Felician community when she was in high school. After her vows, she was a grade school teacher and then a nurse because of the needs of the community. She worked in Buffalo, Oklahoma and Brazil, where she opened a school of nursing. Following Vatican II, she was called to the motherhouse in Rome where she cared for the medical needs of Polish bishops. In her later years she worked in Michigan at Orchard Lake College. She retired in Buffalo and died at the age of 83! She lived a life of deep faith, service and trust in the Lord.

I was always in awe of her—she seemed so serene and trusting in the Lord and the Blessed Mother. I have a beautiful picture of her and a rosary from Rome that she sent to me. Such a beautiful woman of faith for us to admire and love!

- Gloria

### Wearing a Costume

Sr. Maryann Kasica and Sr. DeLourdes Zdurowski came to my child's elementary school. They came to visit before the end of the school year and my daughter came home and said, "we met our new principal today and she was wearing her costume!" She was in 1st grade and the sisters there wore lay clothes. On the first day of school, all the parents and kids were on the playground before the bell. Sr. Maryann got her bullhorn and said "Everybody line up!" The kids stopped but I swear the parents were running to line up!

It's that "nun voice."

The sisters brought new traditions, like the Jesse Tree celebration (I still have the ornaments) and plenty of stories and lessons that my kids (now in their 30s) still share.

The school has since closed but the sisters made it a wonderful place. Their care and concern for the kids was inspiring.

- Kim



### I Was Fortunate



I am very sad to hear of †Sr. Lisa Marie DiSabatino's passing. I was often sent by my grade school teacher to go to the principal's office—Sr. Lisa's office—usually

for talking too much or being sassy. Being sent to the principal's office was a scary, big deal. But it was worse for me as I had to walk by Mrs. Gregal or my mom who worked in the office. Mrs. Gregal would give me a smirk and look like, "Oh boy, again? What did you do?" But I don't think she ever ratted me out. When my mom was there—that was another story! I got an angry look and knew I was in big trouble. Sr. Lisa knew my dad, so she knew I was gonna get in BIG trouble when I got home, so most times she said, "you're in enough trouble because you were sent to see me" and she didn't punish me. As a kid, I took having sisters around for granted. Later I realized I was very fortunate to attend grade school and high school with many nuns who were so caring. Sr. Lisa, I wish I could give you a big hug and say, "Thank you very much!"

- Christine

### My One and Only



My aunt, †Sr. Angela Marie Holewinski, was a Felician for 75 years.

I once told her how special the rosaries she gave me were. She laughed and asked if I

knew how many she had given. I said no but I know the ones you gave me. She smiled. She always called me her one and only. (I was the only nephew.) She made faith and church warm and loving.

- Gary

SEND YOUR THOUGHTS, MEMORIES AND PICTURES to [FelicianMagazine@FelicianSisters.org](mailto:FelicianMagazine@FelicianSisters.org) or via mail to: *Felician* magazine, Felician Sisters of North America, Office of Mission Advancement, 871 Mercer Road, Beaver Falls, PA 15010-6815.



## Building Connections at the LA Religious Education Congress

Sisters Felicity Marie Madigan, Margaret Marie Padilla, Judith Marie Blizzard and Maria Goretti Nguyen, accompanied by Julie Darocha (Volunteers in Mission), Cheryl Hufnagel (Seeds of Hope) and Julie Kresge (Office of Mission Advancement), represented the Felician community at the recent Los Angeles Religious Education Congress (LA RE Congress). This vibrant, three-day event drew a remarkably enthusiastic crowd—with attendance exceeding 15,000 participants.

Attendees had meaningful encounters and formed new connections with inspiring leaders in Catholic ministry and the arts. Among the highlights for us was meeting

Jen Norton, the talented artist who designed the striking historical cover for the *Felician* magazine, Fall 2024 issue. Norton’s creativity and spiritual vision resonated deeply with many participants, sparking conversations about art, faith and storytelling.

The Congress also provided an opportunity to connect with Father Piero Masolo of the PIME Missionaries, Director of Vocations and volunteer at Deo Gratias. His work in catechesis and faith formation continues to influence and support parishes across the country, and his insights on ministry inspired attendees to explore new approaches to engagement. Another memorable

encounter was with Sr. Theresa Francis Marie De Feo, whose decades of dedicated service in education and ministry have positively impacted countless lives. Her experience and wisdom offered a compelling example of faithful leadership and community commitment.

The energy and inspiration of the Congress highlighted the importance of gatherings like this for fostering community, collaboration and creative expression in faith. Participants left with fresh ideas and renewed enthusiasm, ready to enrich their ministries across the Province.

## Sister Helen Prejean Visits Felician Colleges and Universities



This spring, the Felician-sponsored colleges and universities welcomed Sr. Helen Prejean CSJ, internationally recognized author and advocate for the abolition of the death penalty. She visited **Felician University** on March 16, **Villa Maria College** on March 18, and **Madonna University** on March 19, engaging students, faculty and members of the wider community in thoughtful dialogue on justice and human dignity.

Best known for her groundbreaking book *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States*, Sr. Helen shared reflections from her decades of ministry accompanying death row inmates and the families of victims. Her presentations invited audiences to consider the moral complexities of the justice system and the call to uphold the dignity of every human life, encouraging thoughtful engagement with issues of social justice grounded in faith.



# Reflections from SEEK 2026

More than 30,000 young adults gathered in Columbus, OH; Fort Worth, TX; and Denver, CO for SEEK 2026, hosted by FOCUS. The atmosphere throughout the week was joyful and radiant with prayer, worship and a sincere desire to grow closer to God.

For the Felician Sisters, who hosted booths in Columbus and Fort Worth, SEEK was about the meaningful connections made through daily personal encounters and conversations. Many attendees stopped to make rosaries or place written intentions on the prayer cross. "Ask a Sister" cards opened the door to thoughtful questions about community and discernment.

The Volunteers in Mission (VIM) program also played a central part in the booth experience. Past VIM volunteers generously shared their firsthand experiences with attendees seeking ways to live out their faith through service and mission.

SEEK 2026 also included keynote talks as well as opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration, Mass and Reconciliation. Looking ahead, FOCUS has announced that SEEK 2027 will take place January 1-5 in San Antonio, TX and again in Columbus, OH. We look forward to connecting again next year.



# Enriched by Our Diversity

On February 10, the sisters at **Mother of Good Counsel Convent in Chicago, IL** celebrated Têt, the Lunar New Year with the student sisters from Vietnam who live with them.

The sisters shared that in their culture, Thanksgiving is part of the Lunar New Year, marked by three special Masses: giving thanks to God, praying for ancestors and asking God's blessing on the year ahead. They offered song, dance and traditional "lucky money" red envelopes as signs of blessing and joy.

Their words touched everyone present: "Although we live far away from our homes, you have truly created a real home for us here. We are deeply grateful for your love, care and support, and especially for celebrating with us today. We thank God for each of you and for everything we have received through your kindness. In a special way, during these days, we remember Blessed Mother Angela and pray for the repose of the souls of all your Felician Sisters."



We are excited to share that "The Calling" is now available to stream!

"The Calling" is a new documentary filmed in Michigan that highlights women religious, including the Felician Sisters, who have dedicated their lives to God and the service of others.

Watch the documentary on Detroit PBS:





## Ribbons of Hope Connect Us All

During Catholic Sisters Week, March 8-14, sisters, associates, lay partners and friends from across the Our Lady of Hope Province joined together in a beautiful, collective expression of hope: the *Ribbon of Hope* project.

Participants were invited to write a word or short phrase of hope on a ribbon, which was then linked to others to create a chain titled "*Hope Unbroken*." This participatory display celebrated faith and our shared commitment to the mission of the Felician Sisters, connecting convents, ministries and communities across North America.

Each ribbon contributed to a powerful shared witness—our individual hopes became a collective sign of faith, symbolically linking our locations and uniting us with the wider Catholic Sisters Week movement.

Ribbons reflected a wide range of inspiring thoughts and sentiments, including "*Trust in God's Promises*," "*Faithfulness*," "*Peace in the World*," "*Hope in the Lord*" and "*Joy*." Each phrase, whether simple or profound, contributed to the shared message that hope truly connects us all.

We are thrilled to share a few photos of completed *Ribbons of Hope*, which capture the creativity and community spirit of everyone who participated. Thank you to all who helped make this project a visible sign of hope for our province and beyond!



## Blue Light Vigil for Peace, Hope and Change

In this season of deep division and uncertainty, the Sisters of Divine Providence have chosen a public, prayerful witness for peace, hope and change. Beginning on February 2, The Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord (traditionally known as Candlemas), they invited all people to place blue lights in street-facing windows each night. These lights will remain burning until real change is seen—until the dignity of every person is honored and peace shapes our common life.

The Felician Sisters of North America proudly joined this vigil. At the Provincial House in Beaver Falls, PA a candle burns in the conference room, blue bulbs line the driveway lanterns, and strings of blue lights illuminate the front entrance—offering a clear and visible sign of commitment to the vigil's message.



## Answering the Call:

### Partnering with Bread for the World

In response to significant reductions in U.S. government funding for international aid—particularly through USAID—the Felician Sisters of North America have taken a meaningful step forward. Through their *Legacy Fund*, they have committed to a five-year partnership to support advocacy efforts addressing the root causes of domestic and global hunger and poverty.

As part of this commitment, the sisters have partnered with Bread for the World, a collective Christian voice urging decision-makers to end hunger at home and abroad. With more than 50 years of nonpartisan advocacy, Bread for the World equips individuals and communities to influence policy, addressing the systemic causes of hunger—poverty, lack of access to resources and inequitable systems. Advocacy efforts like these are highly effective—often multiplying the impact of each dollar many times over by influencing public funding that reaches millions.

Following conversations with Bread for the World CEO Eugene Cho, the sisters made a substantial commitment to strengthen grassroots advocacy and coalition-building efforts—especially as reductions in international aid threaten access to food, healthcare and development support for millions.

Through prayer, advocacy and action, they invite Felician Associates, employees, lay partners and friends to learn more about Bread for the World ([www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)) and raise their voices in support of policies that uphold human dignity.



## Prayer Vigil for Immigrants

On March 13, during Catholic Sisters Week and alongside the Catholic Sisters of Western PA, Felician Sisters joined interfaith partners at a prayer vigil outside the U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement field office in Pittsburgh, PA. Many from across the region gathered in unity, praying for compassion, dignity and respect for immigrants. They also remembered those who have died in ICE custody over the past year. May our continued prayer be for those who experience difficulties due to an inadequate immigration system in our country as well as those who are called to enforce our laws. May we support them in their challenges, strengthen them in hope and help them find welcome and solidarity among us.



## Felician Children’s Center Receives Highest GSQ Rating

**Felician Children’s Center** in Jackson, MI has received the highest rating from Great Start to Quality (GSQ) following classroom observations in its Infant, Toddler and Preschool programs. GSQ strengthens high-quality early learning experiences for Michigan children by supporting providers and helping families find the best options for their children. All GSQ providers are licensed through the State of Michigan and participate in a continuous quality improvement process to ensure safe, healthy learning environments.

Felician Children’s Center also received an Operation Warm grant, providing 144 winter coats, along with shoes and socks, for children and families. These items were distributed during the February Art Learning Fair, where families gathered for activities, a shared meal and community connection.



## Felician University Ranked a Best College for Women

Newsweek teamed up with Gender Fair to release their first America’s Best Colleges for Women list, ranking higher education institutions based on their leadership, pay, policies, safety and opportunity. Out of nearly 751 colleges nationwide, **Felician University** ranked #30 overall and #1 in New Jersey, one of only two institutions in the state to place in the Top 50!



This recognition reflects Felician University’s commitment to creating an inclusive and empowering academic environment—one where students are supported to lead with confidence, resilience and purpose, both throughout their college experience and beyond.

## Felician MBA Graduate Enters Public Service



**Felician University** MBA graduate Michael Chiaradio is seeking to represent Mississippi’s 3rd congressional district, bringing his background in business, small enterprise and rural life to the campaign trail. He credits Felician’s MBA program with strengthening his foundation in economics, statistics and leadership and shaping his commitment to purposeful service.

Now a regenerative farmer in Shubuta, MS, Chiaradio says his campaign focuses on rural development, support for small businesses and expanding access to resources in underserved communities. Through community outreach efforts and conversations across the district, Chiaradio hopes to build long-term trust and encourage civic engagement, regardless of the outcome of the 2026 election.

*Inclusion does not imply endorsement by Felician University or the Felician Sisters of North America.*



## Supporting Youth Mental Health

**B**ased in **Centralia, IL**, the **St. Clare Foundation** was established by the Felician Sisters to address growing concerns around youth mental health and substance abuse. The foundation's Executive Director, Clare Kessler, says that *support is needed now more than ever*.

Through its inaugural grant cycle, the foundation deployed over \$500,000 to local schools, healthcare providers and community organizations that serve young people ages 5 through 18. Three types of grants will be available: mini grants for immediate, small-scale needs; innovation grants to launch new or experimental programs; and anchor investments to provide sustained support for proven initiatives.



**"These initial investments are not just checks, they are the fuel for innovative, coordinated action,"** Kessler said. **"We are now moving beyond identifying the crisis to actively building the integrated system of resources and care that our youth deserve."**

Recipients include SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital Centralia (outpatient adolescent psychiatrist), Centralia City Schools District #135 (elementary mental health staff) and the Amy Schulz Child Advocacy Center (specialized provider for child abuse survivors).

Innovation grants support social-emotional learning at Mt. Vernon and Odin public schools and NAMI Illinois, while mini grants fund after-school and suicide prevention programs at the Centralia Community Youth Center and Mater Dei Catholic High School.

Sr. Mary Clarette Stryzewski says the St. Clare Foundation is their new way of meeting the sisters' commitment to care for the people of Centralia, which started with their sponsorship of St. Mary's Hospital in 1939.



**"Drug abuse and mental health are at the heart of this work,"** Sr. Clarette said. **"The Felician Sisters made a commitment to establish the St. Clare Foundation as a way to help change the trajectory of these two very difficult situations that families and individuals are dealing with on an ongoing basis."**

In addition to funding, the foundation aims to convene partners, strengthen collaboration and work toward lasting, systemic change in youth behavioral health.



**St. Anne's Family Services, Los Angeles, CA** has been selected to receive a \$20 million grant from California's Department of Health Care Services through the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP).

This investment presents the opportunity to expand its reach, meeting the growing needs of young women and families in the Los Angeles community—while intentionally implementing services to also support and uplift fathers.

As St. Anne's grows, its commitment to provide trauma-informed, evidence-based care that prioritizes equity and lifelong wellness remains. St. Anne's is determined to turn this investment into lasting impact for generations to come.

The construction of The Brighter Futures Center is expected to tentatively be completed by December 31, 2029.



**B**ooks have a special way of guiding us—inviting reflection, sparking conversation and offering hope. Whether through parish book clubs, personal devotion or historical research, Felician Sisters continue to find inspiration in reading. In this edition of "Good Reads," several sisters share the titles on their shelves and explain why these works hold meaning for them.

**"Celebrating God Our Founder"**

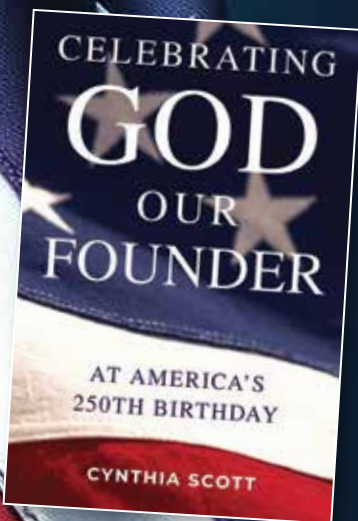
*by Cynthia Scott*

**Sr. Bernadette Marie Jimkoski**

Livonia, MI



As our nation prepares to mark its 250th birthday, this timely reflection invites readers to pause and recognize God as the true foundation of our country. In "Celebrating God Our Founder," author Cynthia Scott offers Scripture-based prayers that encourage gratitude, repentance and renewed trust in God's providence.



Listening to this audio book has become a meaningful part of my daily prayer. Each reflection connects the history of our nation with my own personal walk with Christ, reminding me that America's story is ultimately rooted in faith and guided by God's enduring presence.

This thoughtful collection is a fitting companion for the 250th celebration—helping us pray not only for our country, but for the grace to be faithful disciples in our own time.



**"America's 250th and the Gospel of Life"**

*by Bishop Michael Burbidge*

**Sr. Jeanne Marie Akalski**

Webster, MA



In his January 15, 2026 Bishop's Column, "America's 250th and the Gospel of Life," Bishop Michael Burbidge thoughtfully connects the celebration of our nation's 250th anniversary with the enduring call to uphold the dignity and sanctity of every human life. His reflection invites us to see America's history not only as a civic journey, but also as a spiritual responsibility—challenging us to live the Gospel with courage, compassion and hope for the future.

**"The Time is Now: A Call to Uncommon Courage"**

*by Joan Chittister*

**Sr. Mary Loriette Tokasz**

Buffalo, NY



In a society increasingly marked by dehumanization and darkness, Joan Chittister's book, "The Time is Now: A Call to Uncommon Courage" challenges us to be everyday prophets. It calls us to confront complacency and actively work to recreate a world of freedom, peace and justice. With unwavering courage, we are invited to seek truth, defend the defenseless and stand up for justice—because God calls each of us to be a voice for righteousness in our time.

*Book images courtesy of Amazon.com*



# Ash Wednesday Brings Renewed Pastoral Access to Broadview Detention Facility

*Photo courtesy of the Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership.*

The beginning of the Lenten season marked a significant moment of hope inside the Broadview ICE facility, in Broadview, IL. On Ash Wednesday, clergy members were permitted to enter the facility for the first time in months, following a federal judge's order addressing alleged violations of religious freedom protections by the Department of Homeland Security.

Access was approved just days after the court's ruling, allowing members of the Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership (CSPL) to minister to detainees and distribute ashes, offering prayer and spiritual support at the start of Lent.

"We're grateful that the court spoke and that finally, the federal government listened and obeyed," said Sr. Jeremy Marie Midura, CSSE, a CSPL board member.

The day's focus on migrants and their families extended beyond the detention center. In nearby Melrose Park, a special outdoor Ash Wednesday Mass brought together relatives of those who have been deported or detained, along with members of the broader community.

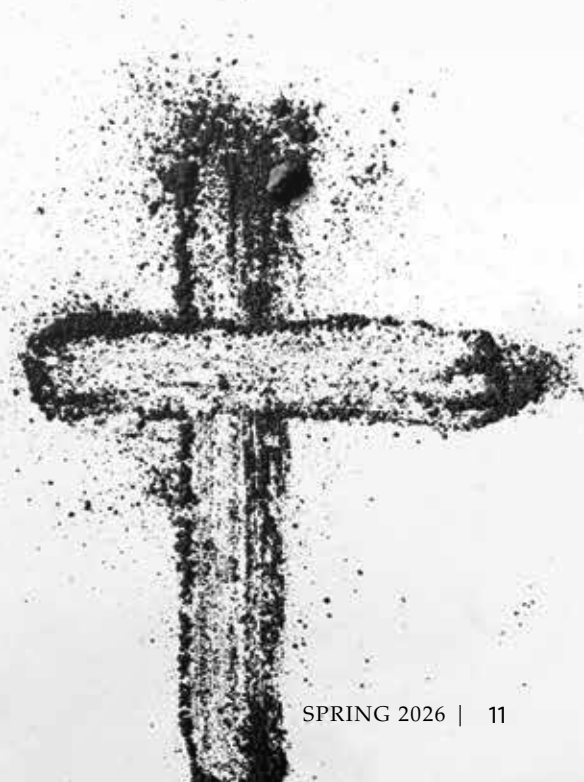
Cardinal Blase Cupich presided at the liturgy, offering words of affirmation and dignity. "Your worth does not come from a visa or a permit," he said. "It comes from the breath of God inside of you."

Following the Mass, participants held a peaceful procession, drawing attention to what CSPL has described as a moral crisis in detention centers and ICE facilities nationwide. Cardinal Cupich reminded those gathered that God remains close to those who suffer. "This day is made for you," he said. "Be confident that Jesus is with you in your hiding and sees the sacrifices you make for your family."

For many, this Ash Wednesday was not only the beginning of Lent but also a renewed affirmation of faith, human dignity and the Church's commitment to accompany those on the margins.

*"Your worth does not come from a visa or a permit. It comes from the breath of God inside of you."*

*Cardinal Blase Cupich*



# LIBERTY FOR ALL?

## Reflecting on Freedom and Justice

As America marks 250 years of independence, we are invited to reflect on what liberty has meant—then and now. Our nation's founding ideals promise freedom, equality and justice, yet the lived reality for many has been, and continues to be, far more complicated. Liberty is not a static gift; it is a work in progress. For the Felician Sisters, the pursuit of freedom is inseparable from our commitment to human dignity, peace and justice. Human dignity reminds us that every person—without exception—is created with inherent worth and deserves to live in freedom, safety and opportunity.

### Freedom Through the Lens of Faith

Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that every person is made in God's image, deserving of respect, opportunity and protection. *Laudato Si'* calls us to reverence all creation, to resist "othering" and to build a culture of encounter. Blessed Mary Angela guides us: **"Give aid to all without exception; your vocation obliges you not to exclude anyone, for everybody is our neighbor."** (I, 112)

Freedom is inseparable from love—love of God and love of neighbor. As Blessed Mary Angela wrote, **"I need not encourage you to love your neighbor, because where love of God dwells, there love of neighbor will be found, since one flows from the other. Both are inseparable; both are embraced in one commandment."** (I, 76-77)

### Stories of Arrival and Courage

Many of us know the stories of our families' journeys to this country—of courage, sacrifice and hope. Why did they come? What did they leave behind? What was life like for them when they first arrived?

These stories often echo the experience of the Holy Family. In Matthew 2, Joseph rises by night to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt, seeking to save the life of the child. Today, countless children, women and men must leave their homes for safety—fleeing violence, persecution or poverty. Could we endure such a journey, walking miles

through unknown and dangerous terrain, carrying only hope and love?

St. Paul reminds us: **"You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people."** (Eph 2:19) And Jesus, in Matthew 25, tells us that every act of care toward the most vulnerable is an act of love toward Him.

### Freedom at Home and Abroad

Liberty also connects us to those who serve to protect our democracy. Perhaps you, someone in your family or someone you know has served in the military—ensuring that we live in freedom today. Their sacrifice calls us to consider: liberty is not only inherited but also defended and nurtured through civic responsibility and moral courage.

### A Reflection for Today

This year, as we honor the anniversary of the death of St. Francis, we hear his call: **"I have done what was mine to do; may you do what is yours."** In this Year of St. Francis, may we allow his spirit to guide us in our endeavors: to protect creation, to lift up the marginalized, and to work tirelessly toward a more just society. Blessed Mary Angela echoes this sentiment: **"May the blessing of St. Francis accompany you everywhere and at every moment, may it sanctify all your endeavors, may it fill you with His**

**spirit, that as His child you should perform His works."** (III, 135)

### Questions to Reflect On

- How did your family come to this country, and why?
- What challenges did they face when they arrived?
- Who in your family has served to preserve freedom and democracy?
- In your own life, how do you respond to the call to recognize the dignity of every person, in your community and across the world?
- How can we live out freedom in ways that include everyone—especially those who are "othered"?

Liberty is still a work in progress. Created equal? Freedom for whom? These are not just questions for our nation—they are challenges for our hearts, our communities and our ministries. In answering them, we follow the vision of our founders, the teachings of our faith and the example of those who walked before us, from the Holy Family to Blessed Mary Angela, to the sisters and all who carry forward the work of justice and peace today.

\* References to Blessed Mary Angela's writings are cited by volume and page number.



GOD BLESS  
AMERICA

# HEALING A DIVIDED NATION: What the Felician Charism Offers Today

In today's polarized world, divisions can feel sharper than ever. Yet the Felician charism, rooted in the compassionate heart of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, calls us to be instruments of peace, understanding and reconciliation. Our mission has always been to *"serve where you are needed"*—a directive from Blessed Mary Angela—and it has always extended into the broken spaces of our society.

The Felician charism is to imitate Blessed Mary Angela's boundless love of God, surrender to God's will in compassionate service and live in total availability and concern for the salvation of all people. For example, during her lifetime, she instructed her sisters to care not only for their own Polish soldiers but also for wounded Russian soldiers, demonstrating her vision of compassion that transcends borders and differences.

## Listening with Compassion

**Healing begins with listening**—not merely hearing, but truly seeking to understand experiences, fears and hopes that differ from our own. The Felician tradition emphasizes compassionate engagement: listening

without judgment, asking questions with curiosity and recognizing the dignity of every person. In these moments of attentive listening, walls of misunderstanding begin to soften and pathways toward dialogue emerge.

## Building Bridges Across Differences

**Peace-building happens through relationships**, not debate. Sisters, associates and lay partners in mission convene conversations that cross political, cultural and generational divides, fostering spaces where honest dialogue and shared reflection can take place. These small acts—offering presence, patience and care—ripple outward, creating unity and mutual respect across communities.

## Action Rooted in Faith

**Healing a divided nation also requires action rooted in justice and charity.** The work of Felician ministries—supporting immigrants, advocating for vulnerable families, nurturing the environment and serving those in need—demonstrates that dialogue must lead to service. Compassionate action turns abstract

concepts of peace and unity into lived realities, showing that faith in action can transform communities.

## An Invitation to All

**The Felician charism does not promise easy solutions, but it offers a path forward: one where listening, dialogue and compassionate action intersect.** In neighborhoods, parishes, workplaces and civic spaces, we are called to be present, stand with those on the margins and weave understanding into the fabric of our communities. Healing begins not with winning arguments, but with opening hearts, fostering dialogue and walking together toward a shared vision of peace.

**Blessed Mary Angela's courage and vision remind us that even amid division, small, faithful steps—through conversation, service and genuine care—can bring hope and reconciliation.** In embracing this call, the Felician way invites us all to be peacemakers, bridge-builders and witnesses to a more united and compassionate world.



# A JUBILEE YEAR OF ST. FRANCIS:

## Walking Humbly, Loving Generously, Living in Peace

**P**ope Leo XIV has proclaimed a special Jubilee Year marking the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi—a moment of grace for the Church and for all who seek a deeper commitment to peace, humility and love for God’s creation.

The Jubilee formally began on January 10, 2026, following the conclusion of the Church’s 2025 Jubilee Year. Celebrations opened at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels in Assisi, home to the Chapel of the Transit where St. Francis died. Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino described the opening as “an explosion of true joy”—a joy born of rediscovering Francis in all his dimensions and, ultimately, rediscovering Christ, the true source of peace.

Among the most significant events of the Jubilee Year is the first public display of St. Francis of Assisi’s body. With papal permission, the saint’s remains were available for veneration from February 22 to March 26. More than 370,000 pilgrims registered—a powerful testament to the enduring and universal appeal of Francis’ life and message.

For the Felician Sisters, this Jubilee is an opportunity to reflect personally and communally on the life and witness of St. Francis. As members of the Third Order of St. Francis, the sisters are invited to consider Francis’ love for creation, his respect for all creatures and his commitment to peace and humility.

For some, this might mean deepening prayer for peace in the world, in their communities and in their own hearts. For others, it may inspire living more simply, in harmony with Christ’s example, and caring for our common home.

Sr. Elaine Marie Frigo, who visited Assisi on February 25, shared the profound impact of the experience: “I saw people who came with mild interest transform into silent, reflective participants. The day included viewing the remains of St. Francis, listening to a Conventual friar speak about him, receiving the Sacrament of Confession, and spending time in prayer. It was a graced moment for me and for many others.”

Through this Jubilee, the Felician Sisters are reminded that living Franciscan spirituality today is both a personal journey and a communal witness—a call to walk humbly, love generously and live as peacemakers. As the year unfolds, sisters across the province will find ways, large and small, to honor St. Francis’ example in their ministries, communities and daily lives.

Look for more reflections on how the Jubilee Year of St. Francis is inspiring the Felician Sisters in the fall issue of *Felician* magazine.



# Storming Heaven for Justice

## *The Enduring Legacy of Sr. Barbara Marie Juskiewicz*

Jan Donsbach, Vice-President, Austrian-American Council West

I was there when Sr. Barbara Marie Juskiewicz was born, and I was blessed to be with her in her final days. As her cousin, I witnessed a life shaped by faith, courage and an unwavering commitment to justice.

Her mission began at home. Barbara’s father was a dedicated member of the United Auto Workers (UAW) at the Ford Stamping Plant. In the 1960s, her parents traveled to California with a UAW delegation to march alongside farm workers advocating for fair wages and humane working conditions. From childhood, **Barbara learned that justice was not abstract—it meant ensuring every person had dignity, shelter and respect.**

When she entered the Felician Sisters, she joined a community rooted in the Franciscan spirit of peace. As a young sister, she taught social studies in Buffalo, NY and became active in neighborhood organizing efforts that addressed abandoned housing and unsafe conditions. She believed change happened when ordinary people worked together for the common good.

While teaching at Villa Maria Academy, she pursued studies in formative spirituality at Duquesne University, where she formed a lasting friendship with Fr. Richard Kyeremeh of Ghana. Through that friendship, her heart expanded to the global Church. Her visits to Ghana deeply moved her. Amid poverty, she encountered vibrant faith and profound joy.

Sr. Barbara served on justice and peace initiatives, supported local shelters and chaired her community’s Peace and Justice Committee. In 2000, she celebrated the dedication of the Stigmata of St. Francis

statue at Villa Maria Academy, designating the school a “Peace Site”—a lasting symbol of her commitment to forming peacemakers.

Her life changed dramatically in 1996 when she was struck by a car and left paraplegic after months in a coma. Though her mobility was limited, her spirit was not. She continued her ministries through prayer, correspondence and advocacy, determined to participate fully in life.

Her bond with Ghana endured. Learning of plans for stained glass windows in the Cathedral of Christ the King in Sunyani, she began raising funds among family and friends. She often reminded us that even modest donations could be lifesaving. Eventually, enough was raised for a window, and she returned to Ghana to witness the fruit of that shared generosity.

Beginning in 2010, she spent Lenten seasons with me in California. Each day she prayed, wrote letters and maintained her ministries from a small desk overlooking the garden. During these visits, she formed a close friendship with Veronika and Fred Reinelt of the Austrian-American Council West, a nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles, focused on fostering cultural understanding, education, humanitarian work and goodwill between the United States and Austria.

When the Council launched its Legacy Project to build a community center for abused foster children as part of Together California: A Village for Brothers and Sisters, Barbara embraced the mission wholeheartedly. Unable to give financially, she offered what she called her greatest gift: prayer. She promised to **“storm heaven.”**

The task was daunting—millions were needed to complete the community center. By 2025, nearly \$7 million had been raised, and even after Sr. Barbara’s passing in May, unexpected and matching gifts continued to propel the project. As of 2026, the Village neared completion.



**Those closest to the effort believe Barbara’s prayers continue to guide it. She was named Patron of the Legacy Project, and her name will be permanently inscribed on the donor wall when the Village opens.**

As our nation approaches America250, Sr. Barbara’s life reminds us that freedom carries responsibility. She embodied a quiet but powerful patriotism—one rooted in service, solidarity and steadfast belief in human dignity. She showed that democracy flourishes when citizens commit themselves to justice and care for the vulnerable.

Her mission did not end with her passing. It lives on in Ghana, in communities she strengthened and in the safe homes being built for children who will grow up knowing stability and hope.

One faithful woman, limited in body but limitless in spirit, showed that prayer and perseverance can move hearts and build a more just nation.

# From Displacement to *Belonging*

Sr. Mary Renée Kurczaba's American journey serves as both a history lesson and a profound teaching moment.



(From left to right) Stefania, Isabelle, Alex and Adam Kurczaba, circa 1950.

Though Isabelle Irene Kurczaba didn't know it at the time, it was a hugely pivotal day in her 11-month-old life. The date: late summer, 1950.

After several years in Polish Refugee Camp #11 in the British Zone of postwar Germany, in the tiny town of Watenstedt-Salzgitter, Isabelle's parents, brother and she had just boarded a train that was headed to the coast. A photographer captured the moment.

The expressions on Isabelle's parents' faces seem ... well, a lot of things. Anxious. Hopeful. Steadfast. Maybe a little befuddled.

At the coast, a ship would take the Kurczaba family to their new life in America. It would be a second chance made possible by the Polish-American refugee services, and by the strength and courage of Isabelle's parents.

That little girl grew up to be Sr. Mary Renée Kurczaba, now the Local Minister of Our Lady of Hope Convent in Beaver Falls, PA, the Provincial House. In addition to serving as Local Minister, Sr. Renée wears many hats in the Felician community. She serves on the community's Formation Team, works with sisters in temporary profession as Temporary Professed Director and contributes her

leadership on the Board and Real Estate Committee for St. Felix Centre in Toronto, Ontario.

Her journey involved many twists and turns, but it's been guided by her steadfast service to God and God's people and her love for her Felician Sisters.

To help celebrate the country's 250th anniversary, it is especially fitting to tell Sr. Renée's story.

That story starts with her parents.



## Stefania

Sr. Renée remembers her mom as a loving mother, a hard worker and a proud American.

Also very brave. "My mother's family (last name: Zaremba) got into serious trouble near the end of the Second World War because they sheltered Jews on their farm," says Sr. Renée. "One day, a truck driven by German soldiers came along and snatched up the whole family and sent them to a labor camp."

When the war ended, Stefania and her family were placed in Polish Refugee Camp #11. After several years at the camp, the family decided to return to Poland—minus Stefania.

"By then she had met and married my father and had two children, my brother Alex and me" says Sr. Renée. "She'd made the decision to emigrate, rather than return home to Poland. She was quite young at the time with two little kids. That was a courageous thing to do—a huge step into the unknown for her."

When the family settled with their refugee sponsor family in Calverton, a rural community on Long Island (NY), Stefania did housework: cooking, cleaning and laundry for her hosts.

After moving to Buffalo, NY and learning English from friends in the neighborhood as well as school, Sr. Renée remembers helping her mother with English translations during various appointments. "She was so proud of her adopted country," remembers Sr. Renée.

**"I recall her saying to one of her friends in Buffalo that it was okay to listen to the local Polish station on the radio, but that we needed to listen to the American news too. She said 'This is our country now.'"**

Isabelle and her mother remained close throughout her teen years, which made for a bit of a challenge when Isabelle announced to her parents that she was joining the Felician order.

"It's actually funny to think about it now—though certainly not at the time—but it was a scene at my acceptance ceremony," says Sr. Renée. "I remember looking out of the corner of my eye at my parents in their seats. My father was beaming; my mother was weeping."

Adds Sr. Renée: "She came around to my calling, and supported me in it, but it was hard for her at first. I was very young and her only daughter."



## Adam

Sr. Renée's father, Adam, was hardworking, pious, well-educated and determined to build a better life for his family.

After their years in the refugee camp in Germany, during which he'd wedded Stefania and had Alex and Isabelle, Adam had no intention of returning to communist Poland.

"I have his journals from that period and he couldn't imagine living under that kind of rule," says Sr. Renée. "He wanted a better life for us."

**"My father wrote in his journal that when we arrived in New York Harbor on September 5, 1950, one of the first things he saw was the Statue of Liberty. I wasn't quite a year old, so I have no memory of that moment. I can't imagine how that must've felt."**

"The way the refugee program worked was that you were assigned to a sponsor family before your journey was over; you then lived with them and worked until you paid off the cost of your voyage to the U.S."

After working in the fields for their host family on Long Island, the Kurczabas moved to Buffalo, where Stefania and Adam raised their children and then, later in life, moved to Cheektowaga, NY.

Once the family settled in the Polish section of east Buffalo, Adam got work at the Bison Cheese Company, then the New York Central Railroad. Stefania worked for a bakery at the Broadway Market and later as a seamstress at Hickey-Freeman Company.

"My father had been a teacher in Poland before the war and he co-founded a Polish-language school in east Buffalo that met on Saturdays," says Sr. Renée. "We learned the Polish language, history and Polish songs and dances."

"I remember being surrounded by a lot of love and a lot of friends in those years. We knew many people because of my father's school."

## The Felician connection

"Both my parents were religious, and early on we joined Transfiguration Parish in east Buffalo," says Sr. Renée. "I went to the parish school and later to St. John Kanty Parish school, which is when I came into contact with the Felician Sisters. They taught at both schools!"

By grade school and junior high, she was helping the sisters with various chores, including cleaning the chapel. Sr. Renée remembers noticing at recess that the sisters would gather in groups to share news, laugh and enjoy each other's company. It made an impression.

Isabelle went on to attend the local Felician-run Villa Maria High School. By her senior year, she'd met a boy, and they started talking about marriage.

"We both agreed, let's finish college first," remembers Sr. Renée. "But the summer after high school graduation, my mother took me on a two-month trip to Poland to learn about my mother country, and to meet my extended family. That was quite an experience for me, especially meeting my grandfather with his handlebar mustache."

## "You belong here."

On returning from Poland, Isabelle heard that two of her friends had decided to become Felician Sisters.

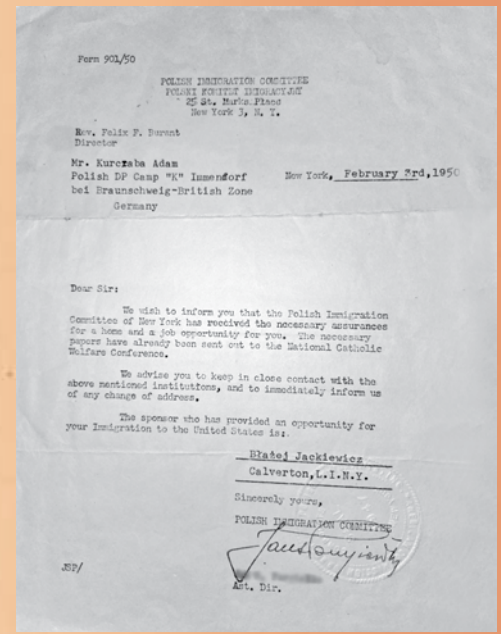
It was soon after this news that Isabelle heard something else: God's voice speaking directly to her.

"The telling thing for me was, what I heard in my head wasn't 'I belong there' with the Felicians. Rather, it was 'You belong there.' It wasn't me saying it, it was God saying it."

After continuing to hear God's call loud and clear in the following weeks, Isabelle took the initiative—at 17 years of age—to make an appointment with the Buffalo Provincial Minister herself. In the meeting, Isabelle announced to the esteemed minister: "I want to serve God." Her mind made up, Isabelle told her parents about her plan and entered the order in September of 1967.



(From left to right) Adam, Alex, Stefania and Isabelle Kurczaba. Family photo taken at Polish Refugee Camp #11 in 1949.



Polish Immigration Committee refugee program acceptance letter.



Sr. Renée's certificate of citizenship issued July 6, 1960 in Buffalo, NY.

## The desire to help refugees

Sr. Renée began teaching in grade schools—Buffalo, Lackawanna, Batavia and Salamanca (NY)—but always felt drawn to counseling. She earned her Bachelor’s and Master’s in the field from Canisius College (now Canisius University).

By 1988, she was ready to pursue her long-sought vocational calling as a counselor/case worker, and was hired by Catholic Charities. During the 24 years with Catholic Charities, Sr. Renée found her sweet spot as a Felician Sister: ministering to immigrants and refugees in Buffalo.

**“I believe I have done important work in my service to God and God’s people before and after that time, but during those years is when I felt most useful to Him,”** says Sr. Renée.

**“The people I worked with really needed me, and in very real ways, I needed them.”**

Most were non-Christians from war-torn countries including Iraq, Myanmar and Somalia. Once in a while, the intense pressures of being a refugee would lead them astray, and some would succumb to neglect, spousal abuse, alcohol and drug use and other mental health problems. Sr. Renée would sometimes accompany her charges to court, then help them comply with what the judge ordered.

“A memory that has stayed with me from that time is when a Muslim man, a father, sought me out to ask for my help,” says Sr. Renée. “His daughter hadn’t come home that evening, and he was terrified for her. For a Muslim man to come to me, a Christian woman and sister, was unusual. But he trusted me.”

“I was so touched. It was clear how much we needed each other. His daughter ended up being fine.”

## An honest assessment of our situation

As the 250th anniversary celebrations approach, Sr. Renée is worried about where the United States is going, and she doesn’t mince words about it.

“I think we’re losing our way,” she says. “During most of my lifetime, we as a country have been a world leader. We’ve been respected and relied upon.”

“Americans have always been known for our humanitarian work around the world. Poor countries have depended on us for our medical knowledge and supplies. We’ve now pulled back on so many of those efforts, and people are dying because of it.”

“The home front is equally worrisome,” she continues. “Of course we need to fix our immigration system, everyone agrees with that. But until we do, let’s not take it out on immigrant individuals and families who are protected by international law. Snatching people off the street is exactly what Hitler did to the Jews.”

**“As a former refugee myself, this change in our country’s values is upsetting to me. I think about my family arriving in New York Harbor in 1950. My parents learned what the words on the Statue of Liberty meant: ‘Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.’ It’s heartbreaking to think about that spirit of open arms in the context of what’s happening now.”**

## Going forward together

In this anniversary year, Sr. Renée is clear on what she thinks our priority needs to be: taking care of the weakest among us.

**“We must help the poorest and the least powerful, and that includes our immigrants and refugees,”** she says. **“That’s where the strength of our country comes from, when we lift those people up and help them to thrive.”**

“They help make this country great. They make it work, they give it spirit and energy and they give it moral fiber.”

**“When I pray now, I often pray for my country,”** she says. **“I pray for all of us. Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Show us the way. Guide us to a new time.”**



Sr. Renée (center) in front of the Kino Border Initiative operated by the Jesuits in Nogales, Mexico.



The Last Supper painting reimagined by an immigrant artist in Nogales, Mexico. The quote above in Spanish reads “Do this in remembrance of me.”



# THE ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT OF AN INVISIBLE TECHNOLOGY

**AI** relies on vast data centers that consume enormous amounts of electricity and water. Operating continuously, these centers generate intense heat often cooled with water, yet companies frequently under report usage, leaving communities unaware of long-term strain on aquifers, rivers and municipal supplies—a familiar pattern of progress outpacing our understanding of its costs.

Across the country, communities are asking hard questions. In Michigan, temporary moratoriums on new data centers aim not to stop innovation, but to assess environmental impacts, shape policy and protect shared resources.

Water, a finite and life-giving resource, sits at the center of this debate. As climate pressures grow, the ethics of diverting water for digital infrastructure can no longer be ignored.

## **Catholic Social Teaching: Progress Must Be Guided**

Catholic Social Teaching offers a crucial lens for this conversation. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis cautions against an uncritical faith in technology, warning that when power and profit are separated from moral responsibility, both people and the planet suffer. He reminds us that technological progress must be evaluated by its impact on human dignity, social relationships and the integrity of creation.

In *Laudate Deum*, the Pope intensifies this call, underscoring the urgency of environmental action and the disproportionate burden borne by the poor and marginalized. Delay, he argues, is itself a moral failure. Innovation without accountability risks deepening inequality and accelerating ecological harm.

Church leaders have echoed these concerns about AI, calling for safeguards that protect truth, human dignity, children and the natural world. Recent papal teaching warns that emerging technologies must uphold human dignity and moral responsibility. The goal is not to reject technology, but to ensure it serves life rather than dominates it.

## **A Felician Perspective: Witness Across 150 Years of Change**

The Felician Sisters of North America have witnessed extraordinary transformation since their arrival in the United States 150 years ago. They lived through the rise of industrialization, the expansion of cities, the growth of public education and health care and the environmental consequences that often followed unchecked development.

Across generations, the sisters saw how progress could uplift communities—and how it could also exploit workers, degrade land and pollute water when ethical considerations were set aside. This lived history offers a valuable perspective for today's AI revolution. It reminds us that new technologies always carry moral weight, and that the choices made early often shape decades, even centuries, to come.

Rooted in Franciscan spirituality, the Felician charism calls for reverence toward creation, solidarity with those on the margins and a commitment to justice that extends beyond immediate gain. These values are deeply relevant as society navigates the promises and perils of artificial intelligence.

## **Water Stewardship and Corporate Responsibility**

The Felician Sisters address environmental concerns through initiatives like the Ceres Valuing Water Finance Initiative, encouraging corporations and investors to manage water risks in global supply chains. While current efforts focus beyond AI, emerging studies show data center water use poses significant, often underestimated environmental and financial risks.

Promising research on alternative cooling technologies could greatly reduce—or even eliminate—water use in data centers. But these solutions require ongoing commitment, transparency and regulation to become standard rather than exceptional. Now is the time for faith communities, policymakers, corporations and investors to collaborate, ensuring technological progress does not harm local communities or future generations.

## **America250: Choosing the Next Chapter**

As the nation marks 250 years of independence, artificial intelligence challenges American values. Will innovation repeat patterns of overconsumption and environmental neglect, or embrace a vision that balances creativity, justice and care for life? For the Felician Sisters, environmental stewardship in the AI era is a continuation of our long-standing commitment to care for creation and protect the vulnerable. Decisions today—on water use, transparency, regulation and ethics—will shape the nation for generations. Guided by faith and hope, we are called to ensure innovation serves the common good and honors our shared home.



# SERVING THOSE ON THE MARGINS: The Felician Center in South Carolina

When the Felician Sisters arrived in South Carolina, they came to serve communities in need, guided by a mission of compassion, faith and education. Today, the Felician Center, in Kingstree SC continues this legacy, supporting individuals and families facing economic, social and health challenges.

The Center's programs respond to both immediate needs and long-term growth. The St. Felix Food Pantry provides nutritious meals and grocery assistance to families in need. The Learning Center offers educational support for children, while the St. Clare Clothing Closet ensures access to affordable clothing with dignity. Blessed Angela Meals provides nourishing meals to anyone who comes through the doors, fostering not only nourishment but also a sense of community.

These programs often extend beyond their original purpose. Clothing Closet items are used during homebound visits or donated as prizes for Vital Aging bingo events, multiplying the Center's reach. Blessed Angela Meals has become a hub for connection, welcoming residents from the Williamsburg County Residential Facility for shared meals, companionship and inclusion.

Education remains a cornerstone of the Felician Center's mission. In recent years, the Center has "widened its tent," welcoming an increasing number of international families whose children attend Learning Adventures. Many of these parents serve as teachers in local public schools, strengthening the bond between the Center and the wider educational community.

One parent, Claire Tejero, shared the profound impact the Center has had on her family:

**"The Felician Center has helped nurture my children's spiritual life in a beautiful way. My children are learning the importance of kindness, gratitude and prayer. At home, we've noticed a more respectful attitude and a stronger desire to help others. The spiritual guidance they receive at the Center is shaping their character and values in a very positive way."**

What makes the experience even more special is the presence of the sisters who lead and serve in the Felician Center. Their dedication, compassion and faith-filled example inspire the children every day.

**"They don't just teach—they model love, service and humility in everything they do. Knowing that these sisters are guiding the Center gives our family great confidence and peace of mind. We truly feel that our children are growing not only academically, but also spiritually, in a place rooted in faith and care."**

Health care is also a vital priority. In partnership with the Medical University of South Carolina and Hope Health, the Felician Center offers eye, dental and prescription assistance programs to support underserved members of the community.

None of this work happens in isolation. The Center and its programs benefit from strong interdenominational support across South Carolina and beyond, including Catholic and other Christian churches, Knights of Columbus councils, civic and school organizations and generous individual benefactors.

Today, the Felician Center, continues to embody the nation's best ideals—walking alongside those on the margins, empowering lives and nurturing hope for generations to come.



From left to right: Sr. Mary Susanne Dziedzic  
and Sr. Mary Johnna Ciezobka  
Back row: Sr. Mary Carol Piskor



# Inspired by St. Felix: *Same Name. Two Nations.*

*In the name and spirit of St. Felix, whose life of service inspired the Felician Sisters to reach communities in need and guided by the words of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska—"Serve where you are needed"—these ministries embody a commitment to dignity, care and hope that transcends borders.*

## St. Felix Centre

Toronto, ON, Canada

What began in the late 1930s as simple acts of neighborly care has grown into one of Toronto's vital outreach ministries. When the Felician Sisters opened their convent at 25 Augusta Avenue, they built a nursery for children of newly arrived immigrants. Soon, individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness sought food at the convent's back door, and the sisters responded with soup and a warm welcome. Those humble gestures became the foundation of St. Felix Centre, officially established in 1993.

Over the decades, the ministry continually adapted to meet emerging needs. In 2012, the former convent transitioned to St. Felix House, a transitional home for women. As homelessness increased, the Centre continued to expand, launching the Extreme Cold Weather Alert Program in 2014—now evolved into its largest initiative, the 24-Hour Respite Program.

Today, St. Felix Centre serves hundreds of vulnerable individuals each day through respite care, meals, outreach and supportive programming. Many guests are newcomers to Canada, individuals with mental health challenges, seniors on fixed incomes and people experiencing chronic homelessness.

The Centre remains committed to providing services in a safe, welcoming environment inclusive of all religions, genders, cultures and abilities. Every person is treated with dignity—a hallmark of the Felician-Franciscan tradition.

**"St. Felix Centre, in the last few years, has evolved to open different centres in downtown Toronto to respond to the increased need of providing a variety of compassionate services to those in need. To have Hope House finally open is one example. We are truly blessed with many committed staff and volunteers who continue the ministry of the Felician Sisters."**

Sr. Christina Marie Kazimirek

## St. Felix Pantry

Rio Rancho, NM

Across the border in the American Southwest, the same spirit thrives under the same name. Founded in 1992 and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, St. Felix Pantry has served the greater Albuquerque area for more than 30 years. Today, it provides free groceries and compassionate support to more than 1,000 individuals each week—no income requirements, no questions asked.

New Mexico consistently ranks among the states with the highest rates of food insecurity. Approximately one in six residents struggles with hunger. Families face rising housing costs, inflation and limited access to affordable groceries. Seniors often choose between medication and food. Parents skip meals to feed their children. St. Felix Pantry is the only food pantry in Sandoval County that allows guests to receive food weekly—a critical lifeline for families living paycheck to paycheck.

Rooted in strong cultural traditions and deep community ties, the Pantry restores hope by providing not only groceries but also compassionate presence and referral services. Over three decades, it has become a trusted resource.

Despite economic pressures and rising demand, the Pantry has never turned anyone away empty-handed.

**"We don't see numbers. We see neighbors. Every box of food is a reminder that someone is not alone."**

Sr. Mary Martha Janysek

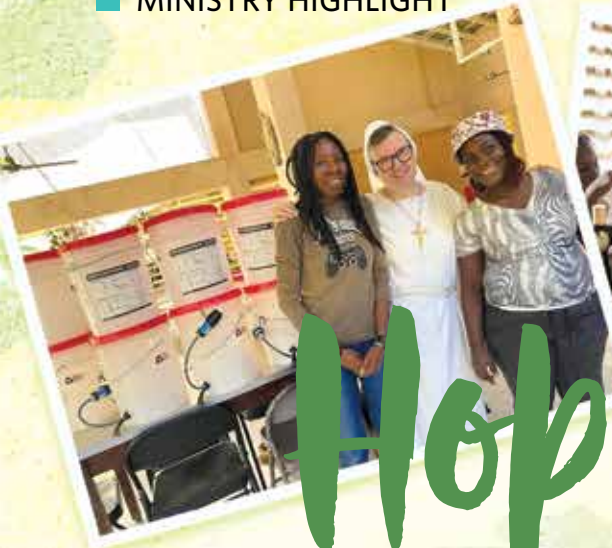
## Same Name. Same Spirit.

While contexts differ—urban homelessness in Toronto, rural and economic hardship in New Mexico—the mission remains the same:

- Food is offered with respect.
- Relationships are built through listening.
- Service is grounded in the belief that every person carries inherent dignity.

These St. Felix-named ministries offer a quiet yet powerful witness. True freedom is not found in abundance for some, but in care for all. It is lived out when communities take responsibility for their most vulnerable members. Across borders and cultures, the Felician Sisters continue a mission that transcends geography.

**Same name. Same spirit.  
One compassionate response.**



# Hope in Action

Felician Mission: *Haiti*

**As America marks 250 years, we reflect on values that shape our nation: service, community and compassion. Felician Sisters Inga Borko, Julitta Kurek and Marilyn Minter live these ideals through *Felician Mission: Haiti*, accompanying youth, families and communities with education, health care, faith formation and vocational training. Through programs that teach practical skills, provide clean water and offer vital medical care, the sisters bring hope that transforms lives and strengthens communities.**

## Opening Doors Through Education

The Felician commitment to education continues to evolve to meet current needs for tech advancement and hands-on learning programs. In winter 2025, eight teenagers completed an eight-week online web development course led by Haitian-American programmer Jean-Marc Julien of Chicago. Guided by Peterson, director of the mission's computer lab, students learned fundamentals and presented final portfolios, preparing them for further education and careers.

At the St. Clare Sewing School, students develop practical skills while fostering independence and entrepreneurship, recently creating handcrafted bags that promote self-sufficiency and dignity.

The mission's impact is tangible. Wilkens, a former participant, now serves in the Haiti National Police Force. The sisters celebrated his return with a cross and their prayers, honoring his commitment to serving his country.

## Strengthening Faith and Community

Faith formation remains central to the mission. Parents and students met with Fr. Samson Pierre of Jacmel Cathedral to explore meaningful ways to nurture faith at home. During the season of Lent and Easter, the sisters joined the wider community in prayer, reflection and celebration—deepening their collective commitment to faith and service.

## Clean Water, Renewed Hope

The Servants of the Living Water program addresses the urgent need for clean water. Women learn to assemble and maintain filtration systems while reflecting on water as God's gift. In Marigot, participants traveled hours—sometimes on foot—to join training sessions led by local leaders Melinda and Rosemarie, gaining skills that directly improve health and daily life in their communities.

## Caring for Body and Spirit

On March 19, the Mother Angela Mobile Clinic marked its 12th anniversary, celebrating over a decade of compassionate care. Each month, the clinic travels to five remote villages, serving more than 600 individuals who have no other access to medical care. From routine check-ups to urgent treatments, the clinic brings healing, hope and dignity to families across the region.

## Hope in Action

Through these programs, the Felician Sisters demonstrate how faith in action can transform lives. From providing access to education and clean water to nurturing spiritual growth and self-sufficiency, their presence strengthens families and communities.

The legacy of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska lives on in every empowered young person, every life touched and every future made brighter—showing that hope, guided by compassion and creativity, can flourish across borders and generations.



# A CALL THAT RETURNED: MISSION IN BRAZIL, 50 YEARS LATER

Sr. Mary Timothy Ruszala

**N**early 50 years ago, I first answered a call to serve in Brazil. As an American reflecting on my country's ideals—liberty, equality, justice and opportunity—I've come to see how these values are lived not only at home, but also beyond our borders.

I first served in Brazil, working in American schools in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. I loved the mission work. Life was different then—but the call to serve was the same.

During the 2024 General Chapter, the Felician Sisters' international assembly that guides governance and mission priorities, the idea of returning to Brazil began to surface again. I laughed and said to God, **"You must be joking—maybe someone else will go."** But the thought persisted. Eventually, I said yes.

When I asked our Provincial, Sr. Judith Marie Kubicki, who was going to Brazil, her answer surprised me: **"You're the only one who volunteered."** When I asked if I could go, she simply said, **"Yes."**

## THE JOURNEY SOUTH

Preparing for the trip required patience. Visa restrictions limited my stay to 90 days. I am grateful to Helen Yee, Health Services Administrator, for her help, and to Sr. Mary Alicia Adametz, who skillfully managed multiple flight changes.

After receiving a blessing at Mass, I departed for Brazil in June 2025 for a 90-day mission experience. The 20-hour journey to Curitiba ended with a warm welcome from Provincial, Sr. Maria Aparecida Vilas-Bôas. I stayed briefly at the provincial convent before heading to the Amazon—true mission territory, where I had never served before.

## LIFE IN THE AMAZON



Reaching Japurá required long travel by plane and then a 31-hour boat ride along the Amazon River. When we arrived, I was struck by the vastness of the river and the simplicity of life around it.

There were no cars—only motorcycles—and most streets were unnamed. People walked everywhere. So did we. Sr. Alexandra became my partner in ministry, guiding me through mission chapels, neighborhoods and daily life.

The people of Japurá welcomed me with open arms. They were excited to meet an American. Children greeted us with hugs—some so small they could only hug my legs.

We cleaned and prepared small mission chapels that held about 30 people. After services, food was shared. Children arrived with pots and pans to bring stew home to their families. It was a powerful reminder of community, gratitude and dignity.

## FAITH IN MOTION

Each day, children gathered to pray the rosary with Sr. Alexandra, honoring Our Lady of Aparecida. Sometimes their prayer took the form of movement and dance. One small girl danced joyfully during Mass and all I could think of were Jesus' words: **"Be as little children."** This was her prayer.

I was also invited to teach English in public school. I taught children and adults, sometimes team-teaching with Joseph, who translated when needed. The adults were eager to learn and deeply appreciative. I was never tired.

What I witnessed in Japurá was a living faith—God present in laughter, learning, music and daily life. Children ran in and

out of chapels. Families showed deep respect for one another. Simplicity and joy were everywhere.



## A WITNESS BEYOND BORDERS

As an American reflecting during this America250 moment, I was struck by how the values we celebrate—faith, freedom, community and service—are most clearly revealed in relationships, not borders. This, too, is part of America's story.

Leaving Japurá was difficult. Returning to Brazil after nearly 50 years reminded me why I first said yes to mission work. Much has changed—but the heart of mission remains the same.

This experience will stay with me for the rest of my life.

## CALLED ONCE AGAIN TO SERVE

**Once again God has called me to do missionary work in the Amazon.** I am spending April 14 through July 14, 2026 sharing God's love in the Amazon. This time I will have an opportunity to teach English to elementary school children as well as assist the sisters in caring for the chapels and doing catechetical work.

**Please pray for me that in the spirit of Blessed Mary Angela, I am able to multiply myself a thousand times to spread God's love in the Amazon.**

# An *Extraordinary* Life, A Living Legacy



As I prepared to write this reflection, I spent considerable time discerning how best to introduce this page entrusted to me. Allow me to

begin with a brief introduction. I am Sr. Marie Alexander Siegel, designated promoter of Blessed Mary Angela for Our Lady of Hope Province. I am grateful to serve alongside dedicated collaborators representing our former provinces, whom I will acknowledge at the conclusion of this column.

For many years, this group published *Journeying with Blessed Mary Angela* twice annually, offering a meaningful opportunity to reflect on Mother Angela's life and the historical context in which she established our Felician Congregation, mission and charism.

Having recently marked two significant milestones—the 150th anniversary of Felician presence in North America and the 200th anniversary of Mother Angela's birth—we now look ahead with renewed purpose. In future issues, it is my hope to foster deeper reflection through "An Ordinary Life Lived in an Extraordinary Way" by Reverend Jan D. Szczurek, a work that beautifully captures the spirit and legacy of Mother Angela.

In my own reflections, I often refer to her simply as "Mother." For me, she is not only a spiritual guide, but a profoundly maternal presence.

Forty-eight years ago, during my novitiate, we received copies of the newly translated Volume I of the Letters of Mother Angela. I immersed myself in her words—her counsel, encouragement, gentle admonitions and, above all, her abiding love. Her letters continue to offer inspiration and strength to this day.

On even the most challenging days, Mother's words remain a source of consolation:

**"Remember that I am always at your service, that there is no sacrifice I would not make for you... Be assured that even from a distance my heart will watch over you... I cannot forget that you are my daughters and I am your mother... you are very close to my heart."**

**(Letters, Vol. I, p. 72)**

Mother's presence endures, guiding and strengthening us as we continue to advance the Felician mission and charism. Through the many ministries we sponsor (listed on the following page), we witness ongoing growth and vitality. I invite you to join us in this shared mission—through your prayers, your support and your partnership—as together we cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world.

I look forward to the Fall issue of *Felician* magazine, where we will begin a series of reflections on Father Szczurek's work, starting with Chapter 1: Love of God. Please note that it is not necessary to have a copy of the book to participate.

For those interested in Blessed Mary Angela devotional materials, please contact the regional coordinator nearest you. A free-will offering is appreciated.

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# Felician *Ministries* in North America

Since the Felician Sisters arrived in North America in 1874, they have continued to evolve to meet the needs of the time, by following God's will and Blessed Mary Angela's directive to "serve where you are needed." The ministries below are sponsored, co-sponsored, have a Felician presence or were founded by the Felician Sisters of North America.

## Affordable Housing

Angela Court 1 & 2  
(Angela Court Senior Residence)  
Philadelphia, PA

Angela's House  
Buffalo, NY

Beverly Terrace  
Los Angeles, CA

Francis House  
Philadelphia, PA

Hope House  
Toronto, ON, Canada

Our Lady of Grace Village  
Newark, DE

## At-Risk Youth Programs

Mooncrest  
Neighborhood Programs  
Coraopolis, PA

St. Clare Foundation  
Centralia, IL

United Stand  
Chicago, IL

Villa Maria Youth Program  
Buffalo, NY

## Education

### Child Care

Enfield Montessori School  
Enfield, CT

Felician Children's Center  
Jackson, MI

Sister Celeste Child  
Development Centre  
Tulita, NWT, Canada

St. Joseph Child Care Center  
Pontiac, MI

St. Mary Child Care Center  
Livonia, MI

## Early Childhood Education

Montessori Center of Our Lady  
Livonia, MI

St. Joseph Academy  
Milwaukee, WI

## K-12 Education

Enfield Montessori School  
& Chiaravelle Academy  
Enfield, CT

Holy Name of Mary  
College School  
Mississauga, ON, Canada

Montessori Center of Our Lady  
Livonia, MI

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart  
High School  
Coraopolis, PA

St. Joseph Academy  
Milwaukee, WI

## Higher Education

Felician University  
Rutherford, NJ

Madonna University  
Livonia, MI

Villa Maria College  
Buffalo, NY

## Ministry to Individuals with Disabilities

Felician School for  
Exceptional Children  
21 and Over Program  
IMPACT Program  
Lodi, NJ

McGuire Memorial  
New Brighton, PA

## Ministry to the Marginalized

Águilas del Desierto  
Fallbrook, CA

Deo Gratias Ministries Detroit  
Detroit, MI

Felician Center, Inc.  
Kingstree, SC

Response to Love Center  
Buffalo, NY

Sr. Mary Josette Food Pantry  
Buffalo, NY

St. Anne's Family Services  
Los Angeles, CA

St. Felix Centre  
Toronto, ON, Canada

St. Felix Pantry  
Rio Rancho, NM

## Mission Ministry

Felician Mission: Haiti  
Jacmel, Haiti

Felician Mission: Tulita  
Tulita, NWT, Canada

## Retreat Centers

Maryville Retreat Center  
Holly, MI

Jericho House  
Port Colborne, ON, Canada

## Senior Living & Health Care

Angela Hospice and Home Care  
Livonia and Waterford, MI

Felician Senior Services  
Enfield, CT

Felician Village  
Manitowoc, WI

Marywood Nursing Care Center  
Livonia, MI

Senior Clergy Village  
Livonia, MI

St. Anne Home  
Greensburg, PA

St. Francis Residence  
Enfield, CT

St. Ignatius Community Services  
Philadelphia, PA

Villa St. Francis  
Milwaukee, WI

## Program Outreach

Seeds of Hope Young Women's  
Leadership Experience  
Holly, MI

Volunteers in Mission  
Detroit, MI

## Other

Hopebound Ministries  
Chicago, IL

If you are interested in learning more, volunteering or supporting our ministries—or are in need of our services, please visit [Felician.org/Ministries](http://Felician.org/Ministries).

# HOPE IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON OF ALL

Don't forget the many who cross the border for all the right reasons.

*Detroit Free Press, May 18, 2025*

*Reprinted with permission by Mitch Albom*

**T**his is an immigrant story. It is not about a threat. It is not about an illegal crossing or an arrest. It's about HOPE.

## Most immigrant stories are.

Jhonas Nelus was born in Haiti 23 years ago. When he was 9, a massive earthquake hit his country and left his family homeless. Like tens of thousands in the capital city of Port-au-Prince, his relatives sought refuge in a filthy, overcrowded, tent city.

## That was where I met him.

Jhonas' sisters were in an orphanage I operate in Haiti. I had come to the tent city to meet the rest of their family, all of whom were squeezed inside four pieces of tin, with a blue tarp tied over top. Their floor was dirt. There was no sink. No running water. One mattress for everyone. When it rained, they slept atop old wooden chairs, so they wouldn't be lying in mud.

The toilets were several hundred yards away, holes in the ground surrounded by a small mountain of plastic bags. When I asked what the bags were for, I was told, "toilet paper."

Over 2,000 people shared this camp. Jhonas, at the time, was a thin, angular boy with piercing eyes and a huge smile. He was drawing when I met him. A cartoon. It was excellent. He also spoke fairly good English, which was remarkable given his young age.

"Where did you learn to speak so well?" I asked him.

"In school," he said.

"You like school?"

"Yes. I love school."

## Promise brings HOPE

**This is an education story.** The next month, when I came down to Haiti, I visited Jhonas' family again. This time, I brought a few comic books. To say Jhonas liked them would be like saying teenage girls like Taylor Swift. Every subsequent visit, I brought him more. I noticed his artwork improving. He also wrote me a thank-you note.

In my heart, I wanted to take Jhonas into our orphanage, but he was already older than the age we accept most children and since we already had his siblings, it went against our policy. But I realized he would soon be of the age when Haiti's oppressive poverty and general desperation might tempt him to quit school in search of quick opportunity, money or gangs.

## So I made him a promise.

"Jhonas, if you stay in school, get good grades and don't get in any trouble, I will make sure you get to college."

"College?"

"Yes."

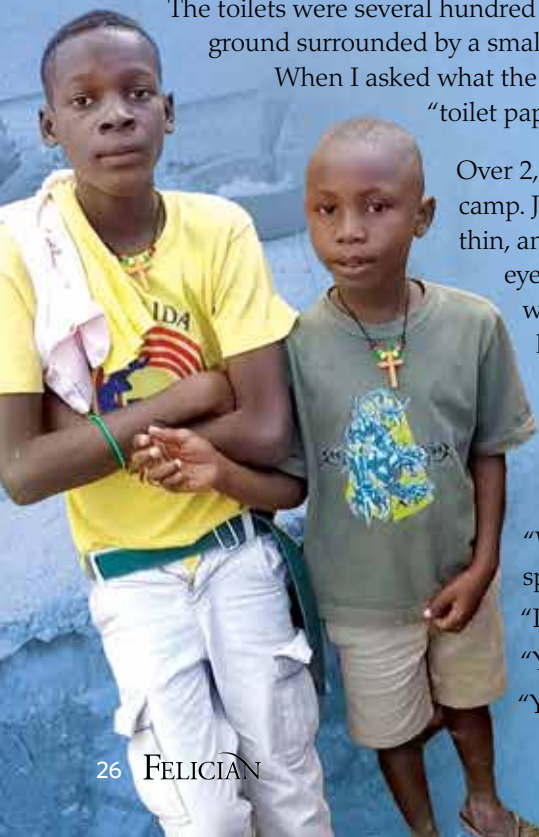
"In America?"

"Yes. In America."

His eyes bulged. Never mind that his "home" had no electrical power, no lights, no fans and the idea of him even doing homework seemed far-fetched.

The promise inspired him. It gave him hope.

And hope is the most powerful weapon of all.



## Hope brings PERSEVERANCE

**This is a graduation story.** Jhonas took me up on my offer, and year after year, gave me his report card from his Haitian school. His English became impeccable. His voice changed. His body sprouted from a kid I used to pat on the head to a teenager who towered over me.

But his love of learning never wavered. Still forced to live in those tents, he studied by candlelight and when his mother didn't have the pennies to buy candles, he left the encampment to find a streetlight to sit under, where he could read and do his assignments.

Can you imagine, in the crushing heat and humidity of Haiti, being in the street at night, with nothing more than a pencil, a piece of paper and your lap as your desk? And our kids complain about homework?

Jhonas completed his schooling with excellent grades. By that time, I had established connections with several colleges in Michigan, encouraging them to give our orphanage kids a shot.

One of them was Madonna University. They read Jhonas' application. In it, he spoke about wanting to study medicine, because when he was younger, his little brother, Jameson, was taken to the hospital because of an ugly skin issue. No one took care of him. They wanted money first. When the family had none, they were sent away.

Months later, Jameson died in the same tent where the whole family slept. Jhonas came in from playing soccer and saw his younger brother gone. He decided, he says, to become a doctor that day.

Madonna wisely accepted him. He was granted a U.S. student visa and arrived here in the summer of 2021. On the way to our home from the airport, we stopped at Buffalo Wild Wings. When Jhonas saw how much food they brought to the table, he nearly wept.

## Perseverance brings GRATITUDE

**This is a surprise story.** In May 2025, Jhonas was set to graduate with his bachelor's degree. We always make a big deal over our kids graduating, so all of his orphanage brothers and sisters who are also here studying and many of the people he has impressed or touched, wanted to be there as well. This meant quite a caravan of people.

We did our best, but as folks who tend to be late for most things, we arrived after the ceremony began. I wasn't worried. I had been to college graduations before. I knew there was a good deal of pomp and circumstance and they called out every name for a diploma. Since Jhonas' last name began with "N" we had plenty of time.

We arrived, sliding into our seats just in time to hear one of the administrators say **the student commencement speaker this year** had been specially chosen for his accomplishments, his willingness to help others and his sterling academic record, including a 3.94 GPA as a chemistry major.

His name, she said, "**is Jhonas Nelus.**"

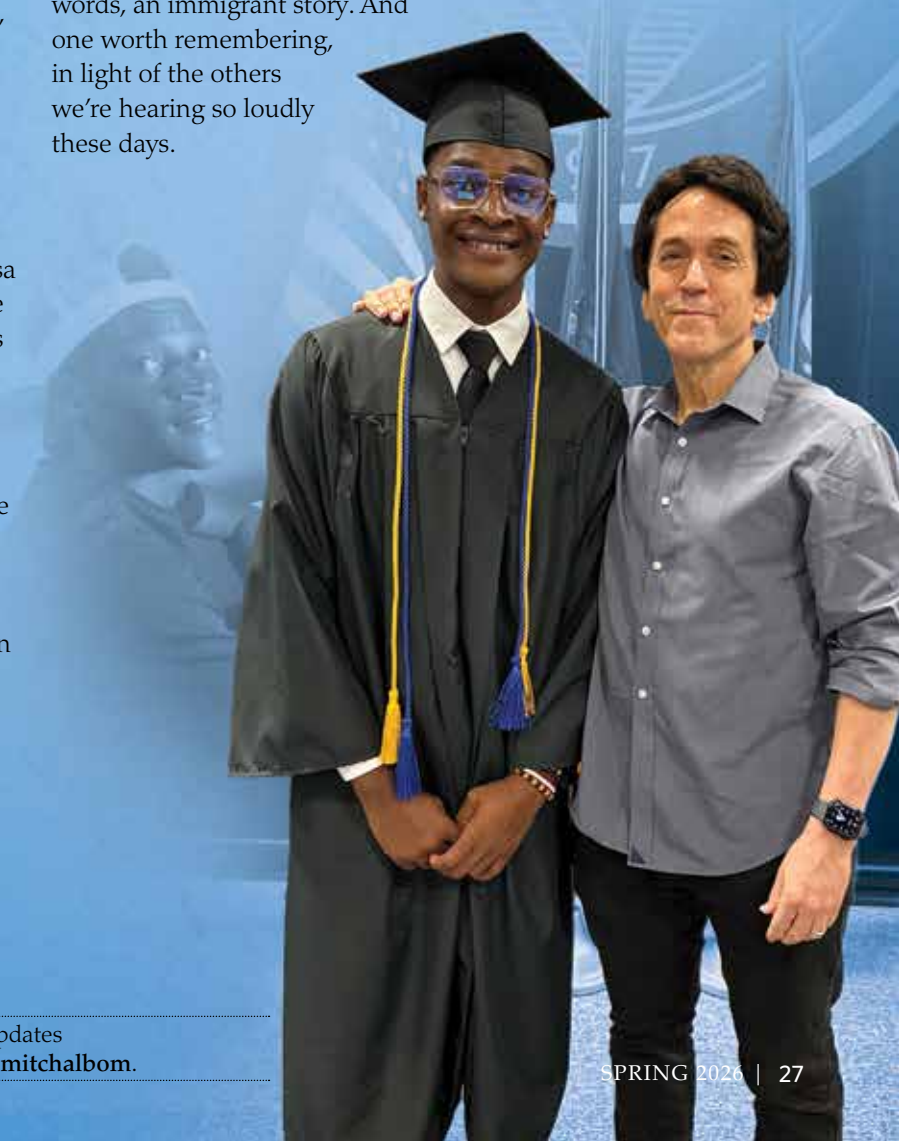
And sitting in that crowd, my wife and I stared in disbelief as this beaming, confident, young man—who never told us about this honor because he wanted it to be a surprise—walked to the microphone and delivered a pitch-perfect commencement address, beginning with, "When I first came to Madonna University, I was filled with excitement, curiosity, and, if I'm being honest, a little bit of fear. ..."

He congratulated his fellow students. He spoke about the future. He mentioned the challenge of leadership and his desire to go to medical school, to one day make life better for children in his home country.

He never mentioned his own story, or all the horrors he'd overcome with his tireless hope. He never congratulated himself.

### **So, I'm doing it here.**

This is a story about dreams, belief and opportunity. In other words, an immigrant story. And one worth remembering, in light of the others we're hearing so loudly these days.



# Strengthening Our Country's Quilt

For a collective 242 years, these five sisters have done their part to bolster the at-times fraying fabric of our nation. In this 250th anniversary year, their leadership, love of country and steadfast good works are needed more than ever.

Sisters Mary Norberta Malinowski, Dorothy Ann Mary Moczygamba, Mary Faith Balawejder, Mary Joanne Suranni and Maria Bakhita Waweru have experienced much during their time as Felician Sisters. The first (Sister Norberta) entered the order in 1957. The last (Sister Bakhita) entered in 2015—a span of 58 years.

The year Sr. Norberta answered the call, *I Love Lucy* topped the TV charts and the Soviet Union successfully launched *Sputnik I*, kicking off the space race.

In Sr. Bakhita's entry year, *The Big Bang Theory* was tops on television and President Obama was nearing the end of his second term.

Along the way, momentous changes occurred and events such as Vatican II, the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement changed the nation and the lives and ministries of these five sisters forever.

As our country evolved in those last 60-some years, by far most of the work of these Felician Sisters happened in life's

trenches. The reason is simple: When the world churns forward, great masses of people get left behind and are left to fend for themselves. That's when the Felician Sisters get busy, and these five are no exception.

Here, in their own words, are highlights of their lives, times and ministries.

**Sr. Norberta Malinowski**  
Location: Enfield, CT  
Entered: 1957  
Years of Service: 70  
Main ministry: Hospital CEO



"When I was little and there was rationing during World War II, the Felician Sisters in my neighborhood gave their green stamps to families with children who needed more food. That memory always stuck with me."

**Sr. Dorothy Ann Moczygamba**  
Location: Chicago, IL  
Entered: 1964  
Years of Service: 62  
Main ministry: Teacher (all levels)



"I thought it was awful how some of our soldiers were treated when they came home from Vietnam. It may've been an ill-advised, immoral war, but that wasn't their fault."

**Sr. Faith Balawejder**  
Location: Coraopolis, PA  
Entered: 1965  
Years of Service: 61  
Main ministry: Teacher/Formation advisor



"Vatican II really affected our day-to-day lives as sisters. Before, we needed to be silent a lot of the time. When the changes came, house meetings and committees sprung up and we shared more. It was less "top down" and everyone had more input."

**Sr. Joanne Suranni**  
Location: Buffalo, NY  
Entered: 1982  
Years of Service: 44  
Main ministry: Middle school teacher



"As important as civil rights are, they weren't something I needed to be taught. My parents brought me up to believe everyone was equal."

**Sr. Maria Bakhita Waweru**  
Location: Livonia, MI  
Entered: 2015  
Years of Service: 11  
Main ministry: Nurse



"Choosing religious life in a society that is increasingly secular requires courage and conviction. It confirmed that my 'yes' to Christ wasn't simply convenient. Rather, it was deeply personal and countercultural."



**Question:** What made you say “yes” to your Felician calling? Did national events or conditions influence your decision?

**Sr. Joanne:** “I didn’t enter in direct response to what was happening in the 70s or early 80s, but there was a growing social conscience at that time that affected all of us.

I grew up in a small town (Batavia, NY) near Buffalo, and when I became a sister and moved to that city, I could feel those things happening. Women’s rights were growing and women were starting to occupy positions in the Church.

In high school, I was invited to be a Eucharistic minister. I’m pretty sure I was the first woman in that position at my church. Same goes for altar service; there were no women when I started.”

**Sr. Norberta:** “World War II created a lot of hardship in Boston because of the rationing. That was hard on people, as were those moments when husbands, fathers and sons didn’t come back home. I witnessed that as a child.

The way my mother bought extra groceries for families in my neighborhood, and bought them clothes she disguised as hand-me-downs so as not to embarrass them—those actions planted seeds in me. So did the love and good works of the Felician Sisters I grew up around. I’m sure that influenced my desire to go into hospital work as a sister.

When Vatican II changes started to trickle down in the mid-60s, I was still quite young, and those things moved me. We participated more in community affairs. There was also

a greater push for higher education for us. Among the Felician Sisters, Bachelor’s degrees were rare until then, but that changed in large part because of Vatican II.”

**Sr. Bakhita:** “Our contemporary world of 2015 did not significantly influence my decision to join the Felician Sisters. Mine was a personal response to God’s call. However, two broad realities shaped my environment when I entered.

The first was the continuing transition from the eight convents to the single Felician North American province in 2009. When I joined, the community was still adapting to those difficult changes and the push for renewal. Seeing the sisters embrace those changes while remaining faithful to their Franciscan charism was so inspiring to me.

In the larger world, we were in the final years of the Obama administration, and there was growing political polarization. Discussions around race, immigration and identity became more tense, and as an immigrant from Kenya, I felt those things keenly.

Rather than discouraging me, these historical moments (Felician transition and U.S. polarization) strengthened my vocation.”

**Q:** As a Felician Sister, what are some of the ways you engaged with and adapted to the world during big moments of change?

**Sr. Dorothy:** “When I entered in 1964, the Vietnam War was ramping up for the U.S., but I taught small children in those years. We didn’t talk much about the war in the classroom, so it didn’t affect my work too much.

But Vatican II was another story in terms of how it affected my life. I was excited about the changes coming through. We sisters carefully read the Vatican documents, so we knew what was going on. Unlike us, many of the priests at the time were slower to adopt the new ways. The result was that, from my vantage point at least, Vatican II changes occurred in fits and starts in the Church.

We saw those changes as a nudge from the Holy Spirit. Liturgical conferences sprung up and our social justice push had its roots in that time as well. There were a lot more adult classes as well, which is when we engaged more fully with the laity of all ages. Those classes have continued to today.”

**Sr. Joanne:** “It was the beginning of the John Paul II era in the Church when I entered in 1982. Those were unprecedented times in many ways.

John Paul was the first pope to travel a lot. He was also the first pope to pray in a mosque (Damascus, Syria, in 2001). Up until John Paul, the recent popes had all been Italian, but he was Polish. We Felicians were quite proud of that!

Vatican II was still very influential when I started as a Felician. That movement called us back to our roots, to the charism started by Mother Angela. Many of us became more intentional about studying our Franciscan traditions.

At one point, John Paul met with many of us Felician Sisters in Rome. He urged us to be true to our founding charism, and to follow the teachings of the Foundress.”

**Sr. Faith:** “I entered in the fall of 1965, just months before Vatican II ended, so that movement dominated the early years of my sisterhood. It appealed very much to me. It came from the Holy Spirit and touched my heart.

With the Church and Felician Sister order, there was heavy emphasis on spiritual renewal at that time. We were more open to change and adaptation than before. This was a good thing. It changed the way we engaged with each other and the outside world.

Our stance toward the laity changed. There was more outreach. The thinking was that lay people needed to live the Gospel at home and in their neighborhoods, not just in church. We assisted with that. The idea being to allow God to influence your life the other six days of the week, not just on Sundays.”

**Q:** Now that the U.S. has reached its 250th anniversary year, and given everything you have witnessed as a Felician, how would you say things are going for our country?

**Sr. Dorothy:** “I believe we have lost our way. We are a nation of immigrants, but many people in our nation, including our leaders, have no respect for them now.

Those who have made it in this country often don’t seem to have empathy or understanding for those who haven’t made it. It almost seems like we’re developing a caste system.

There’s a global warming connection to immigration that you don’t often hear about. We don’t have an equator running across our country, but if we did, we would better understand why people need to leave those areas sometimes. When things heat up and dry out, where are farmers, herders and others supposed to go to make a living? What are they supposed to do?”

**Sr. Joanne:** “Within the Church and Felician Sister order, there’s a much greater understanding of diversity than ever before in my lifetime. Diversity is how the world works now. You need to be ready to understand and live together with the people right in front of you.

As a country, however, we’re quite polarized. We are not dealing with diversity or our immigrants very well. In our Felician community, it has always been a guiding principle to welcome the stranger. We have always supported people on the margins—including immigrants. And we will always do that.

As Jesus says in Matthew 25:40, ‘whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters, you did for me.’ He’s talking about the poor, sick and suffering—and yes, immigrants.”

**Sr. Faith:** “As a country, we have moved away from our foundations and from our values. We have moved away from the idea that character in our leadership is important, or even necessary.

And most distressing to me, we have moved away from caring for the needs of all people, and from the importance of recognizing their dignity and worth.”

**Sr. Norberta:** “I don’t think we’re doing very well. We’re losing our moral standard. The U.S. used to lead in that way. I’m worried about us getting into a major conflict now, as I’m not sure we have any allies left.

It can shake your vocation, at least it does mine. The belief gets shaken. We’re human after all, and God understands that. He was human, too, when he came down to Earth for us.”

**Q:** What do you see as a priority for us going forward as a nation?

**Sr. Dorothy:** “We need to care about each other a lot more. We also need to stop being so sure that we’re the only one who is right—and I’m speaking about individuals and also our country. People are too convinced that what we’re doing is the only way.”

**Sr. Joanne:** “We need to unify around the principles of the country. We need to let them guide us again.

Another priority is to look within ourselves as Americans, and make the right decisions. An old professor of mine used to say: ‘Change is inevitable. Growth is optional.’ To me, that means the onus is on us as individuals. You can decide who you are and how you act, and what kind of country you want. It’s your choice.”

**Sr. Faith:** “I’m actually not sure about a specific priority for our country, other than to pray that the Holy Spirit guides us to the right place. And that we will then be willing and able to do what He leads us to. We sisters need to be ready to do more advocacy on His behalf.”

**Sr. Norberta:** “A big priority is to work together more. This is our country. It’s the only one we have. We would not have survived if the 13 colonies hadn’t figured out how to work together. We need to start doing that now.”

**Sr. Bakhita:** “I believe the priority is to understand that our country’s future won’t necessarily depend on political victories, but rather on moral and spiritual renewal.

If we can rediscover a shared commitment to human dignity and the common good, there is great hope ahead. From my vantage point in 2026, I remain prayerfully hopeful.”

# Faith in Action: 250 YEARS of Hope, One Ongoing Call

For 250 years, the American story has been shaped by bold ideals: liberty, opportunity, dignity and care for the common good. Yet every generation learns the same truth—these ideals only come alive when people choose to **act**.

When the Felician Sisters arrived in the United States in 1874, America was still taking shape. Poverty, migration, illness and inequality marked daily life in growing cities and rural communities alike. With faith as their compass and compassion as their guide, the sisters responded—not with grand declarations, but with humble service.

Today, as our nation approaches its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the call remains the same. The needs have evolved, but the sisters' mission is to cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world: to respond where hope is most needed and to help shape a more just and loving society.

This is faith in action—then, now and for generations to come. See timeline on pages 32 and 33.



250<sup>th</sup>  ANNIVERSARY  
1776 - 2026  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Mary Angela Truszkowska



## Growth, Immigration & Inequality

**United States:**  
Rapid industrialization draws millions of immigrants. Cities grow—and so do poverty, overcrowding and disease.

**Felician Response:**  
Felician Sisters arrive in America, opening schools, caring for the sick and welcoming immigrant families—offering education, dignity and hope to those often overlooked.



## Civil Rights & Social Change

**United States:**  
The nation wrestles with inequality and calls for justice, dignity and civil rights.

**Felician Response:**  
Grounded in Gospel values, the sisters stand with marginalized communities, deepen commitments to education and health care and advocate for the dignity of every person.



## A Nation Is Born

**United States:**  
A new nation declares independence, grounded in the belief that all are created equal.

**Felician Response:**  
Decades later, Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska would plant the seeds of a community rooted in human dignity, service to the poor and trust in God—values that would soon cross the ocean to America.



## The Great Depression

**United States:**  
Economic collapse leaves families without work, food or security.

**Felician Response:**  
The sisters expand ministries of care—schools, orphanages and social services—ensuring children and families are not forgotten during times of hardship.





## A Time of Reckoning & Renewal

### United States:

A global pandemic, social division, climate concerns and economic uncertainty challenge our shared future.

### Felician Response:

The sisters and partners respond with resilience—caring for the vulnerable, advocating for justice, embracing *Laudato Si'* and strengthening ministries that heal, educate and accompany.

## America at 250

### United States:

A milestone moment—inviting reflection on who we are and who we are called to become.

### Felician Response:

The mission continues. Guided by faith and sustained by generous partners, the Felician community remains committed to being a living response to the needs of our time.

1980s–2000s

2020s

2026 & Beyond

## A Changing World

### United States:

Globalization, technological change and shifting family structures reshape communities.

### Felician Response:

Felician ministries adapt—expanding healthcare, elder care, social services and educational models that respond to emerging needs while remaining rooted in mission.

## One Ongoing Call

America's story—and the Felician story—are not finished. At 250 years, the question is not only where have we been but how will we respond now?

Through education, compassionate care, advocacy and presence among those most in need, the Felician mission lives on because of faithful partners who believe hope must be practiced.



250<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
1776 - 2026  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

# Welcomed with Joy:

## PERPETUAL PROFESSIONS AND NEW BEGINNINGS

In a world marked by uncertainty and rapid change, the public profession of religious vows is a profound sign of hope. To profess perpetual vows is to declare, before God and the Church, that love, prayer, community and service remain essential and life-giving. For the Felician Sisters, each profession is not only a personal commitment but also a renewal for the entire community—a reminder that God continues to call generous hearts to respond. This year, Our Lady of Hope Province celebrates five women who embraced new or lifelong commitments with courage, joy and faith.

### Sr. SHANNON MAUREEN FOX



"I knew the Felician Sisters were the community for me based on how at home I felt with the sisters and the joy with which they live their lives. In some ways, it felt like I had been with them for years!"

Sr. Shannon's perpetual profession on August 11, 2025 at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Convent Chapel in Coraopolis, PA was a joyful celebration of transfer from the Sisters of St. Joseph Third Order of St. Francis. With the theme, "A new commandment I give you: love one another," the liturgy included a blessing from three Sisters of St. Joseph, emphasizing unity and shared Franciscan roots. Rev. Samuel Esposito, a Felician Associate, served as celebrant and homilist and Sr. Shannon made her vows in the hands of Sr. Danat Marie Brysch, minister general, as the community sang the Magnificat.

Her reflections reveal the depth of this day:

"My profession was even more meaningful after recovering from open-heart surgery. The sisters welcomed my family with open arms, and together we experienced a sense of belonging and joy. I chose the religious name Shannon Maureen to honor my Irish heritage—Maureen means 'Little Mary,' and I wanted to carry that in my name."

### Sr. AGNES MARIA TROJNAR



"I was happy with my life and work, but there was something missing—a longing to give my life completely to God and serve His people."

For Sr. Agnes, perpetual vows on August 17, 2025 at Our Lady of Hope Provincial House Chapel in Beaver Falls, PA, were a heartfelt offering of self to God. With the theme, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the wedding feast of the Lamb has come, His bride has prepared herself," the ceremony reflected her deep faith and joy. Rev. Richard Mucowski, OFM, served as celebrant and homilist, assisted by Rev. William Schwartz, provincial house chaplain, and Sr. Agnes made her vows in the hands of Sr. Danat Marie Brysch.

"I felt embraced by the community in every moment," she recalled. "Making my vows was not only a personal commitment but a shared celebration with sisters and friends who have journeyed with me."

Born in Poland, Sr. Agnes came to the United States after high school, working as a nanny while earning a degree in commercial art and web design. Though she enjoyed her work as a graphic artist, she felt called to something more and began discerning religious life after encountering the Felician Sisters in New Jersey.

Her ministry experiences in Toronto, Detroit and Pennsylvania deepened her love for God and for those most in need. Now serving at the Felician Generalate in Rome, she embraces her ministry with gratitude:

"It is hard work, but I love serving my sisters. Being in Rome is a blessing."

## Sr. GABRIELLA MARIA IANIERI



Sr. Gabriella's connection to the Felician Sisters began far from home.

"My first encounter with the Felician Congregation happened in Rome in 2013 while I was working on my PhD dissertation in Philosophy. I lived at the

Generalate house for two years and was struck by the openness and welcome I received. I was more than a guest; I felt like part of a family."

Her perpetual vows on September 30, 2025 at Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent Chapel in Buffalo, NY, coincided with the anniversary of her baptism. The liturgy honored her Italian heritage through hymns and readings, and she made her vows in the hands of Sr. Danat Marie Brysch. Reflecting on the occasion, she said:

"Being able to profess my vows on the anniversary of my baptism made my 'yes' even more meaningful. The grace of baptism is the root of my vocation, and this day celebrated that mystery in the rhythm of my life with God."

## Sr. MARIA TERESA LAN KIM TRINH



Sr. Maria Teresa entered the novitiate on January 17, 2026 receiving the white veil as a sign of her intention to embrace Felician life. Rather than seeing this as a step into something new, she describes it as the continuation of a journey that had been quietly unfolding:

"Time spent at Maryville Retreat Center allowed me to experience Felician ministries deeply. I saw a life of simplicity, joy and compassion. Sisters praying together, supporting one another and serving those in need inspired me to embrace this path wholeheartedly."

Her words capture the essence of joining the community:

"I longed to be part of this life of joyful service. The Felician Sisters show hospitality, justice and hope in every encounter, and I hope to bring that same spirit wherever I am sent."

## Sr. ANNA QUYEN PHAM



For Sr. Anna, the Rite of Welcome was a moment of profound peace and belonging. Presented with the Tau Cross and a candle to symbolize her Franciscan call, she entered the Process of Transfer with trust and openness.

"Standing before Our Lady of Czestochowa, I felt direction and love. Receiving the Tau Cross and the warm welcome of the Felician Sisters felt like a homecoming. My years in healthcare and education, in Vietnam, Connecticut and Washington, prepared me for this moment. I hope to carry these experiences forward to enrich the community."

Even in quiet daily life, Sr. Anna sees God's handiwork:

"Hiking reminds me to notice God's beauty, while sewing, knitting and crochet show me how beauty is created one stitch at a time. God is weaving a pattern of love in my life, and I hope to share that pattern with others, especially the marginalized and the poor."

## A SEASON OF GRACE

This season of professions and new beginnings has filled Our Lady of Hope Province with joy. Sisters Shannon, Agnes, Gabriella, Maria Teresa and Anna remind us that God's call continues in every generation. Each of their journeys—unique in culture, experience and path to the Felician Sisters—enriches the community, creating a tapestry of faith, compassion and hospitality.

In a world that often feels fragmented, their "yes" illuminates the enduring power of prayer, community and service. These women exemplify the Felician spirit in action: a life of simplicity, joyful presence and service to those most in need.

# The Long View: Faithful Stewardship Across Generations

Spring invites us to lift our eyes—to notice what is growing, what is unfolding slowly and what we are called to nurture for those who will come after us. In the Felician tradition, this long view has always shaped our understanding of stewardship. We have never been a community focused only on the moment at hand. Rather, we trust that what we plant in faith today will bear fruit well beyond our own lifetimes.

As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, we are reminded that a nation's story is never finished. It is shaped, chapter by chapter, by those willing to invest in a future they may not fully see. The same is true of the Felician mission.

From the moment the first Felician Sisters arrived in America in 1874, they made choices rooted in courage, sacrifice and deep trust in God's providence. They built schools, cared for the sick, welcomed immigrants and responded to the needs of their time—often with limited resources but unlimited faith. Their vision extended far beyond themselves, and because of that vision, lives continue to be transformed today.

Faithful stewardship asks us to hold that same perspective. It invites us to consider not only what we give now, but what kind of legacy we hope to leave. Stewardship, at its heart, is an act of love—love for God, for neighbor and for generations we may never meet.

Legacy giving is one way donors live out this long view. A gift planned today—through a will, trust or beneficiary designation—becomes a quiet but powerful expression of hope. It says:

**I believe the Felician mission matters. I trust it will continue to further God's call. I want to be part of that story, even beyond my lifetime.**

Legacy gifts provide long-term stability and flexibility, allowing the Felician Sisters of North America to respond to emerging needs, care for aging sisters, support ministries of education, healthcare, retreat

and spiritual formation, and advance works of justice, peace and care for creation. Legacy gifts do not simply sustain what exists; they make possible what is yet to come.

Importantly, legacy giving is not reserved for a select few. It can take many forms and often costs nothing today, such as:

- **A bequest in a will or trust**, designating a specific amount, percentage or remainder of an estate
- **A beneficiary designation** on a retirement account, life insurance policy or donor-advised fund
- **A planned gift that honors loved ones**, ensuring values and faith continue through future generations

For many, including a charitable gift in their estate plan is one of the most meaningful decisions they will ever make. It reflects gratitude for blessings received and confidence that God's work will continue.

As we celebrate milestones—both national and communal—we are invited to ask enduring questions: What will remain because we were here? Whose lives will be changed because we chose generosity? How will our faith speak to the future?

America's story is still being written. So is the Felician story. Together, through faithful stewardship and thoughtful planning, we can ensure that the Felician mission continues to serve, to heal and to inspire for generations to come.

We invite you to consider how you might help write the next chapter.

For more information about legacy giving or to begin a confidential conversation, please contact the Office of Mission Advancement at 724-480-5756. Your faithfulness today can shape tomorrow in ways only God can imagine.





# Step Inside the Story:

## The Felician Sisters of North America Heritage Center *Awaits!*

*The doors are open—the story continues.*

The Felician Sisters of North America Heritage Center is now welcoming visitors to experience the rich history, enduring mission and living legacy of the Felician Sisters of North America. This sacred and inspiring space honors the courageous beginnings of our foundress, Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, and celebrates the generations of sisters who have carried her vision forward.

**Designed as a place of reflection, education and connection,** the heritage center invites guests to journey through the story of the Felician Sisters—from their founding in Poland in 1855 to their arrival in North America in 1874, and into the vibrant ministries that continue today. Through curated exhibits, historical artifacts, photographs and interactive displays, visitors will encounter the spirit of Gospel-rooted service that defines the Felician charism.

The heritage center is a living testament to faith in action. It highlights ministries in education, health care, social services, parish life and global outreach—witnessing to the sisters’ ongoing commitment to human dignity, compassion and solidarity with those in need.

Whether you are a longtime friend of the Felician Sisters, a student of Catholic history, a ministry partner, or someone discovering this story for the first time, the heritage center offers a meaningful and enriching experience for individuals and groups alike.

### Plan Your Visit

We warmly invite you to schedule a tour and experience the story firsthand. Guided tours provide deeper insight into the artifacts, stories and milestones that have shaped the Felician journey.

**To arrange a visit or learn more, please contact Chelsea Cooper, Marketing & Special Events Coordinator at [c cooper@feliciansisters.org](mailto:c cooper@feliciansisters.org).** You can also explore additional details on our website.

### Visit the Website

The Felician Sisters of North America Heritage Center & Archives can be found online at [www.FelicianHeritage.org](http://www.FelicianHeritage.org). This website invites you to browse digital exhibits, explore archival collections and learn about the remarkable women who have shaped the Felician legacy. Whether you are a long-time friend, a researcher, or simply curious, the site offers an engaging way to connect with our heritage from anywhere in the world.

**Come walk the path of our past.**

**Be inspired for the future.**

**Encounter the living legacy of the Felician Sisters.**

## FELICIAN SISTERS OF NORTH AMERICA HERITAGE CENTER

36700 Schoolcraft Road • Livonia, MI 48150

[FelicianHeritage.org](http://FelicianHeritage.org) • Facebook: @FelicianSistersHeritageCenterArchives • Instagram: @FelicianHeritageCenter



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## Faith and Family Under the Sky

Summer Outdoor Mass & Family Fun Evening  
**Saturday, August 22, 2026**  
4:00-8:30 p.m.

Spend a joyful summer evening with family, friends and parish communities on the beautiful grounds of Maryville Retreat Center, Holly, MI. The evening begins with an outdoor Mass and continues with lawn games, s'mores, sidewalk chalk art, face-painting and hands-on crafts for all ages.

Bring a lawn chair or blanket and come as you are. Sponsorship opportunities are available.

### Not local?

Scan the QR code or visit [MaryvilleRetreatCenter.org](http://MaryvilleRetreatCenter.org) to explore other events, eNews and blogs.



## Would you be interested in a Felician Pilgrimage to Poland in Spring 2028?

Join us on a sacred journey to Poland, home of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, and walk in her footsteps through Warsaw, Kraków and Wadowice. Along the way, we will visit Our Lady of Częstochowa, home of the Black Madonna, and other sites connected to Blessed Mary Angela's life and spirit. *Please note: Sites and experiences will vary from the 2025 pilgrimage.*

Led by Sr. Mary Inga Borko, this pilgrimage invites us to deepen our understanding of the Felician Foundress—Sophia Camille—and the historical, spiritual and cultural roots of the Felician way.

This is an exploratory invitation, and space will be limited. We encourage you to express your interest early.

More details to come—your response will help shape the journey.

Contact Julie Kresge at  
[jkresge@feliciansisters.org](mailto:jkresge@feliciansisters.org) or 724-480-5756.